



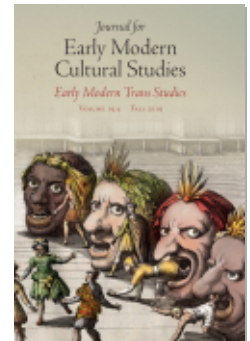
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Early Modern Tranimals: 57312*

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Early Modern Tranimals: 57312*

HOLLY DUGAN

ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes 57312, a seventeenth-century manuscript that is part of the British Library's additional manuscript collection, as evidence of trans experience in the past. Its design includes a series of images of humans and animals that change and transform through manipulation of the flaps of its parchment. In this way, 57312* is part of what Jacqueline Reid-Walsh identifies as the history of playable media; its content, however, deviates from these traditions in unique and surprising ways. Combining Protestant ephemera with images drawn from bestiaries, 57312* does not reflect the norms and traditions invoked in these source materials. Its movable images provide evidence of what Eva Hawyard and Jami Weinstein identify as tranimality. Tranimality signals postmodern and posthuman states of being that resist historically defined categories of difference; tranimals are posthuman, but because their affective work, their representational significance, and their social agency stem from the very frameworks of harm that they resist, they are often intertwined and attached with trans experience. The pliability and design of 57312* operates in this way and thus participates in an expansive history of gender.*



In their 2015 special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Eva Hayward and Jami Weinstein argue for political, affective, and social agency located in “tranimalities.” Tranimalities signal postmodern and posthuman states of being that resist historically defined categories of difference, including those separating and defining “animal” from “human” (Kelley 2014 226). A portmanteau that describes creatures derived from both “real and imagined animals who traverse taxonomic categories,” tranimals render what was once singular plural: the prefix “trans-” encompassing “the animal” and expanding and changing its meaning to include a wider array of beings that transcends, crosses, and pollutes species boundaries.

Whether formed through violent networks (within postmodern scientific genetic laboratories) or new kinds of technological affinities, including distributed digital networks (like those discussed by Colby Gordon in this special issue), tranimals subvert what Mel Chen has identified as “animacy” hierarchies, including species taxonomies (29). Their affective work, their representational significance, and their social agency stems from the very frameworks of harm that they resist, and it is this quality that “binds tranimals to other forms of trans- life, including humans” (Kelley 2014 27).

In what follows, I explore one such possible binding, reading what we might describe as a “bestiary” of premodern tranimals created by a (possibly) trans-identified young student in the Renaissance. It exists as a single manuscript, made of vellum and folded concertina-style to allow for transformations. It was likely made in the mid-seventeenth century in England, as part of an educational writing task designed to foster, practice, and enforce Puritan religious ideals about what constitutes a moral life. Yet it does not do this, depicting instead a stunning array of what we might describe, *pace* Kelley, Hayward, and Weinstein, as early modern tranimals, creatures who traverse a wide array of categories, transforming to create surprising social affordances through modes of being that challenge both gender and species divides. These affordances—between the animal materiality of the manuscript, the shape-shifting human and animal creatures depicted in it, and the somewhat confusing textual traditions that it invokes—make the manuscript interesting for those of us seeking to understand trans-identities and gender variance in the past, especially in its visual staging of bodily forms as pliable matter, unfolding in multiple ways that challenge how we interpret, catalogue, analyze, and describe its significance.

The manuscript itself, as playable media, resists animacy hierarchies that usually structure reading encounters in the Renaissance: its formatting (whether deliberate or by happenstance) requires that the reader reorient it several times, reading it in different directions. In both its surprising form, matter, and content, the manuscript allows us to posit not only what it might have meant to fashion a very different kind of self in the Renaissance than we are used to thinking about (and the role of animality and animacy in scripting these expressions) but also what it means to search for evidence of trans experience in the past in order to challenge transphobia in the present. In what follows, I argue that 57312* is an early modern tranimal, challenging us to think differently about how we archive and access historical matter of the past.¹

Known more traditionally as British Library ADD Ms. 57312, the manuscript exceeds this designation.² I refer to it throughout this essay as 57312* in order to signal more expansive possibilities. Affixing the (now obsolete) asterisk that helped to define trans studies to its archival call number serves as a visual reminder that its importance surpasses the categories we impose upon it. And, as a core Boolean operator, the asterisk offers a reminder that writing transhistory should remain connected to and in conversation with transactivism. The tranimal power of 57312* is still operational, especially if made accessible and searchable to new audiences within digital networks.

Creaturely Encounters: 57312*

A creature, Julia Lupton reminds us, is “made or fashioned;” it is, by its very definition, created (14). But such acts of creation are sublime and existential. The form unfinished and becoming, its relationship to its “architect, potter, logician, or mere mixer of mud pies” unclear and unfolding, creatures could be human or animal, divine or diabolical, alive or inanimate, singular or expansive (Lupton 15). Within early modern religious world views, humans were creatures. Boundaries between and among creatures were less about species, morphology, or difference than about politics: drawing on twentieth-century political theory, Lupton argues that creatureliness is bounded by human phenomenological terms, describing “a specifically human way of finding oneself caught in the midst of antagonisms in and of the political field” (15).

This conceptualization is useful for thinking about 57312*, a manuscript that documents a tremendously creative act of imagination, transforming source materials that sought to categorize and discipline human and animal bodies into a pliable and playful mode of self-expression. In representing not only a wide array of creatures but also designing the layout to allow for the reader to animate metamorphic transformation, the maker of 57312* crafted a unique approach to embodied humanity by depicting what we might term early modern tranimals. While operating together, each image nonetheless presents a unique transformation, forming a radical reassamblage of creaturli-ness. In this way, 57312* requires players rather than readers, and in doing so, gestures to how queer animacy hierarchies between humans, plants, and animals may have worked in the past (including those pasts identified by Mel Chen and analyzed by Colby Gordon and Vin Nardizzi in our posthuman cluster of essays in this issue). A transanimate object, 57312* encourages those

of us interested in transhistory to “broaden” our evidence beyond vectors of identity and incorporate evidence of trans-imagining and becoming.³

57312* is a mid-seventeenth-century manuscript designed to be played with, manipulated, and maneuvered as well as read: made by folding a single piece of vellum (64 cm x 24 cm) into eight pleats, each with moveable flaps at the top and bottom, 57312* constitutes what Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (drawing on the work of Noah Wardrip-Fruh) describes as “playable media,” and what Whitney Trettien describes as “an operational” textual object, one that “works in and on the world” (1149). While such adjustable mediums are not unique within early English printed books (specifically early modern scientific texts and anatomies), it is relatively rare as a manuscript. Folded “concertina-fashion” (i.e., pleated into accordion-like folds), the manuscript requires a reader to maneuver its flaps in order to read it (See Figure 1).



Fig. 1: © British Library Board (Add 57312).

There are eight folded pleats; each pleat is eight cm wide and twelve cm long, with two six-centimeter flaps at the top and bottom, both of which open and close, altering images located in the center of the pleat. Maneuvering its flaps—unfolding or refolding them—alters the images. Together, these flaps form a book that stages eight transformation sequences, each with three components.

