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Animal Encounters

Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain

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Chapter 1

Cohabitation

Celtic populations in northern Britain had received Christian conversion by the fifth century, when they began to participate in the conversion of Ireland. During the sixth and seventh centuries, religious traffic across the Irish Sea shifted strongly in the direction of Britain as Irish missionaries came into Scotland and Northumbria. On the island of Iona, 80 miles off the Irish coast and one mile off the Scottish Isle of Mull, Columba (Colum-cille) founded a monastery in 563 that soon became the leading religious foundation of the Irish world. Proselytizing among the Picts and then in the seventh century among the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria, monks of Iona founded Lindisfarne and Melrose, where Cuthbert was educated beginning in about 651. The influence of Irish tradition persisted in Britain through the later seventh century, alongside the influence of Roman traditions dating from the sixth-century mission sent into England by Pope Gregory the Great.¹

Written down between the seventh and ninth centuries, my earliest set of works reflects the contiguity of Irish and northern British monastic life and thought. These works value ascetic simplicity, prayer and study, ecumenical work, and productive interactions with animals. This latter aspect of Irish monasticism is pointed out by scholars but is seldom a subject of analysis.² Animal relationships in monastic writing are not as favored in scholarship as monastic relationships with secular rulers, the Roman church, and the works of the early church fathers. The Irish and northern British monasteries, however, were deeply enmeshed in nature, reflecting their founders' ambitions to seek out deserted places and to create new settlements where none had been before. The typical monastic foundation of the earlier centuries was little more than a collection of wattle huts for monastic solitude near a larger structure for communal meals and an oratory or church.³ Wild nature challenged monastic settlements and domesticated nature facilitated their work. An Old

Irish lyric about a monastic scholar and his cat and a handful of early Irish saints' lives will demonstrate how rich medieval thought about animals could be in these ascetic foundations.

The Irish lyric "Pangur Bán" meditates on the symbiosis of a scholar's efforts and a housecat's hunting, to discover within their analogous work a precisely observed equivalence between their minds. In the second half of this chapter, the scene of cohabitation moves from the small space of a scholar's monastic hut to the seas, pasturelands, and wilderness of seventh and eighth-century hagiography. Poised at the leading edge of humanity, saints of the Irish tradition establish their sanctity by entering into relationships with wild and domestic animals, shaping all creation into a more hospitable place for Christian settlements.

Living with animals in the Middle Ages, so intensive and pervasive in contrast to our century's curtailed living contacts, could not yet be conceived in terms of "domestication," that is, a long process of genetic adaptations toward cross-species tolerance and exploitation. Instead, medieval sources often imagine cohabitation with animals as a heuristic arrangement in the here and now of a particular creature and a particular human. Yet the etymological root of "domestication," in medieval Latin *domesticare*, "to dwell in a house" and by metaphoric extension "to accustom, to become familiar with," connects the contemporary term back to the medieval view that a particular relationship of two beings could exemplify how entire species have come into interdependence with humans.⁴ Indeed, the Irish texts of this chapter treat the immediate present of a cross-species encounter as paradigmatic for cross-species relationships more generally, contributing a certain universality and explanatory force to the scenes of contact.

Pangur Bán

The Old Irish lyric called "Pangur Bán" ("White Fuller"), "The Scholar and His Cat," or "The Monk and His Cat" has been widely translated, printed, and appreciated over the last century. The lyric survives in a single ninth-century manuscript that was probably produced in Ireland; the lyric's composition may be contemporaneous with its manuscript or somewhat earlier.⁵ The manuscript's association with the eighth-century abbey at Reichenau in southern Germany testifies to the peregrinations of Irish monks across Britain and Europe. "Pangur Bán" appears in this manuscript, not marginally as is

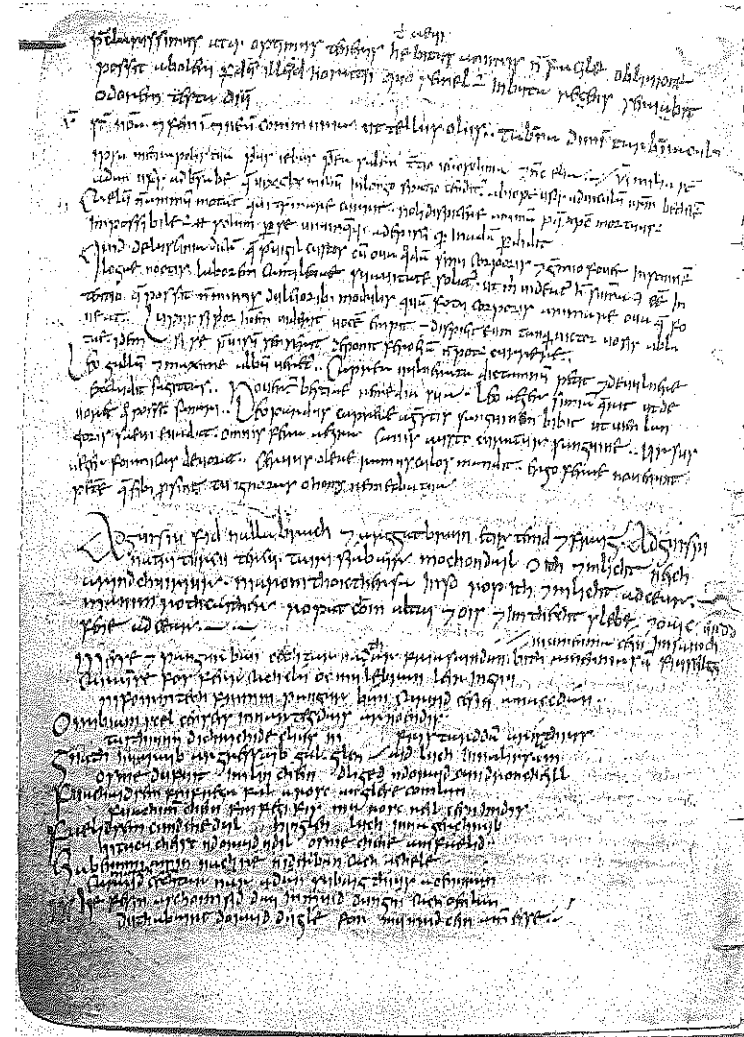


Figure 1. "Pangur Bán" in the Reichenau Primer. Carinthia, Austria, Archiv St. Paul 86 b/1, folios 19–20. By permission of Stift St. Paul. Digital image by Dr. Konrad J. Tristram.

sometimes said, but across the bottom third of folio 1 verso. Seamus Heaney offers the finest poetic rendering of “Pangur Bán”:

Pangur Bán and I at work,
Adepts, equals, cat and clerk:
His whole instinct is to hunt,
Mine to free the meaning pent.

More than loud acclaim, I love
Books, silence, thought, my alcove.
Happy for me, Pangur Bán
Child-plays round some mouse's den.

Truth to tell, just being here,
Housed alone, housed together,
Adds up to its own reward:
Concentration, stealthy art.

Next thing an unwary mouse
Bares his flank: Pangur pounces.
Next thing lines that held and held
Meaning back begin to yield.

All the while, his round bright eye
Fixes on the wall, while I
Focus my less piercing gaze
On the challenge of the page.

With his unsheathed, perfect nails
Pangur springs, exults and kills.
When the longed-for, difficult
Answers come, I too exult.

So it goes. To each his own.
No vying. No vexation.
Taking pleasure, taking pains
Kindred spirits, veterans.

Day and night, soft purr, soft pad,
Pangur Bán has learned his trade.
Day and night, my own hard work
Solves the cruxes, makes a mark.⁶

This beautiful poetic translation has certain marks of modernity that appear when we set it next to a rigorously literal translation from Whitley Stokes and John Strachan's anthology of Old Irish poetry:

I and Pangur Bán, each of us two at his special art:
his mind is at hunting (mice), my own mind is in my special craft.

