READING IN THE ANIMAL VERNACULAR: THE BESTIARY AS LAY GENRE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Many of the bestiaries that survive from medieval England were produced by monastic orders such as the Benedictines. However, there is evidence of a widespread understanding of the bestiary’s system of imagery and moralizations by the fourteenth century, which exclusively monastic use does not explain. The animal imagery that appears in vernacular media requires a nuanced understanding from the audience in order to have any meaning beyond superficial figural representation; in other words, the laity had acquired a “literacy” of the bestiary’s animal exempla by the fourteenth century. In this dissertation, I examine the use of the bestiary by lay audiences in the Middle Ages, and how and why the English bestiary shifted from a Latin genre to a vernacular one. I argue that preaching was the primary medium by which the bestiary reached the English consciousness.

In Chapter One I lay the groundwork for defining the bestiary genre and identifying its major textual components, and show how it was distinct from similar contemporary genres. I also trace the history of its scholarship, and how our understanding of the genre has also changed over time. Then, in Chapter Two, I examine the extent of lay use of the bestiary tradition, as evidenced by the appearance of its imagery in lay genres, despite the decline in manuscript production during the same time. I propose that the bestiary’s imagery had become so commonplace and familiar to the population at large, that its animal symbolism resembled a kind of vernacular in its legibility. In fact, the spread of the bestiary throughout the larger population eventually affected the content of later manuscript copies; an example of this visual vernacular can be seen in the development of the siren and its visual representations throughout the course of the bestiary’s production.
In Chapter Three, I trace the spread of the bestiary content to the point of its initial contact with the laity, preaching. The genre’s shift from a more common treatise on virtues and vices to a resource for popular preaching, especially after the Fourth Lateran Council and the pastoral care movement, demonstrates its repurposing for broader populations; mendicant excerpt collections included bestiary chapters bound together with other preaching aids, and later sermons that were delivered to lay audiences continued to make use of the bestiary’s animal exempla. We see evidence of a “missing link” between manuscript and laity in the bestiary in British Library, Harley MS 3244. The manuscript marks a transition point between the bestiary’s original cloistered use and its later use in sermons directed to lay audiences.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I explore the continued use of the bestiary tradition in later vernacular literature, even after the production of bestiary manuscripts had essentially ceased. The bestiary’s robust afterlife further indicates the widespread and lasting legibility of its system of animal imagery and moralizations by lay audiences. In addition to examples in romance and drama, I examine Geoffrey Chaucer’s use of the bestiary to create his character of the Pardoner in *The Canterbury Tales*; Chaucer’s use represents a particularly rich concentration of bestiary imagery in vernacular literature, and relies on the reader’s association of animal features with morality to convey its meaning. Chaucer’s characterization of the Pardoner as well as the structure of his Prologue and Tale demonstrate the incorporation of the bestiary into a *Mischgattung*, or mixed genre: Chaucer combines the generic components of the bestiary, sermon, and exemplum to create something wholly new.
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**INTRODUCTION**

The last English bestiaries, produced in the late thirteenth century, looked very different from those produced only a century earlier. They had grown to astonishing size; not only did they include the “core catalogue” of animals common to all bestiaries, but they also had expanded to include monstrous human races as well as a seeming miscellany of sermons and encyclopedia excerpts, the Wheel of Fortune, and the Seven Wonders of the World.¹ By comparison, the compilers of the first of the English-produced Latin prose bestiaries in the early twelfth century referred to only two sources: excerpts from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* appended to the twenty to forty animals in the Latin *Physiologus*.² Between the first and final bestiaries, the manuscripts came to contain entries on many more animals than were in the *Physiologus*, imported from sources such as Hugh of Fouilloy, Gerald of Wales, Hrabanus Maurus, Solinus, and Bernard Silvestris.

Like the growth in its material, the bestiary genre had also evolved over its lifetime beyond its original monastic uses and readers. In this dissertation I examine how the English bestiaries, which were produced in England between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and written in Latin prose, had become a lay genre. I have limited the scope of this dissertation to bestiaries produced in England during this time, because they had developed independently from continental bestiaries, and this development was a product of their specific location and cultural

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¹ The latter two, the Wheel of Fortune and the Seven Wonders of the World, are found in a late 13th-century “Third Family” bestiary (London, Westminster Abbey Library Ms. 22). Also included in this manuscript are Seneca’s *De remediiis fortuitorum* and John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*. Florence McCulloch, *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 38-40.

milieu; there are significant generic and textual differences between them, some of which I will address briefly in this first chapter. I argue that the bestiary’s system of animal moralizations had become commonly understood by the population at large when the production of bestiary manuscripts was declining; eventually, the laity became a major audience of the bestiary’s animal imagery. The laity’s ability to “read” context-dependent moralizations from animal imagery is evident in the continued survival of the bestiary tradition in art, sermons, and vernacular literature, well into the fourteenth century and beyond. Despite more than a century of bestiary scholarship, the extent of the bestiary’s use by the laity, as well as the nature of the bestiary genre’s development from a monastic, Latin text to a vernacular genre remain unresolved.

The earliest studies of the bestiary had focused on either the visual tradition of the animal illustrations, or the organization of the numerous manuscripts. The general consensus amongst early scholars was that bestiaries were used for the benefit of lay audiences, mostly through their adaptation into church decoration; and while the prevailing assumption was that preachers referenced the bestiary for their sermons, the use of bestiaries in specifically lay-facing sermons remains a subject of debate today. Subsequent references to English bestiaries, as in G. R. Owst’s work on preaching in medieval England, included bestiaries among other kinds of

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4 Druce, Bond, and James built upon the theory of a lay audience. Bond and Druce, based their arguments on the reproduction of bestiary images in church decoration, including misericords. More recently, the question of whether the bestiary was used in sermons remains contested: Willene B. Clark argues for the bestiary’s largely academic rather than preaching context, while Patricia Stewart believes that bestiaries had a wide variety of uses—including preaching. Willene B. Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 85-92; Patricia Stewart, “The Medieval Bestiary and Its Textual Tradition” (doctorate of philosophy thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2012), 37-56.
popular preaching reference works. In 1956, Fr. John Morson concluded that the bestiary was used as source material in a number of Cistercian sermons. Although Morson’s findings only speak to the bestiary’s use in a cloistered setting, they are a starting point from which to investigate whether the characteristics that made the bestiary appealing for use in sermons ad clerum may also be applicable to sermons and other preaching media ad populum.

More recent interest in the bestiary in the past few decades has also been largely concentrated on continuing work in the visual tradition in addition to animal studies rather than on the genre’s lifespan. While focusing on the relationship between the bestiary’s text and image, Debra Hassig gives some attention to their evolving meanings when read by different audiences in her 1995 monograph, Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology. Hassig acknowledges that “the same texts and images accrued new meanings as different types of readers perused the bestiaries and brought to them their own values, beliefs, and practical interests.” There have been two notable efforts to investigate the larger contextual significance of the bestiary. In 1998, Ron Baxter gave attention to the purpose, audience, and use of bestiaries while evaluating the organization and distribution of bestiary manuscripts in his Bestiaries and

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6 Fr. John Morson, “The English Cistercians and the Bestiary,” Bulletin of John Rylands Library 39, no. 1 (1956): 146-70. Morson comes to the conclusion that Cistercian monks used the bestiary as a source for sermons, identifying forty-six instances, after accounting for the possibility that they could have used the bestiary’s source texts—the Physiologus and Isidore.
9 Hassig, Medieval Bestiaries, xvi.
Their Users in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{10} In his conclusion on manuscript consumption, he notes the “exciting possibility that changes made to the text and organization of the bestiary transformed it from a structured treatise on virtue and vice into a \textit{summa} of sermon material.”\textsuperscript{11}

The other recent examination of the bestiary genre’s lifespan is Willene B. Clark’s edition of a bestiary, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}.\textsuperscript{12} In her overview of the contemporary context and use of bestiaries, Clark comes to a different conclusion from Baxter regarding their use, and the reason for the genre’s decline. She posits that the primary use of bestiaries was in an academic setting, and that they were out-competed by the encyclopedias that reemerged in the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{13} As I will elaborate in Chapter One, this theory seems insufficient. Academic or exclusively monastic use does not adequately explain the development of the bestiary in England, or the spread of the bestiary’s animal exempla throughout vernacular media and literature. Despite the bestiary genre’s original use in cloistered, monastic contexts, the animal imagery that appears in vernacular media requires a nuanced understanding from the audience in order to have any meaning beyond superficial figural representation; in other words, the laity had acquired a “literacy” of the bestiary’s animal exempla by the fourteenth century. I believe that the use of bestiaries in preaching was the primary method by which the laity learned the moralizations and moral judgment associated with individual animals.

While Baxter’s research centers around determining the bestiary’s users, I have taken this a step in a more specific direction: envisioning the bestiary as a lay-oriented genre in medieval England. It is clear that the bestiaries were used for a variety of reasons over the course of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 193-94.
\item Willene B. Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts} (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).
\item Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 85-92; 114-116.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
genre’s production, especially depending on the bestiaries’ location of production and time of use. My purpose in this dissertation is not to proclaim one exclusive use for all bestiaries; rather, I have narrowed my scope of present research to focus on how the bestiary moved from a learned Latin genre to an accessible vernacular one, and why this had occurred. G. R. Owst saw the significance of identifying this “missing link” between bestiaries and their audiences: “But no one hitherto, apparently, has troubled to show what actual use was made of them by our English homilists in their work of popular religious instruction. The task is not idle, again, for the simple reason that it fills an unnecessary gap in the story of the education of the masses, and indeed proves further that there was no great gulf fixed in medieval times between the artistic symbolism of sculptor and wood-carver, the zoological literature of the “learned” and at least some popular understanding of the same.”

Even though Owst drew attention to this more than a half-century ago, the gap remains. I seek to close this lacuna in the relationship between the bestiary genre and lay audiences by tracing the significance of the changes to the bestiary genre throughout its lifespan, and their relationship with the appearance of bestiary imagery throughout lay-facing spaces, preaching, and vernacular literature.

Before exploring the changes to the bestiary genre over its lifespan, it is first necessary to establish the baseline by which to measure the genre’s development. In the first chapter I revisit the early scholarship and its methods of organization that remain mostly in place to this day, and determine the best working definition for the bestiary genre by taking into account its audience and uses. I then examine how the bestiary is unique in comparison with other contemporary genres, some of which were very textually similar. Its combination of comprehensive animal

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14 Owst, Literature and Pulpit, 196.
exempla, accompanying illustrations, and vivid imagery were major factors in the bestiary transitioning into a lay-oriented genre.

After establishing the essential textual components of the bestiary genre, the second chapter centers on the bestiary’s imagery and visual tradition, its influence on the visual representation of popular animals, and how those popular representations may have in turn affected the development of bestiary illustrations as they continued to be produced in manuscript copies. To trace the transformation of the bestiary as its images enter the common vocabulary, I use the siren as a case study. The siren is a staple creature of the bestiary’s core catalogue, and its evolution from part bird to part fish shows the disconnect between visual imagery and text as a result of the visual image’s popular use. The visual representations of bestiary imagery appear divorced from the text, yet still require the viewer’s knowledge of the moral significance—presentations of the animal images, particularly in religious contexts, suggest lay audiences’ working “literacy” of the animals’ accompanying moral lessons.

In the third chapter I explore how preaching allowed the bestiary to shift from a Latin genre to a vernacular one, by examining the genre’s historical context and its use as pastoralia, or preaching aids for lay-directed sermons. The thirteenth century was the turning point for the bestiary genre: its use in preaching to lay audiences further distinguished the bestiary from its monastic genesis as simply an expansion of the highly moralized Physiologus. Perhaps the greatest catalyst in the use of the bestiary in preaching to the laity was the Fourth Lateran Council, in conjunction with the twelfth century’s pastoral care movement. From the Fourth Lateran Council, Pope Innocent III decreed that confessions be a central mission of the Church, and attempted to further standardize preaching—particularly to lay audiences. This was partly in response to the growing number of lay preachers, or preachers from the lay population without
formal ordination, preaching in the public spaces to the general public. In this chapter I examine how the bestiary, due to the flexibility of its vivid animal imagery and their corresponding moralizations, would be uniquely useful for preaching to a lay public. I look to the binding of the bestiary with other kinds of *pastoralia* in excerpt collections as evidence of the mendicant orders using the bestiary in preaching to the laity. Furthermore, the use of bestiary imagery in fourteenth-century sermons shows the continued use of the bestiary in lay-focused preaching contexts. I finally examine the bestiary in British Library, Harley MS 3244 as further evidence for the use of the bestiary in preaching to lay audiences. Harley 3244 represents a unique case, where a wealthy Dominican friary had commissioned a fully illustrated and colored bestiary. While the manuscript is not typical, Harley 3244 offers valuable insight into an instance in which both the bestiary’s text and image may have been presented together before a lay audience. The use of the bestiary in preaching to the laity could not have occurred without the Council’s emphasis on confession, nor with the materials derived from Isidore or the *Physiologus* alone. While bestiaries were still produced for the wealthier audiences that traditionally had access to manuscripts, the general populace had become “literate” in the bestiary’s animal tradition through repeated exposure in sermons. What may have remained within academic or monastic libraries eventually entered into lay use and, as I will explore in the final chapter, vernacular literature.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I examine the bestiary’s ultimate absorption into other vernacular genres—to become an element of a mixed genre, or *Mischgattung*. While the production of bestiary manuscripts sharply decreased in the early fourteenth century, the bestiary’s animal exempla continued to survive in vernacular literature and genres. The animal tradition as popularized by the bestiary had become a part of the vernacular to such an extent that
It was incorporated in other emerging genres for the burgeoning literate laity, such as romance. Incorporated as an element in late medieval drama, the bestiary’s animal moralizations reached an even larger lay audience. The survival of the bestiary in vernacular literature is especially evident with the Pardoner of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, as the silver-tongued pilgrim represents the most elaborate literary reworking of the bestiary genre into Middle English. Chaucer uses the bestiary’s animal imagery to reveal the Pardoner’s spiritual and moral state; the Pardoner embodies the bestiary genre as a whole, and even bookends its lifespan: the Pardoner’s portrait is a microcosm of the bestiary’s animals and moralizations, the recognition of its significance as preaching material, and its lasting legacy in making the spiritual state visually manifest.

With my dissertation chapters I aim to trace the “vernacular” arc of the bestiary genre’s trajectory, as it moved from the monasteries to the public: from its earliest compilation as the consolidation of related animal exempla, to the spread of its imagery into the popular consciousness, to its appropriation into the burgeoning *cura pastoralis* movement, to finally its survival in vernacular genres, repurposed and reassembled by writers such as Chaucer. By the time of its “death,” the association of animals with their moral significance was already in place, existing as a framework by which lay audiences interpreted and understood the animal imagery they encountered. Deeper study of the bestiary genre’s lifespan and development can give us insight into the lay interaction with literature, especially valuable in a time when lay literacy was exceedingly rare.
CHAPTER 1: DEFINING THE BESTIARY GENRE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

More than most other textual works composed prior to the fourteenth century, the bestiary’s compilation of vivid animal imagery both textually and visually made it accessible to non-monastic populations prior to the increase in literacy in the fourteenth century. The steady increase in the number of chapters and overall content throughout the course of its use reflects the changing needs and interests of its audiences. While the bestiary originated from the highly moralized *Physiologus*, where Scriptural lessons were paramount to its educated readers, a number of factors had converged to broaden the bestiary’s sphere of influence beyond that of the *Physiologus*: a preaching movement and its related literary genres, a Church-decreed mandate to save souls through confession, the effectiveness of using animals as symbols for complex meaning, and finally, a means of literary characterization.

There is little evidence for contemporary lay ownership of a bestiary, save for one instance of likely courtly patronage and ownership, and many of the bestiary manuscripts were owned by cloistered monastic orders, namely the Benedictines and the Augustinians. However, despite this, there was a spread in the bestiary’s popularity and visual tradition that seems to have reached the broader populations. The bestiary’s combination of non-Aesopian animal tradition and iconic imagery, visual and literary, and their recurrence in other visual media and literature give compelling reason to question whether the recent limitation of bestiary manuscripts and their influence to monasteries, schoolrooms, and libraries is entirely accurate. There is good reason to believe that the non-monastic, lay population of England did have significant contact with the bestiary-specific animal tradition, through its use in sermons and visual imagery. More than simply because of its vivid illustrations—captivating as they are—the bestiary genre was most significantly unique in the widespread “legibility” of its symbolism. To understand the
trajectory of the bestiary as a genre and how it is distinguished from other similar works, I will examine the major generic conventions of the bestiary, and its place amongst contemporaneous genres such as encyclopedias and *pastoralia*. Understanding the bestiary’s coexistence with these other genres helps determine in what ways the bestiary is unique in its content and use.

1.2 History of Bestiary Scholarship

Study of the bestiary is relatively young, and its status as a distinct genre had largely developed in the latter twentieth century. Most early scholarly attention focused on the *Physiologus*, which initially was interchangeable with the term “bestiary”, though this conflation still occurs today as a term that describes a literary collection of animals. It is thus impossible to discuss the history of bestiary scholarship without also speaking of the *Physiologus’s*, and so that will begin my overview.

1.2.1 Early Scholarship and the *Physiologus*

The earliest printed edition of a medieval “bestiary” comes from Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin in the nineteenth century. The chapter entitled “Bestiaires” in their 1847 multi-volume publication, *Mélanges d’archéologie, d’histoire et de littérature, rédigés ou recueillis*, includes excerpts of animals from the Latin *Physiologus* as well as metered French *bestiaires*.¹⁵ Cahier and Martin also included illustrations copied from bestiary manuscripts, which resulted in a compilation of sources edited in a somewhat confusing manner.¹⁶ There was extensive


scholarly interest in the Physiologus in the nineteenth century,\(^\text{17}\) which—not unlike its historical development alongside the bestiary—continued into the twentieth with studies by Ben E. Perry and later Nikolaus Henkel, and editions by Michael J. Curley and Hanneke Wirtjes.\(^\text{18}\) A frequent point of contention was the Physiologus’s date of composition, with estimates ranging from the second to fourth centuries. M. R. James found attempts to trace the Physiologus farther back than the fifth century unconvincing, noting that efforts to assign a third or even second century date were based on shared wording in the Homily of Origen on Genesis extant only in a fifth-century Latin version of Rufinus.\(^\text{19}\)

Each of the thirty-nine chapters of the Latin Physiologus begins by citing the Scriptural text in which the animal being moralized is mentioned. Each chapter then continues with the moralization, often as an address to a πολιτευτής, or a monk or person devoted to religious life.\(^\text{20}\) Of the Physiologus’s audience and use, James suggests that “the object of the book, then, is purely religious, even ascetic.”\(^\text{21}\) He comes to this conclusion due to the pervading focus on the animals’ Biblical context, which he claims “presupposes an audience of ascetics, and that alone is against a primitive date” for the Physiologus.\(^\text{22}\)


\(^\text{19}\) James, The Bestiary, 3. James cites the flaw in dating the Physiologus according to the Homily of Origin on Genesis (xvii), where the words “Nam Physiologus…” follow the story of the the lion breathing life into its cub. James cites Rufinus’s tendency to write many versions and take “liberties with his originals,” and had a history of familiarity with the Physiologus.

\(^\text{20}\) James, The Bestiary, 2.

\(^\text{21}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{22}\) James also notes that the Physiologus writer must have been “old-fashioned, or at least a person living apart from the prevailing current of thought in the Church. His ideas of what Books are canonical scripture are archaic.” James, The Bestiary, 3.
While still largely entangled with the *Physiologus* at the time, the beginnings of bestiary scholarship as distinct from the *Physiologus* began to take shape in the early twentieth century. Unlike scholars’ genealogical approach to the *Physiologus*, the bestiary’s earliest academic attentions centered around its illustrations and visual tradition. As the *Physiologus* supplied much of the content in the bestiary’s core catalogue of animals, the illustrations of twelfth-century bestiaries were their most immediately unique characteristic. *Physiologus* manuscripts were occasionally illustrated, but the bestiaries proper of the twelfth century and later show a distinct departure from their predecessors in the quality and ubiquity of their drawings. In 1910 Francis Bond examined the connection between bestiary animals and misericords in his monograph on wood carvings in English churches.\(^\text{23}\) He used the terms *Physiologus*, Book of Beasts, and Bestiary interchangeably, though there are instances in which he seems to refer to a non-*Physiologus* bestiary.\(^\text{24}\) In a similar vein during this time, George C. Druce also focused on the bestiary’s illustrations with his study of the bestiary’s visual tradition and how it “played a great part in influencing decorative detail in ecclesiastical art and architecture in the middle ages,” as well as how it “inspired the early heralds in their selection of animals and birds for crests and otherwise.”\(^\text{25}\) Druce also published an edition of Guillaume le Clerc’s *Bestiaire*.\(^\text{26}\) Modern scholars have challenged the strength of Druce’s conclusions, as the imagery shared by the bestiary’s illustrations and church decoration are inconclusive as to the direction of influence.\(^\text{27}\)

\(^{24}\) Bond discusses each of the animals in the *Physiologus*. Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches*, 22.
\(^{27}\) Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (London: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 7-8. While there does appear to be a continuity in visual tradition and the church decoration depicts the animals’ moralizations described in the bestiary text, it is just as possible that both bestiary illustrator and church sculptor had referenced a similar source for their visual model. Whether the bestiary illustrations were referenced as the models for church
1.2.2 M. R. JAMES AND THE FOUR FAMILIES

The most influential treatment of the bestiary to date comes from M. R. James’s work in the early twentieth century, to which I will thus devote a more significant amount of space in reviewing. James first wrote a brief overview of the bestiary to accompany his edition of the Peterborough Psalter and its bestiary, but his most significant contribution comes from his material for the facsimile of Cambridge, University Library, Ms. Ii 4.26. It is here that he first proposes the Four Families organizational system for bestiary manuscripts. James’s objective for organizing the manuscripts into the different Families was to track the developments of the manuscripts and their chapters. James’s work is significant not only for his enduring Four Families system, but also, perhaps more importantly, in that it signals a more formal interest in the study of the English bestiaries. James still categorizes the Physiologus as an early bestiary, but he identifies a clear distinction between the Physiologus and the bestiaries produced from the twelfth century onwards. And unlike the previous focus on visual tradition in the work of Bond and Druce, James’s study of the bestiary’s text as a development from the Physiologus marks the transition into the recognition of the bestiary as a distinct genre.

In this early attempt to delineate the bestiary genre, James includes the thirty-nine chapter Latin Physiologus as the oldest “bestiary,” with Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Armenian versions. James recognizes the later bestiaries as more or less the Physiologus text, with appended chapter expansions (at least 110 and up to 150, according to James’s count of those in

architecture is uncertain. Furthermore, the moralizations Druce cites are shared by the more heavily didactic Physiologus. Druce refers to a number of bestiary manuscripts, but the texts he references are indistinguishable from the Physiologus.

28 M. R. James, Peterborough Psalter and Bestiary of the Fourteenth Century (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1921).
30 James, The Bestiary. 2. James notes that the extant Greek texts of the Physiologus are “of rather late complexion,” and “the Ethiopic [version] seems to be as free as any from late accretions.”
Cambridge, University Library, Ms. Ii 4.26). He also notes the lack of an “intermediate stage” between the two, but he does not pursue any further elaboration on their differences. He does not mention the significance of or variance in the illustrations in the *Physiologus* and twelfth-century bestiaries, in respect to defining the genre or otherwise.

As the most representative copy of the bestiary, James proposes Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 247. An early twelfth-century bestiary, it contains thirty-six chapters, and James classifies it as a First Family bestiary. Its illustrations are somewhat simple line drawings, and curiously this early example retains some rubrications more commonly found in *Physiologus* illustrations. That the later bestiaries largely lack the rubrications would suggest that they were not essential to the illustration process. It is possible that the process had also changed from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, where the necessary illustration was otherwise clear.

As James initially envisioned it, the Four Families system is a method of organizing the thirty-four bestiary manuscripts he had examined, which he had limited by including only those of English origin and in Latin prose. Despite increasing modifications and challenges to his original organizational system, it still persists today relatively intact. By James’s original conception, the Four Families are as follows:

**The First Family** includes Latin *Physiologus* (*Physiologus*-B) manuscripts. Also included are the earliest twelfth-century bestiaries with a limited number of animals/chapters closely based on those of the *Physiologus*. Chapters range from around twenty-four to forty different animals. The bestiaries follow the *Physiologus*’s ordering of *Leo, Antalops*, etc. and conclude with the *Mermecolion* (ant-lion). Their chapters are interpolated only from Isidore’s

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32 Ibid.
Etymologies, and there is no attempt by the bestiarist to classify the animals into larger groupings. James originally named fourteen manuscripts to this Family.

The Second Family is recognized by James as comprising the most common and popular bestiaries. James attributes the use of Isidore as a model to its origin from one redactor. Second Family bestiary manuscripts adopt the larger categories of Book XII of Isidore’s Etymologies: Beasts, Birds, Fish, Serpents. The numbers of animals have expanded to beyond those of the Physiologus, and the ordering generally begins with animal additions from Isidore: Leo, Tigris, Pardus, Panthera, etc. They also include animals without moralization, material from Solinus’s Liber memorabilium, and Ambrose’s Hexameron. Some include excerpts from Hrabanus Maurus’s De universo and Peter of Cornwall’s Pantheologus. James’s Second Family was originally comprised of “about twenty copies, all of them English… which must have originated in the twelfth century.”34 Chapters number to over a hundred. James notes that in many of the manuscripts, a sermon beginning “Quocienscumque peccator…” has made its way into the dog (canis) entry without any apparent reason, and its end is also inexplicably omitted.35

The Third Family is comprised of manuscripts that contain additions on top of those in the Second Family. James ascribes just four manuscripts to this family.36 These bestiaries are the most expansive in content, including chapters on Isidore’s monstrous races followed by his discourse on beasts, and content from Bernard Silvestris’s Megacosmos. Then the bestiary begins with the core catalogue of domestic animals. Some moral additions to the animal entries come from the Pantheologus. The larger classifications are ordered thus: Beasts (domestic animals, wild beasts), Birds (largely increased in number), Fish, Snakes, Insects, Isidore on mythological

34 James, The Bestiary, 14.
35 Ibid.
36 James’s Third Family manuscripts: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 254; Cambridge, University Library, Kk. 4. 25; London, Westminster Abbey Library, MS 22; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88.
monsters, then finally the Fire Stones (*Lapides igniferi*). There are also non-bestiary excerpts that commonly follow Third Family bestiaries.\(^{37}\)

**The Fourth Family** contains only one manuscript, Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 6.5, and is based on Bartholomew’s *De proprietatibus rerum*. James’s reasoning for including this final manuscript is that “its order is akin to that of the Second Family, but it also has striking resemblances to the Third.”\(^{38}\) The ordering is also peculiar: Beasts, monstrous races (fragmentary), Birds, Snakes, Insects, Fish, and Trees. The final section on trees is a near-complete copy of the chapter in Bartholomew. The moralizations have been mostly omitted. As I shall discuss in greater detail in this chapter, modern scholars no longer consider the manuscript known as the Fourth Family a bestiary because its composition more resembles the encyclopedic works of the time, with some added bestiary passages.\(^{39}\)

It is also in his foundational work that James famously stated that the bestiary’s “literary merit is nil, and its scientific value (even when it had been most extensively purged of fable, and reinforced with soberer stuff) sadly meagre.”\(^{40}\) The only reason the bestiary had been as successful as it was, according to James, was due to its illustrations; the role of the text was simply as “the vehicle of many beautiful and many curious images… [which] justifies the spending of some labour on the tracing of its history.”\(^{41}\) That James’s general dismissal of the genre prefaced such a lasting work in bestiary scholarship is amusing in hindsight, as modern study of the bestiary is stuck with the quandary of appealing to the “universal” recognition of

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\(^{37}\) According to James: “the Seven Wonders of the World, an extract from Seneca’s *de remediis fortuitorum*, and and another on Divination from the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury.” James, *The Bestiary*, 23.

\(^{38}\) James, *The Bestiary*, 25.

\(^{39}\) Willene B. Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 115. Clark’s n.10 also refers to Baudouin van den Abeele’s “Un Bestiaire à la croisée des genres” and the uncertainty in whether the Fourth Family is a bestiary-like encyclopedia, or an encyclopedia-like bestiary.

\(^{40}\) James, *The Bestiary*, 1.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
James’s well-codified system on one hand, and qualifying it with the appropriate denunciations on the other.

1.2.3 FLORENCE MCCULLOCH AND THE FOUR FAMILIES

Building upon James’s work, Florence McCulloch expanded the Four Families system in her also influential *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries.*42 One of McCulloch’s most significant contributions is her revision of James’s First Family, which I will thus cover here. She makes a clearer distinction between the *Physiologus* and the Latin bestiary genre, and further subdivides the First Family manuscripts into B-Isidore (“B-Is”), “H,” and Transitional.43 As its name indicates, B-Isidore describes manuscripts that contain the *Physiologus*-B, and appended existing animal entries from the *Physiologus*-B with Book XII of Isidore’s *Etymologies* only.

Group “H” represents an anomalous set of four manuscripts.44 The manuscripts actually contain the work *De bestiis et aliis rebus*, misattributed to Hugo of St. Victor, and it is Book II of *De bestiis et aliis rebus* that contains a B-Isidore bestiary. However, the H manuscripts differ significantly from B-Isidore in that they include only two birds. Hugh of Fouilloy’s *Aviarium* comprises Book I of *De bestiis et aliis rebus*, which may explain the abridged bird section in the bestiary. All four illustrated H manuscripts date to the thirteenth century.

McCulloch introduces another significant revision to the Four Families system, which is the Transitional group of manuscripts.45 The Transitional manuscripts contain the first twenty-

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44 The four H manuscripts: Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College 100; Valenciennes, Bibliothèque Municipale de Valenciennes, MS 101; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 14429; Chalon-sur-Saône, Bibliothèque Municipale de Chalon-sur-Saône, MS 14.
45 Transitional manuscripts: Cambridge, Trinity College 884 (R.14.9); London, British Library, Royal MS 2 B. vii (“The Queen Mary Psalter”); New York, Morgan Library, MS M.81; St. Petersburg/Leningrad, State Public Library,
four to forty chapters and ordering from the First Family bestiaries (B-Isidore or H), with the addition of several animals from Isidore. Transitional manuscripts also begin the division of the animals into large categories such as Beasts, Birds, and Fish, common to the other later bestiaries.

McCulloch splits her attention between the Latin and French bestiaries. While both Latin and French versions share roots in the Latin *Physiologus*, McCulloch is also careful to stress that “the word ‘bestiary’ is not precisely the correct one to apply to [the French] compositions, since with one exception all were translated not from the large *bestiarium* with its extensive borrowings from Isidore, but rather from the older *Physiologus* of thirty-seven chapters with fixed Isidorean additions.” McCulloch, *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries*, 45. The Latin bestiaries and French *bestiaires* clearly follow divergent paths in their textual development.

1.3 THE BESTIARY AS A GENRE

To better understand how the bestiary genre could have encompassed broader uses that were not originally intended, it is first necessary to examine the reasons for the bestiary’s genesis as well as its generic components. The content alone of the bestiary can only give an incomplete story of its purpose and use, and so it is necessary to broaden the scope of study to consider other contemporary factors during the bestiary’s development to understand the significance of the genre. The purpose of a more refined definition of the bestiary genre is not simply the attempt to fashion a better-looking box in which to confine it, or satisfying an abstract “desire for crude

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MS Saltykov-Shchedrin Latin Qu.V.1; London, British Library, Royal MS 12 C. xix; Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS. 100; Munich, Die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB) gall. 16.

While the number of extant bestiary manuscripts attests to its popularity, less certain are how it was used and by whom, and why this may have changed throughout the genre’s lifespan.

Other medieval genres often have more explicit clues as to their monastic or courtly use, some in dedications preceding the work, which reveal an intentional consideration of audience. For instance, compilations of hagiography or saints’ lives are less frequently as comprehensive as the collections of animals in bestiaries seem to be. The practice of selective or comprehensive compilation speaks to the variation in audiences, with different groups of Vitae adapted for different audiences. The sheer volume of works in the hagiography genre allows much room for variation and various audiences, and so the set of particular saints compiled can give further clues; those that include the Katherine Group, a collection of the saints’ lives of Margaret, Katherine of Alexandria, and Juliana, strongly suggest monastic, devotional use, with some copies including dedications to women readers. In contrast, the inclusion of the Vita of St. Margaret amongst other homilies in John Mirk’s Festial takes on a different tone in the anticipation of its performance to lay audiences during her feast day. Another example of a genre with a distinct lay use is the Book of Hours, which I will discuss in more depth shortly. The encyclopedia genre, which I too discuss later in this chapter, has an apparent use according to its purpose—academic, either monastic or lay.