These transformations include a wide array of early modern creatures; they unfold and refold in the following way:

Adam↔Eve↔Syren
 Anguis↔Draco↔Serpens
 Testudo↔Cætus ↔Delphin
 Leo↔Grips↔Aquila
 ["woeful knight"]↔Cor inflamescens↔Crumena
 Mantichora↔Leo↔Simia Praesia
 Lamia↔Sphinx ↔Simia Calitricia
 Venator↔Acteon↔Caerus

The catalog represents them differently:

Adam, Eve, Siren, Snake (Anguis), Dragon, Serpent, Tortoise, Dolphin, Fish (Cætus), Lion, Griffin, Eagle, Man in contemporary dress (the Author?), Purse, Flaming Heart, Manticora, Lion, Ape, Demon (horse with human head - Lamia), Monkey, Sphinx, Hunter, Acteon (man with stag's head), Stag.

These descriptions relabel and translate the images for modern readers, helping scholars find the manuscript but also simplifying the logic of transformation into one long metonymic sequence, rather than a series of linked and unlinked transformations. The digital images of the manuscript available online work in a similar way, highlighting the beginning form and the final transformation, but occluding the intermediary process. The catalog describes the manuscript as a game, one in which "an overlying picture in two halves may be lifted to reveal another picture underneath." To operate it, the reader must engage simultaneously with two directions, moving horizontally across the folds of the book and vertically to operate the transformations. Early reports of the acquisition emphasize this history—one describes it as a "child's 'game-book' on vellum, with coloured drawings of animals, etc."⁴



Fig. 2: © British Library Board (Add 57312).

57312* was donated to the British Museum in the late 1960s by Estelle Winifred Fuller, who, along with her husband, Captain A. W. Fuller, amassed a tremendous collection of anthropological objects associated with Polynesian history, many of which are now part of the Pacific collection in the Field Museum of Natural History. Their contributions to the British Museum's

collection were substantial (over seventy-four items, including indigenous objects from Africa and North America as well as Renaissance objects); along with the four manuscripts that comprise the Fuller collection, Estelle Winifred Fuller donated at least sixteen other Renaissance materials to the British Library.⁵

Most announcements of the acquisition, however, do not describe BL Add 57312, focusing instead on state papers gifted along with it or combining all of manuscripts into a single gift of miscellaneous “historical and literary manuscripts” (Accessions to Repositories). Such descriptions construct and obscure some aspects of its history even as they highlight others in order to increase searchability. Digitization of the manuscript has greatly increased who can now access it through the British Library’s Images Online portal. These access points matter, but they are not neutral, especially in archives that C. Riley Snorton reminds us, are both “extensively documented and underdeveloped” for the questions we wish to ask of them about trans lives in the past and in the present (181). Snorton’s sharp assessment is particularly acute in the case of 57312*; static images of the manuscript—now accessible online to a much wider audience than ever before—offer some sense of its transformative potential, but even these are dampened significantly by the portals through which they are viewed. A scholarly article is equally unsuitable to the task; I am more able to trace how 57312* may have once circulated within collections assembled to create animacy hierarchies—to tell stories about human and animal difference—than I am capable of elucidating how it managed to survive the violence of those processes.

It is tempting to borrow the manuscript’s own approach to make sense of its histories: its pliability allows it to unfold in unexpected ways, overlapping vectors of harm to create transformation. The maker of 57312* worked with two very different source materials in order to create an aesthetic object that engages, intertextually, with both while also transforming each of them substantially. In this way, it is both completely derivative and remarkably unique. All of the images come from two source materials: *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650), an anonymously authored, mass-produced, “cheap print,” turn-up book designed to instruct school children on living a moral life [Image 3] and Edward Topsell’s *History of Foure-Footed Beastes and Serpents* (1658), a Renaissance bestiary that sought to catalog the world’s animals [Images 4 and 5].

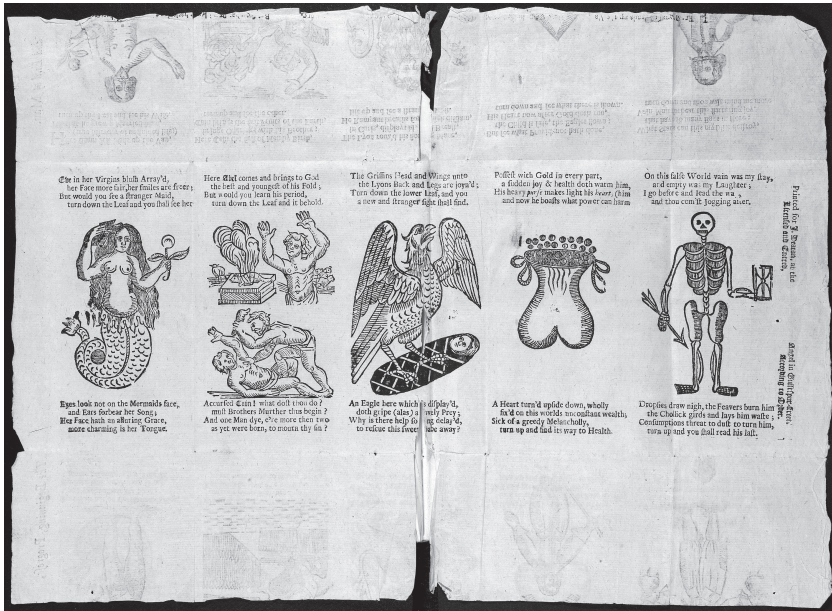


Fig. 3: © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2020.

In yoking these two textual traditions together, the maker of 57312* radically reorganized moral and scientific conventions, changing the intended use of the former by engaging with the images of the latter. In modeling itself on the form of *The Beginning, Progress, and End of Man*, the manuscript follows in a tradition in which playable media was used to instruct school children on moral lessons, mostly about avoiding avarice and vanity.⁶ Reid-Walsh's analysis of these early examples of English "playable media" demonstrates that mid-seventeenth century examples were designed as educational materials, "cheap print" for school children to model and create their own flap books (2012 167). For this reason, they are incredibly fragile evidence.⁷ The earliest example, from 1650, survives in the British Library's rare book collection likely because it was not used: it is uncut and thus labelled as restricted.⁸ As Reid-Walsh notes, scholars must themselves creatively reassemble it from minimal "glimpses" of what is inside.⁹

These foldable texts quickly moved from what we might think of as books to what we might think of as games. Arguing that it is important to view these