I love to rest—better than any fame—at my booklet with diligent
science:
Not envious of me is Pangur Bán: he himself loves his childish art.

When we are—tale without tedium—in our house, we two alone,
we have—unlimited (is) feat-sport—something to which to apply our
acuteness.

It is customary at times by feats of valour, that a mouse sticks in his net,
and for me there falls into my net a difficult dictum with hard meaning.

His eye, this glancing full one, he points against the wall-fence:
I myself against the keenness of science point my clear eye, though it is
very feeble.

He is joyous with speedy going where a mouse sticks in his sharp claw:
I too am joyous, where I understand a difficult dear question.

Though we are thus always, neither hinders the other:
each of us two likes his art, amuses himself alone.

He himself is master of the work which he does every day:
while I am at my own work, (which is) to bring difficulty to clearness.⁷

Juxtaposing Heaney's lyric translation with a close paraphrase reveals two revisionary tendencies shared by many recent translators and readers: the

ninth-century lyric's vivid depiction of similarity between scholar and cat morphs toward parity and acquires an emotional charge. Heaney's scholar and cat are "equals," "kindred spirits." Pangur purrs softly; he is "happy for" the scholar. None of these renderings is accurate to the Irish text, but all seem plausible translations in the context of our era's pet-keeping. "Equals" and "kindred spirits" are interpretive extensions of the lyric's parallel phrasing: in Stokes and Strachan, "his mind . . . my own mind," "I love . . . he himself loves." Heaney's "soft purr, soft pad" is an outright addition, and his "happy for me" alters the original's "not envious of me," a fascinating expression that altogether reserves judgment on the cat's orientation to the scholar: does the cat's absence of envy express tolerance or simply obliviousness—relationship or nonrelationship? Heaney's shifts toward fellowship and sentiment are in fine company: W. H. Auden similarly nudges the Irish text to read "how happy we are / Alone together."⁸ From the scholarly corner, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen invokes "Pangur Bán" to argue that, like contemporary pet owners, "medieval people loved these same animals with an ardor equal to that which today has encouraged the development of gourmet dog biscuits and Tiffany cat collars."⁹

Love does suffuse this lyric with glowing joy, but scholar and cat are depicted loving their separate endeavors, not loving each other. The scholar's relation to the cat is more meditative than affective: Pangur exemplifies for the scholar a deep commitment to "his special art," "the work which he does every day." Yet the scholar also values a carefully delineated connection between Pangur and himself. This connection comes into view when we set aside the contemporary assumption that sharing affection is the best of all relationships with other creatures.¹⁰ The Irish lyric depicts instead a relationship nearer the medieval ideal of cohabitation, in which each animal in domestic space has a specialized task to perform. Only within the sharply observed specifics of their separate tasks does the scholar assert a small, precisely observed equivalence between them: both are capable of focusing so intently at their work as to produce a kind of elation, a "joyous" state of concentration that they share.

"Unlimited is feat-sport"

To be sure, the "childish art" of hunting mice stands in contrast to the textual labor of the scholar, expressing the fundamental difference between irrational and rational creatures that medieval exegetical tradition grounded in the text of Genesis. As "Adam called all the beasts by their names and all the fowls of the air and all the cattle of the field" (Genesis 2:20), patristic commentary finds a foundational distinction between the rational, speaking first man and

all other living creatures. This exegetical tradition, a topic of Chapter 3 on the bestiaries, is no doubt latent in "Pangur Bán." The difference between catching mice and solving textual cruxes makes "our house" a microcosm of creation's rightful hierarchy.

Anthropomorphic tactics for depicting the cat, however, put certain pressures on the lyric's hierarchical differentiation between scholar and cat. The cat's name, "Pangur Bán," means "white fuller," a man who works with fuller's earth and comes to be covered in its pale dust.¹¹ Given the high value of work and craft in the lyric, one might hazard that "white fuller" evokes both the cat's pale fur and his workmanlike behavior. The cat is next anthropomorphized as a net-wielding gladiator or perhaps a huntsman equipped with a net (his extended claws) as he performs "feats of valor."¹² Cat as workman and cat as valiant gladiator have mock-heroic potential that could reflect doubly on the cat, humorously inflating his worth in order to discredit it and distance him from the scholar. In a counterstrategy, however, the scholar shares mock-heroic status with the cat as "there falls into *my* net a difficult dictum with hard meaning." Both of them are attempting "feats of valor" that could look small from the net-wielding, death-defying gladiator's perspective. Anthropomorphism can cut in many directions, but in "Pangur Bán" the consistent strategy is to strike analogies that reinforce the scholar's bemused admiration for Pangur with his self-deprecating account of his own efforts to work well. The bodily organ through which both of them work is the eye, crucial for each task. The scholar's "very weak" eye may suffer from presbyopia but is surely metaphoric for his intellectual struggles. Here again the scholar's self-deprecation sets Pangur's workmanship ahead of his own.

The scholar's characterization of Pangur's "special art" interprets a peculiar trait of domestic cats: they do not kill only when they are hungry, in order to eat. Probably as a result of artificial selection for good mousers over centuries of cohabitation with humans, domestic cats (*Felis catus*) may kill many times a day without eating their prey, as if they were hunting just for the sake of hunting.¹³ Crooks and Soule call them "recreational hunters."¹⁴ In the moment of Pangur's and the scholar's cohabitation, it appears that a white cat who hunts all day in disconnection from hunger "amuses himself" and "likes his art" in analogy to the scholar's long hours of fascination with textual analysis. Both of them are specialists.

Medieval sources call the domestic cat *catus* less often than *musio*, *murilegus*, *sorilegus*, and *muriceps* (mouse catcher, rodent catcher), indicating the quality for which cats were most valued. During the Roman Empire cats were

taken northward from the Mediterranean; some of the tiles excavated at the Roman town of Silchester in Britain bear the footprints of cats.¹⁵ The Welsh legal code of Hwyl Dda specifies the worth of a cat as follows: "The price of a cat is four pence. Her qualities are to see, to hear, to kill mice, to have her claws whole, to nurse and not devour her kittens. If she be deficient in any one of these qualities, one third of her price must be returned."¹⁶ The noun "Pangur" is not Irish but Welsh, so that Pangur's presence in an Irish lyric, perhaps also in an Irish monastic house, suggests the best mousers may have been worth taking from place to place and even buying and selling. But a monk need not purchase cats; their upkeep amounts to nothing and they reproduce freely even in a feral state. Thus they were characteristic denizens of the poorest households, including those of monks and hermits, where manuscripts as well as food supplies needed protection from rodents.¹⁷

As one of so few possessions, the scholar's cat poses a risk to spirituality: one might be tempted to take frivolous pleasure in a cat. John the Deacon's ninth-century *Life of St. Gregory* tells of a hermit who possessed "nothing in the world except for a cat." He was so fond of her that "he caressed her often and warmed her in his bosom as his housemate."¹⁸ His virtuous asceticism brought him a dream foretelling that in heaven he would be placed next to Pope Gregory. The hermit questioned whether this place was a just reward for his ascetic life, so different from the Pope's life of luxury. God replies to him in a second dream that he is more wealthy with the cat he cherishes so deeply than was Gregory with all his riches, which he did not love but rather deplored. The anecdote celebrates Gregory's transcendence of worldly ties but also the hermit's effort at transcendence, as he wakes and prays for strength to live more ascetically and deserve his place in heaven.

The scholar of "Pangur Bán," as if taking to heart the rigorous lesson of John the Deacon's anecdote, controls the risk of worldly pleasure by finding exemplarity in Pangur and restricting their pleasure to their work: "each of us two likes his art, amuses himself alone." Yet relationship is not banished from "our house"; the scholar is warmly respectful of this creature who is "master of the work which he does every day." The lyric's parallel constructions begin by moving from "I" to "he" (stanzas 1a, 2) but soon shift to move from "he" to "I" (stanzas 1b, 4, 5, 6, 8), to emphasize that the scholar is taking inspiration from Pangur's persistence in hunting. And the scholar finds more to their similarity than their commitment to their separate arts. They also share a hunter's mind.

