The Sounds of Beasts and Birds: Noise and Nonhuman Communication in Medieval French and English Texts Written in Anglo-Norman England

by

Liam Gil Lewis

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

One book chapter, based upon material from Chapter Two of the thesis, is currently in print:

'Quacktrap: Glosses and Multilingual Animal Contact in the *Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth', in *Words in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Vincent Debiais and Victoria Turner (Brepols, 2019)

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on representations of nonhuman sounds in vernacular texts written in French and English in Anglo-Norman England. Through close analysis of a varied corpus of texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including a medieval French bestiary, a multilingual treatise on language, a saint's life, fables and a Middle English song, it highlights the multiple ways that the sounds of beasts and birds are represented for interpretation. It argues that the sonic phenomena associated with nonhuman creatures are used to construct acoustic environments in medieval texts that were exploited by writers to produce and reinforce human subjectivity as distinct from the nonhuman—forms of subjectivity that assert a human exceptionalism in large part based on physical or cognitive power, the expression of hierarchy and control of language. Close examination of a range of such episodes in medieval texts suggests that such networks of power relations were fundamental to the comprehension of human and nonhuman relationships; however, the sounds of beasts and birds also served to destabilise the primacy of the human in those relationships. If medieval texts insist upon human exceptionalism, they also suggest that such exceptionalism has to be asserted, rather than being taken for granted. Moreover, in their engagement with nonhuman sound, these works create spaces in which the human and the nonhuman may come into contact in surprising and unpredictable ways. This project analyses such spaces using insights drawn from sound studies and musicology, translation studies, continental philosophy and critical animal studies. In doing so, it argues that the kinds of cross-species communication made possible by medieval texts are often based on cross-linguistic contact and on the imitation of nonhuman sounds by humans. By placing the sounds of nonhumans into the mouths and minds of human audiences and performers, the medieval texts analysed here demonstrate that it is not only humans that converse with each other. Rather, these texts posit a range of cross-species networks in which human and nonhuman vocalisations such as barking, crying, singing and calling 'cuccu' mirror one another, thereby exposing not only the limits of human language but also the communicative possibilities of nonhuman sound-making.

ABBREVIATIONS

AND	*Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, *The Anglo-Norman Online Hub* (online), <http://www.anglo-norman.net>
Bestiaire	'Le Bestiaire', in *Bestiari Medievali*, ed. and trans. by Luigina Morini (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1996)
Etymologies	*The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
Fables	*Les Fables: Edition critique accompagnée d'une introduction, d'une traduction, de notes et d'un glossaire*, ed. by Charles Brucker (Paris: Peeters, 1998)
LM	Bonaventure, *Legenda maior S. Francisci Assisiensis et eiusdem legenda minor* (Florence: Ad Claras Aquas, 1941)
MED	*The Middle English Dictionary* (online: University of Michigan), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (online), <http://www.oed.com/>
SEL	*The South English Legendaries*, as defined in *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Heather Blurton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017)
Tretiz	*Walter de Bibbesworth: Le Tretiz*, ed. by William Rothwell (Aberystwyth, online PDF: *The Anglo-Norman Online Hub*, 2009), <http://www.anglo-norman.net/texts/bibb-gt.pdf>

Vye	*La Vye de Seynt Fraunceys (MS Paris, BNF, Fonds Français 13505)*, ed. by D. W. Russell (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002)

INTRODUCTION

Bien loinz sur destre aveit oï
chiens abaier e cos chanter:
iluec purra vile trover.
Cele part vet a grant espleit,
u la noise des chiens oeit.[1]

Marie de France, *Le Frêne*

Far on her right she had heard dogs barking and cockerels singing; there she would be able to find a town. She went quickly in this direction where she heard the noise of the dogs.

In this quotation from *Le Frêne*, one of a collection of medieval *lais* attributed to the Anglo-Norman poet Marie de France, a servant about to abandon the character Frêne as a baby is guided towards civilisation by the 'noise' of dogs and the singing of cockerels.[2] This episode is a key transitional moment in a story that begins in Brittany with two wedded knights who live adjacent to one another. The wife of one of the knights falls pregnant and gives birth to twins. On hearing this news, the neighbouring knight's wife laughs and proclaims that she has never heard of a woman giving birth to two babies at the same time unless two men had been involved in the conception. Her rumour spreads around the country; however, later in the year, this same lady, who had been so vocal about her neighbour's presumed infidelity, herself gives birth to twins. She decides that she would rather kill one of the two children than shame herself in public, but her ladies-in-waiting instead persuade her to give one of the babies to a monastery. As night falls, one of the servants leaves

[1] *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Karl Warnke and trans. by Laurence Harf-Lancer (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), p. 94, ll. 144–48. Translations from Old French into English are my own.

[2] For an introduction to Marie de France, see Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, *Marie de France: A Critical Companion* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), pp. 1–15; for this *lai* see François Suard, 'L'utilisation des éléments folkloriques dans le lai du "Frêne"', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale: Xe-XIIe siècles*, 21.81 (1978), pp. 43–52.

the town with the child and travels through the forest. As indicated in the epigraph, she finds her way towards a church, guided on her journey by the barking of dogs and the singing of cockerels. Marie's description of nonhuman sound in this passage works in two distinctly cross-species ways: it conjures human habitation before it is encountered by the servant as she moves from the forest towards the promise of a more familiar environment (here heralded by the noises of domestic animals); and it also demonstrates the unfolding of the human cognitive processes by which a character might interpret such sounds as meaningful.

This passage from *Le Frêne*, which leads to the abandonment of the child in the shade of an ash tree, neatly encapsulates some of the main focal points of this study and the questions it will address. The description of the servant finding her way through the forest with only barking dogs and singing cockerels as her guides condenses some of the themes and stylistic decisions that I argue are essential to understanding how the sounds of nonhumans are conceptualised, represented and interpreted in medieval literary texts. The sounds of different beasts and birds, and the meanings they generate through textual interpretation, offer ways of navigating the networks of relation that exist between humans and nonhumans in medieval texts. To her right, the servant hears sounds that she seems to recognise, which guide her instinctively towards a human environment. The barking of dogs and singing of cockerels are at once familiar domestic sounds and indicators of an urban space revealed by sonic phenomena. The recognition of these sounds by the servant demonstrates that such sounds are points of sonic contact in the soundscape of this particular *lai* that indicate the presence of nonhuman life, but also the presence of humanity in what might at first be presumed unknown terrain.

The expression of sound in this passage is depicted in two discrete ways. Firstly, the individual sounds of barking and singing are distinguished through the verbs *abaier* and *chanter*—verbs that translate nonhuman vocalisations into a form that can be communicated in human language. Secondly, canine sounds are described using the Old French term 'noise', a term that suggests such sounds are unintelligible in human linguistic terms, even if they may communicate human presence in other ways. Sound, noise and language thus function as communicative symbols or tools for characters. Indeed, it is the interpretation of these sounds through human forms of expression in *Le Frêne* that most clearly demonstrates that the servant lives in networks of sonic cohabitation with the dog and the cockerel. In

other words, the servant, the dog and the cockerel share an acoustic environment in which sound becomes meaningful through the cognitive and physical responses of the human character within the text and, subsequently, through the interpretation of this response by the audience. If, as this extract demonstrates, the protagonist is guided by nonhuman sounds that are, in turn, encountered and interpreted by the human audience of this work, this raises some broader questions about the representation of nonhuman sound in medieval texts. What part does sound play in the representation of contact and encounter between the human and the nonhuman in medieval texts? What kinds of interaction do the acoustic environments of such texts facilitate among domestic or wild beasts and birds, and other nonhuman or human characters?

The patterns of interpretation that communicative sounds create in vernacular texts are connected to the linguistic contexts in which such texts were written and circulated. I focus here particularly on twelfth- and thirteenth-century French and English texts written in Anglo-Norman England. Post-Conquest England was a contact zone in which multiple languages coexisted and where Latin, French and English were the predominant written languages. Anglo-Norman texts from this period, such as Marie de France's collection of *Lais*, therefore offer a means of considering how texts produced within a multilingual environment represent cross-species encounters, occasionally even framing these encounters in cross-linguistic ways. For medieval audiences, creatures' names were intimately connected to their natures in etymological and conceptual terms.[3] For instance, in *L'Aüstic*, another *lai* composed by Marie de France, the act of naming the nightingale is presented as a cross-linguistic one as the Breton, French and English names for this bird are juxtaposed: 'L'Aüstic a nun, ceo m'est vis, | si l'apelent en lur païs; | ceo est russignol en Franceis | e nihtegale en dreit Engleis' ('I believe it is called *Aüstic*, as they call it in their country. That is to say *russignol* in French, and 'nightingale' in good English').[4] The complexity of sound associated with this species is communicated through the diversity inherent in the common medieval juxtaposition of the vernacular names for the common nightingale, thus reinforcing a distinction between

[3] For further discussion on this theme, see Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013), pp. 69–100; and Carolynn Van Dyke, 'Names of the Beasts: Tracking the Animot in Medieval Texts', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 34 (2012), pp. 1–51.
[4] Marie de France, *Aüstic*, in *Lais de Marie de France*, p. 210, ll. 3–6.

fictional human representation and actual nonhuman sound that works in part on a type of multilingual reflection. In this *lai*, the juxtaposition of the English, French and Breton names for the nightingale draws attention to the sonic differences between languages; this is a feature that might evoke the nightingale's reputation for its impressive range of gurgles, whistles and trills when it sings.[5] This representation is itself ironic as the nightingale first appears in the *lai* as a fiction conjured by the lady as an excuse for going to the window to meet her lover.[6] Audiences are presented with the translation of the range of sounds associated with the nightingale through the names connected to that bird, which in turn emphasise the bird's conceptual, fictional nature—indeed, the physical bird is only present later in the short *lai* when the husband vengefully brings the body of a real dead nightingale to his wife.

The two examples discussed so far from this selection of *lais* reveal some of the ways that sonic phenomena—the expression of barking and singing, and the naming of the nightingale—communicate connections between humans and nonhumans and enjoin audiences to reflect on the nature and function of sound as it is expressed through language. Seen as part of the vernacular literary culture of Anglo-Norman England, these examples also point towards a number of broader questions about sound and language in medieval works written in this milieu: how do other insular texts composed in the vernacular languages of England treat the representation of nonhuman sound, and what comparisons are there to be made in, or across, such texts? How might the expression of nonhuman sound as a form of language challenge or unsettle the notion that sound can be controlled and manipulated by humans (or indeed nonhumans) for their own advantage? What effect does the expression of nonhuman sound in medieval literature have on an often-rehearsed medieval (and modern) philosophical conceptualisation of language as the domain solely of the human? These questions have guided the thinking presented in this thesis. They have acted as springboards for an engagement with the medieval sonic phenomena that communicate encounters with beasts and birds.

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[5] Michael J. Warren notes an association between the name of the nightingale and the sweetness of the harp in Old and Middle English. See *Birds in Medieval English Poetry: Metaphors, Realities, Transformation* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), p. 231.

[6] *Marie de France: a Critical Companion*, ed. by Sharron Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, pp. 150–51.

This thesis is about the ways that the sounds of dogs, goats, sheep, cockerels, cuckoos, sirens and a variety of other creatures that inhabit the pages of Old French and Middle English texts composed in England during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, afford moments of encounter with the communicative potential of such sounds. Through examining points of sonic contact in texts written in Old French, and by way of comparison with Middle English, scholars can come to a better understanding of the role and function of sound and language as they are represented for interpretation. Since the examples chosen for discussion are almost always produced by living (albeit fictional or imaginary) beasts, birds and creatures, this thesis also considers encounter with nonhumans in a broader sense, and the ways that actual and imaginary encounters between species inform the depiction of cross-species communication. It examines how the sounds of nonhuman agents that are filtered through texts from different genres—bestiaries, glossaries and word lists, hagiography, fables, songs—are framed by their own historical, cultural and linguistic contexts, be they pedagogic, entertaining, moralistic, instructive or didactic in nature. In dealing with the ways that sound is mediated by human language and presented for interpretation by the frameworks and interpretive structures of different texts, the discussion that follows demonstrates how expansive notions of the role and function of sound and language are part and parcel of the interpretation of beasts and birds in medieval texts. Barking, crying, singing and even speaking are nonhuman phenomena that present ways of thinking about networks of cross-species communication, as well as response and interpretation to that communication, for medieval audiences. It is only by responding to and interpreting the 'noise' of the barking dogs that the servant in *Le Frêne* finds her way through the woods. Without that interpretation, we would be in a different story.

The Symbolic and the Living: Tensions in Animal Studies

The concern with nonhuman identities, and especially their relationship to language, has been a theme of growing importance in scholarship over the past couple of decades. The vast majority of studies of medieval animals have sought to draw attention to the importance of the animal for the conceptualisation of the human in the Middle Ages. Any project on medieval nonhumanisms is intimately bound up with questions of humanity, and this is the case as much in francophone scholarship

as in anglophone contexts. As Michel Zink notes, 'ce qui intéresse la littérature médiévale dans l'animal, c'est ce qui touche à l'homme' ('what interests medieval literature in the animal is what touches man').[7] Brigitte Resl confirms this observation in her volume *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, in which she notes that representations of nonhuman animals in medieval culture are usually 'designed to further our understanding of human nature rather than of animals themselves'.[8] Resl compares historical research into human and animal relations to the work of medieval philosophers, who thought about animals in order to better understand human nature. In some respects, this thesis is similarly invested in understanding human identity, because any expression of nonhuman sound or the words used to describe nonhumans in medieval texts are always written in human languages. However, contact between humans and nonhumans was framed by medieval scribes and artists in ways that emphasise their place in broad networks of relation in which beasts, birds and legendary creatures become meaningful in multiple ways through textual interpretation. This being the case, this thesis seeks to understand how we might also interpret the close attention to the nonhuman in medieval texts from a plurality of perspectives, most of which reference, but are not confined to, the human.

Critics have drawn attention to the need for an approach to human/animal relations that engages with nonhuman life and perspective in textual cultures more broadly. The field of animal studies has been particularly interested in interdisciplinary understandings of the types of contact available between humans and nonhumans in historical periods. French philosopher Elisabeth de Fontenay remarks that 'c'est à l'horizon de nos pensées et de nos langues que se tient l'animal, saturé de signes; c'est à la limite de nos représentations qu'il vit et se meut, qu'il s'enfuit et nous regarde' ('it is at the horizon of our thoughts and our languages/tongues that the animal is situated, saturated by signs; it is at the limit of our representations that it lives and moves, that it flees and watches us').[9] In this

[7] 'Le monde animal et ses représentations dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge', in *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public* (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse Le-Mirail, 1984), p. 70. Translations from modern French into English are my own throughout the thesis, unless otherwise stated.
[8] *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Brigitte Resl, vol. 2 (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 2.
[9] *La Silence des bêtes: la philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), p. 18.

articulation of the relationship between humans and animals in philosophical contexts, de Fontenay emphasises the difficulty of grasping the animal as a figure on the margins of human consciousness. In a different approach, Jonathan Burt takes the animal as a given and reminds scholars not to overemphasise nonhumans as metaphoric and iconic. Instead he urges us to 'achieve a more integrated view of the effects of the presence of the animal and the power of its imagery in human history.'[10] Scholars such as these, however, have often been too quick to dismiss historical depictions of animals as purely symbolic or entrenched within human projects of anthropocentrism. Instead, medieval texts often represent nonhumans in ways that encouraged medieval audiences to hold multiple interpretive possibilities for beasts and birds in their minds at the same time.[11] Michael J. Warren notes that recent interest in human-nonhuman relations has emphasised 'the eclecticism of animal meaning in pre-modern living'.[12] As this thesis suggests, a focus on sound, as just one of the ways that humans and nonhumans communicated with each other in historical contexts, offers an alternative way of thinking the animal in medieval texts. As I have already demonstrated in reference to the *Lais*, sonic contact moves beyond an opposition between 'real' animals and their symbolic representation. It affords audiences the opportunity to consider nonhuman beasts and birds neither as an essence, nor as a purely symbolic presence in medieval writing, but as figures of encounter that enjoin audiences to identify and interpret their sounds.

Rethinking the networks of relation between humans and nonhumans requires the consideration of beasts and birds as simultaneously referring to actual living, breathing and noisy creatures, as well as to their symbolic or allegorical elements. However, there are other important ways of interpreting animals in medieval sources. The past few decades have witnessed a general movement from studies of zoological history (the evolution of nonhuman representation over time) and zoosemiotics (the examination of the symbolic properties of nonhuman species), towards anthropological and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the

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[10] 'The Illumination of the Animal Kingdom: The Role of Light and Electricity in Animal Representation', *Society and Animals*, 9 (2001), p. 203.
[11] Susan Crane notes that medieval writers 'had no animal experience, however physically immediate, that they did not apprehend cognitively as it unfolded', *Animal Encounters*, p. 1. See also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 157–62.
[12] *Birds in Medieval English Poetry*, p. 2.

nonhuman.[13] Art historian Michel Pastoureau cites two key opposing ideas about nonhumans circulating in the High Middle Ages that have informed today's anthropological studies of the period: one based on the superiority of the human and the other emphasising a conceptualisation of life as a community of living beings.[14] On the one hand, different species were made into symbols by the systematic opposition of man and animal due to theological, social and legal changes to human relationships with nonhumans in Western Europe during the High Middle Ages, with the twelfth century receiving particular focus from scholars to date.[15] This opposition entailed the assertion of the superiority of man over other animals. On the other hand, this period witnessed a revival of the Aristotelian idea of a community of living beings as expressed in the *De Anima*.[16] The scholastic framing of this Aristotelian idea was facilitated by the already prevalent Christian notion of community expressed in the epistle of Romans 8.21: 'For the creature itself will be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God'.[17] The conceptualisation of a community of living beings, including

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[13] Key examples of zoological, historical and semiotic approaches include a study by Dan Sperber, 'Pourquoi l'animal est bon à penser symboliquement', *L'Homme* (1983), pp. 117–35; and Jacques Voisenet, *Bêtes et hommes dans le monde médiévale: Le bestiaire des clercs du Ve au XIIe siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

[14] 'L'Animal et l'historien du Moyen Âge', in *L'Animal exemplaire au Moyen Âge (Ve-XVe siècles)*, ed. by Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1999), pp. 14–15. Jean-Marie Fritz notes that 'le discours sur l'animal au Moyen Age est toujours aussi un discours anthropologique' ('the discourse on the animal in the Middle Ages is always also an anthropological discourse'), *Paysages Sonores du Moyen Age: Le versant épistémologique* (Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 2000), pp. 178–81.

[15] See Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 8; and Irène Fabry-Tehranchi, *L'Humain et l'Animal dans la France médiévale (XIIe-XVe s.)/ Human and Animal in Medieval France (12th-15th c.)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 8.

[16] According to Pastoureau (pp. 11–12), the Aristotelian corpus on animals was translated into Latin from Arabic by Michael Scot in Toledo (Spain) around 1230. Much of this was integrated into Albert the Great's *De Animalibus* a generation later. For further information see Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism* (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1955); and C. H. Lohr, 'The Medieval Interpretation of Aristotle', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: from the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, ed. by Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 80–98.

[17] 'Quia et ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei'. Original Latin quotations from the Bible are always from the *Latin Vulgate and Douay-Rheims Bible* (online), unless otherwise stated. The translation into English here is adapted. For further discussion on Western European philosophical debates on animals in the twelfth century, see Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, pp. 1–9.

nonhumans, became commonplace through Christian religious texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by writers such as Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas.[18] These two opposing ideas—one of man's superiority over animals and the other of a community of living beings—coexisted in medieval thought, culture and society in the High Middle Ages and represent two divergent ways that animals were interpreted and conceptualised during this period. Medieval thinking thus makes man one of the animals whilst simultaneously insisting on human exceptionalism.

While remaining sensitive to the numerous ways that nonhuman creatures were meaningful in medieval cultures, recent studies move beyond a vision of the Middle Ages that would reduce medieval beasts and birds to static carriers of meaning saturated with human symbolism. These studies range from examinations of interdisciplinary cultural history or comparative literature to philosophical and epistemological studies of nonhuman representation; they have been influenced by recent thinking in medieval posthumanisms and new materialism, which have sought to demonstrate the ways that medieval sources represent relations between humans and nonhumans in ways that engage discursively with issues of supremacy, dominance and hierarchy.[19] Karl Steel and Peggy McCracken, whose work I engage with in Chapters One and Four respectively, have each independently tackled questions of human dominion over nonhumans in the Middle Ages in important studies of violence and sovereignty in medieval texts. Steel's study of violence and animals in literary texts establishes how such depictions assure human mastery over animals whilst McCracken's work emphasises the mobility of the qualities used to define human exceptionalism and sovereignty in relation to the nonhuman.[20] Carolynn Van Dyke and Sarah Kay have studied medieval nonhuman representation, drawing on Derridean philosophy to underline the critical differences between

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[18] For Francis of Assisi, see my discussion in Chapter Three of this thesis. For Thomas Aquinas and his legacy on the status of animals, see Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals: The Dominant Tradition and its Alternatives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 8–20.

[19] See 'The Animal Turn', ed. by Peggy McCracken and Karl Steel, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 2.1 (2011); Irène Fabry-Tehranchi, *L'Humain et l'Animal dans la France médiévale (XIIe-XVe s.)*, p. 11; and *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Washington, DC: Oliphaunt Books, 2012).

[20] See Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), and 'Woofing and Weeping with Animals in the Last Days', *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 1 (2010), pp. 187–93; and Peggy McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

medieval and modern understandings of beasts and birds, and the language used to describe them.[21] These projects open up new directions for the study of nonhuman identities in medieval literature. In contrast to studies of literary texts, Sarah Kay demonstrates that materialist perspectives offered by close readings of Latin and French bestiary manuscripts associate beasts with books, and suggests how parchment may intervene in the reading process.[22] In this context, the animal gains the ability to bite back at modern scholarship and to reassert itself as the subject of critical epistemological and affective enquiry.

Building on the consensus of scholarship that seeks to uncover the traces of actual animals alongside their figurative counterparts, the work of scholars such as Susan Crane and Michael J. Warren has introduced ways of thinking about nonhuman species in medieval texts from perspectives grounded in critical animal studies and critical theory. They independently focus on understanding how actual beasts and birds informed the depiction of fictional ones, and vice versa, in texts from medieval Britain. Susan Crane, for example, has examined how cross-species encounters transform human and animal participants in episodes from medieval texts where we can glimpse the traces of what she describes as contact with the 'living animal'. For Crane, the animal is present in literary texts in ways that exceed the boundaries of heraldic and spiritual symbolism. Nonhumans can be effectively studied by connecting written representations to perspectives 'from natural science, animal training, husbandry, and historical studies' as well as by treating language 'not as a transparent window on the real, but by concentrating on the peculiar obscurities and revelations inherent in turns of phrase, narrative strategies, and formal conventions.'[23] In line with the critical approach suggested by Crane, Warren's work on birds in medieval English literature has proposed that real, lived experience with birds informed the cultural, literary and metaphorical representations of birds in ways that compelled audiences to think about actual birds alongside the avian literary motifs of flight and voice.[24] Studies of nonhuman

[21] See Sarah Kay, 'Before the Animot: Bêtise and the Zoological Machine in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries', *Yale French Studies*, 127 (2015), pp. 34–51; Carolynn Van Dyke, 'Names of the Beasts', pp. 1–51; and Jacques Derrida, *L'Animal que donc je suis*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallett (Paris: Galilée, 2006), pp. 15–54.
[22] *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).
[23] *Animal Encounters*, p. 5.
[24] *Birds in Medieval English Poetry*, p. 15.

identities such as these confirm that, whilst zoosemiotics were a fundamental aspect of the depictions of nonhumans in medieval literature and art, nonhuman symbolism is connected to living creatures and contact with beasts and birds in ways that emphasise cohabitation, encounter and cross-species communication.

Man and the Nonhuman: Language, Sound and Song

Communication and encounter with the nonhuman in medieval texts evokes acoustic and sonic phenomena as much as the more widely studied physical and material realities of human and nonhuman relationships discussed by those scholars mentioned above. This thesis is particularly invested in demonstrating that the study of sound, an understudied resource for thinking about nonhuman identities in literary contexts, can inform the field of animal studies. I do so by demonstrating that Old French and Middle English texts exploited the ties and tensions that bind nonhuman beings with humans, including the ability to vocalise sound, to communicate textual acoustic environments through sonic phenomena. In examining nonhuman sound and communication in twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts from Anglo-Norman England, I consider the ways that sound contributes to a broad and complex series of soundscapes in which language (and, by extension, the human) is often implicated. I examine how expressions of sound, or 'noise' as it is described in Old French texts such as *Le Frêne*, draw connections between species in acoustic environments as they are represented in medieval texts. This project thus brings a range of medieval texts from different genres into dialogue with both animal studies and sound studies in order to explore the relationship between nonhuman sound and language in depictions of cross-species contact.

The study of nonhuman sound in medieval literature poses specific challenges for scholars because, of all aspects of nonhuman life in the Middle Ages, it is perhaps the one that has been most ephemeral. In terms of source material for studies of nonhumans in the Middle Ages, today we are left with literary texts written on animal skins, the bones of beasts and birds in archaeological studies, and portraits and sculptures of creatures in medieval art and architecture, but what remains of nonhuman sound? The relatively new field of medieval sound studies, which incorporates discussions of acoustic epistemology, critical literature on historical soundscapes, translation studies, and the study of cross-species perspectives, has laid

the foundations for my own exploration of nonhuman representation through the words used to describe animal sounds in different medieval languages. In many of the texts that I discuss in this thesis, cross-species contact cannot be separated from the themes of linguistic contact and communication, both between the vernacular languages of English and French, and between living and literary beasts and birds.

When an animal or a bird makes noise in a medieval text, how does it signify and what is the relationship of that signification to human language? And if a creature communicates through speech, what then are the consequences for our understanding of encounters between humans and nonhumans as they are constructed, represented, reinforced and challenged by and through sound and language? The relationship of nonhuman animals to language has been a major area of interest in modern studies of humanity and animality in critical theory, philosophy, theology and comparative literature more broadly.[25] This relationship is also a focus for medieval intellectual debates on the qualities of human language in comparison to nonhuman sound or noise. The Middle Ages witnessed a widespread interest in naming, describing and classifying animals (a theme that is particularly prominent in chapters One and Two of this thesis), which took as a key point of departure the moment when Adam names the animals in Genesis 2.19: 'And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: for whatsoever Adam called any living creature the same is its name'.[26] As we have already seen, Genesis was an important reference point for the conceptualisation of human and nonhuman identity in its relationship to language throughout the Middle Ages because it associated man's first act of naming with animals. This act also demonstrated Adam's pre-eminence over other species through his control of language. The ideal relationship Adam has to language in Eden is, however, corrupted by the Fall, initiated when the serpent speaks to Eve (Genesis 3:1). Humankind's relationship to nonhumans is altered by this cataclysmic event,

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[25] For notable examples relevant to the work in this thesis, see Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); and Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: the Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (Columbus: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[26] 'Formatis igitur Dominus Deus de humo cunctis animantibus terrae, et universis volatilibus caeli, adduxit ea ad Adam, ut videret quid vocaret ea: omne enim quod vocavit Adam janimae viventis, ipsum est nomen ejus', *Latin Vulgate and Douay-Rheims Bible* (online).

and the human assertion of dominance over the community of living beings on Earth is subject to continual rethinking. What does it mean, therefore, for a human being in a Christo-centric universe to conceptualise, write, read and possibly mimic the sounds of creatures to whom the possession of those same aspects was not unconditionally ascribed?

The interpretation of the biblical scene of Adam naming the animals, and subsequently the Fall of mankind, by authorities such as Isidore of Seville in the sixth and seventh centuries had a profound impact on the ways that animals were categorised by scholastic writers in the High and later Middle Ages. In the *Etymologies* Isidore suggests that 'Adam did not assign these names in the Latin or Greek language, or in any of the languages of foreign nations, but in […] Hebrew. In Latin they are called animals (*animal*) or 'animate beings' (*animans*), because they are animated (*animare*) by life and moved by spirit.'[27] Susan Crane has argued that this passage in Genesis 'aligns Adam with God as a speaker, a possessor of *logos* or *ratio*, in contrast to the dumb animal'—a process that implies a distinction between man and all other species.[28] Adam's dominance in Genesis thus becomes bound in alternative networks of relation with beasts and birds as the scene is interpreted. What happens when humans start to speak languages other than prelapsarian Hebrew is that Babel results in an increasing diversity of human languages, and thus the incomprehensibility of those languages. A parallel can be drawn between the incomprehensibility reflected in the range of nonhuman sounds that are described by medieval writers in texts from the Middle Ages. The sounds of beasts and birds, like those of human languages, present a bewildering range of sonic phenomena in complex soundscapes that create connections across species in ways that emphasise communicative potential but also control and dominance. The decentring of man's control over prelapsarian language held important implications for the figure of man and other human figures, such as women, children, peasants and so on, who are connected in various ways with the nonhuman world in medieval

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[27] 'Non autem secundum Latinam linguam atque Graecam aut quarumlibet gentium barbararum nomina illa inposuit Adam, sed […] quae Hebraea nuncupatur. Latine autem animalia sive animantia dicta, quod animentur vita et moveantur spiritu', *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XII.i.2–3, p. 247, ll. 1–3. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online).

[28] *Animal Encounters*, p. 90.

texts. These latter categories, which are often conceptualised in subordination to the category of man, may be deprived of language in the same ways as many beasts and birds because they are not the possessors of language and *logos* in the same way as man.

Since postlapsarian human language does not guarantee a clear differentiation of man and animal, language becomes a crucial topic of debate for medieval scholastic thinkers interested in the nature of human exceptionalism. The distinctiveness of human language is asserted in a number of different ways in medieval scientific and moralising texts that discuss animals. In an important study of zoosemiotics in medieval scholasticism Umberto Eco, Marmo Costantino and Shona Kelly demonstrate that distinctions were made in medieval scholastic traditions between types of vocal sound (*vox*) emitted spontaneously or naturally (*naturaliter*) and those emitted by convention (*ad placitum*). These categories of sound ran in parallel with sounds emitted by non-vocal living beings (*non vox*). The agent's intention to produce sound also posed a philosophical conundrum for medieval scholastic writers.[29] These observations about the conceptualisation of sound in medieval scholastic thought provide suggestive ways of approaching the representation of nonhuman sounds in medieval sources. However, though they may reflect some of the concerns of the Latin intellectual tradition, medieval vernacular texts do not necessarily subscribe to a single view of sound and language. Beyond the confines of scholastic writing; whilst some medieval texts signal that sounds or utterances produced by nonhuman species are guided by distinctions between human and nonhuman sonic phenomena, others do not. Whilst medieval texts are often interested in framing nonhuman sounds in relation to human language, they do so in different ways. Texts that I discuss in this thesis frame depictions of nonhuman sound in relation to cross-species control over language, to the theme of naming and categorising as well as etymological thinking, and to the portrayal of different forms

[29] *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, ed. by Umberto Eco, Marmo Costantino and Shona Kelly (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989), pp. 3–41. The scholars in this study draw on a number of examples for their discussion: for Peter Abelard a sound is meaningful because of the will that produces it and not for the fact that it itself produces meaning, *Logica Ingredientibus*, (Geyer, 1927), pp. 335–36, as quoted in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, pp. 15 and 35; Roger Bacon suggested that 'the wail of the infirm and the bark of the dog spring from an *intention*, an impulse of a sensitive soul which tends to express that which the animal (human or not) *feels*', *Sumule dialectices*, ed. by R. Steele (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 233–34, as quoted in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, pp. 19 and 36, my emphasis.

of life or perspective, including those offered by melody and song. Crucially, however, sound in vernacular texts does not conform to a set of strict theoretical principles, such as those found in the work of medieval scholastics.

In contrast to medieval grammatical debates on the role, function and interpretation of nonhuman sounds, vernacular texts such as fables and saints' lives may invite interpretation, imitation or even mimicry of those sounds. Such imitation highlights the ways that the sounds of different beasts and birds trouble distinctions between nonhuman sounds and those of human languages. The ways that nonhuman sounds are transcribed into, and imitated by, different human languages in twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts from Anglo-Norman England raise further questions about how the nonhuman is seen through different linguistic filters. Old French and Middle English texts from this period, or multilingual texts which include both French and English, seem to work on the assumption that languages (human and nonhuman) are always plural.[30] Depictions of the vocalisations of nonhumans, which are naturally plural and complex, thus add to a lively interchange between different languages in Anglo-Norman textual cultures. On one level, the pursuit of more expansive notions of language and sound in Anglo-Norman literature and culture leads to a better understanding of the connected nature of sound in particular texts—a connectedness that encompasses both human and nonhuman beings. However, at the same time, my sources call upon the figure of man—the speaker, the reader, the singer, the gentleman, the saint—as a male, anthropocentric reference point. The sounds of beasts and birds in Old French and Middle English texts are rarely neutral, and are often also used to shore up human exceptionalism.

The study of sound in medieval vernacular texts offers a potentially significant vantage on the question of humanity's relationship to nonhuman species. As mentioned above, there is a growing trend in medieval scholarship towards studies of nonhuman voices and languages, and the ways that these are connected to expressions of cross-species and cross-linguistic interaction. However, although many shorter-length studies have valuably taken critically-informed approaches to the interpretation of nonhuman language, questions of sound in particular have not

[30] For the notion of the plurality of England's languages in this period, see Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); and *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Joceleyn Wogan Browne*, ed. by Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 1–11.

received adequate critical attention.[31] I signal here those contributions that have engaged with sound in some ways, and which have had an influence on the conceptualisation of nonhuman sound in this thesis. In a study on animal-human bi-lingualism, Jonathan Hsy reveals the complexity of 'zoo-anthro-linguistic soundscapes' (the representation of cross-species sounds through human language in specific textual acoustic environments) across texts from a range of genres and languages, including the types of catalogues and word lists that I investigate in Chapter Two.[32] Examining examples of lists resembling the Latin *vocas variae animantium* catalogue texts, which list animal sounds in the fashion of subject followed by third person indicative verb, Hsy suggests that such animal-sound wordlists 'stylize nonhuman sounds and enact diverse modes of animal mimicry', encoding intra-species communication in ways that may blur human linguistic boundaries.[33] Hsy's attention to the communicative possibilities that such lists generate for cross-species encounters has influenced a number of other articles on nonhuman vocalisation. These include studies by Robert Stanton and Michael J. Warren, each of whom underline the importance of understanding that texts perform forms of translation between nonhuman sounds and their expression in human languages in insular medieval texts.[34]

Thinking about cross-linguistic contact and modes of translation is particularly important for discussions of the sounds of beasts and birds. However, the insular French contexts for much of the literature that has been studied in relation to the representation of nonhuman sound have attracted limited attention compared to English texts. Those studies of the French material that do exist have focused

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[31] See, for example, the essays collected in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. by Alison Langdon (Cham: Palgrave, 2018), which focuses on language rather than sound. I discuss this volume in further detail in my discussion on 'Methodology, Scope and Content' below.

[32] 'Between Species: Animal-Human Bilingualism and Medieval Texts', in *Booldly bot meekly: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages in Honour of Roger Ellis*, ed. by Catherine Batt and René Tixier, *The Medieval Translator*, 14 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2018), p. 556.

[33] Ibid., pp. 565 and 570–76.

[34] Robert Stanton, 'Mimicry, Subjectivity, and Embodied Voice in Anglo-Saxon Bird Riddles', in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Irith Ruth Kleiman (New York: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 29–41; and Michael J. Warren, '"Kek kek": Translating Birds in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 38.1 (2016), pp. 109–32. Emma Gorst has discussed similar themes in 'Interspecies Mimicry: Birdsong in Chaucer's "Maunciple's Tale" and *The Parliament of Fowls*', *New Medieval Literatures*, 12 (2010), pp. 137–54.

mainly on specific groups of creatures, such as birds, leaving gaps in our understanding of the vocalisations of other animals. An article-length study by Peggy McCracken proposes that the properties of animal/human transformation in the *Lais* by Marie de France are encapsulated in Marie's understanding of translation. For McCracken, the *Lais* are less concerned about identifying boundaries between the human and the animal than identifying a movement between forms of being that acknowledges power relations present in medieval translation theory.[35] Other studies on animal language in Anglo-Norman texts include discussions of texts discussed in further detail in the chapters of this thesis, such as the words used in animal wordlists or in beast epic and fable.[36] These studies, however, tend to focus on language rather than sound, which significantly reduces the capacity to rethink the anthropocentric circuit that language may simply reinforce in medieval texts. This thesis seeks to build on these studies by focusing attention on comparisons between sounds described in French and English texts written in Anglo-Norman England, incorporating French or multilingual texts that so far have been understudied.

Another context that is fundamental to many conceptualisations of nonhuman sonic phenomena in medieval texts is the tension between noise and melody. The barking of the dog and the singing of the cockerel discussed above in relation to *Le Frêne* represent a common juxtaposition of animal sound and birdsong in Old French literature. This comparison is usually expressed between singing and sounds deemed 'noise', such as the bark, which shade into music and melody. One prominent area of scholarship in which the connection between the two has been carefully examined is in studies of the musical properties of nonhuman sounds. In the field of musicology, Elizabeth Eva Leach has demonstrated that medieval musicological texts exhibit some of the same tensions that are found in medieval scholasticism. These include distinctions between the human and the avian in musical contexts in which 'even tuned sounds [that might represent birdsong in melodic form] merit the

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[35] 'Translation and Animals in Marie de France's *Lais*', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 46.3 (2009), pp. 206–18.

[36] See William Sayers, 'Animal Vocalization and Human Polyglossia in Walter of Bibbesworth's Thirteenth-Century Domestic Treatise in Anglo-Norman French and Middle English', *Sign Systems Studies*, 37.3/4 (2009), pp. 525–41; Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). One significant exception to the focus on language rather than sound in French texts is Susan Crane's discussion of a *Livre de chasse* by Gaston III, count of Foix, in 'The Noble Hunt as Ritual Practice', in *Animal Encounters*, pp. 101–19.

status of music only when they are both produced and received by an intellectually engaged rational animal'; that is, human beings.[37] Leach thus highlights a strong current of identifying nonhuman 'musical' sounds as irrational when compared to human sounds, even when they possess elements of human melodic composition. One effect of this is that medieval depictions of music or sound potentially create slippages between categories such as irrational beasts and women in comparison with the conceptualisation of a more rational masculinity. Leach discusses this theme in relation to the sexualised figure of the singing siren in medieval musicology.[38] Similar comparisons are generated by the slippages between categories of melodic or non-melodic vocal expression in a variety of vernacular medieval texts. The singing of some nonhumans, and especially of birds, may emphasise species difference whilst depicting such sounds as part of networks that mirror human social and cultural systems. In other texts, such as *Le Frêne*, the singing of the cockerel acts as a positive, or at the very least neutral, guide for the servant to find her way to the town. In this case, concerns about gender and dominance are eclipsed by those of space, domesticity and survival.

Nonhuman melodic or musical sound is figured as both a narrative construct and as a set of conceptual tools for thinking about cross-species communication in medieval texts. My approach to the musicality of nonhumans in medieval texts takes inspiration from the work of Emma Dillon, who has explored a variety of possibilities for representations of medieval sounds in *The Sense of Sound*. Dillon considers how animals and other nonhuman creatures feature as musical instruments and performers in narratives and manuscript marginalia, in texts such as the *Roman de Fauvel*, the *Roman de Renart* and in prayer books. To take just one example, she examines an early fourteenth-century Flemish book of hours, in which the marginalia includes a dog and man creating 'a noisy ensemble with a man swinging bells', a 'shouting head on legs' running across the page, a 'strange beast whose nether regions form a trumpet [which] blasts into the margins' and two hybrid men emerging from the foliage 'blowing on a horn and the tail of a dog (who obliges by

[37] *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 1.
[38] 'The Little Pipe Sings Sweetly while the Fowler Deceives the Bird: Sirens in the Later Middle Ages', *Music and Letters*, 87.2 (2006), pp. 187–211.

yipping).'[39] This analysis of visual and textual depictions of sound demonstrates that the different senses are sometimes simultaneously at play in representations of nonhuman sounds. Visual representations of sounds such as these anticipate some of the ways that the musical and non-musical bodies of beasts and birds are figured as part of a broader acoustic environment in which objects and subjects can fill textual soundscapes and present such sounds for interpretation.

Through the representation of different creatures singing, crying, barking, roaring, quacking and so on, the musicality of some of the acoustic environments in medieval texts invites readers to reflect on the musicality of their own voices in ways that frame sound in networks of relation. These networks encompass connections to birdsong, the liturgy, legendary siren song, or the cuckoo's call, rather than solely logic and grammar. The depiction of the musical elements of beast and bird vocalisations opens new opportunities for ways of reading, seeing and hearing the nonhuman in the acoustic environments depicted in medieval texts. Simultaneously, the representation of nonhuman sound in medieval texts troubles the conceptualisation of language as a category that expresses the unquestioned rationality and linguistic superiority of man. The relationship between nonhuman sound and human language is therefore a central concern for this thesis. With this in mind, each of the chapters that follows reflects on how depictions of nonhuman sounds relate to and inform conceptualisations not only of sound, language and noise, but also of singing and musicality. In considering the ways in which sound intersects with singing, particularly the singing of birds, I explore how texts articulate and enable sonic encounters with nonhumans in the diverse soundscapes presented in medieval texts.

Cross-Species Sonic Cohabitation: Terminology and Theory

I have sought to refer to nonhumans in this thesis using a range of terms that are appropriate to beasts, birds and legendary creatures in their medieval textual and cultural contexts. At the same time, I draw on the vocabularies of posthumanism, critical animal studies and translation studies to establish connections between

[39] *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 187–88.

modern and medieval approaches to interpreting nonhuman figures. Where possible, my choice of modern terminology to describe nonhumans is connected to the usages found in medieval texts. The Latin terminology for beasts and birds is relevant to some of the source material for my primary texts. In many medieval Latin texts, such as Pliny's *Natural History* or Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, the term *animal* is used to refer to 'all breathing, moving, living beings', human and nonhuman. In contrast, the terms *brutum*, *fera* and *pecus* are used for beasts, wild animals and cattle respectively.[40] In the passage from Genesis discussed above, in which Adam names the animals, there is a distinction between animals of the earth and birds of the heavens: 'animantibus terrae, et universis volatilibus caeli'. Whilst these Latin terms circulated widely in Latin contexts, I do not generally use the term 'animal', which was used only rarely in vernacular texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and which reinforces a modern binary that opposes the figure of the human and the animal in philosophy.[41]

Vernacular languages in the Middle Ages used other terms for beasts and birds, such as the Old French and Middle English *beste* for nonhuman creatures that roamed the earth. Birds were distinguished from beasts using separate terms: Old French 'oisel' and Middle English 'brid'.[42] This thesis does not include detailed discussion of fish, which are less frequently depicted in medieval texts written in Middle English and Old French, let alone featured producing sounds. With this in mind, and as a reflection of the vernacular language used by many of my sources, I refer to nonhumans in this thesis with the modern English equivalents of these terms: 'beasts' and 'birds'. When referring to these creatures as a collective grouping distinct from humankind, I prefer the term 'nonhumans', whilst I acknowledge that this can have the unfortunate consequence of framing other-than-human species in

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[40] Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human*, pp. 19–20; and Brigitte Resl, *A Cultural History of Animals*, p. 9. For Pliny, see *Natural History*, trans. and ed. by H. Rackham, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), bk. VIII, 1, pp. 2–3. For Isidore of Seville, see *Etymologies*, I.vii.5, p. 42.

[41] Laurie Shannon claims that the term 'animal' does not occur often in English until the end of the sixteenth century, although 'animal' was used in Middle English to refer to anything possessing a soul, as in Latin. See 'The Eight Animals in Shakespeare; or, Before the Human', *PMLA*, 124 (2009), pp. 472–79. For the term 'animal' as a philosophical problem, see Jacques Derrida, *L'Animal que donc je suis*, pp. 15–54.

[42] See 'beste' and 'oisel' in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (Aberystwyth University, online, henceforth *AND*), and 'best(e)' and 'brid' in the *Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan, online, henceforth *MED*). Michael J. Warren discusses avian terminology in detail in the introduction to *Birds in Medieval English Poetry*, pp. 1–6.

terms of lack and in comparison to human status. In discussions of texts that have a specific theological focus, I use the term 'creatures' in acknowledgement of the biblical notion of creation that I discussed above in relation to Genesis. I use the modern English term 'species' as a way of identifying different types of nonhuman being, but this word is used cautiously so as not to create confusion with Latin terminology and to avoid framing the terms of the discussion through excessive reference to post-Darwinian scientific terminology.[43]

So far in this introduction, I have used a number of terms to refer to the representation of the vocalisations of beasts, birds and other nonhuman creatures in medieval texts, including 'sound', 'noise' and 'language'. The meanings of these terms should not be taken for granted and thus require some explanation. The term 'language' is itself a disputed term that signals a number of different meanings in modern English including, but not limited to: 'a system of spoken or written communication used by a particular people, community, etc.'; 'the vocal sounds by which animals and birds communicate [and] any other signals used by animals to communicate'; 'the style of literary composition'; and the 'power or faculty of speech'.[44] The term 'language' in modern English thus signals human and nonhuman modes of communication or the ability to participate in such forms of communication. In medieval contexts, the French term *langage* may be used to represent one or more of these meanings simultaneously. To take one example, the Old French term *langage* is used in comparison to the word 'noise' in the *Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth, discussed in Chapter Two. This is a juxtaposition that draws a distinction between the words (*langage*) used to describe different nonhuman species and the words used to depict their sounds (*noise*). In Old French and Middle English literature, language is also contrasted with the *jargon* of birds, a term discussed at greater length in Chapters Three and Four. The types of communication and vocalisation encompassed by medieval notions of language will be explored further in individual chapters.

The term 'sound', like 'language', is also one that has a range of meanings in modern English, referring, as a noun or verb, to the sonic phenomena produced

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[43] The French term 'espece' could be used to describe the noun for 'sort, kind', or 'species' in theological contexts. See *AND*, 'espece'.

[44] *Oxford English Dictionary* (online, henceforth *OED*), 'language, n. (and *int.*)', 1a/b, 2c, 4. Definition 6 includes: 'the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way'.

by different species, peoples, instruments and environments.[45] Brigitte Cazelles suggests that the Old French noun *son* (sound), was an objective term emphasising the production of sound compared to the more subjective *noise*, which suggests a physical or emotional response to hearing a sound. Cazelles argues that *noise* is connected in Old French literary texts to embodied sensory experience in ways that contrast distinctly with the modern use of 'noise' in English to describe an auditory experience that is disagreeable or undesirable. In highlighting the role of sonic expression and acoustic epistemology to signal ways of hearing and interpreting Old French texts, Cazelles draws attention to how noise is represented through language: 'its occurrence in the soundscapes of early French literature evokes a synesthetic type of perturbation which tends to have a noxious effect, consistent with the origin of a word whose possible roots include the Latin *nausea* ('seasickness'; French 'nausée'), *nocere* ('to harm'; French 'nuire'), and *noxia* ('nuisance')'.[46] From the thirteenth century, the term 'noise' was also used in Middle English literature to suggest a loud or unpleasant sound, a perturbation or a rumour.[47] However, the sounds or noises of nonhumans are discernible in medieval texts in ways that are not purely objective, and which may also be expressed in indirect or mediated ways. Noise may even be a frightening but useful phenomenon, as with the barking of the dogs in *Le Frêne*. In my own discussion, I use the word 'sound' to describe the vocalisations of beasts and birds in a general sense, and 'noise' to refer to moments in texts in which sounds are depicted as unsettling or nonsensical. In particular, I refer to sonic phenomena as noises when medieval texts themselves use the term *noise* in order to anticipate sonic production and acoustic reception.

The soundscapes of medieval texts are of course filled with more specific expressions of nonhuman vocalised sound, which similarly come with their own vocabularies. The barking and singing in the episode from *Le Frêne* that opened this introduction is just one illustration of this general point. Old French and Middle English texts refer to nonhuman vocalisations using a wide range of terms, which may sometimes be associated with particular beasts and birds (e.g. the dog's 'bark' or the duck's 'quack'). At the same time, however, other texts describe nonhuman vocalisations using vocabularies that overlap with the sound-making capacities of

[45] *OED*, 'sound', n.3 and v.1.
[46] *Soundscape in Early French Literature* (Tempe: Brepols, 2005), p. 20.
[47] *MED*, 'noise'.

humans (crying, singing, speaking or communicating through *jargun*). Rather than reinforcing the distinction between language and sound, many medieval literary texts thus place nonhuman sounds in networks that emphasise their affinity with human language and sound-making; my own vocabulary to describe such sounds reflects the flexibility with which different techniques were used. Nonhuman sounds illustrate the difficulty of clearly distinguishing sonic phenomena not produced by humans from human sound production. Indeed, one of the claims of this thesis is that sonic phenomena associated with nonhumans in medieval texts are always implicated in cross-species and cross-linguistic interpretation.

Alongside the terminology that is employed in this thesis, the work of a number of contemporary scholars working in medieval studies, critical animal studies, musicology and continental philosophy has contributed to the theoretical terminology that I employ in interpreting sonic phenomena. I will briefly outline here how their work has influenced my own, leaving more detailed discussion of individual points for the chapters themselves. In using the theoretical readings of nonhuman sounds developed in modern critical theory to think about sonic phenomena in medieval literature, it is not my intention to simply 'apply' theory to medieval texts in anachronistic ways. Rather, I seek to create a dialogue between medieval and modern ways of conceptualising such sonic phenomena. This dialogue is conducive to thinking about how medieval texts challenge modern ways of thinking, as well as how such texts may be understood using modern and contemporary methodologies.

