In this paper I argue that a twelfth-century experiment in the bestiary tradition – Hugh of Fouilloy’s *Aviarium* or “Book of Birds” and the various bestiary texts with which it was partnered – uses the bodily substance of the medieval book to mirror an emotional, moral or spiritual self. Specifically, Hugh deploys the imagination of sight and touch – covering, enclosing, or shielding – in order to conjure in his readers the sense of having an “inner life” that is outlined by “inner vision” and “inner touch,” and filled with love for God and one’s fellow man. These developments may be understood as taking place through the internalized sight and touch of another’s skin, variously manifested as a parental (specifically maternal) skin, the social skin of an institution like the cloister, or the skin from which the medieval page was made. They have parallels in other religious works that exploit the book’s potential as a mirror, such as the twelfth-century *Speculum virginum* (“Mirror for Virgins”) conceived, as Janice Pindar puts it, “as an image against which the religious woman can measure her inner self, a reminder of who she is and what she is supposed to be like.” I use this argument to develop an idea first advanced some years ago that reading a parchment book acts as an extension of the reader’s own skin, which may insinuate unintended elements in this inner self.

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Locating the “soul” in relation to inner senses that are the reflex of external ones nuances the somewhat blunt opposition between “flesh” and “spirit” proposed early in the bestiary tradition, an opposition apparently compounded by one between human and nonhuman animals. The characteristic bipartite chapter structure, for example, corresponds on first sight to a distinction between an animal body and a human soul, the first segment describing a creature’s physical appearance and behavior and the second allegorizing them in terms of human spiritual welfare. In Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 53 the allegories are signaled by the indication *spiritualiter* in the margin. The texts of individual chapters often contrast flesh and spirit, exhorting readers to avoid the ways of the former and embrace those of the latter, as in the chapter on the Fox which, from the earliest redactions, identifies it as representing the devil and continues:

To all those who live according to the flesh, he pretends that he is dead... but to spiritual men (*spiritualibus*) and those perfect in faith he is truly dead and reduced to nothing. Those, however, who want to practice his works, they desire to be fattened on his meats, that is, the devil’s... as the Apostle says, “Knowing this, therefore, that if you live according to the flesh, you will die; if, however, with the spirit (*spiritu*) you mortify the works of the flesh, you shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

As this passage shows, however, while the Fox’s nature sounds a warning against the pitfalls of the flesh, it does not represent the flesh as such. Although it is tempting to read the chapter’s structure as setting the soul apart from the body, its bipartition does not cleanly divide the spiritual from the physical any more than dualist theologies of the soul thought it completely separate from the body.

As if capturing this permeation of one by the other, the traditional *naturae* of some beasts specifically enact the infusion of spirit in the body, like the Lion which revives cubs that are born dead by breathing life into them, or the Panther whose breath draws all creatures to it except for the dragon. Negatively valued

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animals, like the Great Fish, are also characterized as exhalation. The associations performed in such chapters between breath, animation, and a soul that can be eternally damned or saved, indicate the diversity of medieval thinking about the “life-giving principle” or “soul” (*anima*), a diversity resumed in this paper under the term “inner life.”

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which major modifications were made to Latin bestiaries and the French versions emerged, was also a period in which treatises on the soul proliferated. Although the influence of the tradition of Aristotle’s *De anima* is perceptible in some works, the texts discussed in this paper broadly reflect an Augustinian approach to what is meant by “soul.” Both approaches, however, mediate between the poles of “flesh” and “spirit,” “human” and “nonhuman,” by attending not only to spiritual content but also to the way that content is shaped by a containing structure, envelope, or skin, which serves as the recipient of external sensations and as a surface on which inner senses are imagined as felt.

**Hugh of Fouilloy’s imagined enclosures**

Hugh of Fouilloy (c.1096–c.1172, known in Latin as Hugo de Folieto) was an Augustinian canon whose works were often attributed to a more famous canon of the same order, Hugh of St Victor. He was confirmed as prior of S.-Nicolas-de-Regny in 1132 and became prior of the superior house of S.-Laurent-au-Bois c.1152. The *Aviarium* was conceived for novice monks or lay brothers in Hugh’s care, and most copies of known provenance are either Augustinian or Cistercian. Sometimes the *Aviarium* is inserted alongside parts of the birds section of

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9 On the attribution of *De claustro* to Hugh of St Victor, especially in Germany, see G. Bauer, *Claustrum animae I*, Munich 1973, 269–281. On misattribution to him of the Aviarum, see Clark, *Book of Birds*, 6–7. The H bestiary was also wrongly attributed to Hugh of St Victor, see Clark, *Book of Beasts*, 13.


a second-family Latin bestiary text, as happens in the Aberdeen bestiary (Aberdeen University Library, MS 24) or in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius 372/621; at others it is copied alongside a bestiary text, often that known as the H-text which was specifically designed to accompany it. Many of these combined Aviary-bestiaries, especially those with the H bestiary, are also from Augustinian or Cistercian houses. I will look closely later at two manuscripts in particular, the Aberdeen bestiary and Sidney Sussex MS 100, which juxtaposes the Aviarium with an H-bestiary text.

The Aviarium was written in order to improve the souls of Hugh’s monastic pupils by encouraging their conversion to the monastic Rule, and by helping those who have converted to convert others. The extent to which the soul’s development is bound up with the modes of its containment is well conveyed by the Aviarium’s initial entry on the Dove, which Hugh successively identifies as a figure for the whole person of the monk (Prologue §1), divine Grace (§1), the Church (§§2, 5), the soul (§3), and a priest (§4) – the soul cannot be considered separately from its embodiment and social dependencies. Caroline Bynum does not discuss the Aviarium in her study of individuality in the twelfth century, but Hugh’s glosses on the Dove concord with her account of the medieval “self” as delineated both by personal interiority, and by inclusion within a group that

and the Garden”, 160. Y. Gobry, Le “De claustro animae” d’Hugues de Fouilloy, Amiens 1995, 86, queries how far Hugh’s hermeneutics are specifically Augustinian, and underlines his debt to Citeaux, 102–106. This pamphlet is a reprint of the introduction of Gobry’s 1965 dissertation and edition of De claustro Book 3, which I have not been able to consult.

