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DECONSTRUCTING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN ANIMALS AND HUMANS THE SERPENT IN THE *GREEK LIFE OF ADAM AND EVE*

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Abstract. Scholars have proposed various explanations to the puzzling conversation between the serpent and Eve, between an animal and a human in the narrative of the Fall and in *the Greek Life of Adam and Eve*. I argue here that a Derridean reading highlights the ways the narrative deconstructs the boundary between human and animal. I explore the similarity between the human and the serpent both in terms of appearance (an upright posture and limbs, being "furless"), and abilities (voice, speech, and reason, fear of God). I discuss the identity and specific features of the serpent, focusing on the similarities and differences between human and the serpent, implied in the rewritten narrative of the Fall, in the dialogue between Eve and the serpent, and the episode of the punishment.
Keywords: human, serpent, *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, deconstruction, *animot*.

Introduction

The etiological account of the creation and Fall in Genesis 2–3 seeks to explain certain phenomena like the bond between man and woman, the origin of evil, but also the relationship between the human and the animal realm. The mythical images express a kind of philosophical reflection on these questions, including that of the boundary between human and animal. The interpretation of these issues can benefit of a fresh perspective by introducing the Derridean notion of deconstruction, applied to the binary opposition between human and animal. This viewpoint allows the rethinking of the boundaries between humans and other beings.

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Jacques Derrida has reflected on some elements of the account of the creation and Fall in Genesis 2–3,[2] addressing the relationship between human and animal. Thus, evoking a number of motifs from the etiological narrative of the Fall, Derrida challenges the strict distinction between humans and the animals, inasmuch as the latter would be understood as a single, unified category. He does that by inventing the notion of *animot*, – a multiplicity of living creatures that cannot be reduced to the single generic category of *Animal*, a chimera combining "a multiplicity of animals", "an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals", sharing with humans the condition of living beings, deprived of speech, of the word that names a name, a condition that, he argues, should nonetheless be perceived otherwise, not as privation.[3]

The Book of Genesis has been discussed by scholars who engage with a Derridean reading.[4] Conversely, re-writings of the story of the Fall like the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE)[5] were not included in this discussion.

The GLAE is remarkable in a number of ways, as it expands the dialogue between Eve and the serpent, putting the blame for the Fall on Eve exclusively, and has several other noteworthy elements regarding the relationship between the human and the animal realm. In this paper, I explore the similarities between human and serpent implied in the Genesis account and the GLAE. Focusing on the GLAE I highlight the ways in which the narrative deconstructs the boundary between human and animal. To that purpose I focus on the serpent, the tempter or its instrument, that appears to a certain degree as an *animot* or chimera. I explore the similarities between the human and the serpent both in terms of appearance (an upright posture and limbs, being "furless", i.e. naked), and abilities (voice, speech, reason, and fear of God).

2 Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (trans. David Wills), New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 15–21.

3 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 41, 47–48.

4 Hannah M. Strømmen, *Biblical Animality after Jacques Derrida* (Semeia Studies 91), Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018 (focusing on Gen 9, Acts 10 and Rev 17); David M. Carr, "Competing Construals of Human Relations with "Animal" Others in the Primeval History (Genesis 1–11)", *JBL* 140.2 (2021) 251–269.

5 The GLAE has been dated between the 2–4th century. John R. Levison, *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature), Berlin–Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023, 85–97; Marinus De Jonge – Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 66–67.