48 However, the effort to compile a comprehensive saints’ Lives also suggests audience and use akin to reference works like encyclopedias and summae of exempla.
49 Certainly monastic, if not necessarily exclusively female, use. Ancrenee Wisse is a work that includes the Katherine Group of saints’ lives, though was for a female audience of anchoresses. Wendy R. Larson, “The Lives of St. Margaret of Antioch in Late Medieval England,” in Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Routledge, 2000), 678.
The English bestiary is unique in its appeal to both monastic and non-monastic audiences with the same text. The bestiary genre’s audiences and uses are as integral to the genre as the core text that remains largely stable throughout the various manuscripts; even with the addition of material in the later, larger bestiaries, they still retained the core text and animal catalogue of the early bestiaries. Understanding the English bestiary as a distinctive genre, through an examination of its generic conventions together with its early uses, can help us better determine the reasons for the developments throughout its lifespan, and how its system of animal imagery and accompanying moralizations could have gained a foothold in the imaginations of the laity. In this chapter I will also examine other contemporaneous animal texts, namely the French bestiary tradition and the encyclopedia genre, to further highlight the bestiary’s audience and use as a defining generic trait. Finally, I will explore the bestiary’s development into a subgenre of 

*pastoralia.*

**1.3.1 Determining Genre**

Astonishingly, there is relatively very little scholarship on medieval generic conventions, many of which are poorly defined aside from those of romance. This may be because generic forms in the Middle Ages seem almost amorphous and indistinct, with one genre overlapping with the next. It seems most accurate to describe medieval genre as a complex sub-genre system. By contrast, the genre of romances has received the most attention due likely to its existence as a vernacular narrative; many monastic works do not have the same structured system as a narrative work. An exception would be saints’ lives, which have relatively rigid narrative structures and
were often written in the vernacular, up through the twelfth century when our record of vernacular saints’ lives shows a distinct decline in surviving manuscripts.\footnote{Joana Proud cites some 32 eleventh-century manuscripts of saints’ lives survive, while we only have nine from the twelfth. Of course, as with any evaluation of manuscripts, we must be cautious in making conclusions exclusively from the surviving manuscript record. Proud also suggests that the decline may be related to the (in)adequacy of earlier manuscript copies of this material, or the constantly shifting popularity of individual saints’ cults, away from the available manuscripts. Joana Proud, “Prose Saints’ Lives: Extant Manuscripts,” in \textit{Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century}, eds. Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 118-19, 122.}

Though the bestiary’s compilers and audiences likely did not understand literary genre as we do today, the process of composition and compilation with distinct purposes and audiences in mind seems to describe at least roughly a movement towards distinct genres. For instance, the Books of Hours are known not only for their textual and visual content, but for their audience as well. Scribes and bookmakers organized hourly prayer cycles specifically with a lay audience in mind, and to guide domestic religious devotion throughout the year. Their initial readership was fairly restricted, as the extensive ornamentation of early Books of Hours limited their ownership to the nobility and very wealthy who could afford the process, but their demand eventually led to more streamlined production, which in turn allowed wider access. It is their distinctive portable size, in conjunction with their textual content and illustrations that comprise the Book of Hours genre and are indicative of its non-monastic audience. It is not only the material content, but its readership as well that makes the Book of Hours genre distinct.

Similarly, the way the bestiary was precisely compiled and structured best suited its use as a preaching reference text, with moralizations that were understandable to the laity. This is not to say that there is not some flexibility or fluidity between generic distinctions. Tzvetan Todorov offers an answer to the question of “new” genres: “From where do genres come? Why, quite simply, from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of one or several old
genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination.\textsuperscript{52} The bestiary is even more accurately and explicitly a product of previous genres, following the medieval convention of compiling existing sources. In the compilation of the source texts and recasting them in a new context due to the specific assemblage, combination, and availability of these excerpts, the bestiary genre carries a new meaning in the sum of its parts.

In the history of bestiary scholarship, Willene B. Clark similarly argues for the need for a clearer definition of “bestiary,” and comes to define it as Latin-language medieval beast books, descended from the \textit{Physiologus}.\textsuperscript{53} This is a great improvement upon James’s and McCulloch’s grouping of the bestiary as simply an expanded version of the \textit{Physiologus}. The divisions that McCulloch and M. R. James identify in accordance with expansions to the \textit{Physiologus} are in fact symptomatic of changes in use from the \textit{Physiologus}, with later additions further serving more specialized uses. Even recent scholarship on the bestiary as a genre has been unable to resolve the major questions regarding the bestiary’s lifespan, and the question remains as to why it was even necessary to expand the \textit{Physiologus} with material from Isidore, especially considering the popularity of both the \textit{Physiologus} and Isidore at this time.

Clark details some of the contextual events of the twelfth century that surround the Second Family bestiaries, but attributes the development of bestiaries to an increased interest in animals, spurred by the translation of Ancient Greek and Arabic science, and the twelfth-century Classical revival.\textsuperscript{54} Broadly speaking, these larger cultural developments may have indeed played a part in aiding the bestiary’s most productive period of manuscript copies in the thirteenth century, but it is still less clear as to who would need the large compilation of animal

\textsuperscript{53} Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 10.
\textsuperscript{54} Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 14-20.
behavior and moralizations, who did not already have access to its source texts. Thus, I believe that a more extensive consideration of usage is the missing link to answering why the bestiary emerged as a unique genre. Additionally, this will also explain why the expansion in the number of animals from the *Physiologus* to the bestiary served to create a new genre, while the increasing expansions in content throughout the genre’s lifespan did not.\(^{55}\)

### 1.3.2 The *Physiologus* as Source Text

The *Physiologus* came to be considered as a Latin-learner text in schoolrooms by the twelfth century. It had appeared in French school-text lists as early as the eleventh century, and its use as such became widespread across Europe by the mid-twelfth century; at least one twelfth-century school library catalogue lists a *Physiologus* bound together with other popular teaching texts such as Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*.\(^{56}\) Of the versions of the *Physiologus*, the most directly relevant to the bestiary and its use in medieval England is what is known as the “B version,” or *Physiologus*-B, which consists of thirty-six to thirty-seven animals and their moralizations.\(^{57}\) This version is the most direct ancestor to the bestiaries and the Latin *Physiologus* that was known throughout medieval England, with a notable vernacular descendent, the eighth- or ninth-century Old English *Physiologus* included in the Exeter Book.\(^{58}\)

The most widely-known *Physiologus* during this time was a descendent of the *Physiologus*-B,\(^{59}\)

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\(^{55}\) Florence McCulloch is among those whose early studies of the bestiary grouped it closely with the *Physiologus*, describing the bestiary as “its enlarged form” and does not make a distinction between the two. In fact, McCulloch’s distinction is that the bestiary manuscripts are those that are illustrated versions of the *Physiologus*. McCulloch, *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries*, 22.


\(^{57}\) The earliest Latin manuscript appearing in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 233, ff. 1-13, dated to the eighth to ninth centuries.

\(^{58}\) The Old English (OE) *Physiologus* is very much abridged, including only three animals: the panther, the whale, and the fragmentary partridge. In addition to its unique composition in Anglo-Saxon, the OE *Physiologus* is also a metrical version similar to Theobaldus’s Latin *Physiologus*.
Theobaldus’s eleventh-century metrical version, and contained an abridged thirteen chapters or animals. By 1300, Theobaldus’s *Physiologus* had been translated into a metrical Middle English version.\(^{59}\)

It is possible that the Middle English *Physiologus* was used for clergy instruction or, similar to the bestiaries, as sermon source material for lay congregations. The animal imagery it shares with the bestiary would have been particularly suitable for use as a vivid exemplum, and it retained the many explicit Scriptural references that the bestiaries mostly replaced with material from Isidore and other additions. But the question of redundancy remains; why did *Physiologus*-B branch off into the simultaneously popular Theobaldus’s version and the bestiary, if they fulfilled the same purpose? It seems that the possible dual-functionality of Theobaldus’s *Physiologus* as an academic and teaching text may be key, especially in contrast to the increasingly comprehensive and illustrated bestiaries.

1.3.3 ILLUSTRATIONS

I will explore the spread of the bestiary’s visual tradition in greater depth in the next chapter, but it is important to note here the significance of the illustrations to the development of the bestiary genre. The most significant difference between the bestiary and the *Physiologus* and other animal-centered works such as *The Phoenix* is the near-ubiquitous presence of illustrations. It would, however, be shortsighted to define the bestiary genre exclusively by its illustrations. As I will discuss later in Chapter Three, there are some later instances of unillustrated bestiary chapters included in excerpt collections. These collections represent one way in which use had

\(^{59}\) The Middle English *Physiologus* survives in a single manuscript, British Library MS Arundel 292, dated to around 1300, but the poem “is written in the language of the previous half-century.” The dating of the Middle English *Physiologus* is contested, and Wirtjes concludes that its composition before 1250 is possible, but cannot be proved. Hanneke Wirtjes, *The Middle English Physiologus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xl-lii.
shaped the bestiary text, and demonstrate how the bestiary’s imagery and moralizations could flourish in certain applications without the necessity of costly and time-intensive illustrations.

But investigating one modality of the bestiary as a picture book or visual medium, in a similar vein as the Books of Hours, can provide other clues as to its audience, purpose, and use. Some manuscripts show stronger visual relationships with each other, which resulted from a common exemplar or model book of animal forms. In fact, manuscripts with unique illustration styles or animal renderings are relatively rare. This may be attributed to the use of common copy texts, as well as the frequent depiction of the same aspect of the animal’s description. Most of the animal entries are paired with a single illustration, though there are a few animals with more than one illustration in the case of some longer entries, such as the dog and horse. The typical illustration depicts the animal in the midst of one of its described natural behaviors, but on rare occasions the illustration depicts one of the animal’s moralizations or a Biblical allusion. James notes the very different visual tradition of the bestiary illustrations, as they rarely overlap with those of the Greek Physiologus. Furthermore, the greater visual emphasis on the animals’ natures allows a greater flexibility and range in uses than a singular, static moral lesson portrayed by an animal; for instance, the bestiary’s illustration of the bees (apes) surrounding a hive could be displayed or reproduced to represent the virtues of celibacy for a monastic audience just as easily as communal cooperation for a lay one.

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61 Notably, some illustrations in the Harley 3244 bestiary are significantly different, and have no apparent precedent in the other extant bestiaries. I explore the possible reasons behind this in Chapter Three.

62 James, The Bestiary, 27.
In comparison to the *Physiologus*, which was occasionally illustrated, the bestiary is nearly always provided with illustration, or at least with empty spaces intended for later inclusion of illustrations. Additionally, the illustrations in the *Physiologus* more directly depict Christian iconography and the animals’ moralizations. The earliest known bestiaries, such as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 247 from the B-Isidore category (First Family), show rubricated descriptions alongside the illustrations. Some rubrics simply repeat the name of the animal, and others include short descriptions pulled from the text. In the case of the early bestiary, MS. Laud Misc. 247, which James cited as the most representative copy of the twelfth-century bestiaries, the rubrics appear to be from the same scriptorium, if not the same hand that penned the main text. In the example of the *Nicticorax*, or night crow (see Appendix, figure 1), the similarity of the rubication hand and the main text hand is apparent, though perhaps the former is slightly more compressed for space due to the assumption that an illustration would be added later.

Two possible functions for the rubrications in the bestiary are not necessarily mutually exclusive. First, they could have been for the benefit of the illustrator; instead of searching through the text, an illustrator with at least some Latin literacy would have been able to quickly reference the rubrication and fill in the space accordingly. However, this does not explain the rubrications with more extensive excerpts from the text. The second possibility is to benefit the reader, as a kind of mnemonic device for the moralizations; this is consistent with the bestiary’s early use in monasteries and perhaps classrooms. In the illustration and accompanying rubrication of the elephant in MS Laud Misc. 247 (see Appendix, figure 2), the marginalia in the gutter is a copy of the rubication.

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63 James, *The Bestiary*, 7.
1.3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE FOUR FAMILIES SYSTEM

M. R. James’s early classification of Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.5 as the Fourth Family speaks to the limitations of his original organizational system as a method for defining the bestiary genre. Relying solely on the inclusion of bestiary passages cannot be an adequate method of categorizing a text as a bestiary, as we shall see in the expansions in animal content in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century encyclopedias. The more recent expulsion of the Fourth Family as bestiary proper is further indication that the “Four Families” are a misnomer, and the nature of the First Family as a kind of catch-all for miscellaneous early manuscripts has been noted by McCulloch.64 The First Family, as it was originally detailed by James, is less clearly defined and exhibits greater variation than the Second and Third. McCulloch attempts to rectify the issue by further subdividing the early First Family bestiaries. Thus, while imperfect, the Four Families system is nonetheless useful in identifying common characteristics that unify bestiary manuscripts as a genre, and showing how the genre had progressed over time and through use.

There are several reasons for the de-classification of the Fourth Family. Only one manuscript, Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.5, represents the Fourth Family. This more strongly suggests that the manuscript is an outlier, rather than representative of a distinct Family. Its very late date of composition in the fifteenth century, more than a century after bestiary production had slowed, casts some suspicion upon its status as a bestiary. Furthermore, the Fourth Family manuscript’s compilation of Bartholomew and bestiary entries seems to have more in common with encyclopedias than with the First, Second, or even Third Family bestiaries. The Cambridge, Univ. Lib. Gg.6.5 manuscript does include the illustrations characteristic of the bestiary; however, its illustrations seem to be “poor copies” of those found in the Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. Kgl. 1633 4˚ bestiary manuscript, and which

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64 McCulloch, Mediaeval French and Latin Bestiaries, 75.
McCulloch describes as “careless.” In addition to the manuscript’s much later date, the more simply rendered drawings are also reminiscent of those found in the French vernacular bestiaires, as the “lesser” quality was generally indicative of “a less wealthy, and evidently rather often a less discriminating group, than the one to whom the finer Latin versions were addressed.” The questionable status of the Fourth Family encapsulates the need for greater clarity in defining the bestiary genre: it contains the bestiary core text and illustrations, yet it also includes considerable parts of Bartholomew’s De proprietatibus rerum. This is also in contrast to the Third Family bestiaries, which are defined by their ballooning number of sources and entries, including material from additional encyclopedias.

James’s initial inclusion of the Fourth Family manuscript speaks to the confusion over how to define the bestiary genre, and to what degree it is different from encyclopedias. The answer seems apparent when referring to the expansive encyclopedias like Isidore’s, which include entries on many aspects of observable phenomena; however, the distinction becomes less clear when comparing bestiaries against later animal encyclopedias, which incorporate some of the bestiary passages. Compared against the bestiary core text established by the early First Family/B-Isidore bestiaries and carried through the subsequent bestiary manuscripts (even with increasing numbers of additions), it is clear that the animal encyclopedias belong to a separate genre even when the direction of influence went both ways. And unlike the verbatim compilation of the bestiary entries, the evaluative voices of the encyclopedists run through the entries, often expressing skepticism of the more outrageous claims in a similar manner to Aristotle.

65 McCulloch, Mediaeval French and Latin Bestiaries, 75.
66 Ibid.
1.3.5 Development of the Encyclopedia Genre

While the encyclopedia genre has a fairly defined structure, its uses were far more varied due to their comprehensive coverage of all natural phenomena. This is in contrast to the single-subject focus of a genre like the bestiary. Encyclopedias were just as useful as reference in exegesis and for literary purposes as they were for preaching. Because bestiaries continued to coexist alongside encyclopedias and the *Physiologus* for a considerable length of time, even before the fourteenth century, they must have fulfilled different enough purposes despite any overlap in use. Both the bestiary and animal encyclopedia compile information on animals, and some instances such as the Fourth Family “bestiary” pose an interesting conflict. While early encyclopedists adhered to the Aristotelian naturalistic approach to nature as opposed to the allegorical one of bestiaries, the differences between them became less distinct as the encyclopedias began placing greater emphasis on animal allegory in the thirteenth century.

As previously mentioned, one distinctive characteristic of the encyclopedias is the emphasis on the encyclopedist’s voice. In comparison to the bestiaries, medieval encyclopedias are distinguished by their author. Encyclopedias with significant animal sections, like Alexander Neckham’s *De naturis rerum* and Thomas of Cantimpré’s *Liber de natura rerum*, were expansive not only in the sheer number of animals (about 114 and 500 respectively) but also in the amount of information contained in the entries. Some animal entries were much more extensive than others, but many included marginal allegorical readings, transcribed from one manuscript copy to the next.67

This side-by-side use of the animal description and allegorical explanation seems indicative of some overlap in the use of the encyclopedias and bestiaries. What may have

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originally been supplementary to the text was eventually deemed useful enough for scribes to preserve the marginalia, yet largely remained separate from the main text until the late thirteenth century. As the encyclopedia genre progressed into the late thirteenth century, their animal chapters did increasingly resemble the bestiary as new works incorporated the animal moralizations into the text. Baudouin Van Den Abeele has noted how the *Proprietates rerum moralizate*, or *Liber septiformis de moralitatibus rerum*, attributed to Marcus of Orvieto, seems to resemble a mid-point between the encyclopedia and a collection of *exempla* used for preaching. Encyclopedias from the fourteenth century, likely of Dominican origin, further show the significant impact of *De Proprietatibus rerum* and the interest in the originally marginal moralizations through their incorporation of allegorical readings into the entries.

While the bestiary was still unrivaled in its inclusion and scope of animal illustrations, the allegorical readings of animals in these thirteenth-century encyclopedias would appear to create a possible point of redundancy. Especially in light of the bestiary’s decline in production shortly afterwards, it seems easy to conclude that the increasingly expansive encyclopedias had simply beaten the bestiary at its own game, as Clark has posited. However, this explanation for the bestiary’s decline does not account for the continued popularity of the *Physiologus*, of which a majority of copies do not have the bestiary’s distinctive illustrations. While I will examine in Chapter Four the literary impact of the bestiary after its decline, it is important in our definition

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68 One early exception is *De naturis rerum* of Pseudo-John Folsham, in Cambridge, Trinity College Library, R.15.13, which incorporates the allegorical commentary into the main text; however, this is the exception rather than the rule.


70 As with the aforementioned author of the *Septiformis*, either Marcus of Orvieto or another Dominican friar, the 1326 *Multifarium* (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, ms Gud. lat. 200) contains a miniature depicting a teacher and three students in Dominican habits. Abeele, “L’allégorie animale dans les encyclopédies latines du Moyen Âge,” 128-29.

of the bestiary genre to determine how its organization of similar information differs from the encyclopedias of the time.

Compared to the influential encyclopedias of Isidore, Hrabanus Maurus, and even as late as Bartholomew, the organization of Thomas of Cantimpré’s *Liber de natura rerum* is quite unique. In ordering chapters on natural phenomena, the encyclopedias are typically modeled after the Biblical days of Creation, like Ambrose’s *Hexameron*; they begin with chapters on God and the angels, then progress to man, with chapters on subjects like geography and astronomy as somewhat less structured, sometimes ordered before or after the chapters on animals. The comparison chart below (Table 1) details the organization of the major encyclopedias’ chapters:

**Table 1**: Comparison chart of encyclopedia chapters

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Table 1 (cont.)

| Isidore of Seville, Etymologies | Hrabanus Maurus, *De rerum naturis* | Bartholomew, *De proprietatibus rerum* | Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*
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<td><strong>Book XII: Animals</strong></td>
<td>Book XII: Regions of the earth, paradise</td>
<td><strong>Book XII: Birds</strong></td>
<td>Book XVII: Spheres of the Earth and seven planets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book XV: Buildings and fields</td>
<td>Book XV: Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Book XV: Regions of the earth, geography</td>
<td>Book XX: Eclipses and celestial moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book XVI: Stones and metals</td>
<td>Book XVI: Language</td>
<td>Book XVI: Stones and metals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book XVII: Rural matters</td>
<td>Book XVII: Geology</td>
<td>Book XVII: Herbs and plants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Book XVIII: War and games</td>
<td>Book XVIII: Numbers, music, medicine</td>
<td><strong>Book XVIII: Animals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Book XIX: Ships, buildings, clothing</td>
<td>Book XIX: Agriculture</td>
<td>Book IX: The senses</td>
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<td>Book XX: Provisions and various implements</td>
<td>Book XX: War, ships</td>
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<td>Book XXI: Textiles and clothing</td>
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<td>Book XXII: Meals, provisions</td>
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Hrabanus Maurus orders the animals (Book VIII) immediately following the various aspects of man—similar to Isidore. Bartholomew orders his chapters of the elements, weather, and properties of time before the animal chapters. He divides the animals into two chapters, the birds (Book XII) and the rest of the animals (Book XVIII). Thomas’s encyclopedia dispenses with the standard opening chapters on God and the angels, and instead begins with human anatomy and monstrous races (Books I-III), then progresses to animals (Books IV-IX). This results in a more specialized encyclopedia geared towards natural history, rather than the all-encompassing works of his predecessors. It is thus unsurprising that Thomas’s dispensing with the typical chapters had garnered hostile attentions from the Dominican order.

Thomas’s chapter on monstrous races (Book III), which bridges the chapters on humans (Books I-II) and animals (Books IV-IX), resembles Isidore’s treatment of monstrous races and portents at the conclusion of his Book XI, which also appears in the Third Family bestiaries.
Thomas’s expansion of the animals into their own individual Books or Chapters is thus reminiscent of the bestiary’s ordering of animals, set within the larger encyclopedic organizational structure.

1.3.6 **French and Anglo-Norman Bestiaires**

While I am focusing my attentions on the English-produced bestiaries, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss the French and Anglo-Norman bestiaries produced during this period. Examining the defining characteristics of the parallel French bestiary tradition may offer further insight into the development and use of the bestiary in England, especially in light of how the English bestiary tradition developed independently from the continental bestiary tradition. In the twelfth century, Anglo-Norman poets had translated the *Physiologus* into the French vernacular, which in turn grew into the bestiary tradition in France. As McCulloch is quick to clarify, the word “bestiary” is somewhat of a misnomer in describing the French compositions as parallel to the English tradition. Further complicating the matter is the use of *bestiaire* in the French compositions, which translates to “bestiary.” For the sake of clarity and maintaining the distinction between the two traditions, I will henceforth refer to the French tradition with the term *bestiaire*.

The French *bestiaires* are notably distinct from the Latin prose bestiaries in several ways. Defined by its textual tradition, the bestiary genre proper consists of texts descended from the B-version of the *Physiologus (Physiologus-B)* appended with excerpts from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*; this includes all manuscripts classified under the Four Families. By contrast, the French *bestiaire* tradition, including Philippe de Thaon’s twelfth-century Anglo-Norman

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*bestiaire*, branched off earlier in the textual genealogy of the *Physiologus*, from a version older than the *Physiologus*-B. 73 Another substantial difference is the use of meter, present across the four major *bestiaires* of Philippe de Thaon, Pierre de Beauvais, Gervaise, and Guillaume le Clerc. Rather than the more straightforward compilation of various sources on animals that distinguishes the English bestiaries, the composers of the French *bestiaires* demonstrate greater creative license in their metrical adaptation of the *Physiologus*.

Perhaps the most curious of the resulting differences is the unification of the bestiary as a cohesive text. The use of rhyming verse and meter by the French writers allows each line to elide into the next, creating a bestiary that was to be read in its entirety. This is substantially different from the English tradition, in which the bestiary’s non-narrative organization serves a purpose similar to an encyclopedia: it is meant to be consulted one section at a time, and often with a specific one in mind. This also speaks to the difference in audience and use, as a more cohesive narrative would better serve the courtly use of the French *bestiaire* as recreation or entertainment.

The illustrations of the animals also differ. Where the English bestiary tradition overwhelmingly favors the depiction of the animals’ behavior, the two manuscripts that contain Guillaume le Clerc’s vernacular *bestiaire* instead portray the animals’ moralizations,74 similar to the type of illustrations in some copies of the *Physiologus*. This may indicate a function similar to the Aesopian fable tradition, where the illustrations were included as entertainment and used as mnemonic devices for a specific moral. The *Physiologus*-like depiction of a specific accompanying moral could further suggest the similar use of the *bestiaire* as a school text, in the

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classroom or in a domestic environment; rather than for learning Latin, the vernacular bestiaire could instead be used for teaching children basic moral lessons. In the English bestiaries, the illustrations are less narrative, and more often plainly representational of the animals’ behavior and physical characteristics. This blank-slate type of image has the flexibility to accommodate any number of meanings.

The French tradition’s use of the vernacular additionally suggests differences in audience and use. In the case of Philippe de Thaon’s bestiaire, Philippe’s courtly dedication to Adelaide of Louvaine, queen of Henry I, is an explicit declaration of a non-monastic audience.75 The Latin prose of the English bestiaries restricted access to the text far more than a vernacular translation. It is possible that some English bestiaries were used by wealthy laity, one possible example being MS Bodley 764.76 However, Bodley 764 had not been altered from the standard Second Family structure to something better suited to more extended reading sessions, as the French bestiaires were. If it indeed was created for a courtly patron, its use would undoubtedly have been different from that entailed by monastic ownership of the identical text. The versification of the bestiaires may have been inspired by the Reynard and beast fables, which were commonly in verse and immensely popular in France. The bestiary’s animal entries were often disjointed and abruptly transitioned, and so the rhyming verse of Philippe’s Bestiaire not only structured the bestiary within a familiar literary form, but it also lent a continuity between the animals and meanings through the rhyming lines. This further reinforces the likelihood of the private and

76 Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 160. Baxter argues that Bodley 764 is the only bestiary manuscript with significant evidence for lay patronage, based on the heraldry depicted in the illustration of the elephant.
continuous reading of the *bestiaire* in contrast to the more utilitarian bestiary, which is aligned more closely with *pastoralia* in its structure as well as its audience and use.

### 1.4 Bestiary Uses and Pastoralia

The *pastoralia* genre comes from the *cura pastoralis*, or pastoral care, movement of the late twelfth through thirteenth centuries, especially following the Fourth Lateran Council’s 1215 declaration that the pastoral care of souls was a skill or art that could be taught in schools. Thus, works that were created in service of the movement are classified as *pastoralia*. Of the works considered *pastoralia*, there are also distinct subgenres of works such as *distinctiones, summae*, and sermons. The significance of purpose, use, and audience in defining genre is also why monastic sermons are considered to generically differ from *pastoralia* sermons. The use of the bestiary as *pastoralia* could explain how lay audiences learned to associate animal images with their moral significance by the fourteenth century, especially considering the barrier of Latin literacy and the decline in overall bestiary production during this time.

There are three broad categories of *pastoralia*: those used to aid preaching, confession, and ecclesiastical education. Each of these categories additionally includes many forms and styles, and there are also some works of *pastoralia* that may contain aspects of two or three of the categories. As contemporary descriptions of *pastoralia* include the same work being called *summa, distinctiones, and manuale* in various manuscript copies, it appears that while the specific nomenclature may vary, the works were still identified primarily by their purpose and use. It is in this way that I believe that the bestiary genre functioned similarly during its production and use, both in its textual similarity to other *pastoralia* and in its identification with a specific audience. This outreach to lay populations was to be conducted through confessions and preaching. *Summae* and *distinctiones* were created for preaching reference as well as for
specific instruction on how to best carry out the Council’s decrees. Preachers had to be educated on the art of preaching and the proper care of souls, and reference materials as well as preaching manuals experienced an incredible increase in production.

There is currently a dearth of scholarship on medieval distinctiones, a genre that flourished in the late twelfth through early thirteenth centuries.\(^7\) Notable authors of distinctiones include William of Montibus, Alan of Lille, and Peter of Cornwall. Alan of Lille’s distinctiones is particularly large, as is the Angelus or Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, previously (and erroneously) attributed to Hrabanus Maurus.\(^8\) The entries in a set of distinctiones consist of biblical or theological words and a collection of their various meanings, drawing on a wide variety of sources ranging from Scripture and the Church Fathers to art and secular poetry.\(^9\) This structure is in fact very similar to that of the bestiary, which represents a collection of an animal’s various meanings, as gathered from many sources; a bestiary is a collection of distinctiones that is specifically limited to the animal world. Envisioning the bestiary as a specific type of distinctiones collection or at least as related to a pastoralia genre offers an explanation for the animals with seemingly contradictory meanings as a compilation of all the available readings. That the height of popularity for the bestiary and distinctiones roughly overlaps in time merits further investigation into the rise of pedagogical and preaching literature, and where to position the bestiary genre within this trend.

Additionally, many bestiaries and bestiary chapters were bound together with distinctiones. We can look to other pastoralia such as distinctiones that were bound together with the bestiary for more information. Bestiaries are most commonly bound together with works

\(^{7}\) Joseph Goering, “II.8: Distinctiones theologice,” in William de Montibus (c. 1140-1213): The Schools and the Literature of Pastoral Care (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992), 261.

\(^{8}\) R. E. Kaske, Medieval Christian Literary Imagery (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 33.

\(^{9}\) Ibid.
on virtues and vices, penance, and heresy (30%); the next most frequent associations are with sermons (27%), and saints’ lives and exemplary lives (27%).\textsuperscript{80} These most common complementary texts are all types that are specifically relevant to the laity and pastoral care.

This pairing of the bestiary with works designed to encourage and guide confession is significant. The bestiary’s second most frequent association—with sermons—also attests to its continued use as a source of sermon exempla. While the encyclopedia was used primarily in an academic fashion, the bestiary had a more specific purpose to function as \textit{pastoralia}, to educate and ultimately guide confession. In contrast to separate \textit{summae} for instruction and preaching reference, the bestiary contained vivid exempla that could be readily incorporated into a sermon, and its content educated lay audiences on the need for confession. Even if the bestiary may have been initially formatted as a treatise on virtues and vices as Baxter had suggested,\textsuperscript{81} its text, illustrations, and structure were easily repurposed for educating and encouraging confession in the population at large—which we see in the spread of bestiary imagery in vernacular media. The bestiary’s extensive focus on sinful behavior, linked allegorically to memorable and vivid animal imagery, effectively worked as a model for introspection. Animals and their behavior encouraged confession, as they modeled virtues and vices and flexible meaning all within the same animal. Familiar domestic animals, such as cats, dogs, and sheep, were excellent reminders of their lessons, as their very appearance and connection to the bestiary’s vivid imagery echoed back to remembered sermons.

\textsuperscript{80} Baxter’s information is sourced from medieval book lists, in which he finds 42 volumes that include bestiaries. 12 include no other named material, so Baxter is counting from the 30 volumes with other listed content in addition to the bestiary. By Baxter’s count: Virtues and vices, penance, heresy (9/30, 30%); Sermons (8/30, 27%); Lives of saints, exemplary lives (8/30, 27%); Miracles, marvels and visions (4/40, 13%); Biblical narratives (3/30, 10%); Lapidaries (3/30, 10%); and Medical texts (3/30, 10%). Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 189.

\textsuperscript{81} Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 194.
If we presume that the bestiary began its life as a treatise on virtues and vices, which its predecessor the *Physiologus* more closely resembles, it seems that it had developed laterally: it was still associated with virtues and vices, but had developed into its own special niche through the effectiveness of its animals in illustrating moral concepts to a lay audience. The bestiary spoke directly to the laity through the strength of its animal symbolism, something I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Two. The vivid descriptions of behavior and symbolism created a lasting impression on the minds of the illiterate—a much better use for the bestiary than providing an academic or naturalistic explanation of the world.

The textual style of *pastoralia* is “simple and straightforward,” as the texts were “designed for priests (and eventually the laity) who have had little formal education and for those who have learned their Latin primarily by speaking it in the schools.”  


The moralizations are not particularly profound or subtle, and the animals’ naturalistic details are not scientifically accurate even for the Middle Ages; and neither offers any new or original insights. Source texts such as Pliny and Isidore are not regarded with the same level of disappointment, so James’s complaint is not so much about the text of the bestiary as it is about its apparent lack of creativity due to its verbatim
copying of the source texts. What James missed, however, were the new uses and lay audiences that had given the bestiary a reinvigorated purpose.