The first theorist who has had an influential effect on the theoretical direction of this thesis is companion-species theorist, biologist and feminist scholar Donna Haraway. Haraway's perceptive reconsideration of companion species theory in *When Species Meet* provides a key stimulus for my analysis of cross-species sonic cohabitation. She argues that 'too much weight has been loaded on to questions and idioms of language in considering the doings of the great variety of animals and people alike'.[48] This overemphasis has made humans incapable of considering other species beyond the fixed frameworks of their own languages. In order to counteract this theoretical problem, Haraway's work explores ways of thinking about humans and nonhumans that emphasise their materiality and the semiotically-connected

[48] *When Species Meet* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 234.

networks of contact and relation in which they exist. She emphasises that moments of encounter between species can never be simple in the ways that philosophy and zoosemiotics have suggested they are.[49] In contrast to overly simplistic accounts of cross-species encounter, Haraway proposes that any point of contact between agents from different species will be conceptually tangled in ways that push simultaneously towards divergent interpretations of that contact.[50] I suggest that Haraway's reflection on the nonhuman may be adapted to thinking about how nonhumans and their sounds are represented in medieval texts and culture. In my first chapter on the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon, for example, I consider how the suffering of some hybrid bestiary creatures evokes divergent relations of power between humans and nonhumans, and how points of cross-species contact based on the expression of sound are depicted as tangled in networks of layered interpretation.

The criss-crossed and overlapping networks of cross-species and cross-linguistic encounters examined by Haraway are explored in a different way in the work of Vicky Hearne, who considers how encounters between humans and domesticated animals—dogs, cats, horses and even zoo animals—produce different meanings according to the contrasting perspectives of different species.[51] Though Haraway and Hearne offer suggestive ways of thinking about cross-species communication as more than simply linguistic, neither scholar pays any serious attention to sound as a crucial mode of cross-species contact. Instead, their discussions give primacy to sight and touch as key factors in such contact. In medieval texts, however, moments of encounter always have a linguistic (and by association, sonic) dimension. The sounds of nonhumans pass through human languages as these are written on the manuscript page. What I take from Haraway and Hearne is the importance of questioning the dominance of language as a framework for human/nonhuman encounter, and of attending to the multiple networks of relation between humans and other species, which include, while not being limited to, linguistic and sonic communication.

In my own discussion I seek to move away from thinking about sound in purely linguistic terms. One of the conceptual tools that enables this is the

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[49] This theme is discussed in great detail by Cary Wolfe in *What is Posthumanism?* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 99–125.
[50] *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 30–57.
[51] *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007).

'soundscape', a term that offers a way of displacing the centrality of language in an analysis of humanity's relationship to the broader nonhuman environment. I take this term from the work of musicologist R. Murray Schafer, a Canadian composer, writer and environmentalist who has famously argued that the general acoustic environment of a society can be read as an indicator of the social conditions which produce that environment.[52] Schafer has given scholars valuable tools, and a primary vocabulary, to begin thinking about the role and function of sound in historically and culturally situated contexts.[53] The conceptualisation of sounds in texts as forming different soundscapes also draws attention to the connections between expressions of sound and the portrayal of space, the word 'soundscape' deriving from 'landscape'. In particular, Schafer's interest in acoustic ecology, which in terms of nonhuman beasts and birds is focused primarily on the recording of birdsong, and his attention to the various ways of recording sounds in different soundscapes, has made an important contribution to studies of sound and the environment. However, Schafer fails to capitalise on the potential of this concept for considering modes of interaction and communication that include diverse nonhuman, as well as human, agents.

Schafer's interest in the quantification of sound is not well-adapted to medieval ways of recording. However, the ways that medieval conceptualisations of nonhuman sound create the circumstances for culturally situated interpretations of, and response to, those sounds offer a counterpoint to Schafer's effort to record the sounds of specific environments. How can medieval texts record the sounds of nonhuman beasts and birds? How can we analyse these sounds, many of which express sonic phenomena in ways that shade into human forms of expression? As a theoretical tool, the soundscape is helpful for considering the nonlinguistic evocation of ecologies that include humans, while not being restricted to them. What it is not is a 'recording' of sound in the modern sense. However, this is precisely what enables us to consider the soundscapes of medieval texts as meaningful in other ways. Sound in these works is about communication and the evocation of the environment as well as the representation of the nonhuman in relation to the human. As many of my

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[52] *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

[53] See, for example, Jean-Marie Fritz, *La cloche et la lyre: pour une poétique médiévale du paysage sonore* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2011).

readings suggest, the soundscape offers a guiding principle for analysing how sounds are recorded and interpreted in texts, but it does not act as a definitive rulebook for interpreting sonic phenomena more broadly.

In thinking through the power dynamics of cross-species contact and sonic cohabitation in medieval soundscapes, my interpretation of nonhuman sounds has been informed by the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project, which includes his book *The Open: Man and Animal*, considers how life qualifies, or fails to qualify, as human in different political and cultural contexts. *The Open* makes an attempt to answer this question by discussing how a distinction between the human and the nonhuman has shaped 'the conception of human political life as an attempt to surpass animal existence'.[54] The crux of Agamben's argument is that such a distinction between human and nonhuman 'animal' is based on a process of human decision-making through what he describes as an 'intimate caesura' between human and animal that is located within 'man' himself. Agamben argues that such a division within man is the product of two evolving 'anthropological machines': one modern which excludes the nonhuman within the human; the other pre-modern which figures the animal in human form.[55] These anthropological machines create spaces of exception in which the caesura of human and nonhuman is repeatedly revised.

Agamben's work is useful for this thesis because it provides a way of thinking about the broader implications of attempts to establish or destabilise the categories of human and nonhuman in the Middle Ages, particularly when it comes to questions of power and human sovereignty. His work also enables a more precise consideration of how nonhuman sounds may participate in the revision of distinctions between humans and nonhumans by calling into question the distinctiveness and exclusivity of human language. In Chapter Three, I draw on Agamben's work on Franciscanism to highlight how expressions of sound in the Life of St Francis complicate the process of distinguishing humans and animals by drawing a line between different categories of life in which both humans and

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[54] Emma Campbell, 'Political Animals: Human/Animal Life in *Bisclavret* and *Yonec*', *Exemplaria*, 25.2 (2013), p. 97. For Giorgio Agamben, see: *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Astell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); and *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[55] *The Open*, pp. 13–16 and 33–38.

nonhumans may participate.[56] The sounds of beasts and birds in the *Vye* feature as points of cross-species contact through which audiences can navigate different states of existence, the two primary forms of which are 'bare life' (*zoë*), a life in which the biological aspect of life is given preference to the way a life is lived, and a 'qualified form-of-life' (*bios*) as exemplified in the Rule that guides the actions of the saint.

In utilising the methodologies I have mentioned above to explore the specifics of how medieval texts represent human and nonhuman interaction, I frame my discussion of nonhuman sounds with the work of modern philosophers, anthropologists, musicologists and social theorists. I do so by exploring the specificity of medieval ways of thinking about nonhuman sound, and also the parallels that they create with contemporary discussions on nonhuman life more generally. In medieval texts, sounds may feature as guides for human audiences to interpret the acoustic environments of texts and the ways that they frame contact and communication; they may enjoin readers to imitate or mimic sounds and expressions of music for pedagogic, didactic or spiritual reasons. Likewise, sounds and noises pose a continual challenge to the conceptualisation of fixed forms of language as the sole domain of the human. As I will suggest at various junctures in this thesis, sounds point towards different conceptualisations of encounter between human and nonhuman. In particular, they point towards nonhuman vocalisations as meaningful, whilst also gesturing back towards the perplexities of human language.

Methodology, Scope and Content

All of the primary texts for this thesis were composed or translated in Anglo-Norman England; they are all written in French or English (sometimes both), though many are translations or adaptations of earlier Latin texts. I focus on the geographical area of England because the kinds of language contact found in Anglo-Norman texts raises questions of sound and language that have a bearing on the depiction and interpretation of nonhuman sounds. The presence of multiple languages in England already complicates the idea that there is an opposition between a singular conceptualisation of 'human language' opposed to 'nonhuman sound'.

[56] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Multilingualism also raises questions of linguistic intelligibility that are about more than a simple distinction between humans and nonhumans. I take a comparative approach to the representation of the sounds of beasts and birds in texts written in French and in English in order to highlight the linguistic complexity of some cross-species sonic phenomena as these are expressed in different texts and to explore questions of representation that may be specific to these languages. It is neither my intention to give an account of the historical evolution of the vocabularies used to express nonhuman sounds, nor to provide a systematic overview of the ways that beasts and birds are represented in medieval texts. Questions of the historical evolution of terms for nonhuman sounds are of course raised at various points in my discussion, but this thesis is less interested in providing descriptive accounts of nonhuman sounds than in analysing the function of nonhuman sound in specific texts. My discussion of each of my primary texts is focused primarily on how these works offer distinctive representations of cross-species sonic cohabitation and cross-linguistic contact, and on how such contact is put to work.

Since the relationship between humans and nonhumans is always to some extent open to reinterpretation in the moments of cross-species contact depicted in medieval texts, I have found it less important to classify what are assumed to be 'fixed' representations of sound and more important to attend to the conditions that enable the sounds or noises of humans, beasts and birds to be identified as such. With this in mind, my analysis of the sounds of nonhumans in Old French and Middle English texts ranges across a variety of texts from different genres. These include word lists and glossaries, bestiaries, saints' lives, fables and songs. This comparative approach enables me to consider how different types of text negotiate human and nonhuman sonic encounter in particular ways, to certain, generically-specific ends. In this way, I consider how genre informs the representation and function of nonhuman sound in medieval texts, even if I am not aiming to identify particular genres with distinctive soundscapes that would apply to all expressions of sound in other texts from those genres.

This approach to sound and genre complements more systematic studies of nonhuman sounds in medieval literature and of the development of such sounds over time. For instance, Jean-Marie Fritz's work offers a picture of how sounds are

considered across medieval textual cultures.[57] What my approach adds to such studies is a closer attention to how nonhuman sound mediates cross-species contact; it also places greater emphasis on the importance of thinking about the living animal in close readings of texts. Indeed, the theoretical framing of my thesis is part of an attempt to bring the important work being done in medieval sound studies into conversation with wider debates in medieval studies, particularly those that concern the ways that nonhuman sounds may be considered as participating in human conceptualisations of language, divergent forms of life and extra-human perspectives. Thinking through sound encourages audiences and scholars to reconsider their own connections to the nonhuman world, particularly through the shared vocal abilities of humans (in the majority) and a large number of beasts and birds depicted in textual soundscapes.

My methodology also differs in important respects from the approaches to animal communication taken by scholars working in medieval animal studies. Whilst a number of scholars have pointed to the theme of animal language as one that opens up debate to discursive issues on the connections between humans and nonhumans, my approach is instead to begin with sound, and move to language from that specific vantage.[58] For instance, in the introduction to a recent collection on *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages*, Alison Langdon observes that 'talking animals abound in medieval texts.'[59] This volume brings a new perspective on previous studies seeking to challenge assumptions of a 'reflexive anthropocentrism governing attitudes toward nonhuman animals in the Middle Ages' by emphasising the role of language in challenging anticipated distinctions between humans and other animals. As with my own analyses, *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages* is invested in an attentiveness to the real, living creature represented in medieval texts and to a 'discourse with animals in something approaching their own terms', including 'gesture, touch, olfaction, posture, and other forms of embodied expression.'[60] A number of chapters from this volume accordingly discuss the types of language used

[57] *Paysages Sonores du Moyen Age*, p. 17.
[58] One key study of talking animals in medieval texts is Jan M. Ziolkowski's *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry, 750-1150* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). This should be set alongside Jill Mann's *From Aesop to Reynard* as foundational studies of the ways that animals are figured using human speech in important texts from this period.
[59] *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages*, p. 1.
[60] Ibid., p. 4.

by humans to communicate with beasts and birds, or elements of embodied nonhuman expression that may be interpreted as a form of animal language.[61] In contrast to this, I take noisy beasts and birds rather than talking animals as my starting points and consider the ways that language is figured in broader soundscapes. In this way, I emphasise different ways that sound becomes implicated in communication not only with the human, but also between different species themselves, sometimes in ways that bypass human figures altogether.

Finally, a word on the structure of this thesis. In Chapter One, I consider the early French *Bestiaire* (composed sometime between 1121-35), by the earliest Anglo-Norman poet Philippe de Thaon, as a text that constructs multiple soundscapes associated with its chapters on various creatures. The sounds made by bestiary creatures, insofar as they are part of the literal depictions of their natures, are subject to established traditions of description and allegorical interpretation in this bestiary. The sounds of certain bestiary creatures, such as the lion, the siren and the mandrake, direct interpretation through a limited vocabulary to describe sound. I draw attention to the ways that sound is represented in these soundscapes, but in particular to how the sounds produced by creatures highlight moments of nonhuman suffering. By joining the concept of the soundscape to an analysis of suffering, I ask how the multiple layers of sound in the text might be interpreted and enriched by Donna Haraway's suggestion that the suffering of creatures serves as a point of reflexive contact between human and nonhuman agents. When the suffering of creatures, of humans and indeed of Christ is introduced into soundscapes through nonhuman sound, this has important consequences for the interpretation of sonic encounter and cohabitation in the *Bestiaire*. While sound is part of conventional forms of allegorical interpretation, when linked to suffering it may disrupt the modes of reading on which bestiaries rely. I argue that this is particularly the case for the siren, who anticipates the suffering of the sailors who drown because of her song, and for the uprooted mandrake, which cries when it is harvested and lets out a piercing and deadly *cri*. In these instances, both of which involve the sounds made by legendary creatures, I argue that suffering, as it is communicated through nonhuman vocalisation, breaks with the traditional frameworks of bestiary

[61] See Robert Stanton, 'Bark Like a Man: Performance, Identity and Boundary in Old English Animal Voice Catalogues', in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages*.

interpretation. I thus emphasise how sound is part of the interpretation of the natural world as meaningful, while also having the potential to disrupt that interpretation.

My second chapter examines the mid-thirteenth-century multilingual *Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth in which the types of words used to describe the qualities and sounds of beasts and birds are incorporated into mnemonic lists that are used in pedagogic contexts. I examine the *Tretiz* as a contact zone; that is, a space of encounter between two or more languages and/or species that frames points of contact within social and cultural networks that are constructed on asymmetrical relations of power. In the context of Anglo-Norman England, the textual contact zone is a space that is situated within a broader geographical, linguistic and cultural contact zone that encompassed the three primary languages of England during this period: Latin, French and English. The noises of nonhumans are expressed through these languages, and also contribute to the form, content and style of the treatise. Distinctions between different species' vocalisations (described as *noise*), and the words (or *langage*) used by humans to describe a variety of species, are thus linked closely to the organisation and expression of sounds that work to form masculine, aristocratic subjectivities through the subordination of the nonhuman. The words describing the sounds of beasts and birds in this contact zone thus bolster a type of masculine subjectivity based on dominance and on the creation of hierarchies that affirm the superiority of young gentlemen over nonhumans. Simultaneously, the language used to classify those beasts and birds, and the words used to describe nonhuman nonsensical sounds, are often figured in ways that invite imitation or audience response, emphasising how sonic cross-species and cross-linguistic contact is formed through human language. This suggests that the linguistic and semiotic foundations upon which masculine and aristocratic subjectivities are constructed are themselves unstable and open to interpretation.

In Chapter Three, I discuss two different versions of the Life of St Francis of Assisi—the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys* (datable to 1273-75) and a shorter late thirteenth-century Middle English *Life of Saint Francis*—both of which are based on the orthodox version of Francis' Life by Bonaventure. These saints' lives are interested in the depiction of different types of cross-species worship and praise, in which the sounds of creatures such as sheep and birds play a crucial role. Taking my cue from the work of Giorgio Agamben on form-of-life in Franciscan theology and liturgy, I suggest that the bleating of sheep and the singing of birds in these Lives of

St Francis express creaturely sound as a cross-species phenomenon orchestrated by the saint in ways that associate bleating and birdsong with preaching and the singing of the liturgy. The communities that are formed by Francis' sacramental project of shared worship demonstrate that sounds such as the sheep bleating at the altar, or the cricket that sings to Francis, are important signifiers for the depiction of different categories of life. Francis himself epitomises a form-of-life that is exemplary (*bios*); this is a life to which other creatures and humans might aspire from their own natural form-of-life (*zoë*). Through interaction with the saint, sheep and birds move from *zoë*, in which their sounds express their essential ability to praise, towards *bios*, in which state their sounds become steeped in close interaction with Francis' own form-of-life. Creatures vocally praising the Creator form connections between themselves and the friars based on the shared desire to praise the Creator under the saint's tuition. Throughout the Lives the sounds of various creatures highlight the ways that beasts and birds move up the created order when in the presence of the saint, just as humans might when they follow the Rule of Francis.

My final chapter on the *Fables* by Marie de France (composed in the twelfth century but also popular in the thirteenth) incorporates texts in which nonhumans speak and talk to each other, as well as producing sounds such as barks and birdsong. Contrary to the texts discussed in earlier chapters, in which nonhumans make noises and sounds that contrast (and sometimes intersect) with human language, the *Fables* represent beasts and birds explicitly appropriating forms of expression marked as human. Chapter Four examines the ways that the *Fables* present different cross-species perspectives, including the perspectives of mouths (in which goats and wolves converse through human language), those of muzzles (such as the barking of dogs) and those of beaks (including the call of the cuckoo and the *jargon* of birds). Fables are bound in anthropocentric frameworks of interpretation that encourage readers to see human social and political systems in the figures and behaviours of beasts and birds. The juxtaposition of nonhuman sounds with vocalisations resembling human utterance and speech invites a reconsideration of perspective and point of view from a nonhuman angle. The sounds emitted by muzzles, for example, mirror human social, religious and legal constructs such as the common law process of the hue and cry. They also offer a way of thinking through encounters between humans and nonhumans that are based on contact with actual beasts, including goats, foxes, dogs, and so on. The perspectives offered by mouths, muzzles and beaks are

communicated in ways that bridge the conceptual divides between humans and nonhumans, situating nonhuman sound on a continuum with human language. The chapter finishes with a comparison of the representation of cuckoo song in the *Fables* with cuckoo-calling in 'Sumer is icumen in'. This comparison highlights the divergent ways that perspectives of beaks are formed through the expression of cuckoo-calling in a text that is supposed to be sung by humans. Whilst the cuckoo is represented as a largely absent and ambiguous figure in the French *Fables*, the call of this bird is placed directly into the mouths of human singers in the English song.

This thesis is thus an attempt to understand the linguistic, cultural and ideological networks of relation that inform the depiction of nonhuman sound and noise across a range of medieval French and English texts composed in Anglo-Norman England, both in narrative terms and for audience interpretation. It also suggests how points of contact and encounter—be they based on literary representation, the proximity of sound and language, or physical encounters between human and nonhuman—are implicated in such networks. Sonic contact between humans, beasts, birds and legendary creatures produces the conditions for a critical reassessment of divides between rational humans with language and irrational nonhumans without. The sounds of nonhumans are brought into dialogue with human modes of expression in ways that are textually specific, and which reveal forms of sonic cohabitation that are similarly particular to certain texts. I contend that sonic cohabitation is presented in terms of cross-species and cross-linguistic connections that interpret different species according to a variety of themes, including the challenges they pose to anthropocentric circuits of interpretation, the ways they teach readers about their own humanity or nonhumanity and the ways that they form textual soundscapes. Crying, roaring, barking, bleating and singing are examples of sounds that negotiate between categories, languages, conceptualisations of life and other-than-human perspectives. Such nonhuman sounds have the potential to trouble human exceptionalism as well as to produce or reinforce it. In encouraging readers and audiences to reflect on their own sounds and languages, nonhuman sounds evoke the movement between categories of human and nonhuman and of beast and bird by communicating the perspectives of beings with different vocal apparatuses. Such forms of movement and communication suggest that sonic contact in the soundscapes of medieval texts ultimately provides some of the most transformative depictions of cross-species and cross-linguistic encounter.

CHAPTER 1

Crying Creatures: Suffering in Soundscapes of the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon

> We are in the midst of webbed existences, multiple beings in relationship, this animal, this sick child, this village, these herds […]. This is a ramifying tapestry of shared being/becoming among creatures (including humans) in which living well, flourishing, and being 'polite' (political/ethical/in right relation) mean staying inside semiotic materiality, including the suffering inherent in unequal and ontologically multiple instrumental relationships.[1]

Medieval bestiaries are noisy places of 'webbed existences'. Creatures in Latin versions of the *Physiologus* and, from the second half of the twelfth century, in French bestiaries, contribute to a tapestry of soundscapes in these texts through the sounds that they make. Despite the concentration of sonic phenomena found in the chapters of medieval bestiaries, these texts have often been considered more for their visual appeal than for the quality of their acoustic environments.[2] However, creatures in these texts do not just appeal to the eye. If we listen to bestiaries, as well as reading or seeing the pages themselves, we can hear a range of sonic phenomena that situate bestiary creatures in networks of relation with other creatures and with humans: the panther roars as it emits a sweet smell that entices its prey; the chicks of the partridge recognise their estranged biological parents by the sounds of their voices; the songs of sirens lead sailors to their deaths on the waves. Beasts and birds cry and sing,

[1] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 72.

[2] See Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Other studies that have emphasised the visual appeal of bestiaries include the following: *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. by Debra Hassig (New York: Routledge, 2013); *The Grand Medieval Bestiary: Animals in Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. by Christian Heck and Rémy Cordonnier, and trans. by John Goodman, Linda Gardiner, Elizabeth Heard, Charles Penwarden and Jane Marie Todd (New York: Abbeville Press, 2012); and Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

establishing sonic relationships between themselves and others, whilst also emitting sounds that may be interpreted in figurative terms and that form soundscapes. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the sounds of creatures like the lion's cry in one French *Bestiaire* are incorporated into models for interpretation in ways that emphasise the allegorical and symbolic qualities associated with their 'natures'. However, the sounds of other creatures, such as the siren's alluring song and the deadly cry of the mandrake, disrupt these interpretative frameworks and present moments of rupture in the conventional modes of bestiary interpretation that equally emphasise how sonic cohabitation between bestiary creatures is fraught with aural, physical and spiritual dangers. Such moments encourage audiences to reconsider the meanings associated with particular creatures in the rich bestiary tapestry (or series of soundscapes) of shared being and becoming, especially when nonhuman vocalisations are expressions of pain or suffering.

In keeping with the broader project of medieval bestiaries to present a Christianised version of natural history, nonhuman sounds are interpreted by bestiary texts in ways that frequently identify such sounds with central tenets of Christian Scripture or with Christian moralisations. The Bible was subject to four-fold interpretation from the third and fourth centuries onwards and bestiaries imitated this in applying literal, allegorical, tropological (or moral) and eschatological interpretations to the creatures and stones that feature in their pages.[3] The four-fold model of textual interpretation dates back to the late antique *Physiologus* (c. fourth century onwards), a prototype that informed compilations of Latin *Physiologus* material later termed 'bestiaries' around 1100.[4] The bestiaries reorganised chapters and integrated supplementary material such as etymologies and observational explanations for nonhuman behaviour. This emphasised the interpretation of the names and natures of creatures as examples of 'visible, temporal phenomena that

[3] See *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second-Family Bestiary: Commentary, Art, Text and Translation*, ed. by Willene B. Clarke (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 22; Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, pp. 7–13; and Emma Campbell, 'Sound and Vision: Bruno Latour and the Languages of Memory in Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiaire*', *The Romanic Review*, Special Issue, ed. by Marilynn Desmond and Noah Guynn (forthcoming 2019).

[4] For the *Physiologus*, see *Physiologus*, trans. by Michael J. Curley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. ix; and *Physiologos: Le bestiaire des bestiaires*, ed. and trans. by Arnaud Zucker (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon, 2004), pp. 19–20.

could point towards invisible, eternal realities.'[5] These layers of interpretation included references to the relation between Christ and his Church, drawing on episodes of biblical history such as the Incarnation of Christ. The development of the bestiary as a genre included the translation of Latin versions of the *Physiologus* into vernacular languages such as Old French, a process through which the interpretation of nonhumans and the sounds they were thought to make were carried over into languages other than Latin.

The bestiary on which my first chapter is focused is the earliest extant translation of a bestiary into French: the twelfth-century verse *Bestiaire* by the Anglo-Norman writer Philippe de Thaon.[6] Philippe is the earliest French-language author whose name and work have come down to us. He also wrote a *Comput* (a poetic guide to the metrical science of *computus*, or calendrical writing), and possibly a translation of Sibylline prophecies known as *Le Livre de Sibile*.[7] A brief description of his bestiary and its manuscript contexts will allow us to place the *Bestiaire* in a broader tradition of writing about nonhuman creatures, and to consider how these types of writing are implicated in the types of cross-linguistic networks of relation that frame the representation of creaturely sound. This bestiary, which was probably written around 1121-35, is transmitted in three manuscripts, which bind the *Bestiaire* with texts from a range of genres. In the oldest and longest version of the *Bestiaire* in London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A. V. (*L*), which comes to a total of 3194 lines, the bestiary is dedicated to Aelis (Adeliza) de Louvain, who became the second wife of Henry I of England in 1121.[8] This manuscript, which was at one point owned by the Cistercian Holmcultram Abbey in Cumbria, also contains

[5] Sarah Kay, 'Post-human Philology and the Ends of Time in Medieval Bestiaries', *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 5.4 (2014), p. 475.

[6] My primary source for this text will be the edition provided by Luigina Morini in *Bestiari Medievali* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1996). All page and line numbers are taken from this text and will be indicated in parentheses following quotations. All translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated.

[7] For further information on Philippe de Thaon, see Thomas O'Donnell, 'The Gloss to Philippe de Thaon's *Comput*', in *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*, ed. by Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), p. 15; M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 18–26; and Rupert T. Pickens, 'The Literary Activity of Philippe de Thaün', *Romance Notes*, 12 (1970), pp. 208–12.

[8] The first part of this manuscript containing the *Bestiaire* dates from the second half of the twelfth century. In another later version, Oxford, Merton College Library, MS 249 (*O*), Philippe's *Bestiaire* is rededicated to Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204).

the *Comput*.[9] The arrangement of the *Bestiaire*, which hierarchically ranks beasts (mostly quadrupeds and reptiles) below birds, and birds below stones, is comparable to the Latin *Dicta Chrysostomi* although the subjects are closer to the B-Isidore bestiary format.[10]

To add to its credentials as the first Anglo-Norman text written by the earliest Anglo-Norman poet, the *Bestiaire* is also the earliest extant version of a vernacular bestiary produced in England. It therefore offers a snapshot of the early vernacularisation of the *Physiologus* tradition. Though written primarily in French, the *Bestiaire* is multilingual and multimedia in nature, including Latin rubrics that often enjoin the reader to visualise the creatures depicted in the text or in the accompanying illuminations.[11] These images are a virtual or actual presence in the three manuscripts that transmit the text: spaces are left for images in *L*, but they were never executed; images are included alongside the text in two thirteenth-century manuscripts, *C* (c. 1300) and *O*. The rubrics emphasise the acts of imagining creatures in a process that also involves a transition from French to Latin. The rubrics are particularly evident in the sections discussing the lion and the mandrake, which, as I detail below, make cross-linguistic contact part of a more complicated set of sonic relations between audiences and bestiary creatures. Nonhuman beasts and birds are thus, from the outset, presented for interpretation in ways that emphasise the multiplicity of human forms of representation, which include images as well as text in Latin and French.

The consequences of this multiplicity for the generation of meaning in the bestiary is evident in the relationship between text and illuminations, which occasionally offer alternative representations of the natures of bestiary creatures when read in parallel. Sarah Kay has demonstrated how the seeing or touching of

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[9] The only surviving Continental copy, which transmits an incomplete version of the text, is now in Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. Kgl. S. 3466 8º (*C*). See Maria Careri, Christina Ruby and Ian Short, *Livres et écritures en français et en occitan au XIIe siècle* (Rome: Viella, 2011). For the *Comput*, see Thomas O'Donnell, 'The Gloss to Philippe de Thaon's *Comput*', pp. 13–37.

[10] Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, p. 159. See also: Theobaldus, *Theobaldi "Physiologus"*, ed. by P. T. Eden (Leiden, Brill, 1972), p. 3; and Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), pp. 148 and 209.

[11] For example, the chapter on the lion, written predominantly in French, contains a number of Latin rubrics, explaining: the meaning of the lion's name (p. 114); the lion tearing the ass (p. 114); a description of the lion's tail (p. 118); how the lion is depicted above man (p. 118); the relationship between the lion, the cockerel and the cart (p. 124); and brief explanations of the canonical hours (pp. 126–28).

bestiary manuscripts with punctures or holes in the pages of vellum creates a symbiotic loop through which the human reader is enjoined to consider the relationship between their own skin and the bestiary page.[12] Interactions with bestiary texts might in this way produce a reflection on the nature of the human that passes through a tactile, as well as a multimedia encounter with nonhuman animality. Sounds communicated through language or through images in this text are also part of the description and interpretation of bestiary creatures, whose sounds are usually nonlinguistic in nature—a quality that paradoxically enhances their communicative potential. The *Bestiaire* frequently uses nonlinguistic sounds as the literal basis for multiple, figurative interpretations, such as in the case of the lion, whose roar at the sight of his dead cubs expresses his own grief and suffering as well as the strength of God when Christ rose on the third day. Sound in the bestiary traverses literal and figurative levels of meaning and, in doing so, acquires multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. Thinking specifically about the soundscapes of this text allows for a reconsideration of how different levels of sonic expression create alternative symbiotic loops between creatures and audiences, and how the expression of a type of sound that is nonhuman and nonlinguistic may act as a disruptive force for the conventional framework of the text.

The range of nonhuman sounds in this bestiary is encapsulated in two key forms of vocalisation: the expression of names (particularly through etymology) and the depiction of creatures crying. The etymological sounds of words, alongside the literal sounds of creatures, are framed by a broader interest in the function of sound and the way that it is represented in cross-linguistic modes of interpretation for the potential audiences of the *Bestiaire*, which may have included lay as well as monastic readers or listeners. The first mention of sound in this text, introduced just before the chapter on the lion, draws attention not to nonhuman vocalisations, but to the articulation of a human name. In the short Prologue, which is addressed to 'Aliz', Queen of England, the act of listening is connected to spiritual improvement and a return to prelapsarian perfection. The *Bestiaire* enjoins the reader to 'oiez de son non | qu'en ebrieu trovon: | Aliz si nons est, | loënge de Dé est; | en ebreu, en verté, | est

[12] Sarah Kay, 'Surface and Symptom on a Bestiary Page: Orifices on Folios 61^{v}-62^{r} of Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 20', *Exemplaria*, 26.2/3 (2014), pp. 127–47.

Aliz *laus* de Dé' ('listen to her name, which we find in Hebrew: "Aliz" is her name, that is "praise of God"; for in Hebrew, truly, "Aliz" is "praise of God"', p. 113–14, ll. 13–18). The cross-linguistic qualities of this statement, through which the audience hears the sound of a name and its etymological meaning, reinforce the connection between sound and translation from the ancient language of Hebrew—a language given special value because of its associations with Judeo-Christian Scripture. To hear the French name 'Aliz' is to be connected to an ancient language through etymology, and to the *loenge* ('praise', 'glory' or 'jubilation') that it connotes. The interpretation of the Queen's name encapsulates the purpose of the bestiary as a whole, namely the praise of God through a spiritually informed reading of his creatures. In this way, words in Hebrew, Latin and French in the *Bestiaire* are shown to continue to signify the types of knowledge and divine truths available to humans when they shared primal innocence with the other creatures in Eden, a theme touched upon in the Introduction in my discussion of Adam naming the animals in Genesis. As well as connecting the expression of names with etymological thinking in the bestiary, the initial direct address of the *Bestiaire* frames the text as vocalised by a human author and heard by a human audience.

In addition to its association with various figurative meanings, vocalised sound in the bestiary also acts as a point of encounter between the human audience and the sonic environment of the text. When the creatures of the *Bestiaire* cry or sing the text establishes moments of contact with other human or nonhuman creatures that are, in some cases, clearly defined as acoustic environments or soundscapes. The literal descriptions of the sounds of nonhuman creatures in the *Bestiaire* often place these sounds in scenarios where such creatures perceive or actively listen to one another or to humans. To take one example, the mandrake is a plant-like creature that emits a piercing cry, which is lethal to the creatures that hear it, when uprooted from the ground. This is an encounter with a creature that creates a specific and dangerous acoustic environment for the human gatherer, who in turn has to find a way to avoid hearing the cry in order to harvest the mandrake for its medicinal qualities. Chapters of the *Bestiaire* discussing other legendary or hybrid creatures such as sirens also incorporate depictions of singing and sound-making and connect these vocalised expressions to the sailors who hear her alluring songs. A few birds of the skies, such as the *nicticorax* and the phoenix, are described as singing in the

Bestiaire in ways that emphasise the allegorical value of such sonic phenomena in these textual soundscapes.[13]

The notion of the 'soundscape' is useful for thinking about the representation of nonhuman vocalisations in the *Bestiaire*. As I noted in the Introduction, the term 'soundscape' is a relatively recent coinage by the musicologist R. Murray Schafer; I offer some detail here on how my use of the term draws on and modifies Schafer's own terminology. Schafer's work emphasises the importance of listening to and recording the sounds present in any given environment at any given time. The term 'soundscape', derived from 'landscape', offers a way of identifying the sociohistorical function and meaning of sonic phenomena.[14] Schafer notes that 'a soundscape consists of events *heard* not objects *seen*', and it is this distinction that informs his project to record and analyse the sounds of different acoustic environments.[15] The term 'soundscape' has now become a commonplace in sound studies and can be found referring broadly or specifically to the sounds that contribute to the production of discreet and defined acoustic environments presented in texts as well as in physical environments such as woodlands or urban spaces. In a study of soundscapes in early French literature, Brigitte Cazelles uses the term to describe soundscapes of narration in medieval texts which foreground language 'of an often prelinguistic or nonlinguistic character'.[16] My own use of the term, like that of Cazelles, focuses on how medieval texts represent as well as produce sonic environments. In texts such as the *Bestiaire*, this includes the depiction of nonhuman, nonlinguistic or prelinguistic expression such as crying, braying and singing. The bestiary soundscape is not, then, a soundscape in Schafer's original sense: the text is not an objective recording of the sounds produced around it. Rather, sound is evoked as a literal presence, and may subsequently acquire figurative meaning through

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[13] Jean-Marie Fritz, *Paysages sonores du Moyen Age: Le versant épistémologique* (Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 2000), pp. 23–34.

[14] Ari Y. Kelman calls the term 'soundscape' a vexed one: 'One of the most useful and vexing terms offered to date has been Schafer's 'soundscape'. […] a 'soundscape' seems to offer a way of describing the relationship between sound and place. It evokes the sonic counterpart of a landscape in which one sees trees or buildings, but hears wind, birds, or traffic. But what is a soundscape? Where is it? How is it bound or defined?', 'Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies', *The Senses and Society*, 5.2 (2015), p. 215.

[15] R. Murray Schafer, 'The Soundscape', in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. by Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 99–101, original italics.

[16] *Soundscape in Early French Literature* (Tempe: Brepols, 2005), p. 18, n. 52.

allegorical interpretation. Bestiary soundscapes are thus part of the way the natural world is brought to life and interpreted as meaningful.

Schafer and Cazelles both posit a connection between sound (or noise) and power in soundscapes.[17] Studies of the representation of sound and noise in medieval texts more generally have highlighted the ways that sonic aspects of texts are related to language and, in turn, to the production of communicative encounters between creatures, including humans, that are based on power and hierarchy.[18] What interests me is the way that the soundscapes of the bestiary are instrumental in making connections between human and nonhuman creatures, as well as the ways those connections may express or construct relations of power. This is akin to what Haraway describes as 'webbed existences', as seen in the epigraph to this chapter. Indeed, I argue that the suffering that Haraway claims is 'inherent in unequal and ontologically multiple instrumental relationships' is significant for thinking about how bestiary soundscapes work. In the *Bestiaire* sound expresses nonhuman and human suffering—both literal and figurative—and this becomes part of the entangled soundscapes produced by the text.[19] In the examples that I have chosen from the *Bestiaire*, notably the chapters on the lion, the siren and the mandrake, the soundscapes within which these creatures interact with humans or other species generate affective responses that reinforce the connections between these literal and figurative meanings. When suffering as an expression of weakness and powerlessness is translated into bestiary sound this translation is part of a cross-species encounter with the human audience of the text. Through the act of hearing or listening to the suffering of bestiary creatures these sounds, and the suffering associated with them, acquire other meanings too, such as the association with Christ's suffering.

I examine in what follows how suffering in the chapters featuring the lion, the siren and the mandrake is connected to sound and how this impinges on bestiary interpretations. The lion's *cri*, the siren's *cante* and the mandrake's *cri* are each

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[17] See R. Murray Schafer, 'The Soundscape'; and Brigitte Cazelles, *The Soundscape in Early French Literature*, pp. 5–6.

[18] Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'The Little Pipe Sings Sweetly while the Fowler Deceives the Bird: Sirens in the Later Middle Ages', *Music and Letters*, 87.2 (2006), pp. 187–211; and Jean-Marie Fritz, *Paysages sonores du Moyen Age*, pp. 193–209.

[19] See Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), pp. 49–50.

connected in different ways to suffering. These are also three nonhuman figures that, in contrast to the beasts and birds discussed in later chapters of this thesis, were exotic creatures for medieval readers in Anglo-Norman England. The sounds attributed to these creatures are therefore significant less for their realism than for the ways they generate certain responses and meanings (literal or figurative) within the soundscapes in which humans and nonhuman creatures interact. Following my discussion of the more conventional interpretation of the lion's cry, in the last sections of this chapter I explore in particular how the chapters on the siren and the mandrake draw attention to the (literal) suffering expressed through sound by leaving it uninterpreted in visual and textual ways. These three creatures thus demonstrate the ways that the depiction of suffering in bestiary soundscapes may both reinforce and interrupt the interpretative framework of the text, offering audiences access to both literal and eschatological forms of knowledge, whilst revealing that sound is a site for audience response and interpretation.

Cross-Linguistic Sounds in the Prologue and the Chapter on the Lion

The chapter on the lion directly follows the Prologue to the *Bestiaire* and applies the same kind of etymological analysis that I noted in relation to Queen Aliz to the king of the beasts, observing that 'Ceo que en Griu est *leün* | en fraunceis 'rei' ad num' ('that which is *lion* in Greek has the name of "king" in French', ll. 25–26). Here, as elsewhere in Philippe's bestiary, etymological analysis is part of an enquiry into how language and the sounds of words convey truth—an enquiry that applies to the full diversity of God's creation, including human and nonhuman creatures.[20] Whilst etymological analysis focuses on the human capacity to name God's creation (and glimpse a truth made visible through that analysis), the description of sound instead translates the voices of creatures into human language. However, the primary difference between naming a human and describing a nonhuman sound is that the types of sounds emitted by nonhumans may bypass direct reference to human grammatical or linguistic structures. By emphasising sound as a nonlinguistic sonic phenomenon that signifies in different ways, the lion's *cri*, for example, becomes a

[20] Sarah Kay, 'Post-human Philology', p. 480.

signifier that reaches out across the four conventional modes of bestiary interpretation (literal, allegorical, tropological and eschatological).

The Old French noun *cri* is the most commonly used word associated with nonhuman sounds in this text. Used to describe the sounds emitted by a spectrum of different life-forms, including mysterious creatures such as the mandrake, the term 'cri' covers a broad range of sounds which are not specific to particular creatures and, by extension, become associated with the figurative meanings developed in different chapters. Various bestiary beasts and birds apart from the lion are described as emitting a 'cri' in response to events or actions prompted by themselves or other creatures, in formulations where other texts would use a range of vocabulary. The word 'cri' in the *Bestiaire* is included in descriptions in the following episodes: the roar of the panther (l. 480); the cry of the antelope (l. 788); the screech of the mandrake (l. 1593); the braying of the ass (l. 1846, also described a few lines earlier with the verb *rechaner*, l. 1835); as well as the cries of the partridge (l. 1981), the phoenix (l. 2271), the hooppoe (l. 2604), and the *nicticorax*, or night raven (l. 2795). Crucially, 'cri' is a descriptor that also refers to sounds made by humans in Old French texts. To take just one example, in Old French *crier* may suggest weeping in a similar way to the modern English verb 'to cry' or to the modern French *crier*, 'to shout' or 'to cry out'.[21]

The first occurrence of 'cri' in the *Bestiaire* is in the chapter on the lion, where it is used to describe not only the roar of the lion, but also the sound of the wheels of the cart (l. 224).[22] A lengthy passage from the chapter on the lion suggests that these 'cries' are connected to the expression of the lion's emotional state. In the first instance of the use of 'cri' the lioness gives birth to a dead cub, after which the lion arrives and gives a roar or cry: 'li leüns i survent, | tant veit entur e *crie* | que al terz jur vent a vie' ('the lion appears, he goes around and *cries* so much that on the third day [the cub] comes to life', p. 132, ll. 366–68, my emphasis). An extra statement is provided on the meaning of the cry, explaining its eschatological significance: 'Par le cri del leün | la vertud Deu pernum | par quei resuscitad | Crist

[21] *AND* (online), see 'cri'. According to this entry the Old French *cri* is also used in texts to indicate a variety of actions related to the expression of sound, including as a description of the following: a war-cry, the baying of hounds, the croaking of frogs, a din or uproar, outcry or protest, a proclamation, an exhortation or a rumour.
[22] Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 137.

enfern despuilla' ('By the cry of the lion we understand the strength of God, through which he came back to life [and] Christ harrowed Hell', ll. 381–84). The text's interpretation of the cry of the lion as the strength of God, linked to the Harrowing of Hell, associates this sound with New Testament motifs that would have been familiar to Philippe's audience.[23] This eschatological interpretation is based upon the literal details of the lion's vocalisation, namely the anguish (or anger) expressed at the sight of his dead cubs. The *Bestiaire* demonstrates that the power of the *cri* lies in this double interpretation, in which layers of literal and allegorical meaning are superimposed. Hearing the cry of the lion is thus a moment of cross-species contact between human audience and bestiary lion, one that conjures both the literal sound and its eschatological significance.

The cry of the lion highlights how a sound may express the enmeshment of creaturely distress and the human suffering of Christ, as well as forming part of a soundscape that brings human listeners and bestiary creatures into contact. This contact is further complicated by the description of other sounds later in the same chapter. The noun *cri* is used to describe not only the sound of the lion waking its cub but also the noise of the cart (a sound that the lion is said to fear, along with the crowing of the white cockerel); this usage attributes the same type of sound-making agency to man-made technologies as it does to living creatures. The lion's fear of the cockerel and the cart is introduced in ways that connect different 'cries' with the creature's literal fear and with the demonstration of God's power. However, the fear of the lion is treated differently in the French verse when compared with the Latin rubrics that accompany the text. This divergence emphasises that sonic contact in the *Bestiaire* cuts across different languages:

> Li leüns blanc coc crent
> de char le cri ki en vent;
> e si ad itel sort
> que a uilz uvert dort.

[23] In the chapter on the lion, the tracks of this beast are understood as revealing the Incarnation of Christ (l. 168). Elsewhere, detailed reference is made to the basic tenets of Christian Scripture ('Escripture', p. 156, l. 841). Other Old Testament sources are referred to frequently throughout the text including, to take a few examples: Solomon (p. 140, l. 527), Jeremiah (p. 174, l. 1186), and Deuteronomy (p. 224, l. 2148).

E iceo entendez
es furmes que veez.
Hic pingitur leo et quomodo album gallum et strepitum plaustri pavet. Leo iste Cristum significat et gallus sanctos Dei, et plaustrum evangelistas.
Li blanc coc signefie
humes de sainte vie
ki ainz que Deu fu mort
annuncierent sa mort
que il forment cremait
sulunc que hom estait
Bestiaire, ll. 223–34

The lion fears the white cockerel and the cry that comes from the cart. And he also has this characteristic: that he sleeps with his eyes open. Understand this in the form that you see. *Here is depicted the lion and in the same manner the white cockerel and the noise of the cart. This lion signifies Christ, and the cockerel holy God, and the cart the evangelists.* The white cockerel signifies holy men who announced God's death before he died, which he very much feared as he was a man.

In this passage the sounds of the cart and of the infamously noisy cockerel are set into a context in which textual explanations in French and Latin are juxtaposed to communicate different messages. Firstly in the Latin the cockerel signifies 'sanctos Dei' ('holy God'); in the French the cockerel represents the 'humes de sainte vie' ('men of holy life'), who predict Christ's death in Gethsemane. In the ensuing text, after associating the cockerel's song with St Peter, the French passage continues by extolling the virtues of the monastic liturgy, listing: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and ending with '*silencium*' ('silence', ll. 297–98). However, there is nothing silent about the soundscape of this bestiary chapter. Alongside the depiction of sonic phenomena, the allegories that accompany the literal expressions of such phenomena in this soundscape introduce strong doctrinal messages. The movement between French and Latin interpretations in this passage establishes the sounds of the lion and the cockerel as phenomena that can be approached from complementary linguistic, literal and figurative standpoints. The cockerel causes the

fear of the lion (the literal sense), signifies the dread of human sinners who fear God (the moral message) and conveys the anxiety of Christ, who feared the experience of death in human form (the eschatological reading).

The noise of the cart in the same passage gives rise to a more limited number of interpretations based on the association between its four wheels and the four evangelists, which nevertheless contribute to the cross-linguistic and cross-species forms of contact made possible by the textual soundscape. The lion's fear of the *cri* of the cart is identified with Christ's death and, by extension, with the suffering of Christ at the moment of his crucifixion. In Latin, the noise of the cart signifies 'evangelistas'. Likewise, in French, the four wheels of the cart, evoking a chariot, signify the four evangelists, thus implying the mobility of the gospels: 'Li chars note en verté | quatre des feelz Dé: | Marc, Matheu senz engan, | Lucas e sain Johan; | e li criz signefie | la mort del filz Marie' ('In truth, the cart designates the four followers of God: Mark and Matthew, honestly, Luke and St John, and the cry signifies the death of the son of Mary', ll. 317–22). The suffering of the lion, through the expression of its fear of the cart's 'cri', therefore only makes sense once the audience of the text has joined the literal description of the lion, the cockerel and the cart to the allegorical and eschatological interpretations, and understood the layering of meanings associated with the original sounds. The juxtaposition of Latin and French interpretations of the soundscape in which the lion reacts to the cockerel and the cart (and simultaneously Christ, God, and the evangelists) adds to the complexity of this acoustic environment by articulating bestiary interpretations through two, audibly distinct languages.

The use of a very narrow range of terms to describe a variety of nonhuman sounds in the chapter on the lion is an illustration of the capaciousness of sonic phenomena as they are presented in the *Bestiaire*. This narrow terminology for the sounds of beasts, birds and objects contrasts with the Latin traditions that informed French bestiaries; Latin bestiaries generally draw upon a wider and more diverse vocabulary to describe nonhuman sound than that deployed in the *Bestiaire*. Returning to the scene in which the lion sees his dead cubs, in the *Theobaldi Physiologus*, the father lion rouses his cubs with a roar: 'Sed dans rugitum pater eius suscitat illum' ('then his father wakes him with a roar, and in this way he comes to life', p. 26, l. 7). The Latin B-Isidore version of the *Physiologus*, an adaptation of which provided source material for Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiaire*, takes a different

approach and describes the lion instead breathing into the faces of his cubs: 'donec veniens pater eius die tercio insufflet in faciem eius et vivificet eum' ('until the father, coming to them on the third day, breathes on their faces and revives them').[24] In Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* the lion is described as roaring or growling: 'fremitu vel rugitu'.[25] In contrast, the sound descriptor 'cri' in Philippe's *Bestiaire* potentially confuses different associations for nonhuman sounds rather than offering referential precision as in these Latin examples. Though this restricted vocabulary can be partly explained by the fact that Philippe's French is at a relatively early stage of development as a written language, the effects of this restriction are important. The *Bestiaire*'s use of the word 'cri' draws no necessary distinction between different categories of human and nonhuman sound: it associates the cries of living creatures such as the lion with the sounds of the cart and, implicitly, with the cries of human beings. The relevant distinctions are made not only on the level of sound itself, but through the various interpretations of sounds.

The ways that nonhuman sounds are connected to words in the chapter on the lion emphasise the range of meanings encompassed in a limited vocabulary as well as the importance of thinking about sound as a multilingual phenomenon. Complementary allegorical messages in different languages support the bestiary's interpretation of the world as rich in spiritual meaning. The bestiary's presentation of the truth of the natural world, therefore, is one that reaches across different modes of interpretation, rather than remaining fixed in one linguistic and thematic response to the text. Above all, the *cri* of the lion and the cart associates sound and its spiritual meanings with earthly suffering, not only connecting it to the grief, fear and anxiety of the lion, but also to Christ's fear and suffering while in human form. Sound thus expresses a link between terrestrial and divine forms of suffering in this text which goes beyond what may be heard or intuited through the lion's literal 'cri'. The sonic phenomena associated with the lion in this bestiary chapter serve to connect human readers or listeners, nonhuman creatures and divine beings. Sound also links the literal and allegorical senses of interpretation in ways that contrast with my discussion of other bestiary chapters below. Whereas the chapter on the lion uses

[24] 'Il 'Fisiologo' latino: 'versio' Bis', in *Bestiari Medievali*, ed. by Luigina Morini, p. 12.
[25] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XII.i.5, p. 251. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online).

sound to reinforce figurative reading strategies, sound in other chapters is more disruptive of the conventional modes of interpretation for bestiary texts.

The Siren's Song as Absent Referent

Having established how the lion's *cri* relates to cross-linguistic and cross-species forms of interpretation in bestiary soundscapes, which use the nonhuman world as a basis for human edification, I turn to the expression of a different type of nonhuman sound in this text. After the noun *cri*, the second most commonly used word describing creaturely sound in the *Bestiaire* is the verb *canter*, a verb that indicates the action of singing, as in the chapter on the siren. This is another term that encompasses both human and nonhuman sound-making. The act of singing acts as a counterpoint to the *cri* because the musical or melodic action that it describes places sound in a different context to the cries of creatures such as the lion. In the *Bestiaire*, the French verb *canter* describes the vocal action of the cockerel (l. 249), of the *nicticorax* (l. 2798) and of the *serena*, or siren (l. 1362). It is therefore primarily associated with avian creatures and with hybrid figures such as the siren, which were also understood to have some bird-like features and to be connected to music and melodic expression. The siren is an interesting case study for this discussion on sound because her song is presented as dangerous for human listeners.