12 See Clark, Book of Birds, 73–75. The second-family bestiary text will be cited from Clark, Book of Beasts, by chapter and, when chapters range over more than one page, additionally by page number.

13 For an initial conspectus of the bestiary pairings of the Aviarium, see Clark, Book of Birds, Appendix 1, 257–259; and for an initial list of Aviarium manuscripts, the Catalogue in Clark, Book of Birds, 267–313; both need to be supplemented by Van den Abeele, “Trente-et-un nouveaux manuscrits”.

14 A few are Franciscan, like Cambridge, Gonville and Caius MS 372/621 and the interesting BnF fr. 24428 which combines a French version of the Aviarium with the bestiary of Guillaume le Clerc.


16 Clark, Book of Birds, 7.
is subject to a particular external authority.\textsuperscript{17} Others of Hugh’s works are also intended for a monastic readership and often circulate with the \textit{Aviarium}, particularly his \textit{De claustro animae} (“The Cloister of the Soul”), a treatise promoting a reformed monastic spirituality of which there are over 500 known manuscripts.\textsuperscript{18} The relative chronology of these works is not certain, but the \textit{Aviarium} is likely to be the earlier of the two.\textsuperscript{19}

Although Hugh accords a clear priority to humans, he nevertheless entertains their affinity with other creatures. Reason, which presides over the soul in \textit{De claustro animae}, is said to act like Noah in his Ark when “he edifies the soul, ordering the irrational animals below and placing birds and humans above, that is, he subordinates carnal movements and promotes spiritual ones” (3:6, PL 176:1094B).\textsuperscript{20} Some animals may be irrational and carnal, but birds belong alongside Noah, reason, and the spirit. The capacity of birds to enhance the life of the soul is the enabling trope of the entire \textit{Aviarium}. In fact Hugh says at the outset that both birds and other animals serve “as an example of moral character” (\textit{ad exemplum morum}; Prologue §1), evidence that he at one stage contemplated writing a bestiary also. By “example” he means that other creatures’ physical behavior – especially that of birds with regards to their eggs and chicks – are both an instance of, and an incitement to, care for the soul.

The effectiveness of examples, the prologue to the \textit{Aviarium} makes clear, lies in the appeal to the imagination. The work begins by stating that it is addressed to the eye rather than the ear. This, Hugh says, is the best way to affect unlettered pupils (\textit{illiterati}, Prologue §2):

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{De Claustro animae} will be quoted from J.-P. Migne (ed.), \textit{Patrologia Latina}, 176, columns 1017–1182; hereafter abbreviated as \textit{PL} 176. Gobry’s list of manuscripts, \textit{Le “De claustro”}, 51–53, has been updated online on the website Archives de la Littérature du Moyen Âge, http://www.arlima.net/ which lists 513 manuscripts in known locations (consulted April 3, 2015). Other works by Hugh of Fouilloy found together with the \textit{Aviarium} and associated bestiaries, especially the \textit{H redaction}, include \textit{De medicina anime, De rota, De pastoribus et ovis}, and \textit{Visio cuisdam monachi}.
\textsuperscript{19} Subsequent scholars challenge Gobry’s chronology, which identifies the \textit{Aviarium} as a youthful work from the 1120s and \textit{De claustro} as his most mature (\textit{Le “De claustro”}, 21, 25). Clark, \textit{Book of Birds}, 9, places all Hugh’s output during his tenure of positions of responsibility for young monks, and dates the \textit{Aviarium} to the late 1130s or early 1140s.
\textsuperscript{20} “Aedificat animam, quae irrationabillia animalia in inferioribus ordinat, homines et volatilia in superiori parte locat, id est, motus carnales subjicit, spirituales superponit.”
\end{quote}
I decided to paint the dove whose wings are silvered and the hinderparts of the back in pale gold (Ps. 67:14), and by a picture to instruct the minds of simple folk (*simplicium*), so that what the intellect of the simple folk (*simplicium*) could scarcely comprehend with the mind’s eye, it might at least discern with the physical eye; and what their hearing could scarcely perceive, their sight might do so. I wished not only to paint the dove physically, but also to outline it verbally, so that by the text I may represent a picture; for instance, whom the simplicity (*simplicitas*) of the picture would not please, at least the moral teaching of the text might do so. (Prologue §1, 117)

The Dove has many natures that can be (and are) moralized, but above and beyond these allegories Hugh’s insistence on its feathers evokes the value of authorship as writing, a value confirmed by occasional *manicula* clutching pens in the margins of these pages. Repeated reference to the Dove’s silver and gold plumage also seem to anticipate his treatise’s realization as a richly decorated book. (The Hawk’s feathers, by contrast are associated with molting, and thus with the moral transformation needed when someone enters a monastery who was previously habituated to secular violence.) Hugh makes clear that the images painted in his book will generate a moral response in the student; for example, in the initial chapter of the Sparrow and Turtledove sequence, Hugh writes:

> Not only shall I describe (*scribam*), but also I shall paint (*pingam*) how the turtledove prizes the solitude of the wastelands, and the solitary sparrow continuously cries on the roof (Ps. 101:8), so by the example of the turtledove you may maintain the purity of chastity, and through the example of the sparrow you may favor the protection of practiced caution, so that you may live virtuously as well as walk cautiously.