To be sure, once again, the philosophical and exegetical traditions infusing this lyric's context would not sustain a claim that cat's mind and scholar's

mind are entirely alike. The very foundation of the lyric's "house" is that the scholar's intellectual work, the *ratio* unique to humankind, contrasts with and complements the cat's work of killing mice. But *ratio* does not encompass all mental activity. Early medieval theology and natural science in the Aristotelian tradition had no hesitation in according mental activity to animate creatures other than humankind.¹⁹ What is unusual in "Pangur Bán" is its identification of a certain mental acuteness that a cat can share with a scholar. The lyric's opening comparison between "his mind" and "my own mind" ("menmasam . . . mu menma") introduces the intriguing possibility that hunting and scholarship can both involve a kind of mindfulness that goes beyond *ratio*.

José Ortega y Gasset insists in his *Meditations on Hunting* that in human hunting, reason is a hindrance. "Reason's most important intervention consists precisely in restraining itself, in its limiting its own intervention." In order truly to excel at hunting, Ortega y Gasset continues, we must

accept the most obvious thing in the world—namely, that hunting is not an exclusively human occupation, but occurs throughout almost the entire zoological scale. Only a definition of hunting that is based on the complete extension of this immense fact, and covering equally the beast's predatory zeal and any good hunter's almost mystical agitation, will get to the root of this surprising phenomenon.²⁰

I want to linger over Ortega y Gasset's "almost mystical agitation," his expression for the peculiar alertness that replaces reason and calculation in hunting. Other hunters have attempted to describe this remarkable state of nonrational attentiveness. Nancy Mitford's clever, literate narrator in *The Pursuit of Love* is so absorbed in a hunt that "I forgot everything, I could hardly have told you my name. That must be the great hold that hunting has over people, especially stupid people; it enforces an absolute concentration, both mental and physical."²¹ Michael Pollan writes of his first hunt, "my attention to everything around me, and deafness to everything else, is complete. Nothing in my experience (with the possible exception of certain intoxicants) has prepared me for the quality of this attention."²² These attempts to characterize hunting's peculiar alertness concur in contrasting it to rational thought. In the ninth century and even the nineteenth, the focused concentration of hunting would have been a broadly familiar experience. It is some kind of comment on Pollan's audience that the experience of "certain intoxicants" is a more broadly shared frame of reference than the "almost mystical agitation" of hunting itself.

Given how rarely in medieval texts the behavior of an animal is closely described, it is remarkable that the poet of “Pangur Bán” took care to represent a cat’s intense alertness in hunting. More remarkably still, the lyric’s scholar takes that alertness to be exemplary on its own terms, rather than simply as a rhetorical figure for something else. In the lyric’s third stanza, Stokes and Strachan’s “feat-sport” translates *aithes*, whose meanings encompass “ingenuity, sharpness, keenness” as well as “exploit, victory, successful feat.”²³ *Aithes* introduces the idea of an accomplishment that is alert and skillful but not rational. The connection between “my mind” and “his mind” is tightest in stanzas 4 and 6, when Pangur’s pounce is juxtaposed to the scholar’s apprehension of “a difficult dictum” and “a dearly loved question.” Perhaps, in a dull and conventional simile, the scholar seizes a crux just as eagerly as Pangur seizes a mouse. But I believe that the lyric’s claim is far more fascinating: that the scholar seizes the crux *when his mind works as the cat’s mind works*. Seizing a crux can depend on nonrational states of attentiveness that intellectual workers call inspiration, revelation, bursts of insight. Physicist Richard Feynman recounts inspiration as standing back from thought:

I worked out the theory of helium once and suddenly saw everything. I had been struggling and struggling for two years. . . . At that particular time I simply looked up and I said, “Wait a minute, it can’t be quite that difficult. It must be very easy. I’ll stand back, and I’ll just treat it very lightly. I’ll just *tap* it, boomp-boomp.” And there it was! So how many times since then am I walking on the beach and I say, “now look, it can’t be so complicated.” And I’ll tap-tap—and nothing happens. The delights are great, but the secret way—what the conditions are. . . . By the way, it’s the delight that is absolute ecstasy. You just go absolutely wild.²⁴

Here is the joy of hunting, as well as its intense focus: “He is joyous with speedy going where a mouse sticks in his sharp claw: I too am joyous, where I understand a difficult dear question.” In this one respect Pangur’s and the scholar’s work are not just analogous but equivalent. And so at this point an apology to Seamus Heaney is in order. Heaney’s first stanza rendering the cat and the scholar “equals” does accurately translate the lyric’s narrow parity between the mental orientation of hunting and of solving cruxes. Reinforcing that limited parity, Heaney continues, “His whole *instinct* is to hunt, / Mine to free the meaning pent,” substituting a term closely identified with other species for the lyric’s “his mind . . . my own mind,” in order to express the

nonrational focus needed for both hunting and resolving textual cruxes. The “feat-sports” of scholar and cat share a specific kind of mental alertness.

“In our house, we two alone”

In addition to sharing a certain kind of mental work, Pangur and the scholar also share a working space, “our house.” Within the bounds of the lyric, this working space is entirely constituted by “we two alone,” some mice, and a book. The lyric’s depiction of “our house” recalls the “domus” in “domestication,” the modern term for the process of genetic change by which certain species have come to live with humans. The deep perspective of genetic change is of course completely unavailable to a ninth-century Irish poet, yet “Pangur Bán” offers a weirdly compelling illustration of recent scholarship concerning what domestication is and how it works. A few flagrantly atemporal paragraphs will bring to light two modern misapprehensions about domestication that can distort our appreciation for medieval accounts of cross-species cohabitation. In my temporally collapsed reading, two details from the Irish lyric, the symbiosis of scholar and cat and the cat’s white fur, evoke a history of domestication reaching back millennia before the ninth century.

Patrolling the wall-fence and catching mice, Pangur creates good conditions for scholarly work. The lyric’s perception is consistently that cat and scholar work in tandem—as expressed through the stanzas’ rhetorical organization in parallel phrases, the equivalent terminology for the mind, joy, work, and art of both creatures, and the metaphoric equations of cat and scholar to net-fighters and craftsmen. Cat and scholar “in our house” enjoy a mutually sustaining relationship. Here “Pangur Bán” adumbrates recent scholarship that resists seeing domestication as a one-way process in which humans have chosen to manage other creatures, compelling them to behave in useful ways. In that older view, which has medieval as well as post-medieval proponents, animals change (whether individually or as whole species) when humans make them change.²⁵ Revisionist views of domestication, sometimes termed “co-domestication” and “self domestication,” represent differently how other species came to reside with humans. These models propose that much of the genetic change in domestication is not willed by humans but takes place without their intervention as other species exploit human environments.²⁶

The domesticated cat well exemplifies this revisionist interpretation that domestication is “a symbiosis that needs at least two partners, and it is simplistic to view it from the side of one of the partners alone.”²⁷ As agriculture replaced hunter-gathering, wild cats that could tolerate proximity to human

settlements moved in to hunt the rodent populations attracted by stored grain. The concentration of rodents was advantageous to the cats, and their rodent killing was advantageous to the settlements. This first stage of feline domestication reaches back about 9000 years.²⁸ Through generations of natural selection for tolerance of proximity to humans, cats became “neotenuous”: traits that had been juvenile in their species came to be preserved into adulthood. Compared to their wild forebears, domesticated cats are more calm, sociable, and tolerant of humans, not because they are individually tamed in each case but because their genetic code has shifted to make them more kittenlike, and thus more capable of living near humans. All domestic mammals are neotenuous to some degree: throughout their lives, they retain juvenile tendencies to solicit care, to tolerate contact with other species, and to be capable of learning new behaviors well into their adult lives.²⁹ Natural selection, evolutionary changes brought about by environmental conditions rather than human intentions, produced a cat that could exploit human environments by producing a permanently juvenile cat.