1.4.1 Religious Orders
Of the bestiary manuscripts with known provenance, many have been traced to Benedictine monasteries. Despite this, the bestiary’s primary function as instructional text was extremely versatile and applicable for a wide variety of audiences. The bestiary was equally relevant to monastic matters and to pastoral duties because it addressed neither directly; it instead spoke to a more general connection between the natural world and Christian morality.

Identifying possible non-monastic copies of the bestiary is especially difficult for the first century of the genre’s history. In determining localization, Baxter notes the thirteenth century introduced the acceptance of painters into guilds and thus created fixed workshops, whereas previous illustrations were the work of traveling lay artists. Determining locality from illustration style pre-thirteenth century is thus difficult and unreliable unless the work is attributed to a specific, known artist. Slightly more than half of the bestiaries with known provenance—twelve manuscripts in all—are attributed to a Benedictine monastery or Benedictine Cathedral Priory. While the bestiaries housed in Benedictine libraries span through the twelfth century to the mid- and late-thirteenth century, nearly all the non-monastic copies are dated in the thirteenth century; the only exception is the late twelfth-century New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS 81. Considering the evidence from Baxter’s list, though it certainly is not comprehensive, there is a possible explanation for this pattern. The Benedictines were the oldest of the monastic orders

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84 Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 150-51.
85 Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 145.
in England, and also possessed one of the oldest recognized bestiaries, Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 22 (c.1150-75); the Corpus Christi is the oldest manuscript on Baxter’s list.

An overwhelming majority of the bestiaries produced in England are from the thirteenth century, with the greatest number produced in the first third, and with strong production continuing throughout the second and final third of the century. In the first third of the fourteenth century, there is a significant drop in the record of production, and no bestiaries survive from the final third of the fourteenth century. The distribution of Benedictine-owned bestiary manuscripts over time is notably concentrated in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, with fewer produced in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Of the twenty bestiary manuscripts dated to 1250 or later, four or 20% are known to have originated from the Benedictine order. This is in comparison to the 15% traced to mendicant orders, comprised of one bestiary from the Dominican order and two from the Franciscan order. One of the twenty later bestiaries was likely owned by a member of the court, and the remaining twelve are of unknown origin. Broadening the set to include the 1240-1260 date range brings the numbers only slightly higher to about 23%, with six out of the twenty-six bestiaries traced to the Benedictines.

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87 Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 167.
88 Ibid.
89 Benedictine bestiaries from 1250 or later: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 53 (1304-21); Cambridge, Trinity College Library, R.14.9 (1275-1300); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 91 (S.C. 1891) (1340-60); Oxford, St. John’s College Library, MS 178 (1275-1300). There is only one bestiary from 1250 or later that is Augustinian in origin: Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College Library, MS 109/178. Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 147, 150-51.
92 Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 147, 150-51.
While the Benedictine-produced bestiaries in the later thirteenth century still outnumber those that survive from the mendicant orders, this means that two-thirds or about 66% of bestiaries known to be of Benedictine origin were produced before 1250. This decrease in bestiary production by the Benedictines could signal the shift in the bestiary genre’s use over time, from monastic to lay audiences; it is also worthwhile to consider that the emergence of mendicant-commissioned bestiaries coincided with the decline in Benedictine bestiaries. The dates of the Dominican and Franciscan bestiaries also align with the spread of lay preaching and the spread of *pastoralia* in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Some attention has been directed towards the Benedictine participation in popular preaching, and thus, there also exists the possibility that monastic bestiaries were employed as a part of this effort in late medieval England. However, it is necessary to look at the use of the bestiary by the mendicant orders for the most promising link to a lay audience; and Dominican-owned British Library, Harley MS 3244 offers insight into how a wealthier friary may have used a bestiary. I will explore the mendicant use of the bestiary in greater depth in Chapter Three, but the bestiary was particularly well-suited for use as *pastoralia* by anyone engaged in preaching to lay audiences. Before returning to the role of the mendicant orders and the method by which the laity acquired literacy of the bestiary’s animal exempla, I will first discuss in the following chapter the ways in which the bestiary’s animal imagery and visual tradition functioned as a “vernacular” language.

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CHAPTER 2: USE OF THE BESTIARY AS A VISUAL “VERNACULAR”

2.1 INTRODUCTION

By the fourteenth century, the association of animals with moralizations reached a point of widespread recognition and understood meaning that may be considered to reflect its status as a kind of vernacular language. In this chapter, I argue that the bestiary was the source of the moralized animal imagery that lay populations encountered. The bestiary genre is often characterized by its illustrations of animals, and for good reason; the extant bestiary manuscripts are extensively illustrated, or at least contain empty spaces throughout the text intended for illustrations to be added at a later time. It seems apparent that the bestiary came to be known by the laity, despite the audience being unable to read the Latin prose of the text.

Some of the changes to the bestiaries are more clearly directed towards consumption by a lay audience; this consideration of a lay audience set the bestiary apart from works that may have been textually similar. In a library that must have included the bestiary’s source texts as well as the encyclopedias which some have considered as having rendered the bestiary obsolete,94 the bestiary would indeed have been inadequate if its purpose was to accumulate naturalistic information in the Aristotelian tradition. Instead, bestiaries had developed a distinctly different use for preaching, and could include the lay audiences that the other contemporary genres excluded.

I will first discuss the extent to which the bestiary genre’s animal imagery may constitute a vernacular language. After my definition of the vernacular, I will then discuss the viability of the animal image as a vernacular language. I will then discuss visual media by means of which

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94 Willene B. Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 116. Clark suggests that the bestiary “was probably overwhelmed by the far more ambitious, inclusive, more broadly useful, and more readily available encyclopedia.” However, I believe that this is too simplistic an explanation for the bestiary’s seeming “decline,” as encyclopedias were available both before and during the bestiary’s production, in addition to the likely different uses for the bestiary and encyclopedia.
the laity was exposed to the bestiary and its imagery, and the reasons behind its enduring popularity with them. Finally, I will conduct a case study of the siren and the bestiary’s role in its transformation to the mermaid to trace the extent of the bestiary’s transmission and influence throughout England. Understanding the bestiary’s imagery as a legible language will give us greater insight into the survival of the bestiary beyond its manuscripts and cloistered contexts, as well as the widespread use of a “written” or recorded vernacular in medieval England during the reign of Latin.

2.1.1 **Spread of Bestiary Imagery as Vernacular**

I look to the spread of animal imagery from the bestiary tradition as a method of measuring the genre’s success, as an indication of its absorption into the contemporary culture. I will define vernacular broadly, as a system of communication that is readily understood and accessible by the majority of a population; this majority must necessarily be mostly comprised of the laity, or again broadly defined, people who were not members of the clergy. This includes members of the court; although there are differences between the courtly laity, who were often literate to some degree, and the non-courtly, general populace, who were often illiterate or literate in Latin to a minimal degree, these differences are not significant here. A vernacular as a language must be understood by a majority of the population, regardless of standing. An “animal vernacular,” then, is the system of communication and Biblical meaning conveyed through the imagery of the bestiary’s animals.

This specifically animal-image-based vernacular could be read by monastic, academic, and illiterate lay audiences, and it also was commonly used in the form of exempla to better

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95 See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 224-26. Those of the laicus may have been at least passably literate in Latin by the end of the thirteenth century.
convey the sermon’s *thema* of the day to a lay congregation. It is the spread and accessibility of
the bestiary’s animal imagery amongst this large and varied audience that enabled it to become a
vernacular language. Their moralizations would be implicitly read in the invocation of the
animals and their imagery; and eventually, the interplay between visual image and vivid textual
imagery would lead to the absorption of the bestiary’s animals and meanings in later vernacular
literature. Before I discuss how lay audiences acquired this literacy of the bestiary’s animal
exempla through preaching, which is the subject of the next chapter, I must first provide
evidence that the bestiary actually did function as a visual vernacular.

2.1.2 Using Animal Imagery as Communication
The use of animal imagery as a visual language was effective and economical: abstract
and oftentimes complicated information could be communicated with a consistent set of
characteristics. In his *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante argued for a “noble vulgar” that would
elevate the vernacular (non-Latin) language through structure, consistency, and rules—qualities
that gave Latin a sense of well-worn dependability over the disorganized and transitory
vernacular.96 The structure and rules of Latin were “given by God,” and help the student come
closer to fulfilling God’s will.97 As Katharine Breen notes, “the implications of Dante’s effort to
enoble the vernacular extend beyond language acquisition to the inculcation of a generalized
moral *habitus*, or a systematic and fully internalized Christian ethics.”98 Dante further suggested
that a “nobler” and more prestigious level of communication could exist in the vernacular when
the language achieves a moral, spiritual end through its use. The first step towards this elevation

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96 Katharine Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public, 1150-1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2010), 2. Here, Breen discusses the use of a visual language as vernacular or *habitus*, a learned “mother” tongue.
97 Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public*, 98.
98 Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public*, 3.
of an animal-based vernacular lay in the application of structure and set rules, which was achieved through the consistent allegorical meaning of the animal imagery; the repetition and popular use of the bestiary’s animal characteristics and behavior created a stable cue paired to its allegorical, spiritual meaning.

Interpretation played an important role in the animal image. Only when associated with Christian symbolism and exempla did the image of an animal move beyond simple descriptive representation. The bestiary’s collected moralizations of the animal characteristics and behavior represented various and contradictory meanings together, such that one meaning could be selected over another depending on context; the importance of specific context and meaning were encountered and reinforced by the preacher’s sermon, such as when a preacher decided to selectively describe the serpent as Christ or the Devil, depending on the sermon’s *thema*. This complexity made it necessary for the audience to understand the animal’s inherent fluidity and to seamlessly transition between the available meanings by relying on the consistency of the behavior and moralization, rather than just the type of animal. To the bestiary’s medieval audience, meaning relied so heavily on the animal’s moral context in preaching, that its visual representation in some manuscript illustrations and misericords would eventually change to reflect the moralization that was most frequently invoked.

The bestiary’s status as animal vernacular additionally leads us to question the distinction between the “high” and “low” culture of vernacular. While lay audiences might not be able to read or even access the volumes sitting in library shelves, they were able to read the animal imagery they saw or heard in church. Even in the different representations of the same information—whether through reading the text, listening to a sermon, or observing the illustrations—the bestiary and its imagery unified these different classes of audiences through a
common, consistent system of symbolism and iconography that represented spiritual morality. The elite courtly classes’ enjoyment of the illustrated bestiary also helped legitimize the bestiary’s vernacular, bringing its influence to a social spectrum larger than that of the illiterate, lower classes—it occupied “high” and “low” cultures simultaneously. The illiterate laity’s ability to read complex meaning from this image-based animal vernacular gives a glimpse of a democratizing literacy that long predates the increased access brought about by the printing press. The bestiary genre’s success is best characterized in its penetration through the classes, beyond traditional literacy.

In addition to accessibility to all audiences, especially the illiterate laity, the animal imagery used in the bestiary had a system or grammatica in its internal consistency and logic. It was this ability to combine the accessibility of images and the structure of grammatica that made the bestiary’s use of animal imagery an especially effective language, predating Dante’s efforts to create his “noble vulgar.” Even as bestiaries increased in length and breadth of material over the genre’s lifetime, the imagery of the animals’ behavior and physical traits remained fairly consistent with their corresponding meanings.

One medium in which animal symbolism was incorporated is the wall painting. The thirteenth century saw a shift in the style of wall paintings, from learned, meditative, and esoteric to something more accessible that reflected “in an intimate way the nature and lives of the folk for whom they were, in the first place, conceived and executed.” As with the texts being produced, the art and wall paintings in churches reflected the changing attitudes, with greater emphasis on the care of souls and the general population. This can be seen in the late thirteenth-

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century increase of popular saints as wall-painting subjects, and their rendering in simple lines and straightforward representation.  

Preachers more often incorporated vivid imagery to bolster their sermons, using “that type of verbal illustration which describes everyday things as seen by the shrewd observer, and may be called ‘realistic.’” This method of using common sights and sounds frequently encountered by the sermon’s audience, with mentions of easily recognizable social types and ordinary events such as harvests, was to better ensure the audience remembered its lesson. The vivid animal imagery proved to be so popular amongst congregations, that it became the target of vocal backlash against what was seen as pandering to the lowest denominator. The criticism was that preachers relied too heavily on the imagery in sermons and visual media, serving to titillate and entertain rather than teach. One such critic was Bernard of Clairvaux, who believed that such imagery had the tendency to distract rather than to aid in meditation and reflection.

Thus the vernacular sermon’s vivid imagery or “word-pictures,” as G. R. Owst calls them, had the ability to captivate audiences to an even objectionable extent. Occupations and sights around town were commonly used in sermon similes, and reference to animals played a significant part in giving these domestic portraits a color of authenticity. John Bromyard himself had a penchant for painting such scenes, calling upon the domestic images of the household dog begging for table scraps and lazing in the outdoor sun, the innocent and generous nature of children displayed in their relationships with cats and dogs, and the perpetual annoyance of chickens trailing a mess into a freshly cleaned home. Sermons depicting the English

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100 Tristram, “Franciscan Influence in English Mediaeval Wall-Painting,” 5.
103 Owst, Literature and Pulpit, 27.
104 Owst, Literature and Pulpit, 34.
105 Owst, Literature and Pulpit, 35.
countryside are particularly abundant with animals, which is no surprise considering the ubiquity of animals in the home and in the fields. But even beyond superficial scene-setting, the visual richness of the invoked imagery helped to instill commonly encountered animals with the moralizations.

2.1.3 **Popularity of the Bestiary’s Animal Imagery**

The aural and visual language of the bestiary had a greater reach that bypassed the need for a formal education and the attendant minimums of time and general socio-economic requirements. The richness and complexity of meaning packaged within the concision of the familiar animal image gave preachers the flexibility necessary to expand or narrow the day’s focus as the sermon required. Although the bestiary’s animals were mediated through a preacher’s rendition, the images referenced not so much the actual animal in a naturalistic way, but instead were placeholders for the many different Biblical lessons and vices and virtues that the animals symbolized.

One explanation for the bestiary’s popularity and broad dissemination throughout England is that it appealed to a large audience. And as I have argued, the bestiary served a purpose and audience that no other work fulfilled at that time, including its source texts the *Physiologus* and Isidore’s *Etymologies*. The bestiary’s integration of images alongside the text was a distinguishing aspect of the genre, but the manner in which the images and imagery were used and reinforced throughout the bestiary was its most significant innovation. It was not the animal illustrations alone that spoke to an illiterate audience, but the ordered and systematic use of animal imagery, both literary and artistic, that created an informal, vernacular language. Bestiary manuscripts record a steady expansion of the core text throughout the genre’s lifespan, and changes to the text came in the form of additions rather than any significant alterations to the
“B-Isidore” core text. Even if the original reason for the consistency was a simple and practical one—the use of common templates and copy texts between scriptoria—the result was the repetition of symbols and images to convey complex meanings.

The more mundane and common animals that make up the bulk of the bestiary’s featured creatures provided a convenient point of entry for illiterate audiences familiar with working the land, as well as increased the opportunities for practical reinforcement of the sermons’ lessons. This unprecedented accessibility to Biblical exegesis gave the animal vernacular a functionality and higher spiritual purpose that other oral methods of communication amongst the laity lacked. Although the lion may not have been a common sight in twelfth-century England, the complex flexibility of the symbols allowed the oft-encountered snake to stand in for attributes alternatively Christ-like and Demonic, depending on context and purpose. The bestiary genre was uniquely successful in its spread amongst the lay population. While lay audiences may not have been able to draw from the same level of academic training as their clerical counterparts, they were able to identify the animal imagery and understand its meaning according to its context. In particular, the bestiary’s siren shows the relationship between the evolution of the imagery and its reception by the lay audience. As a result of its popularity, the visual imagery of the siren in the bestiary and other media evolves over time to better reflect its use as an exemplum.

2.1.4 Uses of the Bestiary’s Animal Imagery
Even with the possibility of bestiaries being displayed to an audience, the development of a “word-picture” in sermons was likely the most common vector of exposure of lay audiences to mythographical and classical references to animals. The efficacy of religious images and
paintings is well documented.\textsuperscript{106} Despite the contention of critics such as Bernard of Clairvaux on whether to allow the laity the benefit of religious statues and images, the usefulness of symbolic images such as animals may have fostered a compromise that allayed concerns of idol worship in the case of depicting Christ or saints. Even without the aid of an illustration, the moral lessons of the animal depended on the detailed imagery of their corresponding behavior or physical characteristics. In his influential studies of church architecture, Druce traces the animal carvings to the illustrations and specific imagery from the bestiary.\textsuperscript{107} However, the extent of influence of these carvings is unclear without larger context. These woodcarvings would be reduced to simply superficial decoration, if not for sermons as a method of popular reinforcement.

Whereas earlier sermons referenced source texts similar to those of the bestiaries themselves, such as other exempla collections and encyclopedias, the popularity of bestiaries and their distribution throughout England’s monasteries and libraries made them the clear choice for \textit{pastoralia} reference text, alongside \textit{summae} and collections of \textit{distinctiones}. Not only did the bestiary compile the known animals from sources such as Isidore, Aristotle, and Pliny, but most importantly, it compiled the known (and disparate) moralizations and Biblical meanings of the animals as well. Where the meanings of an animal may have been puzzling in their proximity to their contradictory counterparts, the bestiary’s kitchen-sink system of inclusion makes sense when viewed through its primary function as a reference text for homiletic exempla. Its organizational system, modeled after its encyclopedia sources, made easy work of finding a


\textsuperscript{107} In his examination of the caladrius, Druce draws a connection between the bestiary’s description and illustrations in the bestiary to church sculpture: “Some of the illustrations show this, as in MS. Douce 132 (Bodl.) and MS. Sloane 3544 (B.M.), where the bird's beak almost touches the man’s face, thus affording a close correspondence with the sculpture at Alne,” George C. Druce, “The Caladrius and Its Legend, Sculptured upon the Twelfth-century Doorway of Alne Church, Yorkshire,” \textit{Architectural Journal} 69 (1912): 386.
specific animal to fit into the day’s sermon *thema*, and listing the animals’ characteristics at the beginning of the entry is also in line with similar sermon reference texts.\(^{108}\) Taken in context with the medieval exemplum tradition established by Gregory the Great’s classicizing and the tradition of moralized exempla of Jacques de Vitry, and growing in influence from the pastoral care movement onwards, the form and use of the bestiary is a logical bridge between the two trends. Major homiletic collections of the thirteenth century were organized systematically and alphabetically. Organization and comprehensiveness were important considerations of the audience for exempla authors and compilers, such as Stephen of Bourbon, whose *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* detailed nearly 3,000 exempla.

The authority of the bestiary as a source of exempla is established through its use of classical animal tradition together with familiar Biblical animal symbolism, and the thorough collection of moralizations for each animal characteristic lend themselves well to use as homiletic exempla. The moralizations that follow the animal’s characteristics strongly resemble the sequential structure in Paul the Deacon’s compilation and Hrabanus Maurus’s homiliary. There have been several proposed explanations for the purpose behind the bestiary’s organization of animals. Clark suggests that the bestiary’s ordering of wild animals before the domestic animals “gives the new bestiary not only a structural clarity beyond that of Isidore, but also potentially a meaning for his time,”\(^{109}\) Baxter links the bestiary’s organization to the *Physiologus*’s grouping of their appearances in the Bible,\(^{110}\) and Patricia Stewart identifies the later reordering of the bestiary animals to reflect their purpose as sermon exempla.\(^{111}\) As I have

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\(^{109}\) Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, 34.


\(^{111}\) Stewart, “The Bestiary as a Source of Sermon *Exempla*,” 129-43.
indicated in the previous chapter and will explore in the next, Stewart’s theory provides the most plausible account, since the bestiaries’ use as *pastoralia* would explain their adherence to the encyclopedia model, which was already familiar to preachers. Additionally, the organization by animal, rather than by Scriptural reference or general moralization as in other types of exempla collections, makes the bestiary most efficient for a reader searching with a specific image in mind. This further suggests that the bestiary was consulted for the strength of its imagery.

2.1.5 **THE BESTIARY’S ANIMAL ILLUSTRATIONS**

The stylistic difference between the illustrations that characterize the bestiary and those of the *Physiologus* offers further insight into the factors that contributed to the bestiary’s widespread use, including evidence of its use by lay populations. While several of the *Physiologus* manuscripts do contain animal illustrations, they are uncolored and stylistically distinct from the later bestiary illustrations. For instance, unlike those of the *Physiologus*, the bestiary’s illustrations can be understood independently from the text. Many bestiary manuscripts have clearly delineated frames that isolate the image from the text, and they often depict a simple portrait of the animal or an aspect of the animal’s nature. In comparison, the *Physiologus* manuscripts that do include illustrations frequently have brief, descriptive texts—not unlike captions—that accompany the image, describing the illustrations. This difference in how the *Physiologus* and bestiary present their illustrations also further supports their distinct uses; explanatory text would be particularly conducive to reinforcing a classroom’s Latin exercises.

The amount of attention spent on many bestiaries’ illustrations speaks to their value to the genre. Several bestiary manuscripts stand out today as particularly luxurious and elaborate in their illustrations, such as the Aberdeen-Ashmole and MS Bodley 764 manuscripts. The expense
and time required to hand-letter and color these manuscripts would have been considerable, and could not be justified by their exclusive use as a preacher’s reference material. Wealthy patrons that could focus money on the bestiary’s illustrations did so, giving some indication as to their appeal beyond monastic audiences. While much of the lay public may have been literate at least at a rudimentary level sufficient to read some of a bestiary, their ownership and personal use of a bestiary or any manuscript would be out of reach outside of the aristocracy. Skeptical of lay ownership, Baxter nonetheless finds possible evidence of courtly ownership in one manuscript, the *de luxe* Bodley 764, through its connections to the court incorporated into the illustrations.112

Clark finds more evidence of lay interaction, if not ownership, with the illustrations in which the bestiaries depict lay occupations and clothing whenever humans accompany the animals.113 When the bestiary depicts human figures in its illustrations, they are in lay occupations: some wear chainmail armor, while others seem to be farmers or shepherds. The allegorical meaning of the bestiary’s animals allowed basic teachings in morality to be paired with an instantly recognizable and distinct image, whether through the physical image or the description of it. By contrast, *ad cleros* sermons primarily addressed areas relevant to monastic life: prayer, meditation, and compliance with the rules governing life in the monastery. Hugh de Fouilloy’s *Aviarium*, excerpts of which appear in later bestiary manuscripts, is an example of a work directed specifically to a monastic audience. In his first entries, Hugh uses the allegory of the dove and the hawk to illustrate contemplative and active life in the monastery. The popular virtues and vices-type morality detailed by the bestiary and the lack of explicit references to monastic life in the text and illustrations are promising indications of the genre’s potential to

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112 Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users*, 160. This is primarily through evidence of identifiable heraldry in the illustration of the elephant.

engage a broader audience. While the degree to which the larger public had access to the bestiary’s illustrations is difficult to determine with certainty, the example of the bestiary in the Dominican-owned Harley MS 3244, to be discussed in Chapter Three, does indicate the genre’s association with other pastoralia, and supplies at least one possible instance of a bestiary’s public display. If this and other bestiary manuscripts were commonly used during preaching and indeed displayed in lay-focused friaries, the visual reinforcement of the bestiary’s vivid imagery would be quite powerful.

2.2 TRACING BESTIARY IMAGE: SIREN AS CASE STUDY

The most notable example of the impact of the bestiary’s imagery belongs to the mythical siren.\textsuperscript{114} We can trace the development of the siren not only from Antiquity to the Physiologus, and from there to the earliest bestiaries, but also throughout the genre’s life spanning its Four Families. The changes to the siren show a level of interaction and exchange between the bestiary and its audience, eventually affecting other media of visual representations, that illustrates the widespread use and popularity of the genre. Originally half woman and half bird, the siren’s accompanying illustration changes to show a woman and fish, while the Latin text in the Physiologus and bestiaries retains the siren’s description as woman and bird. Some copies of the Physiologus, such as the ninth-century Bern Physiologus, depict the half-woman, half-fish siren (see Appendix, figure 20)\textsuperscript{115}; however, most early Physiologus manuscripts included the half-bird version. The continued illustration of the siren as half bird in some of the bestiary

\textsuperscript{114} I reference the siren of the classical tradition, rather than the sirene that also appears in some manuscripts of the bestiary and its source texts, such as the Physiologus and Isidore. The sirene is a winged snake-like creature, and probably comes from the Near East. While it is possible that there may have been further conflation between the part-human siren and the reptilian, winged sirene, I argue that the continued reference to water (both in the siren’s form and its context) as well as Odysseus’s encounter with them points to a medieval tradition that stems from Homer’s siren.

\textsuperscript{115} Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Codex Bongarsianus 318, f. 13v.
manuscripts suggests that the siren’s physical form was still in a state of flux throughout the earliest bestiaries: Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 602 (f. 10r); Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 6838B (f. 25v); Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88 (ff. 138rv); and J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 3 (f. 78r) (see Appendix, figure 21). An early “Transitional” bestiary, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library MS 22, actually includes one of each version of the siren: one half bird, and the other half fish.\footnote{Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library MS 22, f.167v.} However, the fish-siren form largely outnumbered the bird-siren throughout the lifespan of the bestiary genre. By the time of twelfth-century British Library, Additional MS 11283 (see Appendix, figure 22), one of the earliest Second Family bestiaries, the bird’s half of the siren had been replaced by a fish’s tail.\footnote{Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 52.} That this switch occurred is not surprising. Although the physical descriptions of the siren in the bestiary and earlier texts explicitly mention their human-bird form in the same way,\footnote{Bestiary text: “Sirenae sicut dicit Physiologus mortifera sunt animalia, quae a capite usque ad umbilicum figuras hominum, extrema vero partes usque ad pedes volatilis habent.” Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 179. Also in Isidore’s section on portents: “Sirenas tres fingunt fuisset ex parte virgines, ex parte volucres, habentes alas et ugulas: quorum una voce, altera tibiis, tertia lyra canebant.” Isidore of Seville, \textit{Etymologies}, XI.iii.30-31.} the siren’s behavior and its accompanying moralization place the creature clearly in the sea.

Consequently, the imagery and symbolism of the air and sea, represented by the bird and fish, compete with each other. The winged, bird-bodied siren gave way to conflicting associations with the lesson of its embodiment of vice and singing with similarly winged angels, or the visually very similar harpies. In the wake of this dissonance, the siren’s association with the more distinctively symbolic sea became dominant. Thus, we see the development of the siren into the later representations as the half woman, half fish creature we know more familiarly today as the mermaid.
In the context of a preacher’s sermon or commentaries on ancient texts, the siren’s value as exemplum would have taken precedence over a physical description unmoored to a corresponding moralization or exegetical significance. Alternatively, the bird-siren was perhaps too closely aligned with the visual significance of winged angels or similarly winged harpies. Though the siren traditionally possessed a bird-like bottom half, it lured seafaring men to their deaths. The efficacy of the lesson relied on the force and vividness of this visual tableau, with sailors battling stormy waters while resisting the siren’s song of temptation—a well-known scene from the *Odyssey*, following the Homeric tradition. Ecclesiastical interest in the bestiary was a logical extension of the “peculiar fondness… shown for the fantastic monsters of classical legend, as we might well expect from lovers of the medieval bestiary.” 119 The appearance of birds amongst the sea was in itself not problematic, as the bestiary contains a number of sea-dwelling birds such as the similarly mythical *halcyon* and the common swan. Birds circling the coastline would also have been a common sight and sound to most Englishmen reasonably near a body of water.

The siren’s connection to water and subsequently, its seafaring victims was its most powerful and distinctive attribute. The sea was a particularly strong conceit in sermons. In one macaronic sermon, it is likened to the state of the world “because just as the sea it is always moving, unstable, full of tempests and storms of labor and tribulation, of misery and sorrow.” 120 Though medieval audiences would not have read Homer’s *Odyssey* as a whole work, Odysseus’s encounter with the sirens was one of “perhaps a dozen classical tales that recur with frequency”

in sermons and literature even as late as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{121} Sermons and mythographies where the inclusion of sirens was based on Odysseus’s encounter with them further reinforced the connection between the siren and water. The British Library, Harley MS 4751 bestiary contains the most explicitly Classical depiction of the siren, showing a siren looming above two men in a ship; one man has his fingers stopping his ears, in a clear reference to Odysseus’s encounter with the sirens (see Appendix, figure 23).\textsuperscript{122}

Early depictions of the Odysseus scene often contained three bird-bodied sirens,\textsuperscript{123} and medieval interpretations of the trio were likely influenced by Fulgentius’s explanation of their three attributes: their song, their appearance (sight), and their ability to tempt men (habit).\textsuperscript{124} In his time, Fulgentius was allegorizing a siren figure that was based on the classical story of Odysseus’s encounter with several of them, though he references the siren’s traditional bird form; he explains the meaning behind their wings and hen-like feet.\textsuperscript{125} Fulgentius’s association of threes with the siren may have contributed to the later division of the siren into three distinct figures, each of which corresponds to one characteristic, though the most popular depiction of the siren was one that was simplified in meaning to reflect its most frequent use in sermons as an allegory for temptation.

\textsuperscript{123} While the bird-bodied siren was by far the most common depiction, there is a small number (4 out of 63) that depict the fish-bodied siren. However, these exceptions can be explained by contamination with other motifs: Scylla, a bacchanalian group, or a group of Muses. Jacqueline Leclercq-Marx, \textit{La Sirène dans la pensée et dans l’art de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge: Du mythe païen au symbole chrétien} (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1997), 1-6, 10-12.
\textsuperscript{125} Fulgentius, \textit{Mythologies} 2.8.
In several sermons during and after the bestiary’s height of production, the inclusion of the siren focuses primarily on the creature’s embodiment of temptation, in connection to its marine environment. The siren’s association with the sea becomes stronger than textual reinforcements of its physical description. This is one extreme result of the bestiary’s illustrations functioning and developing independently from the text. The fact that the siren’s visual depiction eventually changed to more accurately convey the moralization—despite explicit textual descriptions to contradict this change—is an indication that it reflected the most widespread and recognizable interpretation of the siren. In contrast to the illustration, the text remains relatively stable within the bestiary tradition. As a result, we find bestiary manuscripts in which their illustrations of the half-woman, half-fish siren are inconsistent with the text’s description. By the time of the Second Family bestiary manuscripts, the siren is exclusively depicted as half fish in the illustrations.

2.2.1 Later Appearances and Meanings of the Siren

Later representations of the siren follow the transformation seen in the bestiary in mappae mundi, church architecture, and even marginalia. The fourteenth- to fifteenth-century Durham Cathedral MS Cosin V.IV.3 (f.11v) contains penciled drawings of long-haired, large breasted sirens with curling tails and “a comb to identify them as sexual temptresses.” In addition to the comb that symbolized sexual promiscuity and prostitution, one also holds a fish, “a sign of a soul ensnared by the devil.” The fish’s symbolism as a soul is particularly apt in this context: it

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refers back to the visual tableau of the ship amid rough waters, where one of the sailors had fallen victim to the siren’s temptation. Despite being divorced from their original aquatic environment and, consequently, any visually explicit or contextual connection to fish, the sirens still retained their association with temptation and the half-woman, half-fish form. In this instance, the scribe of MS Cosin V.IV.3 further specified the type of temptation as sexual through the addition of the comb.

The text that surrounds the doodled siren is also significant to consider. MS Cosin V.IV.3 contains Sunday sermons for Advent, Lent, and Easter. While the siren may just have been a product of a copyist’s wandering attentions, its location within the Sunday sermons—one of which centers on the devil’s temptation of Christ\footnote{MS Cosin V.IV.3, ff. 24-67. The manuscript’s website also mentions that Gloucester Cathedral MS 22, Lincoln Cathedral MS 50-51, and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodl.e.mus. 180 also contain more of the same sermon cycle by the same hand.}—as well as the connection between sirens and temptation suggest at the least the copyist’s association of sirens and temptation, if not more abstractly sirens and sermons. The duplicitous nature of women was often addressed by sermons, and the story of the siren luring men to their physical and spiritual demise is a familiar analogue; with full breasts and hips to signal associations with both fecundity and sensuality, the siren’s literal, physical duality at once encapsulates the feminine and the visual and narrative tableau. The loaves and fishes Gospel story, commonly found in Lenten sermons,\footnote{Owst, \textit{Literature and Pulpit}, 58.} shares at least a visual connection with the popular depiction of the siren with fish in hand. And compared to the bestiary’s somewhat androgynous and questionable anatomical accuracy in its illustrations of the siren, the later medieval portrayals emphasize its femininity further through the objects depicted within its grasp as the embodiment of sexual temptation and the dangers of carnal pleasure.
Beth Allison Barr, in addition to Bond and Druce, also cites an appearance of the siren, similar in form to the MS Cosin drawing and by now a “mermaid,” frequently appearing in misericord church woodcarvings in places that include Ludlow St. Lawrence, Norwich, Ely, Great Malvern, Ripon, Westminster Abbey, Gloucester, Stratford-on-Avon, and Beverly Minster.  