Siren song is presented not as a stimulus for spiritual rejuvenation for human audiences in the *Bestiaire*, but as a threat to humans and as the cause of human suffering as it lures sailors to their deaths. Because of the disturbing qualities of the siren's song, namely that it produces a stupor in those that hear it and thus deprives humans of their cognitive capacity, the siren appears to be less easily interpreted according to the conventional senses of bestiary interpretation seen at work in the chapter on the lion. In the chapter on the siren, there is a notable absence of positive eschatological interpretation of the siren's nature. Instead, we are simply told she is a creature to be avoided at all costs. In my reading of this textual soundscape, I emphasise in particular how the illuminations that accompany Philippe's text in some manuscripts frame the siren as a sexual rather than a sonic creature. In doing so, I consider how the siren's song is figured as an absent referent, as these

manuscripts deprive her of her most alluring and identifiable characteristic: her voice.[26]

The siren's song, which may be traced back to Classical texts, is reinterpreted in Christian terms in the *Physiologus*, in which sirens, described as 'monstra maris' ('monsters of the sea'), produce shipwreck and the peril of death for sailors through the overpowering sweetness of their voices.[27] This song is a powerful signifier, but does not carry the same scriptural associations as the 'cri' in the chapter on the lion in Philippe's *Bestiaire*. The siren's power over the soundscape developed in the *Bestiaire* is also hidden in visual depictions of these creatures in ways that implicitly avoid unintentional and undesired aural effects on the audiences of the texts and reverse the control of sound that is so explicitly in the siren's favour in the literal description of her singing. In this respect, her ability to cause human suffering is anticipated and diverted by the bestiary's resistance to the textual interpretation and visual representation of sonic phenomena. The siren's song thus becomes an absent referent in the hermeneutic framework of the text, which emphasises instead her optically sexual and hybrid appeal. The cloaking of the siren's sonic nature and the portrayal of her song as an absent referent suggests that her sound, like her body, has potentially disruptive qualities that need to be contained by different modes of textual interpretation.

The hybridity of the siren is a standard feature of the *serena* chapter in bestiaries, but, even before the development of the Latin and French bestiary traditions, sirens provided food-for-thought for medieval scholars interested in the connections between nonhumans and music. Isidore of Seville imagined a soundscape made up of a trio of mythical musical sirens, explaining that they were representations of prostitutes:

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[26] In my discussion of the siren's song as an 'absent referent', I draw on the work of modern feminist Carol Adams, who uncovers the cloaking of the violence inherent in patriarchal gender systems that are founded on meat-eating. According to Adams, meat-eating protects the conscience of the meat-eater (usually men in her case studies) whilst rendering women and animals as absent referents. In my own discussion, the erasure of sound in bestiary illuminations works in similar ways to the erasure of female agency in Adams' discussion. See *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 3rd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 4.

[27] *Theobaldi "Physiologus"*, p. 60.

> People imagine three sirens who were part maidens, part birds, having wings and talons; one of them would make music with her voice, the second with a flute, and the third with a lyre. They would draw sailors, enticed by the song, into shipwreck. In truth, however, they were harlots, who, because they would seduce passers-by into destitution, were imagined as bringing shipwreck upon them. They were said to have had wings and talons because sexual desire both flies and wounds.[28]

In legendary terms, then, sirens pose an explicit danger to humans and, more specifically, to male sailors—a danger connected to the ambiguous relationship between sirens and sound. Three distinctions between *musica harmonica* (made by the voice), *musica organica* (made by blowing) and *musica ritmica* (made by the impulse of the fingers), were commonly used in medieval music theory and implicitly support the tripartite conceptualisation of sirens in this passage from the *Etymologies*. In medieval treatises on music the type of sirens described by Isidore were noted for their role at the beginnings of music itself—*musica* being named from *moys*, water, and *sicox*, wind: 'music was discovered by certain Greeks from the reverberation of wind and water in a certain hollow rock situated a long way off at sea, in which the Sirens were thought to be.'[29] The eleventh-century music theorist Aribo Scholasticus likewise defined music in relation to these mythical hybrid figures, noting that the sirens lured the mariners onto the rocks 'by the mixture of harmonic, organic, and rhythmic music.'[30] The figure of the polyphonic trio of sirens has also been interpreted by scholars as an expression of sexual, bodily and aural desire.[31] Debra Hassig suggests that these female hybrids become creatures whose

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[28] 'Sirenas tres fingunt fuisse ex parte virgines, ex parte volucres, habientes alas et ungulas: quarum una voce, altera tibiis, tertia lyra canebant. Quae inlectos navigantes sub cantu in naufragium trahebant. Secundum veritatem autem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem, his fictae sunt inferre naufragia. Alas autem habuisse et ungulas, quia amor et volat et vulnerat', *Etymologies*, XI.iii.30–iii.31, p. 245. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online).

[29] St. Emmeram Anonymous, *De musica mensurata: The Anonymous of St. Emmeram*, ed. and trans. by Jeremy Yudkin (Indiana: Bloomington, 1990), pp. 66–67, as quoted in Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'The Little Pipe Sings Sweetly', p. 197.

[30] Aribo, *De musica*, ed. by J. Smits van Waesberghe (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1951), pp. 36–37, as quoted in Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'The Little Pipe Sings Sweetly', p. 198.

[31] See Debra Hassig, 'The Harlot: The Siren', in *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*; and Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, pp. 15–21. Elizabeth Eva Leach has

relationship with sound and noise lends them power over earthly and heavenly life and death, represented as it is through the sounds that they make.[32]

In Philippe's *Bestiaire* the siren is a deadly creature with human form from the head to navel. She has the feet of a falcon and the tail of a fish, although different manuscripts feature illuminations that render some of these features ambiguous.[33] Whereas the lion's *cri* draws attention to its emotional state in parallel to the dread experienced by Christ, the depiction of the siren's song establishes a contrasting image that draws on human apprehensions about music, song and female sexuality. Sirens are powerful manipulators of textual and musical soundscapes. Indeed, in contrast to theories of soundscapes that passively record acoustic environments, the term may be appropriated here to incorporate a textual space in which nonhuman figures control the function of sound in the narrative, with the potential to cause great human suffering to those who hear their singing. In turn, sirens are themselves controlled by medieval artists and scribes to dampen their aural appeal. Audiences of the *Bestiaire* may recognise in the depiction of the siren their own abilities to vocalise and be disturbed by its effects. Alongside the power of her voice, the hybridity of the siren is an important feature of her nature, simultaneously emphasising her proximity to, and distance from, the figure and agency of the human.

The description of the siren in the *Bestiaire* begins with the noisy image of this creature singing through a storm. Here she is described as a single creature, rather than as part of a trio, and the 'music' that she makes would fall into the category of *vox harmonica*, being produced by the vocal apparatus. Her song is described in terms of singing and weeping (the French verb *plurer*). However, in a similar way to the depiction of the lion's *cri*, which revives his dead cubs, the siren's song is expressed in a way that ascribes agency to this nonhuman creature that far surpasses human abilities:

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examined the ways that siren figures in a variety of medieval texts sexualise and feminise the inducement to aural pleasure. See *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 267.

[32] *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*, p. 114.

[33] For further depictions of sirens in medieval texts, see Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, p. 167; Jacqueline Leclercq-Marx, 'La Sirène et l'(Ono)centaure dans le *Physiologus* grec et latin et dans quelques bestiaires: le texte et l'image', in *Bestiaires médiévaux: nouvelles perspectives sur les manuscrits et les traditions textuelles*, ed. by Baudouin Van den Abeele (Louvain-la-Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 2005), pp. 169–70; and Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*, pp. 104–15.

Serena en mer ante,
cuntre tempeste cante
e plure en bel tens,
itels est sis talens;
e de femme ad faiture
entresque a la ceinture,
e les pez de falcun
e cue de peissun.
Quant se volt dejuër
dunc chante alt e cler;
si dunc l'ot notuniers
ki najant vait par mers,
la nef met en ubli,
senes est endormi.

Bestiaire, ll. 1361–74

> The siren dwells in the sea, sings over a tempest, and weeps in good weather; such is her desire. And she has the figure of a woman up to the waist, and the feet of a falcon, and the tail of a fish. When she wants to amuse herself, she sings high and clear. In this way the sailors, who are rowing on the sea, hear it. They forget about the boat and immediately are asleep.

The representation of the siren's song in this *Bestiaire* contributes to a soundscape in which humans are in no way the dominant species. Her song evokes the potential human suffering that is the effect of moments of cross-species encounter between human and nonhuman agents, making the satisfaction of aural pleasure a threat to human subjectivity. The song that the siren sings in the passage above has a clear effect on the sailors, who hear it 'high and clear', instantly forgetting their boat and falling asleep. Their potential suffering is evoked through the implication that they will forget their journey, or teleological purpose, and once asleep, be easily drowned or controlled by the siren. The *Bestiaire*, anticipating this reversal of control in the networks of relation between humans and nonhumans, attempts to redirect the song of the siren away from human ears (and eyes) in various ways.

The text is careful to mask the effects of human encounters with sirens, preventing the effects of the song from reaching out beyond the confines of the text's literal description. To this end, the text channels interpretation of this sound away from eschatological concerns and potential Scriptural parallels. Instead, the song is interpreted in negative moralising and allegorical terms: just as the siren sings, the allegorical figure Splendour ('richesce', l. 1404) corrupts men and strangles them; if the sailors manage to escape, the siren laments the loss of human prey, and likewise Splendour is said to weep when men give their own power and abundant riches to God, rather than to her: 'La sereine en bel tens | plure e plaint tut tens: | quant hume dune richeise | e pur Deu la depreise, | lores est bel ore | e la richeise plure' ('The siren weeps and laments in good weather; when man gives wealth away and disparages it in favour of God, then a good hour has come and Splendour weeps', ll. 1407–12). The aural appeal of the siren's song, a musical form connected to desire and female sexuality, is thus equated with the lure of earthly riches and power over men. The sound of her voice becomes a point of sonic contact in the soundscape that is to be avoided.

The negative moralisation of the siren's song is one way of dampening the power of the literal depiction of her enticing voice in the soundscape and instead emphasising the optic agency of the viewer. In manuscripts of the *Bestiaire* that feature illuminations (*C* and *O*), the visual depictions of the siren move a step further in their attempts to assert a human form of control over this figure by also depriving her of her voice. Instead, the siren's body is sexualised to the extent that the focus of her interpretation turns towards the interpretation of her physical body, rather than her sonic abilities.[34] In this way, her enticing voice is silenced, becoming an absent referent. The siren in *C*, for example, is depicted in traditional fashion with dangling breasts, a fish tail, and talons for feet (see figure 1, appendix). Around her are two trees and two leaping fish, suggesting the aquatic nature of her domain.[35] The raised

[34] In a large number of manuscript illuminations across a range of Latin and French bestiaries, the siren is depicted as a sexualised figure with or alongside a boat in which humans either attempt to cover their ears or have already succumbed to slumber. See, for example: London, British Library, MS Harley 4751, f. 47^{v}, or Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Kk.4.25, f. 77. Debra Hassig has collated a number of images of sirens in *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*; see plates appendix.

[35] I have argued elsewhere that the tripartite symbols in this image—three 'fish' creatures (including the siren herself), and the three branches on each of the trees—are scribal 'errors' and in fact depict the allegorical interpretation that forms part of the chapter on the

hand gesture of the siren in this illumination is a typical feature of this creature in bestiary texts.[36] However, contrary to what might be expected for a creature notorious for the power of her voice, the siren's mouth is closed or only slightly ajar, meaning her most striking and recognisable characteristic is not referenced in the visual imagery. Instead of drawing attention to the voice that gives her power over humans, her sexualised body is accentuated, shifting a patriarchal form of control back onto the viewer of the manuscript, whether or not that viewer feels powerful or powerless in the process.

In a discussion of the iconography of sirens in the oldest English B-Isidore manuscript (early twelfth-century), Sarah Kay suggests that medieval visual representations of sirens anticipate a response from the reader that includes sexual desire, as the artist 'succeeds in drawing the viewer into the encounter, as if the Siren were beckoning to him inviting his gaze to follow the line of her tail'.[37] This is an observation that certainly holds true for the siren in *C*. Likewise, in *O* (figure 2) a siren is depicted as a human from the waist upwards but as a fish below the waist. She too is represented with her mouth firmly shut. Evidently aquatic in nature, she swims towards the edge of the page, and her tail extends back into the space below the last paragraph of text for the *sylio*, or salamander, and above the beginning of the chapter on the siren. The liminal space in which she dwells echoes the way that the text isolates her voice; whilst her physical appearance remains enticingly mysterious, her true nature as a powerful songstress is instead replaced with the allure of a lengthy tail. Unlike the siren in *C*, this siren's gaze towards the edge of the page places her between or outside the frame of the text and therefore beyond direct communication with the audience of the text.

Both depictions of sirens in *C* and *O* evoke physical forms of femininity and hybridity that are presented as alluring to audiences of the text in ways that override the appeal of her voice in the narrative; at the same time, these depictions bolster a project of anthropocentrism that, in depriving the siren's voice of spiritual meaning,

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salamander in this manuscript. Further discussion can be found in Liam Lewis, *Engaging Animals: The Question of Human Identity in Philippe de Thaon's Bestiaire* (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Warwick, 2015), pp. 76–78.

[36] See the plates on sirens in Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*; and Christian Heck and Rémy Cordonnier, *The Grand Medieval Bestiary: Animals in Illuminated Manuscripts*, pp. 546–49.

[37] *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, p. 19.

encourages an interpretation of her song that makes her a morally negative example. Unlike the lion, whose literal *cri* is eloquently depicted and interpreted in the *Bestiaire* through Christian allegory, the audience is supposed to listen to what the siren means, but not hear what she sings. In the illuminations in *C* and *O*, illuminators choose not to focus on sirens' contributions to the soundscape of the text, perhaps as a way of guarding readers from the lures of aural attraction.[38] Siren song remains an elusive textual (but not visual) motif, hinted at but contained to protect human audiences who might not be able to cover up their ears or eyes in time.

'Estuper ses orailes': The *Cri* of Mandrakes and the Limits of Bestiary Interpretation

The representations of crying and singing in the *Bestiaire* that I have discussed so far portray these actions as nonlinguistic vocalisations produced by bestiary creatures that draw little distinction between human and nonhuman vocalisation. Both the lion and the siren share a common point of reference with humans—they emit vocalisations through recognisable vocal apparatuses; a muzzle and a mouth, respectively. In this regard, these creatures' vocalisations mirror human sound-making. In the text, these sounds also direct attention towards both literal sound production and its figurative significance (biblical in the case of the lion and moral in the case of the siren). However, there is one creature in the *Bestiaire*, the mandrake, whose plant-like form troubles such processes of mirroring further in bestiary soundscapes. This creature emits a *cri* or screech when uprooted, revealing a noise that defies interpretation in moral, allegorical or eschatological terms and that consequently exposes the limits of the text's interpretation of nonhuman sound. This is particularly apparent when the mandrake's *cri* is read in relation to the chapters on the lion and the siren, in which sound is interpreted in more conventional and recognisable ways.

The mandrake does not feature in its own chapter in the *Bestiaire*. Instead, it is included twice in the chapter on the elephant: once as an aphrodisiac for elephant

[38] John Morson connects the *Bestiaire* with putative Cistercian orders, for whom such themes may have been of particular interest. See 'The English Cistercians and the Bestiary', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 39 (1956), pp. 146–70. For a short commentary on Morson's argument, see Willene B. Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, p. 94.

conception, and later in a scene that describes the cry that it produces when a human attempts to harvest it for its medicinal value by tying a dog to the mandrake and tempting the dog with bread from afar. As in the chapter on the siren, the noise made by the mandrake is linked to the suffering of those humans who hear it; like the siren, this creature also shares some features that correspond to human anatomy, while not being fully human. These qualities contribute to the positioning of the mandrake's sound at the limits of bestiary interpretation. In the section of the *Bestiaire* that discusses the mandrake, the ambiguity of this creature's physical form and sonic expression heightens the uncertainty about how to interpret its 'cri'. Through the description of how to harvest the mandrake, and the suffering that such harvesting entails because of the mandrake's lethal cry when uprooted, the text suggests that the mandrake's *cri* is bound in a network of webbed existences that connects the plant, the dog and the human in a soundscape that is positioned in relation to the chapter on the elephant. In this case, the network emerges in the literal sense of the bestiary interpretation, but the text offers no other explicit interpretive lens through which readers can come to a better understanding of the nature and meaning of the sound. Instead, the text focuses on the process by which the creature is harvested, which incorporates elements of nonhuman suffering, and which opens a space for rethinking the role and function of interpretation in the cross-species relations depicted in bestiary soundscapes.

The figure of the mandrake, based either on plants from the genus *mandragora* or from other species such as *bryonia alba*, held an important place in the imaginations of writers throughout the Middle Ages. This plant-creature has an exceptional documentary history, being discussed extensively in ancient texts as well as medieval herbals.[39] Florence McCulloch explains that the mandrake 'is named *mandragora* because it has *mala*, "apples", that are sweet smelling and the size of filberts. In Latin it is therefore called "earth apple", and the poets call it manshaped because the root has the form of a man'.[40] In the first appearance of this creature in the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon, it is briefly introduced as the bestiary describes

[39] See Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, pp. 117–19; Charles B. Randolph, 'The Mandragora of the Ancients in Folk-lore and Medicine', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 40 (1905), pp. 489–537; and George Druce, 'The Elephant in Medieval Legend and Art', *Journal of the Royal Archaeological Institute*, 76 (1919), pp. 40–51.
[40] *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, p. 116.

the reluctance of the female to mate until the male has brought to her the mandrake plant from Paradise 'en orïent' ('in the East', p. 186, l. 1423).[41] In this passage the mandrake serves a miraculous purpose in enabling the female elephant to conceive. Although this passage does not mention sound, it holds important keys to understanding what the mandrake is and how it might be interpreted, suggesting that the mandrake is connected to the spiritual world and to the sexual lives of elephants.

The second appearance of the mandrake features at the end of the chapter on the elephant. It is introduced with a description of the creature in a Latin rubric: 'De mandragora, et ejus natura, et quid valet et quomodo cognoscitur' ('Of the mandrake and its nature, and of its strength, and how to acquire knowledge of it', p. 192). The description of the mandrake's form, or multiple forms, in the *Bestiaire* follows the traditional interpretation of the roots of this plant. It has two roots, which have the characteristics of male and female human beings. The female root has leaves like a lettuce, and the male root has leaves like a beast, which presumably refers to the shape of male genitals (ll. 1569–80).[42] Following the description of the mandrake's form in the *Bestiaire*, the text describes a scene in which the mandrake notoriously cries out when it is uprooted from the ground. This is an episode that unites the ambiguity of form described earlier with ambiguity of sound. In this episode, which is introduced by another Latin rubric, 'Homo qui eam vult colligere' ('Man who wants to fasten to it', p. 194), the mandrake is described in French as being harvested by humans 'par engin' ('by a cunning trick/ruse', l. 1579): since the *cri* that is emitted by the uprooted mandrake is deadly for those that hear it, a human must starve a dog for three days and fasten the dog by a rope to the mandrake.[43] When bread is shown

[41] The chapter on the elephant includes descriptions of the birth of the elephant calf in a pool of water to protect it from the dragon, signifying the devil (ll. 1439–50), and the burning of elephant skin and bones to expel serpents from any place (ll. 1517–24). For further information, see Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, pp. 115–19; Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, pp. 82–85; and Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*, pp. 129–31.

[42] This is a slight adaptation of the description of the mandrake in the *Etymologies* by Isidore of Seville, who describes the mandrake as having 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'. ('Huius species duae: femina, foliis lactucae similibus, mala generans in similitudinem prunarum; masculus vero foliis betae similibus'), *Etymologies*, XVII.ix.30, p. 351. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online). For further discussion, see Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self*, pp. 145–47.

[43] Dogs do not generally become incorporated into the scheme of bestiary chapters until the bestiary tradition develops further from the *Physiologus.* The Latin Second-Family bestiary

to the dog from afar, the dog pulls, uprooting the mandrake, and subsequently dies when it hears the 'cri'. The cunning human closes off his ears ('estuper ses orails') to shut out the noise:

> Li chens a sai trarat
> la racine rumperat,
> e un cri geterat;
> li chens mort en charat
> pur le cri qu'il orat.
> Tel vertu cel herbe ad:
> ren ne la pot oïr
> sempres n'estoce murrir;
> e se li hom le oait
> eneslepas murreit.
> Pur ceo deit estuper
> ses orailes, guarder
> que il ne oi le cri,
> qu'il ne morge altresi
> cum li chens ferat
> ki le cri en orat.
>
> *Bestiaire*, ll. 1591–606

> The dog pulls and uproots the plant, which lets out a cry. The dog falls dead because of the cry that it hears. Such a power has this herb: no one can hear it without immediately dying. And if man were to hear it, he would die straight away. For this reason, he must close off his ears, to protect them so that he doesn't hear the cry, and so that he doesn't die in the same way as the dog, who hears the cry.

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of the second half of the twelfth century does include the dog (Clark, pp. 145–48), as well as a greater range of domesticated animals, such as horses and cats. McCulloch notes that the only French illustrations of the dog tied to the mandrake root are in manuscripts of Guillaume le Clerc's thirteenth-century *Bestiaire divin*. See *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, pp. 116–18, and *Le Bestiaire divin de Guillaume Clerc de Normandie*, ed. by C. Hippeau (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970).

The focus of the episode of mandrake harvest in the *Bestiaire* draws attention not to allegorical or eschatological interpretation, but to cross-species sonic encounter as described in the literal sense.[44] In particular, it emphasises the dangers of sonic cohabitation between creatures in bestiary soundscapes. As already noted, the text offers no moral, allegorical or eschatological interpretation of the *cri* in this episode, which is not unusual for bestiaries in general. Indeed, despite clear opportunities for allegorical or even eschatological interpretation—the fact that one type of mandrake is found by elephants in Paradise, or that the dog is starved for a symbolic three days before being tied to the plant—the text resists interpreting these elements of the scene for its audience. This lack of figurative interpretation, in comparison to the chapters on the lion and the siren, instead highlights the terrestrial relationships between the human, the dog and the mandrake plant, and the ways that these beings interact with each other. However, rather than flourishing together, these relationships are based on human ruse, temptation and exploitation of the soundscape—an exploitation that ends in nonhuman suffering and the deaths of two creatures.

In contrast to the positive layering of meaning for the lion's *cri* or the negative moral interpretation of the siren, which highlights the parallels between the siren and the figure of Splendour, the meaning of the mandrake is left undecided. The summary of the mandrake's medicinal properties is limited to a mere six lines, which signal only the literal fact that whoever has the root of the plant is successful in medicine and can cure all illness apart from death itself, from which there is no escape: 'Ki ad ceste racine | mult valt a medicine; | de trestut enfermeté | pot trametre santé, | fors sulement de mort, | u il n'ad nul resort' ('Whoever has this root is great in medicine; they can treat every disease apart from death, from which there is no escape', ll. 1607–12). A Latin rubric that precedes the description of the mandrake's medicinal qualities in French confirms this observation: 'Radix mandragore contra

[44] Many French bestiaries make no mention of the mandrake's *cri* in their own depictions of bestiary soundscapes, describing only its physical form and properties. The *Bestiaire* attributed to Pierre de Beauvais, for example, includes the scene of the consumption of the mandrake by elephants for conception, but does not describe the harvest by humans. See *Le Bestiaire: version longue attribuée à Pierre de Beauvais*, ed. by Craig Baker (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010), pp. 220–22. Likewise, Isidore of Seville remains silent on the issue in his *Etymologies*, describing only the size and shape of the fruits, the plant's medicinal properties, and the differences between the male and female forms of the plant (XVII.xi.30, p. 351).

omnes infirmitates valet' ('The root of the mandrake is strong against all infirmity', p. 194). The repetition of this observation in both Latin and French reinforces the importance of this feature of the mandrake, and its potential interest to audiences of the *Bestiaire*, but anchors the interpretation well within the literal world of the bestiary. When used in a medical context, therefore, the mandrake acts as a powerful cure for human illness. The strength of this power is indicated in the depiction of the mandrake by the equally powerful *cri* that it emits, which kills instantaneously.

The inclusion of Latin rubrics in the description of the mandrake introduces a cross-linguistic aspect to the harvesting scene, which echoes the language switching found in the chapter on the lion and frames the harvest in terms of multilingual interpretation. I have noted above how the Latin rubrics in the chapter on the lion are part of the process of reading the eschatological meaning of the lion's nature, indeed reinforcing the attention to sound by contrasting the representation of sonic phenomena through representation in a second language. However, whilst the mandrake's physical and medicinal properties are reinforced in both Latin and French in this chapter, the Latin rubrics make no mention of the sound that the mandrake produces when uprooted. This further lack of interpretation on the level of rubric serves as an indication that the type of interpretation anticipated by the text is subjective in nature rather than handed down from classical texts or Scripture. Instead, French is used to describe the creature's *cri*, and to leave potential interpretation hanging. The mandrake's sound becomes one of the rare points of cross-species sonic contact in which a nonhuman creature, whether beast, plant or stone, is left completely outside the bounds of spiritual or moral interpretation in the *Bestiaire*.

Whereas other chapters of the *Bestiaire* interpret the natural world for the spiritual edification of its readers, the chapter on the mandrake foregrounds physical rather than spiritual benefit. The cry of the mandrake is an obstacle to such benefit, revealing the troubling hierarchies of power embedded in the bestiary's depiction of mandrake harvest. When read as a soundscape, it becomes clear that the nonlinguistic nature of the mandrake's *cri* highlights the types of exploitation that are exposed by the scene. Indeed, there is a telling unjustness to the scene that is expressed through the deadly 'cri', which seems to function in part as a protest as the mandrake is brought out of the earth. Death, the only thing that the use of the mandrake in medicine cannot cure, similarly permeates this episode in ways that are devoid of

reference to a Christian understanding of the purpose and function of death and healing: the dog dies simply because it is hunger and temptation that drives it, and not self-protection; the mandrake is killed by being uprooted from the ground and no eschatological or moral interpretation is offered. Medieval readers may have interpreted the scene in these ways, or as a moment of human triumph over the other creatures involved in the harvest. However, the possible choice of actual reader interpretation is a less interesting question for this discussion than that of whether the exposure of suffering and inequality in bestiary soundscapes is made possible through the expression of sonic phenomena such as the *cri*?

The difference between human and canine responses to sound in the episode of mandrake harvest reveal how suffering and power relations are embedded into the manipulation of soundscapes. In this scene the display of human cognitive power demonstrated through the manipulation of the dog reveals the ability of humans to control soundscapes to their own ends through temptation. Whereas the siren used her song to lure sailors to their deaths, the human uses bread to tempt the dog and pull up the mandrake root in the process. The ability to protect oneself from manipulative or dangerous sounds in these episodes depends firstly on the capacity to foresee the dangers they pose, and secondly on the will to protect oneself from the suffering such sounds might inflict. In the chapter on the siren, the sailors succumb to the siren's temptation, but the viewer of the text is protected from the power of her voice through her closed mouth featured in illuminations. In the mandrake-harvest scene, the human is the only figure who has the foresight and the strength to cover his ears to avoid hearing the *cri*; he is also the only being to survive the harvest scene. The text is attentive to this moment as one that expresses the human's clear understanding of his manipulation of the soundscape, for 'se li hom le oait | eneslepas murreit' ('if man were to hear it, he would immediately die').

Other episodes in the *Bestiaire* in which humans and nonhuman creatures cover their ears to avoid hearing the noises produced in bestiary soundscapes similarly highlight unequal situations of power and the manipulation of sound, occasionally revealing situations in which nonhumans trump humans in this respect. To take one example, the asp avoids enchantment from the damnable sound of a human magician by pressing one ear to the ground and covering the other with its

tail.[45] In the mandrake episode the dog, having neither a serpentine tail with which to wrap and cover its ears nor the foresight to protect itself, is not able to shut out or muffle the acoustic environment in which it finds itself threatened, and thus to prevent its own suffering or death. The dog is not completely forgotten, however, as the text circles round to moralise that the dog died because it could not shut off its ears from the sound. The dog's death, like the mandrake's, is left hanging on this literal interpretation, despite possible associations between the mandrake, temptation and the Fall that are explored in the illuminations of one manuscript of the *Bestiaire*.

A closer look at the way that the mandrake is depicted in the illumination sequence in *O* uncovers some of the complexities of the unequal networks of power relations with which audiences are familiarised through this episode. The roots of the mandrake are featured in the *bas-de-page* illumination of Eve and Adam in *O* (figure 3, appendix). We know that these are depictions of mandrakes because the female root takes the form of lettuce leaves to the right of Eve's head, and the male root next to Adam's head resembles the shape of male genitalia like those of a beast. In the illumination sequence in this particular manuscript, the male and female mandrake roots occupy a position that forms the frame for a depiction of the Fall, but the roots of the mandrake are separated from the biblical scene by a thick red border. This visual depiction highlights the links between the mandrake roots and the human sexual organs, and therefore echoes the use of the plant as an elephant aphrodisiac. The mandrakes are juxtaposed with the apple from the Tree of Knowledge with which Adam and Eve fell from grace in the Garden of Eden, and which was the cause of human suffering. In much the same way as the siren's song is masked by her visual depiction in manuscripts of the *Bestiaire*, the form of the mandrake is shown, but the plant is deprived of the possible associations that would confirm its own power. Rather than a symbol of temptation or of healing, the mandrake is presented visually in the liminal space on the edge of the scene of the Garden of Eden—neither fully incorporated within the garden nor fully present in the real world. The mandrake remains marginal, unable to fully participate in the bestiary's programme of spiritual development.

[45] For the asp in Philippe's *Bestiaire*, see p. 196, ll. 1615–80. The wolf, although not figured in this *Bestiaire*, is also connected to loss of human vocal capacity in other bestiaries. See *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, pp. 142 for the asp, and 197 for the wolf.

Reading the scene of mandrake harvest alongside an illumination sequence that deliberately places the mandrake outside of the prelapsarian framework in which Adam and Eve contemplate the Tree of Knowledge suggests that this creature provides an uncertain foundation for figurative meaning. Are these mandrakes the same plant that is uprooted by the human in the scene of mandrake harvest? If so, do mandrakes represent an esoteric form of medicine that is best left in the spiritual, rather than the physical, world? Depictions of mandrakes in the *Bestiaire* raise a number of questions concerning the physical and sonic qualities of creatures and the types of relationships established by sonic encounters in bestiary soundscapes, but there is little attempt in the text itself to offer answers to these questions. What is at stake in the episode of mandrake harvest in the *Bestiaire* is not only the relationships of humans and bestiary creatures as they are depicted in a terrestrial setting, but also the function of Christian hermeneutics in a text that conventionally seeks to explain the spiritual value of the natural world. The absence of interpretation for the *cri* of the mandrake signals a break with the interpretive framework used elsewhere in the *Bestiaire*. The familiar allegorical pattern of the bestiary is interrupted by the *cri* of the mandrake and the circumstances that give rise to that particular sound. In the soundscape in which this *cri* reverberates, it becomes a point of fatal sonic encounter that emphasises the dangers of sonic cohabitation with other creatures. The powers of sound, and the suffering that such sounds may cause, are presented as an inevitable consequence of living in webs of cross-species existences where sound as a nonlinguistic force is open to manipulation by humans at the expense of other creatures who inhabit the same world.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a quotation from Donna Haraway in which she describes how ‘webbed existences’ of multiple beings necessarily entail the suffering of some of those beings. In this chapter I have argued that bestiary soundscapes represent historically and culturally specific forms of such webbed existences that present moments of cross-species contact in which suffering, manipulation and danger are implicated. These soundscapes can be productively read and interpreted in connection with the suffering that is the effect, or occasionally the cause, of sonic expression. In some ways the types of sonic contact made available in medieval

bestiary texts are a far cry from the acoustic environments that the term 'soundscapes' was originally meant to define. Medieval sonic phenomena are very different to their modern counterparts, especially in terms of the representation of nonhuman vocalisations. In the *Bestiaire*, the depictions of various creatures rely on medieval understandings of human-nonhuman relationships, as well as the ways that beasts and birds accrue meanings through different types of interpretation. Soundscapes in this bestiary present moments of contact between beings that are expressed through language, but which reference nonlinguistic forms of vocalisation such as crying and singing through a restricted range of vocabulary. This vocabulary nevertheless speaks to the multilingual and spiritual contexts of the bestiary. In some instances, nonhuman sounds of suffering, such as the lion's *cri* at the sight of his dead cubs, place the creatures that emit those sounds into loops of interpretation and at the mercy of the fourfold templates for interpretation offered by the bestiary. In other cases, bestiary creatures produce songs or cries that draw attention to the limits of the conventional templates for such interpretation. The theme of suffering is central to these networks because many of the most striking noises in the soundscapes of the *Bestiaire* are bound in webs of interpretation that incorporate or draw attention to suffering in some form.

The most complete model of spiritual interpretation in the *Bestiaire* appears in the chapter on the lion, where the lion's *cri* is interpreted according to Scripture. Through the lion's *cri*, the chapter evokes a host of symbolic meanings that are designed to inspire the reader or listener to consider the suffering of the lion in parallel with the fear of Christ and of God's strength in resurrecting him. The word *cri* to describe the lion's roar is the first example of sound in the *Bestiaire* that expresses both terrestrial and heavenly suffering in interpretations that are superimposed. The *cri* of both the lion and the cart also become indistinguishable from the dread of Christ and the words of the evangelists in this chapter and draw attention to the ways that cross-species connections (including those between living beings and objects) are also connected to cross-linguistic expression in Latin and French. The association between naming humans and nonhumans in different languages, including Hebrew and Latin, and the expression of nonlinguistic sounds made by different creatures in French, demonstrates that the text is heavily involved in the juxtaposition of different forms of sound as part of the creation of a broad group of soundscapes that emphasise the aural qualities of the text.

Nonhuman creatures contribute to the formation of discreet soundscapes in the *Bestiaire* that work to complement the Christian hermeneutics of the text or conversely to rupture this framework. What the bestiary makes clear is that sound and suffering are connected in forms of sonic encounter based on cross-species contact. The bestiary presents creatures as agents of nonlinguistic sonic production, and as the targets of manipulation, suppression and even aggression from other creatures, including humans. These moments of contact enjoin audiences to reflect on spiritual and moral concerns, such as the appeal of the siren's sweet voice or the manipulation of the dog to harvest the deadly mandrake. In some cases these moments of contact teach readers or viewers to guard themselves from the dangers that these creatures present. The manipulation of textual soundscapes by humans and nonhumans is one way of revealing how webbed existences based on unequal power relations and the subjugation of some creatures by others in such soundscapes can offer new modes of interpretation for the bestiary.

Whilst my discussion has focused primarily on the expression of nonhuman sound in narrative depictions of various beasts and birds, the bestiary format encourages audiences to link narrative descriptions to the depictions of creatures presented in illuminations. In *O* and *C* the siren is represented as sexually alluring rather than vocal; she is liminal or partially absent from the soundscape of the text, thus preserving a human form of control over the function of alluring sound and sexual desire in the text, and focusing interpretation on moral, rather than eschatological, meaning. Acting as a mirror image to human control and manipulation, the siren's song becomes an absent referent, simultaneously evoking the power of music and singing whilst being deprived of the very agency that theoretically gives her access to such power. Insofar as it draws on both text and image, the soundscape of the *Bestiaire* raises the possibility of human suffering as a result of the siren's song whilst averting the song's dangers for human readers.

Finally, in my discussion of the chapter devoted to the elephant and the mandrake I proposed that suffering is inevitable in cross-species relationships based on sonic cohabitation in which cognitive power is used to manipulate the soundscapes of the text. Despite the mandrake's brief appearances in the chapter on the elephant, the sound of this creature interrupts the interpretative impulse of the text. The mandrake's power over sexuality and over death itself is reinforced by the effects of its cry, but these effects are neither interpreted by the text, nor featured in

the illumination sequence in *O*. In this case, the mandrake's *cri*, in contrast to that of the lion, seems to defy interpretation. This episode, left uninterpreted by both the French text and the Latin rubrics, highlights how soundscapes in the bestiary can be formed in ways that circumvent a recourse to allegorical or eschatological interpretation. It demonstrates that the diverse sounds of bestiary creatures sometimes do not fit into the figurative reading practices that we might expect from bestiary texts. Like the hybrid siren, the depiction of the mandrake encourages us to consider how and why points of sonic contact that highlight suffering, manipulation or danger in bestiary soundscapes are either explained according to conventional norms or, conversely, left open to reinterpretation by the audiences of these texts themselves.

CHAPTER 2

Contact and Sonic Cohabitation in *Le Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth

In the thirteenth century an English knight called Walter of Bibbesworth composed a *Tretiz* on language that ostensibly teaches the French language and English vocabulary to medieval aristocratic readers, especially children. Beginning with the French vocabulary for midwifery, birth and youth the text also describes an array of other topics relating to the natural world and agriculture. These topics include: extended sections on estate husbandry and menagerie; a list of agricultural procedures including the verbs for ploughing, sowing, weeding, kneading and brewing; the French for the woods, fields, pastures, gardens, flowers and fruits; and the words used to describe collective groups of beasts and birds followed by a list of the noises that these species make. Included amongst the latter is one section that lists nonhuman noises in French with Middle English glosses of certain words (usually written above the words that they translate in manuscripts):

Vache mugist, gruue groule,	*cow lowes crane crekez*
Leoun rougist, coudre croule,	*romies hasil quakez*
Chivaul(e) henist, alouwe chaunte,	*neyez larke*
Columbe gerist e coke chaunte	*croukes*[1]

> Cow (*cow*) moos (*moos*), crane (*crane*) crows (*crows*), lion roars (*roars*), hazel-tree (*hazel*) shakes (*trembles*), horse whinnies (*neighs*), lark (*lark*) sings, dove coos (*croaks*) and cockerel sings.

Drawing on grammatical knowledge and vocabularies in French and English, this list demonstrates that the noises produced by beasts and birds can in some respects be mastered by readers or listeners, who might at the same time be grasping how to

[1] *Walter de Bibbesworth: Le Tretiz*, ed. by William Rothwell (Aberystwyth, online PDF: The Anglo-Norman Online Hub, 2009), p. 11, ll. 250–53. All references to the *Tretiz*, unless otherwise stated, will be made to this edition. The text is an edition of Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg. 1. 1 (*G*), to which folio references following citations refer. Translations from French and Middle English are my own.

speak and write these two, human languages. It is this connection between human language acquisition and dominance over nonhuman beasts and birds essential to estate life that provides the stimulus for thinking about nonhuman noise in this text. The ways that the text presents this list of nonhuman sounds, shifting as it does so between French and English, become associated with learning how to become a male aristocrat in sonic cohabitation with nonhuman beasts and birds. 'Sonic cohabitation' is a term that I adapt from Thomas Hinton's observation that the *Tretiz* is interested in 'linguistic cohabitation' in multilingual environments.[2] I use this term to emphasise the nonlinguistic aspects of sound that are represented in the treatise, especially those referencing nonhuman noise. Through such textually-mediated forms of encounter, readers or listeners learn about contact with beasts and birds, and, simultaneously, about how to assume a position of dominance over nonhuman species through the words used to describe and categorise them and their sounds.

The *Tretiz* is composed in rhyming couplets across lines of irregular length (usually hepta- or octosyllabic, although no pattern is readily apparent from this passage alone); rhyme and repetition are central to the poetic style and to the pedagogic purpose of lists such as the one above. Versification, rhyme, rhythm, orthography and wordplay are elements of the French verse that reinforce the conceptualisation of a sonic connection between the expressive capacities of human languages and nonhuman noises, framed by the text's investigation of language.[3] The list of nonhuman noises in the *Tretiz* is the first example of such a list to be written in any European vernacular, although it follows a formula common to medieval Latin catalogues of nonhuman (animal) noises, termed by modern scholars *vocas animantium*.[4] These texts translate nonhuman vocalisations into Latin and

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[2] Thomas Hinton, 'Anglo-French in the Thirteenth Century: A Reappraisal of Walter de Bibbesworth's "Tretiz"', *Modern Language Review*, 112 (2017), p. 879.
[3] Ibid., p. 863.
[4] William Sayers, 'Animal Vocalization and Human Polyglossia in Walter of Bibbesworth's Thirteenth-Century Domestic Treatise in Anglo-Norman French and Middle English', *Sign Systems Studies*, 37.3/4 (2009), p. 525. The fullest treatment of the *voces animantium* is found in Wilhelm Wackernagel, *Voces variae animantium: Ein Beitrag zur Naturkunde und zue Geschichte der Sprache*, 2nd edn (Basel: Bahnmaier, 1869), and also in Maurizio Bettini, *Voci: Anthropologia sonora del mondo autico* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 2008). See also: D. Thomas Benediktson, 'Polemius Silvius' *Voces Variae Animancium* and Related Catalogues of Animal Sounds', *Mnemosyne*, 53.1 (2000), pp. 71–79, and '*Cambridge University Library* L1 1 14, F. 46^{R-V}: A Late Medieval Natural Scientist at Work', *Neophilologus*, 86 (2002), pp. 171–77. Early studies and collections of these lists include an article by C. E. Finch, 'Suetonius' Catalogue of Animal Sounds in Codex Vat. Lat. 6018', *American Journal*

consequently present them in terms of human linguistic and grammatical conventions, often placing them in pedagogical debates between a master and a student.[5] The sounds of nonhumans are presented in similar ways to those in the *Tretiz*, with lists of subjects followed by third-person verbs usually derived from the substantive: 'Ouis balat, canis latrat, lupus ululate, sus grunnit, bos mugit' ('The sheep bleats, the dog barks, the wolf howls, the pig grunts, the cow moos'), and so on.[6] These catalogues emphasise the capacities inherent in different languages to imitate the sounds of other species, thereby establishing comparisons between human and nonhuman modes of expression.

The mastery of language through Latin and vernacular lists relies on the lists themselves representing 'a sonic database of relatively stable natural phenomena', which could be relied upon to support the conceptualisation of nonhuman noise as always simultaneously referencing fictional and actual encounters between humans and different species.[7] However, unlike texts written solely in Latin, in which such references work by expressing nonhuman noises in one particular language, the *Tretiz* does not work with a singular notion of human language. Whilst elements of the lists in the *Tretiz* resemble Latin catalogues, the French treatise also engages the poetic features of versification across two languages to emphasise how the words used to describe species and their sounds are themselves subject to interpretation in

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of Philology, 90.4 (1969), pp. 459–63; a study by M. C. Diaz y Diaz, 'Sobre las series de voces de animales', in *Latin Script and Letters A.D. 400–900: Festschrift Presented to Ludwig Bieler on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. by J. J. O'Meara and B. Naumann (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), pp. 148–55; an article by V. M. Lagorio, 'Three More Vatican Manuscripts of Suetonius's Catalogue of Animal Sounds', *Scriptorium*, 35 (1981), pp. 61–62. A number of catalogues of animal sounds have been incorporated into collections of medieval Latin glossaries, such as G. Goetz and G. Loewe, *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, I (Leipzig and Berlin, Typis B. G. Tevbneri, 1888–1923, reprinted in Amsterdam, 1965).

[5] Robert Stanton, 'Bark Like a Man: Performance, Identity, and Boundary in Old English Animal Voice Catalogues', in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. by Alison Langdon (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 92.

[6] These entries form the beginning of a list from a Latin Polemius catalogue. See D. Thomas Benedickson, 'Polemius Silvius' *Voces Variae Animancium*', p. 74. This translation from Latin is my own. Other similar lists include one by Aldhelm, a version of which is found in *De metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Auctores Antiquissimi 15, ed. by Rudolh Ehwald (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), p. 179.

[7] Robert Stanton, 'Bark Like a Man', p. 92. See also Jonathan Hsy, 'Between Species: Animal-Human Bilingualism and Medieval Texts', in *Booldly bot meekly: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages in Honour of Roger Ellis*, ed. by Catherine Batt and René Tixier, *The Medieval Translator*, 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 563–73.

different cultural and linguistic contexts.[8] Likewise, the vernacular *Tretiz* can be distinguished from Latin catalogues through its presentation of French and English as connected languages that might speak to each other through depictions of nonhuman sounds. In this way the list of the sounds produced by beasts and birds in the *Tretiz* emphasises that human languages are always plural, just as nonhuman sounds are always plural and complex.

The Prologue to the *Tretiz* suggests the work was designed to shape a specific subjectivity associated with young gentlemen, who would have needed French and English for the running of an estate. This is a type of control that has elements in common with an Adamic vision of the world, whereby man has dominion over other creatures. The text thus constructs a specifically male form of control over life and over the words used to describe species.[9] In an early fourteenth-century manuscript copy of the work, the Prologue is addressed to a patroness, Dyonise de Mountechensi, describing the text's purpose as for 'aprise de langage' ('the learning of language').[10] However, we soon learn that the text is envisioned to teach language not to the patroness herself, but for the reader to learn how to 'parler e en respundre qe nuls *gentils homme* coveint saver' ('speak and to answer, which every *gentleman* needs to know', Prologue, p. 1, my emphasis). The adjective *gentils* here signals that the nobility of these men is accompanied by appropriately refined and courteous behaviour.[11] A narratorial interjection before the lists of different species in the *Tretiz* calls for children (presumably future masters of the estate) to listen to the meaning of the text in order to speak properly, thus further emphasising the theme of

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[8] Thomas Hinton, 'Animals on the Page: Voces animantium' (in preparation), 'Anglo-French in the Thirteenth Century', p. 862, and 'Language, Morality and Wordplay in Thirteenth-Century Anglo-French: The Poetry of Walter de Bibbesworth', *New Medieval Literatures*, 19 (2019), pp. 89–120. See also William Sayers, 'Animal Vocalization and Human Polyglossia', p. 534.

[9] William Sayers, 'Animal Vocalization and Human Polyglossia', pp. 534–35.

[10] *Tretiz*, Prologue, (*G*), f. 276^{v}, p. 1. This manuscript, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg. 1. 1, holds many popular and influential religious, romance and didactic texts, including: *Urbain le Courtois*; *The Fifteen Signs of the Day of Judgment*; a version of the prose *Prophecies of Merlin*; Penitential Psalms in Latin and French; the *Physionomiae*; extracts from the *Legenda Aurea*; proverbs; and *Auctoritates*. The Prologue survives in five of the sixteen manuscripts of this *Tretiz*. I follow Hinton who suggests that, although it is worthwhile accepting the proposition made in the Prologue that the text was commissioned by Dyonise as an aid in teaching French to her children, 'it is nevertheless worth pointing out the fragility of the evidence at our disposal' for such claims. See 'Anglo-French in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 857–58.

[11] See *AND* (online), 'gentil'.

refinement.[12] Of course, it is possible that women read or heard the *Tretiz*. However, for the purposes of the following discussion, I think closely about the effects of the anticipated audience of aspiring gentlemen in *G*.

The balance between expressions of nonhuman sounds in multiple vernacular languages with the formation of predominantly male, aristocratic subjectivity raises important questions for this study on man's sonic cohabitation with beasts and birds. To what extent, for example, do such lists draw on and represent the sounds of actual species that man may then articulate? What types of contact between men, women and nonhuman subjects are depicted, anticipated and interpreted by the *Tretiz*? And finally, what is the effect of translating these sounds into human language or, conversely, of thinking about human languages through the prism of nonhuman sounds? The types of encounter that are imagined through lists of beasts and birds in the *Tretiz* evoke real and fictional possibilities for cross-species sonic cohabitation in the ways that the medieval estate is envisioned. Unlike in the *Bestiaire*, sonic cohabitation in this text is both textual and based on lived experience with other species. In particular, its depiction of nonhuman sounds draws on contact between humans and other species, both domestic and wild. The *Tretiz* is therefore a space, or zone, of cross-species contact, the primary conduit for which is human language. The words describing nonhumans and their sounds contribute to the conceptualisation of the *Tretiz* as a zone of encounter and interaction between languages, peoples and species, which I define as a 'contact zone'.

The term 'contact zone' was initially coined by Mary Louise Pratt to describe the space of colonial encounters in the Americas 'in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict'.[13] Jonathan Hsy has adapted this term in his work on multilingualism and the meeting of peoples and tongues in cross-cultural encounters in medieval contexts. Hsy proposes that the term 'contact zone' imbues 'the phenomenon of language contact with an important spatializing force, drawing attention to how languages mix and commingle within particular geographical and social

[12] For one such interjection, see *Tretiz*, p. 9, ll. 215–30. This example is discussed in detail below.
[13] *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

environments'.[14] From this vantage point, it is certainly possible to describe earlier thirteenth-century texts as being written, read or heard within their own historically- and culturally-situated contact zones. Indeed, the meeting of languages such as English and French was fundamental to the production and subsequent interpretation of texts such as the *Tretiz*, with its focus on the similarities and divergences between these two languages. By adapting the scope of the contact zone in the formulations of Pratt and Hsy, I grant the types of encounter in the contact zone the further capacity to reflect and intervene in the culture that produced that zone, notably through the formulation of the type of male, aristocratic subjectivity mentioned above. The *Tretiz* is not only the product of the contact zone in which it was written and circulated, but also acts as a contact zone itself in which human subjectivity is formed in relation to other species.

According to companion species theorist Donna Haraway the co-constitutive aspects of companion species relations, including the stories and histories that have shaped co-evolution between humans and nonhumans, also take place in cross-species contact zones. Haraway points out that a 'contact' perspective 'emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other [treating the relations] in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.'[15] The term 'asymmetrical relations of power' can be read in this citation as a euphemism for uncomfortable or often violent conceptualisations of power hierarchies and practices of domination. By adapting the work of Haraway on cross-species contact zones I attend to the ways that the *Tretiz* as a contact zone passes through language, but also through contact based on sound. Only by thinking simultaneously about these different forms of contact are we able to define and then trouble some of the asymmetrical relations of power that are anticipated through descriptions of the sounds of beasts and birds.

There is a crucial distinction to be made here between the contact zone, which frames contact with language, and the soundscape, which I discussed in relation to the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon in Chapter One. In theoretical terms soundscapes

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[14] *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), p. 4.
[15] *When Species Meet* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 216. Original quotation from Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 6–7.

involve the recording of acoustic phenomena in ways that sometimes defy the confines of semantic or semiotic meaning, although I have also shown how nonhuman creatures may themselves manipulate or control soundscapes. Crucially, the soundscape does not presume language as a point of contact between the human and the nonhuman. In contrast, a contact zone, as a tool inherited from translation and cultural studies, should be read with the assumption that language is the first point of contact for cross-species encounter. As is clear through the prominence of the theme of language acquisition in the *Tretiz*, this text presents language acquisition alongside nonhuman sounds to form a specific type of subjectivity that assumes dominance over different languages and nonhuman life.