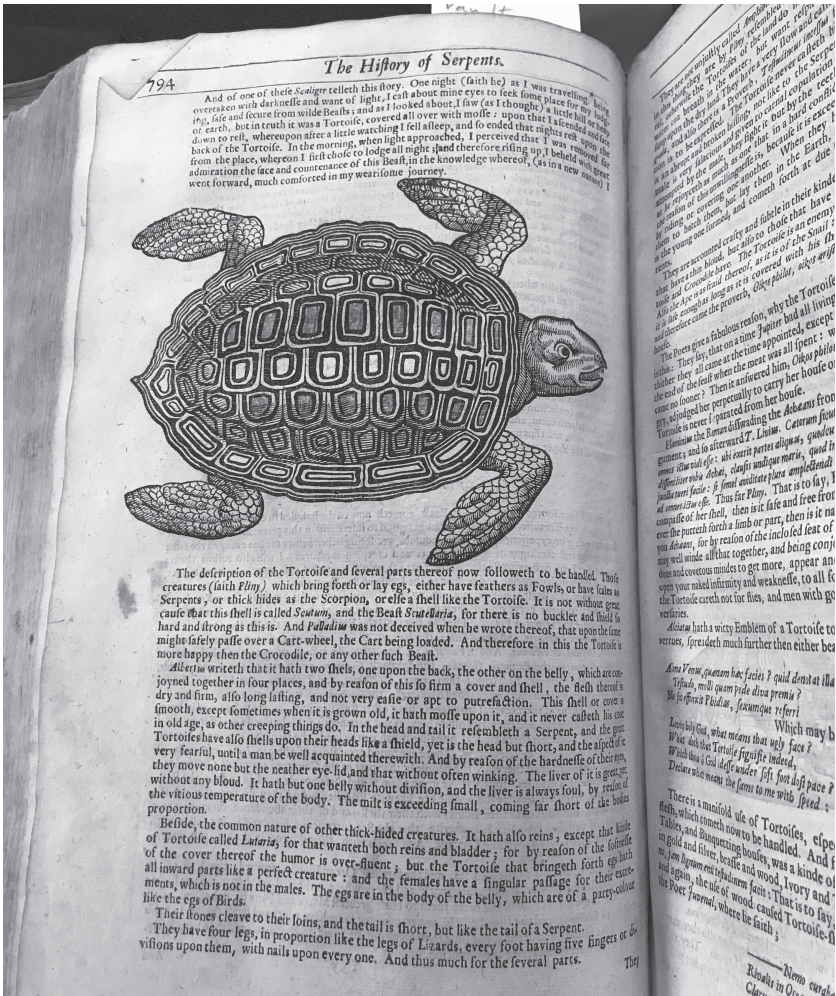


Fig. 4: Author's image, with permission from Gelman Library, the George Washington University.

objects in terms of their design and in terms of their intended audience, Reid-Wash positions them as objects of both play and instruction (2018 184). Printed on a single piece of paper and illustrated with woodcuts, the earliest “turn-up” books were created by students who manipulated the papers into books; almost all were printed on paper, presenting an inexpensive but “rich interactive medium” that appealed to children and was thus “exploitable” by educators (Swann 188).

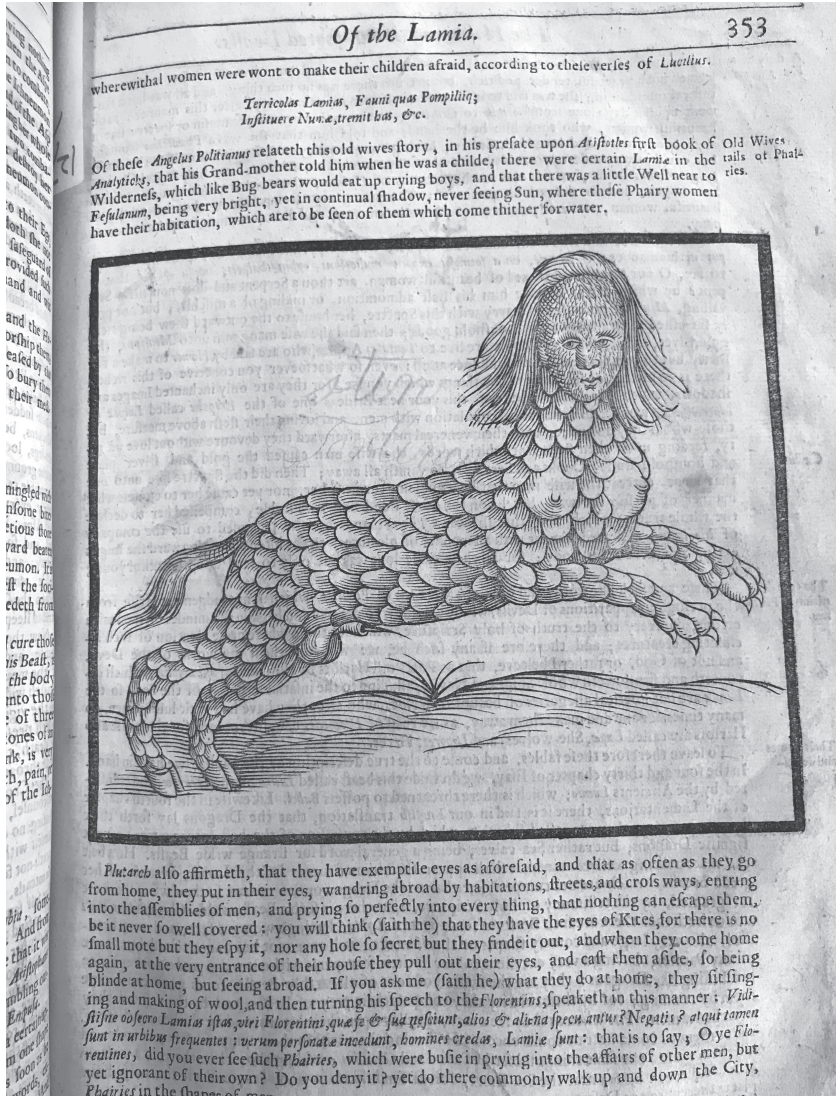


Fig. 5: Author's image, with permission from Gelman Library, the George Washington University.

As hinted in its title, *The Birth, Progress, and End of Man* maps moral lessons onto a life cycle: first published during the English Civil War, and reprinted in slightly different versions numerous times until the nineteenth century, these editions function collectively in predictable ways. As Reid-Walsh characterizes them:

All editions consist of four or five panels of words that transform one into the other by lifting the flaps up or down. All begin with Adam, Eve, then a mermaid, and may include Cain and Abel, all include a lion/griffin/eagle stealing a baby; all show the grown baby as a young man who loves money; and all end with the miser becoming sick and then dying. (*Interactive Books*, 189)

As playable media, however, they could be manipulated to create different outcomes. Reid-Walsh emphasizes that even these mass-produced books allowed for surprising “transformations”: flaps once lifted can fall back down, creating hybrid images that “invert or contradict” the sequencing of the moral lesson. Though these “transformations” are meant to flow one way, the reverse is possible. A sequence that flows from Adam-Eve-Siren can create a merman if the top flap (depicting Adam) is moved back into place before the bottom one. Likewise, hybrid creatures can emerge: a skeleton, for instance, suddenly appears to be wearing pants when a bottom flap is moved back into place but the top flap is not.