The difference between humans and animals

Theological and some philosophical readings of the creation accounts understandably highlight the difference and superiority of human beings over animals. Thus, humans differ from animals in terms of their nature, a notion inherent in the metaphor of being of the same flesh and bone. This aspect produces at first sight an unbridgeable distinction between humans and all other creatures.[6] However, Derrida points to the difference between the first creation account, which envisions the human beings created in the image of God as ruling over animals, and the second account, in which Adam, the earthling, although naming the animals, shares in their nature.[7] The animals are "living things that came into the world before him but were named after him".[8]

The emphasis on the distinction between humans and animals is particularly manifest in interpretations of the idea of *imago Dei*, based on Gen 1,26-28.[9] Being created in the image of God grants humans their uniqueness in the created realm.[10] Philosophical discussions also highlight the abilities that distinguish humans from animals. Jean Grondin emphasises the limitations of the animals in terms of cognitive functions, and the superiority of humans from the perspective of self-consciousness, self-transcendence, the consciousness of mortality and empathy.[11]

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6 Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, "Noblesse Oblige: Theological Differences Between Humans and Animals and What They Imply Morally", *Journal of Animal Ethics* 1.2 (2011) 132–149 (135).

7 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 15–17.

8 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 17.

9 McLaughlin, "Noblesse Oblige", 134–137. On the implied idea of representation: W. Randall Garr, "'Image' and 'Likeness' in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh", *Israel Exploration Journal* 50.3–4 (2000) 227–234. I will not discuss the possible interpretations of the notion of *imago Dei*. For a detailed analysis see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, (trans. John J. Scullion), Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984, 147–155. W. Sibley Towner, Clones of God Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible, *Interpretation A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59.4 (2005) 341–356.

10 McLaughlin, "Noblesse Oblige", 136.

11 "Like us, animals feel, suffer, are born, die, and reproduce. They understand each other, and they make us understand what they have to say, and not just through their voices. But it is not certain that they can think beyond their immediate situations and take their distance from them. Humans benefit from a unique ability to transcend themselves (which goes

The closing remark of Genesis 2, according to which, before the Fall, the man and the woman are not ashamed of their nakedness in front of each other (2,25) deserves further attention. Derrida links humans' consciousness of their nakedness with self-awareness; conversely, "the property unique to animals, what in the last instance distinguishes them from man, is their being naked without knowing it. Not being naked therefore, not having knowledge of their nudity, in short, without consciousness of good and evil."[12] As opposed to animals, the man, Derrida argues, "would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked".[13] On the other hand, this particularity, which distinguishes human beings from animals also implies that in the logic of the narrative, before the Fall there is little difference between humans and animals. They realise their nakedness and they become ashamed of it only after eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[14] "Adam and the woman are now separated from animals by virtue of the ability to see themselves, to be self-aware and self-conscious; human beings now have a characteristic that they share with no other living creatures."[15]

While these distinctions between humans and animals – reason, self-consciousness, self-awareness – make sense from a theological and philosophical perspective, in the mythical narrative they do not apply, notably if one considers the serpent and the relationship between humans and the serpent.

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along with a consciousness of mortality) and to put themselves in someone else's place." Jean Grondin, "Derrida and the Question of the Animal", *Cités* 30.2 (2007) 31–39 (39). To put it somewhat differently, as Viktor E. Frankl pointed, human have the ability of dereflection (*Men's Search of Meaning. An Introduction to Logotherapy*, New York–London: Simon&Schuster, ^{3}1984, 125–131. On the distinction between humans and animals in the light of Gen 1,26-28, see also Ann Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals in the Bible: Paratexts as Symptoms of Cultural Anxiety in Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century England", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33.4 (2010) 438–451 (437).

12 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 4–5.

13 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 5.

14 Strømmen, *Biblical Animality,* 57; Carr, "Competing Construals of Human Relations with "Animal" Others", 260.

15 Stephen Grosse, "Building a Relationship with the Earth: Humans and Ecology in Genesis 1–3", *Denison Journal of Religion* 5 (2005), Art. 4, https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol5/iss1/4/., 12; Carr, "Competing Construals of Human Relations with "Animal" Others", 257.