Ludlow’s siren carries a mirror rather than a comb and fish, but the two large fish that flank it are hooked through the mouth by the curved outgrowths of the column behind it (see Appendix, figure 24). While other figures on the Ludlow misericords share this column and creature motif, the creatures on either side seem to grow as fruit from the column’s branch-like outgrowth, rather than be ensnared by it (see Appendix, figure 25). The other carvings’ creatures appear more as companions than the siren’s, the victimization of which helps complete the moralization of the visual narrative.

A number of later church misericords depict the bird-bodied siren, but of those that survive, the fish-type siren far outnumbers them by about three to one. After the reinforcement of the connection between the siren and the sea, it appears that the siren’s traditional characteristics of musicality and temptation were split into two distinct representations along these lines. The bird-siren is nearly always holding a musical instrument, such as a harp or lyre, to symbolize its musical ability, while the fish-siren may hold a comb, mirror, fish, or nothing at all, to symbolize temptation, promiscuity, or vanity.

Combinations of the bird and fish with the human may suggest some attempt at reconciling the competing depictions, or a specific reference to the existing bestiary or

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131 Barr, The Pastoral Care of Women, 73.
132 Alongside the siren (or mermaid), other mythical bestiary creatures such as the harpy also appear in Ludlow’s misericord.
133 Paul Hardwick finds more than 40 sirens on misericords, with the mermaid/half fish representing around three-quarters of them. Paul Hardwick, English Medieval Misericords: The Margins of Meaning (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 92.
Physiologus images that portrayed the three-creature siren, in combination with Fulgentius’s early association of the siren with three aspects. A second tradition comes from Plato, who mentions three types of sirens, though Plato primarily associates them with singing and musicality. Due to the conflation of the siren’s temptation of sailors and its physical form (as well as the scarcity of Plato’s works during this time), the medieval tradition as seen in the manuscripts and misericords follows Homer’s siren rather than Plato’s.

Especially when they occupied the same spaces, it seems that the transformation of the siren to an aquatic from an avian creature helped distinguish it from the physically similar harpy, depicted as having the hindquarters of a bird and being similarly treacherous to men. Unlike the siren, however, the harpy remained consistent in form from the times of Antiquity, and was depicted as more feral. While sirens have the pretense of mimicking humanity by appealing to the higher culture of music—before dropping the façade and viciously tearing their victims apart—harpies are thoroughly animal, only borrowing the appearance of humans. It is this deception through the affect of civilization and beauty that makes the siren such a dangerous temptation.

The tension between half-bird and half-fish depictions of the siren can also be seen in British Library, Royal MS 2 B. vii, where there are two sirens, one with the bottom half of a bird and the other with that of a fish (see Appendix, figure 26). Some bestiary manuscripts combine the possibilities to form a triad of animal parts, with human features from the head to

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134 British Library, Royal MS 2 B. vii, f. 96v.
the torso, the legs of a falcon, and the tail of a fish. A misericord of the early fifteenth-century’s Carlisle Cathedral also contains a human, bird, and fish siren.

Ultimately, the half human, half fish representation of the siren triumphed over its half-bird sister; the siren’s transformation to the mermaid was so complete, so thorough in the visual vernacular that to portray it as it was originally described would convey a different meaning altogether, either of a relatively benign musicality or the mistaken identity of the harpy. The popular established image was that of the half-fish siren, carrying a message that warned of carnal and spiritual temptation. Just as to rearrange the letters of a word would create something wholly different and with a unique meaning, so was the necessity of the specific combination and assemblage of the siren’s two halves if the image was to accurately convey its warning of temptation and sin. That the siren’s physical characteristics were altered despite its textual descriptions to the contrary speaks to the strength of its association with a preaching context and moralization. The medieval association of the siren was with temptation, as its classical tradition linked it with Odysseus’s plight on the sea, and sermons used the sea to illustrate a world full of hidden dangers and sin; the combination of these contexts informed the siren’s visual image as human and fish.

There have been several significant treatments of the siren in recent scholarship, including Debra Hassig’s Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology and Jacqueline Leclercq-Marx’s La Sirène dans la pensée et dans l’art de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge, which also explore the intriguing incongruity between the bird-siren of the text, and the fish-siren of the

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135 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. Kgl. S. 8’ (f. 37r); Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB, KA 16 (f. 109v); Oxford, Merton College Library, MS 249 (f. 6r); New York, Morgan Library, MS M. 81 (f. 17r); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88 (f. 21v).
image in terms of the siren as temptress, and woman as the source of sin.\textsuperscript{139} Even in his study of the siren in England’s church misericords, Bond has cited the “confusion” between the siren and the mermaid, with the half-fish trait associated with the mermaid.\textsuperscript{140} However, the development and transmission history of the siren reveal less a confusion than a period of transition between the two portrayals, where the traditional, textual representation of the siren was at odds with the half-fish depiction that had become more familiar, and additionally was conflated with the existing figure of the sea-woman (though distinct from the fish-bodied siren or mermaid), which already had roots in medieval English culture. Rather than there being a conflation of two existing forms, that of the mermaid and the siren, the seeming indecision in portraying the siren’s physical features was a result of the conflation of the image and context: its larger lay audience almost exclusively encountered it within a sermon, divorced from the larger bestiary text. Even without the audience reading the bestiary text, the widespread use of its content as exempla marked the height of the bestiary genre.

2.3 CONCLUSION
The moralization and use of the bestiary’s frequently cited animals, particularly the mythical creatures, became familiar enough to its medieval audience that the images represented an English vernacular; after sufficient exposure to the preacher’s sermon, the audience read the animal’s meaning and moralization by reference to the image alone. Despite being located amongst the other birds in the bestiary, the siren’s loss of any kinship with birds attests to its frequent use independently from the other bestiary animals. And as the imagery of the siren


\textsuperscript{140} Bond, \textit{Wood Carvings in English Churches}, 10.
developed, its meaning became more strongly associated with its exegetical significance as it would have been used in sermons, as a warning against carnal temptation. As popular—vernacular—associations of the siren became centered around the sea and wary seafarers, the bird-like bottom half became rarer, and branched off into the more specific association with music.

Even after the bestiary genre had faded from production, the ideas it conveyed continued to live on due in large part to their appeal to the laity and the strength of their imagery. The bestiary’s established vernacular language created a common visual vocabulary of symbolism and morality that later literature and artwork frequently referenced, which similarly targeted a broad lay audience. The association of the animal moralizations had eventually become so enmeshed in its imagery that the presence of the bestiary text itself may not have been as essential to users, especially as preaching manuals and narrative literature gained prominence.

The bestiary’s visual language was significant to the broader lay population, and the vernacular literature that did eventually appear used the existing visual language in which the laity was already fluent. The bestiary records the transition created by the strength of its animal imagery, whether orally or visually expressed. This vernacular was a rich language in its own right, and its lasting impact can be seen in its continued survival in later literature. As I will explore in the next chapter, the bestiary was able to reach this level of dissemination through preaching; preaching to lay audiences established and reinforced the popular literacy of the bestiary’s animal exempla.
CHAPTER 3: CROSSOVER OF THE BESTIARY TO A LAY AUDIENCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As the need for preaching manuals as well as material for sermons increased in response to the Fourth Lateran Council’s call for the pastoral care of souls, the bestiary was uniquely well-suited for popular appeal. The earliest and simplest bestiaries, those comprised of content from the *Physiologus* and Isidore’s *Etymologies*, predated the Council of 1215 and remained primarily in cloistered monasteries. But by the mid-thirteenth century, the increased efforts to educate the laity resulted in the mendicant orders producing illustrated bestiaries, as well as unillustrated bestiary excerpt collections that were used as preaching aids. In this second chapter, I explore preaching as a medium by which lay populations were exposed to the bestiary’s animal imagery and moralizations. Preachers came to rely on bestiaries to provide engaging exempla for their sermons, to better reach broader populations. Despite the bestiary’s original cloistered use and composition in Latin, the genre had evolved to suit a larger variety of purposes and audiences.

While there is evidence that animal imagery from bestiaries continued to survive in lay and vernacular genres, the questions of how and why they became separated from the Latin prose bestiaries have remained unanswered. The Latin language and largely Benedictine ownership of the English bestiaries make the path to lay use difficult to pinpoint. However, that bestiary imagery survived in later lay-oriented works suggests that the crossover did occur at some point before the “death” of the genre in the fourteenth century. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, animal imagery in public-facing works such as church decoration required an existing understanding of the animal’s moralistic context. Without the viewer’s knowledge of the animal’s moral lesson, the image would simply be a decorative representation of an animal; and in the case of the more fantastic creatures such as the siren and satyr, a purely aesthetic purpose.
is unlikely considering the vocal objections—and concessions—by Bernard of Clairvaux regarding their frequent use in church decoration.\footnote{Durant Waite Robertson, “Late Medieval Style,” in \textit{A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspective} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 176-77.}

Context to the visual images in church decoration must have been acquired primarily through sermons. Preaching was the primary method of communication between the religious orders and lay populations, especially after the mendicant orders arrived in England in the thirteenth century. While there are few surviving thirteenth-century sermons that were known to have been performed before lay audiences, there are indications that the bestiary was used as a reference work for lay outreach. In this chapter, I will look at two excerpt collections that contain bestiary chapters bound together with other works of \textit{pastoralia} used for preaching to lay audiences. The excerpt collections provide evidence as to the value and use of the bestiary in preaching to lay audiences. I will then look at bestiary imagery in surviving sermons from the fourteenth century that were preached to lay audiences and mixed audiences of laity and clergy; the reliance on the bestiary in later sermons provides some insight into a continuing tradition of bestiary animals in preaching.

Finally, I will examine a particularly fascinating manuscript, British Library, Harley MS 3244, as a case study.\footnote{London, British Library, Harley MS 3244. Digitized manuscript is available through the British Library website (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=harley_ms_3244).} While it may not have been typical as it was likely owned by a wealthier Dominican friary, the illustrated bestiary manuscript of Harley 3244 provides unique insight into the visual and textual components of the bestiary working together in a preaching context. The Harley 3244 bestiary has garnered some attention due to the quality of its illustrations and the nature of the other works in the volume. Although the greatest number of surviving bestiaries are Benedictine, the largest and oldest established order in England, it seems an unlikely coincidence.
that bestiaries produced by the mendicant orders appear in the second half of the thirteenth century, when the overall production of bestiaries begins a gradual decline; in the first third of the fourteenth century production decreased significantly, to only two bestiaries.\textsuperscript{143} There must have been some use of the bestiary that prompted production by the mendicant orders during this period, while the demand from the other orders waned. Evidence of the bestiary’s use by non-monastic groups is scarce—even for wealthy, aristocratic readers\textsuperscript{144}—but Harley 3244 is an example that links a bestiary to its use in preaching to the laity, and even the public display of its illustrations is a distinct possibility. The bestiary in Harley 3244 sheds some light onto how the bestiary functioned as a bridge between the Church and the laity, and the literate and illiterate.

3.2 \textbf{THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL AND PASTORALIA}

The bestiary’s use as \textit{pastoralia} alongside other exempla collections was critical to its survival beyond the thirteenth century. The bestiary’s comprehensive compilation of animals and their Christian moralizations possessed an inherent flexibility in use, which ranged from personal contemplation by monks, to its use by preachers in order to more specifically encourage confession through its examples of virtues and vices. While the earliest bestiaries of the eleventh and twelfth centuries may have been produced as compilations of available sources on animal allegory for academic or private use, similar to its source text the \textit{Physiologus}, the bestiary was well positioned to become an effective tool for preaching.

From the Fourth Lateran Council’s reforms came the pastoral care movement. The pastoral care movement was the application of the Council’s reforms, and focused primarily on

\textsuperscript{144} Ron Baxter discusses this in \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, and is largely unconvinced of widespread bestiary ownership by the aristocracy. Baxter argues that MS Bodley 764 contains the most promising clues for a non-monastic owner; he points to the illustration of the elephant and the inclusion of coats of arms as indicative of Roger of Monhaust as owner. Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 160; 199-201.
preaching, confession, and catechesis. As the general success of animal-based pedagogy was apparent in the continuing popularity of Aesopian fables and the *Physiologus*, the bestiary’s special appeal was in its expansiveness and explicitly Biblical moralizations, characteristics that enabled it to become an essential work of reference in pastoral care. Preachers such as Jacques of Vitry stressed the importance of tailoring sermon imagery and types of exempla according to the audience, such as using agricultural metaphors in structural and illustrative roles. The organization of the bestiary by animal facilitated sermon construction according to imagery and detail, with a range of moralizations the preacher could choose from according to the sermon’s theme.

The Fourth Lateran Council’s constitution or canon relevant to confession is the first, which established the necessity for confession and appropriate penitence. It declared that confession and penance are as integral to salvation as baptism and the acceptance of the Holy Trinity as one. The use of confession as a path to eternal salvation was only addressed briefly at the end of the Council’s first canon; in response, legislation and statutes grew in length and complexity to encompass not only the specific requirements and guidelines for priests to follow, but also a list of specific sins deemed outside the ability of the parish priest to absolve. Confession had already been standard practice for centuries, but the Council’s specific call for annual confession between a lay person and his parish priest and the subsequent incorporation of this requirement into regional legislation had a profound effect on the Church, how clergy interacted with the laity, and manuscript production.

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After Pope Innocent III had called together the Fourth Lateran Council to address growing calls for reform and concerns over political, economic, and social problems, a flood of pastoralia and sermon materials appeared; like bestiaries, however, many of these materials were not new inventions. Various works considered to be pastoralia were already in use prior to the Council, and Leonard E. Boyle notes that “There is clear evidence that most of them came into existence in the interconciliar period 1179-1215, between, that is, the Third Lateran and Fourth Lateran, and that by and large they were the result of a combination of circumstances in that span of time.” Especially in the early years after the Council, preachers repurposed the existing works of pastoralia for a new context, as “it was just then, too, at the tail end of the renaissance of the twelfth century, that the literary genres to accomplish this popularization were readily at hand in the summae, distinctiones, and manuals of the schools of law and theology that had come into being during that renaissance.” Furthermore, Archbishop John Pecham’s dislike for overly-learned delivery of sermons and encouragement for preachers to consider popular appeal may also have directed attention to the accessible imagery and lessons in the bestiary. Pecham’s decree in 1281, which has led some scholars to conclude that there were only four “statutory” sermons a year and thus they were somewhat rare occurrence for a majority of the population, may in actuality have referred to priests underutilizing the available theological information rather than neglecting to preach.

By the mid-thirteenth century, properly educating lay audiences in confession was a concern for bishops. The Bishop of Coventry, Roger Weseham, indicated in his treatise Instituta
that sermons should be delivered “in well known words and illustrated with exempla and familiar allusions.”

This emphasis on popular accessibility was also due in no small part to the rise of mendicant orders, with Franciscan and Dominican friars preaching to the laity in the vernacular throughout England. In his “Notes on the Education of the Fratres Communes in the Dominican Order in the Thirteenth Century,” Boyle describes the Dominican order’s dual emphasis as an Order of Confessors as well as an Order of Preachers. The order was founded on its mission of preaching, but following the Fourth Lateran Council, included the hearing of confessions to further serve the general public. In May 1221, following the February papal commission to hear confessions, Dominican preachers from France, Italy, Spain, and the Rhineland were sent out to areas including Britain and Ireland. Four manuals of summae were written between 1221-1225, and were used by the Fratres communes that engaged with the laity.

Boyle additionally notes, however, that this did not mean that the Dominicans neglected their own education. The Dominican educational system was designed to prepare its students, lecturers and Fratres communes for interactions with the public, with material organized into a question-and-answer format in the style of the Quaestiones of the Decretists. Although “It is not unlikely… that many of the questions in this collection were stock ones which passed from province to province within the Dominican Order,” there are some questions that seem to have included a “local flavour” that specifically incorporated local geography and place names. In this same manner, a bestiary may have been commissioned by a wealthier Dominican friary due to its specific appeal to the laity, and its existing use as a preaching aid. Just as the summae and other

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155 Boyle, “Fratres Communes,” 265.
manuscripts served to prime Dominicans and Franciscans to become preachers-at-large, the bestiary’s core text and organization were well-suited to becoming a reference for composing these sermons intended to win over a public audience.

In addition to preaching in the vernacular, Franciscan and Dominican friars needed to draw upon a large variety of exempla for their sermons; accessibility and memorability were essential considering the common public presentation venues in the street, in market places, and in taverns.¹⁵⁷ The Dominicans in particular were known for their compiled volumes of exempla and preaching material.¹⁵⁸ Eventually, the widespread influence of the mendicant friars proved so effective that clergymen unsuccessfully rallied for the restriction of the friars’ rights of hearing confession and preaching, the source of increasing tensions with local parish priests.¹⁵⁹ Records of “land grants and formidable financial and material bequests [to friars] attest to their popularity among the English and Franco-Flemish nobility and upper-bourgeoisie” and the effectiveness of the friars’ lay outreach throughout the thirteenth century.¹⁶⁰ Preaching to a secular audience increasingly was a popular event, just as preaching ad religiosos, or within monasteries, became increasingly rare. The draw of such public preaching was so great, that some local celebrity evangelists attracted flocks of crowds, even accumulating fervent devotees: according to some anecdotal accounts, small followings of noblewomen would disguise themselves in the dress of poor women, in order to more freely follow the preachers on their preaching tours.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Cate Gunn, Ancrene Wisse: From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality, 108; Michèle Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study”: Dominican Education before 1350 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 458.
¹⁵⁹ Randall, “Exempla as a Source,” 98.
¹⁶¹ G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c. 1350-1450 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 56. An account of this anecdote was recorded by Etienne de Bourbon; this popularity also observed in the Liber Exemplorum.
Not long after its peak in the thirteenth century, the bestiary genre would seemingly fade from previous levels of production, and did not enjoy continued popularity throughout the later Middle Ages by contrast with French and other continental bestiaries. While this sudden decline may seem puzzling, the bestiary’s trajectory parallels the ebb and flow in popularity of other forms of “first wave” pastoralia throughout England. With preachers charged with the care of all souls, as well as the burgeoning influence of the Dominican and Franciscan friars in England, manuals and material that provided instruction on how to effectively care for said souls saw a rise in production. The initial increase in these materials was short-lived, however; Boyle cites two “waves” of pastoral interest. In the first wave, Boyle explains that “Within fifty years of the [Fourth Lateran] council there was a profusion of episcopal or synodal constitutions all over Europe and a remarkable array of manuals of confession, summae of moral teaching, expositions of the Ten Commandments, compendia of vices and virtues, collections of sermons and sermon exempla, and general manuals of the pastoral care, in Latin and in various vernaculars.”

However, “by 1260 the great wave of diocesan pastoral legislation seems almost to have spent itself, and some twenty lean years of pastoral effort were to follow until the Council of Lambeth in 1281,” from which originated the first program of pastoral instruction and the rise of detailed manuals such as the Oculus Sacerdotis. The second wave of pastoralia and the demand for new kinds of instructional manuals for preachers in the late thirteenth century offers one explanation for the slowing production of bestiaries, which were associated with the first “wave,” with the eventual cessation in production in the fourteenth century.

3.2.1 BESTIARIES IN PASTORALIA EXCERPT COLLECTIONS

While the extraordinary labor, time, and expense that the illustrated bestiaries required limited their ownership to wealthier patrons such as the Benedictines and the aristocracy, it is clear that the bestiary’s content was valued for its ability to captivate audiences—especially the laity. Content from the bestiaries was included in unillustrated excerpt collections beginning in the late thirteenth century. While they do not contain the complete animal catalogue of the illustrated bestiaries, the excerpt collections include a varying number of chapters that have been copied from the bestiary text. Friars assembled these excerpt collections from encyclopedias, the Bible, and bestiaries to aid their composition of sermons for lay audiences. Unlike the encyclopedias of Thomas of Cantimpré and Bartholomew, the excerpt collections were curated with an eye to animal moralizations.

Two excerpt collections, London, British Library MS Additional 22041 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C77, are dated to the mid-thirteenth century and include chapters from the Second Family bestiary. The dating of these two excerpt collections to the mid-thirteenth century coincides with the first wave of pastoralia and the increased demand for material to aid in lay preaching. Both MS Add. 22041 and MS Rawl. C77 are smaller in size and thus more optimal for travel than the more extravagant, illustrated bestiaries, and the contents are suggestive of a lay audience rather than a clerical or academic one. Along with the bestiary chapters, the manuscripts contain treatises on virtues and vices and prayers. MS Rawl. C77 also includes sermons and an essay on moral and spiritual topics, as well as a set of diagrammatic distinctiones. MS Add. 22041 is a larger collection, with theological treatises, treatises on confession and dispensations, Augustine’s De abusionibus, and canon law tracts. Along with 40

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bestiary chapters, the manuscript’s section on animals also contains three chapters from the 
*Physiologus*-B and four chapters from Hugh of Fouilloy’s *Aviarium*.

The bestiary chapters included in MS Rawl. C77 include popular animals used in 
sermons: the caladrius, nightingale, phoenix, and bees, as well as the siren.165 As I will discuss in 
my case study in this chapter, there are indications that these animals attracted similar attention 
in the Harley 3244 manuscript. Even in her resistance to the possibility of bestiary use in 
sermons, Clark acknowledges the likelihood of MS Rawl. C77 being used by a sermon writer or 
preacher.166 While the sermons found in MS Rawl. C77 include animal exempla, identification of 
their sources suffers from the same issues arising from the bestiary’s compiled text; many 
animals’ characteristics and moralizations overlap with those of the *Physiologus*. Other 
characteristics described in the sermon, such as those of the eagle and lion, are not found in the 
bestiary text, but are found in Theobaldus’s metrical *Physiologus* and Bartholomew’s *De natura 
rerum*.167 While the animals in the sermons cannot be definitively traced to the bestiary, the 
inclusion of Second Family bestiary chapters is in itself significant; as the other works bound 
together were for preaching purposes, and likely to a lay audience, it is highly likely that the 
bestiary excerpts were used for a similar purpose and audience as the other works.

In addition to the Dominican-owned Harley 3244 manuscript and the two extant 
Franciscan bestiary manuscripts,168 the preaching material found in the excerpt collections of 
London, British Library MS Add. 22041 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawl. C77 suggests a 
larger trend of the bestiary’s application in lay preaching contexts. The lack of illustrations in the

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166 Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, 95.
168 London, Westminster Abbey Library, MS 22 and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College Library, MS 372/621.
excerpt collections poses an important question as to the nature of the bestiaries and their value. These bestiary chapters would have been used for their textual content and “word pictures,” rather than a visual display. This use would have likely been the most common presentation of bestiary imagery for lay audiences, due to the rarity of the more extravagant, illustrated bestiaries owned by the mendicant orders, and would have provided the moral context needed for deciphering the visual representations of the same animals. The unillustrated bestiary excerpts may have been more widespread and commonly used for sermon writing, the legacy of which we see in fourteenth-century sermons delivered before lay audiences.

3.2.2 The Bestiary as a Source of Sermon Exempla

While the bestiary is a non-narrative genre, its individual animal entries have the potential to function as narrative exempla when used as a subgenre of *pastoralia*; this type of use further distinguishes the bestiary genre from the otherwise similar encyclopedias that are one of its source texts. Their compilation of particularly vivid imagery, represented through both the text as well as the accompanying illustrations, made them valuable resources in the construction of a sermon by theme or moral lesson, especially in the later *sermo modernus* style that relied on elaborate imagery. Each reading of the animal within the larger entry provided an entry point for a more elaborate narrative to be created by the preacher, such that the multiple readings constituted a comprehensive collection of discrete narrative possibilities that would best suit their use as exempla in service of a larger, cohesive theme.

There are several clear instances of bestiary exempla in medieval English sermons, but none that indicate performance before non-monastic audiences. In his early research into the use of the bestiary in Cistercian sermons, Fr. John Morson concluded that there are forty-six
instances in which the bestiary was used as source material for sermons. Morson found these in the sermons of Baldwin (2), Gilbert (12), and Aelred (32). Vernacular or lay-facing sermons prior to the fourteenth century have not been preserved nearly as well as those in Latin and those that were ad religiosos or ad clerōs. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the recorded sermons that do survive were ever delivered in the first place, and if so, to what degree; sermons were rarely recorded at the moment of performance.

In instances of bestiary-like imagery in sermons, it can be difficult to determine whether the bestiary is the source of the exemplum, rather than one of its possible source texts. Because the word physiologus was used literally to mean the “naturalist” or “natural philosopher;” its appearance in a sermon or other text may refer to either the Physiologus text or a bestiary. A number of animal entries in the bestiary include references to a physiologus as well, particularly the earlier bestiaries that draw the most extensively from the Physiologus as source text. Morson’s methodology for distinguishing between the later, twelfth-century bestiaries and their source texts such as the Physiologus is to analyze the number and type of animals used (due to the limited range of animals in the Physiologus) and the use of material from Isidore. He acknowledges that while the cited sections “by themselves prove nothing: [] their convergent testimony cannot be so easily neglected.” Even considering the widely-known and used Etymologies of Isidore, it would be much more likely for preachers to have composed their

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169 Fr. John Morson, “The English Cistercians and the Bestiary,” Bulletin of John Rylands Library 39, no. 1 (1956): 146-70. Significantly, Morson makes the distinction between the Physiologus and the “twelfth-century bestiaries,” which, as discussed in the previous chapter, include at least excerpts from Isidore appended to the Latin Physiologus. He accounts for the possible use of the bestiary’s source material and rules their use as unlikely, in favor of the bestiary.
171 The Aberdeen Bestiary retains many of the references to a physiologus. The Harley 3244 text includes references to a physiologus in the panther (f. 37r), caladrius (f. 52r), siren (f. 55r). A majority of the references to sources cite the Greeks, which come from Isidore’s Etymologies.
sermons from a bestiary in their library rather than refer to the two separate volumes of the
*Physiologus* and Isidore.

Despite the large number of extant bestiaries, their precise point of interaction with a lay public has been difficult to determine. There is compelling evidence of their use in the context of preaching, due to their association with preaching reference works and eventually, preaching orders. There is also record of the use of bestiaries in later sermons of the fourteenth century, which can speak to the survival of the bestiary in its preaching context. Manuscripts carried with traveling preachers would also significantly reduce survival rates, compared to those that remain safely tucked away in monastic libraries. The more utilitarian excerpt collections such as London, British Library MS Additional 22041 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C77 have survived the hazards of time and extensive use, and are even more impressive because of their unideal preservation conditions. A manuscript like Harley 3244 is again a fascinating example, due to its illustrations and possible frequent use in preaching. It is bound with other preaching-oriented works and carries signs of wear consistent with display; a private, meditative purpose for the bestiary illustrations is less likely than a public, didactic one.

Further complicating the use of the bestiary as preaching reference material are the limitations in using a textual witness as evidence of an oral performance, as “the form and style of sermons could come in various packages, sometimes appearing to be treatises, letters, biblical commentaries, and saints’ lives, adding further confusion to what constitutes the content of preaching.”¹⁷³ Some bestiary manuscripts, such as the earliest Second Family manuscript, British Library, Additional MS 11283, and the Aberdeen Bestiary show clear physical evidence of frequent use. While Clark interprets the “dirtied parchment and numerous pricked images,” with

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contemporary stress accents and content glosses as those of a teacher in preparation for a lesson to his pupils,\textsuperscript{174} they seem at least equally likely to indicate preparations for similarly didactic preaching. Both teacher and preacher would have relied on the text for oral performance, and the distinction between the uses would be whether the emphasis of the lesson was moral or grammatical. However, records of later sermons delivered to mixed audiences of both laity and clergy can shed light on a history of their use in preaching.

3.2.3 \textbf{BESTIARY ANIMALS IN LATER SERMONS}

The use of the bestiary in lay preaching is seen in surviving fourteenth-century sermons. Much of the lay population would at least have heard sermons at specific liturgical occasions, such as Lent and Easter, and certain moralized animals were particularly appropriate subject matter for preaching on those feasts. The incorporation of the nightingale as an allegory for Christ in later Good Friday sermons\textsuperscript{175} offers a more likely indication of the bestiary as reference material, as the bird is not one of the animals detailed in the \textit{Physiologus}. The possible source texts of the nightingale and its moralizations within the sermon are Ambrose and the bestiary.\textsuperscript{176}

The nightingale is absent from Hugh of Fouilloy’s \textit{Aviarium}, and its description in encyclopedias like Isidore and Hrabanus Maurus remains limited to a naturalistic description of its singing. Pliny the Elder also details the nightingale’s reputation for marathon singing,\textsuperscript{177} but is similarly unlikely to be the source of the Jesus allegory from the singing alone. Ambrose’s \textit{Hexameron} is the source of the nightingale’s symbolism as a devoted mother nourishing her children despite

\begin{itemize}
\item[174] Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 111.
\item[176] The English nightingale tradition is distinct from that of French origin, which is specifically sexual. French tradition nightingale appears in the bestiary of Pierre de Beauvais and works from Marie de France and Boccaccio. Elizabeth Eva Leach, \textit{Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages}, 93.
\item[177] Pliny the Elder, \textit{Naturalis Historia}, vol. 2, 10.43.81. Edited by Karl Friedrich Theodor Mayhoff (Leipzig: Teubner, 1875).
\end{itemize}
her suffering, and her willing sacrifice is a very plausible connection to Christ.\textsuperscript{178} The nightingale does appear in Harley 3244, as well as the Aberdeen Bestiary and the rather late Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB, KA 16 manuscript (ca. 1350).

Some sermons were preached to a monastic audience or mixed audience, and their suitability for both groups suggests the ability for lay audiences to understand the meaning of the animal symbolism. Thomas Brinton, the bishop of Rochester, is best known for his mention of the “belling the cat” fable in his sermon during the meeting of the Good Parliament in 1376. The sermon’s fable is Aesopian rather than from the bestiary, and was delivered to an audience of clergymen at this meeting; but Brinton was no stranger to the use of animal exempla in his sermons, and took advantage of their ability to captivate a variety of audiences. Although Brinton was a Benedictine monk, his preaching was not limited to monastic audiences. His collected Latin sermons were records of those he had preached before clergy, laity, or both in mixed audiences in the late fourteenth century, and his Easter Sunday sermon demonstrates the continued relevance of bestiary animals in a preaching context before broad audiences.

In his Easter Sunday sermon, Brinton uses the natures of the panther and phoenix to illustrate various aspects of resurrection. He cites the panther as an example of how good Christians “show openly that they have risen by a true resurrection from the death of sin through the worthy reception of the Eucharist and good works and continued perseverance.”\textsuperscript{179} Brinton describes several characteristics of the panther: “Natural philosophers tell us that the panther, a very beautiful animal of many colors, after he is sated with food hides in his den and sleeps there for three days. When he rises from his sleep, he seeks a high place and roars. With this such a

sweet smell comes from his mouth that all the animals come to him and follow him steadily, all except the dragon, who when he hears his voice hides in the caves of the earth." The *Physiologus* includes similar details on the panther, but with extensive Scriptural references woven throughout them. The abridged text, phrasing, and ordering of the details are nearly identical to those of the Second Family bestiary text, making it a more likely source. Furthermore, the separation of the nature and moralization in the bestiary allows for quicker reference and application to the sermon’s *thema*. By referencing the bestiary rather than the *Physiologus*, Brinton can more readily supplement the panther’s behavior with his commentary on the resurrection and his choice of Scripture.

Similarly, Brinton’s use of another animal, the phoenix, later in his Easter sermon further suggests a Second Family bestiary as his source. Brinton calls upon the resurrection imagery of the phoenix, likening it to a just man’s salvation in death “to receive his reward from the Lord.” He explains how the phoenix creates a nest of fragrant twigs, which is lit by the heat of the sun. After he is burned to ashes, a worm is born and grows feathers and takes the shape of a bird again. The bestiary’s details of the twigs and particularly the phoenix’s rebirth from the worm originate from Ambrose’s *Hexameron*, and it is reasonable to presume that Brinton could just as well have access to either work. However, the detail of the sun’s heat lighting the fragrant twigs comes not from Ambrose, but from the short chapter on the phoenix in Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*. It is very possible that Brinton could have consulted these works separately; but that both the Ambrose and Isidore details are found together in the bestiary’s phoenix chapter is worth serious consideration. While the nature of the bestiary text as a compilation of sources

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182 Ibid.
makes definitive identification a difficult task, Brinton’s use of a Second Family bestiary as a source is the simplest explanation for the phoenix and panther’s unique compilation of natural traits from varied sources, as well as the precise ordering of their details.