57312*, however, is not printed. It was not designed to be mass produced; indeed, even when compared to paper manuscript flap books, 57312* is unique. While its colorful transformations recreate some scenes from the *Birth, Progress, and End of Man*, many more are drawn from Topsell’s *History of Four-footed Beastes and Serpents* (1658). Furthermore, it radically reorients these images, creating affordances and transformations that transcend Topsell’s scientific schema. Like the printed versions Reid-Walsh analyzes, 57312* begins with Adam, Eve, and a Siren, and features an image of an eagle stealing an infant but also includes images from Topsell’s catalogues of four-footed “beasts” and “serpents.” Over half of the images are copies of engravings in the 1658 edition, many of which were first printed in Conrad Gessner’s *Historia Animalium*. The illustrations in 57312* do not map onto a “progress” narrative about moral lifecycles, but rather foreground creaturely transformations; each of the twenty-four animals contained and displayed in eight segmented panels traverse boundaries of gender, race, species, and animacy in some ways while remaining fixed in others.

Unlike paper versions of “turn-up” books, 57312* is made from animal skin. The choice to use vellum instead of paper was likely one of functionality rather than cost. Vellum is rare in this period; most manuscripts (and books) are made of paper. The maker likely chose this material in order to create a pliable book. The object is made from skin: the catalogue lists it as vellum, a

term that denotes a higher quality of parchment made from the skin of younger animals. It was often thought of as a superior product to parchment and thus more valuable (though parchment, made from sheep, was valued for its whiteness). The pliability, color, and smoothness of vellum shaped its artistic depictions, especially its reactivity to ink and to its environment, especially heat and humidity. However, vellum absorbs humidity in the air—too much will distort the images and too little will cause it to crack.

As biological matter, 57312* is reactive. The history of 57312* is written on its skin: its outer pages are darker and worn, including the inner flaps near the center of the first and last pages, whereas the inner pages are more protected. Tactile awareness is required to make an object like this; the maker would have had to feel the skin in order to understand its surface and work with it. Likewise, users must touch 57312* in order to enact any of the transformations; its fading suggests that it was held and operated enough times to significantly wear off the beginning and ending images.

The choice to fold the book in this way was a deliberate and creative one, using the *Birth, Progress, and End of Man* as a model but infusing it with other book traditions. Although fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscript doctors' almanacs use flaps (as do seventeenth-century printed anatomies), European Renaissance bestiaries do not. These texts fix and display animals as static objects of knowledge. Expensive to produce, latent with engravings, folios like Topsell's participated in the expanding discourse of seventeenth-century science.¹⁰ In this way, the accordion folds of 57312* (combined with the illustrated images of humans and animals) resemble the *amoxtli* or *vuh* in meso-American book traditions more than those in Renaissance ones; such traditions, Walter Mignolo argues, ran counter to Renaissance European understandings about how books and, indeed, literacy were designed for use particularly in religious, humanist education (1995 130). Franciscan missionaries in Mexico destroyed thousands of *amoxtli*, Anahuac and Nahtual cultural objects, interpreting them as demonic books for both their images and the way they oriented the reader.

Whether or not the maker of 57312* was familiar with these Meso-American book traditions, they were certainly familiar with the precise social codes that governed how to fold a letter in Renaissance England. Alan Stewart's study of letters in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England reveals how important fold lines were to shaping the meanings contained within (51). The fold lines themselves provided important material guidelines guiding where to

place content. The act of folding was also strictly choreographed. Stewart's numerous examples drawn from Renaissance plays reveal the potential for outrage when letters were folded in the wrong order. Jeronimo's outburst at Horatio's folding in *The First Part of Ieronimo*, a prequel to *The Spanish Tragedie*, expresses his frustration at the perceived slight embedded within its fold lines: "What fold paper that way, to a noble man" (Stewart 51)? Folding was a highly important and routinely practiced task in preparing a letter; lines provided guidelines for margins and content but also for social cues, signaling the class status of both addressee and sender. Folding a letter in ways other than those standardized between aristocratic men risked offence.

These cues all suggest that the design of 57312* was deliberate: it is a highly ornate, elaborate, and expensive manuscript that mirrors Christian morals but subverts them through creative folding, substituting bestial transformations for allegorical ones. The material used to make them articulates a biological matter, reacting and changing to heat and humidity and to human touch, embodying it its own vitality (and reminding us that archives are not wholly separate from postmodern laboratories as possible locations of transimality). These clues suggest that the maker was both educated and wealthy enough to afford the materials and innovative enough to counter them in highly unique and creative ways. Though the maker seems to include themselves in the manuscript, the male-presenting lover depicted in the fifth transformation defines himself mostly as poor ("I hold no danger to be worse/ Then want of mony in my purse"). Given the choice of materials used to create the manuscript and the scripts it draws upon in printed material, this identity category seems constructed.

The irony of depicting bestial transformations using animal skin suggests other ways that meaning unfolds in the manuscript. It is not happenstance that the last transformation foregrounds hunting and ends with death. Velum is an animal product and, in this way, the manuscript functions as what Erica Fudge terms as a "Renaissance-animal-thing," an object whose biological material has been transformed from living creature into material commodity. Early modern men and women were acutely aware of these shifts and often foreground the animal materiality latent in their commodities in metaphorical ways. This is true here: the maker plays with the materiality of skin in the final transformation, labelling the hunted stag as Caerus, who represents opportunity, luck, and fortune in Greek mythology even as the stag announces its own death. Whoever made this object thus had access to education and to a wide array of books and objects associated with Renaissance writing cultures;

encountered prescriptive moral Christian teaching, including its surprisingly playable transformations; and created instead a document that staged a series of creaturely transformations through the creative folding and unfolding animal skin.

Animating 57312*

As Colby Gordon and Vin Nardizzi's essays in this special issue remind us, animacy hierarchies structure natural history in the Renaissance, including animal history. By the early sixteenth century, Renaissance naturalists had developed a language that catalogued and classified nature's matter, organizing it and displaying it in ever larger compendia.¹¹ Such expansive cataloguing included Ellen Cotes's reprinting of Topsell's works for George Sawbridge, a printer and bookseller specializing in medical works (Furdell). Ellen Cote's husband, Richard Cote, had worked with his brother Thomas printing a number of influential editions of medical anatomies and herbals in the mid-seventeenth century, including works by John Parkinson and Ambrose Paré. When her husband died, he left his shop to his underaged son, which Ellen managed for him.¹² In this way, the 1658 edition of Topsell emphasizes the success of his initial moral and natural project. He elaborates in in his unpublished manuscript *Fowles of Heaven* that it was written to celebrate "the glory of the grand creator."¹³ Though works like these engaged with mythological and bestiary traditions, they tended to emphasize naturalist history. Topsell's text is, in one scholar's opinion, "crammed with bizarre information," but it presents such knowledge with "complete confidence in its truth" (Cheney 31).