This prologue stresses the value of modes of experience and cognition located primarily in the imagination. That of his readers is to be sustained and furnished by the visual images of birds painted in his book, by the imagined “sight” of their behavior as he describes it and also, as becomes clear as the *Aviarium* develops, by imagining the sense of touch of one bird’s body on another.

The second half of the *Aviarium* (§§38–60) relies consistently on imagery of nurture, dwelling in detail on birds’ treatment of their young and attributing strong parenting skills to nearly all the birds that are interpreted positively. Hugh’s teaching is more moral than doctrinal, his aim being to fill new monks with love for God and their neighbor, a love they are to internalize by imaginatively contemplating the natural affection of birds. The motif of the Raven feeding its chicks is amplified over several pages as an image of a preacher ministering to the repentant (§40). Cranes are said to halt in their flight so they can support and

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21 See fos. 42v and 43r in the *Aviarium* section of Gonville and Caius 372/621.
take care of an exhausted fellow; they are tireless sentinels, whose nature lends itself to informing the life of those in religious orders (§44). The Swallow wisely nests near human habitation where its young can be reared in safety (§46); Storks “have an exceptional sense of duty toward their offspring” (§47); and so on with the Heron (§52) and the Quail (§56). Conversely, the negative value of some birds is reflected in their being unfit parents. A long chapter describes how the Ostrich lays its eggs at a time when they will be warmed by the wind so it can devote itself to its own concerns (§42). It is moralized as a hypocrite and lengthily condemned for its failure to nurture its young, for “to have left the eggs on the ground is to fail to raise the sons born of conversion from worldly activities by providing them with the nest of encouragement” (§42, 193). Similarly with the Partridge: both parent birds aggravate their tabloid-worthy vices by the scandalous way they treat their young (§55).

Throughout these chapters Hugh offers his charges the inducement of physical tenderness while also conveying to them the inexorable duty of loving one’s fellow. To do so, he builds on imagery used by other spiritual thinkers of his time, such as Anselm’s prayer to Jesus “who, like a hen, collects her chickens under her wings” (cf. Matt. 23:37). Each new convert monk is encouraged both to visualize and to feel himself a child enfolded in a parent’s embrace; contained within this nurturing structure, his soul is exhorted to see, feel, and love in return.

While these images dominate the second half of the Aviarium, its opening sequence of chapters locates the nurturing of its readers’ souls in the cloister. In chapters 1–22 the Dove and the Hawk share a monastic “perch,” and in chapters 23–37 Church institutions are among the meanings of the Palm and Cedar trees where the Turtledoves and Sparrows make their nests. The value Hugh places on the cloistered life prompts comparison with his De claustro animae, where Hugh submits the architecture of a monastery to fourfold exegesis: its construction is praised as granting unique access to the religious life (Book 1), and then interpreted as materializing a Rule that conduces to virtue and shuns vice (Book 2), as an allegory of the soul (Book 3) and as anticipating the heavenly Jerusalem (Book 4). All four books, but especially Book 3, clearly show how a sustaining external environment equates to an inner spiritual and moral development; the topography of the cloister both maps that of the soul and nurtures its progress.24

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23 Walker Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 114. Her other examples of the motherhood of Jesus use human or at least mammalian imagery.

24 This point is made in different ways by all commentators on De claustro animae, e.g. Pindar, “The Cloister and the Garden”, 167: “His spiritual cloister, while imagined as being inside the soul,
Like the *Aviarium* with which it is often copied, *De claustro* is more pastoral-affective than theological-academic in content. The aspects of spiritual life that it stresses are community and charity, discipline of the self and care for the other, and the need for the monk constantly to strive toward perfection. Like the *Aviarium* promotes nurturing care, *De claustro* teaches that “the practical care of one’s fellow brethren [is] of paramount importance for moral and spiritual life in the monastery” as it “prepares the mind for loving God.” The fact of spending his days moving around the monastery will remind the monk to reflect on the teachings which the treatise has “placed” in its various parts: the layout of the building is not only a set of memorial loci but the setting for the daily practice of the virtues they prescribe. The text promotes a constant exchange between what appears to be *outside* (the building) and what is conjured *inside* the individual soul, the purpose of the treatise being to bring one into harmony with the other and both into a state of perfection.

The boundary between “inside” and “outside” in *De claustro* can act as a skin within (or upon) which the interiority of the soul is constructed. Ivan Gobry draws attention to a passage in which skin mediates this exchange: “Sing to the sound of a tambourine to sing in the choir. Those who sing to the sound of the tambourine mortify their flesh. Those who sing in the choir maintain the harmony of their conscience” (*De claustro* 3§15). He explains: external discipline is figured here as lashes that strike the skin like beats on a tambourine; each member of the community sings to the resulting music, which is what forges them into a “choir.” A different emphasis, one that stresses purity within the skin boundary, is found in the section on the dormitory (*De claustro animi* 3§9), of whose chaste spiritual rapture Hugh writes that “just as the flesh of animal beings is covered on the outside by skin, so the spirit of the living creature, casting abroad in quest of vain
glory, takes its delight from what lies outside it.”\textsuperscript{30} The goal of monastic discipline is to make the externally defined Rule inform the internal self-regulation of each monk. “Spread out the straw of the flesh,” instructs Hugh, “so that animality may be subject to (lit. lie underneath) the reason of the mind,”\textsuperscript{31} a striking image that recalls the passage already quoted in which reason, who presides over the community’s chapter house, acts like Noah with his Ark when “he edifies the soul, ordering the irrational animals below, and placing birds and humans above, that is, he subordinates carnal movements and promotes spiritual ones.”\textsuperscript{32}