By the late fourteenth century, certain animals mentioned in sermons needed no extensive explanation of their natures and meaning; the context was sufficient in providing the moral significance of the exemplum. A popular Middle English sermon by Thomas Wimbledon, *Redde racionem villicationis tue*, was composed in 1388 and survived into printing. The extant copy referenced was printed in 1579 by John Charlewood, and the sermon is prefaced on the title page as “A Sermon, No lesse fruitfull then famous.” Sabine Volk-Birke draws attention to “the oddity of the fact that this sermon is in English,” and argues that Wimbledon’s sermon was performed before a lay audience rather than an academic one.

In his sermon, Wimbledon briefly alludes to the owl and “night crow,” a vernacular translation of the *Nicticorax*. In this instance, Wimbledon is describing how covetous men are blind to their path to heaven, but are able to see many paths to worldly goods: “Hee that hath money, shal have no fruit of it. And this covetise is the eye of the covetous men, for they be blinde to see howe they should come to heaven. But to win worldly thinges they can see many wayes, like to the Owls and night crowes, that better see by night, then by day.” The accompanying marginal note to the passage cites Eccle[siastes] 5, which refers to the fruitlessness in the pursuit of material wealth; Wimbledon’s reference to the owls and night

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183 This printed copy used one of several manuscript copies of the sermon, MS Hatton 57. The earliest version is preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 357.
crows in this context seems to be original. Wimbledon briefly cites a natural trait of the two birds, their superior night vision, which works as an analogy to the covetous man’s misplaced “eyesight.” But with Wimbledon’s use of these two birds, a strong moral judgment is implicitly understood; the fact of their eyesight alone does not convey this meaning. Both the owl and *Nicticorax* are moralized in the bestiary as extremely dirty and undesirable creatures. The audience’s knowledge of the overwhelmingly undesirable comparison to the owl and *Nicticorax* lends an important emphasis on and elegant corroboration of the grave error in favoring worldly goods.

3.3 **The Dominican Order and Harley 3244 Case Study**

The British Library manuscript Harley 3244 is the only known bestiary owned by the Dominican order, which had arrived in England in the early thirteenth century. The Dominicans’ focus on evangelism and preaching to the lay populations that many clergymen had historically ignored ensured their spread and success. The British Library catalogue dates Harley 3244 to around 1236-1250, and Ron Baxter gives the later dating of 1255-1265; both dates are consistent with the Dominican order’s presence in England. Baxter’s dating of 1255-1265 may however be more accurate if the manuscript was part of the first wave of *pastoralia* production throughout England, as well as taking into account the accuracy of the elephant illustration (as I will discuss shortly). Dominican patronage of the Harley 3244 manuscript is apparent in the full-

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186 The anti-Semitism of the owl’s description also lends a history of strongly negative Christian associations.
187 Due to the dating and the type of entries, Harley 3244 is considered a Third Family bestiary according to M. R. James and Florence McCulloch’s Four Family organization of bestiaries. Willene B. Clark and Ron Baxter also further identify Harley MS 3244 as belonging to the Third Family. It was written between 1236-1250 in England (British Library, dated to after the composition of Willelmus Peraldus’s *Summa de vitii et virtutibus* in 1236).
188 Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users*, 147.
page miniature on f. 27r, which depicts a Dominican friar kneeling before Christ, his hands closed in prayer.\footnote{Harley MS 3244, f.27r.}

The decline of the bestiary seems to parallel the shrinking size of the book, connected to the book’s use by traveling friars as well as by burgeoning secular or lay reading audiences. In addition to the possibility of the bestiary’s decline in the fourteenth century resulting from \textit{pastoralia} production shifting to instructional manuals, another contributing factor may have been the bestiary’s later production and use amongst the traveling Dominican and Franciscan preachers. As portability was a priority for traveling, the size and space required for the bestiary’s illustrations would typically have been too great, as evidenced by the unillustrated excerpt collections; however, the Dominican patronage of Harley 3244 is fairly certain, so the bestiary must have been useful in certain preaching contexts. Harley 3244 is also of a smaller size than is typical of bestiaries, which would allow it to be held and displayed more comfortably in a friary if not quite used for travel.

As the bestiary genre progressed, the moralizations originally from the \textit{Physiologus} increasingly became abridged and even omitted at times while the number of different animals ballooned. In the Harley 3244 manuscript, its bestiary is comprised of a fairly standard Second Family text, with entries covering around 115 animals.\footnote{There are a few animals that have more than one entry, likely a result of the additive compilation process.} Non-animal entries within the Harley 3244 bestiary are the Perindeus (Perindens) Tree, Fire Stones, and Adam naming the animals. These are typically included in the bestiary, but their ordering in Harley 3244 is unconventional; in particular, Adam naming the animals appears very “late,” after the dog entry, whereas it typically precedes the first animal, the lion.\footnote{Adam naming the animals (f. 46r), Perindeus Tree (f. 58v), Fire Stones (f. 60r).}
Harley 3244 presents the most promising physical link between the laity and an illustrated bestiary. The laity at large would have encountered publicly accessible images such as church decoration and stained glass, but by contrast, medieval bestiaries and their illustrations generally were privately owned and thus viewed only by those who owned them: the clergy and some wealthy nobility. Most bestiaries have been traced to Benedictine monasteries, which had little contact with the lay public during the height of bestiary production.\textsuperscript{192} Because of this, the ownership of a bestiary by a lay-oriented order such as the Dominicans is worth more extensive investigation, even if atypical. In addition to its ownership by Dominicans, evidence for Harley 3244’s lay audience can be found in its size and bestiary illustrations unique to the manuscript. I have also attempted to determine localization of the Harley 3244 bestiary, which is widely accepted to have had Dominican patronage. Through this localization to a Dominican friary, I believe Harley 3244 can offer insight into another point of interaction between the laity and the bestiary.

3.3.1 Use and localization of Harley MS 3244

The Augustinian and Benedictine-owned manuscripts’ content and larger size suggest private use as they were often larger folio sizes, about 381mm or 15” in height, and were neither intended nor well suited for travel or handheld use. The Harley 3244 codex is of a more manageable, portable size, 280mm x 165 mm (about 11” x 6.5”), but would still be large enough to display to a small audience. Due to the presence of prick marks at the edges of the pages, it is unlikely they were trimmed down from a larger size. It also seems less likely that the Dominican-owned Harley 3244 bestiary illustrations were used exclusively for personal

\textsuperscript{192} Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 150-51, 180.
meditation. Any books that traveling Dominican preachers had with them would by necessity have to be reasonable to carry, as we see with the extant *vademecum*, or pocket-sized, manuscripts of abbreviated sermons.\(^{193}\) While Harley 3244 certainly outsizes the typically 5” x 4” dimensions of *vademecum* manuscripts, it is smaller than the typical folio size and even the more moderate-sized bestiaries of the 300 mm x 200 cm (about 11.8” x 7.8”) variety. While the use of smaller-sized bestiaries by itinerant preachers may have existed, the overall survival rate would likely have been much lower than for manuscripts housed in a library.

Works created with a similar mind towards portability were Books of Hours, which were often palm-sized\(^ {194}\) for portability and contained illustrations alongside the prayers as aids to personal meditation. These books were popular with the aristocracy and court; some of the most elaborately illustrated Books of Hours belonged to the aristocracy, and what was originally used to facilitate personal devotion eventually came to signal status. The lay public could not afford expensive luxuries such as personal books, but Harley 3244’s size in between the larger folio and smaller duodecimo dimensions allowed it to better function as a communally viewed book.

Illustrations that accompanied Benedictine and Augustinian-owned texts were also most often used for quiet, personal contemplation. It seems less likely that the illustrations in Harley 3244 were used for personal meditation, as may have been the case with the illustrations in bestiary manuscripts destined for monastic or courtly use. The production of the bestiary manuscripts and their illustrations in such lay-centered mendicant orders at least suggests the possibility of lay viewing as the illustrations’ purpose and use; and as I shall explore further in this chapter, the Harley 3244 bestiary’s illustrations and patterns of wear offer compelling

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\(^{193}\) Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 421. Traveling preachers did carry small, pocket-sized manuscripts that contained outlines of sermons, relying on the schematic collections for getting started. These simpler manuscripts were cheaper to copy and more practical for portable use.

\(^{194}\) i.e., duodecimo
evidence for this type of use. The Harley 3244 bestiary could serve parallel uses for preachers: the text for the preachers and the composition of their sermons, and possibly, the illustrations for the illiterate public.

One possible explanation for the size and survival of Harley 3244 is that it was displayed not during the travels of an itinerant friar, but in an established friary to a lay audience. While Dominican and Franciscan friars were given formal permission to preach in their own churches only at the relatively late date of 1301, through the Super Cathedram papal bull, their acquisitions of land and churches had been steadily growing since the mid- to late-thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{195} The popularity of the friars amongst the laity and their competition with local parish clergy had resulted in more resources and income, with several new friaries founded between 1250 and 1300, and evidence of enlargement or rebuilding in thirty-four friaries between 1270 and 1320.\textsuperscript{196} However, the increasing enlargement of their churches inflamed the existing tensions with parish clergy over income-generating services; the very public gains in material wealth led to the sense of hypocrisy and corruption, especially in contrast to their orders’ foundation upon mendicancy and poverty. This was a swift reversal from the incredible popularity at the arrival of the Dominican order in England early in the twelfth century. During the period of their greatest popularity, the Dominicans’ exposure of the bestiary to large numbers of the population through preaching helped ensure the bestiary’s survival in sermons and the lay imagination.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
3.3.2 Dating Harley 3244 and Its Elephant

A more accurate dating of Harley 3244 to around 1255 to 1265 also coincides with the influx of wealth and establishment of new Dominican friaries during this time, in further support of its use in a friary context. We can derive a *terminus post quem* date of 1255 from one of the most distinctive animal illustrations in the manuscript, that of the elephant (see Appendix, figure 3). The illustration of the elephant in Harley 3244 is remarkably accurate, considering the rarity of the animal in England and the typical inaccuracies found in bestiary depictions of it. The drawing’s accuracy could only come from some degree of interaction with an actual elephant, even if the Harley illuminator probably worked from a representation that was based on firsthand observation. In 1255, King Louis IX of France presented King Henry III with the gift of an elephant, which was eventually housed in the Tower of London.197 Famously, Matthew Paris had drawn a remarkably accurate elephant in his *Liber Additamentorum*, likely from his first-hand observation of the royal elephant.198 There is a “more finished” illustration in a flyleaf of *Chronica maiora*, which Suzanne Lewis posits was drawn later as his second attempt, modeled after his sketch in *Liber Additamentorum*.199

There are two illustrations of the elephant in Harley 3244: the first is of the “elephant and castle,” and the second of an elephant facing a dragon (see Appendix, figure 4). While they lack the level of detail and accuracy of the first-hand accounts of Matthew Paris, both are still surprisingly accurate—and much more so than is typical in other bestiary illustrations of the

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197 Matthew Paris adds in his account that it is the first elephant ever seen in England. He also surmises that it was the first “in the countries on this side the Alps,” but Madden notes the earlier instance of an elephant being gifted to Charlemagne in 807 by the famous caliph Haroun al Raschid as well as the unconfirmed account of one brought to England by the Romans, under Claudius. Frederick Madden, “On the Knowledge Possessed by Europeans of the Elephant,” 335. Matthew Paris’s translated account in the *Chronica maiora* from Matthew Paris’s English History: from the year 1235 to 1273, ed. J. A. Giles (London: H. G. Bohn, 1852), 115.


199 Suzanne Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Maiora (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 212-16. The flyleaf has been inserted into Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16i, f. iir (iv).
elephant. Depictions of the elephants in bestiaries largely show the characteristic tusk protruding from the lower mandible upwards. This is a reasonable mistake to make, and may be attributable to an illustrator relying on the common wild boar as a visual frame of reference. Common errors also include flowery or tiny, round ears, and trunk placement that ranges from the forehead to the chin. The two images in Harley 3244 are likely at least second-hand illustrations of the elephant, where the illustrator has some small degree of separation from a direct eye-witness like Matthew Paris. In its anatomical accuracy the “elephant and castle” illustration in Harley 3244 falls between the the traditional bestiary depiction and the eyewitness rendition: it has accurate placement of the tusks and more realistic ears, but it still has the open, hose-like trunk and stiff, joint-less legs. The overall form is quite accurate; its size relative to the humans on its back and its tail placement are similar to their depiction by Matthew Paris.

The second elephant illustration on f. 39v, the elephant facing the dragon, gives further indication of the illustrator’s familiarity with the animal’s actual form. Like the elephant and castle on the reverse, the second elephant suffers from a similarly hose-like trunk and rounded, shapeless ears; however, it also has the accurate tusk placement in clearer detail, down to creases outlining the tusk beneath the skin. The reality of the elephant’s tusk as an elongated upper incisor, rather than a lower canine like with the boar, is better represented here. It seems apparent that the illustrator had a basic familiarity with the form of the actual animal, with some features more roughly rendered. The capture of some distinctive details and omission of others would be typical of a one- or two-degree removal from personal contact with the live elephant, not unlike copying errors and accretions over time in manuscripts. After seeing the drawn-from-life sketch, the Harley 3244 illustrator corrected the more egregiously incorrect characteristics, such as the tusk placement—which is, along with its size and trunk, one of the elephant’s most memorable
features. Subtler features, such as the precise ear texture or trunk shape, would be details easily lost in the illustration. Take for instance the ear, in particular: the thin, leathery skin of the ear and how it drapes around the head would be difficult to gather from the Matthew Paris illustration alone.

The Harley 3244 elephant is similar to the one that appears later in the *Chronica maiora*, modeled in the “elephant and castle” style as well (see Appendix, figure 5). Instead of soldiers in the castle, a group of musicians ride on top of a triumphal elephant at Cremona. Notably, the elephant on f. 152v of the *Chronica maiora* suffers from the same common inaccuracies as other renderings. If Matthew Paris was indeed both the chronicler and illustrator for the *Chronica maiora*, this discrepancy could most plausibly be attributed to Matthew completing this portion of the work before his visit to the Tower of London, and during his work on its accompanying appendix, the *Liber Additamentorum*. He would then complete his initial, from-life sketch of the elephant in the *Liber Additamentorum*, then later complete a second, revised elephant drawing, inserted as a flyleaf in the *Chronica maiora*. It is unlikely that Matthew would continue to incorrectly position the tusk after his other illustrations. Even if a shop assistant were responsible for the drawings, he would still have worked alongside or under the influence of Matthew Paris, and would certainly have been aware of Matthew’s rather spectacular experience of an event worthy of an entry in the *Chronica maiora*. For instance, Matthew’s drawings

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200 In Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16II, f. 152v (151v).
201 Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora*, 15-22. The extent of Matthew Paris’s involvement in the drawings has been quite contentious over the century, alternately expanding and shrinking. I remain agnostic in the controversy, as either way, artistic output from St. Albans during this time would have had some degree of Matthew Paris’s influence involved. “The controversy over the attribution of the marginal drawings in the historical manuscripts goes back to Sir Frederick Madden who, in his introduction to the 1866-1869 Rolls Series edition of the *Historia Anglorum*, first drew attention to the artistic work of Matthew Paris by ascribing all the illustrations in MS Roy. 14. C. VII, as well as those in the two Corpus Christi manuscripts of the *Chronica Majora*, to the personal hand of the author,” 16.
202 Though the elephant on the flyleaf/f. iv has been “unanimously attributed to the hand of Matthew Paris without reservation.” Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora*, 15.
must have influenced the simplified, yet similarly accurate, drawing of an elephant attributed to John of Wallingford, a brother monk of Matthew Paris at the Abbey of St. Albans (see Appendix figure 6). Primarily a colored line drawing, John’s illustration depicts only the faintest articulation of the leg joints where Matthew Paris’s is very distinct. Like the Harley 3244 elephant, John’s illustration is very clearly based on a someone’s first-hand account of the animal.

If the Harley 3244 elephant represents a compromise between the “traditional,” inaccurate renderings and Matthew Paris’s sketch, it is likely that its illustrators had access to Matthew Paris’s *Chronica maiora* and *Liber Additamentorum*, or John of Wallingford’s chronicles. The relative accuracy of Harley 3244’s elephant is more suggestive of a second-hand representation of King Henry’s live elephant. Lewis also noted this similarity between elephants in the *Chronica maiora* and Harley 3244, though she does not remark upon the greater anatomical accuracy of the latter. Inclusion of the elephant and castle for the elephant entry is extremely common in the bestiaries, and often included an accompaniment of soldiers riding on top. Harley 3244 is no different in depicting the elephant and castle for the elephant entry, but the illustrator had added details of the actual creature’s form. Further linking Harley 3244 to the *Chronica maiora* is the unique description of the elephant’s trunk as *promoscida*. The *Chronica maiora* elephant includes a few rubricated labels: *promoscida* along the trunk, *magister bestiae* by the man perched on its neck, and a brief gloss of the text. In Harley 3244, the elephant’s entry

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205 Some bestiary manuscripts that use the elephant and castle imagery: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 (f. 77r); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 1511 (f. 15v); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 764 (f. 12r); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 151 (f. 11v); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 88 (f. 87v); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. e Mus. 136 (f. 19v); London, British Library, Royal MS 12. xiii (f. 11v); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS 53 (f. 191r); Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. kgl. S 1633 4˚ (f. 6v).
says: Rostru(m) au(tem) p(ro)boscida v(e)l p(ro)muscida d(icitu)r. While partially found in Isidore, this text is not common to other bestiaries. While the focus of both manuscripts on the elephant’s trunk may stem from both drawing from a common copy text, as Matthew Paris (or a workshop associate) may have referenced or at least have been very familiar with the bestiary as his model for the elephant at Cremona, the greater accuracy of Harley 3244 suggests its composition after 1255 and the *Chronica maiora*.

The *terminus post quem* dating of Harley 3244 to the third quarter of the thirteenth century significantly narrows down the possible Dominican friaries active during this time. This was still in the relatively early days of the Dominican order, with many houses founded after 1300. By dating alone, there are three possible houses that could have commissioned the Harley 3244 bestiary: London (1243); two locations in Winchester (c. 1239 and 1245). The Holborn Priory in London (1243), in particular, was the beneficiary of several gifts from Henry III and the Earl of Kent. The “persistent stream of royal favours” would be sufficient to explain how the Dominicans were able to afford the elaborately illustrated bestiary, when other friar-owned excerpt collections of bestiary content were unillustrated and slimmed down to include only the most popular animals.

Aside from a *terminus post quem* dating of 1255 for Harley 3244, the contact of the Harley 3244 illustrators with the *Chronica maiora* or John of Wallingford’s chronicles is also significant in identifying its use. Its ownership by Dominicans is quite apparent, but the function of the bestiary and its illustrations is less clear. The compilation of other preaching works

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209 Dominican friar praying before Christ in Harley MS 3244, f. 27r.
along with the bestiary suggests that it also aided in preaching and writing sermons; the two extant Franciscan bestiaries survive without contemporary content. An exclusively clerical use does not fully explain the extensive illustrations of the bestiary. The other illustrations in Harley 3244 are relatively sparse throughout the text; excluding the bestiary, the only other illustrations are four full-page miniatures.

3.3.3 Patterns of Use and Wear in Harley 3244

The vellum pages of the Harley 3244 bestiary show more wear than other works in the manuscript, and can be valuable for determining patterns of use.\(^\text{210}\) The areas of wear are consistent with public display as well as private viewing. Extensive use of the bestiary in particular is visible in the darkened edges, especially on the top and bottom corners where a thumb or palm would have rested on the open page. Indications of public display can also be seen in the areas of wear. The wear marks on the center top or center bottom pages are unlikely to have resulted from an unnatural resting hand position for a single reader, and would more accurately reflect the hand positioning of someone displaying the page. The other works in the manuscript also serve as a point of comparison: as the preaching aids were intended for private reading and reference, their areas of wear would thus reflect this. Wear on the bottom corners, either on the outer corners or inside in the gutters, represents conventional use of a volume by a single reader.\(^\text{211}\) The natural position of holding a book open, especially of a size larger than the vademecum, would create wear at the outer bottom edges, or possibly the outer margins.

Wear at the top margin or corners is more peculiar; it would result from what is not a comfortable position to hold while reading, as the reader’s forearms would need to be angled

\(^{210}\) For an attempt at quantifying such indications of use, see Kathryn M. Rudy, “Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2:1-2 (Summer 2010), 1-44.

\(^{211}\) Rudy, “Dirty Books,” 4-5.
away—a difficult position to hold, the larger the codex—or else they would obscure some of the text. This pattern of wear appears in the Aberdeen Bestiary, though it is not found on an animal entry. One page has a dirty patch on the top of the margin, above the only female devotional figure in the manuscript.\footnote{Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24, f. 34r. For the digitization project by the University of Aberdeen and supplementary commentary by Jane Geddes: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary.} The position of the darkening is in a place associated with an unnatural holding position for personal reading, and the larger area of wear suggests repeated gripping of the upper margin area for the same purpose, over many uses. Its display to an audience is confirmed on the facing page,\footnote{This darkening is apparent on f. 33v of the Aberdeen Bestiary.} which shows wear on the bottom margin towards the center, consistent with someone supporting the weight of the book for display.

The single-most worn page of Harley 3244 is the first page of the bestiary, f. 36r. Even its facing page (f. 37v), the conclusion of Alan of Lille’s De sex alis cherubim, is not nearly as worn or dirtied. As is typical of the genre, the first page of this bestiary depicts the lion. This page has a fairly consistent amount of wear over the whole page, and as the first page of the bestiary, it is the likely point of place-holding. Judging from the extreme differences in the darkening of the pages alone, the bestiary was the most frequently used section of the book. It is possible that the pages accumulated the wear through the intervening centuries and owners. However, taking the Dominican context of the manuscript into consideration along with the types and patterns of wear, concentrated around certain animal entries and within the illustrations themselves, the pattern of wear aligns with contemporary didactic use. While we cannot be certain as to whether the dirt that was deposited on the pages is from the original owners of the codex, the signs of wear must be used in conjunction with other evidence of contemporary use.\footnote{While using a densitometer to help quantify areas of wear caused by handling, Rudy admits the inability to pinpoint the time of wear with the instrument alone. Instead, she proposes that “The reason we can be confident that the manuscripts were fingered in the fifteenth century in the ways that I have suggested above and not by later
wear, the location of the wear, and the unique nature of several illustrations and text in Harley 3244 seem to point to the wear accumulated over the course of its contemporary use.

The Harley 3244 entry for the bees (apes) shows exceptional wear along the margins on the facing verso and recto pages. This is very much consistent with the bee’s historic popularity, which continued from Antiquity into contemporary exempla and sermons. The verso side, f. 57v, shows greater wear, and includes the illustration of the bees. The recto side, f. 58r, contains only the text from the bee entry and has less wear. The pattern of wear for the recto side gives some indication as to the use: there is a long, finger-like mark extending from the outer right corner inwards into the text, even lifting away some of the ink in two lines. This long mark, in conjunction with the diagonal patterns of wear, are consistent with displaying the book outwards. The ants (formica) are another animal entry showing extensive wear. Other pages with the diagonal pattern of wear are those depicting the camel and the dromedary and the ass, f. 47v and f. 48r, where the top margin of the verso and bottom margin of the facing recto are dirtied. While every page of the bestiary has visible wear, it is apparent that some animals were more popular for display than others when examining the degree of darkening on the outer margins.

There are several other pages with noticeable dirtying on the illustrations themselves, showing even more extensive use. One such page, perhaps with the greatest amount of visible wear after the lion, is the one depicting the satyr (f. 41v). The popularity of the satyr illustration is especially apparent due to the page’s containing two different illustrated animals, with two different degrees of visible use. Below the satyr is the hart (cervus), a creature much more

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215 Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 52-61. One of the most popular exempla was of the Host that was hidden in a beehive, found intact and surrounded by a shrine of honeycomb a year later. The bee appears in the blessing of the candle on Easter Sunday in the Leofric Missal, due to its association with the Virgin Mary and, of course, the wax.

216 Harley MS 3244, f. 50r.
mundane than the fantastic image of the satyrs above it. In the illustration of the satyrs, the negative space enclosed by the decorative border is much darker, with some areas more clearly smudged and dirtied by fingers. The selective and repeated wear is more indicative of public display, with the preacher guiding the audience’s attention to particular areas in the course of explaining an exemplum related to the satyr scene. Curiously, a similar pattern of wear is not carried over to the hart. Whatever the reason for the relative neglect of the hart, the greater signs of wear surrounding the satyr illustration are consistent with the continuing popularity of the devil-like satyr imagery in later art and literature. The satyr illustration is perhaps the most unique of those in the Harley 3244 bestiary, which I will discuss in greater depth later in this chapter, and there is no comparable rendering of the satyr in the other bestiaries. Unlike others, which commonly depict a reclining satyr without larger context, Harley 3244 gives a tantalizing scene with two satyrs frozen in medias res. The smudges represent the accumulation of many years of pointing, and directing attention to various aspects of the scene.

Like with the satyrs, certain areas within other animal illustrations have been more clearly worn, indicating frequent and deliberate use. On f. 52r depicting the caladrius and the ill, bed-ridden man, halos of dirt surround the figures. Such areas of dirtying might come from personal meditation, where the reader repeatedly touches or traces the drawing in an act of devotion. However, it is more likely that it is the result of repeatedly pointing out aspects of the image to an audience when considered with the fainter but still present pattern of diagonal smudging, as well as the greater concentration of wear on some images and not others on the same page. While the image of the caladrius contains visible signs of targeted wear around the caladrius and the ill man, the stork and swan below them do not show such wear despite being on the same page. Just like the satyr scene, the caladrius illustration depicts a narrative scene that
can more easily be incorporated into an extended exemplum, in contrast to depicting the animal in isolation; the increased evidence of use suggests a gravitation towards the more complex types of illustrations, a preference more consistent with a preacher pointing towards the different components while explaining their significance to an audience.

The caladrius was a popular symbol of Christ, described as pure white in color and sent to relieve man of illness. There are a number of indications as to the popularity of the caladrius amongst the population at large. Predating Harley 3244 is the twelfth-century doorway at Alne, which George Druce examines in considerable depth. References to the caladrius appear in later macaronic sermons, giving some indication as to the longevity of the caladrius’s relevance to diverse audiences. The caladrius is also one of the bestiary chapters included in the excerpt collections that were used as preaching aids. The caladrius illustration in Harley 3244 shows heavy wear not typically seen in the other Augustinian and Benedictine-owned bestiaries. If interacting with the caladrius image (or that of another animal) by touching or rubbing was typical in personal meditation, similar wear would be present across the other surviving bestiary manuscripts. Many of the other bestiary manuscripts have been popular acquisitions over the intervening centuries as well, so darkening from the use of more recent owners is not an obvious explanation for Harley 3244. Taking into account the other factors that make Harley 3244 unique, particularly its Dominican patronage and their interaction with the laity, the evidence more strongly points towards the wear arising from contemporary use and public display.

A few other texts in the Harley 3244 manuscript show extreme wear. The first page of the manuscript—the opening of Honorius Augustodunensis’s *Elucidarius*—is understandably

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marked by those opening the book to the text. The subsequent pages remain fairly clean. This pattern continues through Alan of Lille’s Liber penitentialis until the Sermo de diversis of Bernard of Clairvaux (f. 26v), which happens to be facing one of the few full-page miniatures in the book: an image of a Dominican friar kneeling before Christ (f. 27r). The wear on f. 26v seems to be wholly from readers seeking the miniature. As Bernard’s sermon begins on f. 26r and is quite clean—certainly not nearly as dirty as its verso—it seems safe to assign the bulk of the wear to those interested in the facing page. However, the image itself does not have as much wear as some of those in the bestiary.

The pattern of wear on the image of the kneeling Dominican friar and its facing page differs from that of the bestiary in that it is more consistent with personal use than display. Dirt is concentrated in the gutter beneath the miniature as well as the inner and outer bottom corners. The marks on the top of f. 27r and the bottom of f. 26v suggest possible occasional display, with the holder carefully avoiding obscuring the image by restricting his handling to the gutters. The wearing on the outermost letters of several lines on f. 26v, mirrored on f. 27r in the outer margin, is consistent with a reader using his palms to hold the book open before him.219 While grasping the outer margins to display the smaller sized Harley 3244 is feasible, the letters are worn over a larger area that would be encompassed by a palm rather than fingers, which would be indicative of outward display. The varying patterns of use, and consequently, wear, within the same book offer a microcosm of different use cases. In most of the pages containing sermon material, smudges and dirt are confined to the outer lower edges. This is a typical wear pattern in personal use and reference, which is consistent with the nature of the texts. There would be no need to display homogenous script to a larger audience.

219 The worn letters are approximately 11 centimeters from the bottom of f. 26v, with a similar darker concentration of wear on f. 27r.
3.3.4 Preaching Social Sins in the Illustrations of Harley 3244

The bestiary in Harley 3244 is bound together with works also indicative of Dominican preaching, listed here according to their order in the codex\(^\text{220}\): The *Elucidarius* by Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1080-1137); Alan of Lille’s *Liber Penitentialis* (c. 1128-1203); an illustrated extract from Willelmus Peraldus’s *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (c. 1236); Alan of Lille’s *De sex alis cherubim* (c. 1128-1203); a Third Family Bestiary; a collection of exempla; Willelmus Peraldus’s *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (full text); Pseudo-Bernard’s *Tractatus sive meditatio Bernardi de interiori homine*; *Expositiones nominum Bibliotece* [sic]; Robert Grosseteste’s *Templum Domini*; Richard Wetheringsett’s *Summa* “Qui bene praesunt”; two texts on spiritual virtues and conscience, attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux; and Richard of Thetford’s *Ars dilatandi sermones*. It is apparent that the compiler of Harley 3244 had included the bestiary among these collections of sermon reference and instructional preaching texts due to its overlap with them in purpose and use. Richard of Thetford’s *ars praedicandi* gives instruction on how to develop a “modern” sermon (*sermo modernus*) by using the method of *dilatatio*, for which the utilization of an exemplum that corresponds to the *thema* would be standard.\(^\text{221}\) Harley 3244 was thus a fairly self-contained manuscript, in which the bestiary and collections of exempla and *summae* worked in conjunction with the directives of the instructional manuals.

The many animal entries that span the pages of the Harley 3244 bestiary show an emphasis on thoroughness, especially as the genre continued to expand with further additions. Its second entry, on the whale (*belua*), is likely an indication of such expansions, with the compiler less concerned with organizational cohesion than comprehensiveness.\(^\text{222}\) The final animals of


\(^{221}\) Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 400-8.

\(^{222}\) Whale (*belua*) on f. 60v and f. 65r.
Harley 3244’s bestiary are conch shells, mussels, and the frog, and it then transitions into an unillustrated herbarium. This differs from the typical close of the bestiary with the Fire Stones; in fact, the Fire Stones appear quite early in Harley 3244 (f. 60r). The full-page format of the bestiary, while standard for the genre, stands out from most of the other compiled works in the manuscript, which utilize a two-column format. Aside from the bestiary, only *Expositiones nominum Bibliotece* and Robert Grosseteste’s *Templum Domini* fill the entire page.

By far the most popular sermon subjects recorded were the virtues and, in particular, the vices, as seen by the three various collections of virtues and vices present just in Harley 3244. Treatises on virtues and vices were also included in the excerpt collections. The bestiary functioned similarly, assigning certain virtues and vices to iconographic animal characteristics.

The thirteenth-century standardization of iconography for virtues and vices can likely be attributed to preachers’ extensive reliance on them. Penitence and confession were seen to be the remedy for sin and the physical consequences of it, such as plague, illness, malformation, death, with the popular sermon subjects of virtues and vices further reinforcing this causal relationship. The longstanding analogy of the physician administering medicine and the preacher imposing penance underscores the importance of such a service for the laity. Especially in the fourteenth century, preachers frequently cited John Chrysostom’s analogy of Jesus as a zealous physician amongst the sick, administering the appropriate medicine according to the specific complaint. He pays particular attention to those “who are afflicted with the disease of avarice, that we may make some sermon concerning the evil of avarice, to the restoration of health.”

