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Joyce E. Salisbury. *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages.* New York: Routledge, 2010. 224 pp. $130.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-78094-0; $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-78095-7.

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The first edition of *The Beast Within* was published by Routledge in 1994. It remains the only general synthesis on the topic, distilling responses to animals from a diverse range of documentary and literary sources, and presents a model of diachronic change in attitudes toward other species from the early to later Middle Ages. The pivotal time when this change occurred is argued to be the twelfth century, when boundaries between humans and animals established in early Christian thought are thought to have broken down. With its broad coverage and key themes, *The Beast Within* remains one of the most important and frequently cited works on human responses to animals in the Middle Ages. Seventeen years later a second edition has been published, marking a period when the study of human-animal relations in the Middle Ages has truly blossomed.

In the last two decades, the study of animals (and more broadly the natural world) in medieval European societies has proliferated within a range of disciplines. The bestiary has come into its own as a subfield of medieval literature. It is in many ways iconic of the subfield of medieval animal studies, and the cover of the new *Beast Within* exemplifies this with a vignette of a manticore from the Rochester Bestiary. Extensive work has been carried out on the many roles assigned to animals within medieval societies–both real and imaginary–as well as a more ecologically based recognition of other species as agents in their own right. From the creation of symbolically charged bestial hybrids to detailed studies of hunting manuals and the development of commercial fisheries, there is a vast corpus of evidence that contributes to an increasingly detailed understanding of, what from an ecological perspective is sometimes referred to as, the construction of the "human ecological niche"–the physical and conceptual environment created by European societies following the disintegration of the Roman Empire. Zooarchaeologists (or archaeozoologists) have documented the fragmented remains of animals recovered from medieval archaeological contexts across Europe on a daily basis; they have catalogued hundreds of thousands of bone fragments from every type of site. Material culture, derived from locally acquired and exotic animal parts, has attracted the attention of both art historians and archaeologists. Most recently, biomolecular approaches, particularly focusing on isotopes and ancient DNA, have been increasingly applied to the study of medieval ecological questions. Initiatives led by the European Society for Environmental History, the American Society for Environmental History, the Medieval Animal Database Network, and the Animals as Material Culture conference series have contributed in bringing together scholars working with medieval animals from all regions of Europe. The revised edition of *The Beast Within* is therefore perfectly placed to capture and further invigorate this trend in scholarship.

Joyce E. Salisbury provides two main reasons for writing a second edition: firstly, to elaborate on specific themes in the previous work, especially pet keeping and the legal status of animals; and secondly, to update the existing book with the latest research.[1] The question of species segregation remains at the heart of the new edition, a precedent established in early Christian thought, which, Salisbury argues, became increasingly diffuse after the twelfth century. The significance of the creation story in Genesis is downplayed, as the initial formulation of Christian attitudes to animals is linked more to the opposition of the early church fathers to non-Christian (i.e., pagan) values. Their segregating ideology eventually broke down due to the pervasive influence of imaginary animals in medieval culture. The thematic chapters of the book track this diachronic shift in attitudes, culminating in a discussion of hybridity and shape changing. The challenge in bringing all of this evidence together is considerable, and in the second edition of *The Beast Within* Salisbury reiterates her belief in a value system shared by "Western European society," whilst acknowledging the importance of regional studies.

This approach characterized the first edition and was criticized on the grounds of its generic application to a complex and diverse society, as well as the lack of a critical approach to the sources.[2] Much of the original thematic content has been reproduced in the second addition, along with its very readable, if somewhat eclectic, narrative. Examples are drawn from all periods within the chosen timeline and from a number of regions, with no attempt at maintaining any spatial or chronological integrity. Some statements are extremely generic and contribute to undermining the fundamental observations that punctuate the author's thesis. For example, Salisbury writes that horses available in northern Europe were small in the earliest centuries of the Middle Ages, but this is only qualified by one reference to excavated horses in Anglo-Saxon England, which in turn cites a single site report produced by Jennie Coy in 1980, based on an assemblage from a mid-Saxon smelting site in Ramsbury, Wiltshire, rather than more updated and synthetic works on horses and equestrianism. Indeed, Coy wrote that "continental sites contemporary with Ramsbury show horses either at the larger end of the range shown here or much larger."[3] This example typifies Salisbury's approach, which is heavily reliant on a limited number of written sources, virtually excluding archaeological evidence, and does not provide substantiation for statements generalized for "northern Europe" or "western Europe," across the full time span of the Middle Ages.