Sawbridge and Cote's 1658 edition of Topsell's text (published thirty years after his death) was itself an amalgamation of other books, specifically Conrad Gessner's *Historiae Animalium* and Thomas Moffett's *Insectorum sive Minimorum Animalium Theatrum* (1634) and Topsell's own early seventeenth-century volumes. Topsell himself emphasizes that his books on animals should be used in particular ways: animals, the title page announces, are "wonderful works of God's creation," and as such they are "necessary" subjects for both "students and divnes [preachers]." Such moral framing is included in the later reprinting, and textual marks in the edition referenced in this essay corroborate the educational setting: readers' marks engage more with the book's images than with Topsell's text.¹⁴ The 1658 edition represents within histories of science a pivot between English Renaissance thinking about the natural world and emerging

Enlightenment ones, including taxonomies like binomial classification structures and species-thinking, all bound in a single volume and, importantly, assignable in educational curricula.¹⁵ That these three texts were published together is important; for it allowed the maker of 57312* to cut across species and habitat divides, transforming animals into tranimals.

Topsell's work, like medieval bestiaries, is organized alphabetically, but he does group animals together. Monkeys, baboons, and simians, for example, appear under the entry for "Ape," reflecting and affirming certain affinity groupings, even if the text, as a whole, emphasizes a grammar of animality organized alphabetically.¹⁶ Topsell's subtended logic of affinities helps to explain some of the surprises of 57312*, which depicts biblical figures (like Adam and Eve), classical monsters (like the Lamia), and real animals (like lions, eagles, and turtles, and not one but two kinds of monkeys) (see figures 4 and 5). In this way, it crafts a confusing narrative of desire and identity through affinity rather than animacy hierarchies, each of which operates simultaneously and independently of one another. As Mel Chen argues, animacy hierarchies are rooted in linguistic structures that encode a phenomenologically based recognition of the self, including how we compare ourselves to the world around us, particularly in terms of others whose "embodiment, purposiveness, and activity" mirror how we understand our own (29). The more a creature resembles how I envision myself, the more I am able to recognize it, name it, and—importantly—care for it: whether configured as anthropomorphism or as personification, animacy hierarchies activate care networks through perceived affinities. 57312*, however, models connections and groupings that cut across these vectors of identity and recognition, reorganizing an emerging discourse of morphological differences and species into affinities. Just like the tranimals created in twenty-first century laboratories through scientific manipulation, creating affinities that transcend, pollute, and cross species boundaries like, for examples, the bunnies, monkeys, and rats injected with GFP [green fluorescent protein], a reporter gene, the tranimals depicted in 57312* slide across the 1658 edition's divisions of four-footed beasts, serpents, and insects as well as Puritan pamphlets about moral human values.

Read in this way, we might think of 57312* as a series of self-portraits staged through such affinities, in which case it emphasizes a particular kind of visual engagement (and not necessarily their moral, textual frameworks). The use of vellum positions the document within Renaissance artistic traditions of miniatures, which further supports the notion that it functioned as an object of intimacy (miniatures were often given as private love tokens) but by whom

or to whom is unclear. New creatures emerge by manipulating cuts of animal skin. Species, gender, and race become mobile categories of knowledge, emerging as embodied but manipulable. Human genitals are strikingly juxtaposed with animal bodies: the mantichora's phallus and the lamia's breasts are visually arresting (see figure 7). The careful crafting and tremendous attention to decorative detail emphasize a beauty in morphology.

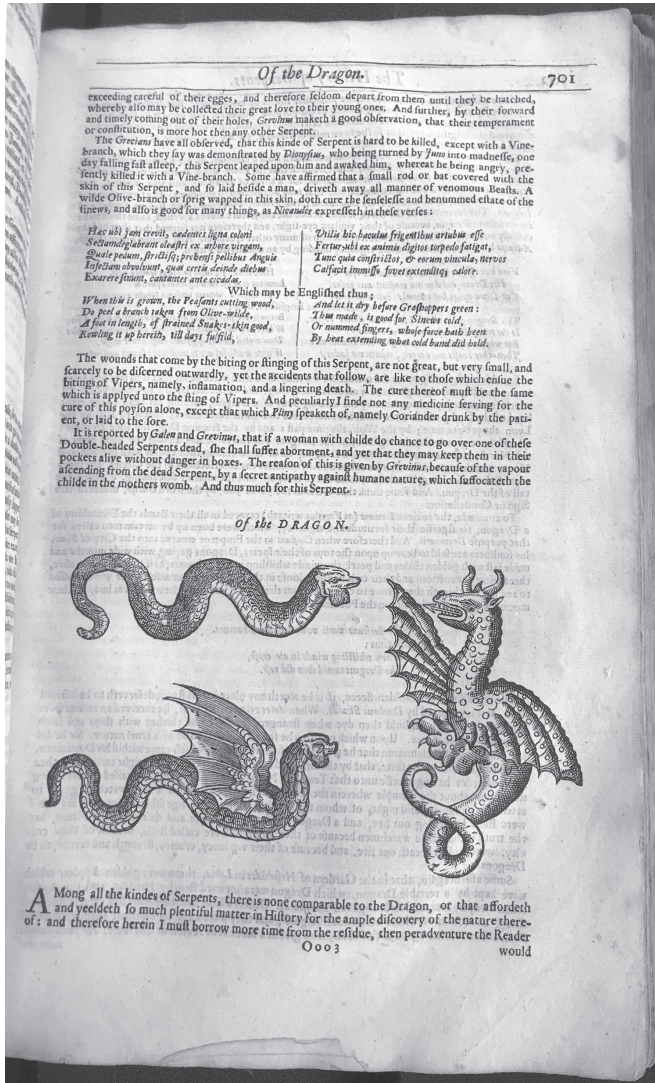


Fig. 6: Author's image, with permission from the Gelman Library, the George Washington University.

There are also limits. Animacy hierarchies, Chen argues, “are precisely about which things can or cannot affect—or be affected by—which other things within a specific scheme of possible action.”¹⁷ These limits also elucidate some of the transformations staged in 57312*; each transformation is bounded by its pleats. Some transformations are occluded (such as Adam’s genitalia as he transform into Eve and then a mermaid and merman) while others are emphasized (such as the bright red genitalia of the mantichora, leo, and simia Praysia). Morphology matters more than habitat in some transformations (such as Anguis-Draco-Serpens) but less so in others (such Testudo-Cactus-Delphin). Creatures gendered in binary ways on land are not in the sea; others transform into inanimate objects (an empty purse, a flaming heart).

Some affinity groupings were intentional, but others were likely unintentional. For instance, vellum, made from calf’s skin, is darker than parchment, which was made from sheep’s skin (which was rougher than vellum, but prized for its whiteness). Eve, the “woeful [k]night” and the Lamia thus have faces lighter than the skin of the manuscript, linking them (at least pictorially) with Renaissance cosmetic traditions of whitening the face with lead paint (See Karim-Cooper, 12). Likewise, mantichora has a painted brown (human) face, implying links between dark skin and animality. These racialized meanings are separate from the ones staged in the manuscript, as when *anguis* becomes *serpens* (“Turne down ye leafe wch tell yt true, I used to be of other hue. Anguis”), or when the brown Leo transforms into the hybridized Grip and finally the black Aquilla. Race structures some of these transformations in overt ways, while others stage more oblique racial transformations (such as the blue *lamia* [with a white face] that becomes a brown sphinx [with a white face]).