The sequence of the \textit{Aviarium} most similar to \textit{De claustro} is that of the Sparrows and the Cedar (\textit{Aviarium} §§30–38).\textsuperscript{33} Sparrows are preachers, and they also figure their young converts; they live in the branches of the Cedar which represents Christ because Cedars “surpass other trees in height, beauty and strength” (§30, 157). As members of the Church, Sparrows are safeguarded by the patronage of the mighty who are another meaning of the Cedar. Yet other Cedars represent predatory barons whose lot is to be felled so their wood can be used in God’s service. Sparrows are unsteady creatures that need the protection of the house built from the Cedar:

See how the sparrow \textit{i.e.} the faithful person, which previously used to migrate to the mountain of faithlessness, now, on guard for the truth of faith, cries from the heights. He is therefore called a recluse \textit{i.e.,} a monk, because he is far removed from earthly desires. (§34, 165)

The Sparrows’ faith and their capacities as preachers or pupils are inward qualities deriving from the fact that they nest within Christ and under the monastic Rule.

The monastery as Cedar and its preachers as nesting Sparrows are depicted variously in \textit{Aviarium} manuscripts. The earliest representation is as a stylized tree containing birds and framing, within a mandorla, a male figure who is some-

\textsuperscript{30} PL 176, 1106B: “Sicut enim caro animalium exterius pelle tegitur, sic animalis spiritus appetitu vanae gloriae ad exteriera se spargens, forinsecus delectatur.”

\textsuperscript{31} De claustro 3§9, PL 176, 1101D: “Substerne fenum carnis, ut animalitas subjaceat rationi mentis.” In subsequent recastings of \textit{De claustro} Reason is replaced as head of house by Love, see J. Pindar, “Love and Reason from Hugh of Fouilloy to the \textit{Abbaye du Saint Esprit}: Changes at the Top in the Medieval Cloister Allegory”, in \textit{Parergon} 27.1 (2010), 67–83.

\textsuperscript{32} De claustro 3§6, PL 176, 1094B: “aedificat animam, quae irrationabilia animalia in inferioribus ordinat, homines et volatilia in superiori parte locat, id est, motus carnales subjicit, spiritales superponit.”

\textsuperscript{33} Because it is tall, the Palm represents not containment but ascent. Its glosses ring the changes on converted monk, Church and soul; it also figures the tree of the Cross and it is here that the Turtledove is said to nest.
times the monastery’s patron (as in Malibu, J.P. Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV.3, fo. 13v). But the illustrators of a few manuscripts have stripped away the tree in favor of an opulent gold field, and substituted doves for sparrows and a female figure for a male one; prime examples are the Aberdeen bestiary (Aberdeen, University Library MS 24, fo. 34r, see Plate 1) and its sister manuscript, the Ashmole bestiary (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1511, fo. 45r). The woman in the Aberdeen manuscript has been variously interpreted as the Virgin, or Wisdom, or the Church. That the figure is a powerful mother of some kind is implied by the way she cradles one of the birds in her arms, unlike in other illustrations which place all the birds in the tree. Its position as nursling evokes the fledglings mentioned in the text and emphasizes the protective authority exercised over them by the allegorical figure. The image combines the intimacy of a maternal environment, mediated by sight and touch, with the discipline implied by the figure’s stern countenance. It epitomizes Hugh’s teaching elsewhere in the Aviarium and De claustro according to which a soul is shaped, regulated, and filled with love, by internalizing the sight and feel of a parent, especially a mother. The fact that the birds depicted in the Aberdeen image are doves rather than sparrows confirms the connection with De claustro since the Doves earlier in the Aviarium represent the addressees of both these works, namely the monks in Hugh’s care.

Although it may seem unexpected to represent the Cedar tree as a woman, in fact the choice of a powerful maternal figure is overdetermined by the maternal

34 This image can be seen online at http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/4767/unknown-maker-a-man-enthroned-within-a-mandorla-in-a-tree-franco-flemish-about-1270/, consulted on April 23, 2015. For identification of the figure, see Clark, Book of Birds, 30–31: the figure is a Count Thibaut, co-founder of the monastery of Saint-Laurent-du-Bois at which Hugh of Fouilloy was prior in 1152. This image with a man in the tree is found in the manuscripts in what Clark calls the Heiligenkreuz and Paris families. Variants on depictions of this chapter in other manuscripts are listed in the commentary on the folio on the Aberdeen bestiary website, see https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/comment/34r.hti. See also Clark, Book of Birds, Figures 7a, 7c–7f, 18a, 20b, 21, 22, 25, 26, 32, 38a, 41, 45, 57b, 70, and 72.

35 Lower resolution photos are visible online at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/34r.hti and https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/comment/34rbirdf.hti.

36 Consulted in Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat der Handschrift Ms. Ashmole 1511. Bestiarium aus dem Besitz der Bodleian Library Oxford, Graz 1982. The figure is also female – a nun – in Bodleian Library, Douce 151 and University College MS 120 (for the latter, see Clark, Book of Birds, Figure 63 and Catalogue, #41; also her Catalog of second-family manuscripts, Clark, Book of Beasts, 223–252, #26). Clark offers an outline of the development of the Cedar iconography, Clark, Book of Birds, 96–97; also J. Geddes, “Observations on the Aberdeen Bestiary”, in Reinardus 11.1 (1998), 67–84.