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223 Conch shells, mussels, and frog on f. 67v.
224 “Expositiones nominum Bibliotece” (ff. 129r-138r) and Robert Grosseteste’s *Templum Domini* (ff. 138r-145r).
225 Robertson, “Late Medieval Style,” 190.
Concern over accuracy in diagnosing sins and subsequently prescribing the correct penance resulted in the necessity for a large compilation of different circumstances; the inclusion of the three collections of virtues and vices as well as the bestiary would thus not so much be considered redundant as necessarily exhaustive. The Dominicans were integral in the development of the various genres of *pastoralia*, as the “Dominican ministry demanded not only schools and doctrine, it required a body of practical literature if the friars were to communicate their learning and its lessons for Christian life to the people.” The friars extensively studied the pastoral tools of Biblical concordances, *distinctiones*, moral *summae*, and other *collationes scientifcae* “before they ever ascended a public pulpit or shrove a soul,” and contributed in kind to almost all of the preaching genres.

The collection of texts that comprise Harley 3244 and other Dominican manuscripts can be characterized by their direct practical application in supplying exempla for encouraging confession and instructing preachers how to do so. The bestiary’s moralizations fit into a similar exempla structure as the other treatments of virtues and vices. Additionally, the most common subjects of exempla and confession literature concerned interpersonal interactions, and how one’s sins affected others. The use of images to supplement or reinforce exempla can also be found in didactic wall paintings; the two exempla that are depicted more than once in surviving wall paintings are Warning to the Swearers and Warning to the Gossips, both of which

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228 Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 398.
229 Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 398-99. Mulchahey gives an expansive list of the types of preaching literature used by the Dominicans, some even for direct utilization by the laity: “official collections of theological and canonical material pertinent to confession; there were academic works, utilitarian works; treatises on dogmatic topics; handbooks on the art of preaching; collections of exempla and lives of the saints; calendars and manuals on computus; compendia of virtues and vices; sermon schemata and full homilies taken from time-honoured preachers.”
represent social sins. Wall paintings and other widely accessible images would logically reflect the social nature of the communal spaces in which they were housed, as well as the most immediately relevant concerns of their lay viewers. The enduring preoccupation with social sins, particularly the sins of anger, hatred, and vengeance against one’s neighbors, is evident in Augustine’s division of the ten commandments into the first three and the last seven: the first three pertaining to man’s relationship with God, and the last seven to interpersonal relations with one’s neighbor. Thomas of Chobham similarly emphasized the division of the commandments, and “underscored the importance of such matters in his advice on the confessor’s duties. Priests must instruct penitents not just about the love of God, but also how, and in what order, to love their neighbors.”

As I shall discuss in regard to Harley 3244’s bestiary, its illustrations also reinforce this preoccupation with these “social” sins, and in some instances appear to be specifically drawn to more accurately reflect these concerns. These social-facing illustrations are in notable contrast to other bestiary illustrations, as a number of usually consistently depicted representations of the animals are entirely different, with no apparent precedent in other bestiaries’ illustrations. In fact, a majority of Harley 3244’s illustrations are in line with those in other manuscripts; however, its occasional divergences are so great and seemingly without comparison that the purpose of the changes can be best explained by a focus on preaching. I have devoted significant study to them below.

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3.3.5 **THE UNICORN**

The unicorn is one of the distinctive illustrations of Harley 3244.\(^{234}\) It shows a more intimate scene than usual, with the figures of the maiden, unicorn, and knight tightly composed within the border (see Appendix, figure 7). This differs from other bestiaries such as British Library, Harley MS 4751 and Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, which depict three hunters in pursuit of the unicorn; the entourage and their clothing depict the scene as communal sport. The unicorn in Harley 3244 is similar to that in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, which also shows a single armor-clad knight piercing the unicorn’s side (see Appendix, figure 8). The compositions and rendering of the figures are nearly identical in both manuscripts: a maiden on the left with unicorn in her lap, and the attacking knight on the right.

However, the knights’ shields are a point of departure. Harley 3244’s knight carries a green shield adorned with quatrefoils, while the knight of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 carries a shield with a simpler design of a gyronny of orange and white. A detail that suggests a common model or image book for the artists is the knight’s arm, which looks like an amputated left arm in Harley 3244 but is much clearer as the right arm in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630; in the latter, it is more apparent that the arm is bent at the elbow, due to the combination of the knight standing in more of a profile, and his lance protruding back past the arm. Harley 3244 is missing this detail of the extended lance, and the knight’s stance facing the viewer. Unlike Harley 3244, however, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 visually divides the image with a tree that extends from the bottom border to the top, fostering a sense of distance between the knight and the maiden holding the unicorn. The greater intimacy of the complete scene in Harley 3244 unifies the three figures aesthetically as well as symbolically.

\(^{234}\) Harley MS 3244, f.38r.
The slight variations show a more visually simplified interpretation of the scene by the Harley 3244 artist, as well as perhaps his lack of figural understanding or attention. Less cluttered than Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, the Harley 3244 illustration presents a clearer relationship between the human figures and the unicorn, which can be more easily parsed from a short distance. The lamb-like unicorn in Harley 3244 also provides another visual association with the Christ symbolism of the unicorn, and its higher-up wound is closer to the location of the human heart than a quadruped’s. Both Harley 3244 and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 were produced in England in the second to third quarter of the thirteenth century, and so the availability of a similar or shared visual model is possible. Considering the likely availability of a common model book, illustrations that are unique or unusual to Harley 3244 indicate a conscious departure.

3.3.6 DEPICTIONS OF HUMAN FIGURES AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The depiction of human figures throughout the bestiaries also offers additional insight into a given manuscript’s audience and use. The men that appear alongside the animals in Harley 3244 are dressed in common clothing and represent lay occupations, and the dog entry, in particular, contains many such illustrations. Some illustrations of common predators, such as the fox and wolf, contextualize the animal through its impact on the laity: a hooded man carries a club to chase away a fox that has eaten what is likely a chicken, and the wolf is similarly shown carrying off a sheep in its bloodied mouth.236

The entry on the dog is particularly elaborate, with six illustrations or scenes depicted in all. The first illustration is of a shepherd and his sheep, and his dog as company; this is an

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235 Harley MS 3244, f. 45r.
236 Harley MS 3244, f. 43v (fox) and f.44r (wolf).
unusual bestiary illustration for the dog (see Appendix, figure 9). The closest image to Harley 3244 is one in Bodley 533, which depicts a shepherd, his flock, and his two dogs, but the differences in composition and figures are significant enough to make a common exemplar or model book unlikely. The inclusion of the bucolic scene would be more visually legible to a lay audience than the knights with dogs seen in bestiary manuscripts such as Ashmole 1511 or Douce 151.

Though there are similarities with Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, Harley 3244’s portrayal of King Garamantes and his dogs is a self-contained scene of the story. The illustration shows King Garamantes watching his two dogs attack the jailer, pulling him from the building as one hand holds the key and the other grasps the doorframe in an apparent attempt to resist (see Appendix, figure 10). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 shows the scene of the king’s capture, as two men lead him to the jail in chains. The specific scene of escape portrayed in Harley 3244 is more effective in conveying the complete action of the exemplum as well as the relevance of the dogs, in comparison with the king’s simply being led to the jail. The scene with King Garamantes and the dogs in Harley 3244 is also unusual amongst other bestiaries. It follows the typical streamlined depiction of the King’s rescue where older manuscripts depict an earlier scene of the King bound, but differs from the others in showing the dogs attacking the jailer, who holds a large key.

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237 Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 533, f.8v.
238 Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1511, f. 26r; Bodleian Library, MS Douce 151, f. 22r.
239 Harley 3244, f.45v.
240 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, f. 81v.
3.3.7 **Analysis of the Ape**

The popularity of the ape in the bestiary as well as in sermons is rooted in its appeal to lay audiences, and is particularly evident in the Harley 3244 bestiary. Harley 3244 is relatively unremarkable in the contents of its scene representing the ape; it shares the typical bestiary illustration of the ape, which shows the mother and its offspring along with at least one hunter in pursuit (see Appendix, figure 11). Similarly composed illustrations of the ape include those in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, f.78r, and Pierpont Morgan MS M.81, f.19v, which depict a tightly bound scene of a hunter on the left and the mother ape and its offspring on the right. Pierpont Morgan MS M.81 more closely resembles Harley 3244 in the positioning of the hunter figure; the hunter in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 has successfully struck his target with his arrow. Both Pierpont Morgan MS M.81 and Harley 3244 show the hunter’s arm pulled back from the bow after firing the arrow, which is nowhere to be seen. However, the renderings of the figural details do not have much in common, and indicate some difference in reference works or perhaps creative license of the respective artists.

Coupled with a sermon based on the bestiary entry, the ape illustration would then reinforce the moral lesson as a kind of mnemonic. The entry on the ape describes its distasteful similarity to humans in appearance and in behavior; this similarity seems to be the source of much revulsion. The text cites Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*, stating that the ape’s Latin name *simia* originates from its simulation of human reason—an attribute long argued by philosophers to be distinctly and exclusively human. The contrast between the hunter (described in the text as *venator*: “a venatoribus”) positioned on the left, frozen in mid-action, and the fleeing ape invites the viewer’s comparison. The mother ape’s face echoes the same expression and profile of the human hunter, offering a visual comparison more readily made than the ape and hunter of Pierpont Morgan MS M.81, where the facial features and profile are not mirrored so precisely.
The bestiary alludes to the hunter and this particular aspect of the ape’s behavior in its text: the mother favors one of its offspring over another, and thus cradles one protectively while leaving the other, exposed, on its back as a sacrificial decoy if pursued. However, the mother ape ultimately cannot outsmart the human hunter, as its efforts prove to be in vain when it grows tired and drops its beloved one. Thus nature works to further establish a behavioral distance between humans and animals, especially in the case of the troublingly human-like ape.

The shared focus of the illustration is of the man as hunter together with the sacrifice of the ape’s young, and creates a dynamic scene for development into a more complete narrative. Distinct areas of darkening mark the area above and below the mother ape figure, accumulation of wear over time that speaks to the illustration’s popularity. The bestiary text on the ape is particularly apt for preaching demonstration, explicitly linking apes to the Devil and his fall from the angels, saying that he too lost his tail. John Felton’s *Sermo de Innocentibus* shows the continued popularity of the bestiary’s ape in late medieval sermons, particularly the mother’s loss of its favorite offspring, while retaining the hated one. He makes extensive use of this aspect of the ape as well as other bestiary animals, and makes the undesirable association between the mother’s loss of one offspring and the covetous man’s hunger for worldly goods.²⁴²

Harley 3244 is not unique amongst other bestiary manuscripts in its depiction of this scene of the ape, but elsewhere the details result in a slightly different dynamic in the relationship between hunter and ape and none show the same visible pattern of wear. The Pierpont Morgan bestiary’s blue and green coloring of the young directs the viewer’s attention to the mother’s choice between the two. The Aberdeen Bestiary gives the hunter his own frame (see Appendix, figure 12), and success in his hunt like that of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 242

The hunter in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 151 has a similarly long spear as Aberdeen's (see Appendix, figure 13),\(^{243}\) but its almost obscene rear penetration of the mother ape portrays a reversal of what was thought to be the male ape’s lust for human women.\(^{244}\) The appearance of multiple hunters, such as in Harley 4751 (see Appendix, figure 14) and Bodley 764, brings a sense of hunting as aristocratic sport. The unsuccessful lone hunter in Harley 3244 may better appeal to the common experience of the general populace; they share a superficial similarity with the ape, but by virtue of their existence as humans and choosing to reject their more sinful inclinations, they can widen the distance through proper Christian living.

So memorable and popular was the ape image, that there were concerns about it becoming a distraction to viewers. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his attack against Gothic style, singled out the ape and other creatures considered hybrids, such as centaurs and monstrous races, for what he considered to be distractions from Scriptural meditation and reflection.\(^ {245}\) The amount of wear from interacting with the Harley 3244 ape illustration at least confirms Bernard’s concerns over the animal’s popularity. The imagery in the bestiary’s illustrations seems to indulge and linger on the animals’ fantastic departure from the familiarity of everyday life. But Harley 3244’s richly illustrated bestiary suggests some utility in their inclusion, for the greater good of instruction. Bernard does make an exception when considering the laity, as he acknowledges the significance of the different audiences; he conceded that the most effective method to reach the lay public may well be through these “corporeal ornaments” of church decoration and other visual media.\(^ {246}\) His exception in regard to effective communication further

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\(^{243}\) Bodleian Library, MS Douce 151 f. 14v.


\(^{245}\) Robertson, “Late Medieval Style,” 176-77.

\(^{246}\) Robertson, “Late Medieval Style,” 177.
highlights the importance of the bestiary in Harley 3244, owned by a lay-focused order.

Bernard’s influence is also explicitly apparent in Harley 3244, which includes a collection of his sermons.

While Bernard thought that the vividness of the ape imagery may have been inappropriate for monastic devotion, its ability to captivate the minds of its viewers is apparent in its continued inclusion in monastic bestiaries, and was an advantage in establishing memorable lessons for the laity. The effort to confess ultimately required the personal devotion of the lay audience, and the preacher’s role was to inspire this devotion. Because the ape was seen to be a “grotesque caricature of man,” it came to represent all that was hideous in humans.\textsuperscript{247} Resemblance to the ape was a resemblance to the Devil by analogy. The ape’s tail (or lack thereof) was a recurring symbol; while the \textit{Physiologus} elaborates on the meaning of the ape’s tail-lessness using explicit Scriptural references, only a very abridged version of this remains in Harley 3244 and the bestiary’s textual tradition.\textsuperscript{248} Man is also tailless, but this instead represents his ability to choose between virtue or vice and thus, his own “end,” through confession.\textsuperscript{249} With the ape embodying the sinful counterpart to the virtuous man, and with the superficial similarities so great that there were popular anecdotes of mistaken identity,\textsuperscript{250} one must still make the decision to confess and attain salvation.

The symbolism of apes had come to represent the preoccupation with appearances and thus, deception, both of which drew men away from spiritual truth and salvation. The Dominican John Bromyard called upon ape imagery, in particular their practice of imitating humans, later in the fourteenth century. The term “ape” was used pejoratively by Christian writers, frequently to

\textsuperscript{247} Janson, \textit{Apes and Ape Lore}, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{248} Janson, \textit{Apes and Ape Lore}, 19; compare to Harley 3244 text on “caudam.”
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{250} Owst, \textit{Preaching in Medieval England}, 263-64.
de cry monks that had fallen to worldly luxury; the religious robes only masked an imposter.\textsuperscript{251} Bromyard used apes to criticize those who lived beyond their means and position, abusing their power with cruelty.\textsuperscript{252} In addition, he likened to apes the nobility that followed eccentric trends out of vanity and fashionability; even if they were not the inventors of the trends, they are nonetheless guilty by falling victim to the social sin. The spread of sin through mimicry and the social desire to resemble others was self-perpetuated.

3.3.8 Satyrs in the Bestiary

With the ape’s portrayal in the bestiary and visual tradition established as a reference point, we can now examine the portrayal of the satyr. Harley 3244’s most significant departure from other bestiary illustrations is in its representation of the satyr (see Appendix, figure 15). Traditional depictions of the satyr in the bestiary show a couple of common variations: early bestiaries show a hairier, more animal- and ape-like satyr with clear visual ties to the Physiologus, and later bestiaries (from the Second Family onwards) almost always show an exceedingly human-like satyr, in a reclining or seated position and holding a scepter. Druce theorizes that the earlier depictions come from the confusion in the classification of satyrs as kinds of apes in Solinus, which he described as resembling—yet distinct from—the faun-like satyrs of mythology; thus, the ape species are confusingly named.\textsuperscript{253} Considering the rarity of illustrated ape-satyrs in later bestiaries, faun-satyrs appear to have been the visual reference for illustrators instead.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{251} Owst, Preaching in Medieval England. 264. Bromyard, also possibly Bishop Repingdon who speaks of “apes of the clergy,” 394.
\textsuperscript{252} Owst, Preaching in Medieval England. 313, 323. Apes were grouped together with lap-dogs, palfreys, falcons, and hounds, as pets of the nobility, and are tended to better than the poor; apes are the more amusing substitutes for the lower classes. Also evidence for apes/monkeys as not an uncommon sight. Owst, 301, 327.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
Despite the similarity of Harley 3244 with Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 in a number of its illustrations, including the unicorn, dog, and ape, the images of satyrs in the two manuscripts bear absolutely no resemblance to each other. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 shows a Pan-like satyr reclining on a crutch or staff. It has a tail in addition to the human-like torso in the style of Harley 4751 (see Appendix, figure 16), though there is very much a different source for the illustration: the satyr’s face in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630 is more animal-like, and does not so closely resemble a man’s face like those in Harley 4751 and Bodley 764.

As Harley 3244’s illustration of the satyr visually distances it from its ape cousin, its association with the Devil is uniquely explicit. This is a departure from other bestiaries’ illustrations of the satyr and even from the text. In the bestiary tradition, the satyr entry is paired with that of the ape, and the satyr is treated as a kind of “sub-species” that is also characterized by its mimicry of humans in its movement. In some bestiary illustrations, such as the one in the Aberdeen Bestiary, the illustration of the satyr is more ape-like or animalistic in appearance (see Appendix, figure 17). The sources also categorize satyrs as a type of human, specifically of a monstrous race. In his description of satyrs as a monstrous race, Isidore refers to satyrs as little men that may also be a type of wild man.\textsuperscript{255} The Harley 4751 and the Pierpont Morgan bestiary (see Appendix, figure 18) both depict this Wild Man type of satyr. The unique rendering of the satyrs in Harley 3244 compared to the other bestiaries’ illustrations makes their association with the Devil unambiguous.

Many privately-owned bestiary manuscripts do indeed tend to depict a more human, Wild Man type of satyr, standing upright with human feet and a bearded face. Both the ape and the satyr reflect the Wild Man tradition from the twelfth century. If not for the tail, these satyrs could easily be mistaken for unclothed humans. Some of the conflation in the visual portrayal of apes, satyrs, and humans may originate in part from the bestiary’s source texts. While most bestiaries do not include the monstrous races—even expanded entries of the Third Family do not have corresponding illustrations to accompany the races—there seems to be some similarity in the inconsistent rendering of both the satyr and the Cynocephali, or dog-headed men. Pliny refers to dog-headed men who bark instead of speaking, and wear clothing made from animal skins and live in India. Solinus describes them as apes from Ethiopia, and it is his description of them that appears in the Third Family bestiaries. In his *Etymologies*, however, Isidore only includes a very brief description of the Cynocephali as having dogs’ heads, revealing their animal nature through barking, and uses Pliny’s Indian origin rather than Solinus’s Ethiopian origin.

The illustrators’ common modeling of the satyr after men more so than animals brings out the human viewer’s affinity with the creature rather than their differences. Even the Aberdeen Bestiary’s more animal-like satyr evokes a reaction of more curiosity or pity than of skepticism of its sinister intent, and its association with the Devil is not as clear as the satyrs in Harley 3244. The satyrs in Harley 3244 resemble the more classical conception of their appearance as goat-like: they have horns and goatee facial hair. The satyrs do not share the

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258 Druce, “Some Abnormal and Composite Human Forms in English Church Architecture,” 147.
260 The Aberdeen Bestiary’s illustrations (including the satyr) are related to Ashmole (and paired with MS Douce 151, with possible same illustrator as Aberdeen).
human feet of the other manuscripts’ depictions of satyrs, but the cloven feet more suggestive of Pan, and mostly, the Devil. How this illustration elaborates on the satyr scene reveals a more specific and deliberate association with the Devil and his influence. Of the two satyrs shown in the illustration, the one on the right is carrying a snake. There is no reference to a snake in the text, and this particular scene seems to be unique to this manuscript.²⁶¹

Earlier illustrations show the satyr holding a scepter, or perhaps a jester’s club,²⁶² in varying degrees of human resemblance. Here, the scepter has translated most directly as the snake of the right satyr, or the axe carried by the left satyr. The elaboration of the illustration thus creates a more complete narrative: the snake faces the satyr, with mouth open to better whisper its heresies and sins. Additionally, the composition of the figures positions the snake at their front, as if leading them in a devilish march; the left satyr’s armament readies him for the march towards battle. Especially with the depiction of two satyrs instead of the one frequently seen in bestiaries, the departure of the Harley 3244 satyrs more clearly represents their popular reading as a warning against social or interpersonal sins; namely, it warns against the dangerous influence of bad companions. This is seen in Jerome, who read satyrs and fauns in a similar way as Bernard’s aversion towards apes. Just as Bernard warned against keeping company with “apes,” so did Jerome read satyrs and fauns as symbols of the Devil.²⁶³

While the snake’s symbolism in the bestiary may represent Christ or the Devil, its context within the satyr’s scene is a more concrete suggestion of its association with the Devil. The satyr’s more explicit, concise visual connection to the cloven-footed Devil circumvented the

²⁶¹ Willene B. Clark seems to make an error in her catalogue description of Harley MS 3244. She singles out the satyr as one of the few similar (or “close”) illustrations as the Ashmole and Aberdeen Bestiary, with the human-like satyr with legs crossed, looking upwards with scepter, but it clearly is not correct. She cites “Payne, Medieval Beasts” in the accompanying footnote, so it is possible that Clark is relying on Payne’s erroneous description/note rather than working from the MS itself. Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts, 79.
²⁶³ Link, The Devil: A Mask Without a Face, 44-45.
ambiguity in its original ape-like appearance, which lay viewers could have conflated with the ape’s moralizations. For the purposes of preaching, the illustrated figure as exemplum would need to evoke an immediate, clear connection to a Scriptural lesson. These satyrs resemble a mid-point between the more hirsute and animal-like satyr of the Aberdeen Bestiary, and the Wild Man of Harley 4751.264

3.3.9 CONFESSION AND THE SATYR
In addition to the Harley manuscript’s changes to the appearance of the satyr, the overall impact of the expanded illustration points towards the Devil and the influence of consorting with such company. Morality and penitence come from man’s personal ability to choose, as well as through the company he keeps. This reading overlaps with Bromyard’s use of the ape. Surrounding oneself with sin, seen here represented by the satyr, threatens with the spell of false words and prophets. Harley 3244’s satyr illustration makes the spiritual condition physically apparent. There is danger in following false words and heresies, and those who encourage one to sin will easily lead one to damnation. Based on the extremely heavy wear on the illustration, the satyr is also one of the most popular entries in Harley 3244. Like the ape, there are more concentrated areas of wear around the figures, caused by fingers lingering on each figure; the satyr entry was so heavily used that the space around the figures is almost entirely darkened.

The Harley 3244 satyrs’ resemblance to the Devil and evocation of the Wild Man may offer some insight into the popularity of the illustration. In addition to his disapproving reading of satyrs and fauns as symbols of the Devil, Jerome describes an encounter between St. Paul the Hermit and a penitent satyr. In this exemplum, Jerome’s satyr and the related Wild Man can still

264 Harley 4751’s illustrations are very similar to Bodley 764, especially the ape and the satyr. Primary differences with ape are of the hunters, which appears to be more aristocratic/elite in nature; scene depicted shows more of a formal hunt/sport of the ape.
attain salvation, though only through penitence. Even those who had fallen into sin could once more return to humanity and a virtuous life through the process of confession. Harley 3244’s portrayal of more Devil-like satyrs appeals more clearly to Jerome’s disapproving reading than the redeemable Wild Man type seen in Harley 4751 and similar manuscripts, but the flexible association still retains the emphasis on confession. The implied narrative of the ominous scene takes on a tone of warning, showing the danger of falling into vice and the sway of social sin, rather than referring to the more uplifting tale of the penitent satyr.

Ultimately, whether satyrs were indeed related to Pan and the Devil or to a type of monstrous race, and in which case were unsaved humans, was a philosophical quandary for another day. At least in consideration of a lay audience of the Harley 3244 bestiary, the immediate concern was for preachers to offer specific, memorable exempla and actionable solutions rather than abstractions. In the case of Harley 3244, the satyr’s Devil-like rendering more vividly encapsulates the temptations of sin and a vision of the path to hell, and the pair of satyrs alludes to the popular concerns over social interactions with others. As the extensive wear attests, the satyrs and their possibilities for being incorporated into an engaging exemplum were wildly popular, and offer rare insight into what Dominican preachers valued in their teachings to the laity.

3.4 CONCLUSION
While each unique aspect of Harley 3244 may not be particularly significant when taken individually, the sum of all these variations strongly suggests some specialized purpose, use, and audience in comparison to other extant bestiary manuscripts. The consideration of its ownership by Dominicans, its place amongst the other works within the codex, and its variations in illustrations and wear makes Harley 3244 a unique example of the bestiary genre; but rather than
being simply a curious oddity, its existence has much greater implications on the genre’s development. Harley 3244 is at least one witness to the shift in who read the bestiary, and how and why they read it. Whether it truly was a rare meeting of a friary’s wealth and the desire to preach to the laity, Harley 3244 is evidence of the applicability of the bestiary’s moralizations and illustrations to a non-monastic lay audience; and thanks to the Church’s desire to reach a broader range of souls, the use of bestiaries grew beyond the restricted audience of monasteries and schoolrooms. The inclusion of bestiary chapters in the excerpt collections provide further support for the widening of the bestiary’s sphere of influence, and bestiary imagery continued to be used in sermons delivered to lay audiences in the late fourteenth century. Sermons and preaching were the entry point of bestiary imagery into the larger lay imagination. While the bestiary genre had eventually disappeared from production, the legibility of its animal imagery survived in sermons and art. And as we will see in the next chapter, continued to flourish in vernacular works written for a lay readership.
CHAPTER 4: THE BESTIARY’S AFTERLIFE IN VERNACULAR LITERATURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I will explore the role of the bestiary’s lay audiences in the closing arc of the genre’s lifespan: its “death,” then afterlife in vernacular genres. There is no consensus as to a definitive reason for the significant fourteenth-century decline in bestiary production in England, but recently Willene B. Clark has put forth several possibilities: the use of new school texts for primary education, the rise in popularity of the vernacular French and Italian bestiaries on the Continent, and the revival of the encyclopedia genre. Clark has settled on the last as the determining blow to the bestiary genre, which she argues was unable to compete with the encyclopedia’s popularity as a more expansive nature book. The massive growth in the encyclopedia genre in the thirteenth century could very plausibly have contributed to the bestiary’s decline; however, it does not explain why the earlier and contemporaneous use of encyclopedias such as those by Isidore of Seville and Hrabanus Maurus—which were certainly influential—would not have had a similar effect, or even stifled the emergence of the bestiary genre. While the bestiary genre in its original form as monastic text did not appear to have survived, the bestiary’s animal exempla remained alive in its lay contexts, continuing into an afterlife in vernacular literature.

I propose that the bestiary’s success as pastoralia was integral in its survival in later vernacular literature, despite the decline of the bestiary genre in its recognized form in the fourteenth century. While there is an appeal to a simpler answer, such as the influx of more scientifically accurate animal encyclopedias or loss of interest, the level of popularity and

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pervasiveness of the bestiary throughout England in the thirteenth century precludes such neat explanations. It was the confluence of several significant factors that first slowed production of the bestiary genre in its original, physical incarnation. The bestiary’s use as “first wave” *pastoralia* in conjunction with increasingly literate lay audiences allowed it to survive after the thirteenth century. The bestiary in its recognized form may have fallen from use, but the widespread use of its animal imagery and exempla during the height of the genre had a far-reaching impact in subsequent literary works for a lay audience. In my exploration of the bestiary genre’s decline, I will examine first the historical context, and then its afterlife in English literature, particularly Geoffrey Chaucer’s Pardoner in his *Canterbury Tales*.

The notion of a literary genre’s death is a difficult one to define, as there are often many distinctive elements that survive in other genres and works. Is it the complete obliteration of use and memory of the genre? Is it the obsolescence of the information and material described by the genre? To fully understand the significance of the bestiary genre and its legacy, I have made the distinction between the disuse of the physical and organizational presentation of the information, and the more abstractly defined information itself.

As I have described in the previous chapters the conditions under which the bestiary had emerged as a unique genre, those same parameters can help us define its death. Thus, we can consider the genre’s “death” as the significant deviation from the bestiary’s audience, purpose, and use in conjunction with its non-narrative organization of vivid, naturalistic animal allegory. Examining the kind and extent of changes can also help give us further information as to what was considered successful enough to transmit, and what to discard. Chaucer’s use of some bestiary details is an excellent case study, as how he had reinterpreted the bestiary and incorporated it into his narrative work will show us how he perceived the bestiary, and which
components he deemed would be most successful in the new context of his writings. The non-narrative organization of the bestiary was compatible with its use as a preaching aid, and so the ways in which Chaucer had adapted it for inclusion in a narrative composition such as The Canterbury Tales must be examined in greater depth. Before discussing Chaucer’s particularly dense concentration of bestiary details, I will first look to lay consumption of the bestiary in other vernacular genres: medieval romance and drama.

In my previous chapters, I have argued for the importance of organization and form to the bestiary genre, and I have shown how content, form, and context are vital to its definition and identifying what makes the genre distinct from other animal or encyclopedic traditions. The understanding of the bestiary’s animal exempla by lay populations was marked by its widespread use in lay-oriented sermons and the altering of its imagery to better align with its associations in lay contexts. However, the production of bestiary manuscripts was also declining during this time. While excerpts of the bestiary entries persisted in later encyclopedias and excerpt collections, the genre’s formula of a core text (Physiologus-B and Isidore, or “B-Isidore,” with any further additions building upon that) with accompanying illustrations had all but disappeared from the textual record in England over the course of the fourteenth century; the disappearance of the lavishly illustrated, costly, and time-intensive bestiary manuscripts at the time of the spread of its animal exempla throughout vernacular genres marks a significant shift in the bestiary’s primary audience and use. As discussed in the first chapter, the “bestiary” originally identified by M. R. James as comprising the Fourth Family is no longer considered a proper bestiary but instead an encyclopedia with bestiary excerpts. While it is no longer a bestiary due to the absence of the core text, the fifteenth-century manuscript, Cambridge, Univ. Lib. Gg.6.5, represents one example of the bestiary’s afterlife.
As we see with CUL Gg.6.5, the bestiary’s afterlife is what remained of the bestiary tradition as it became incorporated into literary works and other genres, without the continued production of its original defining generic conventions of a core text, illustration, and specialized audience and use. The extent of its afterlife, which I document using examples in medieval romance and drama and especially Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale, was a result of the bestiary becoming a lay genre over time. Additionally, it is important to note that while bestiary manuscript production was in decline in England during this time, its continental analogues were enjoying a different trajectory and remained popular amongst literate lay audiences well into print culture. The reason for this discrepancy must be a question for another time, but I will note that this underscores the importance of the distinct cultural and contextual factors to the English bestiary tradition.

That bestiary manuscripts experienced a decline and “death” does not mean that its animal exempla and imagery were no longer valued; rather, the original incarnation of the genre as a comprehensive compendium of illustrated animal exempla and their meanings did not align with the changing needs of the burgeoning literate laity. To more faithfully describe the fate of the bestiary after the thirteenth century, I will first briefly establish the evidence for the bestiary’s decline in production as seen in the manuscript record, and examine the “second wave” of pastoralia and how it may have impacted bestiary manuscript production. Following this, in the second section, I will investigate the use of animal exempla in vernacular genres. The animals do not function as a central element of the works; instead, they rely on the lay audience’s existing familiarity with the bestiary-popularized moralizations, in order to further enrich the narrative and surrounding context. I will finally give the most extensive analysis to Chaucer’s reimagining
of the bestiary formula in *The Canterbury Tales*. In it, Chaucer uses the bestiary’s generic conventions and moralizations to create a contemporary, narrative portrait of the Pardoner.