In this long view of genetic modification, the domesticated cat shares “our house” with another neotenuous creature: the scholar. Open to living with another species, capable of learning from his manuscripts throughout his life, the scholar exemplifies how deeply neotenized is *Homo sapiens*.³⁰ Like the neotenization of cats, the neotenization of humans, many millennia in the past, involved no deliberate human manipulation; neoteny produced its own favoring as it produced humans more and more adapted to cooperative living in tight quarters. Our own neoteny is always credited with creating the conditions for culture-building specifically among humans, but neoteny also makes a second stage of domestication possible—the stage in which various species adapted to living near humans become of interest to humans. Neoteny on both sides—curiosity, flexibility, and comfort across species lines—sustains this second stage of domestication. Humans draw other species deeply into culture, making innovative use of them as supports for cultural advancement. The scholar of “Pangur Bán” lives in the second stage of domestication when the neotenuous cat, “merely a ‘rough first draft,’” comes to be “‘edited’ and modified thereafter by human selection for individual traits” such as superior rodent killing.³¹ Pangur, a second-stage “edited” feline, hunts all day regardless of his need for food, creating good conditions for scholarly work. Deliberate human selection, called artificial selection, produces over time its own evolutionary changes by favoring certain traits over others.

Pangur’s whiteness is poised between the two stages of domestication,

the rough draft and the edited copy, potentially illustrating each of them. Given the light color of fuller’s earth, the name “White Fuller” insists almost redundantly on Pangur’s color.³² Deliberate “editing” of feline litters for color as an aesthetic value could have favored this striking mutation of wild felines’ camouflaging tabby coats. In an offhand reference to such favoring, Eadmer of Canterbury illustrates the overlap of two distinct pleasures, touch and sight, with the example of stroking a white cat.³³ The doubled reference to a pale coat in Pangur Bán’s name suggests that his color was valued in itself, although no such suggestion is worked out in the scholar’s austere appreciation of his merits.

Alternatively to evoking artificial selection of litters for favored colors, Pangur’s white coat could evoke for us the deepest past of feline neotenization, as a secondary trait accompanying evolutionary pressure toward tolerance of humans. Probably because it has some genetic link to calmness, depigmentation is broadly characteristic of domestic mammals—white polled cattle, piebald horses, white-faced dogs. A breeding experiment carried out on silver foxes at a Siberian fur farm, in which foxes of each generation were selected and bred strictly on the criterion of which were less fearful of humans, produced foxes within about thirty generations that actively solicited human contact, whining and wagging their tails to win their caregivers’ attentions—but produced as well some unanticipated changes including depigmentation in the coats of less fearful foxes: white marks and light coats not found in the wild stock.³⁴ Thus Pangur’s white coat can evoke the long history of co-domestication’s intended and unintended genetic modifications. Pangur Bán’s pleonastic name suggests that whiteness may have been a trait favored in cats through artificial selection. On the other hand, the scholar’s rigorous focus on Pangur’s work and skill treats his whiteness as a secondary characteristic, irrelevant to his true value as a good mouser.

In presenting “our house” as a coordinated space of joyous fulfillment, “Pangur Bán” offers a more substantial and positive view of cohabitating with cats than do most medieval texts.³⁵ The scholar’s self-deprecating humility as he observes Pangur’s hunting, together with his depiction of their tasks’ symbiosis, well illustrate Coppinger’s and Smith’s recommendation that “we should swallow our pride and accept our own inextricable interdependency with other domesticants. The culture we pride ourselves on was, and remains, dependent on the success of domestication.”³⁶ “Pangur Bán” acknowledges this success in depicting a spectrum of concentration shared between scholar and cat. Together they make “our house” a coherent space of cultural production.

Saints and Animals

Irish and Northumbrian saints' lives expand the space of cultural production from a single monastic cell to the outdoor spaces of ecumenical pilgrimage. Wild and domestic animals figure prominently in the consolidation of Christian culture as the Irish and Irish-trained saints of seventh- and eighth-century hagiography move out of their cells and into relation with diverse communities—monastic and secular, Christian and pagan—and into the fields, forests, and seas of Ireland, Scotland, and Northumbria. The dual commitment of these saints to spreading Christianity and retreating into seclusion are importantly allied. These early *vitae* in the Irish tradition draw on the lives of desert saints of Mediterranean antiquity, but the northern works do not adopt the antique dichotomy between sinful society and purgatorial desert. Instead, evangelization and lonely self-purification are conjoined values for these saints.³⁷ Weaving settlements and deserted places together as they move among them, they construct a single environment drawn into harmony through holiness. When St. Cainnech withdraws from his brotherhood to a solitary place, a stag stands quietly with the saint's book propped in his antlers; startled into flight one day, the stag soon returns to the saint with the book still in place. Young St. Fintán slips off to his reading lessons by recruiting two wolves to guard his father's herd; the wolves' transformation convinces his father to let Fintán continue his religious studies.³⁸ In these and many further animal encounters, the world of Christian study and spiritual care intertwines with a more than human world.

Literary and cultural scholars have long turned to hagiography for "reliable contemporary evidence about the aspirations and culture of a people," as Kathleen Hughes writes, but the same scholars tend to dismiss the saints' animal miracles as "folk-lore fantasy" or "the common subject matter of hagiology"—transhistorical boilerplate unworthy of scholarly attention.³⁹ Separating Cainnech's miraculous stag so neatly from the rest of his *vita* obscures the culturally specific meanings of his animal miracles. Cainnech's other miracles are not beyond the scholarly pale: T. M. Charles-Edwards finds substantial information about social organization and church rivalry in Cainnech's multiply miraculous rescue of a king from a burning fort.⁴⁰ In order to bring the saints' miraculous contacts with animals into better view, they should be considered alongside other miracles and in the context of the lives' governing concerns: authenticating each saint's life and foundations, expressing values

peculiar to the hagiographers' time and place, and conforming the saint to an ideal of holy life based in Biblical precedents.⁴¹ These governing concerns reach beyond the human to engage the whole of creation. For the hagiographers, sanctity is a particular relationship to God but also a particular path through mortal life.

My central text is the *Life of Saint Cuthbert* written by a member of his community in about 700, soon after Cuthbert's death.⁴² I draw some analogies from the similarly substantial *Life of Columba* (Colum-cille), also written around 700 by a member of the saint's community,⁴³ and from shorter *vitae* in the Codex Salmanticensis cluster that Richard Sharpe has shown to preserve eighth-century lives of the seventh-century saints Cainnech, Fintán, Luguid, and Fínán Cam.⁴⁴ This set of texts in an Irish tradition is more accurately "insular" or "northern" than Ireland's alone. Linking the Irish lives to Cuthbert's Anglo-Saxon life recognizes the persistence and strength of Irish tradition in British foundations.⁴⁵ These lives also cohere in their conception of the relationships saints strike with animals as the frontiers of the Irish foundations move from Ireland across the sea to Britain.

When scholars discuss animal encounters in hagiography, they typically declare the encounters' relevance to be exclusively human. In the earliest scholarly comment on my texts, Bede's rewriting (c. 721) of the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, this apologetic insertion constrains the meaning of Cuthbert's correction of thieving ravens: "Let it not seem absurd to anyone to learn a lesson of virtue from birds, since Solomon says: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.'"⁴⁶ Similarly, on the grief of Columba's workhorse as death approaches the saint, Dominic Alexander concludes that the episode illustrates "the bonds of love and perfect harmony of the productive family within the saint's realm, in no doubt stark contrast to normal secular households. It is not *nature* that is being depicted here, it is *society*."⁴⁷ For many readers of hagiography, animals are ciphers or signs for human followers and teaching; they are insignificant as creatures. This semiotic approach diminishes the range and mystery of the saint's influence throughout creation. Animal encounters can participate more fully in the saint's definition when we take them to be wondrous in their supplementarity to encounters with both angels and humankind. Hagiography's instruction ranges beyond lessons on human conduct to instruct as well concerning how creation is ordered and how it might be revised through faith.