Reading the *Tretiz* as a contact zone is important to my analyses in this chapter because it offers a way of thinking through the connections between languages and cross-species contact. In the following discussion, I firstly consider the ways that the words (*langage*) used to describe groups of species are connected to expressions of power and hierarchy between species. Following this, I examine how terms evoking the sounds (*noise*) of beasts and birds in the *Tretiz* produce an expansive notion of encounter and sonic cohabitation in the textual contact zone. These encounters are rooted in human forms of linguistic and cultural encounter. I argue that questions of sonic contact and cohabitation are crucial for thinking through the ways that the *Tretiz* may be understood as a contact zone that presents sounds as part of a programme for the formation of human and nonhuman identities. Contact in the *Tretiz* is depicted in a variety of ways that reveal the conditions of coercion, inequality and conflict between species, notably to buttress the construction of a male, aristocratic form of subjectivity. However, the words used to describe nonhumans and their sounds also potentially undermine presumed forms of dominance by suggesting that language and words, on which masculine subjectivities are here formed, do not in fact signify in fixed and reliable ways. Homophony, wordplay, onomatopoeia and rhyme are examples of how the *Tretiz* destabilises assumptions about man's dominance over nonhuman species by placing the sounds of nonhumans back into the mouths of human audiences.

The Beasts, the Birds and Man's 'Naturele Langage'

A list of collective nouns for different species in the *Tretiz* presents the act of naming and qualifying species as conducive to acquiring and learning French and English words that relate to beasts and birds. This list of collective nouns is twenty-nine lines long and recounts the names that humans use to designate groups of beasts and birds, beginning with a *herde* of deer and an *erde* of cranes (p. 9, ll. 223 and 224). It quickly evolves to include in its litany the names for groups of humans, including a *fouleie* (throng) of peasants and a *compagnie* (company) of women, as well as objects such a *masse* of silver (p. 10, ll. 228, 240 and 233). The position of this list, which is included immediately before a list of nonhuman noises, frames sonic cohabitation in the contact zone of the *Tretiz* in terms of language. In manuscript *G* this passage is preceded by a rubric, written in a similar hand to the French verse (in black ink) but expressed in red like the English glosses, that emphasises how the various species in the list are arranged by their own 'naturele langage' ('natural/innate/inherent language').[16] The description of this *langage* as 'naturele' suggests that such language is an inherent property of the beasts and birds themselves, strongly connecting species to the words that humans use to identify and classify them.

Despite the primacy of man's language as the guiding theme for this list in the *Tretiz*, the list itself does not present human language as an inherently fixed or stable way of signifying the properties of different species. Instead, the list has all the marks of a thirteenth-century cross-linguistic contact zone, in which French and English are in constant dialogue; English glosses even comment on and destabilise the meanings of French words. The 'naturele' qualities of the language relating to beasts and birds demonstrate human language's capacity to mean two or more things at once. Man's dominance and species-specific properties are juxtaposed as the text provokes disdain or humour in the network of relations that these themes form between human readers and various human, nonhuman or material agents depicted in the list:

[16] *Tretiz*, p. 9, G, f. 282^{v}. The rubrics are by no means present in all of the manuscripts of this text. For an example of one manuscript that does not exhibit the same rubrication sequence, see the version based on *T* in *Tretiz*.

Ore le fraunceis des bestes e oyseus chescune asemblé par son naturele langage

Beaus duz enfanz, p*ur* ben ap*re*ndre
En fraunceis devez entendre
Ki de chescune manere asemblé
Des bestes ki Deus ad formé
E des oyseaus ensement
Coveint parler p*ro*prement.
Primes ou cerfs sunt assemblé *hertes*
Une herde est apelé,
E des gruwes ausi une herde, *cranes*
E des grives sauns .h. eerde;
Nyé de feisauntz, cové de p*ar*triz, *partriz*
Dameie des alouues, t*ri*ppe de berbiz; *larkes*
Harras dist hom des poleins; *coltes*
G*ra*nt fouleie dist hom des vileins, *cherles*
Soundre des porckes, sundre des est*ur*neus,
Bovee des herouns, p[i]pee des oyseauz *smale briddes*

Tretiz, ll. 215–30

Now the French of the beasts and the birds, *each one gathered by its natural language.* Good sweet children, in order to learn well in French you must hear in what manner each of the beasts, and likewise the birds, created by God is assembled, and how to talk about them appropriately. Firstly, where deer (*harts*) are gathered it is called a herd, and also a herd with cranes (*cranes*), and with fieldfare *erde* without the "h"; a nye of pheasants, a covey of partridges (*partridges*), a bevy of larks (*larks*), a flock of sheep; a "rag" says man of foals (*colts*); a "throng" says man of peasants (*serfs*), a sounder of swine, a "sunder" of starlings, a siege of herons, a flock of birds (*small birds*)

The collective nouns used to describe a group of species and, by extension, the act of naming species, are implicitly presented as a means of asserting control over language; this naming allows the reader/listener to speak properly and to express himself as a gentleman, and thus as master of the estate. The act of naming groups of beasts and birds is also presented as a form of control over different species through the assumption that they can be identified and managed through language. Scholars have connected the pedagogic concerns of such passages of the *Tretiz* with the preparation of young children for land ownership.[17] This connection is particularly clear following the interjection of the narrator, who addresses the list to 'Beauz duz enfants' ('Good sweet children'), who are presumably the young gentlemen indicated by the Prologue above. The address at the beginning of the passage on collective nouns emphasises that the projected audience of the text is an audience of children, who are instructed to listen carefully to what is being said about the groupings of beasts and birds in order to be able to speak about them correctly in French: a language associated with the ruling elite. However, as English glosses begin to creep into the passage, it becomes evident that control over the acoustic environment of the estate is a cross-linguistic concern. Rather than solely focused on French vocabulary, the audience is presented with French and English words simultaneously. The passage therefore suggests that linguistic control here is dependent on control of two languages that the children addressed in the text do not yet completely master.

The acquisition of human language is depicted in ways that portray the complexity of networks of language-learning in a contact zone that includes cross-species relations, in which the sounds of human language are used to identify different beasts and birds. In the *Tretiz* the language-learning subject who is trying to express himself as a gentleman is called by the narrator to participate in such relations and to hear points of similarity and difference between the words used to describe nonhumans. Indeed, certain poetic features and literary techniques

[17] See Adam Fijałkowski, 'Die *voces variae animantium* in der Unterrichtstradition des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit', *Das Sein der Dauer* (2008), pp. 447–69; and Karen K. Jambeck, 'The *Tretiz* of Walter of Bibbesworth: Cultivating the Vernacular', in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Amsterdam: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); and William Rothwell, 'The Teaching of French in Medieval England', *The Modern Language Review*, 63.1 (1968), pp. 37–46.

demonstrate how the rhetorical features of French versification, combined with English glossing, unravel the notional separation of the *langage* of man and that of nonhuman species. This is particularly significant for understanding the connections that link the acquisition of language with the formation of aristocratic subjects who would control and manipulate their acoustic environments through subtle linguistic distinctions as well as eloquent use of French:

> Primes ou cerfs sunt assemblé *hertes*
> Une herde est apelé,
> E des gruwes ausi une herde, *cranes*
> E des grives sauns .h. eerde
>
> *Tretiz*, ll. 221–24

> Firstly, where deer (*harts*) are gathered it is called a herd, and also a herd with cranes (*cranes*), and with fieldfare *eerde* without the "h".

The French homophony or pseudo-homophony in this passage demonstrates that the words used to describe groups of beasts and birds are themselves human constructs and subject to human interpretation, even as the rubric seems to suggest that they are natural or innate. The homophones *herde* (herd) and *eerde* (flock or mutation), if they are indeed supposed to sound the same, create a confusing triple pun for the reader or listener. The *AND* includes both nouns under the same entry, 'erde, eerde, herde'. This juxtaposition calls attention to the vocal pronunciation of the aspirated 'h' sound by the listener, or the written 'h' by the reader, to distinguish groups of different beasts and birds.[18] The juxtaposition of these words exposes the absence of the aspirated sound in *eerde* to describe the group of fieldfare, and emphasises that

[18] The complex loop of contact represented in the passage above is not present in all versions of the *Tretiz*. The version from MS *T* (Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.2.21) flattens the meanings that are present in *G* by presenting the spellings, and presumably the sounds, of these homophones as the same:

> Hou cerfs sount assembleez
> Une *herde* est apelez.
> De grues une *herde*, *cranes*
> De gryves ausy *herde* *ffeldefares*

('Where deer are gathered it is called a herd. A herd of cranes [*cranes*], a herd also of fieldfare [*fieldfare*]'), *Tretiz*, p. 61, ll. 186–89. The italicised '*herde'*, repeated three times, is my emphasis.

language and sound are subject to manipulation and interpretation both in written and in spoken form.[19] In this way the text makes very precise distinctions between terms that might otherwise be confused. That confusion might itself be dispelled if the audience of the text has a good grasp of both written and spoken French. If this is *langage* that is *naturele*, then we should understand by those terms that the language for beasts and birds in this contact zone is innately subject to visual and aural interpretation.

The focus on written as well as spoken language in this list draws attention to the ways that readers or listeners may have conceptualised contact with the nonhuman through the spoken and written forms. The likelihood that the text was read aloud is a tantalising one for a study on sound, particularly as the imitation or performance of specific words such as *herde* and *erde* acts as a point of close identification of species being described. Aspiration, breath and the imitation of the sounds of words are linked to the communicative properties of words describing nonhuman life that form the types of gentlemen purportedly reading and interpreting the text. In a spoken context, the question of whether to aspirate or not aspirate the beginning of such a word draws attention to the functional and physical properties of language, including vocalised sound and breath. Furthermore, this suggests that what is *naturele* about language is its expression through human (and as I demonstrate in the next section, nonhuman) voice. This is especially significant considering that the text was composed, as the conceit of the Prologue in *G* would suggest, for the learning of language and for the ability for every gentleman to speak well, rather than necessarily to read or to write.

Male dominance in this text is implicated as part of a process whereby different species are categorised as subordinate to the figure of man, forming a taxonomy that places man in a privileged position relative to nonhuman agents and objects. At the same time, the text is a contact zone: that is, a space of encounter between the human and the nonhuman which enables structures of power and inequality that underscore sonic cohabitation. Rather than drawing a binary

[19] It is possible that the discrepancy between aspirated and non-aspirated sounds here reflects alternative pronunciations of the same word that stem from the mixture of Germanic origins of this noun, including the Old English *heord*, and Old Low German *herda* (*OED*), and its widespread contemporary use in French, not only in Anglo-Norman, but also on the continent. See ‘harde’ in Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialects du IXe au XVe siècle* (New York: Kraus, Reprint Corp., 1961).

distinction between human and nonhuman (as modernity might expect), this text presents different types of life on a continuum, which means that part of the way it asserts the superiority of 'man' is to assert the superiority of the nobleman over other kinds of nonhuman and human being. The taxonomies that separate man from groups of humans as well as nonhumans in the *Tretiz* are clearly expressed in moments that derive from wordplay associated with the *langage* of beasts and birds. To take one example, the *Tretiz* includes amongst the list of collective nouns for beasts and birds the 'grant fouleie' ('big throng') of 'vileins' (signifying peasants, villains and possibly tenants, with implications of baseness and wickedness). *Vileins* is glossed as 'cherles' in Middle English (p. 10, l. 228) to designate groups of humans that are sub-categories of the type of humanity represented by the young children from the list itself who will grow up to be 'gentils homme'. It could even be suggested that this represents, albeit in a tongue-in-cheek way, peasants as a different bestial species from the human reader, considering the rubric pitches these nouns as describing 'bestes e oyseus' ('birds and beasts'). In terms of power structures and hierarchies, there is an important distinction to be made between the depiction of nobles, aristocrats and land owners who might read or listen to the *Tretiz*, and the *vileins* who are depicted as part of the list of nonhuman species in the contact zone. The humanity of the 'hom' ('man', l. 227) that memorises or speaks the list is in fact a discreet category encompassing only the highest echelons of social class and gender.

Groups of young women ('puceles') or ladies ('dames') are similarly depicted alongside the groups of *vileins*. This depiction forces a gendered split in the conceptualisation of aristocratic human subjectivity. Aristocratic or upper-class women are included under the umbrella terms of *puceles* and *dames* in passages that poke fun at the similarities between terms applied to women and birds:

> Luir*e* de faucouns, luyre de puceles.
> Mes pucele ceo set saunz juper *houting*
> Les gentils faucouns aluirer.
> Eschele dist home de bataille.
> Foysun dist home de vif aumaille.
> Des dames dist hom compaignie,
> E des ouwes ne chaungez mie,

Car de bone franceis nient le d*e*it.
Ly mestre baudiment l'oustreit.
Tretiz, ll. 235–43

> A cast of falcons, a bevy of young women. A young woman knows how to lure the peregrine falcon without calling out (*shouting*). Man says "a battalion" of troops; man says "a herd" of living cattle. Of ladies man says "a company", and for geese you change nothing, because in good French one should change nothing; the schoolmaster would gaily grant it.

Mastery of language is the main conceit of this passage. Such mastery is connected not only to the control of language but also to control over the fictional estate, including falcons and geese, as well as authority over women and children. Described as a 'luyre de puceles' ('a bevy of young women', l. 235), groups of women in the list are associated with medieval falconry because the collective nouns that describe them and the falcons are the same.[20] This juxtaposition is followed by the 'compaignie' of 'dames' (l. 240), a description that goes further than simply equating women with geese; as Rothwell notes in his edition of the *Tretiz*, this comparison contains 'a male gibe' that draws explicit comparisons between women and geese (*Tretiz*, p. 11, n. 1) by suggesting that the collective nouns for these creatures are the same.

Wordplay in French is being used in the final example above to collapse the distinction between women and geese, making the collective nouns used for both groups the same: *compaignie*. This process of naming establishes the male speaking subject's superiority over both the ladies and the geese in question. Thomas Hinton suggests that there may be a link here to the case of the 'Winchester Goose', a term used to designate London prostitutes in the sixteenth century, perhaps with older

[20] For further details on depictions of medieval falconry see Susan Crane, 'Falcon and Princess', in *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013); An Smets and Baudouin Van den Abeele, 'Medieval Hunting', in *A Cultural History of Animals in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Brigitte Resl, vol. 2 (Oxford: Berg, 2007); and Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

origins.[21] Misogynistic humour and categorisation are thus presented as part of the language learning process for little gentlemen who should learn how to speak French well. The learning of such tropes is presented as a composite part of acquiring French, and therefore of learning how to become a gentleman. The reference to the 'mestre', most likely a schoolmaster or perhaps even the narrator, who gleefully approves of the linguistic joke on the homonym *compaignie*, is complicit in this process, which involves them both laughing at the associations between groups of nonhumans and aristocratic women. Finally, the French identity of this joke is reinforced by a surprising lack of multilingualism in the passage.

Reading the text as a contact zone necessarily entails a certain contradiction: whilst words are presented in this treatise as effective for identifying, classifying and controlling different species on a fictional estate (including other categories of human being), they are simultaneously presented as potentially ambiguous or open to interpretation. The instrument of control is therefore itself unstable. Humour, which concerns linguistic superiority, founders on the fact that the knowledge it asserts is based on shaky foundations. This observation is supported by the contradiction in the term 'naturele langage' used in the rubric of the text. In *G*, the list of collective nouns for different species is described as giving the 'naturele langage' of those species, that is, their names, in an assertion that would at first seem to suggest that what is natural about such words is their ability to signify in concrete terms. However, as I have already suggested in relation to the homonyms 'herde' and 'eerde' above, what is *naturele* about language is its own slipperiness and semiotic instability, particularly in relation to descriptions of different nonhumans and humans. It is therefore possible to consider the type of humour in the example of the juxtaposition of women and geese as pointing to the fact that language does not communicate innate truths. Inside the contact zone, subtle jibes at women and geese in French may work along similar lines to the homophony of the *herde*, expressing the fact that languages, as human idioms that formulate and develop conceptualisations of cross-species contact, communicate only images or reflections of multiple realities rather than innate, physical truths.

Part of the acoustic enjoyment for soon-to-be gentlemen audiences of this text is the representation of the abundance of life in more than one language, and the

[21] 'Animals on the Page: *Voces animantium*' (in preparation).

ability for readers to distinguish between species in different linguistic settings. The text highlights the range of contact between humans and nonhuman agents generated through cross-linguistic, cross-species encounters in the contact zone. The projected reader of the text is expected to be familiar with the diversity of terms for the natural world, as the glossing pattern from the list of nouns demonstrates:

Nyé de feisauntz, cové de p*ar*triz,	*partriz*
Dameie des alouues, t*ri*ppe de berbiz;	*larkes*
Harras dist hom des poleins;	*coltes*
G*ra*nt fouleie dist hom des vileins,	*cherles*
Soundre des porckes, sundre des est*ur*neus,	
Bovee des herouns, p[i]pee des oyseauz	*smale briddes*

Tretiz, ll. 225–30

> A nye of pheasants, a covey of partridges (*partridges*), a bevy of larks (*larks*), a flock of sheep; a "rag" says man of foals (*colts*); a "throng" says man of peasants (*serfs*), a sounder of swine, a "sunder" of starlings, a siege of herons, a flock of birds (*small birds*)

The English glosses of some of these beasts and birds contribute to the profusion of vocabularies relating to nonhuman life and demonstrate that names for nonhuman species in the French and English vernaculars may vary considerably. In the short passage above, the Middle English words *larkes*, *coltes*, *cherles* and *smale briddes* are all used to suggest linguistic difference in relation to French. However, certain names, such as the partridge (*partriz* in both French and English), reveal a linguistic similarity that highlights more approximative forms of identification. A gloss that is essentially the same word, and the same sound, in both languages, invites the audience to consider the purpose of such glosses; the English gloss for the partridge does not clarify the meaning of the word for the reader—it does not even suggest subtle differences in word forms, as is the case for the homophones of the word *herde*. The glosses thus attest to the importance of being able to distinguish the names for species in different languages, whilst pointing to linguistic overlap. Just as a gentleman may have to learn how to speak French properly, he should also be

acquainted with English, and in particular with its agricultural connections, in order to identify moments when terms are exactly the same.

The ability to understand, imitate and even enjoy the different modes of interpretation conceptualised as 'naturele language' in this section of the *Tretiz* both presumes a certain audience and shapes the superior positioning of that audience. The audience's interaction with the types of contact depicted in that zone thus enables interpretations that may not be neutral. This is particularly relevant to the types of cross-species contact with which land owners in the Middle Ages would have been familiar: domestication, farming, agriculture, hunting and using beasts and birds for pastimes, to take a few examples. The contact zone expresses through language a range of networks between species that reference such meanings for audiences, imitating networks outside the text. These networks generally use the formation of young, male, aristocratic learners of French as a reference point for envisioning a world that such audiences may eventually control through their own perfected use of two vernacular languages. The networks that support a specific type of human domination over groups of humans and nonhumans are presented therefore in broader networks of relations based on the act of naming, the invitation to imitate the sounds of words, and the suggestion that words can be used as a form of control. However, techniques such as cross-linguistic glossing, homophony and the presentation of synonymous words, highlight the inherent instability of human language, making the contact zone a space where linguistic control may be undermined as well as asserted.

***Naturele* Noise: Vocalising Encounter**

In addition to its attention to human languages, the *Tretiz* also foregrounds questions of sound. The *Tretiz* includes passages of text that undermine neat distinctions not only between the words used to describe groups of beasts and birds, but also between terms that communicate human and nonhuman vocalisations. A section on 'naturele noise', like 'naturele langage', demonstrates that nonhuman noise is *naturele* for the very fact that it points back to the porousness of the boundaries between languages and between species. This section of the *Tretiz* describes the sounds that nonhumans emit in the style of the *vocas animantium* tradition discussed above. The list under the rubric for 'naturele noise' is one of the most densely glossed passages of the

Tretiz, which attests to a strong contemporary interest in the linguistic equivalents for expressions of vocalised sound by different beasts and birds. The rubric posits that the noises made by beasts, as they are represented on the page, are *naturele* in the sense that they arise from the beasts and birds themselves, hinting at echoic and onomatopoeic forms of representation. Whilst the rubric suggests a discreet category of the natural or inherent noises of various species, in reality there remains a strong connection between noise and human language (as discussed in the preceding list). The list of noises contains many run-of-the-mill expressions and translations, but certain examples stand out for the way they reveal the capacity of different nonhuman sounds to communicate a form of cross-species contact through the shared ability to vocalise. As in the list of collective nouns, the focus of the rubric highlights how cross-species contact is framed in cross-linguistic ways, in particular through English glossing:

Ore de la naturele noise des toutes manere des bestes

Ore oiez naturément	
Des bestes le diversement,	
Checun de eus e checune,	
Solum ki sa nature doune.	
Home parle, ourse braie	*berre*
Ki a demesure se desraie.	
Vache mugist, gruue groule,	*cow lowes crane crekez*
Leoun rougist, coudre croule	*romies hasil quakez*
Chivaul(e) henist, alouwe chaunte,	*neyez larke*
Columbe gerist e coke chaunte	*croukes*
Chat(e) mimoune, cerpent cifle,	*mewith cisses*
Asne rezane, cine recifle,	*roreth suan cisses*
Louwe oule, chein baie,	*wolfe yollez berkes*
E home e beste sovent afraye.	*fereth*

Tretiz, ll. 244–58

> *Now of the innate noise of all types of beasts.* Now come listen to the diversity of beasts, each and every one as is granted by their nature. Man speaks, bear (*bear*), which acts excessively wildly, roars (*cries out*). Cow (*cow*) moos (*lows*), crane (*crane*) squawks (*crakes*), lion roars (*roars*), hazel-tree (*hazel*) shakes (*trembles*), horse whinnies (*neighs*), lark (*lark*) sings, dove coos (*croaks*), and cock sings, cat mews (*mews*), snake hisses (*hisses*), ass brays (*roars*), swan (*swan*) re-hisses (*hisses*), wolf (*wolf*) howls (*yells*), dog barks (*barks*), and often frightens (*frightens*) man and beast.

Through the listing of verbs describing the noises of beasts and birds the *Tretiz* attempts to linguistically define and mimic nonhuman noises. The relationship between sound and action that is posited by such lists invites the audience to think more closely about the relationship between nonhuman vocalisation and bi- or multilingualism. As I discussed in the Introduction, in some medieval scholastic and grammatical theories inarticulate noises, such as those made by beasts, were often considered to manifest something more than symptomatic responses to exterior or interior stimuli.[22] However, what exactly these sounds articulated remained unclear and open for debate. According to Hsy, these texts invite mimicry on the part of human readers or listeners through the representation of nonhuman sounds as speech-like in human terms.[23] Acting as *aide-memoires* for the acquisition and study of vocabulary, they work to equate the sounds of different languages with linguistically less stable nonhuman sounds, potentially creating 'an intimate partnership that bridges species boundaries and language difference'.[24] The interactions between French words and English glosses thus offer a glimpse of the dynamics of the contact zone in the *Tretiz* through which man, who is himself an entry in the list alongside other species, is shown to be using noise to the same effect as the other beasts and birds. Since the text is a contact zone in which human readers

[22] See *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, ed. by Umberto Eco, Marmo Costantino and Shona Kelly (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989), pp. 3–41. I discuss examples of these theories, such as the *latratus canis*, in more detail in the introduction to this thesis.
[23] Jonathan Hsy, 'Between Species', pp. 571–73.
[24] Ibid., p. 578.

are enjoined to imitate or mimic the sounds of species in different human languages, the cross-species contact that is presented in this list is also a cross-linguistic one.[25]

Certain elements of the English glosses in the list above draw attention to the plurality of noises operative in the contact zone. The glosses introduce rhyme into almost complete, full phrases of English to create patterns resembling the traditional couplets of the French verse. The abundance of English glosses in this passage is notable from the introduction of the double-hemistich pattern. Rhyming in the language of gloss lends a poetic quality to the English—one which is already present in the metrical French—a quality that reaches beyond literal translation and attests to the capacity of nonhuman noises to function as, and even to mimic, different languages.[26] Likewise, the repetition of the English word 'cisses' to accommodate the meanings inherent in the French phrases 'cerpent cifle' ('snake hisses') and 'cine *re*cifle' ('swan hisses', my emphasis) demonstrates that the English and French words for the snake and the swan linger on the meanings created through onomatopoeia. These words hover between languages and are part of a process of interpretation crucial to understanding sonic cohabitation in a contact zone. The English glosses in the passage on noise function within a complex system of interpreting and rewriting the noises made by beasts and birds, a system that cuts across lexical and poetic meanings in both vernacular languages. English and French thus influence each other in ways that mirror the humans, beasts and birds imitating one another. This linguistic entanglement illustrates how contact between species is intimately connected to the production of sound.

The formation of male, aristocratic subjectivity observed in relation to the list of collective nouns (*langage*) for different beasts and birds is complicated in the first few lines of the subsequent list of nonhuman noises. This is because, whereas man is implicit in the first of these lists, the itemisation of noises begins with the

[25] In a linguistic analysis of this list in the *Tretiz*, Hinton suggests that the list contains some articles that are clear derivations from Latin traditions, for example: 'ovis balat'/'berbiz baleie'; 'lupus ululat'/'lou hule'; 'sus grunnit'/'troye groundile'; 'bod mugit'/'buf mugit' etc. See 'Animals on the Page: *Voces animantium*' (in preparation).

[26] This has also been noted by William Sayers, who explains in his article 'Animal Vocalization and Human Polyglossia' that the author 'is similarly incurious that the terminology for animal vocalization should differ in the two languages, although he is concerned in other ways with the shiftiness of language, its elusive, mercurial and polysemous quality' (p. 531). Although I disagree that the text is unconcerned about the differences between languages, I concur with Sayers' subsequent argument.

figure of man followed by the bear, establishing a pattern of juxtaposition that conveys the noises of a variety of different beasts and birds: 'Home parle, ourse (*berre*) braie' ('Man speaks, bear [*bear*] roars', l. 248), and so on. Considering that the Prologue and the first passage on collective nonhuman nouns define the audience of the text in relation to young readers and gentlemen, it is safe to assume here that the man opposed to the figure of the bear refers to a similar exclusive category. The reader is confronted with the paradoxical ways that human language is composed of the same types of sounds that are made by beasts and birds whilst, conversely, the double-hemistich pattern suggests that beasts and birds use noise in similar ways to human beings, in their use of languages to speak ('parle'). In the process, the difference and dominance of human language relative to nonhuman sounds is undermined. The human production of sounds further blurs any separation of human and nonhuman vocalisation.

Human speech, the *Tretiz* suggests, is both particular to man and akin to bestial noise. Noises demonstrate that human language is an unstable category and that the noises of beasts and birds act as anchors for cross-species interaction and encounter. The list above establishes an even closer comparison between the human and nonhumans in ways that further undermine man's distinctiveness and suggest human beings share a sonic environment with other creatures. The question of mastery and dominance raised by the list of collective nouns likewise applies to the text's depiction of cross-species sonic cohabitation. This form of sonic cohabitation is most clear in the representation of contact with dogs and wolves. 'Home' ('Man') is presented as the producer of his own noise ('Home parle'), but also as a respondent to nonhuman noise a little later in the same passage: 'Louwe oule, chein baie, | E home e beste sovent afraye' ('Wolf howls, dog barks, and often frightens man and beast', ll. 256–57). Man is therefore both the speaking subject that defines the terms of the list at the top and the fear-inspired auditor of the vocalisations produced by other creatures in the textual contact zone further down the same list.

The sounds of howling and barking that are figured by the couplet that juxtaposes the dog's bark and man's fear are evocative of hunting situations, despite the fact that encounters with actual wolves in Britain in the twelfth and thirteenth

centuries were increasingly rare.[27] As Karl Steel notes, despite the culling of wolves by professional wolf-hunters known as *luparii*, wolves 'were sometimes […] introduced into game parks, not to cull herbivores, but to be hunted. The degradation of wolves' status from feared predator to poacher to prey—and, at that, inedible prey—suggests that such hunts functioned primarily to reaffirm the human, and particularly the elite, position as masters of violence.'[28] This would seem to be appropriate for the depiction of wolves howling in the *Tretiz*. However, the invitation to mimic howling in order to perfect one's French potentially reverses a position of human dominance over lupine species at the same time that it asserts such a position because it involves the human imitating the wolf's form of communication. The juxtaposition of the howl of the wolf with the bark of the dog also evokes biological similarities between dogs and wolves, whilst emphasising the fear that their noises causes to other species, notably man and beast; the word 'beste' ('beast', l. 257) may refer to cattle, who fear barking and howling, or wolves themselves, who were the prey of medieval hunters.[29]

The ways that young gentlemen were expected to learn French through the imitation of wolves' howling demonstrates how figurative depictions of nonhuman beasts were based on the fusion of real and imaginary sonic encounter. Considering the dwindling presence of wolves in medieval Britain, in thirteenth-century England actual wolves were perhaps best identified and rendered present by the howling sounds that humans produced to imitate them. The French verb for howl in the *Tretiz* is *ouler*, more commonly written *huler* or *heuler*, which emulates the sounds of wolves howling through onomatopoeia, as does the Middle English gloss *yollez*, from the verb *houlen*. The sounds depicted through human language in this passage thus stress the proximity of howling to human utterance. The contact zone counterbalances the absence of wolves from the English landscape (due to hunting

[27] As Oliver Rackham explains, records of wolves in medieval England seem generally to be confined to the Welsh Border counties and the Northern regions of Britain, with little record surviving from the Anglo-Saxon period. See *The History of the Countryside: The Classic History of Britain's Landscape, Flora and Fauna* (London: Phoenix Press, 1986), p. 35.

[28] *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011), p. 63.

[29] Susan Crane has demonstrated that the bark is critical for cross-species communication between hounds and humans, creating meaning for humans in intricate connection with hunting horns and human hunting cries. See *Animal Encounters*, pp. 112–13.

and extermination) with their sonic presence in the form of human imitation of howling. In doing so, it creates a network of relations between reality and fiction, and between the human hunter and the endangered or extinct wolves.

A later passage from the list of beast noises gives a different view of human encounters with canines. Sonic cohabitation is presented in this example not through the howl of the wolf or the bark of the dog, but through the sound of a single syllable in the French verse that opposes this syllable with different human and nonhuman actions. In an aside based on a riff on the syllable *–esche* in French, the narrator evokes the figure of a poor woman, asking her to give a thirsty puppy something to drink. The description of a nonhuman physical action (in this case licking: French 'lesche'; English '*liketh*') is figured in the French verse as if this action were on a continuum with the expression of nonhuman sound. However, it is assonance, rather than the theme of nonhuman noise, that here determines word choice. Indeed, meaning is dictated by the sound of language even if the narrative falls short of providing a clear direction of thought. After the babel of the beastly noises that have preceded in this section, the *Tretiz* draws the reader's attention away from noise and sound and onto the depiction of a dog who licks the pan of a poor woman and the dew off the roses in the meadow:

Q*ua*nt povre femme mene la tresche,	*ring*
Plus la vaudreit en mein la besche,	*spade*
Car el n'ad ou se abesche	
De payn ne a b[ri]be ne a lesche.	*lompe szivere*
Soun chael la paele lesche.	*liketh*
Ore donez a chael a flater	*lappen*
Ki lesche la rosé del herber.	*dewe*

Tretiz, ll. 297–303

When the poor woman leads a ring-dance (*ring*), it would have been better had she taken a spade (*spade*) in her hand, because she has nothing to feed herself, not a piece (*lump*) or a slice (*slice*) of bread. Her pup licks (*licks*) the pan. So give the pup, which is licking the dew (*dew*) off the roses in the meadow, something to drink (*lap*).

The absence of barking in this episode means that, unlike the preceding passage, nonhuman sound is not present to destabilise the dominance of man (both the narrator and the anticipated reader of the text) in the interactions we see in the text. Likewise, this encounter does not involve an explicit assertion of human (implicitly aristocratic, masculine) dominance over the nonhuman, as in the jibes and jokes about women discussed above, because the dog is so clearly already the domesticated dependant of the human.

This is a scene of shared poverty, and a call from the narrator to an act of cross-species care, emphasising a mode of human-nonhuman cohabitation that is grounded in domestication: 'Ore donez a chael a flater' ('So give the pup something to drink'). The imperative command of the narratorial voice thus returns at the end of the passage on 'naturele noise' to command the figure of the woman, or possibly by proxy the audience of the text, to consider the dog. However, the attention to cross-species care that is requested by the narrator is not extended to the poor woman herself. Instead, the narrator's voice remains invested in forms of dominance that reinforce the position of young gentlemen as the superiors to other creatures, both human and nonhuman. The narrator is unforgiving to the poor woman's hunger, suggesting instead that it would be better if she had a spade, either suggesting that she should go back to the fields to grow food herself or that she should dig her own grave. In a macabre interpretation of the narrator's words, the poor woman is so far past a point of return that it would be better that she focuses on caring for the dog. In certain respects, this passage reaffirms the dominance of man, whose acoustic pleasure in the riff on the French syllable acts as a sharp contrast to the comparatively silent depiction of the woman and the dog.

The barking of dogs, the howling of wolves and the silence of the pup provide space within the contact zone to ruminate on the ways that networks of relation, based sometimes on the imitation of syllables that are not immediately identifiable, are expressed through noises rather than through human language per se. The noises of different beasts, such as the bear's roar, the horse's whinny or the snake's hiss, focus the reader's attention on the ways that noises, or articulations that express the vocalisations of nonhuman agents, can communicate cross-species encounter and hierarchies between humans and nonhumans. However, the depiction of noise also comments on these hierarchies and unsettles them. In contrast to the list of collective nouns for different species, the beginning of the list for the noises of beasts

incorporates not only reflections of how language connects humans to nonhumans, but also how noise forms networks of relation in contact zones.

The relationship between French and English words and sounds in this contact zone establishes a way of thinking about cross-species cohabitation that emphasises sound as an important factor in identification with different species, as in the juxtaposition of man and bear at the very beginning of the list. However, the theme of 'naturele noise' that frames this list is considerably more complex than the previous theme of 'naturele langage' because in many ways noise avoids the specific reference to human language that is presumed in latter. In the examples I have given above, the type of male, aristocratic subjectivity that is anticipated as the primary reference point for cross-species comparison is brought into the picture by the representation of noise as 'naturele'. When noise is not present, as in the case of the woman and the dog, the parameters for reassessing male dominance through sound are less clear, but nevertheless implicit in the narrator's address. Encounters between humans and various beasts based on sonic cohabitation in this contact zone convey a picture of the complexity of human and nonhuman contact and cohabitation on medieval estates. In the next section, I draw on a selection of different examples from the list of nonhuman noises, and from other sections of the *Tretiz*, to demonstrate that the contact zone constituted by the text continues to assess the sounds of beasts and birds beyond the formal list of noises in moral as well as in hierarchical ways.

Bleating and Birdsong in the Contact Zone

The instability of language, and language's use as an anchor for cross-species encounter in the *Tretiz*, are themes that are reinforced by a number of moments in which depictions of nonhuman noise generate seemingly nonsensical narrative tangents. In the following discussion I demonstrate how these themes are implicated in depictions of bleating and in the various episodes that evoke birdsong. These include moments at which the narrator riffs on the associations created by words that feature the same syllable, just as in the scene of the poor woman and her dog, mentioned above. In a way that complements the two lists already discussed, the following examples reveal the text's interests in smaller micro-narratives that represent other types of cross-linguistic and cross-species contact. One such example highlights the imitative qualities of sheep bleating on the fictional estate. In this short

passage, bleating acts as a spur for thinking about ladies dancing, monetary concerns and fatigue:

Berbiz baleie, dame bale,	*szep bleteth hoppeth*
Espicer prent ces mers de bale.	*bagge*
Par trop veiller home baal.	*gones*
A sun serjaunt sa chose baille.	

Tretiz, ll. 287–90

> Sheep (*sheep*) bleats (*bleats*), lady dances (*dances*), the grocer takes his goods by the bale (*bag*). If awake for too long, man yawns (*yawns*) and hands over to his squire.

The sound of the sheep's bleat in this passage is a simple and recognisable one that bears strong resonance in both French and English with the actual sound that sheep make, commonly rendered 'baaah' in contemporary English non-verbal onomatopoeia. It is difficult to read this extract without, at the very least, imagining the sounds indicated by the syllable *–ba*, which form a strong sonic anchor for the French verse. The syllable *–ba* is repeated five times (six if the English gloss 'bagge' is included) in the space of four lines, connecting the action of bleating with that of dancing ('bale'), yawning ('baal') and handing over a job ('baille'). The repetition also links these actions with the grocer's bag (French 'bale'; English 'bagge'). The juxtaposition of the vocalisation of the sheep with the yawning of the man suggests a humorous connection between the muzzle of the sheep and the mouth of the man, perhaps also conveying that the narrator himself is growing tired of the incessant wordplay and word association!

This passage also contains an implicit comparison between women and sheep, which echoes the association between women and geese that figured in the preceding list of collective nouns, but which potentially resonates with other comparisons, including that between the lamb and Christ.[30] These multiple associations demonstrate that the noises of beasts create networks of relation that

[30] I discuss the sound of the sheep's bleat, and the symbolism of sheep, in further detail in relation to the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys* in Chapter Three.

spread out into other aspects of medieval estate life. These are networks that help readers of the text to consider their own place amongst other human and nonhuman agents. The dancing of ladies is tied to the sheep's vocalisation in the same way that the man's speech act was tied to the bear's roar at the beginning of the list of nonhuman noises. What is different in this case is that, unlike the use of man's speaking as the counterpoint around which nonhuman noises are interpreted, it is the dancing of the lady that becomes the motif that the young reader or listener must memorise. The connection between bleating ('bleteth') and dancing ('hoppeth') is reinforced in English rhyme, further linking these inherent or *naturele* activities through nonsensical association. Such connections between women and various species highlight the forms of asymmetrical power that are present in the contact zone. Indeed they are an opportunity to reconsider how networks of relations between men, women and various species function to bolster specific subjectivities in the contact zone. The association of the dancing of ladies with the bleating of sheep contains potential spiritual implications as well as elements of humour that might mock the agents performing those actions, through which audiences made of predominantly young boys might learn how to distinguish themselves from women, beasts and birds.

Like the bleating of sheep, the mastery and interpretation of bird sounds also speaks to a more general interest in nonsensical sound in the *Tretiz*. To take one example (this time from the section following the list of nonhuman noises), the sounds of waterfowl are introduced as the noises of the babbling goose, the gabbling gander and the quacking ducks in the marsh are evoked. The passage draws attention to the assonance created through the internal and end-rhyme patterns of the syllable *–oile*. This syllable recurs five times and is echoed a few lines later during an exploration of the meanings associated with the noun *jaroil*, 'quack', and the singular noun *garoil*, a light palisade used in town defences and glossed in English as 'trappe':

Ouwe jaungle, jars agroile,	*gandre*
Ane en mareis jaroile,	*enede quekez*
Mes il i ad jaroil e garoile.	*quekine trappe*
La difference dire vo*us* voile.	

Li ane jaroile en rivere
Si hom de falcoun la quere,
Mes devant un vile en guere
Afichom le garoil en tere *þe trappe*
Pur le barbecan defendre

Tretiz, ll. 261–69

> Goose babbles, gander (*male gander*) gabbles, ducks (*female ducks*) in the marsh quack (*quack*), but there is 'quack' (*quack*) and 'trap' (*trap*); I wish to tell you the difference. The duck quacks in the river if man hunts it with a falcon, but in front of a town in times of war we put a trap (*the trap*) on the ground to defend the barbican

The two French words *jaroil* and *garoile* have little in common apart from their sounds, and the unlikely association between *jaroil* and *garoile* is the source of a light-hearted humour that resonates through the rest of the passage. The merry quacking of ducks in the river, underscored by the inherent humour of the unlikely linguistic play during the previous few lines, is quite suddenly juxtaposed with the image of ducks being hunted by a falcon. This, in turn, contrasts with the subsequent description of setting down traps in front of a town in order to defend a barbican. A lively acoustic environment is thus evoked as the noisy waterfowl act as thematic anchors around which the text departs to discuss human warfare.

Scholars often assume that glossing in this text is an attempt to clarify meaning, but it may also have the opposite effect. The glosses here suggest that noise cannot be as easily controlled by language as one might assume. This passage emphasises that the sounds of words create networks of relation between the noises of waterfowl, the sounds of the words used to describe such sonic phenomena and the figurative connections that they instigate. These types of association are in many cases prompted by the English glosses. The repetition of the syllables *–oil*[*e*] and subsequently *–ere* in French is partially mirrored in the English glosses through a repetition of words for 'quacking' and for 'trap'. In particular, the glosses reinforce the interpretation of 'jaroil[e]' as the act of quacking: 'quekez' and 'quekine'. Almost simultaneously, the English glosses for 'garoil[e]' are introduced, again as a double: 'trappe' and 'þe trappe'. This systematic attempt to create meaning where in

reality there is only sporadic connection and unrelated association based on a quack, runs counter to the rubric's stipulation that the passage treats 'naturele noise'. That is, unless the natural noises of beasts and birds are linked to the acoustic environments in which they are expressed, heard and interpreted.

Quacking in the contact zone connects the noises of ducks and other waterfowl with images of human warfare, achieving a form of prominence over the French verse and the English glosses through the ability of this syllable to morph in and out of different words. Following a simple quack, the list quickly spills out of the boundaries of the framework proposed by the rubric and into an imaginary scenario based on the transformative meanings of sound. The poetry is shown to be determined by nonhuman sound, rather than containing it or controlling it. However, despite the associations made between these sounds, the passage is noticeably silent on the implications of unclear boundaries between human and nonhuman vocalisations. The connection between nonhuman sound and human warfare is presented as a series of nonsensical leaps based on sonic association arising from nonhuman sound, and without further explanation. This contrasts with the representation of the noises produced by birds in other sections of the text beyond the list of the 'naturele noise'. These later sections emphasise even more forcefully one of the most common associations of birdsong in medieval literature, namely the way such song is connected to questions of morality and social class, and to types of hierarchy that mirror human social networks. Whereas the list of nonhuman noises emphasises that various beasts vocalise in distinct, species-specific ways that parallel human speaking, the vocabulary used to describe birdsong is often the same for human and avian species.

The depiction of birdsong in the *Tretiz* implicitly references the human act of singing, emphasising a very close form of sonic cohabitation between humans and birds. The use of the verb *chaunter* to describe the singing of the lark and the cockerel has a particular effect on the conceptualisation of human singing and bird song in the contact zone.[31] One important aspect of the depiction of birdsong in the *Tretiz* is that it emphasises that birdsong is not an expression of neutral, meaningless sound. Rather, the representations of singing birds express clear examples of the types of

[31] *Chaunter* also became a common word in Middle English in the later Middle Ages. See *OED*, 'chant', v.

contact available in cross-linguistic and cross-species contact zones. The most prominent example of moral judgment cast on the vocalisation of birds is through the example of the cuckoo. In a section following the rubric 'Ore le fraunceis des oyseaus dé bois' ('Now the French for the birds of the woods', p. 32), the author introduces the image of singing birds to portray a pastoral scene. The image created by the comparison between different types of birdsong is competitive in nature, simultaneously evoking a cacophony of voices in a dawn chorus and an ensemble of human voices:

> Quant du verger avom le chois,
> Aloms ore juer a boys
> Ou la russinole, þe nichtingale,
> Meuz chaunte ki houswan en sale. *houle*
> E meuz chaunte mauviz en busson *þrostel bosc*
> Ki ne fet chauf sorriz en meisoun.
>
> *Tretiz*, ll. 711–16

> When we have the choice of going to the orchard, let us go play in the woods, where the nightingale, *þe nichtingale*, sings better than the owl (*owl/hoots*) in the hall. And the thrush (*thrush*) sings better in the bush (*bush*) than bats do in the house.

Despite the general noisiness of this text, the real question posited by this passage is, who sings better than whom? A chain of birds is introduced through a hierarchy of birdsong, beginning with the nightingale, who sings better than the owl, and culminating in the thrush, who sings better than the bats. The song of the thrush is contrasted with the chatter of bats, mammals that were often grouped with birds in medieval taxonomies.[32] Alongside the depiction of avian hierarchies, the nightingale, or *russinole*, 'glossed' in-text with the English 'þe nichtingale', represents the acoustic experience of hearing this species' name in two languages.

[32] Whilst indicating the winged and quadruped nature of the bat, the Second-Family Latin bestiary groups this mammal with the birds. See *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second-Family Bestiary: Commentary, Art, Text and Translation*, ed. by Willene B. Clark (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 182.

Unlike some of the comparisons between nonhuman noise and human actions in the *Tretiz*, the experience of encountering the nightingale in this contact zone is communicated through language by the expression of the bird's name in French and English—a juxtaposition also found in other French texts such as the *Lais* by Marie de France, which I discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

Despite the reliance of the contact zone on language and human forms of expression, the noise of the owl in the passage above demonstrates that meaning may also pass through nonlinguistic forms of sound as well as the names of birds. The owl's hoot merges the two vernaculars, troubling distinctions between both human and bird in English and French in ways that resonate with the imitation of the howling of wolves, discussed above. The Anglo-Norman noun 'huan' for owl is depicted in a highly unusual form with a 'w': 'houswan'. It is glossed in English with the noun 'houle', which is an English verb for 'hoot'. Although this gloss features above the noun 'houswan' in the French text, it is also quite possible to read the gloss as a description of the owl's hoot; the English *houle* can be read as a noun and a verb, creating the conditions for the text to be read by fusing the syntax of English and French thus: 'Ou la russinole, þe nichtingale, | Meuz chaunte ki houswan *houle* en sale' ('Where the nightingale, *þe nichtingale*, sings better than the owl *owl/hoots* in the hall', my emphasis). Read in alternative ways, the text establishes that the hoot of the owl bridges the divide between English and French grammar and vocabulary.

The human mimicry of birds that is implicit in these readings demonstrates that the sonic phenomena associated with birds may generate a form of sonic cohabitation in textual acoustic environments. It also suggests that audiences must learn how to recognise their own distinctiveness through terms other than purely linguistic ones. For a young gentleman to learn how to hoot, and thus to produce the same noise as the owl, which is simultaneously that bird's name, is for him to exercise a form of mastery over the acoustic environment of the fictional estate that teaches dominance and the ability to manipulate the sounds of different languages. However, as we saw with the howl of the wolf, it also places the young gentleman in the position of the owl, and thus at a bridge between cross-linguistic and cross-species divides that is conceptually more complicated that it may first seem.

Sonic cohabitation in the contact zone of the *Tretiz* relies on the movement between languages or close contact between species. The mastery of language that frames sonic cohabitation in this text demonstrates that contact between species is

never free from the power dynamics that accompany linguistic and other forms of encounter in contact zones. Likewise, forms of cross-species and cross-linguistic sonic contact can never avoid the types of misunderstanding and conflict that arise when a text is read or interpreted as a contact zone. My final example of contact from a different section of the *Tretiz* concerns another example of a word that is both the name of the species it represents and the sound produced by that species. The call of the cuckoo in the *Tretiz* emphasises how moral judgment of a bird sound may be reinforced as the text scorns this particular sound in another recognisable and common trope:

> Le chaunt de kokel est recous, *kockou*
> E si n'est guers delicious.
> Poynt serreit si riotuse
> Si sun chaunt fu graciouse.
> E plus est oi en oriol
> Ki la noise l'orkoil. *wodewale*
>
> *Tretiz*, ll. 797–802

> The song of the cuckoo (*cuckoo*) is raucous, and is hardly refined. It wouldn't be at all contentious if its song was more charming. And it is no more heard in the chamber than the golden oriole (*golden oriole*).

In this passage a very clear moral judgment is made about the sound of both the cuckoo and the golden oriole, a judgment based on the literary and musical motif of the cuckoo's song as monotonous, a signifier of false love and aesthetically bad.[33] This judgment also involves applying the standards of an elite literary tradition concerning different types of birdsong and poetic form to the mundane aspects of life on a medieval estate. As with the nightingale, the reaffirmation of the cuckoo's sound in both languages, this time glossed separately in English, serves to emphasise the tangible and aesthetic qualities of imitating nonhumans through their noises and through the act of naming nonhuman species. The lack of significant difference

[33] Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 154.

between French *kokel* and English *kockou* creates possibilities for audiences to experiment with the vocalisations of the cuckoo in different languages. The implied listener/reader may be forced to ask himself which language more accurately conveys the sound of the cuckoo. This depiction of cuckoo calling is cross-linguistic in two ways: it works between the languages of English and French, and it identifies the difference between a linguistic noun and the nonlinguistic onomatopoeic expression of sound. This mode of interpretation acts as another example of how the *Tretiz* demonstrates that language works in multiple ways to signify nonhuman sounds, both in the context of naming and in the use of onomatopoeia.

The bad singing of the cuckoo features in the *Tretiz* in a passage separate from the sections on 'naturele language' and 'naturele noise'. However, as the examples above demonstrate, the implications of these earlier rubrics on the conceptualisation of nonhuman sound remain important for understanding the vocalisations of other nonhumans, especially birds. Amongst many examples of taxonomy, hierarchy and separation in the *Tretiz* it is clear that even the act of singing in this *Tretiz* is not a neutral one. In the case of the birds, the comparison between different types of birdsong translates from the ornithological to the human world, reinforcing a hierarchy of moral and aesthetic value based on the mirroring of the two. The ways that birdsong mirrors human singing, and therefore human social systems, contrasts with the types of nonsensical sounds that feature in the list of nonhuman noises because birdsong is implicitly connected to singing rather than non-melodic vocalisations. Representations of sheep bleating, for example, do not draw on the same assumptions about sound as do depictions of nightingales singing, owls hooting or cuckoos calling. Despite differences in the types of sounds produced by nonhuman agents, however, both onomatopoeic sounds and expressions of melodic birdsong are elements of complex networks of relation in the contact zone of the text. A young, aspiring gentleman reading the text also learns to recognise when to laugh at examples of cross-species vocalisation, when to imitate the sounds of particular beasts and birds (and when not too, based on hierarchies of nonhuman sound) and when to notice that different languages meet in their expression of certain sounds related to beasts and birds.