4.2 **DECLINE IN MANUSCRIPT PRODUCTION**

Just as the textual record attests to the bestiary’s spike in popularity in the thirteenth century alongside other similar *pastoralia*, we can refer once more to those records to determine the extent of its decline. English-produced bestiary manuscripts from the fourteenth century and later are few: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library MS 53 (c. 1304-21); Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS 1633 Qto (c. 1400-25); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 91 (c. 1340-60); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 151 (c. 1340-60); Oxford, University Library MS 120 (c. 1300-25).^267^ Five surviving manuscripts out of fifty English bestiaries date after the thirteenth century, and the large majority of the other 45 manuscripts were produced in the thirteenth century. The last record of an English-produced “bestiary,” Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. 6.5, is quite late at 1450-75. It is also likely related to the Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS 1633 Qto (c. 1400-25).^268^ That these late manuscripts are such rare outliers strongly suggests that bestiary production had slowed significantly even accounting for survival bias.^269^ By 1300, ninety percent of surviving English bestiaries had been produced, with about eight percent produced in the fourteenth century.^270^ At least 70 percent of surviving English-produced manuscripts date within the thirteenth century, and that number increases to 84 percent

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^268^ Clark, *Medieval Book of Beasts*, 39. Clark draws the connection between the two manuscripts through the illustrations in the Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. 6.5 manuscript, which are seemingly careless copies of Kongelige Bibliotek MS 1633 Qto.  
if we include the late twelfth century in the calculations.\textsuperscript{271} I have attempted to account for the bestiary’s production patterns in previous chapters by examining historical and cultural factors, with the decline in overall production falling in parallel with the thirteenth-century rise of \textit{pastoralia} and sermon literature in England; furthermore, patterns in the bestiary’s contemporary use (and the decline thereof) are consistent with the changing demographics of medieval reading audiences during this time.

While the bestiary’s use as \textit{pastoralia} and the newfound demand for similar preaching materials after the Fourth Lateran Council resulted in the increased appearance of animal exempla throughout vernacular media, the bestiary was also subject to the rise and fall of trends within the \textit{pastoralia} movement. By the time of the “second wave” in 1281, production of new \textit{summae} and other collections of exempla had practically halted in favor of instructional manuals intended solely for the preacher.\textsuperscript{272} This was not a surprising shift in production, as most monastic libraries already would have had such collections of exempla especially after the previous influx of material; even if each preacher did not have his own personal copy, there was at the very least a centralized collection that would be used during instruction and memorized. The Dominicans in particular had a strong emphasis on education, with the order producing a “vast collection of texts… to help the friars translate the learning of the schools into everyday preaching and into moral instruction for the penitents.”\textsuperscript{273}

In addition to the increase in instructional manuals for preaching, demand for popular preaching also generated a demand for more general pastoral texts, as well as texts in aid of

\textsuperscript{271} 35 of the 50 surviving English-produced manuscripts date within the thirteenth century, and 42 of the 50 span between the second half of the twelfth century up through the thirteenth century. Baxter, \textit{Bestiaries and Their Users}, 147-48.


\textsuperscript{273} M. Michèle Mulchahey, \textit{“First the Bow is Bent in Study”}: \textit{Dominican Education before 1350} (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 398.
reproducing sermons in the *sermo modernus*, or “modern” sermon, style.274 The use of the modern-style sermon began in the late twelfth century, but peaked in technical development in the sermons of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.275 This “new” sermon style was an elaboration on a single *thema* rather than the *modus antiquus* style of verse-by-verse commentary on the day’s Gospel reading.276 The use of the modern sermon style and its central *thema* may be attributed to an adaptation to its modern listeners, who were more receptive to it.277 This shift in popular sermon styles is significant in regards to the bestiary because it is a very generalized work by its very nature. Its non-narrative yet comprehensively compiled animal exempla allowed it to be easily recast as a preaching aid. Of the types of texts produced by Dominican preachers and confessors, one group that seems to describe the bestiary and its uses quite well was comprised of “those which had their origin in the classroom as tools for biblical exegesis, but which came to be recognized as having great relevance in preaching.”278 This repurposing of the bestiary may offer an explanation as to why Clark may be at least partially correct in her insistence that the bestiary was primarily a school text.

The use of vivid imagery in sermons was clearly popular in the early fourteenth century279; yet, bestiary manuscript production did not keep pace with it. There may be a number of factors that contributed to this, such as the bestiary manuscripts having maintained their saturation point in the libraries (as this was still not too far removed from the height of their

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274 Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study,*” 399-401. The modern sermon style was also used interchangeably with “scholastic” sermon style, due to its origins and association with the university and its preachers.
275 Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study,*” 400.
276 Difference of the two styles as described by Oxford Dominican Thomas Waleys in his fourteenth-century tract on sermon style. Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study,*” 401-2.
277 Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study,*” 403.
278 Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study,*” 399. Mulchahey proposes three main categories of these texts: “those which were designed in the first instance as preaching aids; those which had their origin in the classroom as tools for biblical exegesis, but which came to be recognized as having great relevance for preaching; and manuals of moral theology and law intended for use by confessors.”
production), the expense of producing their many illustrations, and the lasting emphasis on a preacher’s ability to extemporize on a variety of exempla rather than restrict his focus to such a specialized area like animals. A combination of many reasons is of course most likely, though any one of these would be a heavy blow to a genre so deeply associated with a distinct audience and use. Another factor for the bestiary’s fall from production, which will be my focus for the remainder of this chapter, is the transition from its use in cloistered monasteries and in sermons to narrative, vernacular literature.

4.3 THE BESTIARY TRADITION IN LATER VERNACULAR LITERATURE

Despite the disappearance of bestiary manuscripts from production, the bestiary continued to survive in vernacular literature as a system of animal imagery and moral judgment to reinforce or supplement the larger narrative. Sir Isumbras is a late medieval romance with most of the nine extant manuscripts from the fifteenth century; the earliest, London, Gray’s Inn MS 20, is dated to 1350, and the latest to 1564. Romances commonly featured animals and heavy moralizations; Sir Isumbras is of particular interest due to the same animals bookending the beginning and end of the story. The number of extant manuscripts, as well as allusions to the poem in other works, further attest to its popularity. 280

In the story, Sir Isumbras is put through several Job-like trials by being stripped of all his family, wealth, and status. While Isumbras encounters a talking bird early in the story, the other animals that appear throughout are meaningful in their association with the moralizations in the bestiary tradition. A leopard, lion, and unicorn carry away his three sons, and an eagle carries away his gold. By no accident are all of these animals strongly associated with Christ. While

Isumbras is distraught over the loss of his family, the animals’ Christ association foreshadows his sons’ safety; this is eventually borne out in their return at the end of the story. The animals, while fierce and dangerous, are thus instruments of divine will and hope rather than a sign of ignominious defeat. The story of *Sir Isumbras* was also adapted into other stories, including the legend of Saint Eustace. While there had been early iconography in the twelfth century depicting Saint Eustace kneeling before a stag, *Sir Isumbras* seems to be the source of the additional animals in the story. The legend of Saint Eustace was similarly popular, and was adapted into medieval plays in several languages; there is record of a sixteenth-century performance in Braintree, Essex, but unfortunately there are no surviving English copies of the Saint Eustace play. However, its apparent popularity demonstrates the narrative reliance on the lay audience’s literacy of the story’s various animals.

The appearance of bestiary animals in medieval plays like Saint Eustace demonstrates an even more widespread literacy of the bestiary, especially in instances where the animals may reinforce characterization. In the Chester Mystery Cycle play, *Noah’s Flood*, there is a lengthy catalogue of animals that halts the action. There is particular care in portraying the animals detailed in the play, with stage direction to paint images of the animals on boards so they can correspond with the dialogue. The animals are roughly ordered in a typical medieval taxonomy, also seen in the bestiary: quadrupeds, domestic animals, and birds. Shem, Ham, Japhet, Noah’s wife, Shem’s wife, Ham’s wife, and Japhet’s wife all take turns reciting groups of animals. The animals each character recites appear to be simply a catalogue, and the account

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281 An English version of the Saint Eustace play, *Placy Dacy als St Ewe Stacy*, was performed to raise funds for church building in 1534. There are extant copies of the Saint Eustace play in French and Italian, but not English. Lynette R. Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: The Plays and their Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13, 210 n.31.
282 *Noah’s Flood*, lines 161-92.
appears innocuous for most of them; for example, Shem cites the animals that are commonly listed first in the bestiary and nature books: lions, leopards, then horses, mares, oxen, swine, goats, calves, sheep, and cattle. But Noah’s wife is tasked with a more unusual group: bears, wolves, apes, owls, marmosets, weasels, squirrels, and ferrets. The owls and apes are particularly strange additions, and the animals that Noah’s wife ushers into the ark stand out from the more mundane cats and ducks the others describe. While the animals are not the central focus of the play, the visual component gives special emphasis to an otherwise unremarkable catalogue of animals: seeing a stream of powerful as well as negatively-associated animals loaded onto the ark as she recites her lines aptly complements the common characterization of Noah’s wife as shrewish and troublesome. The audience’s implicit understanding of the animals’ associated moralizations helps to enhance the scene, reinforced by context-dependent meaning.

4.4 Animal Traditions in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales

Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales is an excellent case study to illustrate the bestiary genre’s afterlife: several of its pilgrims and their tales provide a point of comparison due to their use of the two major, parallel traditions, the Aesopian beast fable and bestiary traditions. Chaucer makes sophisticated use of both in The Canterbury Tales. It is also important to note that he keeps the two traditions distinct, as they are functionally incompatible. References to both the Aesopian and bestiary traditions may appear in a pilgrim’s prologue, but Chaucer will alternate from one to the other as the Aesopian and bestiary traditions serve different, specialized functions. The use of animals as a shorthand for human behavior appears occasionally in a

284 Noah’s Flood, lines 161-64.
285 Noah’s Flood, lines 173-76.
286 For more on how animals function differently according to medieval genres, see Jill Mann, From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

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description of a pilgrim or in the description of a tale’s characters, and using animal likeness to indicate morality or spirituality can be attributed to the bestiary tradition of animals rather than the Aesopian. While both center around animals, the bestiary tradition’s animals work as religious exempla primarily by retaining a more naturalistic character. Their lesson is derived from the allegorical interpretation of the animal’s “natural” behavior and characteristics, and how that may give insight into human spiritual morality.

By contrast, the morals and lessons from the Aesopian beast fable rely on the animals as human or reader surrogates, and they speak and reason as humans might. In Aesop the animals’ natures are exaggerated to represent a variety of human behavioral archetypes, such as a clever fox or malevolent wolf, or the lion as kingly ruler. While the bestiary also describes the animals’ long-cited behaviors, like the wolf’s nature as cunning and predatory, or the lion as Christ-like, in Aesopian fables the animals’ nature is subordinate to the anthropomorphizing characteristic of the genre. The reader learns through their performance as humans, and their lessons are largely secular in comparison to the bestiary’s Christian morality. Examples of animals in *The Canterbury Tales* are many, such as those in The Nun’s Priest’s Tale, The Manciple’s Tale, and The Wife of Bath’s Tale. Chaucer uses the Aesopian or bestiary animal depending on the secular or spiritual nature of the lesson at hand, with the majority of instances and all of the longer narratives concerning animals being of the former. The most extensive use of the bestiary’s imagery and animals surrounds the Pardoner.

While Chaucer draws his beast fables within *The Canterbury Tales* most directly from the Old French sources such as the tales of the fox Reynard, an Aesopian prototype to Chanticleer first appeared in an eleventh-century fable collection, as well as in several fables in a

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similar vein as cited in the Perry Index.\textsuperscript{288} The earliest instance of a singing cock captured by a fox’s deceptive flattery is from a Silos manuscript dated to 1091, with illustrations later added in 1109.\textsuperscript{289} Donald N. Yates proposes that the substitution of a partridge for the cock in Ademar of Chabannes’ version is due to the reputations of cunning for both the partridge and fox in the Physiologus.\textsuperscript{290} If this reason for the substitution is accurate, this would point towards a certain degree of interaction from the bestiary to Aesopian beast fable traditions; however, this substitution in comparison to the more common fox-and-cock version is rare.

While there is some evidence for the later inclusion of other animal traditions in specific bestiaries, such as in an illustration of the fox with a cock or goose in its mouth,\textsuperscript{291} the bestiary’s animal entries have largely developed independently from Aesop and the beast fable. As I have discussed in the first chapter regarding the bestiary’s generic characteristics, the bestiary genre is distinct. On the superficial level, the beast fables and bestiary entries share significant, defining characteristics: the overwhelming centrality of animals as well as the reliance on a moralized lesson. Beyond that similarity, however, the utility of the bestiary lay in the modularity of its information; its organization into discrete “packets” of naturalistic and moralistic behavior could be adapted to any number of its reader’s purposes and sermon topics. This is not unlike the unlabeled sermons collected within manuscripts suitable for many different contexts and audiences, comprehensive in content and portable enough in size so that they “might well have

\textsuperscript{288} Donald N. Yates, “Chanticleer’s Latin Ancestors,” The Chaucer Review, 18:2 (1983), 116-26. The fable in question, from Ademar of Chabannes, centers around a singing partridge rather than a rooster. Yates also cites an early “hint” of the Chanticleer fable in Alcuin’s poem De gallo, and theorizes the role of Isengrimus as having influenced Chaucer alongside the Old French sources. Other variations in the Perry Index may have different animals in the Chanticleer and fox role, such as a wolf rather than a fox, but the story of one falling victim to the other’s flattery of voice maintains a consistent moral between them.

\textsuperscript{289} Yates, “Chanticleer’s Latin Ancestors,” 119.

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{291} Depicted in Harley 3244, f. 43v. The eventual incorporation of Reynard may not have been surprising, considering its popularity in the twelfth century onwards. The fox’s nature was commonly seen to be deceitful in the bestiary and earlier sources. Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts, 141 n.116, 117.
lain open before some Dominican missioner in the pulpit, and reposed on the journey in his tippet.”

Unlike Aesop or the later Reynard cycle, the animals from the bestiary tradition lack the power of speech or human reason. They were used for their Christian allegory and to give visible shape to the internal state. As in their use in sermons, animals of the bestiary tradition are incorporated into vernacular literature more often as the instruments of miracles, punishment, and allegory, particularly as indication of one’s spiritual state. Some vivid examples cited in sermons have included toads permanently attaching to faces, monkeys swallowing the Host to demonstrate its immutability, and the Devil appearing in the form of a hare. Aside from the Devil’s ability to appear as a hare but speak as a man, which in any case would invite suspicion due to its unnatural behavior, the animals still all act within reasonable expectations of an audience familiar with them. They do not act as if they were humans.

The type of animal tradition used in *The Canterbury Tales* is closely tied to Chaucer’s portrayal of the pilgrims and their characterization, and whether it is to depict a narrative, secular lesson or a judgment on a character’s moral standing. And at times, it is primarily visual: In Chaucer’s General Prologue description of the Miller, he tells us that his beard is coarse and red “as any sowe or fox.” This is an unflattering comparison by any definition; however, this differs from the Pardoner’s animal comparisons, as these do not have the same sense of moral significance—there is no entry for the sow in the bestiary. Comparison to an animal such as the sow or fox gives texture to the physical description while also giving some indication of the

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293 Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 62, 64.
295 There is a bestiary entry for the boar, which is very brief and describes its wild and savage nature without moralization. Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, 152.
Miller’s character; without necessarily a spiritual assessment, the comparison is purely
naturalistic. But in other instances Chaucer makes purposeful use of an animal tradition with a
textual history. The portrait of the Wife of Bath as a worldly yet once-domestic woman makes
her recounting of Avianus’s fable of the hunter and the lion appear as simultaneously
recognizable and transgressively authoritarian, as schoolrooms were often the original source of
children’s exposure to such beast fables.\(^{296}\) Another instance of material pulled from the
schoolroom curriculum is in The Physician’s Tale, with its lesson on the wolf in sheep’s clothing
from the *Liber parabolarum*.\(^{297}\) To better highlight the significant departure of Chaucer’s use of
the bestiary tradition in The Pardoner’s Tale, I will first briefly examine The Wife of Bath’s use
of Aesop in her prologue as a point of comparison.

4.4.1 Aesopian Fable in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue
The use of Aesopian animals in the Wife of Bath’s prologue has a purpose and effect
distinct from that of the bestiary animals. Alisoun as the Wife of Bath provides one example of
Aesopian beast fable: when she asks, “Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?” she alludes to a
specific Aesopian fable via Avianus, that of a lion looking at a painting of a man killing a lion.
The Aesopian lion has the physical power and strength of the lion also described in the bestiary,
but it lacks the latter’s association with Christian moralization or moral judgment. Alisoun
provides enough context (painting the lion) to identify the fable and its accompanying lesson as a
way to illustrate her point about subjectivity and power. This context from the fable is necessary,
as the meaning is not implicit in a reference to simply “the lion” or “the hunter.” While

\(^{297}\) Ibid. Similar to the deceptive appearances of the wolf in sheep’s clothing, “Do not consider gold everything that shines like gold” is cited in “The Yeoman’s Tale,” as well as *The House of Fame*. 

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competing moral allegories for animals in the bestiary are commonplace, the narrative context in which the animal is referenced is often sufficient for identifying its meaning, as we shall see later with the Pardoner.

Characteristic of Aesopian animals, the fable’s lion is capable of speech as well as human reason. While the lion is important to the story due to its physical strength over humans—and thus the reader understands the unlikely turnabout of a man killing a lion as easily as is depicted in the painting—the core of its philosophical musings would retain its meaning if the lion was replaced by any number of other similarly powerful animals. The lion’s question invites the audience to empathize with the lion as if it were human, which, in fact, is essential for its lesson of subjectivity and power to be rhetorically effective for Alisoun. As with all Aesop’s fables, the lion is only a means to the end of a wholly human-applicable lesson. The bestiary’s animals and moralizations also function anthropocentrically, as insight into a character’s morality, but the meanings are wholly dependent on the specific animal used.

The lion speaks like a human, and in turn, Alisoun speaks as the lion.298 The voices of the lion and Alisoun actually become one and interchangeable as her tale progresses, and in fact the merging of Alisoun and the lion is necessary to properly convey her lesson. The shared voices of Alisoun and the lion break down the natural order, equalizing men, women, and animals, while the Pardoner and the use of the bestiary tradition’s animals are reliant on a chain of moral hierarchy. Alisoun’s invocation of the Aesopian tradition of animals thus establishes an alternate natural order in which the speaking animals are on equal footing with humans. As Chaucer repeatedly demonstrates in his pilgrims’ portraits and tales, Aesopian animals are simply human analogues, or men in sheep’s (or lion’s, or eagle’s, or hen’s, etc.) clothing. There is no real

distinction between humans and animals in the Aesopian tradition, nor in Chaucer’s borrowings from it.

An abrupt interaction between the Pardoner and Alisoun during the Wife of Bath’s Prologue also brings to the forefront the contrast between the two competing animal traditions, and their different purposes. The Pardoner inserts himself into the scene, declaring that “I was aboute to wedde a wyf; alas!”299 Alisoun calls upon the Aesopian animal tradition as a didactic tool, while the Pardoner’s interruption serves as further confirmation of his depraved morality. His comment calls back to the Chaucer-pilgrim’s observation that “I trow he were a geldyng or a mare,”300 adding to the ambiguity surrounding the Pardoner’s character and authenticity. This speaks to Chaucer’s use of two distinctive animal traditions to represent the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, and is yet another way to paint him as “the exact opposite of… the other great personality in the Canterbury Tales, the Wife of Bath.”301 Chaucer’s use of the bestiary tradition to characterize the Pardoner in the General Prologue serves several purposes: to cast moral and spiritual judgment upon the Pardoner’s character; to paint a vivid physical image of the Pardoner as subhuman; and to establish the sermon-like narrative structure in the Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale.

4.5 PORTRAIT OF THE PARDONER

We see the narrative repurposing of the bestiary animals and its practical association with preaching in the The Pardoner’s Tale in Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales. I have found the Pardoner character worthwhile to study here, as Chaucer has woven into him the textual and

300 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” line 691.
contextual aspects of the bestiary tradition, further detailing the importance of audience and use to the genre’s definition.

Certainly by Chaucer’s time and the peak of the *sermo modernus*, there was much criticism of preachers sacrificing the integrity of a sermon’s moral instruction in favor of crowd-pleasing tactics and style; such critics included Dante and later even Boccaccio. The Pardoner, not lacking in style by any means, embodies this sacrifice of moral substance for charismatic performance. The Pardoner delivers a sermon to the other pilgrims in the *sermo modernus* fashion, leading his prologue with his proclamation of *radix malorum est cupiditas* as his *thema*. His “chaining of authorities” or references to Scripture in his prologue are a common method of expansion (*dilatatio*) upon a *thema*. His tale is his most elaborate expansion, based on the folktale of the three rioters. In his reshaping of the defining aspects of the bestiary genre in the Pardoner’s characterization and in his prologue and tale, Chaucer recreates the emergence of a vernacular literary narrative from non-narrative exempla, including those from the bestiary. The Pardoner himself is the narrative sum of bestiary and sermon exempla, encapsulating the state of the bestiary genre’s afterlife.

Despite the Pardoner’s deplorable nature and unambiguous hypocrisy, the “duality” of his character is difficult to characterize as singularly good or evil. Chaucer uses the bestiary tradition to establish the character of the Pardoner’s disconcerting display of good and evil. Because he is one of God’s creatures, “The Pardoner exists, therefore he cannot be totally evil, therefore some

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302 Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 416-17. Dante’s Beatrice in *Paradiso*, XXIX, II.109-117 criticizes the foolishness of such crowd-pleasing preachers. And echoing Beatrice’s words, Boccaccio defends his tales in the *Decameron* by comparing them with contemporary preaching.
303 Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 409-11.
304 The *exemplum* being the most popular and narrative method of *dilatatio* in sermons, including those by Dominicans, by the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and was recommended in preaching manuals. Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study,” 415-19.
good must be in him.”

But even beyond the fact of his existence, the Pardoner can still promote goodness in others despite his own spiritual and moral failings. In spite of his bluster and hypocrisy, his decision to reveal his usual deception so readily is a confounding dimension of a man seemingly distasteful in all other ways. The pilgrims, and by extension, the reader, would never have had such an insight into his “evil” if it were not for the “good” act that reveals it to us.

In addition to the Pardoner’s spiritual status, interpretation of his physical and sexual nature has been without consensus for at least the past century. The Chaucer-pilgrim’s infamous assertion that “I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare” is one line that further highlights the union of opposing concepts; here, it is of the male or female, and that in between. The Pardoner’s effeminate physical characteristics seem to be challenged by his boasting of sexual activity. While I do not claim to have the Pardoner’s physical or sexual nature resolved, I believe that approaching the Pardoner from the bestiary cues in the General Prologue reveals a structure that unifies his contradictory elements. The physiognomic and phlegmatic composition of the Pardoner complement the bestiary animal tradition in making the spiritual state physically manifest. The elements of the Pardoner demonstrate Chaucer’s intimate familiarity with contemporary genres, and his ability to command and transform them. With the Pardoner’s story—from his description in the General Prologue to his Prologue and Tale—Chaucer returns to the building blocks of the bestiary genre, from its structure and its contextual use, to the narrative shape it will come to take in the process of losing its recognizable form. Chaucer’s

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Pardoner is a fine closing bookend for the genre, helping to transform the bestiary into what could be described as a mixed genre, or *Mischgattung*.

By Chaucer’s time, the bestiary was closely associated with sermons as well as the preachers who performed them. The bestiary’s sharp peak in success in the thirteenth century was due in large part to the increasing focus on reaching lay populations during the same time; competition between newly created mendicant orders, itinerant preachers, and parish priests pushed the bestiary from an occasional resource for use in feast day sermons and monastic *sermones ad claustrales* to a commonly used source of devices designed to capture audiences and encourage confessions. The interaction between preachers and the lay public at large was likely the most significant medium of exposure the latter had with the bestiary and its animals.307 Chaucer’s portrayal of the Pardoner relies not only on the reader’s familiarity with bestiary animals, but also on their strong association with sermons and preaching. The Pardoner embodies the bestiary in twofold fashion: first, his characterization, prologue, and tale comprise a narrative and structural re-envisioning of the bestiary, and second, Chaucer’s choice of the Pardoner as narrative vehicle for the bestiary marries the genre’s textual and structural components with its contextual association of preaching and lay audiences.

4.5.1 **Portrait of the Pardoner as Animal**

Bringing together common subjects of various exempla, Chaucer not only incorporates them into the Pardoner’s meandering sermon to the pilgrims, but he also uses them to more richly develop the Pardoner’s characterization. Unlike other pilgrims designed to be unambiguously virtuous or corrupt, the Pardoner seems to function in both roles. In the case of

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307 Other vehicles for the bestiary tradition’s animals were mostly visual, such as in church decoration like misericords. Refer to Chapter Two for my exploration of the bestiary’s visual tradition and their audiences.
virtuous pilgrims, Chaucer gives us the upstanding Knight and his accompanying tale of chivalry, the Parson as the exemplary religious figure on the pilgrimage, and the Franklin’s happy conclusion on marriage. On the other extreme, the Pardoner’s companion the Summoner is physically repulsive; confirmation of this outward sign of inner corruption is later borne out in his tale. Chaucer uses another religious figure, the Friar, as a similar demonstration of corrupt morality.

The Pardoner, by contrast, has an extra dimension of ambiguity as a result of his honesty. The farther the Pardoner gets into his sermon, the more it reveals the extent of his hypocrisy. He demonstrates his participation in everything he warns against: drunkenness, cursing, and greed. However, the Pardoner’s willingness to reveal to the pilgrims the machinations of his deception, as well as the actual excellence of his tale, makes for a difficult character to pin down. To what end could this transparency serve? Perhaps he had recognized that his present audience was in a different class than his usual country peasants, and decides to give up the game in an act of futility. Another possible reason could be that this brand of “honesty” is just another type of predetermined tactic, one of many in his arsenal of sales pitches. Neither seems quite right, as both still presuppose the final goal of selling false relics as the sole motivator in his exposure of his own hypocrisy. Such a hollow purpose leaves the question of how such a moving tale could come from a wholly corrupted source such as the Pardoner when the other pilgrims’ characters are so well matched by their tales.

The key to the puzzle lies in the animals of the Pardoner’s General Prologue description. If “Chaucer sets up his audience to distrust the Pardoner on sight,” then his later display of honesty is a very shocking surprise. However, his tale and its function of “goodness” are not

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308 Whitney, “What’s Wrong with the Pardoner?” 385.
contrary to or in spite of his character, but rather, they are very much consistent with the structure of his description. The compilation of animals to represent physical features and their meanings is a rapid-fire listing of items reminiscent of pastoralia and, of course, the bestiary. While the Pardoner’s animal likeness adds up to nuanced moral judgment, the compilation of seemingly disparate and ambiguous elements mimics the form and function of a bestiary.

Beginning with his General Prologue description and continuing into the Pardoner’s own introduction and tale prologue, Chaucer uses the bestiary’s animals to indicate this pilgrim’s moral state. This serves to lower the Pardoner to the animals’ stature, rather than elevate animals to that of humans as in Aesop. While the nature of the Pardoner’s spiritual state itself may be invisible, his peculiar, repulsive appearance telegraphs his character quite clearly. In our first introduction to the Pardoner, the pilgrim-narrator interprets his appearance and personality largely through rather unflattering animal comparisons. After describing the Pardoner’s hair “as yelow as wex,/ But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex,” he compares his eyes of “swiche glarynge” to those of a hare. Soon after, he alludes to the Pardoner’s effeminacy or impotence by using another animal analogy, as his voice is “as smal as hath a goot,” leading Chaucer to surmise, “I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.” While the gelding analogy may be apt on the most literal level in describing the Pardoner as a eunuch, the high-pitched, tremulous bleating of a goat and the mare as a female horse further emphasize the Pardoner as lacking in appropriate masculinity. While these descriptions function well in painting a vivid physical portrait, Chaucer’s use of the particular animals invokes associations with the animals’ moralizations; the correspondence of the repulsive, animal-like appearance of the Pardoner to specific aspects of the Pardoner’s inner, spiritual state helps to resolve some of his ambiguity as a character.

309 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 675-76; 684.
310 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 688, 691.
Chaucer describes the Pardoner in the General Prologue using animals traditionally associated with lechery, and that association is further confirmed later during his boasting in his prologue.\(^{311}\) The bestiary describes the goat as “a wanton animal given to butting, and always burning for coitus; on account of his lust his eyes are always casting about, whence he gets his name.”\(^{312}\) Additionally, physical castration was looked upon with mistrust and contempt, in comparison with the more preferred spiritual castration, in which one devoted his life to God and in the creation of good works.\(^{313}\) When we hear what the Pardoner has to say in his prologue and tale, however, suspicion raised in the General Prologue by the animal comparison is confirmed. We learn through the Pardoner’s proud boasting in his tale’s prologue that, “Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne,/ And have a joly wenche in every toun.”\(^{314}\)

According to the Pardoner’s claims, he has proven to be immensely effective in luring in credulous rubes with his promises of increased animals, bountiful grain, and even relief from jealousy, as evidenced by his declaration that “I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,/ Al were it yeven of the povereste page,/ Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,/ Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.”\(^{315}\) His unabashed greed and lack of empathy spreads like deadly poison, like the venom that his victims wish to rid their livestock of; this is even a point of pride, as he boasts that “spitte I out my venym under hewe/ Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.”\(^{316}\) The Pardoner’s self-characterization as beast-like relies on the same bestiary imagery


\(^{312}\) Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, 152. Translated and edited Latin given by Clark: “Hircus lascivum animal et petulcum, et fervens semper ad coitum, cuius oculi ob libidinem in transversum aspicijunt, unde et nomen traxit.”

\(^{313}\) Miller, “Chaucer’s Pardoner, the Scriptural Eunuch,” 51-2.

\(^{314}\) Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” lines 452-53.

\(^{315}\) Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” line 448-51.

\(^{316}\) Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” lines 421-22.
he uses in his sermons. He relishes his ability to “stynge hym with my tonge smerte,” wounding those he feels had wronged him.\footnote{Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” lines 413.} Of the number of serpent entries in the bestiary, the asp is most closely associated with a gaping mouth and a venomous sting. Men who are like asps block their eyes and their ears, unwilling to listen to God.\footnote{Clark, “The Asp and other Serpents” in \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 197-98.} The Pardoner holds misplaced pride in beating others into submission with his open mouth, and he clearly is a poor listener as he cannot even be bothered to listen to his own words.

Chaucer uses the comparison to animals to help his audience understand the Pardoner’s nature, as his likeness to animals places him below humans, at the level of common beasts. There is even danger in falling victim to the Pardoner’s animal-like nature, as he seeks to bring others down to his level: for “with feyned flaterye and japes,/ He made the person and the peple his apes.”\footnote{Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 705-6.} The pejorative use of “apes” is particularly apt here, as the bestiary’s ape is read to represent the Devil’s expulsion from heaven due to his hypocrisy and deception.\footnote{Clark, \textit{A Medieval Book of Beasts}, 133. “Diabolus initium habuit cum esset in caelis angelus, sed hypocrita et dolosus fuit intrinsecus et perdidit caudam, quia totus in fine peribit.”} Beyond simply mindless mimicry, becoming the Pardoner’s ape is far more insidious and corrupting. The Pardoner represents the bestiary in spirit, as his outward form is his inner, moral composition made physically manifest. While all of Chaucer’s pilgrims have physical characteristics that hint towards their personalities and forthcoming stories, the Pardoner’s description is uniquely deeply-rooted in animal analogy. It is fitting that since the Pardoner deals so heavily in animal-bone “relics” and bestiary exempla in his daily hustling, he has taken on the characteristics of his subject matter. This is carried through into the hypocritical affinity between the Pardoner and his...
tale’s thieves; he is financially successful precisely because he embodies the sins he preaches against.

4.5.2 **The Pardoner’s Generic Ties to Preaching**

With the association of bestiaries and preaching, the Pardoner’s corruption represents the merging of text and context in the genre’s afterlife. At times, the exempla he employs align with the Pardoner’s portrait, and they could just as well describe himself; at other times, the bestiary’s animal exempla ironically highlight his hypocrisy by revealing his corrupt morality. That the multiplication and healing of animals are significant selling points for the Pardoner’s relics points towards the centrality of animals in the daily concerns of farmers and uneducated laity that comprise his audience of potential marks. He preys upon the intimate familiarity of his unwitting customers with their animals. The Pardoner certainly claims to be well-traveled, since he is from “Rouncivale… That straight was comen fro the court of Rome.”321 His wealth depended on frequent interactions with the “lewed peple”322 as part of his job as a pardoner. Claiming to know his audience well, he derisively proclaims that “lewed peple loven tales olde,” an inclination he takes advantage of with his tale’s exemplum.323 While the purpose of his claim is ostensibly to show his deft skill in parting even the poorest fools from their money, it also makes apparent the source of the majority of his income. Everything that is effective about the Pardoner is tailored to a very specific audience. He has, however, perhaps overspecialized his pitch to a fault and is unable to adapt to the pilgrims as successfully, as we see with the Host’s

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322 Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale and Prologue,” line 392.
323 Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale and Prologue,” line 437.
reaction to him; but his narrow source of success is so great that he scarcely seems to need any additional revenue streams.\textsuperscript{324}

As I have argued in the previous chapter, a link between the bestiary and popular preaching poses a method of dissemination of the bestiary tradition to the non-monastic, lay population. Chaucer’s pairing of the Pardoner and animals from the bestiary tradition may provide further support for this link. Early work on the Pardoner identifies him as a Dominican friar. Henry Barrett Hinckley’s commentary on the tale notes the Pardoner’s mounting affronts to his order; if he is indeed a Dominican, then Chaucer’s description of wearing his long hair down, as opposed to the customary shaving of the crown for a tonsure, would have further underscored the Pardoner’s lack of discipline and corruption.\textsuperscript{325} However, even if the belief of the Pardoner’s formal association with the Dominican order is no longer widely held, he remains representative of the general ill-will that developed towards traveling religious figures, including mendicant preachers.