Ministering to Guests

The “service and ministry” Cuthbert receives from two sea animals exemplifies how involved sanctity and animality can become.⁴⁸ The Anonymous devotes a chapter to this incident “which I learned from the account of many good men, among whom is Plecgils a priest.”⁴⁹ On each night of his visit to the monastery of Coldingham, Cuthbert walks to the seashore below the monastery. A cleric of Coldingham follows Cuthbert one night to test him (“eum temptando”) and witnesses the sea animals’ behavior:

Ille vero homo Dei Cuthberht, inobstinata mente adpropinquans ad mare usque ad lumbare in mediis fluctibus, isam enim aliquando usque ad ascellas tumultuante et fluctuante tinctus est. Dum autem de mare ascendens, et in arenosis locis litoris flectens genua orabat, venerunt statim post vestigia eius duo pusilla animalia maritima humiliter proni in terram, lambentes pedes eius, volutantes tergebant pelibus suis, et calefacientes odoribus suis. Post servitium autem et ministerio impleto accepta ab eo benedictione, ad cognatas undas maris recesserunt.

That man of God, approaching the sea with mind made resolute, went into the waves up to his loin-cloth; at once he was soaked as far as his armpits by the tumultuous and stormy sea. Then coming up out of the sea, he prayed, bending his knees on the sandy part of the shore, and immediately there followed in his footsteps two little sea animals, humbly prostrating themselves on the earth; and, licking his feet, they rolled upon them, wiping them with their skins and warming them with their breath. After this service and ministry had been fulfilled and his blessing had been received, they departed to their haunt in the waves of the sea.⁵⁰

The spying cleric confesses his weak trust in Cuthbert’s motives for nocturnal wandering. Cuthbert replies, “you shall receive pardon on one condition; that you vow never to tell the story so long as I am alive” (“hoc tibi confitenti uno modo indulgetur, si votum voveris, numquam te esse quamdiu vixero narraturum”).⁵¹

One kind of work this episode accomplishes is validating Cuthbert’s sanctity by aligning it with Biblical and early Christian precedents. Animals minister to the saint, writes the anonymous hagiographer, “just as we read in the Old Testament that the lions ministered to Daniel.” (“sicur leones in veteri

legimus Danihelo servire”),⁵² Like the desert saints of antiquity as well as other monks in the Irish tradition, Cuthbert practices ascetic immersion in cold water.⁵³ His command that the spying cleric keep the encounter unknown imitates the desert saints’ withdrawal from social relations in search of anonymity and rigorous asceticism, and the cleric’s witnessing fills the function of visitors to the desert ascetics: paradoxically, in their *vitae* their withdrawal to deserted places attracts the admiration and commemoration of visitors.

Even as the Anonymous draws on authoritative precedents, he modifies them in directions characteristic of early Irish hagiography: wilderness and settlement are less troubled and less dichotomous places than they were for the desert saints of antiquity. Antony of Egypt retreated from the sinful comforts of civilization to a horrific desert infested with demonic forces in animal forms which injure him terribly. The best that reptiles, crocodiles, and other animals of the desert can do for Antony is to stay away from him “as if they were afraid” and “as if they had been chased.”⁵⁴ In Jerome’s life of Paul of Thebes, a raven sent by God brings bread to Paul and two lions bury his dead body, but the desert remains harshly penitential and importantly in contrast with the sinful comforts of civilization.⁵⁵ The deserts and settlements of early Irish hagiography are more contiguous; both can offer appropriate settings for ascetic practice and saintly heroics. Columba’s founding of Iona and his administrative work there are at least as worthy as his follower Baitan’s effort “to seek a desert in the ocean . . . [on] long circuitous voyaging through windy seas.”⁵⁶ Columba arriving on Iona and Cuthbert arriving on Farne both find their islands haunted, but their *vitae* spend only a line or two on the demons’ expulsion.⁵⁷ Then the saints move on to relate to their islands’ animal denizens, often in modes of mutual accommodation. Cuthbert’s immersion in the sea below Coldingham monastery well illustrates the revised desert of the North: its waves test Cuthbert’s asceticism even as its wild creatures welcome him and care for him.

Their care invokes ritual gestures of hospitality. “At the core of a code of honorable behavior,” according to Lisa Bircl, hospitality in this period was also a legal obligation, widely understood as the practice that held society together as well as expressing its hierarchies.⁵⁸ The anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert* places the chapter “How the sea animals served him” just after an intriguingly similar chapter on “How he ministered to an angel.”⁵⁹ In this preceding chapter Cuthbert, “elected by the community [of the monastery at Ripon] to minister to guests on their arrival,” receives one winter morning an angel guest. “Thinking him to be a man and not an angel, he washed his hands and feet and

wiped them with towels, and . . . in his humility rubbed his guest's feet with his own hands to warm them on account of the cold" ("Ministrare namque hospitibus advenientibus . . . electus est. . . Putans adhuc hominem esse, et non angelum, lavatis manibus et pedibus linteaminibusque tergens et manibus suis humiliter propter frigorem fricans et calefaciens pedes eius").⁶⁰ The two sea animals of the following chapter perform an analogous ritual as Cuthbert leaves the cold waters of the sea for the comparative comfort of land. In both chapters the warming and drying of feet are of course based on the foot-washing of Biblical hospitality, adapted for the colder, damper climate of Ireland and Britain.

Ministering to an angel and receiving similar ministrations from sea creatures poise Cuthbert in a hierarchy that urges not just his special holiness but a coherence in all creation as it unfolds from angel through saint to sea animal. Cuthbert is a guest at the monastery of Coldingham and at the seashore of Coldingham as well, where the sea animals perform a "service and ministry" akin to Cuthbert's ministrations to the angel guest at his own monastery.⁶¹ Hospitality is the authoritative language chosen to express the saint's unifications, illustrating but also enlarging Bitel's observation that for the early Irish Christians, "the practice of hospitality provided both the context and the vocabulary for contact among the religious elite. . . . The hagiographers expressed all kinds of relations between the saints and their communities with the vocabulary of hospitality."⁶² The *Life of Saint Cuthbert* vividly extends the paradigm of hospitality in human communities to encompass also human relations to angels and sea creatures.

In another instance when hospitality stretches across creation, Cuthbert cannot find a sheltering host for himself and his horse on a stormy winter journey. Reaching a group of summer dwellings near Chester-le-Street, Cuthbert leads his horse into a vacant dwelling to wait out the storm.

Oransque sibi ad Dominum, vidit equum caput sursum elevantem ad tecta domunculi partemque foeni tectorum avide adprehendens traxit ad se. Et cum quo statim panis calidus et caro involutus in panne lineae diligenter deorsum cadens emissus est. Ille vero consummata oratione probavit, animadvertitque sibi esse cibum a Deo predestinatum per emissionem angeli, qui sepe in angustiis suis adiuverat eum, gratias agens Deo; benedixit et manducavit.

