

works as Gyatso's narrative strategy to capture her readers' attention. She thus first places her main protagonist, Desi, and his medical legacy within the broader late seventeenth-century political world in which he was a key player. She then disentangles the various 'bones of contention' and 'roots of the profession' that Desi inherited from his medical predecessors. The final chapter on the 'Ethics of Being Human' details the key virtues the ideal Tibetan physician should embody based on both clinical experience and real-life professional competition and sums up the 'medical mentality' or human way of practising Tibetan medicine that stressed compassion toward patients and an understanding of the absoluteness of death. *Being Human in a Buddhist World* is written for historians of medicine and religion in Asia with an eye toward historians of medicine, science and religion in Europe but with its clear structure, well-articulated arguments, and beautiful illustrations it could potentially capture the attention of Buddhists and healers anywhere in the world.

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Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), \$49.00, hardback/ebook, ISBN: 9780226436739 / 9780226436876.

A genre devoted to taxonomising animal life, the medieval bestiary has proven deeply resistant to its own neat scholarly classification. Nearly a century ago, M.R. James, in *The Bestiary* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1928), proposed the nomenclature of the 'family' to describe the loosely affiliated manuscript traditions that developed from the earliest example of the bestiary form, the *Physiologus*, translated from Greek into Latin as early as the fourth century CE. These family trees have grown new branches in the decades since, with recent scholarship largely following the foundational work of Florence McCulloch's *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962). Sarah Kay's *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* marks the first major challenge to the genealogy of the bestiary families since McCulloch, highlighting a continental bestiary tradition too often side-lined in English-language scholarship.

This manuscript argument, however, is secondary to the primary focus of *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, which centres on a different kind of family resemblance – that between the bestiary reader and the book itself. This resemblance for Kay coalesces in parchment. Drawing on work in critical animal studies as well as psychoanalytic theory and New Philology, Kay argues that bestiaries problematise the very questions of resemblance and difference that they are designed to illustrate. As the literal 'skin' that facilitates the reading experience, parchment bears the physical evidence of the animal bodies it once enclosed. The question of whether and to what degree readers saw their own fleshly natures reflected in this surface lies at the heart of Kay's study.

This is not a question that Kay seeks to answer in a positivist way; rather, she takes a phenomenological approach to the bestiary page, organised around close readings of image, allegory and *mise en page*. Kay grounds her argument in the philosopher Didier Anzieu's concept of the 'Skin Ego', the idea that identity formulates itself at the infant stage in the differentiation of the mother's body from the child's, with skin serving as the medium of contact as well as separation. Alongside Anzieu, Kay places Giorgio

Agamben's argument in *The Open* that human identity posits its rationality against the figure of the animal. The bestiary serves as an object of negotiation for these adjacent theories of identity, at once establishing and destabilising the grounds for human difference from the animal world.

Following an introduction, the book progresses by means of six paired chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 take up questions of origins – both the origins of created nature and the origins of human dominion over that nature. Kay takes as her centrepiece a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* (XIII.15.16), in which he describes divine scripture as stretched out 'like a skin (*sicut pellis*)' (Psalm 103:2) over humanity, just like the skins with which God clothed Adam and Eve (cf. Genesis 3:21) after the Fall (pp. 24–5). In Chapter 1, Kay examines bestiaries as an extension of Adam's naming of the animals in Eden, while Chapter 2 returns to Augustine to consider the image of sin as the bestial garment that must be shed in order to achieve salvation. Crucial to Kay's argument is the way that parchment – whether left 'bare' to convey a sense of human nakedness or scarred in a reflection of animal woundedness – disrupts the transcendental work of allegory, returning the reader's attention emphatically to the physical book.

Chapters 3 and 4 treat sex and death, respectively. Chapter 3 reframes bestiary allegory through the lens of Freudian drives – that is, through the libidinal mechanisms of genital fixation and repression that organise human sexuality against 'unclean' or 'bestial' desire. As in the previous chapters, parchment serves as the material analogue to allegory, in this case reinforcing in its own flaws the permeability of the human body. Kay sees these flaws as especially prevalent on leaves concerned with sex and violence. Violence serves as the explicit focus of Chapter 4. Equating animal life with Agamben's notion of 'bare life', Kay suggests that bestiaries manifest humanity's sovereign power over animals, even as the scarred parchment surface serves to remind readers of their own vulnerable flesh.

The final set of chapters, 5 and 6, mull over questions of resemblance and recognition. Chapter 5 considers scenes of looking, both within manuscript illustrations and in the gaze of the reader upon the manuscript page. Kay uses moments of animal misidentification and self-recognition to think about the similitudes that link humanity with divine as well as animal natures. Chapter 6 moves from forms of external recognition to inner cognition, focusing on Hugh of Fouilly's *Aviarium* and Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'amours*. The intimacy of mother–child relationships – represented here by the birds of the *Aviarium*, the Ape, and the Elephant – manifests for Kay the 'codicological unconscious' (p. 142) of the bestiary genre. A mirror to its reader, its parchment skin serves as the sublimated product of human drives towards violence, eroticism and affective identification.

A conclusion and an appendix, offering a descriptive list of Latin and French bestiary traditions, completes the book. It is richly illustrated, with twenty-eight black-and-white figures and an equal number of full-colour plates. So, too, is the book richly argued. The breadth of Kay's manuscript evidence, coupled with the subtlety of her observations, makes this book challenging and rewarding to read. Kay calls her approach to parchment a 'speculative phenomenology' of the page (p. 3), which can lead at times to a speculative phenomenology of the reader, too. Suggestions of what historical readers 'might have' or 'must have' thought about the parchment book in front of them will no doubt convince some modern readers more than others. As a meditation on human nature as it reflects upon the world of nature, however, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self* offers myriad insights and provocations.

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