As a preaching pardoner, the Pardoner embodies the friars’ later reputation for greed, deceptiveness, and competition with the secular clergy. One work intimately known by Chaucer is the \textit{Roman de la Rose}, at least part of which he translated from the French to Middle English. There is a strong possibility that Chaucer’s inspiration for the Pardoner may have come from the \textit{Roman}’s Faux-Semblant and his hypocrisy.\textsuperscript{326} By Chaucer’s time, there was a great distrust of traveling preachers both legitimate and illegitimate. The core mission of the Dominicans and

\textsuperscript{324} Martin Camargo, “How (Not) to Preach: Thomas Waleys and Chaucer’s Pardoner,” in \textit{Sacred and Profane in Chaucer and Late Medieval Literature} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 146-78. Thomas Waleys cautions against such sermon memorization as the Pardoner takes pride in, and seems to misjudge the more diverse audience of pilgrims.


Franciscans was to reach laypeople through preaching, and their success amongst the laity led to an increase in conmen posing as preachers as well as pardoners. These impostors capitalized upon the laity’s early trust of mendicant preachers, and their questionable intentions and legitimacy resulted in much suspicion and animosity directed towards all traveling religious figures. Critical depictions of pardoners frequently cited hypocrisy and greed, accusations similarly leveled against the Dominicans and other preachers not long after their spread throughout England.

The goodwill that the Dominicans had engendered early on when they arrived in England had been eroding as the end of the thirteenth century drew near. Methods of the Dominican preachers could be suspect, such as seizing upon the hospitality of local parish priests and their churches and engaging in land squabbles with them. The fight for land and the very profitable right to hear confessions and bury the dead became fraught with jealousy, resentment, and bitterness, further souring the reputations of the friars. The exchange of religious services for money thus became a source of much resentment for the local clergy and laity alike, with little distinction made between authentic preachers and pardoners and the conmen who impersonated them.

327 “…the success of authorised pardoners attracted a crowd of others, who were really vagabonds and highwaymen, with no character to lose, and who boldly carried on their trade of imposture.” J. J. Jusserand, “XIII. Chaucer’s Pardoner and the Pope’s Pardoner,” in Essays on Chaucer: His Words and Works (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868), 424.
328 As documented by Matthew Paris in his Chronica maiora, some friars would make their way into the domain of larger abbeys, uninvited. They would claim to only be preaching a passing sermon, then claim illness to allow them to stay until they had become a regular fixture, eventually building their own church. This is supported by royal records in at least one instance in Dunstable. Bede Jarrett, The English Dominicans (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1921), 3.
329 “The struggle between the friars and the secular clergy over preaching was largely one of prestige. Over the hearing of confessions it was one of prestige mingled with some financial considerations. Over the burial of the head it was wholly financial.” Offerings during funerals were particularly lucrative, and the right to burial in monastic ground was an honor rarely acquired by the laity; thus, the opening of friary churches and cemeteries became popular choices for those wishing to be buried in some holy place. John R. H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century, 390-93.
Some of this criticism of pardoners in particular may well have been accurate in some cases, as their sale of indulgences became unpopular when the proceeds went less to public services, and more to line the pardoners’ wallets. Additionally, the state of the clergy in the fourteenth century was much criticized. Rogue pardoners were so widespread an issue that Pope Boniface IX denounced the pardoners who were “sometimes friars, and sometimes clerks belonging to the regular clergy, always men of excessive impudence.” J. J. Jusserand notes that Chaucer’s Pardoner may be one of the conmen who “dispensed with the ecclesiastical licence, and wandered like pedlars from one district to another, trafficking in pardons. Their calling was profitable, and there was much competition in it.” Regardless of the Pardoner’s legitimacy, his formal association with a religious order, or whether we believe his possession of authentic papal bulls, it is clear that he is skilled in his preaching and quite familiar with the popular *sermo modernus* style of the time.

When he later alludes to how his tale’s thieves “many a grisly oath thanne han they sworn,/ And Cristes blessed body they torente,” Chaucer imbues the Pardoner with echoes of writers like Bernard of Clairvaux; audiences would have been well-versed in how swearing dismembered Christ’s body. Swearing was often considered an aspect of other sins, such as wrath, envy, and in this case, gluttony. The Pardoner’s sermonizing on swearing is a further elaboration of the sin of gluttony in his overall preamble to his tale; in a similar vein, he continues with gambling. Swearing was one of the more popular subjects of exempla, used in

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332 Ibid.
333 This too is another parallel to Faux Semblant’s confession in the *Roman de la Rose*, where he boasts of his papal bull. *Romaunt de la Rose*, ll. 6841-48 (Fragment B). Mary Hamel, “The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale,” in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales, Volume 1*, eds. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), 274.
sermons and even depicted in wall paintings. At least two wall paintings depicted the Warning to the Swearers exemplum, which is noteworthy due to the general lack of duplication in surviving wall paintings.\textsuperscript{335}

Chaucer’s depiction of the Pardoner, and particularly his frequent comparison of him to animals, was an intentional effort to achieve a description of his character that was recognizably realistic to his readers. G. R. Owst posits that Chaucer’s own love of the commonplace most likely originated from sermon literature and the growth of “realistic” treatment.\textsuperscript{336} It was “the fundamental requirements of moral instruction, full of the raw and simple facts of daily life, with little restriction of style—direct, candid, forceful,” that influenced the literary realism that followed. As Jusserand also notes in admiration, the Pardoner is a display of Chaucer’s “marvelous exactness” in his portrait,\textsuperscript{337} reflecting both the abilities of and attitudes towards the pardoners of his day. Chaucer’s Pardoner plays into the unflattering stereotypes of pardoners of the time. Walter Clyde Curry cites the objections of the “gentils” when the Host asks the Pardoner to relate “som mirthe or japes” following the Physician’s sorrowful tale as an indication of the negative connotation of pardoners, even though “neither a ‘merry tale’ nor a ‘jape’ is necessarily synonymous with a ribald story in Chaucer,” and it is uncertain how well-acquainted the other pilgrims are with him.\textsuperscript{338} But the pilgrims (and readers) are able to associate their Pardoner with the corrupt pardoner stereotype through his animal-like physiognomical characteristics, which his sermon and aggressive solicitation of his relics eventually confirm.

While Douglas Wurtele challenges Curry’s taking the Chaucer-pilgrim’s observations as fact, as

he argues that the Pardoner’s appearance is in fact Chaucer’s critique of such pseudoscientific conclusions, it seems significant that the Pardoner receives the most extensive of these animal-invoking descriptions. Beyond simply indicating the Pardoner’s various personality traits at face value, his likeness to animals and the consistent double-meaning of his words serve the larger purpose of creating a man and narrative out of exempla.

In a similar fashion to its role in characterizing the Pardoner, the bestiary tradition and its association with Christian allegory also appear throughout the Pardoner’s sermon and tale, working in conjunction with the other non-narrative exempla to create a literary narrative. In his sermonizing, the Pardoner makes an analogy between sinful men and animals, likening drunken clumsiness to the actions of a stuck pig: “Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn:/ Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure,/ For dronkenesse is verry seulpture/ Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.” The image is not simply that of a pig or boar, but one that has been immobilized by humans, stressing physical and mental impotence as a consequence of moral failure. A drunken man forfeits many of the characteristics that elevate humans above animals, such as rationality, wit, self-respect, and significantly, the power of speech. Similarly, the bestiary’s boar is known for its wildness and savagery. A drunkard resembles a “styked swyn” in his bodily movements, but also in the inability to articulate his thoughts.

The meandering allusions of the Pardoner call to mind the common structure of a bestiary’s incorporation into a sermon. When he warns against drunkenness, the Pardoner pairs a Scriptural allusion with the imagery of a stuck swine. He makes a surprising allusion to the

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relatively obscure Biblical figure, the king Lamuel,\textsuperscript{342} despite the doubts as to the Pardoner’s qualifications and authenticity in the face of his flagrant hypocrisy. Perhaps in a criticism of the formulaic nature of the popular sermon, Chaucer has the Pardoner preach about the typical vices, but with the most obscure of references—as if he is leafing through a \textit{summa} at random. The allusion would not be unusual in a sermon addressed to a learned audience, but is unexpected from the Pardoner who observes that “in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe./ To saffron with my predicacioun./ And for to stire hem to devocioun.”\textsuperscript{343} If his opinion of his audience is so small and he claims he only needs a few words of Latin to get his intended effect, it seems hardly necessary to stray from the most popular of sermon subjects. This allusion gives some indication of his familiarity with Scripture and his education, and thus, of his possible association with the Church rather than operating as a secular conman. He refers to Proverbs 31, which is a didactic message similar to that of the Pardoner’s sermon, with words of wisdom “comaundd unto Lamuel” by his mother.\textsuperscript{344} From these lines, the Pardoner cautions against “wyn-yevying to hem that han justise.”\textsuperscript{345} While relevant to his concluding exhortations, the mention of Lamuel seems to serve as a display of his inclusion amongst the learned literate culture of his time.\textsuperscript{346} His listing of various rulers under the unifying theme of drunkenness could well have come from consulting a \textit{summa}. In light of the Pardoner’s hypocrisy and greed, his apparent experience with learned

\textsuperscript{342} “And over al this, avyseth yow right wel/ What was comaundd unto Lamuel—/ Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I;/ Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expressly/ Of wyn-yevying to hem that han justise.” Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale,” lines 783-87.
\textsuperscript{343} Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” lines 344-46.
\textsuperscript{344} Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale,” line 584. The second mention of Lamuel by name is in Proverbs 31:4, which states, “Give not to kings, O Lamuel, give not wine to kings,” as the king’s mother warns of the effects of drunkenness on rulers; drink should be left to those who have a need to forget their sorrow.
\textsuperscript{345} Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale,” line 587.
\textsuperscript{346} This seems to contradict the Pardoner’s claim of knowing little Latin, though perhaps it was spoken in false modesty, in a calculated appeal to his audience.
allusions and Scripture is unsettling, and very much unexpected for a simple conman searching for easy money.

In his cries against the sin of drunkenness, the Pardoner’s repeated allusion to “Sampsoun, Sampsoun!” evokes another popular subject of sermons that was strongly associated with animal imagery. The irony in the Pardoner’s invocation of Samson is not only the Pardoner’s obvious hypocrisy about his own drinking, but also the implied comparison between his and Samson’s respective relationships to animals. The Pardoner praises Samson, who was known for his domination of animals and his use of them as tools of domination, while the Pardoner and his penchant for drink renders him only as good as “swyn.” Contemporary readers would have been intimately familiar with the story of Samson through sermons and art. The story of Samson is strongly associated with animals, as Samson encounters several different animals.\(^\text{347}\) The scene of Samson and the lion was frequently portrayed, and he was also associated with conquering an army single-handedly with a donkey’s jawbone. The most directly relevant allusion of the Pardoner’s “Sampsoun!” is to his abstention from drink, in underlining which the Pardoner adds that “God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no wyn.”\(^\text{348}\) In other words, the great figure of Sampsoun never let himself become the “styked swyn.” While not as explicit a comparison as those in his General Prologue description, the Pardoner’s choice of exempla and animal imagery in light of his ironic hypocrisy makes the implicit comparison with his subject matter unavoidable. This comparison of the speaker and his subject matter continues through his tale.

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\(^\text{347}\) The circumstances of Samson’s divinely-inspired marriage begins with his encounter with a lion, exercising his superhuman strength by tearing it apart with his bare hands as if a goat. He then harvests the honey from its hollow carcass, alluding to the transformation of bees as cited in Pliny and Isidore. Judg 14:5-9.

\(^\text{348}\) Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale,” line 555.
4.5.3 **SHAPING EXEMPLA INTO NARRATIVE**

Chaucer gives a unified shape to the non-narrative exempla, combining them to form a narrative product—to give life to the Pardoner’s portrait, and perhaps to move us as well. The Pardoner and Chaucer may both seek to invite a “newer appetit,” where the Pardoner’s leads to the destruction of the spirit, and Chaucer’s leads to the creation of the narrative. In connection to the third thief and his downfall, the personification of gluttony as a cook or poisoner has a precedent in sermons. In a sermon written for Ash Wednesday and with the topic of penance, the deadly sins are personified as members of the devil’s household. Avarice is the court treasurer, Pride is the steward, and so on; the final official of the devil’s fellowship is gluttony, which is “indeed an evil cook, who poisons many, for gluttony kills more people than does the sword.”

Sermons on the deadly sins prepared audiences for the pre-Easter confession, and explicitly called upon the necessity of preaching to the people more than other times of the year. The Pardoner himself is a cook who “saffrons” his prose with Latin, to better entice his audience to feed into his gluttonous greed. He also later invokes the cook imagery in his tale, saying that:

> How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!  
> Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,  
> And turnen substaunce into accident  
> To fulfille al thy likerous talent!  
> Out of harde bones knokke they  
> The mary, for they caste noght awery  
> That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.  
> Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote  
> Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,  
> To make hym yet a newer appetit.  
> But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices  
> Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices. (537-48)

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The cooks “turnen substaunce into accident,” using the raw ingredients to create a new product that is more pleasing to the palate than the original parts taken separately. The act of combining ingredients—a complicated process to “stampe, and streyne, and grynde”—transforms them into a wholly new creation, with irresistible appeal. This cookery describes the Pardoner’s own efforts, as he elaborately manipulates the exempla into a sermon “to fulfille al thy likerous talent!”; but in doing so, he strips them of their original purpose and meaning. And this insight into the creative process speaks to Chaucer’s role as well, as he too has brought together the familiar exempla of sermons in characterizing and speaking as the Pardoner.  

4.5.4 **Comparison with the Friar and Monk**

Chaucer’s use of the bestiary tradition to characterize the Pardoner becomes more pronounced when his depiction is compared to the portraits of the other pilgrims with religious affiliation, especially the Friar and the Monk. Chaucer’s description of the Friar is similar to that of the Pardoner. The Friar too is remarkably silver-tongued, so that “He was the beste beggere in his hous/ For thogh a wydwe hadde nought a sho/ So plesaunt was his “In principio,”/ Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente./ His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.” With these similar abilities of taking more than they should by misusing their verbal skills, it appears that Chaucer demonstrates an anti-fraternal and anti-mendicancy streak rooted in the tarnished reputations of friars.  

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351 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 252-56

352 “It is true that they never reached that pitch of extravagance and easy-going aloofness which characterised the homes of the monks and canons, but by the time of Chaucer there was obviously little to choose between a friar and a monk, each being equally unpopular in the eyes of the people.” Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century*, 396.
While Chaucer’s use of animals to describe the Pardoner puts him on equal footing with them, he uses animals to position the Monk as elevated by contrast. Importantly, Chaucer does not characterize the Monk by animal likenesses, as he does with the Pardoner; rather, it is the Monk’s Samson-like control over the animals in his company that puts him in an oppositional relationship with the Pardoner. The Monk’s portrait may seem initially flattering, but his interactions with the animals and in turn the Pardoner illustrate the Monk’s questionable moral standing. The Monk is nearly the complete mirror image of the Pardoner in his portrait. The Pardoner’s character of effeminate corruption is counterbalanced by the Monk’s, one that exudes masculine power and potency. And yet—while the Monk is the Pardoner’s opposite, the strength of his portrait relies on the Pardoner’s. In the General Prologue, Chaucer introduces him: “A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,/ An outridere, that lovede venerie,/ A manly man, to been an abbot able.” While the Pardoner is grotesque in his animal-like features, the Monk is handsome or at least “in good point”; in fact, he conquers animals in sport rather than appears as them. Chaucer confirms that “he was a prikasour aright,” so skilled a hunter that he can even seem to bend the laws of nature to drive his greyhounds to possess the power of a bird’s flight.

When Chaucer continues to describe the Monk, who “Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare/ Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare,” we arrive at the punchline later in the Pardoner’s description in the General Prologue—as he is likened to a hare. The Pardoner is the

356 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 189-190. “Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flyght.”
object of his hunt; the shared imagery speaks to their relationship as opposing forces, but it also unites the Pardoner and the Monk together through their portraits. Where the Pardoner spits and stings like an asp with his tongue, the bestiary moralizes that the dog heals with his, just as a teacher does with his good works and words. However, the dog also represents temperance and a moderate lifestyle in the same moralization, which is clearly refuted by the Monk’s enjoyment of fine furs and food. Despite the superficial appearance of incredible difference between the Monk and Pardoner, the animal imagery suggests that they may merely be two sides of the same coin. Unlike the Pardoner, the Monk is not characterized by his similarity to the animals, but by his use of them—and by extension, the Pardoner.

Furthermore, the Monk has a stable full of horses at his command, and “whan he rood, men myghte his brydel here.” The Monk’s mastery of his animal is an audible signal of such to all men nearby, but of the Pardoner, we only hear of his own preoccupation with his appearance and the latest fashions. The other instances of animal imagery similarly illustrate the Monk’s domination of animals. He embraces the “newe world”:

He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees—
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinion was good. (177-83)

Chaucer draws comparisons to different small creatures to emphasize the Monk’s disregard for “that text”—the Rule of St. Benedict, but this dismissal of convention seems to shrink the distance from the Pardoner, despite the Monk’s being cast as the opposite of him and his

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360 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 682-83. “Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;/ Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.”
unambiguously contemptible hypocrisy. Chaucer’s tone becomes sarcastic when he says, “What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,/ Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,/ Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,/ As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?” The Monk is well-dressed in expensive furs, with “His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat,” and the animal element of his portrait closes with the observation in the penultimate line, that “A fat swan loved he best of any roost.” The Monk’s free use of animals for his benefit in this portrait “indicate[s] that he honors the Rule more in the breach than in the observance.” We can also look to his favorite roast as an indication of the relationship between Pardoner and Monk. The swan is known for its voice and singing in the bestiary, and the Pardoner’s final lines in his General Prologue description refer to his singing: “For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,/ He moste preche and wel affile his tonge/ To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;/ Therefore he song the murierly and loude.” The Monk is happy to consume the swan that the Pardoner resembles, but in doing so gives indication to the bond between them. The Monk is happy to show his dominance over the Pardoner by dining on the Pardoner’s animal double, but it is not a particularly meaningful achievement.

Several of Chaucer’s pilgrims represent an unflattering type of corrupt religious figure. While they share many characteristics, such as the lack of reservation in taking others’ money and deceitfulness behind the veneer of respectability, Chaucer distinguishes the Pardoner from the others primarily through his animal-like nature. The irony of the Pardoner’s tale could be transferred to the Friar or Monk fairly neatly, but it is Chaucer’s description of the Pardoner in an

361 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” lines 184-87.
363 Herman, “A Monk Ther Was, A Fair for the Maistrie,” 76.
364 Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts, 171-72.
animal blazon and its interplay with his prologue and tale that create a unique view into the bestiary genre’s incorporation into narrative.

4.6 ANIMALS AND THE THREE THIEVES

Chaucer finds one more opportunity to use animals to comment on the Pardoner’s depraved moral character, in his tale of the three thieves. The third thief’s long-winded explanation to the apothecary is another narrative repurposing of the bestiary genre, and Chaucer uses animals in this elaboration of the folktale to establish a moral judgment—similar to and in parallel with Chaucer’s running characterization of the Pardoner. By far the most extensive instance of animals in the Pardoner’s tale comes when we follow the third thief into town, sent there to retrieve some bread and wine for his two companions. There are two instances where Chaucer deviates significantly from the folktale of “The Treasure Finders Who Murder Each Other” and its sources. First is the character of the old man, whom death will not take. Chaucer may have taken this figure from a commonly used school text, Maximianus, though his merging of the old man and hermit/Christ warning character is unique to Chaucer’s retelling. The second is where Chaucer gives the most original and extensive treatment; the exemplum analogues of the folktale leave the details of the thief’s purchase of poison without embellishment. In Chaucer’s retelling, the third thief concocts an elaborate lie to obfuscate his

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366 Hamel, “The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale,” 279-93. In three of the five principal types of the folktale, the tale is framed by Christ or a hermit who returns to draw a final moral. Mary Hamel identifies Chaucer’s version as corresponding most closely to the third type, where there are three treasure-finders, a hermit who directs them to the gold, but no final moralizing character. The five types of “The Treasure Finders Who Murder Each Other” folktale proposed and detailed by Mary Hamel and Charles Merrill, “The Analogues of the Pardoner’s Tale and a New African Version,” Chaucer Review 26, no. 2 (Fall, 1991), 175-83. See also Henry Seidel Canby, “Some Comments on the Sources of Chaucer’s ‘Pardoner’s Tale,’” Modern Philology 2, no. 4 (1905), 477-87.

367 Hamel, “The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale,” 279-80. Similar elaboration of the thief’s purchase of poison and conversation with the apothecary is found in the play of St. Anthony of much later date, mid-15th century. The “Treasure Finders Who Murder Each Other” is #763 in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) classification of folk tales, under the “God rewards and punishes” subclass of “Religious Tales.”
actual intention of using the poison on men, rather than animals. This lie of purchasing the poison for rats and other vermin is only found in Chaucer’s version and in a much later fifteenth-century Italian miracle-play, *Rappresentazione di Sant’ Antonio.*

His reasoning to the apothecary for seeking poison encapsulates how he brings ironic moral judgment upon his two companions, oblivious to the symbolic implications of the animals (but of which the reader is aware):

And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,
And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle
Som poyson, that he myghte his rattes quelle;
And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,
That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde yslawe,
And fayn he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,
On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte. (851-58)

When the unrepentant thief pridefully assumes power over the lives—and deaths—of his companions, he understands that recounting the full truth of his intentions to the God-fearing apothecary may not be well received. The apothecary appears to buy his cover story of using the poison for the imaginary animal vermin that afflict him. But he and the other two thieves are no better than rats marked for poison, which works just as well on them.

The third thief’s fantasy of duping his two companions contrasts with the reality in which the men are brought down to the level of the nuisance animals he claims as the targets of the poison. While intended for human use on animals, the poison is so potent that: “In al this world ther is no creature/ That eten or dronken hath of this confiture/ Noght but the montance of a corn

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368 Canby, “Some Comments on the Sources,” 485. Any mention of rats, or any explanation for the poison, is absent from a preserved version of Chaucer’s possible source *Novella* 149 in the Codex Panciatichiano-Palatino. For the Buddhist origin and other analogues of the tale, also see W. A. Clouston, “The Robbers and the Treasure-Trove: Buddhist Original and Asiatic and European Versions of The Pardoner’s Tale,” in *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, eds. F. J. Furnivall, Edmund Brock, and W. A. Coulston (London: The Chaucer Society, 1888), 129-34; 415-36.
The sin of pride—attributing more power to man than he has—compounds the effects of greed. Both sins work in tandem as the path to damnation, and once again, describe the Pardoner just as aptly. The thief’s overconfidence from his ability to exterminate animal pests allows him to apply the same principles to his two companions; eventually, he arrives at same conclusion we do, which is that there is no difference between himself and the “animals” that he seeks to poison. He is just as susceptible to the poison as his friends. While the rat is conspicuously absent from the bestiary and the medieval imagination, the entry for the polecat or weasel cites how they chase mice and snakes, and are moralized as those who do nothing after hearing the divine word—a particularly apt description of the Pardoner.

As the Pardoner tells his tale and describes the thieves, we cannot help but relate them back to the storyteller himself. The animal allusion is one more point of overlap between the Pardoner and his subject matter, as he is distinctly animal-like in his physical description and personality. The bestiary’s moralization for the weasel or polecat cautions against hypocrisy: “Now, they symbolize the many people who gladly hear a kernel of the Divine Word, but distracted by the love of earthly things, they overlook and neglect what they heard.” From the Pardoner’s sermon and command of an expansive range of exempla, it is apparent that he is well-versed in the Bible and educated. Unlike some in his audience, he cannot claim ignorance, but nor does he attempt to do so. He unabashedly flaunts his hypocrisy, and his ability to

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369 Chaucer, “The Pardoner’s Tale,” 861-64.
370 Curiously, rats are conspicuously absent in medieval encyclopedias and the bestiary, but there are entries for mice.
372 Translation by Clark, A Medieval Book of Beasts, 161-62.
compartmentalize his sermons’ lessons from his own gluttonous greed gives the impression of being a complicit prisoner of such earthly things.

The third thief overestimates his place and pays for the same assumption his companions make regarding him, that they are no better than common nuisance animals. That the two other thieves consume the poisoned wine lends further unity to the overall sermon structure, illustrating the Pardoner’s earlier sermonizing on drunkenness. The third thief may have escaped poisoning, but receives punishment nonetheless, murdered by his fellow vermin. The comparison of the animals in relation to the three thieves and the Pardoner has a dehumanizing effect on the men, rather than a humanizing one on the animals. The more naturalistic portrayal of animals in non-speaking roles contrasts against the highly anthropomorphized animals of the Aesopian tradition in the other tales.

Comparisons with the animals are not often flattering, as we see in these instances that they are indications of the interior state made external. Chaucer incorporates animals and their bestiary moralizations for their vivid imagery as well as for their ability to further shape the moral and spiritual standing of the characters. The animals functioning as animals, rather than as humans, emphasizes the irony in the Pardoner’s classification of the three thieves as inferior to even animals. This harkens back to the description of the Pardoner in the General Prologue, where the Chaucer-pilgrim is uncertain as to what animal he resembles most.373 The Pardoner’s prologue and tale fulfill the structure and character foreshadowed by Chaucer in the General Prologue.

373 Chaucer, “General Prologue,” line 691.
4.7 Conclusion

In Chaucer’s use of animal exempla from the bestiary, he allows us some insight into the bestiary’s afterlife, and how the larger public came in contact with it. Chaucer’s associative “bundling” of the bestiary exempla together with other popular sermon exempla in his *Canterbury Tales* shows a rare example of its larger context, in its life as well as its afterlife. In the character of the Pardoner and his tale, Chaucer makes the most extensive use of the bestiary exempla. It is through the Pardoner that Chaucer demonstrates how the bestiary’s animal imagery could be used as a literary shorthand to indicate the spiritual and moral state of a character. It seems to be no accident that the character with the greatest contact with the “lewed peple,” especially the illiterate laity least likely to encounter a bestiary in a schoolroom or a monastery library, best embodies the vividness of animal imagery as a window to the soul. His uses of bestiary animals over Aesop have the distinct purpose of developing character, simultaneously signaling the exterior and interior state, rather than just a parallel secular moral lesson of the latter. While the bestiary as a compilation of animal exempla and illustrations had fallen from use by preachers by the early fourteenth century, it had transitioned into a new place in the emerging vernacular literature during this time, far more popular and widespread in its repurposing than it had been in its life before.

Despite the bestiary shrinking from production in the early fourteenth century, its continued currency in vernacular works such as Chaucer’s is telling. It had developed into a literary device that incorporated its animal symbolism in conjunction with its historical and contextual use as sermon *pastoralia*, and eventually the associations became a common shorthand for enriching characterization and narrative. This new use combined the bestiary’s vivid imagery with its moral exempla. Its appearances in secular literary works in the vernacular appealed to those who would have previously encountered the bestiary through preachers and
pardoners, in the oral presentations of sermons. Prior to this, any lay interaction with the bestiary during its lifespan would likely have been limited to exposure to the illustrations and the genre’s visual tradition, rather than through reading the text itself; as a result, the experience of the bestiary for the vast majority of the lay population would have been inextricably tied to the larger performative and religious context. Chaucer had called upon this natural association when crafting his portrait and tale of the Pardoner.

As we see with Chaucer’s use of the bestiary to develop a moral statement on his Pardoner and the construction of sermons, the bestiary’s use in later medieval works represented the new uses of the bestiary in increasingly relevant forms for its changing audiences. The defining traits of the bestiary tradition that survived the genre were a merging of its preaching context together with the contents of the text and imagery. It would be gravely inaccurate and premature to pronounce the death of the bestiary with the eventual decrease in its manuscript production in the early fourteenth century; hitching the bestiary’s lifespan solely to its specific physical structure does a great disservice to the genre and its lasting impact on English literature. It is apparent that the bestiary genre did not disappear from the medieval imagination, but had been gradually reshaped to better serve its new audiences.
For all of its unique imagery and persistence in the literary imagination, the bestiary genre had a life that spanned only a short couple centuries. However, it is apparent that the bestiary’s animal exempla enjoyed an afterlife separate from the production of its elaborate, illustrated manuscripts, and had taken on new uses and audiences very different from their originally monastic origin. What survived from the bestiary genre after the transformation of the material culture that sustained it in England is still recognizably unique to the bestiary. Understanding the reasons behind the bestiary tradition’s presence in later vernacular literature such as drama and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* allows us greater insight into the bestiary’s continued influence on the popular imagination, and by the same token its conspicuous absence from print culture in England. Better isolation of the bestiary’s defining contextual characteristics has allowed us to formulate clearer answers concerning the bestiary genre’s “death,” as well as its sustained survival well beyond.

The bestiary, as a non-narrative genre centered around the perpetually popular subject of animals and distinctive for its illustrations, was the perfect blank slate for many uses. It was a collection of raw material upon which to build, and its various possible modalities throughout its lifetime reflect this. Once the first wave of *pastoralia* arrived to meet the demand generated by the pastoral care movement, the bestiary was better suited to the purpose than its source text, the *Physiologus*. In addition to being more expansive, the addition of Isidore made it more versatile than the *Physiologus*. The bestiary’s characteristic illustrations were also important enough to warrant the significant time and expense needed for their completion; and yet, the vividness of its animal imagery and coupled moralizations allowed the bestiary to outlast the willingness or ability to devote to it the considerable time and resources its manuscripts required.
In a process that mirrors its genesis, the bestiary genre transitioned into its afterlife by being compiled into other sources. Later encyclopedic works would absorb its moralizations, and the strongest elements of its visual tradition would appear in vernacular literature. The bestiary did not fade away from literary consciousness, but instead continued to inform it. Understanding the lifespan of the bestiary genre, from its origin to its afterlife as well as the major driving forces behind its development, leads us closer to resolving the mystery of its seeming disappearance in the midst of its greatest popularity. In actuality, its ties to the larger public as a lay genre ensured its continued existence beyond its manuscript production. The bestiary was a witness to the cultural transition into the emerging Middle English and lay literacy, shifting shape but nonetheless surviving to accompany its audience into a new age of meaning.
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APPENDIX: IMAGES

Figure 1: *Nicticorax*
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 247, f. 143v
Image courtesy of LUNA
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Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 247, f. 163v
Image courtesy of LUNA
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London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, f. 39r.
Image courtesy of British Library
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London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, f. 39v
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Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16II, f. 152v
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London, British Library, Cotton Julius D. vii, f. 114r
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Image courtesy of British Library
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Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3630, f. 76v
Image courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France
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London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, f. 45r
Image courtesy of British Library
Figure 10: Dogs Attacking Jailer
London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, f. 45v
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London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, f. 41r
Image courtesy of British Library
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Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24 (“Aberdeen Bestiary”), f. 12v
Image courtesy of Aberdeen University Library
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Image courtesy of LUNA
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London, British Library, Harley MS 4751, f. 11r
Image courtesy of British Library
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Image courtesy of British Library
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Image courtesy of The Morgan Library
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Image courtesy of http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/bbb/0318/13v
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Image courtesy of British Library
Figure 22: Misericord of a siren with two hooked fish
Ludlow St. Laurence
Image courtesy of [http://www.misericords.co.uk/ludlow.html](http://www.misericords.co.uk/ludlow.html)
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Ludlow St. Laurence
Image courtesy of http://www.misericords.co.uk/ludlow.html
Figure 25: Half-bird and half-fish types of siren depicted together
London, British Library, Royal MS 2 B. vii, f. 96v
Image courtesy of British Library