Deconstructing boundaries: the vanishing difference between humans and the serpent

The serpent in Genesis 3 and the GLAE is akin to other mythological ophidic characters with ambivalent, predominantly negative roles, common with those in other myths.[16] One of the particular features in the narrative is that humans live in close proximity to and understanding with the animals, until this blissful condition is shattered. The motif of original harmony with the animals is not uncommon in myths depicting a "golden era", marked by the ideal coexistence of all living creatures, which ends, by some reason, leaving place to disharmony and enmity. In the Gilgamesh, Enkidu lives in communion with the animals, understands them, and they do not fear him. This harmony is lost after his intercourse with Shamhat, who seduces him and introduces him to civilisation.[17] Here too the snake plays a negative role, snatching from Gilgamesh the plant of rejuvenation that would allow him to escape mortality.[18]

One feature of this coexistence in harmony is the speech of animals and/or the ability of humans to communicate with animals.[19] In Gen 3, the fact that humans

16 The snake in the Epic of Gilgamesh (tablet XI., 287, Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ²2000, 119; Sophus Helle, *Gilgamesh: A New Translation of the Ancient Epic*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021, 111). The terrifying snakes created in the Epic of Creation, tablet III, verses 23–26: "Mother Hubur, who fashions all things, Contributed an unfaceable weapon: she bore giant snakes, Sharp of tooth and unsparing of fang (?). She filled their bodies with venom instead of blood." Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 245. In Egyptian mythology, Apophis "is a rebel against divine and cosmic order". "Apophis", in Manfred Lurker, *The Routledge Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons*, London–New York: Routledge, 2005, 16; Barbara Watterson, *Gods of Ancient Egypt,* Cheltenham: The History Press, 2003, 47, 108. A good example of the ambivalent character of the snake is Nehebkau, a snake-demon, which later becomes a protective and benevolent primeval deity. *Nehbkau*, Lurker, *The Routledge Dictionary,* 134.

17 Gilgamesh, tablet I, 180–195 (Helle, *Gilgamesh,* 10).

18 Gilgamesh, tablet XI (Dalley, *Myths*, 119, Helle, *Gilgamesh*, 111).

19 For occurrences of talking animals in Mesopotamian myths see Benjamin R. Foster, "Animals in Mesopotamian Literature", in Billie Jean Collins (ed.), *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East*, Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 271–288. Numerous fables are quoted here. However, Foster stresses, that "direct conversation or interaction between humans and animals" are rare ("Animals", 284). In Greek mythology animals'

can understand the words of the serpent may also evoke the idea of the original harmony between humans and animals.

In what follows, I follow the way the difference between humans and animals is deconstructed on the example of the serpent.

A creature of God

Both in Genesis and in the GLAE, the serpent is one of God's creatures, a male creature, as indicated by the gender of the Hebrew and the Greek noun. In the GLAE this is underscored by the fact that he lives in Adam's part of Eden, reserved for male beings (GLAE 15,3).

In the GLAE the identity of the "tempter" may seem confusing, because it merges at least two (if not more) distinct characters that play a role in the Fall. Thus, various passages speak of the enemy (ἐχθρός – GLAE 7,2; 15,1; 25,4; 29,13), or more specifically the devil (διάβολος – GLAE 15,3; 16,1.2.5; 17,4), the serpent (ὄφις – GLAE 16,1.4; 17,4; 18,1), or in one peculiar case, Satan (σατανᾶς – GLAE 17,1). The differences in naming the tempter in the various passages may have to do with the integration of different traditions in the text, most notably the widespread view emerging in the Hellenistic period, according to which the serpent is an

speech in mythical times is a common idea. As Katarzyna Kleczkowska emphasises, in the mythological ages there is a "total lack of distinction between species" ("Those Who Cannot Speak. Animals as Others in Ancient Greek Thought", *Maska* 24 (2014) 97–108. In this age "animals and humans are described as living together and sharing the same language." Chiara Di Serio, "Marginal Remarks on the Concept of 'Time of Origins' in Classical Greek Culture", in *Myth and History: Close Encounters*, edited by Menelaos Christopoulos – Athina Papachrysostomou – Andreas P. Antonopoulos, (MythosEikonPoiesis 14), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2022, 291–302 (295). Di Serio refers to Philo, *De confus. ling.* 6 (all animals shared the same language); Callim., *Ia*. 2, fr. 192, Dieg. 6.22–32 ("Marginal Remarks", 293–294). In Plato's *Statesman* the foster children of Cronus had "the ability to converse not only with human beings but also with beasts" (Pl., *Polit*. 272b, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, 12, trans. Harold N. Fowler, W.R.M. Lamb (LCL 164), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heinemann, 1921). Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* cites Socrates recalling a time "when beasts could talk" (Xen., *Mem*. 2.7.13-14, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, 4., trans. E.C. Marchant, O.J. Todd (LCL 168), Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heinemann, 1923.