By reading passages that contain noises of beasts and birds, the type of reader identified as the postulated audience of the text learns that bleating evokes ladies dancing, that quacking ducks in the marsh could evoke images of warfare or that the

hoot of the owl offers a chance to consider cross-linguistic forms of expression. In the examples that I have chosen above, the contact between French and English glosses (whether above the words they translate or in the French verse itself) contributes to the subtle destabilisation of human forms of dominance and hierarchy in power dynamics that must be decided upon by the human audience's own judgment. The fact that the reader may be required to make decisions about linguistic dominance when reading or imitating words from the *Tretiz* reveals that the text is a contact zone in which networks of relation are formed and reformed by audience interaction and interpretation. Movement between languages demonstrates that bleating, quacking, singing and hooting are connected to expressions of anthropocentric and class- and gender-specific power and control, many of which are based on decisions formulated by human audiences and which might also work in reverse to destabilise the presumed authority of man.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced the ways that the words for collective groups of beasts and birds, and the words or syllables that are used to describe their noises, are involved in cross-linguistic and cross-species encounters in the *Tretiz*. The words and sounds used to describe such forms of encounter and contact emphasise the ways that noise is pivotal for thinking about the relationships between humans and nonhumans who inhabit the same acoustic environment. Encountering the nonhuman in the contact zone not only teaches young, aspiring gentlemen French, but also enables a textual form of encounter that shows them how to exercise authority and control over the world around them and the languages and sounds that are part of that world. Such control inevitably entails asymmetrical power relations that privilege a certain kind of human dominance: one that is marked as male and aristocratic. However, the fact that sonic cohabitation in the *Tretiz* is framed by, and interpreted through, language, means that dominance is based on a constantly moving foundation.

In the *Tretiz*, the relationships between beasts, birds and vernacular languages are grounded in two key and overlapping contact zones. The first of these is the trilingual zone of literary and cultural networks in Anglo-Norman England during the twelfth century and well into the thirteenth. The importance of the

linguistic context for this text cannot be underestimated and the ways that the trilingual linguistic context is reflected explicitly in this work have an important impact on how we read the text as a contact zone. The English glossing of vocabularies for names of groups of beasts and birds, and for the noises that these nonhumans make, attests to a strong interest in the comparison of such vocabularies between the vernacular languages of French and English. Likewise versification, rhythm, rhyme, wordplay, onomatopoeia and orthography are each part of the text's investigation of language and its connection to cross-species contact. The second contact zone in which the noises of beasts and birds are connected to language is the text itself, which emphasises sonic cohabitation between species, notably portraying the dominance of man in the networks of relation that are formed therein. These two contact zones highlight the ways that cross-species encounters based on noise and sound are informed by, and themselves produce, moments of contact between the human and the nonhuman.

The term 'naturele langage' in the rubrics of manuscript *G* suggest that the words used by humans to describe groups of different species are innate parts of their identity. This rubric reveals that words do not necessarily mean what they first seem to signify because what is *naturele* about words is their capacity to signify multiple meanings at the same time, such as in the example of the nouns *herde* and *eerde*, or the multilingual noun *partriz*. This, in turn, suggests that the networks constructed through cross-species and cross-linguistic contact in the contact zone are based on an always unstable linguistic foundation. The ways that the act of naming is framed in the list on the 'naturele langage' of beasts and birds emphasises at least on a superficial level an assertion of dominance over the nonhuman. This type of dominance is, however, troubled by the self-referential loops that are indicated by the adjective *naturele* in the rubric, which point back to the idea that language cannot fully and concretely signify without interpretation.

Signification and meaning are also constructed on divides based on class, wealth, gender and species that are woven into the text. However, the destabilisation of the authority of man offers evidence that sonic cohabitation is about more than just sharing unequal acoustic environments. Sonic cohabitation requires that boundaries between groups of humans and groups of nonhuman species that are based on defined terms be rethought. In this text, encounters in the contact zone buttress the construction of wealthy, upper-class, male subjectivity whilst

marginalising or denigrating other groups such as women, beasts and birds through the misogyny and mockery evident in some examples from the text. Language acquisition is at the forefront of these moments of contact, but there are limits to the types of communication that are portrayed, especially as the text moves from a focus on language to a closer inspection of nonhuman 'noise'. The classifications of species in the *Tretiz* are structured to provide an anatomy of the estate for the perusal of those running it, but, in the process, human language is shown to be akin to nonhuman noise. If a man imitates a wolf howling, he is at once confirming his ability to exercise control over, and manipulate, nonhuman sound, whilst also revealing that his own vocalisations resemble the sounds of nonhuman species. By contrast, in episodes where noise was absent, such comparisons are not readily available, and the authority of man is left unquestioned or even reaffirmed in the silence of other figures deprived of voice.

Not all noises in the *Tretiz* are easily incorporated into linguistic and grammatical conventions that may be expected of contact zones. Indeed, in many cases, it is nonsensical wordplay and riffs on specific syllables that are the connections creating meaning. The depictions of the noises of beasts and birds present the text's experimentation with words and syllables, but also with sounds that might otherwise be absent of meaning. The noises that differentiate humans from other nonhuman species are also left open to interpretation in ways reveal that such a differentiation is a decision made by the audience of the text, rather than the text itself. I have emphasised that 'naturele noise' as a category for interpreting nonhuman sounds serves to highlight sonic cohabitation through mimicry and imitation, especially through onomatopoeia. This is particularly pertinent to the passage on the barking of the dog and the howling of the wolf, which are compared to the speech of man. In turn, human vocalisations are compared to the sounds of other species—the lion, the cow, the bear, the sheep—that emphasise the plurality of nonhuman sound in multilingual contexts.

The sonic phenomena associated with birds, be it the singing of nightingales or the calling of cuckoos, expand the zones of contact portrayed by the *Tretiz* beyond earth-bound creatures and draw attention to the mirroring of human social spheres and avian hierarchies. In the case of the owl's hoot and the cuckoo's call, the examples that closed my discussion, the expression of sound becomes part of a complex decision-making process on the part of the reader. Decisions about sounds

expressed in different languages are invited by cross-linguistic glossing and the invitation to readers to imitate the sounds that they see or hear in the text. In a reverse formulation of such linguistic and cross-species encounters, the text suggests there is no fixed way of representing and reproducing the sounds that species make; decisions that would judge the noises of beasts and birds in terms of human value systems are therefore always open to reinterpretation. The assertion of man's authority is at once fundamental for the formation of young Anglo-Norman and English gentlemen and posited as a fictional or volatile category that can be renegotiated in the contact zone.

CHAPTER 3

St Francis of Assisi, *Zoë* and *Bios*, and Creaturely Noise

Sound, noise and language are conceptualised in the context of praise and worship in one of the most influential saints' lives recorded in the Middle Ages. This Life narrates the biography of a man who has been described as 'one of the most attractive and best-loved saints of all time': St Francis of Assisi.[1] Not only was Francis one of the most popular Christian saints of the later Middle Ages, he was represented as being very closely connected to the natural world, particularly to beasts and birds. Many of his interactions with beasts and birds in his Life focus on sonority and the ways that sounds can be interpreted, manipulated and harnessed for the spiritual development of humans and nonhumans in a theological framework. Francis interacts with creatures that make sounds in popular scenes such as his famous 'Sermon to the Birds', as well as other less well-known episodes of his hagiography that involve sheep bleating the canonical hours, or a singing cricket, to take just two examples. In some vernacular versions of Francis' Life from Anglo-Norman England, episodes relating the saint's interaction with the sounds of different creatures draw out parallels between beast and bird vocalisations on the one hand and human acts of preaching and praise on the other. These depictions speak to the importance of sound in cross-species communication. They highlight the extent to which the identification of different types of spiritual worship, reflected through the bleating of sheep or the singing of birds, is essential to the differentiation of distinct forms of spiritual life. In turn, they demonstrate how certain forms of earthly and spiritual existence are distinguished through sound, rather than according to a human/nonhuman divide, or one based on rationality and irrationality.

The Life of St Francis of Assisi has been considered by some scholars as an early precursor to Western environmental thought.[2] Indeed, Francis' environmental

[1] David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 205.
[2] Ibid., p. 204. See also Lisa J. Kiser, 'Animal Economies: The Lives of St Francis in Their Medieval Contexts', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 11.1 (2004), p. 121; Timothy Johnson, 'Francis and Creation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi*, ed. by Michael J. P. Robson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 143; Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis, Nature Mystic: The Derivation and Significance*

and ecological associations have been a focus of his cult since he became patron saint of ecologists in 1990.[3] Francis (ca. 1181-1226) was born John, but called Francesco, meaning 'the Frenchman', because his mother was Provençal and he was born while his father was in France.[4] As a young man he assisted his father in running a cloth-merchant business in Assisi, a small town and commune in the Province of Perugia in Italy. Francis purportedly received his spiritual vocation while he was at the semi-derelict church of San Damiano, about two kilometres outside Assisi. Two years after his death in 1226, he was canonised by Pope Gregory IX and was buried in the church of St Giorgio, Assisi. His relics were later translated to the new Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi and decorated with Giotto's famous frescoes, many of which depict the saint interacting with the environment and with beasts and birds.[5]

Francis' development as a figure representing the connection between humans and the environment was an important aspect of his life as presented in medieval hagiography. The medieval sources for the Lives of St Francis are part of a complex literary tradition in which the ecological aspects of Francis' Life played an important role. Many writings directly attributed to Francis still exist today, particularly those that made it into the Franciscan liturgy.[6] However, the texts with the most value for this discussion on nonhuman sound in Francis' hagiography are the sources that recount his life and miracles. The first *Vita Prima* was written in Latin by the Italian friar Thomas of Celano in 1228, the year of Francis'

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of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend (London: University of California Press, 1973); and D. Sorrell, *St Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes toward the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[3] Rodger M. Payne, 'The Wolf in the Forest: St Francis and the Italian Eremitical Tradition', in *Finding Saint Francis in Literature and Art*, ed. by Cynthia Ho, Beth A. Mulvaney and John K. Downey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 64.

[4] David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 203.

[5] Biographies of Francis' life abound. Examples from the twenty-first century include: Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); James Cowan's quest biography, *Francis: A Saint's Way* (Liguori, MO: Triumph, 2001); Donald Spoto, *The Reluctant Saint* (New York: Viking, 2000); Valerie Martin, *Salvation: Scenes from the Life of St Francis* (New York: Vintage Press, 2002); Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi: A Life* (New York: Continuum, 1998); and Adrian House, *Francis of Assisi: A Revolutionary Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring Press, 2001). Earlier biographies include the iconic *Vie de S. François d'Assise* by Paul Sabatier (Paris: Fischbacher, 1899), the most influential of all the modern biographies in academic circles.

[6] See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 'The Saint', ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman and William J. Short, vol. 1 (London: New City Press, 1999).

canonisation.[7] As time passed, disagreements concerning the Rule and the Life of St Francis began to emerge within the Order of Friars Minor, resolved partially by a new orthodox version of the Life by Bonaventure.[8] Compared to earlier documents, which focused on chronological and historical accounts of Francis' life, Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* (henceforth *LM*) reformulated the story of Francis in impersonal terms, dehumanising the figure of the saint and placing him within a framework of ascetic and mystical devotion rather than as the initiator of an Order.[9] This framework placed Francis' interactions with nonhuman beasts and birds in the *LM* in relation to other important themes that characterised his Life, such as mendicancy and preaching.

The *LM* and its translations depict Francis treading a fine line between, on the one hand, being inspired to worship by the sounds made by creatures that worship with him, and, on the other hand, instructing creatures to make noise or to be silent, as in one episode in which Francis silences the birds in order that he may preach. The thematic structure of the *LM* was carried over into an Anglo-Norman translation of the Life, the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys* (Paris, BnF, MS f.fr. 13505), datable to 1273-75, which is the primary source examined in this chapter.[10] Probably translated by a learned Franciscan, the *Vye* is 8727 lines long, and is the unique witness of the Anglo-Norman translation based on the *LM*. We know little of the French text's patron, although D. W. Russell has suggested that it is likely to have been 'a lay patron, perhaps a member of the Order of Penitents, or a noble female patron such

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[7] André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 195. A rhymed Life by Julian of Speyer soon became a rival for Celano's version, as did Henry of Avranche's version. From 1240-41 is dated a work called *On the Beginning of the Order of Friars Minor* by Brother John of Perugia (Vauchez, p. 189).

[8] For further details on the Rule of St Francis, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, pp. 65–72; and Stephen J. P. Van Dijk, 'Liturgy of the Franciscan Rules', *Franciscan Studies*, 12.3/4 (1952), pp. 241–62.

[9] André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi*, p. 200. The disagreements concerning the Order can be separated into two categories: those who saw in the figure of Francis as Poverello an 'evangelical catalyst for human history' (the *Fraticelli* or 'Spirituals'), and those who were convinced that Francis' principle aim had been the reform of Christianity, through the Order of Friars Minor, into an effective ecclesiastical institution organised by the 'pastoral objectives given to it by the papacy' (the *Relaxati* or 'Conventuals'), p. 195.

[10] *La Vye de Seynt Fraunceys (MS Paris, BNF, Fonds Français 13505)*, ed. by D. W. Russell (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002), p. 29. All translations from Old French are my own.

as Joan Tateshal, who commissioned a copy of the *Manuel des Péchés*'.[11] Episodes describing Francis' interactions with different creatures in translations such as the *Vye* may explain popular medieval and modern beliefs that he expressed a tenderness towards beasts and birds that demonstrated his 'dedication to Christ and […] his practical compassion for *all* Creation'.[12] However, I would like to suggest that there are more complex ways of interpreting such episodes. The text proposes a distinction between saintly preaching and nonhuman sound-making, but this distinction does not depend on a strict division of Francis and the rest of creation or on the unconditional inclusion of all creatures in forms of praise or worship. Human and nonhuman contact in this text is multifaceted—a complexity that is thrown into relief by the different ways in which human/nonhuman interaction is depicted in the *Vye*, and in a Middle English *Life* which I discuss in detail at the end of this chapter.

Nonhuman sound is depicted through a range of episodes in the *Vye* that focus on different creatures, beginning with Francis' interaction with a cricket in a fig tree outside his cell. This example, which I discuss below, is used to introduce the theme of nonhuman sound as a spur to spiritual practice for friars. Francis' command over the song of the cricket encourages the creature to participate in spiritual expression through praise to its Creator—an act of worship that, in turn, has the capacity to spur Francis to contemplation. Francis and the cricket thus share a mutual and symbiotic connection that enhances the saint's (as well as the creature's) spiritual pursuits. In other episodes of the *Vye* Francis' interactions with bleating lambs and sheep also encourage a way of thinking about these creaturely sounds in the context of Christian semiotics. Such thinking reinforces the distinction that Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben points to between the concepts of *zoë* and *bios*, concepts that distinguish a 'bare' life from a 'qualified' form-of-life.[13] According to Agamben, these concepts were in circulation in the thirteenth century and were of interest to influential Franciscan scholars, including Bonaventure. They therefore

[11] *Vye*, p. 27. The text is written in an insular thirteenth-century hand and may have been connected to libraries in the prosperous abbeys or priories of South England or Normandy.
[12] Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis, Nature Mystic*, p. 7, my emphasis.
[13] See Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), and *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1–12.

provide a way of thinking about contact between humans and nonhumans in a context that chimes with some of the principles of Franciscan hagiography.

Agamben identifies a distinction between different forms of life expressed in Franciscan theology, which he bases on the writings of the thirteenth-century Franciscan friar Angelo Clareno, who later became a founder of one of the groups of Franciscan *Fraticelli*, or Spirituals. Clareno comments in his *Expositio regulae fratrum minorum auctore* on a distinction between two kinds of form-of-life in Francis' own writings. In the following passage from *Expositio regulae*, Clareno attributes the term 'vios' (*bios*) to the form-of-life exhibited by saints compared to 'zoi' (*zoë*), which indicates nonhuman life (including vegetative life) more generally:

> Life is called among the Greeks *zoë* and this is used for both vegetative and animal life, while among them *bios* is written for the virtuous behavior of the saints. Always and everywhere in the Rule and in the histories of all the saints this word life is used to mean holy behavior and the perfect carrying out of the virtues. [14]

In this passage Clareno draws a clear distinction between the Classical concepts of *zoë* and *bios*. According to Agamben *zoë*, or 'bare life', is the term attributed to a life so bereft of value that it can be killed but not sacrificed. On the one hand, in the context of Greek or Roman cultures, the concept of *zoë* reveals at its most extreme point an existence outside of human and divine law.[15] That is to say, life becomes so bereft of value that the notion of sacrifice becomes impossible. On the other hand, *bios* describes a virtuous and moral life that contrasts with *zoë*. This is a virtuous life lived by saints and aspired to by monks, which can also be applied to the aspirations of friars in the context of Franciscan hagiography.

In *The Highest Poverty*, Agamben examines the conceptualisation of an idealised Franciscan form-of-life (expressed as *bios*) in the writings that supported

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[14] 'Vita vero apud Graecos dicitur zoi et pro vita vegetativa et animali imponitur, vios vero apud eos pro virtuosa sanctorum conversatione tantum scribitur. Ita et nunc in regula et in omnibus sanctorum historiis hoc nomen vita pro sancta conversatione et perfecta virtutum operatione accipitur.' *Expositio regulae fratrum minorum auctore Angelo Clareno*, ed. by L. Oliger (Grottaferrata, Italy: Quaracchi, 1912), p. 140. Quoted from Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, p. 106.

[15] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

forms of worship and forms of living in the Order of Friars Minor. He identifies Franciscanism as a powerful expression of a type of existence that is 'beyond the law', and therefore beyond the reaches of legal sovereignty, particularly in Western European contexts.[16] This form-of-life, or *forma vitae*, is based on a philosophy of the Franciscan Rule common to Franciscan monks, in which their daily activities were framed and interpreted in the manner of the Gospels: a concept of which Bonaventure was well aware as he composed the *LM*.[17] Underlying the Franciscan form-of-life is a distinction between the Greek concepts of *zoë* ('bare life' or the simple fact of living common to all beings) and *bios* (an exemplary or qualified life), as described by Clareno above. As Agamben notes, the difference between *zoë* and *bios* relies partly on the ability to use and apply language (or 'voice'/'speech'), as defined by Aristotle in his *Politics*.[18] Agamben's own vision of the Franciscan *forma vitae* is based on the opposition between bare and a sacred forms of human spiritual existence, which neither incorporates nor makes space for nonhuman existence. His thinking in *The Highest Poverty* focuses primarily on the writings of particular Franciscan authors such as Angelo Clareno; I shall argue here that medieval texts such as the *Vye* reveal a more complex medieval vision of the world than that to which Agamben points. The vision that emerges from vernacular materials encompasses a broader view of the entanglement of human and nonhuman life, which nonetheless engages with the concepts of *zoë* and *bios*.

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[16] This is a statement that is true, of course, for the majority of medieval religious orders. See Mar Rosas Tosàs, 'Life Under and Beyond the Law: Biopolitics, Franciscanism, Liturgy', in *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 20.2 (2015), p. 171.

[17] The notion of the Rule as life is explored by Agamben: 'as Francis never tired of mentioning, what is in question in the 'rule and life' is not so much a formal teaching, but even and above all a sequence or following (*Domini nostri Iesu Christi… vestigial sequi,* "our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footprints we must follow") […]. It is not a matter so much of applying a form (or norm) to life, but of *living* according to that form, that is of a life that, in its sequence, makes itself that very form, coincides with it', *The Highest Poverty*, p. 99, original emphasis. In terms of Bonaventure's understanding of *forma vitae*, Bonaventure notes that under the guidance of Francis 'the Church was to be renewed […] in three ways: by the form-of-life, the rule, and the doctrine of Christ which he would provide', *The Highest Poverty*, p. 103.

[18] 'For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man *in distinction from* the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities', *Politics* (online), 1253a, my emphasis.

Drawing on Agamben's thinking, I propose that the relationships between saint and nonhuman beasts and birds in these vernacular texts are based on the movement between *zoë* and *bios*, rather than on an adherence to one form-of-life or another. My analysis of this relationship between forms of life offers an alternative perspective on the medieval distinction between rational humans and irrational animals, which was outlined in my Introduction. It also offers an alternative way of thinking about the sounds of creatures in that context. My discussion below also suggests that human and nonhuman subjectivities in the *Vye* do not always map onto the forms of life identified with *zoë* or *bios*. Beasts and birds in the *Vye* move from one form-of-life to another with ease, rather than remaining attached to one or other of the two categories described by Agamben. Indeed, different creatures in the *Vye* occupy *zoë* or *bios* in ways that contradict each other. Some, like lambs and sheep, initially partake in a theologically neutral earthly existence (*zoë*), a concept that seems out of keeping with hagiography as a genre. Sheep also move through a form of quasi-human understanding, and finally, by means of their saintly domestication, towards a qualified, exemplary form-of-life associated with the quasi-Edenic sphere of the saint (*bios*). Birds, on the other hand, act as spurs for Francis' own spiritual contemplation and share the act of worship with him for short periods of time, thereby enriching the soundscape of the text. The various creatures that Francis encounters therefore have access to *bios* in different ways: for some, such as lambs, their 'natural' vocal sounds suffice to bring them into symbiotic relationship with Franciscan liturgy; for others, such as crickets, access to *bios* requires a closer proximity to Francis and interaction with his own form-of-life.

Singing Crickets and Speaking Crucifixes

One of the most striking interactions between Francis and a creature in the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys* takes place in the saint's cell at the church of St Mary of the Portiuncula. Francis marvels at the moving songs of the Lord's servant, the cricket, which encourage him to sing God's praises more frequently: 'Sun chaunt ne est pas de graunt duçur— | Iloc chaunta de jur en jur; | Fraunceys ke oy sun chaunçun | Tut le turna a devociun' ('Her song is not very sweet. There she sang each day. When Francis heard the song, he was turned immediately to devotion', *Vye*, VIII, 9, p. 140, ll. 3785–88). One day, Francis calls the cricket to him and she flies to his hand. The

saint instructs her to sing and to praise God the Creator, at which point the cricket obeys until Francis commands her to return to the fig tree. For eight days, the cricket returns, singing at the saint's bidding, before he gives her permission to leave after having cheered all the monks with her singing.[19] The singing of the cricket, and the saintly control of its song by Francis, is characteristic of one of the ways that creaturely sound is connected to human spirituality in this text.

As Francis calls the cricket to him, he establishes a type of contact with her that reveals the inherent spiritual connection between them both. This contact is based on sound and the expression of praise through singing. The noun *chaunt* and the verb *chaunter* are repeated nine times over the space of twenty-nine lines in this episode to emphasise the text's semantic interest in the act of singing and music-making. The singing of the cricket becomes a means of spiritual illumination emphasising the act of hearing the sounds of nonhuman creatures. It also draws attention to how the sonic phenomena of creatures communicate spiritual perfection in the acoustic environment of the text. The association of the French verb *chaunter* with descriptions of birdsong in medieval bestiaries and glossaries has been pointed out in previous chapters; this passage from the *Vye* draws on this association whilst also taking pains to clarify that even though the cricket is not a bird, she does indeed still sing (*Vye*: 'chaunter', *LM*: 'canere').[20] Singing is a particularly important theme in the context of Franciscan hagiography, which formed a key corpus for friars who, unlike monks, were encouraged to sing God's praises and to preach in public. Crickets, alongside the friars, also sing their own praises to God. In this way, I suggest that the connection between singing and preaching in the *Vye* complicates the characterisation of preaching as 'a bridge between divine and human'.[21] This connection also offers an opportunity for texts to show how crickets and birds who sing participate in worship alongside their human counterparts.

The singing of the cricket is an expression of a non-anthropocentric spiritual truth that forms an axis by which Francis directs the worship of the friars. The very interpretation of the cricket's sound as song highlights the blurred boundary between thaumaturgy and what might be considered the natural behaviour of a cricket. This

[19] *Vye*, VIII, 9, p. 140, ll. 3778–806.
[20] For *LM*, see Bonaventure, *Legenda maior S. Francisci Assisiensis et eiusdem legenda minor*, VIII, 9, p. 71. Further references to this text will appear following quotations.
[21] Claire M. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 1.

is a boundary that becomes blurred in the portrayal of cross-species communication. Crickets and cicadas are well known for producing an almost incessant stream of sound at certain times of the year, and the *Vye* recognises that this sound prompts imitation by Francis and his companions: 'A chef des oyt jurs Fraunceys dist | A ses compaygnuns: "Donums respyt | A nostre [soer] ke s'en pusse aler, | Ke sy se aforce de nus solacer, | A Deu loer taunt de espace | Nus ad sumuns, ore eyt grace | De departyr a sa devyse"' ('At the end of eight days Francis said to his companions: "Let us give respite to our sister, that she may go her own way and so that if by cheering us she summoned us to praise God so many times, now may she be allowed to leave as she pleases"', p. 140, ll. 3807–13). The friars are thus instructed to take inspiration from the behaviour of the cricket following the instruction of St Francis.

The association between the actions of the friars and those of the cricket sets the scene for the participation of each in a form-of-life newly inspired by the cricket's song. Vocal activity (or, in the case of the cricket, sound that emulates vocal sonic phenomena) is one of the key bridges between the two because it reinforces their shared capacity to praise God, based on different forms of existence in the world. Francis is depicted as having the ability to identify and respond to nonhuman sound and to render this sound meaningful for his own community of worshippers. In a discussion of this episode in the earlier *Vita Secunda* by Thomas of Celano, Sorrell notes that Francis' qualms about attachments to creatures seem to be based on ascetic concerns; he renounces his pleasant friendship with an extroverted cicada due to fear of self-indulgence or pride'.[22] The French *Vye*, however, following the *LM* (VIII, 9, p. 72), does not mention Francis' fear of pride, and instead focuses on the link between the act of singing and the positive message of praising God through shared vocal means. Sound thereby becomes a point of shared cross-species contact that indicates a way for spiritual migration towards *bios*. Cricket singing establishes an association between friars and nonhumans that is carried forward in the numerous episodes where Francis interacts with other creatures, defining through such interactions a particular form-of-life that is specific to a Franciscan vision of the world and of praise.

The sound of the cricket, which is read as an act of praise to the Creator, is shown to produce an internal change in Francis, acting as a spur to spiritual action

[22] *St Francis of Assisi and Nature*, p. 49.

and thus catalysing his own spiritual transformation. This depiction of sound contrasts with that observed in the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon in Chapter One, where sounds may resonate on a purely literal level or may be subject to Christian allegory. In contrast, Francis' encounter with the cricket is very much figured as a mundane but real, worldly encounter, and a moment of acoustic revelation in the Life of the saint. The *Vye* is explicit about the fact that the saint first hears the sound of the cricket, which then induces in him an altered state of devotion: 'Tut le turna a devociun' ('He was turned immediately to devotion'). Such a swift change in contemplative mode emphasises the saint's ability to hear mundane, creaturely sound and spiritual praise as inherently connected.

Scenes of friars and nonhuman creatures making various sounds in the *Vye* should be set in a wider context of sound-making in the soundscapes that surround these communities. Towards the beginning of the *Vye*, Francis is described making his way to the dilapidated church of San Damiano outside Assisi, where the voice of God speaks to him through a crucifix that hangs in the church. The crucifix calls his name three times and instructs him to '"alez | E ma mesun reparaylez"' ('"go and repair/make ready my house"', I, 1, p. 49, ll. 443–44). In this passage, Francis' reaction to the voice of God emphasises the miraculous connection between the material crucifix and the spoken voice of God, although the exact nature of the voice is left open to interpretation, described simply as being 'de graunt vertu' ('of great power', l. 450) and as affecting within the saint an emotional change: 'En sey senti une eschaunge | Merviluse e mult estraunge | Ke ly suprist e le ravyt | E le aliena par suef delyt' ('He felt a change in himself, marvellous and very strange, which surprised and delighted him, and led him to a state of ecstasy', ll. 452–54). The episode with the cricket echoes this earlier narrative with the speaking crucifix by similarly demonstrating the power of cricket song and material objects to spur a spiritual transformation in the saint.[23]

The sonic phenomena produced by creatures and objects in the *Vye*, and the effects that they have on the human body, are crucial for understanding the role of

[23] Similar episodes in the *Vye* that depict sonorous objects causing transformative change include those in which Francis is taken severely ill. On one occasion, he is allowed by his fellow friars to sleep with a feather pillow to ease his condition, but the devil gets into the pillow and disturbs him. The pillow is then taken away, and the sound of God's voice restores him (V, 2, pp. 90–91). In a similar episode, one day when Francis is ill he wishes to hear music, and angels come to play for him (V, 11, p. 101, ll. 2356–64).

nonhuman sounds in these texts, and especially those that are vocalised and produced by different human and nonhuman creatures. As singing crickets and speaking crucifixes attest, this medieval hagiography does not necessarily distinguish between human, nonhuman and even object sounds, which are all depicted interacting with each other in a textual soundscape. Although the language of the crucifix seems beyond human reach because of its manifestation through the holy symbol in the presence of the isolated saint, the description of the physical and sensorial change in Francis' own body demonstrates the power of sound to effect spiritual transformation from within the body and to transform his state of being. Rapture, which seizes the body and fixes the mind on spiritual contemplation, is thus communicated directly through sound. The mirroring of the cricket episode with that of the crucifix is part of a discourse that recognises the power of such sounds for the saint, especially in the way sounds are connected to his inner transformation, inspiring him to preach back to the creatures of the world in what becomes a symbiotic relationship.

Bleating in *zoë* and *bios*

The sounds of sheep are particularly important for the Life of St Francis. This significance may, in part, be explained by the socio-economic and religious symbolism of sheep in the Middle Ages.[24] Sheep played an important role in agriculture, as well as in economic life and trade in urban Italian contexts, which chimed with the importance of this particular beast in Anglo-Norman England. Sheep were also theologically meaningful insofar as they were associated with the lamb of God. Because of their mundane and spiritual significance, these beasts represent good examples of how nonhuman creatures in the *Vye* are able to move fluidly between categories of bare life (*zoë*) and a more qualified form-of-life (*bios*). The sheep's bleating demonstrates that nonhumans, just like human worshippers, can navigate the complex system of different *forma vitae* whilst in the presence of the saint or under his instruction. Before investigating moments of the text in which sheep bleat, I offer a discussion of sheep as participants in social and religious exchange to place later episodes in their historical and cultural context.

[24] Lisa Kiser, 'Animal Economies', p. 123.

The expansion of the Order of Friars Minor in thirteenth-century Western Europe coincided with a rapid increase in the number of sheep in medieval farm economies.[25] It is therefore not surprising that a number of episodes in the *Vye* involve the saint encountering this species, sometimes even 'rescuing' sheep and lambs that would otherwise have been sold and slaughtered (VII, 7 and IX, 8). Whilst some of these episodes do not directly feature sound, they draw on the symbolism of sheep in the *Vye* in a way that is in dialogue with the sounds of the sheep in other episodes. Kiser describes the patterns of relationship between humans and sheep in the Life of St Francis as a 'gift economy' that replaces the practices of mercantile life; in one episode, Kiser explains, 'the merchant gives (rather than sells) the sheep to Francis, allowing Francis to give the sheep to the nuns and the nuns to give the tunic [made from the sheep's wool] to Francis in return.'[26] As I demonstrate below, in episodes of the *Vye* that draw attention to the bleating of lambs and sheep, the gift economy goes beyond purely human forms of gift-giving. Francis and the sheep share with each other the gifts of spiritual development and worship through their shared participation in and contribution to the same acoustic environment.

The Christian hermeneutics of sheep and lambs had its roots in biblical analogies from the Old and New Testaments, especially the parables of Christ.[27] The Lamb of God, or *Agnus Dei*, is a title for Christ that appears in the Gospel of John 1:29, and which is key to the liturgy and celebration of Mass. The Book of Revelation also refers to Christ as 'Lamb' on several occasions (5:6, 7:14 and 17:14). The image of Christ as a lamb is a familiar stereotype, the power of which should not be underestimated in medieval hagiography and other religious texts.[28] Indeed, many saints venerated during the Middle Ages, such as Agnes (deriving from the Latin *agnus* for lamb), Catherine, Clement and John the Baptist, are portrayed interacting

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[25] Esther Pascua, 'From Forest to Farm to Town: Domestic Animals from ca. 1000 to ca. 1450', in *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Brigitte Resl, vol. 2 (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 92. Pascua also notes that 'at four English medieval urban sites (London, Exeter, Lincoln, and King's Lynn, covering the period AD 55—ca. 1500), sheep, cattle, and pigs form the major part of the faunal remains.' p. 93.

[26] Lisa Kiser, 'Silencing the Lambs: Economics, Ethics, and Animal Life in Medieval Franciscan Hagiography', *Modern Philology*, 108.3 (2011), p. 329.

[27] Ibid., p. 324.

[28] See Claude Bremond, 'Le bestiaire de Jacques de Vitry', in *L'animal exemplaire au Moyen Age: Ve–XVe siècles*, ed. by Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1999), p. 114. For a more extensive survey and analysis of lambs in biblical and patristic writings, see Franz Nikolasch, *Das Lamm als Christussymbol in den Schriften der Väter* (Vienna: Herder, 1963).

with, or in symbolic association with, lambs. Sound was part of this familiar symbolism. Medieval writers and theologians, observing that lambs are drawn to their parents by the sound of their vocalisations, drew explicit parallels between this auditory recognition and the way human worshippers are drawn to worship the Father.

The lamb was connected to sonic expression in Isidore of Seville's *De animalibus*, in which Isidore records that the animal's bleat is one of its distinguishing features because the lamb is able to recognise the bleating of its parent even in a large field of sheep:

> Although the Greeks name the lamb (*agnus*) from ἅγνος ('holy') as if it were sacred, Latin speakers think that it has this name because it recognizes (*agnoscere*) its mother before other animals, to the extent that even if it has strayed within a large herd, it immediately recognizes the voice of its parent by its bleat. [29]

In this passage there is a distinction made between human and sheep vocalisations that contrasts with the sounds of sheep and lambs as they are expressed in the *Vye*. The lamb in the *Etymologies* is introduced by a statement that would seem to draw a distinction between human language and animal sounds based on a linguistic lack: 'Pecus dicimus omne quod *humana lingua* et effigie *caret*.' ('We call any animal that *lacks human language* and form "livestock"', XII, 5, my emphasis). According to Isidore, the lamb, although understanding the bleating of its parents, lacks a capacity for communication that is consequently reserved for humans. Even if the lamb comprehends sonic phenomena in its own way, the distinction between the human and nonhuman livestock is maintained at this juncture in the *Etymologies*. As I argue in this section, however, bleating in the *Vye* draws sheep towards a qualified form-of-life which entails these creatures' shared ability to praise God under the

[29] 'Agnum quamquam et Graeci vocent "apo tou agnou", quasi pium, Latini autem ideo hoc nomen habere putant, eo quod prae ceteris animantibus matrem agnoscat; adeo ut etiam si in magno grege erraverit, statim balatu recognoscat vocem parentis.' *Etymologies*, XII, 12, p. 247. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online). While the Greek is in capitals in the source, I have brought the quotation in line with my own presentation. See also Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 136.

direction of Francis. Bleating is therefore framed not in terms of lack, but in terms of a shared language of spiritual expression and worship.

In the first of the episodes depicting sheep in the *Vye*, Francis' actions test the theoretical boundary between human and nonhuman that underpins contemporary intellectual projects of anthropocentrism, such as the assertion of dominance by humans over nonhumans in legal and theological texts. Francis pushes at the limits of such projects by training the sheep to bleat the canonical hours, highlighting the importance of a cross-species, shared act of communal worship.[30] In one important episode, Francis arrives at the church of St Mary of the Portiuncula and happens upon a sheep that he admonishes to praise God. She does so by bleating the canonical hours before the altar of the Virgin—an action that attaches the sheep to a liturgical as well as an agricultural temporality. Francis takes it upon himself to instruct the sheep in matters of praising God whilst carefully avoiding causing offence to other friars. When the sheep arrives at the church she follows Francis' teachings and bleats at the altar: 'La ouaille tynt ben sa aprise, | E quant l'em chauntast en la eglyse | Ele y ala e devaunt le auter | Nostre Dame soleyt braer' ('The sheep learnt her lesson well, and when men were singing in the church, she would go and bleat in front of the altar of Our Lady', VIII, 7, ll. 3649–53). The association between bleating and praising God (an association underscored by the singing of the friars) troubles the distinction operative in Isidore's text between human language and the sounds of livestock. In the *Vye*, the sheep is shown to have learnt a lesson given by Francis and to be using her own bleating as a form of praise that mirrors the singing of the friars. It is no wonder, then, that Francis takes particular care to not cause offence to the community of Franciscan friars whilst accommodating a nonhuman creature; his actions suggest that sheep may exhibit behaviour more appropriate to *bios* than that exhibited by the friars themselves.

Images of creatures worshipping or praising God are common tropes in medieval hagiography more broadly. The idea that the obedience, reverence and contrition shown by beasts and birds puts human sinners to shame provides popular

[30] As I discussed in the Introduction, there was biblical precedent for this idea in the epistle of Romans, 8.21: 'For the creature itself will be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' ('Quia et ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei'), *Latin Vulgate and Douay-Rheims Bible* (online).

source material for hagiographers.[31] To take one example, Jerome's Saint Anthony reproaches humans because their religious observance falls below even the standards of beasts: 'the beasts speak of Christ and you worship monsters instead of God.'[32] In the *Vye* the reverence of sheep and lambs similarly acts as a reproach to sinners, and even to the devout, but there is more at stake here than a veiled criticism of friars who fall short of the standards of spiritual practice that define the Franciscan form-of-life. The ability of this particular sheep to bleat (*Vye*: 'braer'; *LM*: 'balatus', p. 68), and to worship Christ, dismantles any easy distinction between human versus nonhuman forms of worship. It encourages comparison between the friars and the sheep that emphasises sonic cohabitation; sharing worship or coexistence with sheep are concepts that may not have sat entirely comfortably with those friars. A distinction made between different forms of worship, to which praising God through singing or bleating is fundamental, translates into the categories of *zoë* and *bios* and reveals what may be at stake in such a blurring of human and nonhuman categories.

Clareno's definition of *bios* as a 'holy life' exemplified by saints may help to explain the acceptance of the sheep's bleating into liturgical practice. Like the friar's singing, the sheep's behaviour exemplifies the religious devotion to which the friars aspired—sound being a key conduit for this type of spiritual expression. That the friars aspire to such form-of-life suggests that *bios* is not to be understood as an integral or essential type of existence but rather as a life that depends on spiritual choices and behaviours that may be adopted by humans and nonhumans alike. The implicit association between sheep bleating and the singing of the friars demonstrates that the boundary between *zoë* and *bios* relies less on a binary distinction between human/nonhuman than it does on types of sonic expression that may be shared between these categories. The sheep's bleating is associated with *bios* and is in this case motivated by Francis. This reveals a divinely inspired form-of-life connecting saint and sheep, to the possible exclusion of the friars who fail to meet such standards.

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[31] Dominic Alexander discusses examples of these in *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp. 14–19. See also Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 24–41.

[32] Jerome, *Vita Pauli Eremitae*, VIII, 24, trans. by Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (London: Constable, 1936), p. 33.

Through proximity and interaction with the saint, the sheep moves from a bare life devoid of any particular spiritual understanding, through a process of learning, towards an existence in which she actively participates in liturgy. Such a miraculous development in the sheep's nature reveals a medieval Christian conceptualisation of *bios* that is distinct from this concept's deployment elsewhere, in discussions of life's inclusion in, and exclusion from, the Greek *polis*.[33] Rather than using form-of-life to reinforce social and religious exclusion, the sheep's behaviour allows it to participate in the performance of a type of exemplary behaviour encapsulated in the idea of *bios* as form-of-life: '*Forma vitae* designates in [a] sense a way of life that, insofar as it strictly adheres to a form or model from which it cannot be separated, is thus constituted as an example'.[34] The exemplarity of the sheep's bleating at church draws attention to the similarities between vocal sounds from the nonhuman world and the singing of friars, offering the sheep both as an example of spiritual perfection and as a warning to friars who might skirt their duties. At the same time, the bleating of the sheep reveals the miracle of an actual sheep participating in religious life, for the miraculous nature of her behaviour holds little weight unless the audience of the text truly believes that she is indeed a real, living sheep. The contrary, but parallel, interpretation of the miraculous element of the sheep's bleat is that she only participates in human form-of-life through miracle itself; it is only by the subversion of the natural created order that *bios* becomes available to her.

The bleating of another sheep occurs in the same chapter of the *Vye* when Francis gives a lamb to Lady Jacoba of Setesoli in Rome. The lamb acts as a kind of liturgical alarm clock for Lady Jacoba, bleating to wake her up in the mornings if she is late for church:

> Kaunt ele targast au lever
> Matyn, le ayngnel soleyt braer,
> De ses corneles la dame enpeynt
> E taunt cum pout, la destreynt

[33] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
[34] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, p. 95.

E en contenaunce de sa enprise
La sumunt de haster a la eglise.
Issi devint le ayngnel sun mestre,
La dame a gré le soleyt pestre.
Le Seyngnur pur ceo le cherist
E le ama e joye en fist.

Vye, VIII, 7, pp. 136–37, ll. 3671–80

> When she was slow to get up early in the morning, the lamb would bleat. With his little horns he would nudge the lady and, as he was taught to do, he urged her to hurry to church. In this the lamb became her master and the lady willingly fed him. She cherished him on the account of the Lord and loved him and was glad of him.

In contrast to the spatially located behaviour of the bleating sheep in the church in the previous episode, this episode places greater emphasis on temporality, highlighting the role of the lamb's bleating at various points throughout the canonical day. The lamb is incorporated into the social and religious life of Lady Jacoba so that he transforms her spiritual practice; his bleats and small nudges urge her on to a form-of-life that is more in keeping with *bios*. So too, the spiritual routine that the lamb enables Lady Jacoba to follow mirrors the training of the lamb itself. The lamb adapts to the instruction of the saint, and in doing so demonstrates that domestication is part of the communication of spiritual truth. Through cross-species contact, both the lady and the lamb move up from *zoë* into an existence more closely resembling the *bios* exhibited by Francis. Moreover, the lamb's bleating further demonstrates that participation in *bios* is not purely the domain of the human in the Franciscan worldview depicted in the *Vye*, even if it is here harnessed for the perfection of Lady Jacoba's spiritual routine.

The harnessing of nonhuman sound for cross-species spiritual development is a strong motif throughout the *Vye*. The above examples demonstrate that the saint incorporates sheep into the Franciscan *forma vitae* by revealing how their bleats define acoustic environments in which bleating, singing and the act of praise are inextricably linked. This medieval hagiography presents both humans and sheep moving up the created order together towards *bios* when they bleat or sing in

proximity to Francis or in emulation of his teachings. The bleating of sheep and lambs provides the sonorous anchor for the development of a religious mode of contemplation in which interaction with these domesticated nonhumans is an encouragement towards a more conscious form of spiritual existence as well as a naturalisation of the fraternal *forma vitae*. The inclusion of the sheep in the liturgical day emphasises an understanding of Franciscan daily practice in harmony with, and in continuity with, the natural order. Just like the cricket, sheep and lambs respond according to the saint's instruction, using their voices to communicate a form-of-life that may be shared by humans and sheep alike.

'Jargun' and Sacramental Birdsong

In later episodes of the *Vye*, birds are depicted listening and responding to Francis' preaching. Some of the most famous episodes in the Life of St Francis, including Francis' interactions with swallows and the marsh birds near Venice, show that it is not just symbolic creatures such as the lamb that are able to move from *zoë* towards *bios* in the presence of the saint. Birds also participate in similar transitions. The *Vye* emphasises that the birds already sing their praises to the Creator, in what I determine as a sacramental form of praise (one in which the natural world represents or expresses God's work), but the text also reveals how such behaviour is refined by their encounters with Francis. Likewise, it is not just in the predominantly human spaces of the church and the city that Francis is able to enact such miraculous interactions with nonhumans: cross-species sonic contact also takes place in the marshes and the woods. Songbirds participate in such interaction in the *Vye* by responding to Francis in ways that include silence as well as sound. They reveal that *bios* is available to a wider range of nonhuman agents beyond the confines of stone walls: a powerful concept at the very core of Francis' vision of mendicancy.

The sounds produced by birds in the *Vye* complicate Francis' relation to the natural world by offering a different model of creaturely sound from that observed in the sheep represented in the text. The saint's interactions with birds are complicated because the parallels with Franciscan liturgy and worship that they suggest are less clear-cut than in episodes featuring sheep and lambs. Though birdsong is certainly part of the soundscape of the text, Francis is also depicted instructing groups of birds to remain quiet whilst he and his friars praise God, thus

replacing birdsong with their own form of human praise. This offers an interesting counterpoint to more modern presentations of Francis as a saint who communes with the natural world, rather than dominating it. The text exhibits a tension between the interpretation of birdsong as an act of praise in itself and Francis' exertion of control and dominion over this type of nonhuman praise. The unusual effect of this is that birds are portrayed as stimuli for *bios* but also as distractions from the very form-of-life that they inspire.

Like the bleating of sheep in the *Vye*, the singing of birds is at least partially unintelligible to humans. This is reflected in the language the text uses to describe such sound. In the *Vye*, the term *jargun* appears several times to describe birdsong, including in a description of the background noise created by birds around the saint's cell at La Verna. In Old French texts this noun is used widely to convey the chit-chat of birds. The *AND* provides two descriptors for the entry on 'jargun', explaining that *jargun* may be used to describe 'foreign (and incomprehensible) languages' or 'foolish talk, nonsense'.[35] The former entry includes a note that in ornithological terms 'jargun' indicates 'bird-song' or 'twittering'.[36] When it comes to the argument I am making here, 'jargun' is significant for the way it conveys the mundane and everyday qualities of birdsong (here representative of existence in *zoë*) as compared to a higher, spiritually focused form-of-life, as in the example of the sheep bleating or the cricket singing. Thus, if the singing of birds shares certain features with the vocalisations of other creatures, it also has a distinctive function when compared with those other sounds.

The *Vye* attaches a symbolic weight to the sounds made by songbirds that draws a connection between their vocal activity and that of the lambs and sheep discussed above, but which remains less formal than the bleating of the canonical hours. In one episode, after a journey to La Verna, different kinds of birds come

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[35] Ardis Butterfield has discussed the use of 'jargon' in medieval Anglo-French texts in the context of a French language that is understood by some but not others in medieval England, and in terms of the possession and creation of the French language: 'The texts appear to work across a clear cultural boundary—between English and French—yet when they are considered in more detail, the sense of cultural difference that they present is much more shifting and complex', *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 73.

[36] The Godefroy *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français* notes that 'jargon' may indicate 'babil, bavardage, gazouillement, langage en général' ('babbling, chatting, chirping/gurgling, language in general'), or even 'hinnissement de cheval' ('the whinnying of the horse'). See 'jargon'.

singing around Francis' cell as he and the friars prepare for a forty-day feast in honour of the Archangel Michael. The term 'jargun' in this passage refers specifically to birdsong, and connotes an informal, chatty style of language: 'A sa venue se assemblerent | Entur sa celle e volerent | Oyseus de diverse manere; | Semblaunt de joye firent au frere | En chaunçun de lur jargun' ('When he arrived birds of all kinds assembled around his cell and flew around; they appeared to welcome the friar joyfully by singing in their language', VIII, 10, pp. 141–42, ll. 3851–55). Birds such as these generally do not have religious connotations in the way that sheep and lambs do. It is therefore possible to read this scene as one that is comparatively free of the kind of Christian zoomorphic symbolism mobilised in the depictions of mammals elsewhere in the same text. Instead, through the passage's emphasis on movement, both in the saint's arrival at a new location and in the description of the birds flying around his cell, the 'jargun' of the birds becomes associated with the mobility of communication across species, as the birds welcome Francis using their own idiom.

In another episode of the *Vye*, commonly referred to as the 'Stilling of the Swallows', Francis takes it upon himself to address the swallows, this time in order to quiet them. The saint demonstrates in his sermon that there is a distinction between their 'jargun' and his 'sermun' (sermon), which parallels the distinction between *zoë* and *bios*: '"Mes soers arundes, or est assez, | Ben est tens ke vus reposez, | Lessez ore vostre jargun, | Escutez desormés au sermon"' ('"My sisters the swallows, that is enough now, it is high time for you to rest. Leave aside your chattering, and listen now to the sermon"', XII, 4, ll. 5225–28).[37] Rhyme in this passage reinforces the distinctions between forms of life by highlighting the words 'jargun' and 'sermun'. The former conveys a form of sound specific to the chit-chat of birds in *zoë* whereas the latter transforms this vocal sound into a form that is representative of *bios*. This

[37] The association made between swallows and noisiness is one that was recorded in the *Etymologies*: 'The swallow (*erundo*, i.e. *hirundo*) is so named because it does not take food when it has alighted, but seizes and eats its food in the air (*aer*). It is a *garrulous* bird, flying around in convoluted loops and twisted circles, and it is very clever at constructing its nests and raising its young.' ('Erundo dicta, quod cibos non sumat residens, sed in aere capiat escas et edat; *garrula* avis, per tortuosos orbes et flexuosos circuitus pervolans, et in nidis construendis educandisque fetibus sollertissima.'), XII, 7, 70, p. 268, my emphasis. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online). Florence McCulloch demonstrates that a literary tradition on swallows dates back as far as Pliny and Aristotle, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, pp. 174–75.

evolution of vocabulary suggests that the sermon given by Francis replaces the birdsong with praise in the textual soundscape, reaching beyond the anthropocentric bounds of the human in the process.[38]

When birds of different kinds are pulled into the orbit of Christian semiotics in the *Vye*, it is the transformation of their sounds that highlights a movement from *zoë* towards *bios*. The descriptions of birds in this episode are in tune with a 'sacramental approach' to environment, in which the sacred quality of the cosmos itself is the main focus, and readers are encouraged to interpret the natural world as 'the primary symbolic disclosure of God.'[39] The theological underpinning for Francis' interaction with birdsong throughout the text is thus one that emanates from the material world itself, and in particular from the sounds (especially *jargun*) that the songbirds make. The use of specific terms such as *jargun*, which describe mundane forms of nonlinguistic utterance, supports a reading of Francis' spirituality as one in which the material and acoustic world around him is understood as praising the Creator in harmony with the spiritual practice of the friars—a proposition also supported by his own *Canticle of the Creatures*.[40] His own praise channels such expression into a more direct form of *bios*. But what conceptual problems does a sacramental approach to nonhuman forms of praise pose for the saint's interaction with the sounds of different creatures?