37 Geddes, “Observations”, and see also the commentary on the Aberdeen website already referred to.
Skin, the inner senses, and the readers’ inner life in the *Aviarium*
quality ascribed to teaching and the cloister elsewhere in the *Aviarium*. In context in the Aberdeen bestiary, the imagination of motherhood and its association with nonhuman animals are also contributing influences. This manuscript contains a second-family Latin bestiary text probably copied around 1200 in the South of England. As also happens in a related group of bestiaries, the *Aviarium* is inserted into, and replaces most of, the usual second-family section on birds (i.e. from §51 on). The second-family redaction was probably composed a few decades later than the *Aviarium*, in England; it too foregrounds the maternal behavior of creatures in a number of the beast chapters, which precede those on birds; in particular it underlines connections between motherhood, imagination, and what I call the “inner life” or soul.

After commenting on the production of hybrids by interbreeding, the second-family chapter on the Horse quotes from Isidore an explanation of how young are conceived in conformity with an image imprinted on the mother’s mind at the time of her impregnation:

Likewise, Jacob tended <sheep> that, contrary to nature, were of the same color, for his ewes conceived offspring like the images of the rams mounting them, which the ewes saw mirrored in the water <they were drinking> (Gen. 30:37–42).Wherefore it happened that certain people urge pregnant women not to look at the faces of the ugliest animals, such as baboons and apes, lest they give birth to babies resembling <the beasts> they see. ... For in mating, animals (*animalia* – living beings) transmit their external forms into <a female> during sexual intercourse, and filled with their images, she carries their appearances (*species*) over into her pregnancy. (*Book of Beasts* §44, 160)

In the last sentence, Isidore wrote not “animals /living beings (*animalia*) transmit” but “the soul (*anima*) transmits”; by *species* he means not just that an “appearance” is transmitted but rather that a generic “species” or “form” is imprinted on the future offspring. The claim lodged in this sentence is that species is imposed on raw matter by a soul in thrall to an image. As received in the twelfth century, however, the text has come to mean that motherhood is something held in common with other living beings that are susceptible to imagination. It is exactly this susceptibility that these twelfth-century works – both the *Aviarium* and the second-family bestiary redaction – set out to exploit in their readers.

Both before and after this passage on the Horse, as in the earlier *Aviarium*, motherhood plays an important imaginative role in second-family bestiaries. Caring for infant offspring is a theme of several second-family chapters including the Lion (*Book of Beasts* §1), Tiger (§2), Elephant (§9), Ape (§14), and Bear (§20); it reappears in chapters on birds including the Hoopoe (§67), Pelican (§68), Nightingale (§75) and Raven (§77). In many manuscripts, the initial Lion chapter recasts the father Lion’s act of resuscitating its cubs as the mother’s care for her
infants, even though this goes against the traditional gendering of the allegory according to which the Father resurrects the Son. The Second-family Pelican continues an earlier tradition whereby it is the mother bird that sheds her blood for her children, not the father, even though allegorically the Pelican figures Christ.  

Both the Lion and Pelican chapters share the trend in twelfth-century spirituality toward understanding God’s love for humanity through metaphors of mothering, a development importantly documented by Caroline Bynum in *Jesus as Mother*. The Aberdeen bestiary has suffered the loss of a number of folios, but still retains imagery of motherhood in its illustrations of the Tiger (fo. 8r), Ape (fo. 12v), and Bear (fo. 15r), in the pages preceding the inserted Aviarium. In the related Ashmole bestiary, motherly behavior is depicted on the part of the Lion (fo. 10v), Tiger (12r), Ape (18v), Bear (21r) and Cow (30v).

Some of this physical contact takes the intimate form of licking, as other beasts imitate the mother Bear whose nature is to lick its unformed cubs into shape. The female Tiger is described in the text as trying to suckle an image which it mistakes for its cub, but illustrators often depict her as licking it. Alongside licking, some bestiary chapters evoke terrifying swallowing, the behaviors early attributed to the Fox or Great Fish being added to by the man-eating Cocodrillus and various other Serpents. Instead of spirit being conveyed by breath in these texts, it is passed on through direct contact with an animal’s mouth, usually nurturing, sometimes destructive. The co-existence of these alternatives is reminiscent of the way Melanie Klein analyzes the life-giving versus death-dealing dimensions of an infant’s interactions with its mother, particularly her breast, from which the infant’s sense of self eventually takes shape.

I shall pursue this line of thought before turning, at the end of this paper, to the effects of images of mothering in another manuscript, Sidney Sussex MS 100, which combines the Aviarium with an H bestiary manuscript, and thence back to the Cedar and Sparrows (or woman with doves) in the Aberdeen bestiary. How does the maternal environment depicted on these pages, expressed with reference to representations of skin, excite the reader’s inner senses and give shape to his inner life when he reads a book copied on parchment, itself an instance of actual skin? Answering this question necessitates a return to the idea of the “manuscript matrix.”


39 Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, chapter: “Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother”.

The manuscript matrix and the inner life of the reader

Stephen Nichols first outlined the by now familiar concept of the manuscript matrix in order to promote understanding of manuscript culture by emphasizing the material totality of the book, the page, and the complex ensemble of signifying elements upon it.\(^41\) In her book *Imaginary Worlds* Martha Rust adapts Nichols’ term to three dimensions.\(^42\) The open codex, for her, is the support of a virtual space which projects forward from the page to include the reader. Sometimes this space is the mirror image of a third dimension that a perspective painting already projects backward from the page, like the recessed architectural space framing the Annunciation in a Book of Hours.\(^43\) But its key correlate, for Rust, is the space of imagination that, in medieval theories of mind, occupied “a discreet cell-like area of the brain”.\(^44\) Reading, she proposes, is “an experience [...] of interacting with books as if they bounded a virtual, externalized imaginative faculty”\(^45\), as if the internal cell of the imagination were extended outward to form a space from mind to page that the reader inhabits. Just as imagination is formed by both sensory and intelligent experience, so the manuscript matrix is determined both by the physical features of the book and by what Rust calls “codicological consciousness,” the reader’s awareness of “the interplay among diverse semiotic systems that is only *in potentia* on the physical page”\(^46\). Reading, then, is a space of thinking and, more fundamentally, of *being*, that is framed by a physical support\(^47\).