The manuscript stages eight sequences, which we can choose to interpret as a narrative sequence or to read as discrete ideations. Each image begins with a Latin couplet, and concludes with a stanza in English. Read as a narrative, it models the *Progress* it draws upon by highlighting biblical misogyny and charting a course toward death. But the object’s narrative becomes convoluted; a tranimal logic quickly takes over, confusing any clear “progress” or sequence. Further, the most overtly human gender transformations are the ones most linked to dogmatic sources and misogyny: Adam begins by commanding the reader to “Looke on me well,” even as he reiterates biblical misogyny, orienting both toward his own lower body (occluded from view by a strategically placed leaf) and toward she who “did [him] beguile, whose face if thou desire to see/ Turn up [the] leafe and [tha]t is shee.”

Eve's ability to "beguile" Adam is aligned with the lifting of the "leafe," but not the one we might expect. Turning "up" the leaf reveals Eve's face on what was once Adam's body, signaling a gender and religious transformation: long hair, pink cheeks, and bright red lips signify meaning. She calmly announces to the reader: "I Eve was happy by creation and many thousands drew to hell." Her odd syntax positions her both before and after the Fall. She commands the reader (yet again) to "turne down the leafe be not afraid." Rather comically, the line concludes: "and thou shall see a neat Mermayd." And, indeed, one does, as Eve's bottom half is finally revealed as a scaly tail of a "Syren," complete with a harp and rattle. Conflating Eve's prelapsarian beguilement of Adam with her postlapsarian culpability in drawing "many thousands down to hell," the figure is Adam, Eve, and a mythological Siren. It transforms human binaries of gender through a third term, "a neate mermaid," whose metamorphosis was animated by the reader's desire and fear, and as Reid-Walsh's analysis reminds us, rebellious fun. The flap provides a fourth transformation, allowing Adam to become a Siren as well.

The manuscript's imagination of embodied transformations becomes more radical when it leaves Eden behind. The Siren refuses the logic of the first gendered transformation by embracing aquatic alterity: "Not flesh nor fish alone am I, but boath in Ocean deepe I ly." If terrestrial forms require species binaries, oceanic ones do not. But even with this radical alterity, gender remains a salient category: readers can create mer-men or mer-women by manipulating the flaps but not both at the same time. In the second series of transformations, however, the manuscript moves beyond human gender toward tranimality, embracing herpetological transformations: *anguis*, *serpens*, *draco*.

In Topsell's text, creatures can take a wide array of forms. He reports, for instance, that a *chimera* is an amalgamation of lion, goat, and dragon (417). Like other bestiaries and classical sources, these creatures are grouped as "snakes," but importantly are separated by habitat and how they move through the world (see figure 7). *Anguis aquarum*, Topsell tells us, is a siren of the sea; it is linked to but separate from the serpents of the earth and dragons of the sky (*serpens terrarium* and *Draco Temploru*) and presumably the Siren the reader encountered at the end of the first transformation (Sig. Pr). Here, however, they are temporally linked. *Anguis* is not of the sea, but rather dwells "strange and still, in cavernes of the earth." Men loathe to see it, but when they do, it attacks them, letting venom fly to their breast. Its short verse ends by promising not a transformation yet to come but one that has



Fig. 7: © British Library Board (Add 57312, f 11 & f 13).

already happened: “Turne down ye leafe wch tell yt true, I used to be of other hue. Anguis.”

The aquatic transformations of the third sequence foreground safety even as they spotlight a spectacle of strangeness: “testudo” announces that they are safe inside their shell, which is gorgeously colored and seemingly bejeweled. It is a stunning image. Its value, however, stems from its ability to withstand brute force from humans: “Drive ove my backe with a wagon wheele, I waigh it not nor doe it feele.” They invite the reader to “Turn down ye leafe & you shall see A fish almost as strange as me.” Transformed into “Carus,” the turtle becomes a “whale of a fish,” who “when the seas did beate & billowes roare” helped “poor Jonas to ye shore.” It promises another fish, if the reader turns up the leafe: “it is hee” (one of the only gendered pronouns in the manuscript). The pink fish now becomes “Delphin,” a “princely fish,” who helps to steer

mariners to safety. Its scaly pink skin, red tongue, and crown are striking, linking it to its previous iterations through its nonaquatic colors.

The fourth transformation is copied from *The Birth, Progress, and End of Man*, and yet is also the most unfinished and incongruous transformation in the manuscript: a brown lion (with bright red genitalia) announces that he is “a monstrous beast with princely strey.” Here, the missing human genitals from the first sequence are on bold display, appended to his animal body [See Image 1]. Brightly red, his huge phallus draws attention on the page. Like Adam, the Leo commands the reader to “turne up the leafe and there behold a creature strange and fearce and bold.” The lion becomes a mythical GRIP, a creature formed by combining a lion’s lower half with a black bird raising its wings. The wings, however, do not line up with the Lion’s torso, and the tips of the feathers are occluded from view. The Grip (rather ploddingly) commands the reader to “turne down the leafe,” for “there’s yet another thing to read.” With the turn of the flap, the eagle’s complete form is revealed, its feather tips now visible. The black Aquila holds a cradle in its claws, enacting domain over whatever it prefers as prey (including human infants); its dominion lasts for at least a hundred years.

If the fourth sequence is perhaps the most atypical, foregrounding a body that shifts in hue and does not match the coordinates of the one that precedes, it seems surprising that the fifth would provide the most personal, and in some ways, the most normative in terms of narrative exegesis. It depicts “an image of a woeful [k]night,” who appears as a fashionable Renaissance gallant, gendered male by clothing and by pronouns, wearing a purple cloak, a white ruff, and a red, flaming, triangle his hat. (This image sometimes appears in emblems, signifying that one is captivated by passion or desire.) “If” the reader should “aske who it should be, the answered straight myself is he.” Rather than initiate a transformation, the flaps “prove the same,” pleading with the reader “to turn down the leafe I humbly pray.” The triangle of the hat becomes the poet’s flaming, upside-down heart, which “in flames of greife doth dayle brne.” Love is imagined as torture, a wound in need of “salve” to “yeald me rest, One more I pray the leave upturn Cor inflamescens.” Here, the maker takes the “moral lessons” against avarice embedded in its Puritan source material and infuses it with Petrarchan tropes of desire that debilitate all involved. The poet imagines both the beloved and himself to be an empty purse, one receiving the poet’s heart and the other (hopefully) receiving money.