In the *Vye* birds of different kinds are shown, like sheep, to actively participate in the revelation of spiritual truths through their own form of instinctive praise, whether or not they are in the presence of the saint. Their song demonstrates that they are in many ways already exhibiting behaviours that mirror Francis's praise of God. Conversely, *jargun*, and birdsong in general, also provoke Francis to contribute to the soundscape of the text himself in ways that point to and accentuate the birds' spiritual expression. Companion species are thus shown working together to fill the textual soundscape and to invigorate it through worship. This chimes with how Bonaventure sees nonhuman beasts and birds as expressing 'a sacrament

[38] For a discussion on sermons as 'events' see Augustine Thompson, 'Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event', in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002). The question of language in sermons, in a more limited sense, is discussed by Claire M. Waters in *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, pp. 57–62.
[39] John F. Haught, 'Christianity and Ecology', in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. by Roger S. Gottlieb (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 273.
[40] See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 'The Saint'.

mediating the presence of God in a tangible fashion' through vestige, image, or similitude, and in particular through melody.[41] Indeed, from an early stage in his career Bonaventure was reassessing why Christians should love creatures in the world, resolving conflicting opinions in the Order of Friars Minor.[42] The *LM* and, following this source, the *Vye* therefore present nonhuman sounds as part of an expressive acoustic environment that communicates the worship of the Creator, and which overlaps with other forms of melody, utterance, chit-chat and sound. Francis' role in this environment is to interact with different creatures and guide their sounds into a form-of-life that harnesses the expressive and spiritual potential of such an environment.

Further depictions of birds informed by sacramental theology in the *Vye* include an episode in which Francis silences songbirds to sing his own praises. This appears in chapter VIII. As the birds sing amongst the reeds in a marsh near Venice, Francis wishes to join them in praising God, but he silences them in the process because they are too noisy. In this episode multiple layers of sonority and of interpretation come into play. The passage begins with Francis and his companion friar entering a flock of birds making a commotion in the woods. Francis interrupts them to sing praise to God, and the birds fall silent in order to enable the two men to sing the hours. The sounds of the marsh birds are not described as 'jargun' in this passage but as 'noyse'. The intensity of this noise is indicated through the verb *cryer*: 'E lur noyse esteyt si graunde, | Les oyseus taunt *cryerent*, | Ke les freres desturberent | Ke au servise ke voleyent rendre | A Deu po[e]yent ben attendre' ('and their noise was so great, the birds *cried out* so much, that the friars were disturbed such that they could not yet perform the service that they wanted to give to God', VIII, 9, p. 139, ll. 3762–66, my emphasis).

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[41] *Breviloquium*, ed. by Dominic Monti (Saint Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), XII, 3, p. 97. Timothy Johnson notes that 'Francis heard the chorus of creation, and Bonaventure composed his theological reflections with a keen ear for this melody. […] Bonaventure uses the musical motif to explain the course of the cosmos. Just as a person is unable to appreciate the loveliness of song without following it from the beginning to end, so too the beauty of the world is imperceptible to those who do not understand how divine wisdom generates, orders and governs the universe. Close attention to the natural world allows humanity to heed the praise that arises from every being, both animate and inanimate, *for all creatures sing of their Creator*', see 'Francis and Creation', pp. 152–53, my emphasis. Also quoted within this citation are the following texts: Bonaventure, *Commentaria*, vol. 1, p. 786, and *The Journey of the Soul into God*, ed. by Philotheur Boehner (Saint Bonaventure: 1956), pp. 49–51.

[42] Timothy Johnson, 'Francis and Creation', pp. 150–51.

By way of comparison, the corresponding passage in the Latin *LM* is less concerned with describing the noise of the birds, instead repeating the word *garrio* ('to chatter, prate, prattle, chat'), a term used to describe the sound of swallows in the *Etymologies*.[43] In its adaptation of the *LM*, the French *Vye* thus emphasises the mundane quality of the birds' chattering. Descriptions of the sounds of the marsh birds as cries and noise in Old French contribute to the complex textual soundscape through which Francis' own praise must penetrate. The instinctive praise performed by birds can be periodically overruled by saintly singing but this does not necessarily suppress its significance. Likewise, the encounter between Francis and the birds raises as many questions as it answers. What, for example, do the birds take from their short glimpse of a different form-of-life other than their own natural state? Are they changed permanently after Francis' sermon? One of the effects of the episode of the marsh birds near Venice is to draw attention to a continuous level of sonority present in many episodes of the text. The sounds produced by Francis, the friars and the birds form a soundscape in which birdsong is replaced with liturgical chant. Yet, once Francis and the friar have finished singing the hours, Francis gives the birds leave to take up their own singing once more, thus maintaining a level of continuous sound and ensuring that praise to the Creator is uninterrupted in this section of the text.

Birdsong is identified as a valid and effective form of nonhuman praise, albeit expressed originally from *zoë*, that mirrors Francis' own praise. The birds are associated with *zoë* by virtue of the fact that they are on the threshold of human life. This inclusion/exclusion is made clearer by the way their song emulates human melody, while being performed by nonhuman creatures. Nevertheless, the parallels between the birds' singing and the saint's praises complicate matters by suggesting that *zoë* and *bios* may be connected. The contact with birdsong represented in the episode with the Venetian marsh birds is striking for its emphasis on parallel forms of praise that contribute to a continuous soundscape. These are forms of praise that

[43] See *Perseus Digital Library* (online), 'garrio', and Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, (XII. vii. 70). Bonaventure also uses this word in the *LM* when he writes: 'Cumque in medium earum intrassent, non sunt aves motae de loco, et quia propter *garritum* ipsarum in dicendis horis se mutuo audire non poterant' ('When they had entered among them, the birds did not move from the place; and on account of the *chatter* the birds were making, they could not hear each other saying the hours'), *LM*, p. 70, translation amended from Ewert Cousins, my emphasis. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online).

involve shared worship between the birds and Francis, moving between theoretical boundaries based on form-of-life. Whilst medieval saints quite commonly exercise control over the natural world, Francis' control is unusually focused on the sounds of the acoustic environment through which he moves. This allows for a more subtle exchange between types of praise and form-of-life that is entirely in keeping with the Franciscan emphasis on the practice of salvific song. Sounds, and specifically the songs of songbirds, are described in the *Vye* on their own terms, which are also terms that mirror human singing or noise-making. Amongst the birds, Francis overrules the birds' instinctive praise in order to express his own through the singing of the hours, thereby emphasising sonic communication between human and bird based on contact, reception and response to the other. Indeed, the saint's control of the birds does not necessarily entail their exclusion from *bios* itself. On the contrary, whereas the sheep and the lambs are associated with *bios* through the domestication and training they receive through Francis, birds are incorporated into *bios* through their ability to obey the saint's commands, to praise God and to respect silence as well as singing.

Sermons and Soundscapes

The enormous importance of Francis' preaching to birds in the Franciscan tradition has provided a central axis around which scholarship on his hagiography has turned. This theme occurs in another similar episode in chapter XII on 'The Efficacy of his Preaching and the Grace of his Healing'. The 'Sermon to the Birds' is the first example of preaching to occur in this chapter; it is immediately preceded by a consultation between Francis and the holy virgin Clare, in which Clare confirms Francis' right to preach as ordained by God.[44] The themes of silence, noise and parallel forms of worship are crucial to understanding the progression of the saint's

[44] For prominent examples of scholarship on Francis and the 'Sermon to the Birds', see C. W. Hume, *The Status of Animals in the Christian Religion*, 2nd edn (London: The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, 1957), pp. 24–28; Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), pp. 67–68; Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis, Nature Mystic*, pp. 42–100; Roger D. Sorrell, *St Francis of Assisi and Nature*, pp. 59–68, and 'Tradition and Innovation, Harmony and Hierarchy in St Francis of Assisi's Sermon to the Birds', *Franciscan Studies*, 43 (1983), pp. 396–407; and Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, pp. 169–80.

preaching activities in this episode. I discuss this episode separately to the other avian-related scenes because of the primacy of this sermon in Franciscan imagery. At the height of his interactions with birds in the *Vye*, Francis manipulates the soundscape of the text to replace birdsong with his own preaching. In doing so, he establishes dominion over, and simultaneous contact with, songbirds. Just as we might see a nonhuman expression of *bios* in the exemplary listening skills demonstrated by the birds, so praise is shared between humans and nonhumans. Indeed, contact with the saint accentuates the intuitive forms of praise that birds express in their instinctive vocalisations and behaviours.

The 'Sermon to the Birds' appears in the *Vye* during Francis's visit to the Italian town of Bevagna. The saint comes across a group of birds that look at him attentively as he begins to speak to them. He addresses these silent birds directly, and in response they incline their heads towards him as he preaches. The transition from firstly speaking to the birds, then to preaching to them, which may at first have seemed bizarre or even heretical to some medieval readers, provides a thematic bridge to the more specifically Franciscan practice of preaching to crowds. Reaching beyond the pulpit into the exterior environment, preaching is shown to be of value to birds as well as people—a theme that highlights the Franciscan interest in promoting preaching as a means to salvation beyond the confines of church walls. It also highlights the continuity of sound and noise as the birds settle down to listen to Francis. The submissive behaviour of the birds in this passage mirrors that of the marsh birds in Venice, who likewise stay silent when Francis is preaching. The text thus provides a repetitive framework for Francis' interaction with birds, in which he enters amongst them to speak to them directly:

"Mes freres oyseaus, le Creatur
Ben devez loer e fere honur
A ly ke vus ne seufre estre nu,
De bone plume vus a vestu.
Penne vus dune a voler
Haut e bas, a vostre voler.
Le pur eyr avez en bandun
Saunz rente doner ou autre doun,

Saunz vostre sucyté e cure,
E il vus purveyt e trove puture."
Vye, XII, 3, p. 178, ll. 5179–88

> "My dear brother birds, you truly should praise and give honour to the Creator, to him who, by clothing you in good feathers, does not suffer you to be naked. Wings he has given you to fly high and low at your will. You have the pure air at your disposal, without payment or any other gift to give, without a care in the world, and he looks after you and provides food."

Birds in this episode are quiet in anticipation of Francis' words, demonstrating their respect for the redeeming qualities of the saint's presence and for his preaching. They listen to him with reason ('reysun', XII, 3, l. 5189) and with beaks open, unmoving until given the sign of the cross and Francis' blessing. The word 'reysun' (*LM*: 'loqueretur', p. 99) emphasises the intellectual nature of the sermon to the birds and demonstrates that they recognise Francis' discourse as containing elements of reason or logical argumentation. This is a miraculous event that draws attention to both the saint's dominion over life and the capacity of the birds to understand human reasoning when it is directed by God through a saint.

Through their silent participation in the sermon as active listeners, the birds implicitly move up the created order, temporarily at least, demonstrating elements of the form-of-life embodied by Francis. Likewise, they seem to be attentive to, and to understand, the spiritual truth spoken by the saint. The miraculous nature of the event relies on the recognition that this type of spiritual behaviour, usually reserved for devout humans, is temporarily opened out to other creatures by the presence of the saint and by his control of the acoustic environment. The portrayal of birds exhibiting the same reasoning as human listeners demonstrates why a binary distinction between 'rational' humans and 'irrational' animals in the *Vye* would not fully explain the type of interaction between the saint and the birds. Rather like his interactions with sheep and lambs, Francis' location in the shared acoustic environment with the birds, and the recognition of understanding on their part, reveals how the birds participate in cross-species praise.

The 'Sermon to the Birds' represents one of the highlights of the Franciscan legend, made famous in the visual arts by the painting of the scene in the Basilica of

St Francis in Assisi, and the oil on panel *St Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds* by Giotto di Bondone (figure 4, appendix).[45] In these visual depictions of the scene, Francis stoops down and gestures towards neatly arranged birds on the ground as several birds fly through the air. Many of the birds are featured with open beaks, as in the *Vye*, in a physical gesture that indicates noise or sound. Yet, in the episode in the Old French text, the birds are silent. In contrast to the painting, the silence of the birds in the text when in proximity to the saint reinforces the remarkable nature of the miracle; noisy birds, which have so far contributed to the spiritual acoustics of the text, are rendered silent as Francis' voice fills the text with reverential praise to the Creator.

The soundscape of the text is thus linked with the movement of creatures from life in *zoë* to *bios* and possibly back again, as the hagiographic depiction of *bios* relies on a continuous level of sustained praise to the Creator, be it from the 'mouths' of beasts and birds, or of humans. The accumulation of connections between birdsong and the singing of the liturgical hours throughout the *Vye* culminates in the moment of Francis' death in chapter XIV, when his interactions with birds are brought to a climax. As Francis lies naked in the church of St Mary of the Portiuncula, suffering from prolonged physical illness due in part to his reception of the stigmata, his death is punctuated by specific sounds. These include Psalm 141, spoken aloud by Francis himself, and the miraculous call by the aged Brother Augustine for Francis to wait for him as he dies (XIV, 6). The silence of death then fills the air—a silence accompanied by the image of a shining cloud, taken from the Book of Revelation 14:14, used to depict the saint's ascent to heaven. The final episode of this chapter, however, returns to ornithological sonority rather than visual or biblical imagery. At Francis' death, larks come to circle around the roof of the house and whirl around with unusual joy. Francis is again described as the herald of the creatures, as it is noted that he had taken pleasure in their respectful, benevolent singing, or noise, during his life.

The deathly silence that follows Francis's passing is thus filled by birds, who take up the act of praising God according to their own instinct: 'Longement sur la

[45] Giotto di Bondone, *St Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds*, c. 1290-1300, oil on panel, 3.13 x 1.63 m, Louvre, Paris. For further details on the Basilica, see Elvio Lunghi, *The Basilica of St Francis in Assisi* (Antella: SCALA Group, 1996), p. 83; and Joachim Poeschke, *Die Kirche San Francesco in Assisi und ihre Wandmalereien* (Müncher: Hirmer Verlag München, 1985), plates 44, 129 and 171.

mesun | E noyse firent de lur chaunçun' ('For a long time they noisily sang on top of the building', XIV, 6, p. 205, ll. 6159–60). The praise directed towards the Creator by Francis throughout the text is replaced at the moment of his death by the sounds of the birds, which paradoxically indicate the absence of the saint's voice and, by extension, of human praise. This motif also replaces the usual motif of angels taking the saint's soul to heaven; in many cases, someone with or close to a saint sees a vision of this in medieval saints' lives. The motif of Francis as a summoner ('sumuneur', l. 6173) for all God's creatures also appears towards the end of this episode. This motif reinforces the importance of his posthumous role in encouraging the continued praise of humans and nonhumans in the soundscape they all share. However, at the moment of his death, the birds sing around the building that holds his body, filling the acoustic environment with the praise that Francis would have been performing were he alive.

Throughout the *Vye* Francis' attention to preaching and instructing his friars in the singing of the liturgical hours is echoed in his interactions with various creatures. At certain points in the texts, these creatures join in with human religious and learn the ropes of praising God. At other points, Francis deliberately silences beasts and birds in order to preach himself. In both scenarios, Francis shows nonhumans the way from a form-of-life in which they praise the Creator instinctively, often represented in these texts by noisy birdsong or chattering in their own *jargun*, to a more qualified form-of-life in what I have described as a directing of nonhuman creatures from *zoë* towards *bios*. In the final scene of Francis' death, the return of the birds to an instinctive form of praise that now has a specific spiritual focus reinforces the notion that the power of Francis' contact with the birds continues even after his death. The birds arrive and fly 'longuement' around the site of the saint's death, suggesting that praises Francis encouraged while alive will be perpetuated by the avian creatures of the Umbrian countryside and the soundscape of the *Vye*.

Birdsong in the episodes discussed above is metaphorical and textual, yet it also reflects the tendency of actual songbirds to make noise at dawn and dusk. Compared with the sheep, which have strong biblical and symbolic associations, the songbirds in the *Vye* are less obviously symbolic creatures as well as examples of living creatures; birds thus bring a tangible, specifically avian material quality to the representation of creaturely sound in these texts. This quality is communicated in

depictions of birdsong, and in particular through a designated vocabulary for describing such sounds. The words *jargun*, *noise* and *chaunt* all serve to describe different types of sounds made by birds that interact with Francis and his exemplary form-of-life. A similar range of vocabulary can be found in another vernacular version of this saint's Life, the Middle English *Life of St Francis*. In the final section of this chapter I offer a comparative analysis of some of the key moments discussed above to demonstrate just how important bleating and birdsong are for the depiction of form-of-life across vernacular texts from the Franciscan tradition. I also suggest that the difference between these texts emphasises how sound is represented in an alternative way for a linguistically and culturally different audience.

Sonic Coexistence in the *South English Legendaries*

Both the Old French *Vye* and the Middle English *Life* depict Francis manipulating his acoustic environment in ways that demonstrate the accessibility of *bios* to different species. However, the *Life* reverses some of the miraculous episodes of the *Vye* by combining different miracles with themes of sonic coexistence and control. In the English *Life* some of the forms of control that Francis exerts over beasts and birds in the *Vye* are reversed. Whereas in the *Vye*, Francis instructs sheep carefully in bleating the hours but encourages or silences spontaneous birdsong, in the *Life* the bleating of sheep arises spontaneously and Francis carefully controls the singing of birds in ways that emphasise the distinction between their natural and transformed behaviours. The distinctions between different types of creatures in each of these texts, reinforced through a separation between the beastly and the avian, therefore contributes to subtly different portrayals of the movement between *zoë* and *bios* than we find in the *Vye*. These oppositional portrayals of creaturely noise in two Franciscan texts deriving from the same source demonstrate the flexibility with which medieval texts use such sounds in spiritual contexts. Creatures are thus shown to exist beyond static forms of symbolism and to play an active role in the identification of different ways to access *bios*.

One of the clearest differences between the *Vye* and the *Life of St Francis* from the *South English Legendaries* is the generalising nature of the former compared to the specificity of the latter. Whilst both the French and English versions of the Life feature Francis facilitating the movement of creatures from *zoë* to *bios*

when they are in proximity to him, there are significant details in the English *Life* that differentiate it from the *Vye*, and in some respects focus attention on the symbolism of such movement rather than on the specificities of Franciscan geography and theology. Indeed, the Middle English *Life* features a closer attention to moralisation and a lack of geographically-specific detail, especially in accounts of the saint's interactions with bleating sheep and lambs. These differences present human and nonhuman contact in more generalised terms and underscore Francis' behaviour rather than the locations in which it occurs. Alongside these differences, the *Life* portrays the domestication of sheep and birds in ways that contrast with, and put into question, the same episodes in the *Vye* if they are read in comparison. I discuss these differences here to demonstrate that, even when Franciscan hagiography is pared down to its most basic elements, the sounds of creatures are still crucial features of the portrayal of cross-species communication in Francis' Life, troubling the dynamics of distinctions between the saint and the creatures with whom he interacts.

The Middle English *Life of St Francis* is found in some, but not all, of the *South English Legendaries* (hereafter *SEL*), the plural being a recent coinage attributed to a collection of over sixty manuscripts, produced and modified from the thirteenth until the fifteenth centuries.[46] Pre-conceived ideas of vernacularity, nationalism, and populism in the Middle Ages have contributed to the modern construction of the idea that the intended audience for this collection of hagiographic texts was perhaps a relatively unlearned one. However, recent scholarship has emphasised that the conceptualisation of the *SEL* as 'a substitute liturgy for laypeople or nuns' needs rethinking in contexts where multilingualism, topography and textual performance were increasingly important aspects of the diffusion of saints' lives.[47] In the context of a Franciscan hagiography, the importance of themes

[46] For a reappraisal of the common singular term 'South English Legendary', and the reason for speaking in plural terms, see *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, ed. by Heather Blurton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

[47] See Anne B. Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 193; and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Locating Saint's Lives and their Communities', in *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*. Wogan-Browne provides a brief summary of the recent scholarship in this area: 'Bella Millett has cast doubt on the legendary as proto-liturgical reading for nuns; Oliver Pickering has argued that the great majority of *SEL* copies were used for private reading; Annie Samson has urged the overlap between *SEL* and romance audiences' (p. 263). References for these texts are as follows: Bella Millett, 'The Audience of the Saint's Lives of the Katherine-Group', in *Saints*

that highlight location and the popular relevance of the story of Francis' life is not to be underestimated, as such themes help to bolster the significance of localised saints in the collection as a whole.[48] The epitomisation of the infamous Perugian saint into the short hagiographic form of the *SEL* also has the effect of emphasising his interactions with the sounds of nonhumans as central aspects of his saintly identity. The *Life* includes a high proportion of episodes and miracles featuring nonhuman creatures, perhaps as a reflection of the interest in qualities of popular devotion that such scenes suggest. Claims relating depictions of creatures with the popularity of texts should be made with caution (for example, Bonaventure's orthodox Latin *LM* also contains an entire central chapter dedicated to episodes concerning beasts and birds: 'On Affectionate Piety and How Irrational Creatures were Affectionate toward Him', VIII). However, it is likely that depictions of creatures such as sheep and birds did encourage medieval religious and lay believers to relate closely to a universal figure of Francis.

The version of the *Life* that I discuss below is taken from one of the earliest collections of the *SEL* in a late thirteenth-century version from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108.[49] In this manuscript, the *SEL* is set alongside texts such as the *Ministry and Passion* and the *Infancy of Christ*, as well as works of more secular interest, such as a *Debate of Body and Soul*, *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*.[50] The *Life of St Francis* in the *SEL* is translated, like the *Vye*, from the authoritative *LM* by Bonaventure. Despite the fact that both the English and French versions of Francis' Life discussed in this chapter are based on the *LM*, the *SEL* version offers a starkly different perspective from the *Vye*, presenting a less orthodox

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and Saint's Lives: Essays in Honour of D. Hugh Farmer, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 16 (Reading: Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, 1990), pp. 12–56; Oliver S. Pickering, 'The *South English Legendary*: Teaching or Preaching?', *Poetica*, 45 (1996), pp. 1–14; and Annie Samson, 'The *South English Legendary*: Constructing a Context', in *Thirteenth Century England I*, ed. by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), pp. 185–95.

[48] See Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1974), pp. 23–24.

[49] The Francis legend in this collection belongs to the earliest version of the *SEL*—the work of the Z-poet—although the language has been modernised. For further information on the manuscripts of the *SEL*, see Anne B. Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative*, pp. 194–97; and the 'Introduction' to *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, ed. by E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson and Robert K. Upchurch (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004).

[50] John Frankis, 'The Social Context of Vernacular Writing in Thirteenth-Century England: The Evidence of the Manuscripts', in *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, pp. 77–78.

and more condensed, episodic translation of the *LM*. Nevertheless, the sounds of nonhumans, such as bleating of sheep and singing of birds, remain an important feature of the English text. This is despite the text omitting a great deal from the middle section of Bonaventure's *LM* and amounting to a humble 496 lines in comparison to the 8727 lines of the *Vye*.

It is important to recognise that this *Life* was not working independently of the other lives with which it was bound. Unlike the lengthy *Vye*, which acts as a stand-alone version of events, the Middle English *Life* forms implicit connections between different saints and their legends. The nature of the *SEL* as a collection forges connections between the sheep and the birds in texts such as the *Life of St Francis* and the creatures that feature in other saints' lives: the lion that helps a monk to bury the body of St Mary of Egypt (p. 270); the wolf that finds the head of St Edmund (p. 298); the sheep that surround St Cuthbert when he witnesses angels carrying the body of St Aidan to heaven, or the otters that lick him to revive him (p. 360); and the talking stag from the legend of St Eustace (p. 393).[51] Readers of the *SEL* might well have understood the importance of creatures as an intrinsic part of the expression of certain types of saintly identity, applicable to multiple saints. These episodes demonstrate the relationships of care and control that exist between saintly figures and the created world around them; in this sense, Francis was but one example of such sanctity. What the story of Francis brings to this collection is a particular attention to the sonority of human (and saintly) interactions with nonhuman creatures. The *Life* depicts a particularly lively soundscape compared to other saint's lives in the *SEL*, a distinction that has important implications for conceptualisations of sainthood, preaching and the connections with language that I discussed in relation to the *Vye.*

Due to the significantly reduced length of the *Life of St Francis*, episodes with noisy creatures stand out as particularly evocative of Francis' thaumaturgy. The English *Life* contains a number of such episodes, including: the lamb bleating the liturgical hours; Francis silencing the birds to preach; 'The Sermon to the Birds'; and the larks singing at the death of the saint. The vocabularies used to describe the sounds of sheep are similar in both the French and English versions of these episodes.

[51] Page numbers are cited from *The Early South-English Legendary* or *Lives of Saints: MS Laud, 18, in the Bodleian Library*, ed. by Carl Horstmann, *Early English Text Society* (London: N. Trübner & Co, 1887).

To take one example, the sonic context of the episode in which the sheep genuflects at the altar of St Mary of the Portiuncula and bleats in time with the liturgy is one of song. This is particularly evident in the *Life* in an episode in which the sheep hears the friars singing at church (the *Life* is not specific about which church). When it hears this sound, the sheep stays close and bleats along with the friars:

> Seint F*ra*unceis hiet þis schep a day | ȝwanne it heorde freres singue,
> To churche gon at eche tide | and ne lete for none þingue.
> Þat schep after þulke time | selde wolde a-bide,
> Ȝwane hit i-heorde freres in þe queor | þat hit nas at eche tide;
> Blete it wolde a-ȝenes heom | for it ne couþe nouȝt elles do.[52]
>
> *The Life*, ll. 318–22

> One day Saint Francis told this sheep to go to church at each of the [canonical] Hours, whenever it heard the friars singing, and not to remain behind for anything. After that particular occasion, whenever it heard the friars in the choir, this sheep would seldom stay away and miss being at each of the Hours. It would bleat in response to them, as it could do nothing else.

The juxtaposition of the singing of monks and the bleating of the sheep evokes a call and response framework that emphasises the symbiotic nature of the shared act of worship between humans and nonhumans. The sheep's close proximity to the saint pulls it into a form-of-life that is representative neither of nonhuman irrationality, nor of a quintessentially human rational existence. Instead, its behaviour is represented as partly instinctive and partly inspired by Francis, revealing an exemplary and hybrid form of *bios*. The sheep is depicted bleating ('blete') and thus joining in with liturgical praise and physical genuflections as best it can, because it could not do anything else ('for it ne couþe nouȝt elles do').[53] This is a peculiar

[52] All quotations and page numbers from the *Life* are from *The Early South-English Legendary* or *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Carl Horstmann. Translations from Middle English are my own.

[53] In the later version of this *Life* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 43, the associations between the bleating of the sheep and the act of singing are made more explicit, as the sheep is described as knowing no other song: 'vor it ne couthe non other song'. See 'The Life of St Francis in the *South English Legendary*', in *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, l. 345.

phrase that highlights the instinctive quality of the sheep's vocalisations, despite Francis having instructed it to behave in this way. The passage is accompanied by a short moral that condenses the meaning of the text by suggesting that the interpretation of the episode should be that the reader take example from the sheep when such a beast honours God in this wondrous way.[54] In this way the sheep's behaviour is brought into a more explicit and exemplary relation to the audience of the text. As I noted in relation to this passage in the *Vye*, one implication of this episode is that the sheep's voice and gestures are rudimentary and imperfect imitations of human liturgical praise and performance. However, this episode is also striking in its portrayal of communal worship, suggesting that the practice of the liturgy should to a certain extent be a form of instinctive praise to God, which the sheep performs without hesitation.

The distinction that is explored through the sound of bleating is not between human and nonhuman, but rather between the types of sounds and behaviours that convey *zoë* and those that indicate *bios*. This categorisation, however, does not work as a binary, and onomatopoeia is one of the ways that a slippage between the two is presented as part of a process of spiritual enlightenment. The bleating of sheep in both the *Vye* and the *Life* is communicated through onomatopoeic words that closely resemble the sounds of sheep as they may be reproduced by human vocal means (Anglo-Norman *braer* and Middle English *blete*). The process of human identification with the sheep (on the part of the friars) is presented in different ways in each of the texts, but the purpose of the bleating remains the same: to demonstrate that following the instruction of Francis is a sure way to leading a life that imitates his own exemplary form-of-life. The *Life* is less anxious to show that Francis deliberately tried to avoid causing offence to the friars, which suggests that the theological reasoning behind such careful manipulation of the acoustic environment of the *Vye* is less important to the *Life* and its audiences.

A distinction between spontaneity and learning has important consequences for how each of these texts conceptualises the movement between *zoë* and *bios*. In the *Vye*, Francis explicitly teaches the sheep aspects of his own form-of-life, but in the *Life* the sheep seems to spontaneously perform *bios* after receiving a small nudge

[54] *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of Saints*, p. 63, ll. 325–27. Compare with 'The Life of St. Francis', in *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections*, ll. 347–50.

in the right direction from the saint. The *Life* thus presents *bios* as a more accessible form-of-life for human worshipers who may have contact with the saint (through relics, a text or the preaching of friars) but does not necessarily provide the tools to engage with the complexities of Franciscan theology in its Umbrian geographical, social and religious contexts. Whereas the *Vye* highlights the process by which Francis teaches the sheep to bleat the hours, the *Life* focuses directly on the depiction of the sound of the sheep's bleating, sparked by the presence of the saint alone. This flattens out some of the distinctions made between beasts and birds in more detailed texts such as the *Vye*.

The *Life* is similarly explicit in depicting Francis directing birds to sing in line with a form-of-life that is exemplary. The birds in one episode, which parallels the episode of the marsh birds near Venice in the *Vye*, are described as singing, and the English word 'noyse' is repeated twice to emphasise that they are making a loud disturbance or commotion over which Francis is trying to make himself heard: 'huy songen and maden noyse i-nov' ('they sang and made much noise', l. 332).[55] Eventually, after celebrating the manner in which the songbirds praise God in their own way, Francis tells them to quieten down, so that his own voice might replace theirs: 'Þo maden þis foules so gret noise: þat huy ne miȝten noþing i-here. | "Sostren," quath þis holie Man, "chaungiez eouwer manere! | Beothþ nouþe stille and latehþ me segge: mine tidene with mi frere' ('The birds made such a great noise that he could not hear anything: "Sisters", said this holy man, "change your manner! Be still now and let me say my hours with my brother"', l. 340–41). The birds then remain silent until Francis releases them with the following words:

> "Nou sustren," quath þis holie man | "we habbuthþ i-seid ore tide,
> Bi-guynnez ouwer ȝwane ȝe wollez | ȝe ne þoruen no leng abide."
> Þis foules bi-gonne singue anon | þe leste and eke þe meste—
> Swiþe gret pouwer he hadde of god | þat foules weren at is heste!
>
> *The Life*, ll. 344–47

[55] See 'noise' in *MED* (online) for variants.

> "Now sister", said this holy man, "we have said our Hours. Begin yours when you will, you need not wait any longer." Then the birds began to sing, the small and the large. Such great power he had from God: that birds were at his command!

In this episode from the *Life* the emphasis is directly on noise-making, in contrast to the formalised 'tidene' ('hours', referring to the canonical hours) of the friars in relation to the sheep. However, the lack of vocabulary associated with the spontaneity and terrestrial, mundane nature of birdsong contributes to the conceptualisation of songbirds in the *Life* as solely at the command of the saint. In some respects the *Life* presents this episode in the opposite way to the *Vye*, where the *jargun* of the birds emphasises their contribution to a lively and continuous acoustic environment of praise already in *zoë* before they come into contact with Francis. Notably, the episode from the *LM* in which Francis preaches to birds who stare at him with beaks open is not translated into the Middle English *Life*, an omission that reveals a comparative lack of interest in the subtle processes by which Francis brings creatures to *bios* with him.

The episode above presents the depiction of birds in another different way to the *Vye* by switching the representation of the birds' gender. Claire M. Waters draws attention to attempts in medieval sermons to address women, and the ways that this makes them 'susceptible to its critiques and most capable of wielding those critiques against others'.[56] I broaden the stakes of her discussion to include different species as well as different genders in the reception of sermons in this *Life*. The genders of birds in the *Life* play an important role in the depiction of Francis as a preacher amongst different categories of people and species. For example, in the *Life* the gendered connection between human brothers ('Beu frere') and the Venetian marsh bird sisters ('our sustren'), in Francis' direct address to the friars, draws attention to the continuity between communities of male friars and female birds. This motif is reversed in the *Vye*, in which Francis addresses the Venetian marsh birds directly as 'Mes freres oyseaus' ('My brother birds', XII, 3, l. 5179), although the swallows are addressed as sisters (XII, 4, l. 5225). In the *Life*, the address to female birds reinforces a gendered relationship between the friars and the birds, demonstrating in turn that

[56] *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, p. 167.

each of these groups contributes to the praise of the Creator whilst in the family of the saint. This has a considerable effect on how we might consider Francis' interactions with birds in these texts, and the ways that he brings them from *zoë* into *bios*, for this process is revealed as accessible to all creatures who praise God, regardless of species and gender. It is of course possible to read in this comparison between chatty birds and women a trace of the misogyny that accompanies many depictions of nonhumans in the Middle Ages; whilst the language used to describe both groups of birds in the *Life* is familial, the female birds are depicted as making such a noisy racket that they have to be instructed to change their manner of living ('manere').[57] Such interpretations would, however, be made on the part of the reader in a further interpretive step, rather than being explicitly enforced by the text or the narrative voice.

Having established the ways that sheep and birds are figured in sonic communication with Francis and the friars in the *Life*, I now turn to the final passage that features birdsong in the *Life*—the last episode of Francis' death. The larks in this scene are depicted as singing cheerful songs ('murie sounguen', l. 456) around the church and the body during the night. Close attention should be paid to a particular phrase that, as with the sister birds, encourages the reader to reflect on how creatures make sounds within or without the limits of their own natures. This phrase features in a negative formulation, 'aȝein kuynde' ('against kind/nature'), which is repeated three times in this passage that follows Francis' death:

> Þo þe soule to heouene wende | aȝein kuynde þei it were—
> For þe lauerke is a foul | þat muche louez liȝht
> And herethþ þane dai with hire song | and restez hire a-niȝht.
> Aȝein kuynde huy sounguen þere | ase þei huy hadden in muynde
> hou muche he was anoured er | of foules a-ȝein hore kuynde.
>
> *The Life*, ll. 454–61

[57] I noted similar misogynistic possibilities for interpretation in the examples of the geese and falcons in the *Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth in Chapter Two.

> When the soul went to heaven, although it was against their nature (for the lark is a bird that loves light very much, and celebrates the day with its song, resting at night), against their nature they sang there, as though they had in mind how much he had been honoured by birds, against their nature.

As in the *Vye*, this passage features a modification of the trope of the saintly soul being borne up to heaven after death, accompanied by angelic song. The singing of the larks is what identifies the miraculous quality of the saint's death. The event is punctuated by the phrase 'aȝein kuynde', which draws attention to the transformative effect of Francis' thaumaturgy on the birds, who, even after his death, exhibit sonic behaviours more associated with *bios* than might have been expected of them. The *Life* is unusually insistent in stating that this type of behaviour is 'aȝein kuynde', that is, it is not a demonstration of instinctive behaviour, but of a form-of-life that has been developed by interaction with the saint or proximity to his relics. This is not a distinction that is expressed in the *Vye*, where the singing of the birds arises spontaneously. The more didactic tone of the *Life* is the result of its condensed representation of thaumaturgy and its possible appeal to a wider audience compared to the longer and more complex French *Vye*. As well as suggesting that the remarkable relationship Francis achieved with creatures extends beyond his death, the phrase 'aȝein kuynde' also works to bring a reading of the event away from allegorical interpretation and to highlight the importance of understanding the birds as actual creatures that respond to the saint's death and take up the task of continuing his praise of the Creator.

Conclusion

Creatures in the Lives of St Francis are depicted singing, crying and making noises such as bleating, twittering or chatting. Some of these noises draw attention to the mundane, less spiritually focused qualities of the lives of beasts and birds. The Old French words *jargun* and *noise* encapsulate a type of noise-making that is shown in texts such as the Anglo-Norman *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys d'Assise* to be an expression of instinctive behaviour that may be miraculously overridden by the saint. Other sounds, such as the crying and singing of crickets, and the bleating of sheep and lambs, reinforce the capacity of nonhuman sounds to reveal signs from God, whilst

simultaneously demonstrating how sounds are implicated in cross-species contact and communication. Whichever category of noise textual depictions of sound fall into, all of the examples discussed above illustrate how Francis manages to direct the vocalisations of nonhuman creatures towards praise of their Creator, thus shifting them up the created order, from *zoë* to *bios*. The revelations that come from meditation on the sounds of worldly creatures represent a form of Christian praise that is particularly relevant to a sacramental type of Franciscan spirituality, where the work of the Creator is revealed in many episodes of the Lives through nonhuman vocalisations.

The sounds of beasts and birds in the *Vye* reveal that the desire for salvation is proper to all creatures in the correct circumstances. However, it is Francis himself who draws out the meanings inherent in such cross-species contact. The way in which Francis brings different creatures into *bios* varies according to the religious, social, economic and cultural connotations of those creatures. In the *Vye* he encourages crickets and lambs to praise the Creator using their own voices, and, in the case of the latter, tests the types of distinctions that divide humans and nonhumans in some Classical and patristic writings. These hagiographies are, as I have suggested, less concerned with demonstrating the presence of a distinction between rational, human creatures and irrational nonhuman creatures, and more invested in the differences between types of natural behaviour, nonhuman understanding, and mundane and exemplary form-of-life. I have shown how Francis draws beasts and birds away from a state of instinct or mundane, terrestrial behaviour characteristic of *zoë* (or 'bare life'), through a separate form of *zoë* that includes modes of comprehension that mirror human comprehension, and towards *bios*, a qualified form-of-life based in Franciscan theology on the holy life as exemplified by the life of Francis himself. In texts such as the *Vye*, Francis moves creatures for short periods of time through these three, interconnected stages. In doing so, the saint establishes himself as the epitome of a new form of preacher who takes his sermons out of the pulpit and into the woods and fields shared with other creatures.

My work in this chapter develops Agamben's analysis of *zoë* and *bios* in Franciscan writings by extending it more explicitly to nonhuman creatures. Such an extension is encouraged by the Lives of St Francis themselves, which accord a privileged place to nonhuman creatures. The Lives offer visions of a capacious, sacramental experience of praise that encapsulates one of the principles of

Franciscanism—that friars should travel and preach—while extending the capacity for praise to all creatures. Beasts and birds are met by Francis around his cell and at churches, but birds in particular are also met in their own habitats: the marsh near Venice, the street in Bevagna or the woods, to take a few examples. The saint goes out to the creatures and teaches them how to praise in a way that is more appropriate to Franciscan *forma vitae* as set out by Franciscan writings on the Rule. My discussion of lambs, in particular, has revealed that episodes in which sheep and lambs make bleating sounds at the altar reveal the ways that *zoë* and *bios* incorporate more than just the human species.

Questions of sound and noise-making in these texts can be considered in relation to their opposite—silence. Thinking about the acoustic environment of the *Vye* in terms of sound and silence draws attention to a sustained level of sound, be it nonhuman bleating and singing or human and saintly singing, a continuity of sound that transforms the text itself into a work of continuous worship. One could argue that the text itself, as a form of praise, is never truly brought to a place of silence until it finishes. However, in the case of songbirds, Francis occasionally brings these creatures into a state of silence so that his own preaching might take the foreground. Birdsong thus goes hand-in-hand with silence in the *Vye*, or rather, with the replacement of a mundane type of noise with a controlled form of spiritually beneficial sound, at least until the scene of Francis' death. At the moment of Francis' death, the larks sing on the rooftop of the church, continuing the praise Francis encouraged during his lifetime. This reveals that, although the saint exercised dominion over the birds whilst he was alive, as do many saints in medieval hagiography, the effects of his preaching continue even beyond the point of his departure from the physical world.

Many of the beast and bird episodes in Bonaventure's *LM* were translated into vernacular languages even when, as is the case with the English *Life of St Francis*, the translation is not at all systematic. In my comparative reading of the *Vye* with the Middle English *Life* from the *South English Legendaries*, I have demonstrated that the concept of nonhuman sound is translated into French and English using similar vocabularies that depict movement from one form-of-life to another. This suggests that such passages were considered essential by vernacular authors working in different languages. The less word-for-word Middle English translation pays as much attention to the noises of beasts and birds in episodes of

cross-species contact as the longer *Vye*, although it frames Francis' interventions in nonhuman sound-making in ways that emphasise the effects, rather than the functioning, of his thaumaturgy. The scenes of his death in both the *Vye* and the *Life* reveal the complex ways that these two texts represent sounds for interpretation. They emphasise the birds' actual sonic behaviours as well as their symbolic functions, filling the soundscapes of the texts with praise. Despite subtle differences, the overall effect of Francis' proximity to different species of nonhumans in the Middle English *Life* is very similar to that discussed above in relation to the *Vye*; the saint brings creatures into a state of existence in which their song can be transformed into a higher form of praise closer to that exhibited by Francis. The Middle English *Life*, like the French *Vye*, thus represents nonhuman creatures moving from *zoë* to *bios* through the transformation of the sonic phenomena associated with them, even if the English text contains a less specific attention to geographical location.

CHAPTER 4

Mouths, Muzzles and Beaks in Marie de France's *Fables* and 'Sumer is icumen in'

The world of medieval fable presents a distinctive type of nonhuman sound. Fables depict beasts and birds making sounds whilst placing these in dialogue with, and in relation to, forms of utterance that directly parallel and mirror human language and discourse. In this chapter I am interested in the 'world-forming' capacities of sound in fables, in particular ones that trouble the distinction between human and nonhuman perspectives. The muzzles of beasts and the beaks of birds become points of cross-species contact in ways that trouble the distinction between human and nonhuman. To take an example, in one fable the dog and the wolf converse and exchange pleasantries through human language as the dog naively explains to the wolf the benefits of the chain around his neck, but the language that they speak is emitted from vocal apparatuses that function both as mouths (for speech) as well as muzzles.[1] The ways that mouths, muzzles and beaks communicate perspectives and points of view in the earliest extant fables in the French vernacular have stark consequences for the conceptualisation of language as the exclusive domain of the human. The fables have the capacity to expose divergent human and nonhuman points of view and to create new ones when speech, utterance and sound are read as part of diverse acoustic environments. They represent nonhuman protagonists in a space in-between sound and language, where meaning is constantly open to reinterpretation.

The word 'fable' itself poses a significant problem for understanding the ways that medieval authors conceptualised the relationship between the categories of sound and language. The fables as a genre have been described as 'short, didactic, fictional narratives, in prose or verse, which have at least one distinctly stated moral lesson, placed either before the tale (a promythium), after it (an epymithium), or

[1] *Les Fables: Edition critique accompagnée d'une introduction, d'une traduction, de notes et d'un glossaire*, ed. by Charles Brucker (Paris: Peeters, 1998), 26, 'Le Loup et le chien', pp. 136–39. All quotations from the *Fables* are taken from this edition, unless otherwise stated. All translations from Old French and Middle English are my own, unless otherwise stated.

sometimes within the narrative itself.'[2] This notion of what constitutes a fable, however, is in large part a modern one. In contrast, the *Etymologies* by Isidore of Seville describe fables according to their relationship to the spoken word, noting that 'Poets named 'fables' (*fabula*) from 'speaking' (*fari*), because they are not actual events that took place, but were only invented in words.' According to Isidore, they are presented 'so that the conversation of imaginary dumb animals among themselves may be recognised as a mirror image of the life of humans'.[3] This statement presents a significant problem for the study of nonhuman perspectives in the fables, for it proposes that the 'conversation of imaginary dumb animals' is merely an imitation or mirroring of human activity. There is very little space in Isidore's definition for actual contact with beasts and birds or for the communication of a nonhuman point of view.

In the vernacular fable tradition, however, nonhuman sound arguably plays an important role in the communication of nonhuman perspectives. Marie de France, who drew on the Latin fable tradition in her composition of the *Fables* in the twelfth century, wrote a collection of over a hundred short, pithy tales usually concerning nonhuman beasts and birds.[4] In most cases, these are followed by moralistic messages designed to interpret or re-interpret the moral already encoded in the short tale; this format mirrors the Aesopic tradition from which Marie's tales derive.[5] Howard Bloch remarks that 'in a semantic heritage reaching back to late antiquity, the Old French word *fable* is synonymous with a lie, with ruse, or with fiction, its meaning doubling that of *truffe*, *risée*, *mensonge*, *merveille*, *fantosme*, *bourde*, or

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[2] Karl Steel, 'Beast Fables', in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2017). Most likely emerging from etiological myths concerning beasts and birds, the fable tradition was widespread, incorporating not only Western European literary traditions, but also those from the Middle East and India. See Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 21.

[3] 'Fabulas poetae a fando nominaverunt, quia non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae. Quae ideo sunt inductae, ut fictorum mutorum animalium inter se conloquio imago quaedam vitae hominum nosceretur', *Etymologies*, I.xi.1, p. 66. For the Latin, see *The Latin Library* (online).

[4] For the dating of manuscripts of Marie's *Fables*, see Françoise Vielliard, 'Sur la tradition manuscrite des *Fables* de Marie de France', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 147 (1989), pp. 371–97.

[5] Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard*, p. 21. For Aesop, see *The Fables of Aesop as First Printed by W. Caxton in 1484*, ed. by J. Jacobs, 2 vols (London: Nutt, 1889). For a discussion of metaphor and interrogations of language in relation to the nonhuman in the Aesopic tradition, see Peter Travis, 'Aesop's Symposium of Animal Tongues', *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 2 (2011), pp. 33–49.

gabet'.[6] Bloch is correct in suggesting that human language in the *Fables* is bound up with power and agency. A suspicion of language is also an important part of the thematic content and structure of the *Fables* as it contributes to the formation of political and social ties between human protagonists as well as to narrative tension and resolution. However, the expression of nonhuman sound in this corpus, and the types of nonhuman perspective such sound communicates, demonstrates that the agencies at play in these narrative texts do not always ensue directly from utterances that are easily identifiable as human speech. Agency is also expressed through depictions of nonhuman sound that trouble the boundaries between linguistic and social forms of communication between humans. Vocal sound, a category that I use to designate any sound produced from mouth, muzzle or beak in texts such as the *Fables* occasionally performs nonlinguistic functions that put the perspectives of beasts and birds into a broader acoustic context.

Words that express the sounds of beasts and birds in the *Fables* are not simply a means of presenting the nonhuman world as a reflection of its human counterpart; they also exhibit world-forming capacities themselves. By 'world-forming capacities', I mean that sounds in literary texts can communicate a range of perspectives, even those that are other-than-human, that invite reflection on ways of seeing the world that are not purely anthropocentric. In a discussion of modern poetics and nonhuman perspective, Vicki Hearne suggests that the content and even the form of a poem can communicate the 'world-forming' capabilities of nonhuman agents, whilst also indicating that these are somewhat restrained by human language.[7] This is particularly relevant to fables, which I suggest pull narratives

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[6] *The Anonymous Marie de France* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 111.

[7] Vicki Hearne, *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007), p. 4. Hearne's vision of the 'world-forming' capacities of words draws to some extent on the twentieth-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiania University Press, 2001). Following the scientific findings of Jakob von Uexküll, whose *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* spurred experiments into nonhuman perspective, a host of researchers from the fields of social sciences and literature have taken up similar explorations in textual analysis. These include, to take just two examples: Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); and Aaron Moe, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016). Kelly Robertson has engaged with the 'world-forming' capacities of stones in medieval literature in her study of 'Exemplary Rocks', in *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Washington DC: Oliphaunt Books, 2012).

towards the perspective of the nonhuman through the expression made possible by the sounds of muzzles and beaks. By placing nonhuman sounds on a continuum with human language and in the context of a mistrust of such language, the *Fables* make sound a disruptive communication tool. Sound not only unsettles fixed notions of what constitutes language and perspective, but also raises questions about the function of mouths, muzzles and beaks in the context of the *Fables*: a muzzle barks and eats, but what happens when a fable presents the muzzle as an instrument of speech? To what extent do the uses of the muzzle map onto those of the beak? These are crucial questions for understanding how and why nonhuman perspective is communicated through the medieval fable tradition.

The *Fables* are often bound with other texts discussing beasts, birds or legendary creatures. Despite some superficial similarities when the fables are compared with these other textual traditions, there are important distinctions concerning how fables represent the connection between nonhumans and language or sound. The *Fables* are extant, at least in part, in no less than thirty-three manuscripts. Notable texts with which the *Fables* are bound include saints' lives (Royal Library of Belgium, 10295-10304); texts by authors such as Gautier le Leu (Nottingham University Library, WLC/LM/6), Baudouin Condé (BnF, fr. 1446), Rutebeuf (BnF, fr. 1593, and Arsenal, 3124) and Chrétien de Troyes (BnF, fr. 12603); the bestiary by Guillaume le Clerc (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132, and BnF, fr. 2168, fr. 24428 and fr. 25406); and fabliaux in a high percentage of manuscripts.[8] One manuscript, BnF, fr. 2168, introduces Marie's *Fables* with the term 'bestiaires' on f. 159ra: 'Chi commenche li *bestiaires* che sont les fables de pluseurs bestes' ('Here begins the *bestiary*, which comprises the fables of a number of beasts', my emphasis). The slippage between the French terms 'fables' and 'bestiaires' in this codex suggests a confusion of texts such as fables, bestiaries and

[8] Fables are often discussed by scholars in the context of pedagogy, based primarily on Latin fable traditions. From the eleventh century onward the familiarity of speaking nonhuman protagonists contributed to the genre's popularity in the schoolroom, with many new translations and adaptations by authors such as Ademar of Chabannes (c. 988–1034) and Egbert of Liège (written 1010 and 1026). Jill Mann notes that Egbert purportedly composed these texts 'in order to give young scholars edifying material to recite in place of the popular songs they customarily sang when their teachers were out of the room', *From Aesop to Reynard*, p. 90.

possibly even fabliaux by certain scribes and compilers.[9] One of the defining characteristics of fables in contrast to other types of text such as bestiaries is the depiction of nonhuman language: beasts and birds speak in the fables, as well as making sounds. Fables also contain less direct modes of moralisation when compared with texts such as the *Bestiaire* discussed in Chapter One; moralisation in the fables is certainly a crucial element of the text, but it is usually introduced in the voice of the narrator as a concluding and separate comment on the preceding narrative, rather than being integrated into or around description.