instrument of the devil.[20] I will not focus here on the relation between these three entities or hypostases mentioned in the GLAE as stand-alone characters. Here I will focus only on the serpent.

Posture and bodily features

We can only speculate about the posture and bodily features of the serpent in the biblical narrative. One can infer that the serpent is envisaged as having an upright posture. In the punishment scene God sentences him to crawl on his belly from that point on, without explicitly describing his condition before the divine punishment (Gen 3,14). This suggests a change in the previous posture of the serpent and his way of moving. This remarkable feature, probably linked to his having limbs approaches him to humans.[21]

The GLAE fills this gap and leaves no space for speculations. The narrative gives some more details about God's punishment: "upon your breast and your belly you will go, *lacking both your hands and feet* (ὑστερηθεὶς καὶ χειρῶν καὶ ποδῶν σου). There will be left to you neither *ear* nor *wing* nor one body part of these (ἀφεθήσεται σοι ὠτίον οὔτε πτέρυξ οὔτε ἐν μέλος) with which you enticed with your wickedness and caused them to be thrown out of paradise" (GLAE 26,2-3). This passage envisions the serpent as a creature with human-like characteristics. Beyond hand and feet, he has ears, by which he had listened to the enticement of Satan. The reference to wings suggests that the serpent is envisaged as a winged creature. The depiction of serpent-like characters with limbs and wings reminds of the seraphs of the Hebrew Bible,[22] but it also occurs in representation of deities like Ningishzida.[23] Later Christian artistic

20 This confirms the view of Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp that the GLAE is not a "rewriting" of the Genesis, but it works mostly with the interpretations of Gen which were already widespread in the time GLAE was written. As they point out, "GLAE agrees with broad interpretative traditions in establishing a close connection between the serpent and the devil. No such connection exists in Genesis 3, where diabolical figures are entirely absent." De Jonge – Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve,* 47–48.

21 Carr, "Competing Construals of Human Relations with "Animal" Others", 258–259.

22 Cf. Num 21,6; Isa 6,2.

23 James H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized*, London – New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, 62. Ningishzida is often

representations that belong to the reception history of Gen 3 also depict the serpent with legs or with a human-like face.[24]

Nakedness

Nakedness is a shared condition of humans and the serpent (as furless animal). However, the GLAE reinterprets nakedness, focusing less on the physical aspect. The segregated character of the Paradise makes the assertion of Gen 2,25 on the nakedness and original lack of shame of the first humans irrelevant.[25] GLAE 20 understands nakedness and clothing in an ethical-spiritual sense. Eve avows: "I knew that I was naked of the righteousness with which I had been clothed." She will seek clothing only for herself, in her part of the Paradise (20,4). Adam will become aware of his nakedness only later (21,5), but will not seek to cover it, but decry his becoming estranged from the glory of God (21,6).[26] Nakedness accompanied by the lack of shame as an expression original harmony, plays no role in the GLAE, as opposed to Gen 2,25. Awareness of nakedness is not an expression of self-awareness as philosophical readings of Genesis 3 would have it. It is awareness of being naked of righteousness and estrangement from the glory of God, i.e. it becomes synonymous with the fallen, sinful condition.