It is perhaps not surprising that the humble pleading of the last stanza transforms into more violent iterations in the next two sequences, both of which foreground “monstrous” transformations. These images are flipped, requiring the reader to turn the manuscript to see them properly. Such reversals are thematized in the transformation: mantichora-leo-simia Prasia begins with noble beasts, but descends into simian mimicry of such nobility. It begins with a mantichora, who has a “lion’s foot,” a “man-like” face, and bird’s tail: “If monster you did ever see, you never saw the like to me.” The mantichora commands the reader to “Turn up the leave & there’s a King, which roaring, makes the forest ring.” The Mantichora-to-Leo transformation focuses on the fear that the lion commands through sound: “When I being hungry take my prey I rise at breaking of the day, when I but roare the earth doth shake and beast in forests wide doe quake.” From this statement of power, the lion commands the reader “turne down the leafe & you shall see One that doth much resemble thee LEO.”

The last transformation in the sequence—from the lion to “simia prasia”—seems anticlimactic but it also introduces a more antagonistic relationship with the reader: “Look Knave, looke stedfastly on me; perhaps of kinne I am to thee.” Mocking the reader, the figure reminds humans that brutish creatures can ape “each man’s delight” and that “apish tricks and wanton toyes delight” her most (since “simia” is implied feminine). Yet the flaps align in this transformation, thwarting hierarchies of scale by invoking bestial transgressions even as they yoke emerging scientific nomenclature with nationality: this final transformation accrues both a species designation (“simian”) and a nationality (“Persian”) (see figures 7 and 8).

The penultimate sequence foregrounds nonhuman, feminine monstrosity, framing it as the transformative effects of gendered violence. To activate it, the reader must flip the manuscript around once again, returning to the orientation of most of the book. This sequence begins with a Lamia, a creature formed through rape. She narrates: “in beauty, once I did dwell, and from all others born in hell, but Jove with me committed rape, and Juno turned me into this shape.” The Lamia’s genitalia—like the lion’s—are among the most defined in the manuscript: her white breasts appear stark against her scaly, blue, equine body. Though she describes her “shape” as a hellish space in which beauty does not dwell, she is one of the most striking images in the book. Framed as monstrous, the Lamia initiates a prurient gaze, one that seems to

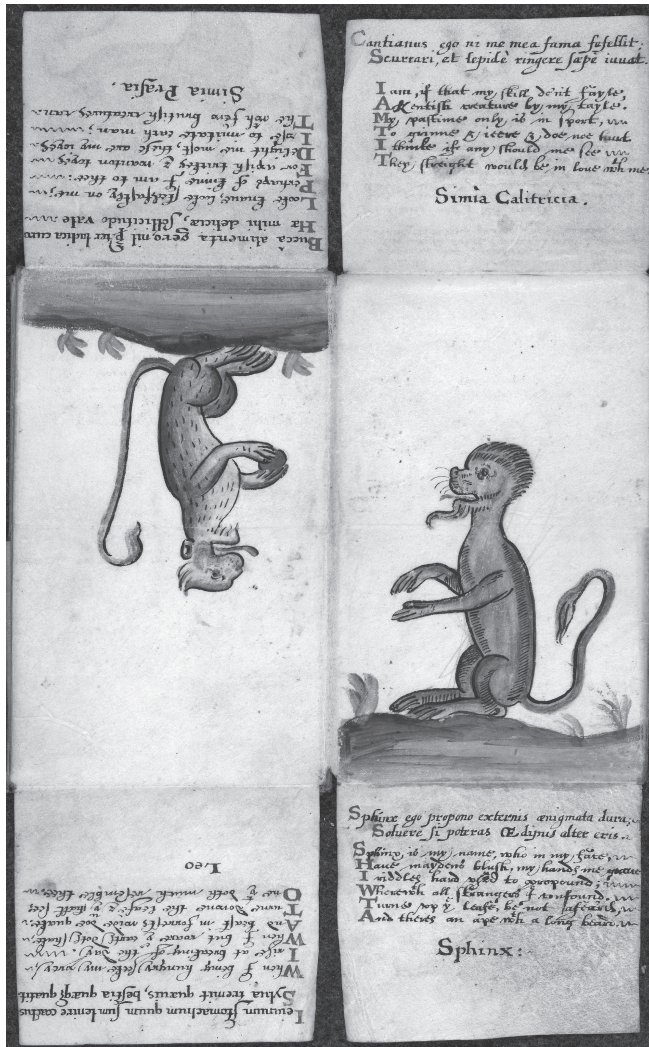


Fig. 8: © British Library Board (Add 57312, f 12 & f 14).

resonate with the monkey's warning about the danger of "looking" as a wanton self-reflection. The lamia commands the reader: "Turn down y leafe & you shall see, a creature faire, not like to me." A sphinx is formed, whose "face" contains a "maydens blush," but whose hands "contain no grace." The sphinx's "riddles" confound strangers, but the poetry ends, rather anticlimactically:

"turne up ye leafe, be not afeared, and theres an ape with a long beard." *Simia Calitricia* is indeed, an ape with a beard; it frames itself as a "Kentish creature," whose pastime is sport, "to grinne & leere & doe not hurt," but "I think if any should mee see They straight would be in love with me." Trauma is reimagined as beauty (via the Lamia), as the sphinx, and finally as the simia *Calitricia*.

The final transformation returns us to a human frame and stages the dangers of spying on feminine bodies, especially in intimate moments. Venator, a human figure dressed all in green, identifies himself as the famous hunter, who "seeking a stagge . . . spide a Queen Diana faire . . . washing in brook." In this instance, the transformation becomes the activation of Diana's punishment: "turn up the leafe & you shall see what for my lust shee gaue to me. Venator." Transformed into Acteon, the penultimate transformation reiterates how lust can transform human bodies: "I was a man but yesterday, but now mong the beast doe stray," a monster whose luck is worse than "beak," "buck," or "cuckold." He rues the sight of the final beast, revealed by turning down the final flap: a hunted stag, labelled Caetus. Caetus, a figuration of lust and luck, ends the sequence. Though no beast can outrun Caetus, it dies from a different foe: "for when ye hunters dogge foorth run, the thread of life is quickly donne." The narrative concludes with devolution and death, from human to beast to prey.

Read in total, it is difficult to come to any conclusion about the overarching literary narrative of this document—other than that it begins with Adam and ends with the death of luck. Though I have tried to provide a way to connect the sequences, this is an interpretive act, one that the manuscript, at times, does not easily support. Simply put, the incongruities of the manuscript are intriguing, particularly its emphasis on design. Its meaning seems to reside less in interpretation and more in the very articulation of expression and the act of design. Any failures of narrative are more than made up for by the delight of the encounter and of animal manipulation, even as it repeatedly warns the reader of the violence latent in such wanton sport. In this way, it might function as evidence of trans life in the past: it documents an attempt to creatively imagine radical transformations of embodiment drawn from early modern lexicons about human and animal lives.

This is not the first such assessment: in July of 1827, *Gentleman's Quarterly* published a letter from "S.T.," who describes an encounter with two "curious illustrated poetical MSS on vellum" presented to him by Mr. Richard Fuller,

Esq. of Chinchester. Both manuscripts were Fuller family heirlooms. Fuller writes, "I know but little of their history, except their having been in my late mother's family for many years, in which they had been treated as heir-looms"; he then admits, "I always considered them very curious, and set a considerable value on them, and of course felt anxious to ascertain their history, but which I have been unable to do."¹⁸ As S. T. emphasizes, though linked, the manuscripts are very different in their orientation; this difference produces affective responses. What Fuller describes as anxiety and what is described here as delight.