Chapter 3 focuses on "the turning point in the medieval view of animals" (p. 80).Salisbury argues that it became increasingly difficult to tell the difference between humans and other species. The evidence presented in the subsequent chapters for this blurring of the boundaries is drawn from the *Physiologus* tradition and bestiaries, and from fables and beast epics. The use of animal metaphors in these families of literature is taken as representing the loss of clear species boundaries within western European society, even when contemporaries, such as Thomas Aquinas, "were asserting the absolute difference between the species" (p. 105). Salisbury links the proliferation of metaphorical animals with the treatment of animals *as* humans, drawing on a regionally and chronologically specific set of animal trials popularized by Edward P. Evans's *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (1906). The unusual and limited distribution of these animal trials is not considered. Instead, they are interpreted as the end result of a widespread semiotic shift prompted by the top-down dissemination of fables. The final stage in Salisbury's chronology–the disintegration of the boundaries between humans and animals–draws on increasingly documented interest in apes and the theme of shape changing and hybridity. The last chapter concludes–as in the first edition–with conceptualizations of human identity, focusing on the examples of saints.

Overall, the second edition reinforces, rather than develops, the study published by Salisbury in 1994. Although new material has been added, the most striking problem with the diachronic model has not been addressed. The trends can be linked to an exponentially increasing data set, reflecting changing literary cultures in western Europe, whilst the evidence of earlier material culture that bridges this gap is not considered. Hybridity and composite forms define, for example, the applied zoomorphic art of Scandinavian regions from the fifth century through the eleventh century, within a culture where human and animal identities could be linked on many levels.[4] Likewise early Christian uses of animal metaphors, particularly lambs/sheep and lions, do not fit into Salisbury's model. The lamb (or sheep) appears from the first century in association with Christ the "Good Shepherd" on catacomb paintings and sarcophagi, and from the mid-fourth century as the *Agnus Dei* and the Lamb of the Apocalypse;[5] it appears as individual animals removed from a pastoral context as visual metaphors for Christ and his passion–in one painting even performing the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves.[6] From the sixth century, this Christological identity was emphasized by representations of the lamb with a pierced side, blood streaming into a chalice recalling the wounds of Christ. A sacrificial motif inherited from the Judaic tradition–indeed early Christian writers regarded the eating of the lamb at Passover as prefiguring Christ's passion–the lamb became incorporated into the decorative schemes of early Christian basilicas, sometimes accompanied by flocks of sheep representing the apostles, and invoking the *Agnus Dei* had become a fixed part of the Roman Mass by the late eighth century.[7] This is surely the essential background to the proliferation of lambs in the decorative schemes of stone churches rebuilt across western Europe from the latter half of the eleventh century. Without providing further examples, it is clear that animals played not only complex symbolic roles in both Christian and non-Christian European cultures throughout the first millennium AD, but also *formative* roles in social and cosmological organization. The shift from envisaging animals as property to attaching a different set of values after the twelfth century is surely too reductive, and ignores the evidence for earlier (and later) complexity. There is an almost complete absence of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental data, which has

contributed significantly to furthering our understanding of animal exploitation in the past, but which remains fragmented and scattered across many different publications and technical reports.

In this respect, *The Beast Within* does not truly capture the state of the art of medieval animal studies, nor does it offer any attempt at integrating the varied data sets. It has been updated to strengthen the diachronic model of gradual integration of human and animal identities in western European society, and in this respect it will continue to provoke challenges to its generalist claims and stimulate debates based on more detailed comparisons and interdisciplinary studies.

Notes

[1]. The topic of medieval pets has been recently studied by Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012).

[2]. David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 4-6.

[3]. Jennie Coy, "The Animal Bones," in "A Middle Saxon Iron Smelting Site at Ramsburg, Wiltshire," by Jeremy Haslam, *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980): 41-51, quotation on 46.

[4]. For example, Siv Kristoffersen, "Transformation in Migration Period Animal Art," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 28 (1995): 1-18; Karen HøilundNielsen and Siv Kristoffersen, "Germansk dyrestil (Salins stil I-III): Et historisk perspektiv," *Hikuin* 29 (2002): 15-74; and Nancy L. Wicker, "The Scandinavian Animal Styles in Response to Mediterranean and Christian Narrative Art," in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 531-550.

[5]. Dale Kinney, "The Apocalypse in Early Christian Monumental Decoration," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 200-216, esp. 202.

[6]. Robin M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 141-143.

[7]. Charles M. Atkinson, "The Earliest *Agnus Dei* Melody and Its Tropes," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 30, no. 1 (1977): 1-19, esp. 5.

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