Cunningness/wisdom and reason

The Hebrew Bible describes the serpent as the most cunning (עָרוּם) of God's creatures (Gen 3,1). Derrida refers to "the cunning genius of the animal, the evil genius as animal".[27] Conversely, LXX Gen 3,1, the pretext of the GLAE, tells that the serpent is wiser than any other animal (Ὁ δὲ ὄφις ἦν φρονιμώτατος πάντων τῶν θηρίων τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὧν ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεός). Being wise (φρόνιμος) replaces the deceitfulness of the serpent in the Hebrew text. The serpent appears

represented as a serpent with limbs, human-like posture, and, in some cases wings.

24 As Ann Cline Kelly notes, this tradition originating in the Middle Ages and enduring well into the English Restoration, was probably meant to eliminate the "uneasiness about how the Serpent could speak without human speech organs". Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 446.

25 Levison, *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, 485, 583, 1039–1040.

26 Levison, *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve,* 572–575, 1039–1040.

27 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 46.

thus as an animal endowed with reason. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil approaches humans to the serpent.

GLAE follows the LXX Gen 3,1 describing the serpent as "wiser than all the beasts" (16,2).[28] This wisdom is tested when the devil seduces him. The dialog between the devil and the serpent, and the fact that the serpent hesitates, shows his ability to reason (GLAE 16). The claim of the serpent that he fears his deception of Eve would anger God (GLAE 16,4) envisions him as a character that has the capacity to think beyond his immediate situation. The devil has to seduce him to convince him to join his evil plan, and the serpent eventually fails. This leads to another question: is the serpent a cunning tempter or a victim?[29] As he claims that he fears God, he has to be seduced by the devil, to become a seducer himself. In this he resembles Eve who hesitates but eventually yields to temptation. This questions the wisdom of the serpent (a feature inherited from the LXX).

The serpent is also envisaged as able to put himself in the place of the humans, and voice certain emotions, with the (negative) intent to deceive them: he tells Eve that "I grieve for you [two], for I do not want you to be ignorant" (GLAE 18,1).

Speech

Already in the biblical account, the serpent is endowed with speech.[30] Speech, *logos*, is an expression of reason.[31] Talking animals are not common in the Bible. Aside from the serpent in Genesis 3, the only other example of an animal possessing the ability to speak is Balaam's donkey (Num 22,28, cf. 2 Pet 2,16). In this specific

28 The word used here for beasts, θηρία, is the same as in GLAE 10, when Eve and Seth encounter a wild beast (θηρίον). Though later this term was used in a negative sense, as it means *wild* animal, in this case it refers to all animals, as in LXX Gen 2,19. The notion of ζῷον, means living being, was only used from 5th century onwards. Kleczkowska, "Those Who Cannot Speak", 98.

29 "A superior entity puts the words in their mouths." Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 439.

30 Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 297–298 (arguing that originally the serpent was not conceived as evil); Jean-Louis Ska, "The Study of the Book of Genesis: The Beginning of Critical Reading", in C.A. Evans, J.N. Lohr, D.L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, 3–26; Carr, "Competing Construals of Human Relations with "Animal" Others", 258–259.

31 Kleczkowska, "Those Who Cannot Speak", 101.

instance, it is emphatic that God enables the animal to speak.[32] In the case of the serpent the ability to speak is taken for granted. (More examples of talking animals are found in the apocryphal Acts.[33])

Already in Genesis, but even more so in the GLAE, the serpent engages in several dialogues. The most intriguing part of the GLAE is the dialogue between Eve and the tempter. The serpent starts the conversation with Eve by claiming: "I am grieved on your account that *you are like animals*, for I would not have you ignorant" (GLAE 18,1). He promises them that after eating from the tree, they "shall know what is good and what is evil" (GLAE 18,3) and "*would be like Him (God)*" (GLAE 18,4). This suggests that there are only two options for the human being: to be like animals, or to be like God. But what then does it mean to be human? In Genesis, animals seem to be "an ideal starting point for defining humanity by an opposition."[34] The serpent *is* an animal. However, the claim of the serpent in the GLAE, quoted above, inevitably leads to another question: where does the serpent belong, if not to the animal world? He does not say: "you are like me and the other animals". Or is Satan the one who is speaking here? This might seem reasonable: the devil is the one speaking, and the serpent is only his vessel. To be sure, the complexity of the identities of the tempter, incorporating various characters, turns the serpent into a kind of chimera, a demonic *animot*, endowed with speech, not unlike the wyvern evoked by Derrida.[35]