As he was praying to the Lord, he saw his horse raise its head up to the roof of the hut and, greedily seizing part of the thatch of the roof,

draw it towards him. And immediately there fell out, along with it, a warm loaf and meat carefully wrapped up in a linen cloth. When he had finished his prayer, he felt it and found that it was food provided beforehand for him by God through the sending forth of his angel who often helped him in his difficulties. And he thanked God, blessed it and ate it.⁶³

The helpful angel does not appear himself, as he did earlier to tell Cuthbert how to cure his infected knee. Instead, the angel's hospitality works through the material world. The dwelling offers horse and rider alluring shelter; once inside, the dwelling provides thatch for the horse to eat; and finally the horse's eating delivers Cuthbert's dinner: a delivery setup that might have been imagined by Rube Goldberg. A twelfth-century manuscript of Bede's prose *Life of Saint Cuthbert* attempts to represent the unfolding sequence of events (Figure 2).⁶⁴ Striving, in Otto Pächt's phrase, "to smuggle the time factor into a medium which by definition lacks the dimension of time," the illuminator attempts some spatial and visual signals for temporal consequence.⁶⁵ Cuthbert's dinner emerges on a cascade of linen cloth from behind, as if consequent on, the horse's eager bite of red thatch. On or within the cascading cloth, the dinner's outline, empty of color, suggests a not yet manifested consequence of the prior consequence of the horse's eager bite. Dwelling, thatch, horse, and angel are wonderfully conjoined in care for the saint, all the more wonderfully given the absence of hospitality that confronted Cuthbert and his horse as they arrived in this fair-weather town. Hospitality, a community-making practice, draws travelers and pilgrims into monastic and secular settlements. In the saint's encounters with animals and angels, hospitality further coheres humanity with all creation.

Adomnán's *Life of Columba* illustrates the capacious reach of saintly relationships most vividly when the monastery of Iona hosts a crane. Columba foresees the crane's visit, instructing one of his monks that "a guest will arrive from the northern region of Ireland, very tired and weary, a crane that has been tossed by winds through long circuits of the air" ("de aquilonali Erenniae regione quaedam hospita grus ventis per longos aeris agitata circuitus . . . superveniet").⁶⁶ The monk is to gather up the exhausted crane, carry it to the nearest house, and care for it "as a guest" ("hospitaliter"). For three days "you will wait upon it, and feed it with anxious care"; then, "not wishing to be longer in pilgrimage with us (nolens ultra apud nos perigrinari), it will return with fully recovered strength to the sweet district of Ireland from which at first



Figure 2. A horse discovers food for the saint. *Life of St. Cuthbert*. © The British Library Board. London, British Library, MS Yates Thompson 26, folio 14r.

it came.⁶⁷ The crane is resonant in some way with Columba himself. It comes “from the district of our fathers” (“de nostrae paternitatis regione”) that Columba recollects and perhaps regrets.⁶⁸ Earlier in his life Columba himself had journeyed from that district to Iona, “wishing to be a pilgrim for Christ (pro Christo perigrinari volens).”⁶⁹ But the crane is also importantly distinct from Columba, a beneficiary of the saint as it lives out its own biography. It returns “back to Ireland, in a straight line of flight” as Columba, for the moment, cannot.⁷⁰ Temporally dislocated from Columba’s earlier pilgrimage, the crane’s unfolds differently thanks to Columba’s hospitality. The saint and his followers have pressed the boundaries of Christendom outward so that a desert place has become a hospitable community. Species difference intensifies this temporal difference between crane and saint, insisting doubly on the saint’s coordination of his environment as he brings monastic hospitality to Britain.

In some hagiographic traditions and scholarship on hagiography, saints’ cross-species relationships are said to recover a prelapsarian existence in which the saints’ purity and proximity to God brings all creatures into loving obedience.⁷¹ It is certainly possible that the Garden of Eden was a subliminal point of reference for the early lives in the Irish tradition, but the specificity of their animal encounters is obscured when they are referred only to the Garden of Eden. These texts do not cite Genesis among their precedents. Instead, the Biblical precedents they cite apply Biblical verses to the saint’s immediate future. In the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, interactions with various animals illustrate the verses “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find” (Matthew 7:7); “Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33); “For the laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7); “If any man will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).⁷² As these citations suggest, animal encounters in my set of early insular *vitae* make less sense as attempts to return to the Garden of Eden than as forward-looking interventions in the fallen world. Hospitality, as a practice that is both spiritual and concrete, grounds saints in their contemporary environment; in further ways as well, these early *vitae* depict their saints engaging with postlapsarian creation.

After the Fall

Among the saints’ postlapsarian concerns are enforcing the concept of private property and competing with pagan religions by resisting or absorbing their beliefs and practices.⁷³ When mice gnaw his shoes on the island of Ibdon in Scotland, Cainnech instructs all the island’s mice to drown themselves, “and

on that island no mice are to be seen even today.⁷⁴ Columba reproaches a man who is poaching “the sea calves that pertain to us (marini nostri juris vituli)” near the monastery of Iona by asking him, “Why do you repeatedly steal other people’s property (res alienas), transgressing the divine commandment?”⁷⁵ Finán Cam and Cainnech reward their hosts by replacing and reanimating livestock that were killed in hospitality for them.⁷⁶ As part of his missionary work, Columba reveals that some milk a pagan priest has apparently drawn from a bull is actually blood bleached by demons; on another occasion Columba’s mastery of a water monster converts a crowd of Picts to Christianity.⁷⁷ Deploying their power over natural processes, the saints achieve both religious and practical ends.

Many of these saints, particularly in their youth, manage cattle miraculously. Finán could separate cows from their calves by dragging his staff along the ground to make an intangible barrier between them, “and not one of them dared to cross the trace of the saint’s staff.”⁷⁸ Fintán, Cainnech, and Finán command wolves to guard cattle “like ordinary dogs.”⁷⁹ These innovations in herding and guarding imagine what we would call domestication as submission to charismatic discipline. The wolves’ doglike “domestication” at the saint’s command illustrates his wonderful power over the material world but also his interest in how the world could be improved. Although disciplinary authority over wolves and cattle has analogies to the saints’ disciplinary authority over Christians, herd management is also a practical pastoral talent in its own right, a talent that serves the human community’s economic dependence on cattle.⁸⁰ That dependence is neatly conveyed in Luguid’s *vita* as he sets out to found his first monastery, “taking with him a few monks and five cows.”⁸¹

Cuthbert and his Irish predecessors sometimes arrive at mutually sustaining arrangements with animals. Flashes of reciprocity and experiments in cohabitation supplement the saints’ authoritative control. A first example from the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert* contrasts with its biblical and patristic analogues. Ravens feed Elijah and Paul of Thebes in their desert isolation, but no reciprocity marks the encounters.⁸² As Cuthbert is traveling with a boy along the river Teviot, he prophesies that “the Lord will provide food for those who trust in him.” Soon an eagle drops a large fish that the boy retrieves. “Whereupon Cuthbert said, ‘Why did you not give our fisherman a part of it to eat since he was fasting?’ Then the boy, in accordance with the commands of the man of God, gave half of the fish to the eagle” (“dixit puero, Cur piscatori nostro ieiunanti partem ad vescendum non dedisti? Tunc vero puer, sicut

praeceperat homo Dei, partim piscis aquilae dedit”).⁸³ Like the insular saints who work with cattle, Cuthbert acknowledges his need for a sustaining physical environment and his interest in how to maintain it.

Cainnech’s interest in a dog’s welfare inspires a penance built on reciprocity. Called to a rich man’s home, Cainnech notices a weak, starving dog and asks the household, “Which of you prepares the food for this dog?” The rich man’s wife confesses that the dog is in her care and offers to perform penance. The saint responds, “until the end of the year you will give the dinner meant for you to the dog, and you will eat the dog’s dinner” (“Usque ad finem anni, tuum prandium cani detur, et tu prandium canis comede”).⁸⁴ Performing this penance, the wife soon dies; Cainnech then raises her from the dead. Standards for both moral and material well-being inform Cainnech’s position that the dog’s starvation reflects badly on the household. His penance reducing the wife to the abject status of the dog is no doubt facilitated by womankind’s excessively embodied and morally suspect status in Irish hagiography.⁸⁵ More saliently, the penance’s reciprocal design corrects a failure of awareness that need not be specifically gendered: the wife’s authority over a living animal, embodied as she is embodied, entails a moral responsibility to care well for it. The exchange of diets makes for a practical lesson in empathy.