Rust’s account of medieval reading has obvious similarities with the one I have been advancing, and is based on the same structure of introjection: a reader may feel held or enclosed by a book, and absorbed within its world, and yet physically he or she is the one on the outside, holding a book that can be set down at any moment. But there are differences. Although Rust uses an Annunciation scene to explain her understanding of the matrix, and equates the matrix with an inner cell, unlike me she does not perceive it as maternal, despite the fact that

\(^{41}\) S. G. Nichols, “Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture”, in *Speculum* 65 (1990), 1–9. Nichols's prolific publications since then have further elaborated the usefulness of the term.


\(^{43}\) The Beaufort (or Beauchamp) Book of Hours, Royal 2.A.XVIII, f. 23v; see Rust, *Imaginary Worlds*, 1–5.

\(^{44}\) *Ibid.*., 4.

\(^{45}\) *Ibid.*., 5.


\(^{47}\) *Ibid.*., 7.
one of the meanings of the word matrix is “womb.” And Rust’s notion of imagination is seemingly immune to unconscious influence, being shaped by what she calls “codicological consciousness”: an awareness on the reader’s part of such aspects of book production as ordinatio and the quality of illustration. In addition to such consciousness, I have been advocating for a codicological unconscious in which reading may be subject to contingent interference from the look and feel of the page itself. The ultimate source of this interference lies in the primitive relation to the mother since “[f]rom the time of its conception on, the human being can only live and develop within the shelter of an envelope that ensures it is contained, body and spirit, within a ‘skin’.” From this perspective, the manuscript matrix is one more such envelope, but one whose maternal origins have long since retreated from the reader’s awareness. At a conscious level, the primitive envelope will by now have given way not only to the aspects of the book that Rust enumerates, but to other kinds of sensory experiences (the skin as an adult erotic or mortal surface, for example) and to wider forms of symbolic containment (for example, the sense of having a bounded self within which knowledge and thoughts are harbored).

The distinction between these two kinds of envelope of the self, one physical and the other mental, illustrates how the process of maturation establishes not only the child’s autonomy from the mother, but the distinctness of its mind and body. The two-fold nature of this process is important: to an outer surface of inscription on which sensations are recorded (such as touch and feel) corresponds an inner one that registers experiences and thoughts. This duality enables me to elaborate my earlier account of reading as sharing a skin with the manuscript.

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48 G. Henrot, *Peaux d’âme*, Paris 2009, 25. In allowing that unconscious factors may inflect a reader’s responses to the page I return to Nichols’ original formulation of the manuscript matrix (“Introduction”, 8) as “a place of radical contingencies [...]. The multiple forms of representation on the manuscript page can often provoke rupture between perception and consciousness, so that what we actually perceive may differ markedly from what poet, artist, or artisan intended to express or from what the medieval audience expected to find. In other words, the manuscript space contains gaps through which the unconscious may be glimpsed.”.


51 Kay, “Original Skin”.
The shared skin is double, and has a double role: (1) to envelope the reader along with the book as maternal environment and surface of signification (the “manuscript matrix”); (2) to fold this external envelope back inside the reader as an “inner self,” fortifying his sense of being and thinking within his own skin.

These operations of the manuscript matrix can be illustrated by a reading of Sidney Sussex MS 100, probably copied in Paris ca. 1250 on large leaves of even-colored parchment on which the hair and flesh sides barely distinguishable. It combines the *Aviarium* on fos. 1–26v with an H bestiary on fos. 26v–43, both texts having a number of missing leaves and thus missing pictures. There is no longer any illustration of the Palm or Cedar in the *Aviarium*; in the bestiary, the chapters that remain in which parenting is represented are the Ape, the Weasel and the Elephant; my comments are addressed to the Elephant.

As in other H bestiaries, the decision to place the entry on the Great Dragon (H§24) immediately before those on the Elephant (H§§25–26) results in double illustrations across facing pages: on the left an Elephant is attacked by the Dragon but on the right Elephants conceive and successfully give birth, foiling its hostility (fos.33v–34r, see Plates 2 and 3). The image on the left (fo. 33v) corresponds with the text’s description on the preceding page (fo. 33r) of the Dragon as powerful because it crushes other creatures with its tail, even one as large as an elephant. The allegory glosses this behavior as like the devil that similarly lies in wait, and ensnares even mighty men. The image on the right (fo. 34r) resumes parts of the first Elephant chapter, which begins at the foot of fo. 33v and continues across these facing pages, ending overleaf near the bottom of col. a on fo. 34v. Elephants are said to be highly intelligent and remarkably continent. On the rare occasions when they reproduce they head East, close to paradise, where first the female and then the male eat a mandrake root; this is depicted the upper register of the illustration on fo. 34v, where the anthropomorphic figure is the mandrake and the paradise is represented as the heavenly Jerusalem. There the Elephants mate and the female conceives. To give birth, she goes into a great lake where the Dragon cannot attack her child; she is also guarded by the male Elephant, who tramples serpents underfoot. This scenario provides the lower register of the picture on fo. 34v; the presence of the identical Dragon in both pictures seals what were originally unconnected chapters into a sequence.

The chapter continues by contrasting the Elephants with Adam and Eve whose concupiscence led to their expulsion from Paradise. We learn too that

53 In the second-family bestiary, these same chapters are wide apart with the Dragon featuring as §91 and the Elephant as §9. We do not know the relative chronology of these two Latin versions, both of which postdate the *Aviarium* (?1130s) but predate the thirteenth century.
burning an elephant’s skin and bones will drive away serpents, a nature that affirms their inner purity. The next following chapter, also on the Elephant, reprises the earlier one’s material from different sources. It repeats that the Elephant is continent, conceives with the mandrake, gives birth in water with the father guarding, contrasts with Adam and Eve, can fumigate serpents with its burned skin, and stands for inner virtue. This second chapter continues to the top of fo. 35v, where there is a large empty space before the entry on the Pelican at the foot of that page.