The *Fables* use nonhuman sounds and utterances to portray the point of view of different human and nonhuman agents and to consider the nature and limits of social contracts from an ostensibly nonhuman perspective. However, not all scholars have agreed on how we should interpret nonhuman points of view in these texts. Some scholars argue that the fables decentre human perspectives; however, most critics maintain that the fables are fundamentally anthropocentric.[10] Peggy McCracken has argued that in many cases, what at first seems to be the presentation of a beast's own perspective in fact serves as an underlying support for the reaffirmation of human sovereignty over the nonhuman.[11] She stops short of extending the type of world-forming capacities to nonhumans in fables that she finds in medieval French saints' lives and romances, noting that fables do not offer the same kinds of insights into an beast's perspective as other texts: 'even the most critical anthropomorphism brought to bear on fables is unlikely to find much to say about the animal's view of its own world, or how it experiences its environment, or what matters to an animal in its own existence.'[12] This conceptualisation of

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[9] The use of the same term to describe the *Bestiaire divin* on f. 188[rb] demonstrates the possibility of a lively interaction between the two texts in this manuscript. For the *Bestiaire divin*, see: *Le Bestiaire divin de Guillaume Clerc de Normandie*, ed. by C. Hippeau (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970); and *Le Bestiare das Thierbuch des Normannischen Dichters Guillaume le Clerc*, ed. by Robert Reinsch (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1982).

[10] Susan Crane has noted that the trouble with fable is 'above all that the form invites little thought on creatures other than human'. She goes on to point out that whilst fables press beasts into human shapes, they also trouble the relation between beasts and the apologues, which deflect attention 'from the human and back toward the pleasure of imagining proximity to other animals.' *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 43–44.

[11] Peggy McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 9.

[12] Ibid., p. 65. The themes of perspective and animacy in relation to nonhumans have been discussed more broadly by Mel Chen in *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering and Queer Affect* (London: Duke University Press, 2012). See in particular Part II, in which Chen

nonhuman identity in fables is equally reflected in the remarks of Jacques Derrida who, in his seminal work *L'animal que donc je suis*, notes that:

> Il fallait surtout éviter la fable. L'affabulation, on en connaît l'histoire, reste un apprivoisement anthropomorphique, un assujettissement moralisateur, une domestication. Toujours un discours *de* l'homme; sur l'homme; voire sur l'animalité de l'homme, mais pour l'homme, et en l'homme.[13]

It is certainly true that the Middle Ages witnessed a strong assertion of dominance over nonhuman beasts and birds by humans in a way that is reflected in certain textual traditions.[14] The fables are in many respects deeply invested in anthropocentric logic. However, as I argue below, these texts can also be read in ways that foreground the perspective of nonhuman protagonists. Certain fables present a reversal of the anticipated human perspective by placing utterance into the mouths, muzzles or beaks of nonhumans such as the fox, the lion, the cuckoo and the cockerel. Beasts and birds are depicted in ways that associate them with the instinctive characteristics of their species as these were understood in the Middle Ages, yet they also possess qualities that mirror human behaviour. This has usually been taken by critics like McCracken as a sign that these texts exclude animal perspectives and subordinate them to human concerns. However, I suggest that fables are far from simple anthropological machines that buttress human identity through comparison with the nonhuman.[15] An attention to sound as well as language allows for a new vantage on nonhuman point-of-view. Through depictions of nonhuman utterance some medieval fables even participate in a decidedly non-anthropomorphic inclusion of nonhuman expression.

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identifies that 'the exclusion of animals from the realm of language is, historically, a relatively recent and uneven phenomenon', pp. 91–92.

[13] 'Above all, it was necessary to avoid fables. We know the history of fabulization and how it remains an anthropomorphic taming, a moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse *of* man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and in man.' *L'animal que donc je suis*, p. 60. Translation by David Wills in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 37. Italics original in both texts.

[14] I discuss some examples of these in the Introduction. For futher information, see Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011).

[15] I refer here to Giorgio Agamben's concept of the 'anthropological machine' in *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), discussed in further detail in the Introduction.

The first part of my discussion in this chapter examines how nonhuman utterance disrupts the status quo, whereas nonhuman—and nonlinguistic—sounds or noises restore harmony following such disruptions. Rather than drawing a distinction between human language and nonhuman sound, I prefer to suggest a more flexible interplay between mouth and muzzle, which insists on the blurred boundary between the organs humans and beasts use for speaking and eating and, by extension, on the porous boundaries between sound, predation and appetite. The juxtaposition of utterance and sound in certain fables emphasises the muddling of the functions of mouths (as orifices used symbolically for speaking) and muzzles (as orifices primarily associated with killing and eating).[16] Several fables depict moments in which nonhumans—a wolf, a billy goat, a fox, a cockerel—are depicted manipulating sound or language to achieve their own ends, usually either to prey on others or to save themselves. In the fables I have selected, moments of linguistic or sonorous tension are juxtaposed with scenes in which the barking of dogs emphasises a muzzled perspective in contrast to other fable beasts, who speak with less clearly defined mouth-muzzles. I suggest that in some fables the barking of dogs parallels the common law process of the hue and cry, thus providing a form of resolution to the deadlock that arises through nonhuman utterance. These texts, I argue, emphasise the importance of nonhuman perspective by depicting beasts resorting to their own muzzles—and to their own vocalisations—to solve situations that have been complicated by mouths or mouth-muzzles.

In contrast to the sounds produced by muzzles, the sounds emitted by beaks in the *Fables* offer a different kind of parallel to human forms of communication, whereby birdsong mirrors human singing. In particular, the sound of the cuckoo, and its connection to music and echoic forms of expression, conveys a perspective that mirrors but also muddles human forms of logic. The relationship between the sound of the cuckoo in one of the fables and the act of singing 'cuccu' in a Middle English song, 'Sumer is icumen in', bound alongside the *Fables* in MS Harley 978, reveals

[16] Sarah Kay has drawn attention to similar tensions in different medieval versions of the 'Wolf at School' fable from the Latin Romulus LBG collection, in which a wolf is made to learn elementary Latin but, when asked to repeat letters out loud, can only say 'agnus'. See 'As in Heart, So in Mouth: Translating the Scandal of Wolfish Desire from *Fables* to Peire Vidal', *French Studies*, 69.1 (2015), pp. 1–13. See also Alison Langdon, '"Dites le mei, si ferez bien": Fallen Language and Animal Communication in *Bisclavret*', in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages*, pp. 160–61.

how the perspective of the beak diverges from that of the muzzle. The *Fables* and the English song portray expressions of cuckoo noise as highly ambiguous in nature; when seen in the context of the fables, such ambiguity suggests that the bird's song lies outside of the logical, legal or moral frameworks observed elsewhere in fables that feature beasts such as dogs and wolves. Put simply, the perspectives of beaks are part of a nonhuman outlook that is less concerned with domesticity and control than the perspectives that emerge in connection with muzzles. Instead, the beak is identified with the pleasure of song and music, simultaneously affirming a connection between human singers and the singing cuckoo bird. This renders ambiguous the meaning of the very action of singing as a viable form of accurate communication.

Bark Like You Mean It: Saved by the Muzzle

The entangled natures of nonhuman sound and speech are especially noticeable in three of the *Fables* dealing with dogs. These fables offer multiple perspectives identified with a variety of different muzzles: canine, lupine and vulpine figures are depicted speaking, while dogs are associated with the sound of barking. The first of these tales is 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat', which illustrates how human systems are to some degree mirrored through nonhuman sounds. This text depicts a situation in which a goat tries to save himself from the clutches of a wolf by reasoning with him that he should be spared from being eaten.[17] The wolf has been hunting the billy goat for a whole year and, finally having found him, refuses to grant the billy goat a reprieve ('terme', l. 27). The billy goat attempts to find a solution couched in the same language as that used by the wolf, suggesting that he say a mass for both himself and the wolf, delivered from the top of a nearby hill. This is an argument that persuades the reluctant wolf, whose concession is described in a passage that introduces the play of power and dominance through language:

[17] According to Brucker, the source for this fable is unknown, but it may be derived from the *Romuli Anglici cunctis exortae fabulae*. See the abridged version provided by Léopold Hervieux in *Les Fabulistes latins depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge*, vol. 2, 72, 'De Capra et Lupo' (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), p. 613. It may also be derived from the *Rom. Anglic. Nonnul.*, an edition of which is provided in *Les Fabulistes latins*, 5, p. 550.

"Tu n'averas ja de mei merci,
kar ne te puis terme doner
que jeo te veie vif aler."
—"Jeo ne quer terme", dist li bucs,
"fors tant que jeo die pur vus
une messë, autre pur mei,
sur cel tertre ke jo la vei.
Tutes les bestes qui l'orrunt,
quë as bois u as viles sunt,
ferunt pur nus a Deu preere."
Li lus l'otreie en teu manere.

Fables, p. 338, ll. 26–36

> "You will never obtain forgiveness from me, because I cannot grant you a reprieve and see you leave alive."
> "I do not seek a reprieve", said the billy goat, "except to say one mass for you and another for myself, on this high hill that I see there. All the beasts who will hear it, who are in the woods and the villages, will say a prayer to God for us." According to these conditions, the wolf conceded.

One of the ways that the language of this passage participates in the expression of the wolf's dominance over the billy goat is through the use of pronouns, which simultaneously signal the status of each beast and their decision to converse in dialogue. The billy goat addresses the wolf with the formal 'vus' whilst the wolf indicates his superiority over the goat by using the informal 'tu', hierarchical modes of address that are maintained throughout the passage. Human modes of expression thus on some level already translate nonhuman perspectives: the use of 'vus' and 'tu' is a linguistic expression of the predator/prey relationship. This relationship, rather than the characters' status, is ultimately what dictates how dialogue between the two beasts unfolds. The conversation between the two protagonists is a battle of wits to determine whether or not the goat will get eaten; the wolf attempts to persuade the goat to give up his life as the goat attempts to reason his way out of the situation.

The rhetoric used by the billy goat and the wolf echoes legal and religious terminology; it is both a linguistic representation of nonhuman predatory relationships and a humanisation of this relationship in terms drawn from the medieval social world. Following this, the fable delves deeply into the anthropomorphic representation of the wolf and the billy goat in the scenario of the billy goat performing mass. The linguistic battle between the two creatures uses a semantic field that draws on political, legal and ecclesiastical terminology, reinforcing the extent to which their actions are humanised. Both the wolf and the goat talk of a *terme*, or reprieve, and the fable portrays these beasts indulging in logical and, by association, rational argument.[18] The appeal to *merci* (mercy) and *preere* (prayer), terms that reflect more religious language, shifts the debate from a legal setting towards a spiritual conclusion. The anthropomorphism of this scene is disrupted, however, at the introduction of sound in parallel to formalised linguistic utterance.

The contrast between discourse and sound is evident in the passage that follows the promise of the billy goat to say mass. The goat, having encouraged the wolf to take his mind off his belly and to consider the spiritual benefit of a mass held on top of the hill, climbs to the summit alone. The billy goat reaches the hilltop and cries out loud ('Li bucs leva en haut sun cri', p. 338, l. 42). This is a cry that summons the local shepherds who live in the surrounding villages. The linguistic tensions that represented the predator/prey relationship between the two protagonists are briefly abandoned at this point as a more dynamic, action-driven style takes its place, emphasising the riotous arrival of the shepherds and their dogs: 'Le lu virent, si l'escrierent, | de tutes parz les chens hüerent; | le lu unt pris e deciré.' ('They saw the wolf, shouted out to him, from all around the dogs came howling. They seized the wolf and tore him to pieces').[19] The billy goat's cry thus introduces an abrupt shift

[18] The verb *otreier* has a history of use in legal contexts, including for a short time in the English language. See the *AND* (online), 'otreier', v.a., and v.n.

[19] *Fables*, ll. 47–49. The scene in which the wolf is killed by the villagers and the dogs is written in the *Romulus Anglici Cunctis* thus: 'Constituta igitur in eminenti loco, respiciens in celum, cepit alta voce clamare, et Lupus astitit ei, credens quod missam cantaret. Audierunt clamorem Capelle vicini; canes et rustici, egressi de villis, Lupum insecuti sunt, et comprehenderunt eum, et fustibus impie ceciderunt, et Capram de morsibus liberavunt suis', Léopold Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes latins*, 2, 72, 'De Capra et Lupo', p. 613. It is described in the *Rom. Anglic. Nonnul.* in the following way: 'Ascendit itaque in montis uertice[m]et boatu tam terribili exclamauit, ut ex ipso mugitu ostenderet Lupum gregibus

in pace and tone alongside the expression of nonlinguistic nonhuman sound. What had been a linguistic debate has now transformed dramatically into a hunting scene! This shift is indicated not only by the action, but also by the language used to describe that action; the verbs *huër* (to howl) and *escrier* (to cry out) indicate the communicative sounds of the shepherds and their dogs—sounds which are part of the response to the billy goat's 'cri'. These terms describe noises emitted from muzzles that are associated with both the production of vocal sound and the appetites of the hunt.

In contrast to the earlier dialogue between the wolf and the goat, depicted through spoken direct discourse (and therefore through what I am describing as nonhuman mouths), the moment of the hue and cry is more dependent on the nonlinguistic sounds of muzzles. The verbs used to describe the barking of the dogs, *escrier* and *huër*, evoke the common English law process, the hue and cry, by which legal bystanders were summoned to assist in the apprehension of a criminal who had been seen committing a crime.[20] The juxtaposition of the verbs *escrier* and *huër* in the *Fables* posits a direct equivalence with the hue and cry law process, suggesting a parallel between the pack hunt and the hue and cry as a way of interpreting the dynamics of this scene. According to Samantha Sagui, the hue and cry allowed victims of a crime 'to summon their neighbours to pursue suspected criminals' and 'was one of the oldest and most communally based systems of policing in England.'[21] With roots in England's tenth-century Germanic legal institutions, the practice continued to be encouraged by the Normans, with parliament rolls recording such events well into the fifteenth century. The depiction of dogs performing these sounds thereby connects canine representation in this fable with this legal process, rendering the dogs themselves agents of communal justice.

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inminere. Quod audintes pastores et rustici, qui ex parte alia montis errant, accurrerunt cum canibus qui Lupum diris morsibus discerpserunt', *Les Fabulistes latins*, 5, p. 550.

[20] The *OED* suggests that the etymology for this phrase is from the Anglo-Norman expression 'hu e cri', noting that 'there is some ground to think that *hue* as distinct from *cri* originally meant inarticulate sound, including that of a horn or trumpet as well as of the voice'. See 'hue and cry, n.' The *AND* provides examples, specifically from law texts, of the expression, 'hu et cri', or 'faire le hu et cri' ('to make the hue and cry'). See 'hu, hue etc.' The word 'hu' in Anglo-Norman is often used to articulate the sound of the hunting cry. The *MED* provides examples of the expression 'hue and cry' dating from the mid-thirteenth century. See 'heu(e) (n. 2)'.

[21] 'The Hue and Cry in Medieval English Towns', *Historical Research*, 87.236 (2014), p. 179.

The English terms 'hue' and cry', related to their French counterparts 'huër' and 'crier', form a connection between collective action and other sonic phenomena such as rioting and hunting. Christopher Fletcher suggests that 'contemporary writers viewed collective action in towns as a mixture of news and noise swelling into the clamour of the crowds and finally into violence'.[22] The hue was also a legal accusation that brought gender into the legal process. Several scholars have highlighted the role of women in raising the hue and cry, and the responsibility that a woman undertook if the court decided that she had disrupted the public peace and made a false accusation: 'if the jury and personal pledging were male institutions, the hue and cry belonged to women'.[23] However, in the *Fables* it is not men and women who raise the cry, but nonhuman beasts, and more specifically, beasts such as goats that might be preyed upon. The billy goat raises the hue as part of his supposed 'mass' in 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat' and in doing so calls upon dogs and humans to resolve his predicament. The text forms a connection between the collective noise of predatory beasts (a hunting pack) and the human mob in pursuit of a criminal. The ensuing sound that comes from the muzzles of the dogs echoes the policing status of the hue and cry as the hunting dogs arrive on the scene in order to rescue the goat from the clutches of the wolf.

Just as earlier in the fable the wolf's predation was couched in feudal language, in the ensuing passage the confusion of nonhuman sound and human social concepts is similarly unclear. The direct consequence of taking justice into the common arena and of placing this justice into the muzzles of the hunting dogs is clear—the predatory wolf is torn to pieces. Whereas the fable began with the expression of the wolf's appetite, by the end of the tale the tables have turned and it is the appetite of the hunting dogs that is sated, restoring the function of nonhuman muzzles to killing and consumption, rather than speech. The difference between the

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[22] Fletcher notes how literary authors including Chaucer and John Gower use terms such as 'murmur', 'clamour', 'cry' and 'noise' in descriptions of political discontent. See 'News, Noise, and the Nature of Politics in Late Medieval English Provincial Towns', *Journal of British Studies*, 56 (2007), p. 261.

[23] DeWindt, Anne Reiber, and DeWindt, Edwin Brezette, *Ramsey: The Lives of an English Fenland Town, 1200-1600* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), pp. 74–75 and 236–38. Sagui also notes that the hue and cry became increasingly connected to women's political expression over the centuries, remarking that this 'may have increased distrust of the hue and encouraged the elite to intensify their oversight of it', 'The Hue and Cry in Medieval English Towns', p. 193.

wolf's manipulative speech and the instinctive barking of the dogs also maps onto a difference in appetite: whereas the wolf wants to feed on the goat for sustenance, the dogs' 'appetite' is focused on killing and tearing to pieces. The terms 'escrierent' and 'hüerent', introduced at the mid-point of the fable, thus mark an important transition in the text as communal justice takes over from the tangled political language used between the wolf and the billy goat.

Despite the resolution that comes about through the hue and the cry in this episode, the utterance of the wolf persists as he continues to speak. As the wolf is being torn apart by the dogs, he calls to the billy goat once more in an address that seems to display his comical detachment from the realities of his situation and his surprise at being unnaturally duped: '"Frere", fet il, "bien sai e vei | malement avez prié pur mei: | bien poi entendre par le cri | que c*eo* ert preere de enemi. | Mut est mauveise ta pramesse, | unc[es] mes n'oï peiur messe."' ('"Brother, he said, "I see and understand well that you have said your prayer for me badly. By that cry I can understand that this is the prayer of an enemy. Your promise is very bad; never have I heard a worse mass."' ll. 51–56). Even as he is being torn to pieces, the wolf pinpoints a distinction between different forms of utterance. The wolf continues to read the situation literally, rather than appreciating the irony that human readers of this text will certainly pick up on.

Whilst nonhuman sounds and language do partially mirror human utterance, they are also represented as forming their own species-specific channels of communication on a broader continuum, forming specific perspectives and thus communicating other-than-human worldviews. The connection between nonhuman sound and meaning-making is fundamental to understanding the status of the hue and the cry in this fable and the way that it parallels human communication. In a discussion of different types of spoken discourse in medieval verse, Sophie Marnette demonstrates that direct discourse and indirect discourse between human protagonists in medieval literature can be situated on a continuum 'between external speech, inner speech, thoughts and attitudes.'[24] We see similar types of utterance, sound and noise communicated in the *Fables*. However, these texts do not just depict

[24] Sophie Marnette, *Speech and Thought Presentation in French* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins B. V., 2005), p. 50. Marnette also discusses these themes in *Narrateur et points de vue dans la littérature française médiévale: une approche linguistique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998).

discourse between human protagonists. Howling and barking are actions that mirror the shouting and wailing of humans in this fable. They are also positioned in contrast to direct and indirect 'human' discourse, which would typically be produced by a human mouth. Rather than presenting a continuum of different forms of speech in the *Fables*, the category of sound allows us to identify different forms of sonic communication between various humans and nonhumans, incorporating sounds that represent or signify in other-than-human ways.

The howling and crying emitted by the muzzles of hunting dogs in this fable restores harmony following the opening conflict between a domesticated mammal (the billy goat) and a wild beast (the wolf). Human dominion over nonhumans and the natural order is thus protected, for it is domesticated dogs that are brought forward to bring communal justice to the situation. The replacement of humanising dialogue with the sound of the hunt (the hue and cry) is also a replacement of the hierarchy of predator/prey associated with a non-domesticated beast (the wolf) and the hierarchies of man, who comes to the aid of the goat accompanied by the hunting dogs. Whereas speaking is reminiscent of human activity even when coming from the mouths of non-domesticated quadrupeds, the crying and howling of dogs is a nonlinguistic vocal signal directed at alerting the shepherds to the presence of the wolf. Communication is therefore depicted as working in more than one direction: between the wolf and the billy goat; between the billy goat and the shepherds; and between the dogs and the shepherds. Howling, crying, or as these terms also obliquely suggest, barking, are thus at once comprehensible and unsettlingly other-than-human. They neither emerge solely from the realm of human semantics nor from that of nonhuman behaviour. Instead, the sounds identified with the hue and cry can be understood as drawing on the perspective of the mouth as well as of the muzzle.

A similar parallel between mouth and muzzle is operative in the fable of 'The Fox and the Cockerel', which was famously re-used in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*.[25] In this fable the cockerel is depicted singing on a farm. A fox soon comes along and addresses the cockerel with sweet words ('beaus diz', p. 238, l. 4), noting

[25] See Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Marie's source for this fable is unknown, but it may be derived from the *Romuli Anglici cunctis*. See *Les Fabulistes latins*, 50, 'De Gallo et Vulpe', pp. 598–99.

in particular that the cockerel has a clear singing voice (‘clere voiz’, l. 7) that surpasses even that of the cockerel’s father. The fox soon displays his duplicity, however, when he recommends that the cockerel would sing better with his eyes closed. As the cockerel closes his eyes and begins to sing, the fox seizes him and makes for the forest. It is at this point that the shepherds and their dogs join the chase, signalled by the verb *hüer* in the third person present indicative: ‘Par mi un champ, u il passa, | curent aprés tut li pastur; | li chiens le *hüent* tut entur: | veit le gupil, ki le cok tient; | mar le guaina si par eus vient!’ (‘In a field which he passed by all the shepherds ran after him; the dogs *howled* at him from all around. He sees the fox, who takes the cockerel; woe is to him who comes among them!’ ll. 16–20, my emphasis).[26] In actual hunting scenarios barking and howling are used to locate and track prey and communicate this to other dogs and hunters. In a similar way, the howling of the dogs in this fable raises the hue and cry and acts as a signal to the shepherd, who only then sees the fox in question, just as if these characters were participating in a fox hunt.

The use of the verb *hüer* seems, as in the fable of ‘The Wolf and the Billy Goat’, to communicate a moment mid-fable in which the narrative perspective slips between the vocal activity of dogs and that of the human shepherd. Directly following this moment, the cockerel wittily suggests to the fox that he should open his mouth and shout out (‘escrie’) to the dogs and shepherds that the cockerel belongs to him, and that the fox will therefore never release him. This is another point at which the verbs *hüer* and *escrier* combine to parallel the hue and cry. The fox follows the advice of the cockerel, but soon realises the error of his ways as the cockerel jumps from his mouth and escapes. The fable ends with a double moral message: one from the mouth (or beak) of the cockerel himself and one situated as part of the more formal epimythium. From this point, the words of the cockerel are depicted through utterance, whereas the fox’s thoughts are presented ambiguously as either inner thoughts or indirect speech:

[26] The chase scene in the Latin *Romuli Anglici Cunctis* reads as follows: ‘Aderant forte pastores in campo, qui Vulpem profugam canibus et clamoribus insequebantur’, *Les Fabulistes latins*, 50, p. 599.

"Va", fet li cocs, "si lur escrie
que sui tuens, ne me larras mie."
Li gupil volt parler en haut,
e li cocs de sa buche saut;
sur un haut fust s'[en] est muntez.
Quant li gupilz s'est reguardez,
mut par se tient enfantillé
que li cocs l'ad si enginné;
de maltalent e de dreit' ire
la buche cumence a maudire,
ke parole quant dev*e*reit taire.
Li cocs respunt: "Si dei jeo faire:
maudire l'oil ki volt cluiner
quant il deit guarder e guaiter
que mal ne vienge a sun seignur."
Ceo funt li fol: tut li plusur
parolent quant deivent taiser,
teisent quant il deivent parler.

Fables, 60, pp. 238–40, ll. 21–38

"Go" said the cockerel, "shout out to them that I belong to you; that you will never let go of me." The fox goes to speak out loud, and the cockerel jumps out of his mouth. He jumped onto a high branch. When the fox understood what had happened, he felt very silly that the cockerel had tricked him in such a way. With irritation and a frank anger, he began to curse his mouth, which speaks when it should keep quiet. The cockerel responded: "This is what I should do: curse the eye that shuts when it should safeguard and watch out so that its lord suffers no harm." The foolish act in this way: most speak when they should keep quiet and keep quiet when they should speak."

The ambiguity of speech and thought presentation in this passage has important consequences for the resolution of the fable, as it blurs the distinction between the thoughts of the fox and the cockerel alongside the moral of the tale. In 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat' the barking of the dogs that came to the billy goat's rescue is

described using both the verbs *hüer* and *crier*; by contrast, in this passage from 'The Fox and the Cockerel', the dog howls (*hüent*) to the fox, and the fox follows the advice of the cockerel to cry out (*escrie*) back to the dogs, in what becomes a call and response. The curse that the fox places on his own mouth, which reflects on his own rashness and deceitfulness, then provides the stimulus for the cockerel's moral. This offers a parallel moral based on a different part of the body than the mouth or the muzzle: namely, the eye that should keep watch for its lord. In line with the moral that 'li fol' ('the foolish') speak when they should be quiet and are quiet when they should speak, both the fox and the cockerel are shown to exhibit behaviours that are expressions of carelessness: the fox follows the advice of the cockerel and loses his prey and the cockerel gives in to pride, which is how he finds himself in the clutches of the fox in the first place.

The fox and the cockerel in this fable are both embroiled in their own mistakes, which involve various slippages between sound, song and language. One implication of the concluding morals of this fable is that the fox should use his muzzle for killing and eating rather than speaking. Indeed, his mistake is presented as the process of succumbing to a type of human communication ('parler'). This mistake also contrasts with what the cockerel anticipated when he asked the fox to cry out ('escrie') and therefore raise the hue and cry on himself. The fox, trespassing onto the realm of human utterance, and therefore of duplicity, thus brings his own doom upon himself through nonlinguistic utterance. This makes narrative sense; after all, the fox was duped by an act of speaking that parallels his own trick on the cockerel at the beginning of the fable. However, it is also possible to read the cockerel's initial song in the fable as his own mistake: were the cockerel to have used language to combat the fox at the beginning of the fable, he may have had a chance at duping the fox himself earlier on in much the same way as the billy goat duped the wolf. The fable thus contrasts the world-forming capacities of nonlinguistic utterance—the cockerel singing and displaying his narcissism; the fox raising the hue and cry on himself—with the proverbial messages of the epimythium, which communicate human social and moral points of view. The slippage between these different types of voice reveals that these fable beasts and birds move between different human and nonhuman communicative worlds. Their mistakes are crucial to the consideration of sound in this fable as world-forming. They demonstrate the ability of fable beasts and birds to transgress the bounds of human language.

Placing the hue and cry into the muzzles of dogs, goats and foxes confuses human and nonhuman sonic phenomena. In doing so, the fable blurs the moralities and world-views presented in the fable. The fable of 'The Fox and the Cockerel' offers a comparison between a vulpine perspective on consumption that overlaps with a human perspective on rhetoric and morality. The dialogue between the fox and the cockerel is built upon the principle that the predator's speech aims to generate the conditions for catching and consuming prey. In contrast, a canine perspective, depicted through the hunting dogs, remains linguistically closed off from the reader and connected to the 'natural' legal retribution inherent in the hue and cry.

The howling of dogs in both fables discussed above introduces two different perspectives that reveal how justice works. 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat' presents a purely canine perspective from the point of view of the dogs themselves (a perspective identified with the muzzle), whose job it is to protect human property and hunt the perpetrators of crimes. In 'The Fox and the Cockerel' we see a cross-species canine/human perspective as the sound from the muzzles of the dogs is directed towards the shepherds, whose own human mouths join the hue and cry in a parody of how the hue and cry was considered to function in practice. The hue and cry in the *Fables* thus communicates canine perspectives whilst simultaneously drawing on ambiguous forms of human policing that rely on noise and confusion rather than direct communication.

Using the distinction between human mouths and canine muzzles, these fables put into question the nature of utterance and its ability to communicate false ideas or alternative points of view. In this way, it is possible to read the expression of nonhuman sound in these individual fables as world-forming, as it communicates different narrative perspectives that go beyond a purely human point of view, while nonetheless being contiguous with it. In a way that contradicts the purely anthropocentric reading that scholars such as McCracken identify with medieval fables, these texts demonstrate how the world-forming capacities of some of the *Fables* develop the ambiguities of nonhuman and human perspectives, rather than restricting depictions of nonhuman sounds solely to reflections of human behaviour and morality. Instead of reinforcing distinctions between human language and nonhuman sound or noise, these fables invite readers to see one shading into the other, and even to see sound as surpassing the boundaries of an anthropocentric perspective.

Canine Perspective in 'The Thief and the Dog'

The perspectives of domesticated canine protagonists in the *Fables* are not limited to expressions that mirror the legal process of the hue and cry. Dogs feature amongst a range of quadruped characters, many of whom, including the lion, the fox or the wolf, are much more infamous and prominent than canine figures in the *Fables* as a whole. Canine perspective expressed through barking, however, is essential to understanding how the *Fables* draw links between utterance, noise, domestication and rhetorical power. These are themes that are present to a certain extent in the fables of 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat' and 'The Fox and the Cockerel', but which are rendered more explicit in the fable of 'The Thief and the Dog'. The latter not only depicts a dog barking, but also provides an example of a canine perspective that is depicted through the mouth-muzzle rather than the muzzle alone. Canine perspective is depicted shading into human perspective in this fable in a way that contrasts with the dogs depicted making the hue and cry in my discussion above. In contrast to the hue and cry seen in other texts, canine utterance is here based not only on barking, but also on human rhetoric. This juxtaposition highlights how the perspective of the mouth-muzzle conveys overlapping human and canine worldviews.

In the fable of 'The Thief and the Dog', a human thief seeks to rob a shepherd and brings with him some bread to appease the shepherd's guard dog.[27] The dog and the thief engage in a dialogue in which the thief tries to persuade the dog to take the bread; the implication of this is that the dog would take the bread in exchange for silence. The dog, however, noticing a flaw in the thief's proposition, engages him in a quasi-philosophical argument:

> Li chiens li dit: "Amis, pur quei
> prend[e]rai jeo cest pain de tei?
> Jeo nel te puis reguerduner
> në a tun eos le pain guarder!"

[27] The source for this fable is *Romulus Nilantii*, 'De F(f)ure Nocturno et Cane Secucto'. See *Les Fabulistes latins*, 3, pp. 527–28. It may be derived from the *Romuli Anglici cunctis*. See *Les Fabulistes latins*, 21,'De Fure et Cane', p. 579.

Li lere dist: “Jeo n’en quer rien.
Mangez le pein, e sil retien!”
Fables, 20, pp. 116–18, ll. 17–12

> The dog said to him: “Friend, why would I take this bread from you? I can neither pay you back, nor guard the bread for your own profit.” The robber said: “I ask for nothing. Eat the bread; take it!”

In a gesture that reaffirms the intellectual superiority of the dog over the human in this passage, the dog proceeds to offer a reasoned argument that explains his refusal to take the bread from the thief. In an amusing mind-over-matter dispute, the dog claims that he is well aware of the thief’s intentions to keep him quiet with bread so that the thief can steal the shepherd’s sheep. Unlike the hunting dogs in the fables I discussed earlier, this guard dog refuses to satisfy his appetite in a move that initially seems to prioritise the rhetorical function of the mouth over the eating and barking function of the muzzle. The dog claims that, were he to allow the thief to take the sheep, he would be neglecting his duty, and in juridical terms, would be taken for a traitor (‘treïtre’):

Li cheins respunt: “N’en voil nïent!
Jeo sai tresbien a escïent
que ma buche veus estuper
que jeo ne puisse mot suner,
si embler[i]ez noz berbiz
quant li berkers est endormiz.
Trahi av*e*reie mun seignur
que m’ad nurri desque a cest jur;
malement av*e*reit enpleié
qu’il m’ad nurri e afeité,
si par ma garde aveit perdu
ceo dunt il m’ad lung tens peü.

Et tu me[is]mes m'en harreies
e pur treïtre me tendreies.
Ne voil tun pain issi guainer."
E dunc comencet abaier.

Fables, p. 118, ll. 14–28

> The dog responded: "I do not want any of it. I know, well and truly, that you want me to keep my mouth shut, so that I am not able to make a sound, and then you would take our sheep when the shepherd is asleep. I would have betrayed my lord, who has fed me up until this day. To have nourished and raised me would have been of no profit to him if, because of my neglect, he had lost the goods that he had for so long left in my negligent charge. And you also would hate me and take me for a traitor. For this reason I do not want to take your bread." And then he began to bark.

The use of juridical language in this passage is accompanied by a series of images that reinforce the feudal values of loyalty, truth and fidelity towards one's overlord. This rhetorical dialogue chimes with the type of language used by the billy goat in 'The Wolf and the Billy Goat', in which the goat persuades the wolf to grant him a reprieve. Another similarity between this fable and those discussed above is that the reasoning behind the guard dog's utterance is rigorously structured around the control and protection of human goods and bound in the logic of the dog's domestic responsibilities to his human owner.

The first twenty-seven lines of the fable contribute to a gradual increase of narrative tension based on the exchange between the two protagonists and the unusual eloquence of the guard dog, which goes some way to communicating the types of conceptually disordered interactions that define canine domestication by humans. Due to the logical structures upon which the dog's argument is based, the utterance of the dog in this passage is rhetorically superior to that of the human thief. The dog addresses the thief as 'Amis' in a style reminiscent of medieval debate. This is particularly clear as the fifteen-line passage engages in rhetorical parody. The argument maintained by the dog acts as a form of *imitatio*—an imitation of human rhetoric as well as a parody of the university practice of *disputatio*, notably in the

dog's efforts at persuasion.[28] The guard dog combines mental images of future actions that might be possible, alongside emotive language that appeals to human emotion, in words such as 'treïtre' in a passage of rhetorical disputation. The tension built during the discourse between the two protagonists thus bridges human and canine perspectives through cross-species interaction.[29] Likewise, elements of the phrasing, such as polysyllabic words ('reguerduner') and formal phrases that extend through *enjambement* over the octosyllabic line, enhance the formal, poetic qualities of the guard dog's utterance. In contrast, the thief is depicted as ignorant of logical argument, perhaps due to a lack of schooling in rhetoric and to the surprise of being confronted in such a direct way by a dog. His reaction is composed of imperatives and short phrases contained on either side of the hemistich.

Although the utterance from the dog's mouth ostensibly communicates human reasoning, and might thus be considered anthropocentric, the dog's bark at the end of his argument unsettles such modes of thinking. The barking of the dog, which is saved until the very last moment of the narrative, pulls the perspective of the fable back to a canine one.[30] By clearly switching from the perspective of the mouth to that of the muzzle at the last moment, the fable communicates a type of bubbling nervousness that some dogs exhibit when they are ready to bark. The two perspectives—the canine and human worldviews communicated by the fable—are thus inseparable. The mouth-muzzle communicates a perspective associated with the dog, but which is identified with human and nonhuman point of view. This is particularly evident if the epimythium is read in conjunction with the dog's bark, for the epimythium's message states that if someone wants to suborn or coax an honest man to betray his lord, that man must expect a recompense of the type that the dog

[28] See Douglas Kelly, 'The Medieval Art of Poetry and Prose: The Scope of Instruction and the Uses of Models', in *Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. by Scott D. Troyan (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1–14; and Martin Camargo, 'Defining Medieval Rhetoric', in *Essays on Medieval Rhetoric* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 21–34.

[29] I refer the reader to my discussion of canine and human relationships in Chapter Two, in which practices of care in relations framed by domestication are emphasised alongside those of dominance. The idea that certain animals, such as dogs, might be better at some forms of communication than humans is particularly relevant to the representation of bleating sheep, who are domesticated by St Francis in the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys*, discussed in Chapter Three.

[30] This play with poetic tension and release is present neither in the *Romuli Nilantii* nor the *Romuli Anglici cunctis*. See *Les Fabulistes latins*, 3, 'De F(f)ure Nocturno et Cane Seducto', p. 527, and 22, 'De Fure et Cane', p. 580.

offered to the thief.[31] The dog's bark, therefore, is interpreted as the logical conclusion of his rhetorical argument, emphasising the importance of thinking through the parallel perspectives of the world-forming mouth-muzzle connection.

Through the representation of canine barking, the audience's attention is drawn to the ambiguous space between articulate language and inarticulate sound. My reading of this fable emphasises the release of the bark as the expression of actual canine behaviour, for what does a good guard dog do but bark at the arrival of an intruder? The fable exploits the ambiguity of the dog's point of view by referring to actual dog behaviour, while also making his bark a conclusion to his argument—a combination that conjoins both humanised mouth and canine muzzle. The dog's final bark, which brings a physical resolution to the *denouement*, is vital to the interpretation of the fable's earlier messages concerning the falsification of speech and its instinctive opposite in the expression of sound divorced from linguistic meaning. The bark in 'The Thief and the Dog' demonstrates that what might be considered as human language is but a small piece of a large puzzle that situates meaning in the fable at the juxtaposition of the sounds and utterances of humans and nonhumans. These various sonic phenomena are situated on a long and muddled continuum of sonic communication tools.

Cuckoos and the Perspectives of Beaks

One of the clear distinctions between the types of nonhuman sounds that are represented in the *Fables* is between the sounds made from muzzles, such as barking, crying and forms of utterance, and those emitted by beaks. As we have seen, muzzled perspectives are often connected to domesticity and power in the *Fables* as this reflects a type of contact between humans and domestic dogs that spoke to medieval, as well as modern, cross-species domestication practices. The distinction between the perspective of the muzzle and that of the beak is connected to the very different positioning of birds as non-domesticated creatures, as well as to their association

[31] 'si nuls l'en veut doner lüer | ne par pramesse losenger | que sun seignur deive trair, | nel veile mie cunsentir; | atendre en deit tel guer[e]dun | cum[e] li chien fist del larun' ('if someone wants to suborn him or by promises coax him into treachery against his lord, he must not consent; expect a recompense of the same nature as that which the dog gave to the thief'), *Fables*, 20, p. 118, ll. 31–36.

with melodious sound. Whilst the barking of dogs is connected to noisiness and confusion in the context of policing disputes, rhetorical debate and warning signals, the sounds of birds hold special connotations with music and performance, and with social judgment of a different kind. These connotations closely tie birdsong and bird calls to the concepts of response and unresponsiveness in fable narratives. They also reveal links between birdsong and human singing, developing perspectives that explore the relationship between mouths and beaks in a way that is distinct from the interplay between mouths and muzzles in other fables. Singing and reproducing the sounds of birds puts avian utterance in ambiguous relation to the concept of language, and such ambiguity is represented in particular through the figure of the cuckoo in the *Fables*.

In 'The Birds and Their King' the birds seek a new ruler and, appropriately for a fable depicting a cuckoo, they consider electing their new sovereign based on the sound he makes.[32] In London, British Library, MS Harley 978 this collective decision is described as being made on the basis of 'le sun' (sound): 'Chescun de eus numa le sun | a fere cele electiun' ('Each one of them proclaimed that sound would be the deciding factor', p. 199, ll. 5–6).[33] The fable thus immediately connects the sounds of birdsong with communal decision-making at court.[34] The birds are surprised, however, when they hear the cry ('cri') of the cuckoo reverberating around the woods, as they do not know which bird it is that makes such a sound: 'Tuz esteient dunc esbaï | quant del cuccu oient le cri: ne surent quels oiseus ceo fu, | mes que tut tens diseit cuccu' ('They were therefore all shocked when they heard the cry of the cuckoo. They didn't know which bird it was, only that it always said

[32] The source for this fable is unknown, although it may be derived from *Rom. Anglic. nonnul.* See *Les Fabulistes latins*, 2, 10, 'De Volucribus et Rege Eorum', p. 553.

[33] Harriet Spiegel notes that most mss have 'chescuns duta de mesprisun' ('each one feared being wrong [of their decision]'), *Fables* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 272. Brucker translates the lines into modern French differently, as: 'Chacun désigna le sien | pour procéder à une telle élection', *Fables*, p. 199, ll. 5–6. I disagree with these translations based on the prominence of sound and speech in this fable as well as the focus on bird-lore in relation to the cuckoo and the distinctiveness of London, British Library, MS Harley 978, f. 52^{v}. This line is not found in the possible Latin source material—see n.[34] below—and may therefore be an addition by Marie herself. The *AND* notes that 'sun' is a form of 'son', for sound, noise or a song or tune.

[34] This is in contrast to the Latin source from which the fable may be derived, in which the birds are only described as hearing the cuckoo's voice: 'Volucribus quondam pro rege sibi eligendo ad consilium congregates, audita est uox Cuculi a longe concinentis. Omnes uocem tam sonogram et claram laudabant', *Les Fabulistes latins*, 10, pp. 553–54.

"cuckoo"', ll. 7–10). This passage demonstrates, however, that despite the ambiguity of the sound's origins, the sound 'cuccu' does indeed hold some abstract meaning for the other birds in the fable. They recognise the sound as a cry, but it is also depicted orthographically in a specific way that disassociates it from other birdcalls, which are merely evoked by the narrative in an abstract sense. Yet, even for human readers, the difference between 'cuccu' as a noun for a bird species and 'cuccu' as a description of sound is not easily discernible. The sound of the cuckoo thus raises more questions than it answers: does the cry the cuckoo makes resonate with the type of sound emitted by other songbirds? How do the other birds not know that the easily identifiable sound is produced by the cuckoo? Does the cuckoo know that it calls its own name?

In response to the uncertainty that arises from the ambiguous representation of the cuckoo's call, the birds collectively proceed to attribute noble values to the 'cuccu' sound, noting that whoever makes such a sound should be their lord. This is perhaps in anticipation of some of the questions raised above, and a way of interpreting ambiguous sound in a courtly or legal setting. The attribution of the concept of bravery and worth to the sound of the cuckoo, perhaps because of the act of self-naming, also distinguishes this sound from other types of birdsong, drawing on the strong *goo-ko* of the actual male cuckoo's mating call that reverberates through woodland when emitted by the cuckoo from an open perch. On hearing the cuckoo's call the excited birds fall into quick and superficial judgments on the nature of that sound and what it represents:

Mut le peot l'um de loinz oïr,
kar tut le bois fet retenir.
Tuz diseient en lur gargun
e afermerent par raisun
que cil oisel, ke si chauntout
e si grant noise demenout,
deveit bien estre rei e sire
de governer un grant empire;

s'il fust di pruz e si vaillanz
en ses ovres cum en ses chanz,
a seignur le vol*ei*ent aver.

Fables, 46, p. 198–200, ll. 11–21

> A man could hear it from afar because it resounded through the whole forest. In their own language (*gargun*) they all muttered and affirmed by reason that this bird, who sang so much and made such a noise, should truly be their king and lord; to govern a large empire. If he was as brave and worthy in action as in song, they wanted to have him as their lord.

Sound in this fable forms its own world from the perspective of the beak. This passage contains similar language for describing birdsong (the *cri*, *gargun* for *jargun*, and *noise*) as is found in the thirteenth-century *Vye de Seynt Franceys d'Assise*, discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. In the *Vye* such precise vocabulary for birdsong describes specific nonhuman sounds in scenes depicting the saint interacting with various birds and pulling them between forms of life. In the *Fables* the cuckoo's sound signifies something for the other birds rather than for human protagonists. Indeed, there are no humans involved in the birds' decision-making process. This is particularly evident when the birds discuss their subject, 'cuccu', in their own language ('en lur gargun'), to which humans are not privy. The cuckoo's sound prompts the other birds to ponder the significations of 'cuccu' whilst causing a great commotion in the woods. This type of world-forming activity posits a distinctive sphere of nonhuman communication, even as it clearly replicates human social structures and institutions. Indeed, it emphasises the theme of superficial judgment in the avian world, whilst marking this off from human understanding.

Since my discussion of this fable draws heavily on the mirroring of actual cuckoo calls with the social and political implications of this sound, it is important to consider the relationships between 'cuccu' as a written word, the sonic phenomena of birds of this species, and the capacity for humans to imitate this sound. The word *cuc*(*c*)*u* in Old French signifies the name of the cuckoo, or *cuculus canorus*, and orthographically represents the sound produced by this species during mating season. The cuckoo is a migratory bird that usually arrives in the British Isles in April and lays its eggs in the nests of smaller birds, leaving those birds to raise its chicks—a

habit which caused them to be associated with notoriety and dubious sexual and reproductive behaviours.[35] On the etymology of its name, the *OED* notes that in many languages 'a tendency has been shown from time to time to abandon inherited forms of this bird's name which, even though originally echoic, may have gradually ceased to be so under the operation of phonetic changes, in order to go back anew to the call of the bird.'[36] This is also the case for *cuccu* in Old French:

> The French *cucu*, *coucou* was not the representative of any Latin form, but taken anew from the call of the bird itself; Middle English *cuccu* might also be directly echoic, but being found only after the Norman Conquest, it was probably influenced by French example, though the annual lessons given by the bird have prevented the phonetic changes which the word would normally have undergone.[37]

The *OED* thus asserts an important connection between the sounds made by the species *cuculus canorus* and the representation of its name and sound through the written, spoken or sung word. Indeed, the *OED* further posits the link between actual cuckoo birds and their continued influence on spoken language produced by humans who, every year, relearn the sound of the cuckoo again in a process defined as 'echoic'. The echoic nature of this word is a point of close connection between the sounds of cuckoos and those of humans—one that highlights the role of call and response in cross-species communication. It also references the impact of such sounds on the formation and representation of words and therefore of human and nonhuman perspectives. For humans, who are intensely focused on the project of naming things, an action exemplified in Adam's naming of the creatures in Genesis (see Introduction), the cuckoo teaches and re-teaches its name every year.

The theme of echoic sound, and by contrast of silence or unresponsiveness (exemplified in the figure of the cuckoo), accompanies that of reinterpretation and

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[35] I refer the reader to the following article for a lengthy discussion on how the cuckoo has been ascribed a variety of associations in texts since the Middle Ages: James Hardy, 'Popular History of the Cuckoo', *The Folk-Lore Record*, 2 (1879), pp. 47–91. See also Lesley Kordecki, 'Chaucer's Cuckoo and the Myth of Anthropomorphism', in *Rethinking Chaucerian Beasts*, ed. by Carolynn Van Dyke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 249–52.

[36] *OED*, see 'cuckoo', n., 1[a].

[37] Ibid.

false judgment throughout the fable of ‘The Birds and their King’. Following the commotion that is caused by the call of the cuckoo, the fable describes how a small bird or titmouse (‘mesenge’) is chosen to go and establish the true character of the cuckoo. When it arrives at the scene of the cuckoo’s calling, the tit looks depreciatingly at the larger cuckoo, who all but fails to respond or even notice the smaller bird. The titmouse then decides to hop above the cuckoo in order to excrete onto his back. Following this, the tit jumps back down to the original branch, insulting and scorning the cuckoo for having said nothing in response to such a dishonourable act:

> Uncor*e* vodra plus haut munter,
> sun curage volt espruver:
> sur une branche en haut sailli,
> desur le dos li esmeulti.
> Unc[es] li cuccu mot ne dist
> ne peiur semblant ne l’en fist.
> Arere s’en vet la mesenge,
> le cuccu laidist e blastenge:
> ja de lui ne ferunt seignur.
>
> *Fables*, 46, p. 200, ll. 35–43

> [The titmouse] wanted to go higher to get a better idea of his temperament. He jumped up high onto a branch and dropped excrement onto his back. The cuckoo didn’t say a single word and didn’t lose his countenance because of it. The titmouse returned back and reproached (*laidist*) and scorned (*blastenge*) the cuckoo: never would they make him their lord.

The instinctive sound of the cuckoo is contrasted with the political and social silence of this large parasite bird in this passage. The reader, and the other birds, expects the noisy cuckoo to respond to the smaller tit in some way. Yet, he retains his composure whilst remaining completely unresponsive: ‘Unc[es] li cuccu mot ne dist | ne peiur semblant ne l’en fist’ (‘The cuckoo uttered not a single word and retained his composure’). This is an unusual way of describing the ungainly cuckoo, as it associates the bird with perseverance and haughtiness, and contrasts the act of not

speaking with the monotonous call that it was supposed to have produced only a few lines earlier. As the titmouse scorns the cuckoo, we are left with the question of whether the cuckoo was ever actually interested in being made the lord of the birds, for at no point had he expressed the desire for that title.

The fable deprives the reader of access to the thoughts behind the cuckoo's vocal sounds, and therefore to the perspective of the cuckoo bird. Instead, the call of 'cuccu' remains ambiguous, meaning more to the other birds in the narrative than to human readers. There seems to be a disruptive third way of indifference to power represented by the cuckoo, which sits outside the dynamic of power represented by all the other birds. The cuckoo's call is given a meaning only through its capacity to excite the other birds, and through its implicit connections to echoic forms of human communication. 'Cuccu' as the expression of the cuckoo's call is a sound that therefore hovers at the edges of categories of meaningful bird sound, birdsong and human utterance. The ambiguous nature of cuckoo perspective is especially prominent in the passage above through the contrast between the thoughts and the perspective of the titmouse, which are so clearly expressed in this small bird's decisions and actions.

Despite the ambiguous nature of the cuckoo's call in the acoustic environment of this fable, the passage in which the tit examines the cuckoo is highly evocative of the movement of small songbirds amongst tree branches.[38] Close attention to narrative detail, especially through the description of the titmouse's decision to hop at least three times around the cuckoo, indicates an effort to communicate the types of movement exhibited by songbirds in trees and shrubs. Unlike the ungainly cuckoo, the titmouse is able to move quickly from branch to branch to assess the character of the bird that emits such a persuasive 'cri'. Alongside the description of movement, the perspective of the angry, tweeting titmouse is communicated through his scorn of the cuckoo—a reproach that is described with the words 'laidist e blastenge' ('reproached and scorned'). This choice of words highlights the reversal of the presumed hierarchy of the ornithological social order and communicates the different perspectives of the different birds: those who hear it are highly excited by the sound of 'cuccu'; the producer of that sound is

[38] Brucker suggests that the description of the titmouse's movement amongst the branches excels in its depiction of the movement of a small songbird in order to better observe the cuckoo, *Fables*, 46, p. 201.

paradoxically unresponsive. The small songbird is nimble in the branches and quick to judge; the cuckoo is slow, heavy, and sonically awkward.