The question remains: why does Eve engage with the serpent?[36] Various explanations have been proposed to this puzzling conversation between a human and an animal. Although the first humans are envisioned as having the ability to speak to animals, the story does not imply that humans may trust the animals and rely on them. Eve trusting and conversing with the serpent could indicate her curiosity, or her ignorance regarding the identity, abilities and intentions of the serpent. In

32 Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 438.

33 The dog who acquires human speech and serves as Peter's messenger in the Acts of Peter, the baptised lion in the Acts of Paul, the speaking serpent and donkey in the Acts of Thomas. See the discussion by Janet Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 247), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 130–140, 182–186, 193–209.

34 Kleczkowska, "Those Who Cannot Speak", 97–98.

35 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 66.

36 Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 440.

this case she does not realise who she is talking to.[37] The reception history of the passage in Gen 3 includes the view that she sees a seraph, a flying serpent, a celestial being.[38] According to the allegorical interpretation of Philo the serpent stands for desire, which engages sense-perception (the woman), reaching thereby to reason (the man).[39] Remaining in the logic of the narrative, however, in the GLAE it is Satan who speaks through the serpent and deceives Eve, while the serpent is only his vessel.[40]

Analysing a fragment of Paul Valéry's "Silhouette of a Serpent" where the serpent of Genesis speaks, Derrida says that "this cunning master of nakedness dissimulated at the origin of desire begins by avowing: I am lying, I am an other, and here are the animal guises by means of which I disguise myself in "animal simplicity," showing and hiding at the same time what is in truth neither so much animal nor simple, nor, in any case, the identity of a single and simple animal."[41] The fact that the serpent expresses himself and speaks of his emotions and functions as an instrument of deception makes him indistinguishable from humans.

Fearing God

The serpent not only shows his ability to reason but even expresses his fear of God. He responds to the devil with: "I am frightened that perhaps the Lord will be angry with me" (GLAE 16,4). Through this remarkable positive trait, not found in Genesis, the serpent resembles humans even more.

Conclusion

The GLAE reevaluates and refines some issues Genesis does not discuss in detail. The figure of the tempter is much more nuanced and complex. It seems

37 As 17th century Anglican bishop Simon Patrick and 18th century cleric and historian Samuel Shuckford suggests, cf. Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 445.

38 Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 444.

39 QG 1.47-48, Philo Alexandrinus, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, trans. Ralph Marcus, (LCL 380), Cambridge, 1979.

40 Cline Kelly evokes the assumption of Richard Kidder that "the Devil commandeered the serpent's body and produced the human speech that Eve hears." Cline Kelly, "Talking Animals", 445.

41 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 65.

reasonable that the devil – who is a master of disguises –, when approaching Eve with his malicious plan, uses the serpent – who is "wiser than all other animals" –, as his vessel. This hypothesis is also supported by GLAE 26,2 in which, when God is punishing the serpent states that it "became a thankless vessel".

In shaping the character of the serpent, the GLAE deconstructs the difference between human and animal. The serpent, a humanlike and diabolic animal, a diabolic *animot*, has an upright posture, limbs and wings. He can reason, he is endowed with wisdom, he has the ability to speak and shows emotions. He has to be tempted in the same way as the first human couple, he fears God just as Adam and Eve does. He is punished together with the first human pair because of his role in the Fall.

Thus, a Derridean reading of the GLAE, highlighting the deconstruction of boundaries, exposes some similarities between humans and the serpent which are "as unexpected as they are irrefutable".[42]

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42 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 48.

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