Cuthbert’s interaction with two birds (*corvi*, usually translated as crows or ravens) offers a more extended example of saintly investment in the present world. Cuthbert withdrew in his later years from his abbey at Lindisfarne to Farne Island. Here he built himself a retreat consisting of a well, a few small dwellings open to the sky, and a guest house for visitors.

Nam cum quadam die in insula sua fodiens, sulcabat terram, primum enim duobus vel tribus annis de opere manuum suorum antequam clausus obstructis ianuis intus maneret, laborans cotidianum victum acceperat, sciens dictum esse, Qui non laborat nec manducet, vidit duos corvos ante illic longo tempore manentes tecta domus navigantium in portum posite dissipantes, nidumque sibi facientes. Prohibuit autem eos leni motu manus, ne hanc iniuriam fratribus nidificantes facerent. Illis vero neglegentibus postremo motato spiritu, austere praecipiens in nomine Iesu Christi de insula discedere exterminavit. Illis igitur nec requies, nec mora patriam secundum preceptum eius deserentibus, post triduum alter e duobus revertens ante pedes hominis Dei fodienti iam ei terram supra sulcum expansis alis, et inclinato capite, sedens et mersus humili voce veniam indulgentie deposcens, crocitate cepit. Servus

autem Christi intellegens penitentiam eorum, veniam revertendi dedit. Illi verò corvi in eadem hora perpetrata pace, cum quodam munusculo ad insulam ambo reversi sunt, habens enim in ore suo quasi dimidiam suis adipem ante pedes eius deposuit. Illis iam indulgens hoc peccatum, usque adhuc illic manent. Haec mihi testes fidelissimi visitantes eum, et de adipe per totum anni spatium calciamenta sua liniantes cum glorificatione Dei indicaverunt.

When on a certain day on his island, he was digging and trenching the land (for at first, for two or three years before he shut himself in behind closed doors, he labored daily and gained his food by the work of his hands, knowing that it is said: "He that will not work, neither shall he eat"), he saw two ravens who had been there a long time, tearing to pieces the roof of the shelter built near the landing-place for the use of those who came over the sea, and making themselves a nest. He bade them, with a slight motion of his hand, not to do this injury to the brethren while building their nests. But when they disregarded him, at last his spirit was moved and sternly bidding them in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from the island, he banished them. Without any pause or delay, they deserted their homes according to his command, but after three days, one of the two returned to the feet of the man of God as he was digging the ground, and settling above the furrow with outspread wings and drooping head, began to croak loudly, with humble cries asking his pardon and indulgence. And the servant of Christ recognizing their penitence gave them pardon and permission to return. And those ravens at the same hour having won peace, both returned to the island with a little gift. For each held in its beak about half a piece of swine's lard which it placed before his feet. He pardoned their sin and they remain there until today. Most trustworthy witnesses who visited him, and for the space of a whole year greased their boots with the lard, told me of these things, glorifying God.⁸⁶

Cuthbert expects to work, in a postlapsarian mode, "knowing that it is said: 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat.'⁸⁷ Modifying his new environment by building and thatching a guest house, Cuthbert makes private property out of the island's natural materials by mixing them with his labor. Now that Farne's grasses have become thatch, the ravens, who "have been there a long time" before Cuthbert, are in the new position of doing "injury to the

brethren" in taking the grass thatch for their nests. In a second modification of his environment made necessary by the construction of the guest house, Cuthbert puts its roof off-limits to the ravens. But subsequently he establishes a harmonious relationship with them, permitting them to nest as before in return for their gestures of repentance and an offering of swine's lard. This fascinating gift draws on the ravens' talent for disposing of carrion to provide waterproofing for the boots of Cuthbert's visitors: "witnesses who visited him . . . for the space of a whole year greased their boots with the lard." Once again, the forms of hospitality express animals' relations to the saint: offering lard for waterproofing the guests' boots is an extension of drying and warming the guests' feet.

In this early insular hagiography, forward-looking environmental curiosity is more salient than nostalgia for a lost paradise. What would a useful raven look like? How should relations between wolves and cattle be modified? The saints' interactions with animals tend to refer these questions to natural science, not just biblical precedent. While Fínán Cam is visiting a virtuous man named Mokelloc, a wolf kills Mokelloc's only calf. Fínán first requires the wolf to stand in for the calf, allowing the cows to lick him so their milk will come down again. But this is not sufficient restitution, declares Fínán; he next requires the wolf to find a replacement calf and finally to spend the rest of his life guarding Mokelloc's cattle.⁸⁸ As the wolf moves through these three roles, he is thrice useful to Fínán's host, but the wolf's lifelong role as guardian of the cattle takes fullest advantage of his abilities. Problem? A ravenous wolf is killing cattle. Solution? Subordinate him to the cattle, then redirect his ferocity to their protection. Similarly, the ravens' gift to Cuthbert is part of a penitential process, but it also makes the ravens materially useful in the hosting of Farne Island's visitors. Fínán's and Cuthbert's arrangements are pragmatic in their acceptance of wolves as killers and ravens as carrion eaters, behaviors that become part of a revised relationship to the saints and their communities.

Modifying the environment in these miracles entails obedience. Like hospitality, obedience is a crucial feature of Irish monasticism that comes to inform the animal encounters in the early Lives. The monastic rule of Columbanus makes obedience the first of its injunctions, with Christ's submission to sacrifice as its divine model: "nothing must be refused in their obedience by Christ's true disciples, however hard and difficult it be, but it must be seized with zeal, with gladness, since if obedience is not of this nature, it will not be pleasing to the Lord."⁸⁹ Obedience corrects pride as asceticism corrects cupidity; these sins are the greatest threats to virtue, according to the rule of

Columbanus. Irish monasticism, although based on antique monasticism of the desert, shifted that model from exalting eremitic solitude toward greater emphasis on the religious community, where obedience was the guiding principle for all interactions.⁹⁰ Like the structures of hospitality that expand to encompass animals, the ravens' and the wolf's obedience expands the model of monastic community outward into the natural realm. The ravens' repentant obedience repeats a pastoral paradigm: Cuthbert reprimands, instructs, and pardons the ravens in terms quite similar to his reprimand, pardon, and instruction of the Coldingham cleric who spied on his encounter with sea animals.

This alignment of animals and human followers puts them all in contrast with the mode of Cuthbert's authority over the inanimate world. Cuthbert diverts fire away from his nurse's house, not by commanding the fire or the winds to obey him, but by praying successfully for God's intervention.⁹¹ Digging a well on Farne, he prays with his brethren "because God is able from the stony rock to bring forth water for him who asks."⁹² Needing a twelve-foot beam of wood for the foundation of his guest house, Cuthbert "received aid from our Lord Jesus Christ in answer to his prayers"; while he slept that night, the waves of the sea "landed a floating timber" in exactly the right place.⁹³ In contrast to praying to God for changes in the inanimate world, Cuthbert directly reproaches, commands, and pardons the ravens and the cleric of Coldingham. All creation serves the saint, demonstrating his holiness, but the mode of his authority is intercessory in the case of the four elements, and pastoral in the case of the animate creatures.

The pastoral alignment of humans with other animals is an intriguing revision to orthodox teaching about God's creation. All living creatures in these early insular *vitae* can understand the concepts of sin, repentance, restitution, and pardon. In these ways they are as postlapsarian as all humanity. According to any strictly doctrinal approach, ravens cannot commit a "sin" or experience "penitence" as the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert* asserts, nor could a wolf act "in humility and penance" as it does in the *vita* of Finán Cam.⁹⁴ Augustine, Ambrose, and further church fathers agree that only humans possess the reason and free will that allow for both sinning and repenting. Other animals are driven by instinct. They can have an inborn virtuousness (turtledove and phoenix, for example) or an inborn viciousness (fox and wolf, for example), but this innate virtue or vice is not subject to revision.⁹⁵ Just as unorthodox as a sinning and repenting raven is a raven who understands the spoken instructions of a saint. Nothing in medieval theology or semiotics suggests that ravens

could understand the Irish or English or Latin instruction of the saints.⁹⁶ And yet, in order to stress this aspect of the interaction, the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert* narrates that the ravens do not leave off destroying the thatch on his guest house when the saint gestures at them, but only when he speaks to them. To make clear that it accepts Cuthbert's correction, one of the ravens returns to Farne to act out a vivid plea for Cuthbert's forgiveness. The ravens' understanding and their submissive response reopen Farne to their nesting.