After this point in the fable, a different type of avian perspective is offered as the titmouse returns to the other birds in parliament in order to condemn the cuckoo for not having taken action to defend his honour.[39] The birds decide on this hearsay that they will choose the eagle as their sovereign instead of the cuckoo. This is a decision that calls to mind the eagle's position at the top of avian predatory hierarchies in bestiaries.[40] Little do the other birds realise that they have just chosen their top predator as their ruler. The eagle was not especially known for its vocalisations in literature of the Middle Ages, but rather for the majesty that it represented as sovereign of the birds and for the fact that it flies at a higher altitude than other birds. The epimythium of 'The Birds and Their King' thus draws on behavioural as well as acoustic qualities of different birds as it summarises one possible interpretation of the fable: that one should not make a lord out of a bad, slanderous or foolish man ('mauveis humme jangleür'), in whom there is only talk or gossip ('paroles'):

> Par cest essample *nus* mustre ici
> que hum ne deit pas fere seignur
> de mauveis humme jangleür,
> u n'i a si parole nun:
> tel se nobleie par tençun
> e veut manacer e parler
> que mut petit fet a duter.
>
> *Fables*, 46, pp. 202–204, ll. 70–76

[39] 'As autres dist la deshonur | e la hunte qu'il fist grant: | "Unc ne mustra peiur semblant. Si uns granz oiseus li mesfeseit, | mauveusement s'en vengereit"' ('He told the others of the dishonour and the great shame that he had inflicted: "Never did he lose his countenance. If a big bird did him wrong, he would find it difficult to avenge himself"'), adapted from *Fables*, 46, pp. 200–202, ll. 44–48. Brucker signals this as speech on the part of the titmouse.
[40] See 'Eagle; *aquila; aigle; aille*', in Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 113–115.

> By this example is demonstrated that man must not make a lord out of a bad *jangleur* in whom there is only verbosity. In argument he is grandiose; although he wants to talk and intimidate, he is not much to be feared.[41]

The moral of the fable troubles the connections between the call of 'cuccu' and the birds' responses to the cuckoo's song. The expression of avian sounds in this fable, through a distinct but expressive vocabulary based on the word 'cuccu' and narrative descriptions that are framed as a response to this sound, highlights competing 'beaked' perspectives. There are two ways of interpreting this moral: the first is superficial, taking the moral at face value, and the second is contradictory as it challenges the narrative of the fable. In the case of the former, the immediate response to this moral message would seem to indicate that the cuckoo is the charlatan because of his monotonous verbosity as well as the way he is described to the other birds by the titmouse. However, the latter interpretation would take the actions of the titmouse into account, suggesting that the moral could also hint that the slanderous gossiper heralded in the epimythium is in fact the titmouse himself, who has just unwittingly brought a top predator into the ruling position. In this interpretation the epimythium would contradict the narrative that the fable initially presents, based on which of the birds' utterance or songs are considered excessive. It is particularly significant that the communication of the point of view of the titmouse, which is portrayed in part through the sounds that birds make in the fable, contributes to the confusion of the moral message intended by the fable. The fable itself seems to support no singular dogmatic conclusion about what the sound 'cuccu' may represent, instead inviting the audience to make this decision themselves.

By presenting perspectives through an avian as well as a human lens, this fable represents bird utterance and sound as world-forming. The sound 'cuccu' conjures a perspective identified with the sound that issues from the bird's beak, highlighting the superficial nature of the judgment that the birds make on the quality of sound, despite their lack of knowledge about the true character of the cuckoo. Although ungainly and cumbersome, the cuckoo thus actually teaches the reader

[41] Note that the word 'jangleur', commonly interpreted as a musician or entertainer in the Middle Ages, also held considerable negative connotations, including: 'garrulous, loquatious', 'babbler, chatterer' and 'slanderer'. See *AND*, 'janglur'.

several important things about language and point of view, in a similar way to how it teaches humans the sound of the call 'cuccu' anew each year. The close association between the cuckoo's original 'cri' and the act of producing birdsong or bird calls means the sound 'cuccu' is correlated with a process of selection and decision-making that is pertinent to avian sonic behaviour, and which does not require the presence of human protagonists for the communication of such a perspective (as did the sound of the hue and cry in my first two examples in this chapter). The sounds emitted from the beaks of birds in the fables convey a nonhuman perspective that mirrors human social and cultural behaviours whilst also expressly drawing on avian characteristics.

Cuckoo Calling in 'Summer is icumen in'

In the Middle Ages expressions of cuckoo sound found their way into musical compositions, and thus musicality became inseparable from the human act of calling 'cuccu' more generally. Whereas the fable of 'The Birds and Their King' avoids evoking the human as an explicit reference point for understanding the utterance of the cuckoo, an early Middle English lyric, 'Sumer is icumen in', which is bound with the *Fables* in London, British Library, MS Harley 978, places the cuckoo's call directly into the mouths of human singers and encourages them to repeat the call *ad infinitum*. In this song, the connection between the cuckoo's call and the human act of singing is amplified by the presumption that the song will be performed by a human singer. By placing the act of calling 'cuccu' in 'Sumer is icumen in' in comparison to the expression of this sound in 'The Birds and Their King', it becomes possible to consider the effect of singing and performing the sound of the cuckoo on the communication of a different type of avian perspective, or rather, perspectives. These beaked perspectives overlap explicitly with the points of view of human singers and demonstrate the importance of reading across species boundaries in medieval texts that exploit the sounds of birds.

Languages and musical expression are different registers of communication that the texts in MS Harley 978 exploit to represent cuckoo sound.[42] Besides its

[42] London, British Library, MS Harley 978 was probably comissioned from Oxford booksellers by William of Wycombe (c. 1275), music copyist and Benedictine monk, or William of Winchester (c. 1265), a Benedictine monk of Reading in Berkshire in the third

inclusion of musical texts, one important aspect of this codex is its trilingual subject matter, which draws attention to the differences between languages, notably French, Latin and English. The contents of the manuscript include: a calendar with prognostications; a musical miscellany with notation; a medical miscellany in Latin and French; poems by Walter Map; satirical verse and songs in Latin; and a legend of Beckett's parents. The musical works in the volume include monophonic songs in Latin, *estampies* (a medieval dance and music form) and a three-part polyphonic *conductus* (a sacred, non-liturgical vocal composition) in Latin with a French alternative. On folio 11^{v} is a four-part rota canon, beginning: 'Sumer is icumen in, Lhude sing cuccu'. This song is written on a two-part pes sung to the words, 'Sing cuccu', with an alternative Latin text, 'Perspice Christicola', written underneath. In the Latin lyrics God is identified as a heavenly husbandman ('Celicus agricola').[43] Evidently, therefore, the short song 'Sumer is icumen in' is involved in code-switching between different languages. In this case, the Latin lyrics to the song add a Christological gloss onto an English song about natural fertility. The juxtaposition of English and Latin stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the manuscript, in which French is the dominant vernacular. What is most surprising, however, is that the Latin lyrics do not translate the lyric's most evocative feature—the repetitive call 'cuccu' of the cuckoo, which would have been recognisable to both anglophone and francophone audiences. This suggests that Latin is being used to act as a linguistic bridge between English and French, since this is the only English text in the manuscript. However, this is a bridge that is inserted to provide its own alternative gloss. The linguistic and sonorous contexts of this song emphasise how the crossing of human languages is implicated in the crossing of species perspectives, and especially of 'cuccu' perspectives.

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quarter of the thirteenth century. See Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 76–136; and Nicky Losseff, 'Wycombe, W. of (fl. c.1275)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[43] The Latin text, written in red underneath the English, reads as follows: 'Perspice, Christicola, | Que dignacio! | Celicus agricola | Pro vitis vicio | Filio | Non parcens exposuit | Mortis exicio, | Qui captivos semivivos | A supplicio | Vite donat | Et secum coronat | In celi solio.' ('Look, O lover of Christ, what condescension! The heavenly husbandman, because of a fault in the vine, not sparing his son, exposed him to the ordeal of death; and he brings back the half-dead prisoners from torment to life, and crowns them with himself on the throne of heaven.'). Original and translation from Bella Millett, 'Sumer is icumen in: London, British Library, MS Harley 978, f. 11v', in *Wessex Parallel WebTexts* (online).

The sound of the cuckoo in the English song is a leitmotif that signals the presence of multiple overlapping themes, including: the celebratory mood of summer; sexual promiscuity and the inevitability of this; the noisiness of the larger countryside soundscape; and human music and song-making. Much has been written on the provenance and meaning of this short English song. 'Sumer is icumen in' has been described by scholars as a musical piece, a literary parody and a *reverdie* (an Old French poetic genre celebrating the arrival of spring).[44] Likewise, scholars have argued for and against the interpretation of the lyric and the musical notation as depicting, in stronger or lesser terms, the call of the cuckoo bird.[45] This is not only because scholars remain undecided on the meaning of the call of 'cuccu' in the song, but also because the sound of the cuckoo, as I have discussed in relation to 'The Birds and Their King', is utilised in some medieval texts precisely because of the ambiguity between human and bird vocalisations and the act of naming nonhumans to which the short expression 'cuccu' refers. Alongside the singers' call to continue the musical round, the song evokes vivid images of nature in full summer, including descriptions of vegetation growth and the calls of other agricultural beasts. This offers a range of perspectives on multispecies utterances, particularly as the sounds of various beasts and birds are emitted from the mouths of human singers:

> Svmer is icumen in,
> Lhude sing cuccu!
> Groweþ sed and bloweþ med
> and springþ þe wde nu.
> Sing cuccu!

[44] B. Schofield, 'The Provenance and Date of "Sumer is icumen in"', *Music Review*, 9 (1948), pp. 81–6; R. Duffin, 'The *Sumer* Canon: A New Revision', *Speculum*, 63 (1988), pp. 1–22; and Marguerite-Marie Dubois, 'Le Rondeau du Coucou', in *Ronde des saisons: les saisons dans la literature et la société anglaises au Moyen Age*, ed. by Leo Carruthers (Tours: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1998), pp. 15–22.
[45] G. H. Roscow, 'What is "Sumer Is Icumen in"?', *The Review of English Studies*, 50.198 (1999), pp. 188–95.

Awe bleteþ after lomb,
lhouþ after calue cu;
Bulluc sterteþ, bucke verteþ,
Murie sing cuccu![46]

> Summer has arrived, sing loudly, cuckoo! The seed is growing and the meadow is blooming, and the wood is springing into leaf now, sing cuckoo! The ewe is bleating after her lamb, the cow is lowing after her calf; the bullock is prancing; the billy-goat farting, sing merrily, cuckoo!

Despite the celebratory tone of the song, it has been noted by a number of scholars that the call of 'cuccu' conjures the negative associations of the cuckoo bird which were numerous in medieval bird-lore and idiomatic expression, and many of which stem from the observation that cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other birds and thus practice morally dubious or ethically ambivalent reproductive behaviours. As well as referring to the name of the cuckoo bird and the sound that it makes, Roscow notes that there is evidence that the word 'cuccu' may refer to an adulterer, whose invasion of the 'marital nest' provides a good analogy with the cuckoo's behaviour as a brood parasite, thus transforming the song into a warning against the potential of adultery in the heat of summer.'[47] As with all things cuckoo, however, it is quite possible to read the same passage as simultaneously celebrating adultery as part of the natural order of things around the summer season as well as pointing it out as a warning. There is no reason to assume that medieval songs could not entertain subversive as well as conservative messages. The theme of transgression is connected strongly to the communication of cuckoo perspective at the *pes* (or refrain) of 'Sumer is icumen in', at which point the word 'cuccu' is repeated potentially indefinitely:

[46] MS Harley 978 f. 11^{v}. Also provided by Bella Millett in 'Sumer is icumen in' (online).
[47] G. H. Roscow, 'What is "Sumer Is Icumen in"?', pp. 190–91.

Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes þu cuccu.
ne swik þu nauer nu!

Pes: Sing cuccu nu, Sing cuccu!
Sing cuccu, Sing cuccu nu! [48]

Cuckoo, cuckoo, you sing cuckoo well, never stop now.
Pes: Sing, cuckoo, now, sing cuckoo; sing, cuckoo, sing cuckoo, now!

What is it exactly that the singers should never stop singing? This question is complicated by the possibility that the imperative statement, 'Sing cuccu nu!', appears to be addressed to both the human singers emulating the bird's cry, as well as to actual cuckoos: the human singers will eventually stop singing (and by association stop courting/having sex/reproducing); the birds will also stop singing in late summer when the mating season is over. Multiple interpretations of this song are therefore possible at once. Indeed, these parallel interpretations are built into the fabric of the song by the cross-species perspectives that are evoked: if it is a cuckoo that is being addressed in the line 'Sung cuccu nu!', the song wittily plays on the repetitive nature of the cuckoo call and the fact that humans notice this call and emulate it with their own mouths. However, if it is human singers who are addressing or being addressed, they themselves are enjoined to emulate the sound of the beak.

The possibilities for variations in the performance of 'Sumer is icumen in' are important to take into account for the consideration of beaked perspectives in this song. Multiple perspectives are common to many medieval lyrics that were composed with the potential to be spoken or sung aloud. The first two stanzas of 'Sumer is icumen in' invite the singer, listener or even the actual cuckoo, to loudly 'sing cuccu', an imperative that finds confirmation in the repetitive structure of the *pes*.[49] Of particular interest to this discussion, however, is the ambiguity inherent in two specific lines that accompany this refrain. The first line, 'Lhude sing cuccu!' is from the first stanza. The addressee of this phrase is likely the cuckoo himself as the

[48] MS Harley 978 f. 11^{v}. Translation taken from Bella Millett, 'Sumer is icumen in' (online).
[49] Note that the original song is not split into stanzas. I use this term here for the sake of clarity following my presentation of the text above.

singular form *sing(e)* has been used as part of the imperative statement. Were the statement addressed to a choir the plural imperative 'singeþ' would presumably have been more appropriate. Nevertheless, it is not possible to rule out whether the singular imperative signals a human singer at the same time as the cuckoo bird. The second line, 'Wel singes þu cuccu', could likewise be addressed to the cuckoo or, were a comma or pause added before the final 'cuccu', to a human addressee who is being praised for singing the *pes*. In both cases the word 'cuccu' provides the stimulus for overlap between human and avian songsters. The sound of the cuckoo here calls for association between the singer and the cuckoo but does so implicitly by enjoining the human to closely imitate the sound produced by the beak.

The overlap between human expression and avian sound runs deeper than a purely textual reading can accommodate. Whilst the musical notation that accompanies the text informs human singers of the notes they are to sing, it also brings the calls of actual cuckoos back into the debate on the nature of 'cuccu' calling. Since at least the eighteenth century scholars have discussed the extent to which the musical notation that accompanies this song evokes the call of the cuckoo bird.[50] It has been demonstrated that the notation in the manuscript was at some point revised, changing the original *f d f d* or *f d f dc* ('Cuccu, cuccu') to *c d c ba*.[51] The original notation provides a falling minor third that is equivalent to the call of the cuckoo at certain points of the year. However, despite the discovery of different original notation beneath the extant notation, some scholars remain critical of attempts to interpret the original notation as representing the sound of the cuckoo bird. Roscow, for example, states that although the original interval may be appropriate for such a comparison, the rhythm of the notation is not an accurate representation of a cuckoo's call, and the sound may not be obvious in performance.[52]

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[50] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, ed. by F. Mercer, 2 vols (New York: Dover Publications, 1935), p. 685, note *u*.

[51] See H. E. Wooldridge, *The Oxford History of Music*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901), p. 328; M. F. Bukofzer, '"Sumer is icumen in": A Revision', *University of California Publications in Music*, 2 (1944), pp. 79–114; and R. W. Duffin, 'The *Sumer* Canon: A New Revision', p. 7.

[52] Roscow argues that it is possible to 'infer that the lyric in its time was not thought to be about a bird at all. See 'What is "Sumer Is Icumen in"?', pp. 194. On the rhythm of this song, he demonstrates that the bird's call is not two dotted crotchets but singular crotchets. See also J. Handschin, 'The Summer Canon and its Background', *Musica Disciplina*, 3 (1949), p. 81.

Whilst concerns about the echoic qualities of calling 'cuccu' in this song are in some respects supported by the context of modern conceptions of music tonality and rhythm, there is one obvious reason why such observations are misplaced. The idea that all cuckoo birds have always sounded the same is an essentialist argument that can be challenged by an approach emphasising the interpretation of the call of the cuckoo from the perspective of actual cuckoos. Decisions on whether the notation in the manuscript accurately depicts a real cuckoo's call are in many respects doomed to failure because they posit a single, exemplary call of an actual, exemplary cuckoo. However, due to an actual cuckoo's creaturely and physical nature, the cuckoo's sound is not a stable referent but a constantly evolving one. Links between the cuckoo and its textual and melodic representation are evident in many texts but attempts by some scholars to accurately identify the cuckoo's sound rely on the essentialist postulation that all cuckoos must sound, and have always sounded, the same. In reality an individual cuckoo's call changes even during the course of the year.[53] Such scholarship therefore mistakes the function of sound in this song. Rather than attempting to accurately portray the sound of a cuckoo or to distinguish between cuckoo sound and human utterance, the song purposefully blends the two and overlaps human and beaked perspectives. Likewise, Roscow's argument can be disputed from the point of view of individual human singers. Musical aspects of this song highlight the subjective decisions involved in the representation of nonhuman perspectives, in particular when such perspectives are based on the emulation or mimicry of sound in performance.

Unlike the representation of the confused perspectives of beaks in 'The Birds and Their King', which are hidden from view of the human reader of the text, the sound of the cuckoo in 'Sumer is icumen in' is strongly connected to human linguistic expression and imitation. The call of the cuckoo shifts along a continuum that connects the sounds of cuckoos with the structures of human utterance. This shift between human and avian sonic phenomena occurs in similar ways both in the fable and in the song that feature in MS Harley 978, although the impact on the

[53] I refer the reader to Margaret A. Barrett's correspondence in *The Musical Times*, in which the author draws attention to the fact that the cuckoo generally begins calling early in the season with the interval of a minor third, then proceeding to a major third and finally a fourth and a fifth. She draws on writings by John Heywood (A.D. 1560) and Gilbert White's *Selbourne* (1878), who confirm these observations. See 'The Cuckoo's Notes', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 38.656 (1897), p. 697.

portrayal of perspective in each differs considerably. What unites both representations of the cuckoo call is that each of these texts suggests multiple possibilities for the meaning of the word 'cuccu'. 'Cuccu' comes to represent both the name of a species of bird, an echoic expression of the sound of that bird, a motif in bird-lore, and a range of human moral attributes, connoting a multiplicity of contemporaneous significations that are all potentially expressed in the sound.

In much the same way as a number of fables deliberately confuse the distinction between mouth and muzzle, in 'Sumer is icumen in' the sound of the cuckoo blurs the distinction between mouth and beak. This song represents how human singers can utilise sounds from beaks for musical and performative effect, reinforcing a process of mirroring between human and cuckoo. 'Cuccu' teaches nonhuman perspective through the emulation of the sound of the beak, whilst also revealing that such sounds cannot be relied upon to signify in a stable and constant way when they are complicated by being emitted from mouths. Whereas in the *Fables*, the sound of the cuckoo is the object of judgment on the part of the other birds, and therefore other beaks, 'Sumer is icumen in' demonstrates that the cuckoo call may also demand interpretation from a human perspective. This song leaves the point of view of the cuckoo call hanging in decisions made by human performers, whereas the fable controls and secures the meaning from a beaked perspective by introducing layers of judgment from the avian protagonists. The song does not need to provide such interpretation because the musicality of the text carries its own joyfulness and playfulness, which frames the content of the song. The type of world-forming perspectives that the song creates draw as much on a human point of view as on that of a bird. How the cuckoo call sounds, and what it means, are concerns for the mouth as much as they are of the beak.

Conclusion

Sounds emitted from mouths, muzzles and beaks sit on a continuum with human utterance in the acoustic environments represented in the *Fables*. As I have shown throughout my discussion, the anthropocentricity attributed to the *Fables* is brought into question by close analysis of expressions of nonhuman sound and the nonhuman perspectives that they offer. In particular, I have demonstrated how sound is world-forming in these texts, portraying the perspectives of dogs and cuckoos in

comparison to human perspectives as well as those offered by beasts and birds that use utterance and dialogue to communicate. Thinking outside the box of human anthropocentrism, where this is possible, allows us to gain an insight into how medieval texts juxtaposed representations of utterance and sound to demonstrate that language was not an inherently and exclusively human construct. I have demonstrated that human and nonhuman perspectives are contested positions communicated in multiple ways: via a process of mirroring behaviour between humans and nonhumans; by the direction of linguistic or nonlinguistic vocalised sounds towards other human or nonhuman protagonists; by the presentation of sound as directing a form of resolution to human and nonhuman social problems; by the submission of sounds to judgment and the ensuing analysis of this judgment by fable morality; and by the mimicry of echoic sounds such as 'cuccu'. Nonhuman sound has a lot to communicate in these texts beyond the purely human and linguistic.

Nonhuman sounds in the *Fables* can provide forms of resolution to social situations between beasts who speak or make sounds through muzzles rather than mouths. These situations may be defined by the use of legal, ecclesiastical or political language that issues from the mouths or muzzles of nonhuman beasts such as wolves, foxes and goats. The sound in the *Fables* that most clearly evokes the perspective of the muzzle is the barking of dogs. The hue and cry as a human policing procedure is effectively placed into the muzzles of dogs after it is raised by the billy goat or the fox. The dogs are then called upon to resolve social tension between other nonhuman beasts and birds by virtue of their domesticated natures. The barking of dogs communicates canine perspectives that contrast with the dialogues between the wolf and the billy goat and the cockerel and the fox. Barking is an action that establishes cross-species communication with humans (in particular through the capacity of the dogs to communicate with the shepherds) but it also draws attention to the muzzle as the producer of sound that communicates in a way that is proper to hunting dogs themselves. Although bound in systems of human power and domestication, the dog's bark has the ability to bypass a human point of view and give direct access to canine perspective.

Nonhuman sound in the fables is conducive to a consideration not only of where sound sits in relation to human language, but also to the portrayal of fiction and truth. Some of the fables use depictions of beast and bird sounds to express a confusion of moral messages as these are highlighted in the epimythiums of the

fables. Nonhuman sound thus troubles fixed notions of human language and speech as well as the conceptualisation of language as a tool for communication belonging solely to the domain of the human. The confusion between mouth and muzzle draws attention to the fact that fables might also be invented in and inventing through the depiction of nonhuman sound. Reading the fables from different perspectives thus encourages readers to make links and discern distinctions between the fable narrative and its moral conclusion. The didactic function of these texts is therefore challenged by representations of speaking wolves and foxes, as well as barking dogs. I suggest that the act of assigning specific types of signification to barking can be world-forming in such texts by communicating the perspective of canines in order to encourage the reader to think about language, and its capacity to create images, in terms that are other-than-human.

Whilst the sounds of dogs in the *Fables* encourage reflection on the nature of canine sound in relation to human language through textual and narrative tension, the sounds of songbirds and cuckoos are placed on a different continuum with human vocalisation—a continuum that incorporates human singing and mimicry of birdsong. Rather like the barking of hunting dogs, the 'cuccu' sound of the *Fables* is a short circuit that almost bypasses human perspective to focus on a nonhuman one. Whilst the decisions taken by the birds do mirror human scenarios, the call of the cuckoo dangles nonhuman perspective before the audience whilst simultaneously shutting off a specific type of avian perspective from view. In contrast to the closed avian perspective of the *Fables*, the call of 'cuckoo' in 'Sumer is icumen in' communicates a range of possible meanings and insinuations through the expectation that 'cuccu' will be sung from the human mouth as well as the beak. The sound of the cuckoo most clearly relies on echoic and onomatopoeic forms of communication that express a different type of ambiguity compared to the barking of the dogs and the call of the cuckoo in the *Fables*. The ambiguous calling of 'cuccu' in 'Sumer is icumen in' provides a stimulus for a direct intersection between human singers and actual cuckoos. As a musical piece, this song encourages singers to emulate cuckoos in ways that mimic the cuckoo and bring the bird's song to life. The melody motivates singers to call 'cuccu' so that the motif of the song may continue indefinitely, endlessly repeating the close connection between the mouth and the beak and the different perspectives that are formed by each of these.

CONCLUSION

> Hearne likes trainers' using ordinary language in their work; that use turns out to be important to understanding what the dogs might be telling her, but not because the dogs are speaking furry humanese. She adamantly defends lots of so-called anthropomorphism, and no one more eloquently makes the case for intention-laden, consciousness-ascribing linguistic practices […]. All that philosophically suspect language is necessary to keep the humans alert to the fact that somebody is at home in the animals they work with.[1]

My readings of the sounds of nonhumans in medieval texts have been, first and foremost, explorations of the ways that written sonic phenomena create acoustic environments in texts that communicate relationships between nonhuman figures and human audiences. In investigating the ways that such sounds are communicated through and across languages, I have focused on the structures that allow such relationships to emerge and the ways that these structures are represented for interpretation, while also attending to how those structures are occasionally challenged by the depictions of sound that are found therein. The sounds of beasts and birds in medieval texts are encoded in different forms of 'humanese', that is, a rewriting and interpreting of nonhuman sounds through human languages. However, they are also represented through linguistic practices that enjoin audiences to pay attention to their own linguistic natures and vocal abilities—abilities that are often positioned in relation to nonhuman voices and language. By considering how sonic phenomena are integrated into the broader acoustic and epistemological networks of medieval texts, I have drawn attention to the possible relationships between human and nonhuman agents that such sounds might engender. This has therefore been an examination of the textual and aural conditions that make cross-species sonic communication in medieval texts possible.

In my interpretations of early Old French and Middle English texts written in Anglo-Norman England I have tried to show how a critical engagement with these texts might address the ways the sounds of the beasts, birds and legendary creatures

[1] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), pp. 49–50.

that stalk the pages of medieval texts create and mediate cross-species relationships. In doing so, I have examined how cross-species contact based on sonic expression might also interrupt some of the anticipated interpretations of relationships between human and nonhuman agents. My engagement with this theme has been a productive one in a number of ways. In the first two chapters I sought to consider how the theoretical tools provided by studies of sound and translation might be utilised to uncover the complex networks of relation that draw together humans and nonhumans in the *Bestiaire* and the *Tretiz*. Such networks reflect variable kinds of linguistic power, hierarchies of life and potential audience interpretation. Sound in these texts is not necessarily part of a single textual soundscape but may construct multiple soundscapes at once. Sound also may have different functions in such contexts—it can (but doesn't have to) be connected to figurative meanings (as in the French bestiary by Philippe de Thaon), and it can be part of playful cross-species sound-making and wordplay (as in the multilingual treatise by Bibbesworth).

As I argued in Chapter One, the ways that nonhuman sounds are recorded, depicted and represented for interpretation in the earliest French bestiary can be considered as themselves forming soundscapes, or acoustic environments in which audiences can navigate complex patterns of allegory and moralisation created by sonic depictions of nonhuman suffering. In these moments of sonic expression, the sounds of nonhuman suffering enjoin the reader to consider, as in the case of the lion's roar, how sound participates in the illustration of a complex layering of meaning. However, bestiary soundscapes also communicate how suffering, whether based on nonlinguistic sound as in the chapter on the mandrake or on sonic encounter in the chapter on the siren, highlights moments of inequality or danger to human and nonhuman creatures. These soundscapes, though they are by no means 'recordings' of literal sounds, still have a relationship to actual sounds, and generate sonic phenomena and soundscapes as much as they reflect them.

I contrasted the depiction of sound in the soundscapes of the *Bestiaire* with the formation of textual contact zones between the human and the nonhuman, and between French and English, in a medieval treatise on language in my second chapter. The contact zone in which the *Tretiz* participates as a treatise on language, alongside the contact zone of the text itself—one that establishes different modes of human and nonhuman contact—allows for a thorough exploration of the relationship between nonhumans and multilingualism. The ways that French verse and English

glosses represent nonhuman words and languages encourage audiences to question man's authority over language even as such audiences may use it to support their own human identity. I demonstrated how the text highlights the shiftiness of word meaning in the context of nonhuman *langage* and how the noises of beasts and birds communicate moments of encounter in which young aspiring gentlemen are enjoined to imitate nonhuman sound, placing such sounds into their own mouths. These first chapters reveal how the sounds of beasts and birds in medieval texts are woven into networks of cross-species relationships that draw attention to how such relationships are based on nonlinguistic or cross-linguistic thinking.

This thesis has argued that the sounds of nonhumans are always presented within particular frameworks for interpretation, and sometimes even contribute to the formation and destabilisation of such frameworks. In these frameworks, which are related to the genre of the texts under discussion, sounds always become signifiers for more than simply the sonic phenomena that they represent. Representations of sonic phenomena are connected to religious or theological allegories in the *Bestiaire*, to human and nonhuman perspectives in fictional representations of human/nonhuman cohabitation or coexistence in the *Tretiz* and the *Fables*, and to the exploration of different forms of creaturely and spiritual life in the *Vye*. As argued in Chapters Three and Four, the perspectives of actual creatures, and the sounds that these birds and beasts vocalise through or alongside human languages may be connected to different models of cross-species contact, including communication between human and nonhuman creatures. The *Vye* presents human and nonhuman acts of praise in the context of the Franciscan Rule and a community of creatures; other texts, such as the *Fables* and the Middle English song 'Sumer is icumen in', construct and dissolve certain distinctions between human and nonhuman points of view by blocking off, or inviting in, human interpretation.

The different sounds one discovers in these texts are not just part of the acoustic richness of these texts—in some cases, they are also part of the construction of meaning and narrative perspective. Some of this positioning is dictated by genre: the audience of the *Tretiz* imitates sound in a pedagogic context, whilst the *Vye* prompts a reconsideration of the purpose of nonhuman communication in relation to religious expression. In texts such as the *Fables*, audiences would expect to meet nonhuman beasts and birds that talk to each other using human utterance. However,

as I have suggested, the distinction between sound and speech is sometimes unstable, occasionally placing different forms of utterance into the mouths, muzzles or beaks of fable beasts and birds. Sounds refer both to nonhuman vocalisations, as we saw with the barking of dogs and the calling of 'cuccu', and also to the perspectives and behaviours of actual birds and beasts with which medieval audiences may have been familiar. The sounds of beasts and birds thus signify in ways that are often difficult to pin down due to their very natures as complex signifiers.

As this would suggest, much of the interest in the representation and interpretation of nonhuman sounds lies in the multiple perspectives and points of view that such sounds communicate. These sonic phenomena might on some level be concrete and accurate representations of the actual sounds made by beasts and birds; however, the textual presentation of such phenomena means that, on another level, the soundscapes of medieval texts are always to some degree fictional or conceptual. What can be said for certain is that nonhuman communication always works in cross-species ways in medieval texts, harnessing the linguistic tools offered by human languages to reconfigure the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. The reconceptualisation of sound in different texts and through different means forms an important part of the way medieval texts gesture beyond the limits of an anthropocentric vision of language present in many medieval scholarly and theological works. Sounds are presented as nonlinguistic forms of expression, as lists of verbs and nouns in grammatical structures, and through narrative descriptions of sonic phenomena and their effects. The literary qualities of many of my chosen texts, even if they might not be described as 'literature' in the modern sense, enable authors and scribes to represent nonhuman sounds in ways that push at the limits of the such boundaries.

Nonhuman sounds pose a challenge to medievalist scholars today insofar as the actual sounds of beasts and birds that lived in the past have migrated into the present only through text and image. In medieval studies a number of critics have signalled new approaches for the study of nonhuman identities more broadly, but the study of the sounds made by creatures remains relatively marginal. As my project demonstrates, however, the sounds of beasts and birds are present and dynamic forces for the interpretation of medieval vernacular texts, in which beasts, birds and humans cry, bark, quack, sing, roar or call 'cuccu'. Whilst a vast number of medieval texts depict beasts and birds using human language in order to communicate with

each other, the sounds that they make are a touchstone for new discussions of the communicative capacities of species other than our own. My approach to textual depictions of sounds is also innovative in that I have emphasised, where possible, the links between nonhuman vocalisations and the evocation of melody and song. Although musicologists have undertaken important studies of nonhuman sounds, especially birds, in later medieval musical works, the attribution of melodic communication to a range of creatures in texts that feature depictions of sonic phenomena calls for a broader, interdisciplinary understanding of how sound works in medieval texts from earlier periods. The textual and melodic nature of many nonhuman sounds help critics to consider the ways that thinking through song interacts with language to communicate cross-species interaction.

The expansion of the categorisation of sound, by which I mean primarily the vocalisations of beasts and birds, into the realm of song and melodic expression is most pertinent to three distinct aspects of my discussion in this thesis: my analysis of the siren in the *Bestiaire*; the act of cross-species worship in the *Vye de Seynt Fraunceys d'Assise*; and the songs of various birds, particularly the cuckoo, in a number of my chosen texts. I have demonstrated that many medieval texts figure melodic expressions of sound, such as sheep bleating the liturgy, or birdsong, in ways that contrast with the vocalisations of nonhuman species. Further to this, depictions of melodic sound or singing draw specific attention to shared cross-species modes of communication through song. Whilst I am not suggesting that all depictions of nonhuman sound in medieval texts are related to or should be interpreted through the lens of song, it is important to note that singing holds particularly evocative associations. In the case of the call of 'cuccu' in my final chapter, I demonstrated how this sound is restricted from human interpretation in the *Fables* but placed into the mouths of human singers in a Middle English song in the same codex. In other texts, song may be connected to aural temptation, to aesthetic judgment or to liturgical worship in ways that mark certain kinds of vocalisation as melodic, rather than simply as speech or utterance. This is significant because it calls on a melodic perspective, rather than a purely linguistic one, in which the expression of a musical form of sound requires the human performer or audience to make certain decisions about the nature of sound that might not be framed by a 'rational' human discourse.

My approach to the study of nonhuman sounds more broadly is based on textual close reading. This approach has enabled me to examine the type of 'philosophically suspect language' (to quote Haraway's term from the epigraph above) that is used to depict sounds, and the ways that words are used to frame networks of cross-species communicative relations. Likewise, I have drawn on critical theory in order to consider the complementarity of theory and the practice of reading historically. In this respect my focus has been on the connections between languages and sounds and the ways that these connections speak to critical paradigms in sound studies and animal studies. My focus on words and nonlinguistic expressions of sound complements, but also contrasts with, assertions by scholars such as Aaron M. Moe that we must pay more attention to aspects of nonhuman communication such as gesture in order to truly understand the communicative potential of nonhumans: 'animals possess communicative zones as well—zones that differ from the human mouth […]. A good rider does not merely observe gestures but feels some of them through his or her feet, ankles, shins.'[2] Some medievalists have anticipated such approaches in work that seeks to interpret the gestures and movements of nonhumans in medieval texts.[3] However, in medieval textual cultures the words and the language used to describe nonhuman beasts and birds and their noises should be seen as equally significant as descriptions of gesture or physicality. Indeed, one might argue that listening to or imitating the vocalisations of nonhuman creatures in texts from vast historical removes is as close as one might get to such creatures, and that such contact offers a means of experiencing them rather than just observing them on a par with Moe's point. This is precisely the reason why a discursive study of sound and language is called for at present.

Throughout my discussion I have attempted to draw connections between the literary and textual qualities of sounds and the ways that they communicate the presence and interpretation of what I described in the Introduction as the 'living animal' in medieval texts.[4] Such contemporary approaches in many ways reflect the close associations between humans and nonhumans in shared acoustic environments. My discussion on the perspectives of muzzles and beaks in Chapter Four builds on

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[2] *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 3.
[3] See Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
[4] Ibid., p. 5.

this critical framework to suggest that there is always a merging of the textual and the extra-textual in representations of nonhuman sounds. This is even true of the vocalisations of legendary creatures in the *Bestiaire* which, as I suggested in Chapter One, emphasise the literal qualities of the song of the siren and the *cri* of the mandrake. Sonic phenomena thus become connected to forms of knowledge that reference experiences of sound that audiences would have been attuned to in their own lives. Indeed, the quest for the living animal in historical contexts is about more than simply looking for the traces of the influence of nonhumans in texts. It also involves a consideration of the multiplicity of the nonhuman, and the processes through which humans arrive at specific conceptualisations of beasts and birds, as well as the sounds that such agents emit.

The fundamental concerns raised by critical approaches that define themselves by a quest for the living animal include the desire to give nonhuman beasts and birds a voice with which they might be reheard once again, after having been deprived of voice and expression in many philosophical and scholastic traditions for so long. In my own examination of medieval texts, the cross-species and cross-linguistic connections made between humans and nonhumans that I have explored emphasise how creatures were indeed heard in numerous ways through medieval textual cultures in different languages. The manipulation of textual soundscapes by humans and nonhumans, in the *Bestiaire* or the *Fables* for example, reveals how webbed existences based on inequality and the sharing of semiotic materiality can offer new modes of interpretation for textual soundscapes. It also suggests how the act of giving a voice to hybrid creatures, such as the siren, is not always considered in positive terms in medieval texts; vocalised sonic phenomena sometimes pose implicit dangers to human listeners. This is the case not only for the legendary siren and the mandrake in the *Bestiaire*, but also for the bark of the dog in the *Fables*, the howling of the wolf in the *Tretiz*, or the exemplary bleating of sheep in the *Vye* that puts human sinners to shame. The dangers posed by such sounds may be moral, physical or even existential when such sounds undermine man's control over language and life.

One of my interests in nonhuman sound that has been developed by critical approaches has been the examination of how a tension between language and sound reinforces or undermines power relations and enables the manipulation of acoustic environments. These forms of manipulation and control reinforce the point that the

sounds of beasts and birds in medieval texts invite audience interpretation. To take one example, my work on the *Tretiz* by Walter of Bibbesworth demonstrates how imitative association between humans and nonhumans in this text enjoins readers to consider the similarities present in the shared act of vocalisation presented through word lists. However, these acts emerge within networks of relation that privilege specific forms of masculine humanity, and even serve in some respects to form the subjectivities of the text's projected audience in relation to other categories of human and nonhuman beings. The question of nonhuman sound therefore intersects with questions of gender, class and social control. In each case, sound becomes a point of cross-species contact, the meaning of which is decided by the human reader, listener or performer, who must make certain interpretive choices in order to understand the multiple meanings produced by the expression of sound. Moments of control or manipulation of sound, however, are occasionally contrasted with moments of silence. Where silence is expressed in my primary texts, it invites a reconsideration of the role and function of sound itself, as well as the ability of humans and nonhumans to control it: the *Bestiaire* contrasts the song of the cockerel in the chapter on the lion with the *silencium* that finishes the liturgical hours; the silence of the woman and the dog licking the pan in the *Tretiz* contrasts with the exuberant wordplay in the surrounding passage; St Francis silences the birds in his famous sermon; and in the fable of 'The Thief and the Dog' the thief attempts to bribe the dog into silence. Sound thus works in parallel to its opposite, each contributing to the interpretation and revaluation of cross-species networks of relation.

The sounds of beasts and birds point to a grey area between different sound systems present in medieval vernacular texts, including language, song and nonlinguistic forms of contact. This area of ambiguity is fundamental to the destabilisation of any absolute division of human from nonhuman vocalisations; as such, it also creates the possibility for cross-species relations such as mouth-muzzles in the *Fables* or the emulation of sound in texts such as the *Tretiz* or 'Sumer is icumen in'. Rather than simply reflecting human behaviour and morality, beasts and birds are depicted in some texts as individual agents that contribute to larger acoustic environments and ecological communities, which may or may not include human beings. Creatures interact with their acoustic environments in diverse ways, and some sounds have the remarkable capacity to cut through what might otherwise seem to be immobile anthropocentric modes of representation. In this respect nonhuman

sounds encourage audiences to entertain perspectives that are considerably other-than-human, but which mirror or dwell on the connections that sounds form between human and nonhuman agents. Nonhuman sounds thus hold the key to specific forms of power and understanding based on noise and communicative acts of vocalisation. By placing sounds into the mouths, muzzles and beaks of human and nonhuman agents, a cry, a quack, a song or a roar in a medieval text has the potential to situate sonic phenomena within networks of relation that invite, resist and redefine cross-species contact and communication.

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APPENDIX

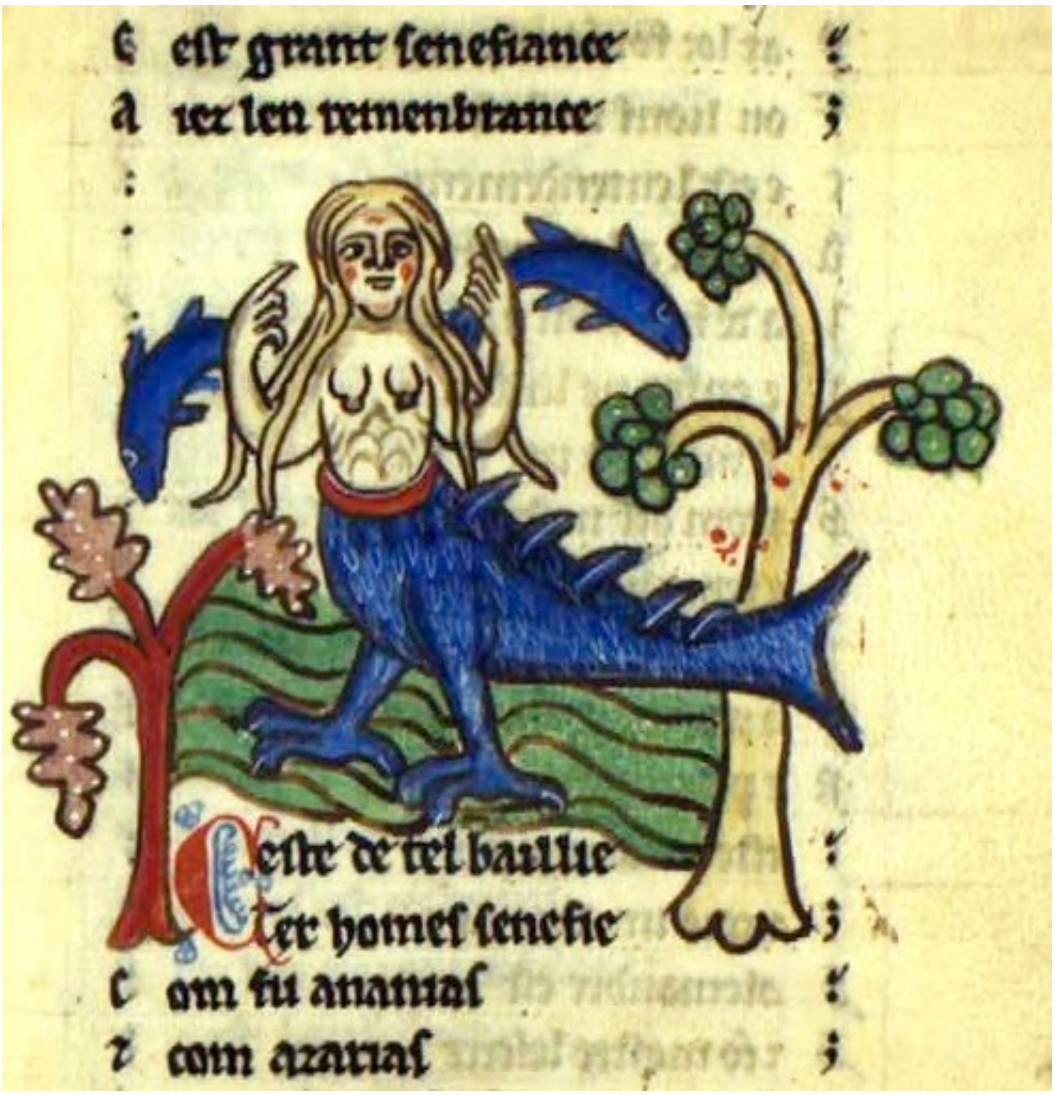

Figure 1. The siren in the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon. Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS Gl. Kgl. S. 3466 8º (*C*), 37

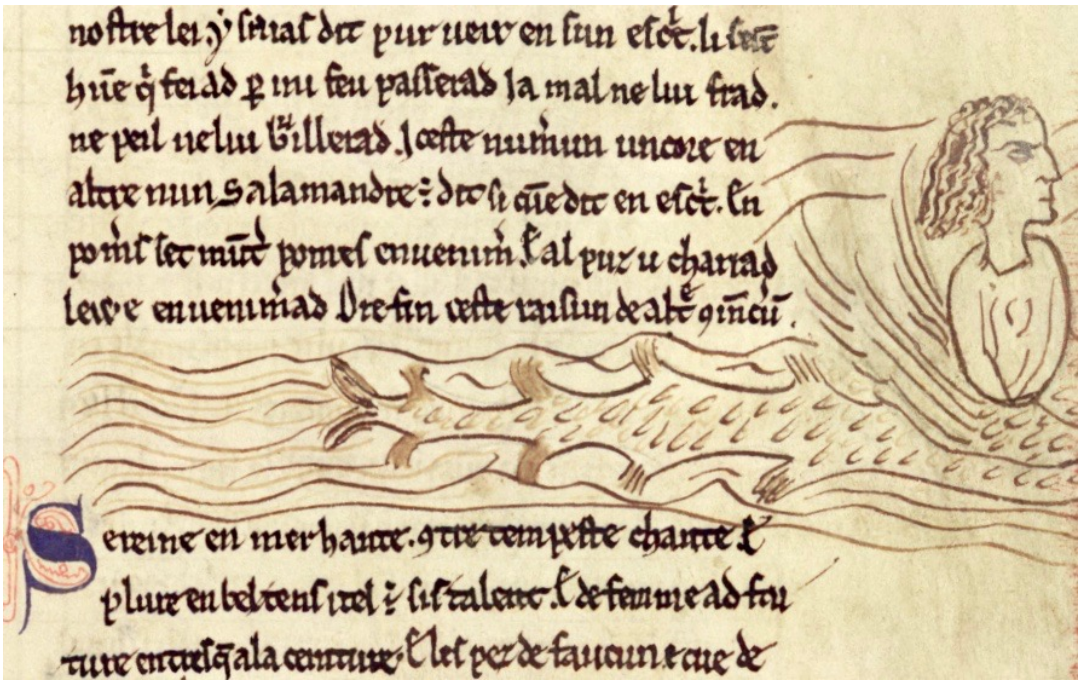

Figure 2. The siren in the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon. Oxford, Merton College Library, MS 249 (*O*), f. 6[r]

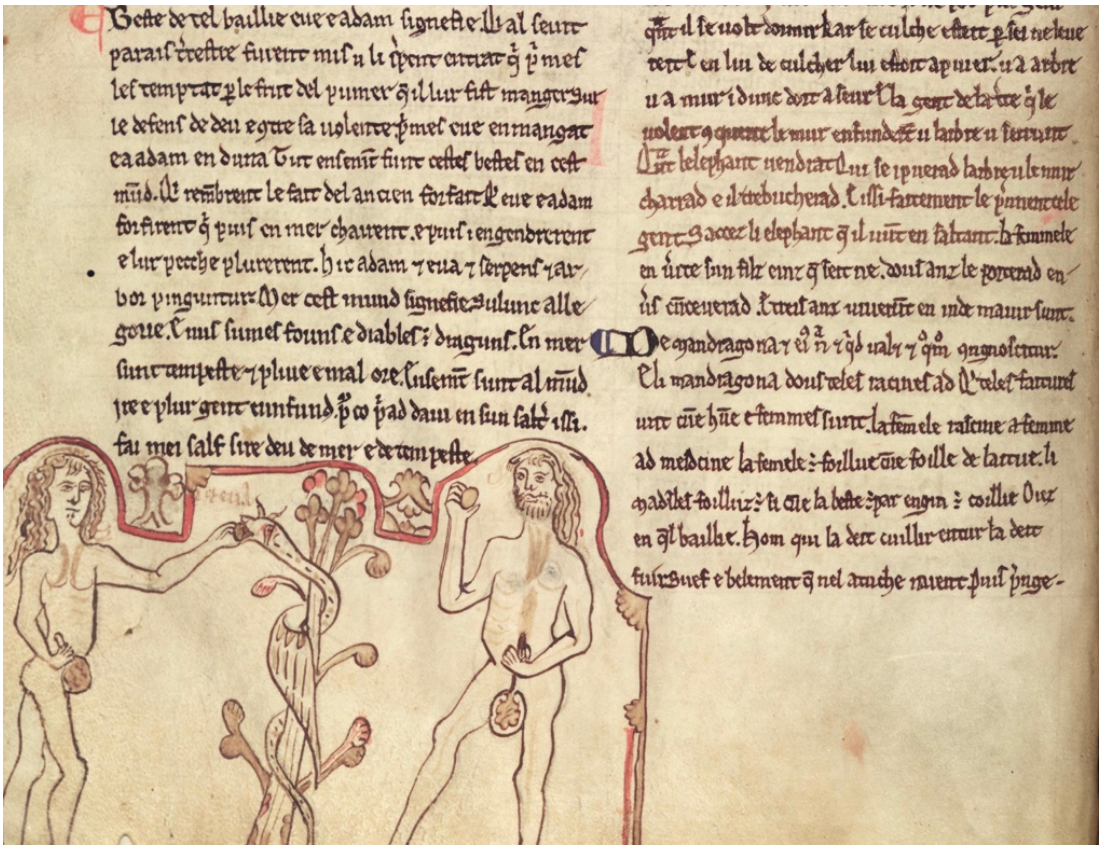

Figure 3. The chapter on the elephant in the *Bestiaire* by Philippe de Thaon, featuring the scene of the Fall with mandrakes, *O*, f. 6^{v}

Figure 4. Giotto di Bondone, *St Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds*, c. 1290-1300, oil on panel, 3.13 x 1.63 m, Louvre, Paris.