S. T., too, responds to it in affective ways: whereas he is clear on the meaning of the first manuscript turn-up picture books and its depiction of religious images (the Nativity, Tower of Babel, Solomon's Temple, the plagues of pharaoh, and the gold calf), he describes the second as "subjects of natural history." These match the exact transformations contained in 57312*.¹⁹

The second manuscript confuses S. T., who spends most of the short letter published in the journal describing the religious manuscript instead, praising its poetry and the Latin of the maker, and hypothesizing that it was made by an innovative educator seeking to find inspiring ways to instill Puritan values in his school charges. He admits that 57312* puzzles him, noting that it "commenc[es] with Adam and Even in the garden; the latter transformed into a syren, the 'All's well that ends well' of the humorous Hood." S. T.'s odd joke, that "all's well that ends well," indexes a muddle of interpretation, an anxious laugh not unlike Fuller's own anxiety to know more about its history. Yet the second manuscript confounds this desire: its subject matter, transformations, and even its political affiliations confuse him; in the end, he merely offers a catalog of its images: "mantichora, Leo, and Simia Pasia; the Lamia, Simia, Calitricia, and Sphinx; the Venator, Actaeon, and Stag."²⁰

If the religious manuscript was once in the hands of an innovative Puritan pedagogue seeking to instill moral values, might the second be fashioned by someone seeking tools to resist those very same life lessons? Or could it perhaps document an attempt to imagine a very different way of being in the world (by teacher or student) through its engagement with creaturely transformations? In this way, the creatures of 57312* are early modern tranimals: engineered and created through human labor and manipulation of matter but also resitant to fixed human ontological or taxonomic models. More than anything else, the manuscript's animation affords it multiple position- alities at once: it posits that we can make and unmake binaries of gender

(Adam and Eve), mobility (serpent and dragon, turtle and dolphin), affect (lover and beloved), violence (ravisher and raped), and pursuit (hunter and prey), sliding across identities by moving flaps of skin. It does not ignore histories of harm; encoded within its logic are the violences of gender and race that position bodies as vulnerable, hurttable, rapeable, and killable. Yet, as “playable” media, it realigns these possibilities so that they emerge within a logic of movement, rather than through a static narrative, offering—at least temporarily—multiple positionalities (and perhaps new alliances) through noncontextual connections.

What, then, can 57312* and its early modern tranimals offer to contemporary trans theory and politics? Its impact is twofold: first, it documents that questions about trans life and politics in the present may be found in media of the past, especially if we think about playable and pliable media as including engaged, hyper-designed interfaces of manuscripts. It shows that earlier encounters with animals and animal matter provided a salient way to unfold discourses of dominance in order to transform and manipulate them into new iterations of meaning.

Secondly, it requires us, quite literally at times, to reorient ourselves to the matter of the past, including the mediums in which we now encounter them. The digital representations of this object—online and for sale in the British Library Images Online catalog—are gorgeous and they greatly enhance access to the manuscript.²¹ Yet they flatten and, at times, distort the manuscript’s design, positioning them as logical progressions. On the one hand, this system makes them much more accessible (a commendable goal) but it also distorts and corrects its unique articulation. This arrangement makes it hard to understand it as historical evidence without wresting from it its ineffable charm or pinning it down into one interpretation of meaning. (Specifically, the sixth transformation is presented as in line with the others; without encountering the manuscript in person, it is easy to assume that the logic of flaps all unfold in a uniform way.) It is also difficult to ascertain how the transformations work; none of the images accessible for free online, for instance, includes any of the transformed middle sequences. They show only the beginning (with flaps closed) and end points (with flaps open). In doing so, they emphasize the beauty of the images as standalone compositions, rather than the beauty of its transformations, its pliability, and its staging of bodily difference. In short, 57312* demonstrates the power (and need) for different kinds of digital and material interfaces with the matter of the past in order to engage with trans logics of agency. The images I have included here represent

the manuscript's folds, but they required more specialized research requests to access them. While workshopping this essay, graduate students rightfully queried whether an academic article like this one was the best medium for this argument. Here, too, the object is static: perhaps video would function better, allowing the manuscript's materiality to operate more fluidly (and allowing the argument to reach nonspecialized audiences)?

In this way, 57312* continues to provoke important questions about knowledge creation, media materiality, and accessibility. But perhaps most importantly, the manuscript emphasizes that it may be possible to historicize trans experience in the past without, necessarily, becoming a history without trans-identified people.²² We do not—and cannot—know how the maker of 57312* defined themselves within seventeenth-century gender norms; but what is evident is a transimal desire to mobilize discourses of science and morality, overlapping and unfolding their restrictive meanings, in order to create new kinds of affinities that are not static. 57312* challenges us to rethink how we orient ourselves to the matter of the past, and especially to evidence rooted in violence but not necessarily subsumed by it; in this way, it is part of an expansive history of gender that insists on the material of the body but resists fixity in its formations.

NOTES

1. Many thanks to the students of George Washington University English 6120 and to Vin Nardizzi for their suggestions on why—and how—I should refer to this manuscript differently than its catalogue designation.

2. For more on perception, object-oriented networks, and playable objects, see Mitchell chapter 3.

3. See Larson 576.

4. See *British Museum Quarterly* 74.

5. Estelle Winifred Fuller is listed as the former owner of Add Ch 75577, ADD Ch 75739–42, ADD Ch 75744–50, Add Ms 59792–4, and Seal CCIII.1

6. The 1654 edition from Harvard's University Library is digitized on EEBO. See also Bodleian Wood E25 10.

7. See Reid-Walsh, "Activity and Agency" 167.

8. See Reid-Walsh, "Activity and Agency" 167.

9. Reid-Walsh's work to digitize these documents and present them in interactive ways is important. See her website.

10. See Swan 51.

11. See Ogilvie 116.

12. See Plomer 53.

13. See Heltzel 201. Thanks to Liz Yount, an undergraduate student in my English Renaissance course, for her excellent research on George Washington University's edition of this book.

14. This edition belongs to The George Washington University's rare book collection QL41.T68 (1658f).

15. See Ogilvie 64.

16. See Topsell Sig Br-C2v.

17. See Chen.

18. See Chen.

19. I found the letter by searching for other instances of *Simia Calitricia* of which this was one of the few.

20. Describing the gallant depicted in the manuscript, S. T. writes: "I at first imagined, from this fold, that it was one of the numerous devices adopted to express loyalty . . . but the subsequent verses are against the idea" (208).

21. I have relied heavily on them in writing this article, consulting them along with my own crude drawings and research notes from before it was digitized.

22. Thank you to Scott Larson, who framed the issue this way in his abstract for his talk on "Trans* Tonalities: Trans history before transgender" at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan in November 2018.

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