The text on these pages proposes a narrative about the conception and safeguarding of the baby Elephant, which is variously and repeatedly framed. Both text and image stress the maternal environment in which, still tiny and helpless, it is nurtured and protected. The water surrounding the infant is literally womb-like. The mother’s body dwarfs and shields it, aided by the vigilant father. But these images of the infant’s physical dependency are further framed by the mandrake, the paradise, and the many glosses supplementing and allegorizing the Elephants’ natures. Although the baby Elephant forms the thematic core of the picture in the lower register, the reader is also encouraged to envisage himself as an adult Elephant that tramples evil underfoot by leading a life of continence, or that sacrifices its skin for the sake of inner purity. The overall point of the chapters is that Elephants are the opposite of, and better than, human beings, because they ate only what was needed to procreate, whereas Eve and Adam ate in disobedience to God’s decree. The commentary on the mandrake, from Isidore, equates its fruit with the malum terrae, a phrase that recalls the malum (both “apple” and “evil”) which Adam and Eve were said to have eaten. The second passage about burning the Elephant’s skin to repel serpents comes just before this commentary. “In this way,” says the text, “God’s commandments purify the the heart of the one who guards and observes them within himself, and suggestion of the enemy is able to gain entry to him.” The need for self-discipline is presented within a parental scenario, but it also undoes the catastrophe of the fall; it strikes a chord with the exhortations of De claustro animae about the behavior of the ideal monk.

The reader of these facing pages is inserted into a complex manuscript matrix that builds out from a protective maternal environment, elaborating contents

54 H§24 (PL 177, 0073A-B): “Quid autem ossa et pellis elephantis faciant, dicam. In quocunque enim loco vel domo incensa fuerint, odor eorum expellit inde statim omnem serpentin, vel quodque animal venenosum. Sic denique mandata Dei, et pia opera faciunt. Si enim accenduntur in corde hominis, effugant omne opus veneniferum diaboli in quacunque parte.” Similar information is reiterated in H§25 (Ibid., 0074A).
55 H§25 (PL 177, 0074A): “Sic mandata Dei eum purificant et cor ejus, qui ea intra se custodit et observat, et nulla suggestio inimici eo praevalet invenire aditum.”
Plate 2: Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 100, fo. 33v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of the College.
Skin, the inner senses, and the readers’ inner life in the *Aviariun*.

Plate 3: Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 100, fo. 34r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of the College.
that, reflected inward into the reader’s mind, will it not only shape it by means of inner vision and inner touch, but will also fill it with inner strength and purity, and guide it toward salvation. The reader is reminded that he and the book share a skin that is important primarily as the container of a pure interior — and which he may be called upon to “burn.”56 The manuscript matrix connects him with sacrificial skin and inner purity of an Elephant, the truly worthy inhabitant of an Eden from which Adam and Eve were expelled.

This identification with the Elephant may to some extent be supported by the fact that parchment is an animal skin: the reader is asked to internalize, from pages made from this substance, the inner life attributed to another nonhuman animal, the Elephant. And yet this identification with or as the animal is also resisted by the image on fo. 34r. Standing out beside these exemplary Elephants is the mandrake. Not only is it human in appearance, quite unlike the leafy plant described in the passage from Isidore, but it stands next to a paradise that looks just like a human city.57 The mandrake’s face is bare parchment and its body painted a nude pink, so its surface also looks like human skin. If the manuscript projects a matrix continuous with the reader’s skin, then it is surely supported as much (or more) by the mandrake as by the Elephant. According to the subsequent text, the mandrake is, in the Elephants’ sober lives, the alternative to the forbidden fruit that led Eve and Adam to fall. Fixing the reader of Sidney Sussex 100 with colorless human eyes, the mandrake may offer the vision of a purified human form that can reproduce without desire, and the paradisal future that awaits him. The text immediately under the picture on fo. 34r is a quotation from Ps.39: 2–3 which reads: “With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he was attentive to me. And he heard my prayers, and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs.”58 It might seem as if the pit and mire are the water the Elephants are confined to, from which the mandrake-human escapes to the paradise

56 Although this convergence between writing surface and elephant skin may appear accidental, it is supported in Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* VI, xii, 1, on the topic of bookmaking (*De libris conficiendis*), where Isidore states that in antiquity elephants’ membranes were used as writing material: “Among the pagans, certain categories of books were made in fixed sizes. […] They were made not only on papyrus sheets or on parchment, but also on the intestinal membranes of elephants.”

57 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, XVII, ix, 30, copied at the end of H§25: “Mandrake (mandragora) is so called because it has a sweet-smelling fruit the size of a Matian apple; hence Latin speakers call it ‘apple of the earth.’ Poets name it antropomorphon (‘human-formed’), because it has a root that resembles the human form. … There are two kinds of mandrake: the female, with leaves like lettuce’s, producing fruit similar to plums, and the male, with leaves like the beet’s.”

58 “Exspectans exspectavi Dominum, et respexit me, et eduxit me de lacu miseriae, et de luto faecis.”
that awaits him. Or, they may represent the human sexuality of which the mandrake is an instance: a persistence that doesn’t go away despite all the instruction that surrounds it. The manuscript matrix describes a place of imagination and prescribes a certain content for it but it cannot guarantee either imagination or thought against all possibility of fear or desire.

