

"It's a really interesting image. The manuscript is a copy of the French translation of St. Augustine's City of God. The passage of text just below the image is from Book 6, Ch. 8, which includes Augustine's commentary on Genesis 2. So, there's several layers: the image is not just an illustration of a biblical passage but an illustration of a French translation of a Latin commentary on a biblical passage.

Some background:

The French translation was produced by Raoul de Presles, a historian and councilor to King Charles V of France, in the 1370s (or thereabouts -- in the last quarter of the 14th century, at any rate). Raoul's translation inspired new iconographies for illustrations of the City of God text in manuscripts made around 1400. In turn, some of the City of God manuscripts made around 1400 inspired the images in the Maitre François manuscript you're interested in. So here again, we're looking at layers of image traditions -- the artist of your picture was probably borrowing from several visual sources, including earlier City of God images, as well as pattern-book images. (Pattern-book images are standardized pictures that circulated among artists and may have been used to create serialized images to save time, or may have been customized.)

Thus to answer your questions: there are several reasons why there are no "fowls of the air" in your illustration. They may not have appeared in other, earlier images that served as the model for this one. They may not be stressed in Augustine's commentary on this passage in Genesis. They may be depicted in another illumination on another folio in the manuscript. They may not have been considered as important to the symbolic meaning of the text or the image by either the artist or the patron. I'm sure there are other possibilities, but those are what I can come up with off the top of my head.

As for why there are two Adams and two Eves, I would assume that it is because Augustine's text (which I haven't read in a while) mentions them twice, referring to two different contexts or situations in the same passage and both references are being illustrated. It is also possible that the two Adams and two Eves represent two different sequential stages in a narrative, as we often find in comic books today.

My guess about the gestures is that they refer to the origins of humans and animals as recorded in Genesis. On the right side of the image, where most of the animals are concentrated, it looks like Adam and Eve are pointing down at the earth, to indicate the relationship of all created things to the earth. By pointing downward, Adam and Eve seem to be acknowledging the fact that Mankind as a species was created from the "slime," "mud," or "clay" of the earth. The scene on the left seems to be getting into the specifics of human creation: Adam looks at Eve and points to the side of his chest -- to his ribs -- to remind Eve that she was formed from his body, from one of his ribs; Eve, in turn, looks at Adam while pointing to the ground, to the earth that God used to create Adam.

The full text of the City of God is available on several sites online. You might be interested in reading Book 6, Chapter 8. There, Augustine uses the creation of Adam and Eve to discuss and define "natural" and "unnatural" relationships, from a philosophical as well as a moral viewpoint." Elizabeth Monti