The image of the woman with the doves on fo. 34r of the Aberdeen bestiary provides different ways of exploring how the manuscript matrix may have wittingly or unwittingly shaped the inner selves of its historical readers (see Plate 1). When the codex is open, this image is on the right-hand page with the facing left page occupied by the end of the preceding chapter on the Palm and the introduction of that on the Cedar; below the image, the chapter on the Cedar continues. Scholars agree that fo. 34r attests an unusual history of touch. Whereas most manuscripts show greatest evidence of handling at the bottom outer corners of their pages, here signs of wear are concentrated in the middle of the top margin, just above the illumination. From this is inferred that this page, alone in the volume, was frequently held up from the top, with the rest of the page pointing down and outward, as if a teacher were repeatedly showing it to students. Presumably they were exhorted both to visualize and to feel themselves reflected in the image as Christian nurslings in the arms of a holy mother. Enclosed and cradled by the maternal embrace of the cloister, they would be able to enclose and cradle within themselves a soul warmed by its maternal love. At stake in this image is the repeated contact of skin against skin: mother to child, church to Christian soul, reader to page.

Just as the baby Elephant becomes enfolded in a world of meanings, nostalgia for the infantile envelope of the mother-child bond is overlaid in this image by more adult ideas about the enclosure of the individual by the institution. Neither the allegorical female figure nor the bird that she holds is a literal mother or child, and rocked in its roundel, the bird is a representation of a picture of a symbolic dove that has been substituted for the textual Sparrow – a far cry from being a representation of an actual sparrow. In this way, contact with a nonhuman animal is minimized and the tenderness of a maternal touch evoked only to give

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59 “On all other pages, there are worn dirty patches at the top and bottom corners where the reader has held the parchment to turn the page. Fo. 34r has these patches too, but uniquely has a dirty patch in the centre of the top margin, just above the illustration. This would be caused by gripping the book with one’s thumb on the page, an unnatural position for anyone except a teacher who repeatedly turned the book upside down to show to students. This suggests that the book was used for many years to instruct groups of people about this figure.” Quoted from the commentary on fo. 34, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/. The corresponding page in Ashmole 1511 is not marked in this way.
way to abstract interpretation. The love that is to fill the viewer’s inner self, as result of this symbolic work, is to be less somatic than theological.

Yet traces of the body remain, even if they are not consciously registered. In the bottom outer corner of this folio is a round hole which has the same dimensions as the medallions. Instead of framing an exquisite painting of a dove-or-Christian-soul, what it outlines is an area of parchment on the page beneath, the darker, slightly coarser hair side of which contrasts with the smoother, paler flesh side of fo. 34r. The page combines what Rust calls “codicological consciousness” (recognizing the dove as an allegorical medallion) with an imaginative echo of maternal holding (the woman) together with something much less open to interpretation: an almost invisible trace, barely perceptible to the touch, of an unseeing gaze onto an area of dead animal skin.

Another unsettling echo is that between the mandorla in which the female figure is placed and the three or more scrape marks at the outer edge of folio 34r. Each scrape spreads out from a central cut from which projects a curved area, a bit like a ghostly leaf. The mandorla shape, associated with divinity and sanctity, is also, as Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out, the shape associated with the wound in Christ’s side.60 Whoever is the figure standing where the Cedar notionally is, the shape in which she is placed evokes not only her holy status but also the wound that Christianity identifies most strongly with salvation; the picture is barely three dimensional, but it just is, the gold frame projecting up from the figure incised in the middle. The scrapes on the parchment next to her, however, in a materialist pastiche of the sacred Wound, resulted from the processes of turning a dead animal into a writing surface. As Bynum also says, the mandorla is also uncannily like a vagina, an association that may rise unbidden to the fore in these representations of motherhood. As well as these definable shapes are a number of other scratches and marks on the polished surface of the parchment, that like the hole are barely visible and that mainly register with the tactile imagination, as if they could only be “seen” through the brush of fingertips.

Each of these two manuscripts creates a maternal environment for its reader who is exhorted to imagine himself feeling like an Elephant, or feeling like a Sparrow; and its mise-en-page is designed to generate in him a corresponding inner purity, discipline, and devotion. The page itself insists, in the senses and the inner senses, on the continuity between parchment and reader, a continuity of human and nonhuman on which are founded the imagination and experience.

60 C. Walker Bynum, “Avoiding the Tyranny of Morphology; or, Why Compare?”, in History of Religions 53.4 (May 2014), 341–368.
of parenting that all animals are supposed to share, yet which is potentially disruptive to the inner life that the representations on it are designed to frame.

**Conclusion**

Taking its place in the bestiary tradition, the *Aviarium* and resulting aviary-bestiaries use nonhuman animals to foster awareness of an inner life (or soul) in the reader, and to inspire it too. The *Aviarium* begins with a prologue that stresses the importance of imagination and the senses to its effectiveness; and it promotes the theme of parenthood, specifically the physical contact of mothering, as a source of imagined sensations. In this work, the reader's sense of an interior self takes shape via imagination rather intellecction, where what is imagined gradually shifts from visual image to imagined touch within a nurturing environment. Aviary-bestiaries shield the “children” that they raise and educate, providing them with a skin within which they “see” what the book expounds and “feel” the touch that it describes.

Aviary-bestiary compilations rely on human resemblance to animals as a means of grounding imagination as well as of exciting it; and they rely on skin as the locus of sight and touch and their corresponding inner senses, as experiences conveyed by books and shared between humans and animals. In reading, the reader assumes a second skin, an enclosing environment in which his inner life takes shape through imaginatively dwelling on the contents of the page and through literally seeing and touching its surface. But above and beyond its contents, the parchment page itself interferes in the reading experience, making the manuscript matrix into what is literally a second skin.