My reading of animal encounters contrasts with two familiar ways of reconciling Cuthbert's ravens to orthodoxy that I find unsatisfactory. First, it may seem that the ravens are simply the cleric of Coldingham all over again—that they are vehicles of a teaching whose tenor, Cuthbert's great virtue, has effaced their significance as birds. This reading would efface the unique aspects of every encounter in the *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, reducing the whole song of praise to a single note. The Anonymous *Life* is better served if we accept that the variety and range of Cuthbert's authority, including his authority over nonhuman creatures, contributes to his greatness and to the specificity of his monastic tradition.

A second way to set animals outside relevance is to concede their physical presence but to attribute their actions to divine manipulation. Of course there is miraculous energy in these animal-saint encounters that opens animal mentality to communication, but the miraculous is only one component of the animal's reaction. When Columba's work-horse weeps, knowing Columba is near death, Adomnán distinguishes between the horse's divinely opened awareness and his creaturely grief. The horse's foreknowledge is "inspired, as I believe, by God, before whom every living creature has understanding, with such perception of things as the Creator himself has decreed" ("ut credo inspirante deo cui omne animal rerum sapit sensu quo juserit ipse creator").⁹⁷ The horse's foreknowledge comes from God, but his sorrow and tears are not God's divine response to Columba's death. Instead, the horse's sorrow is a messy physical affair of dripping tears and frothing saliva: "he began to mourn, and like a human being to let tears fall freely on the lap of the saint, and foaming much, to weep aloud" ("coepit plangere ubertimque quasi homo lacrimas in gremium sancti fundere, et valde spumans flere").⁹⁸ Resisting a follower's effort to brush the horse away, Columba understands that the horse's grief is the animal's own response to his foreknowledge: "Let him, let him that loves us pour out the tears of most bitter grief here in my bosom" ("Sine hunc, sine nostri amatorem, ut in hunc meum sinum fletus effundat amarissimi plangoris").⁹⁹

Cuthbert's ravens invite the same parsing of divine and animal roles: if

God were simply taking over the ravens' responses in order to provide an illustration of how humans ought to behave, the ravens would be no more than finger puppets whose obedience would no longer express the saint's universal moral authority. Instead, to emphasize the ravens' living animality, Cuthbert's relationship with them preserves their species-specific behavior. They continue to nest on Farne "until today." They continue to scavenge for animal fat after understanding that it is wrong to take thatch from the roof of the guest house. They demonstrate their repentance by offering the saint a delicious chunk of carrion they would normally gobble up rather than surrender. Their obedience to Cuthbert's instruction is wonderful because it is their own ravenly, ravenous obedience, and not a divine puppet show.

Spiritual Environment

Implicit in these communicative encounters is a model of how creation holds together. In coordination with bringing Christian faith to new settlements, the saints also transform the more than human world. The two spheres become one as saints work along the frontier between settlements—fragile bastions against transience—and the powerful forces that surround them. Saints bring rain, shift winds, sweeten bitter fruit, hasten the harvest, even keep themselves dry in the snow by thinking on angels.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen, the saints also express their mastery over the created world in ecumenical and reforming relationships with animals that could well be called pastoral—linking clerical pastoralism back to its etymological source in herd management. The saints' engagements do not sharply divide a realm of human society from a realm of nature.¹⁰¹

But this wording is inadequate to the vision of saintliness in the Lives. As the saints bring settlements and wilderness into interpenetration, "society" and "nature" flow into one another, become contingent on one another, in that logic of supplementarity by which the supplement betrays the incompleteness of the apparent wholeness that preceded it. When Columba articulates the hosting of a crane as an extension of Iona's hosting of human pilgrims, the latter merely human hosting is shown to be incomplete in relation to the full potential of hospitality. Cuthbert's hosting by otters likewise suggests that the "social" is no longer an exclusively human context for saintly relationships. Cuthbert in the Anonymous *Life* could be said to distort monastic society by bringing other creatures into its forms. Or just as easily, the Anonymous *Life* could be said to denature animals by bringing them into the forms of hospitality and obedience. As the saint's pastoral care expands to encompass the

correction of wolves and the penitential gift from ravens, the hagiographers narrate the interpenetrations of "social" and "natural" with serene wonder, as if they were unproblematic. If these interpenetrations were truly unproblematic, however, it would be difficult to explain why so many scholars, from Bede onward, have insisted that they are not taking place—that "it is not *nature* that is being depicted here, it is *society*."¹⁰² Irish hagiography's view of nature and society is neither dichotomous nor reassuring; it is often quite odd. What is a crane doing in a guest house? Is it not uncanny how the two little animals at work on Cuthbert's feet so closely echo Cuthbert's two hands at work on the angel's feet? In presenting a natural world so continuous with human society, Irish hagiography's hierarchy of species looks less than vertical, tilting over toward horizontality. Its animals make its humans look less uniquely social, less unique among animals, more entangled in their environments. Here it seems the Lives of Cuthbert and Columba resonate faintly across the ages with the environmental thought of Timothy Morton, Katherine Hayles, or Ursula Heise.¹⁰³ These and other post-humanist interpreters urge that societies and natures, humans and other animals, are intricately enmeshed in dynamic environments stretching outward and upward beyond our ken.

As Cuthbert moves through creation, a trace of lived experience hovers just beyond the miraculous narrative. Clare Stancliffe has pointed out that most of Cuthbert's miracles "can be understood quite plausibly as being based on real events, which were perceived as miracles, while none of them are of the wholly impossible, magical type."¹⁰⁴ A workman stashing food beneath the thatch of an empty house or an eagle losing its grip on a fish could have fed Cuthbert without divine intervention. The miracle of Cuthbert's ravens also has a basis in ordinary events. Farne Island lacks trees, favored for nesting by ravens (*Corvus corax*). In his edition of the *Life of Saint Cuthbert in English Verse*, J. T. Fowler proposed that "the 'crows' . . . that built on Farne were probably jackdaws [*Corvus monedula*], which abound there now."¹⁰⁵ Konrad Lorenz, a lifelong student of jackdaw behavior, describes the "plaintive begging gestures and notes" used by juvenile jackdaws and adult female jackdaws: lowering their bodies toward the ground and half-spreading their wings, they make "infantile sounds" to solicit attention and care.¹⁰⁶ The posture is that of Cuthbert's repentant *corvus*, begging with "outspread wings and drooping head" and emitting "humble cries asking his pardon and indulgence." Other corvines such as crows and ravens beg similarly as juveniles, but it is tempting to think of Farne's *corvi* as jackdaws since they still nest in the rocks of this treeless island.

Is it licit to recollect the behavior of living birds as we read this miracle of a *corvus* asking Cuthbert's pardon? In "Lifting Our Eyes from the Page," an essay that has been foundational for environmental studies, Yves Bonnefoy takes literary theory to task for evading, in the latter decades of the twentieth century, the question of how texts are related to experiences. Bonnefoy praises deconstruction's rigorous attentiveness to language in these decades—and that very attentiveness has revealed language's incapacities as well as its immense constitutive power. Imaginative language derives imperfectly from experience, soliciting readers who make their worldly memories part of their reception—readers who look up from the page, "giving new life to its words with our memories or present experiments."¹⁰⁷ This version of reading might sound like a futile effort to reject language in favor of "true life," but Bonnefoy insists that both poetry and experience snatch imperfectly at life, each sustaining the other's efforts: "It is not within the poet's scope to reestablish presence. But he can recall that presence is a possible experience, and he can stir up the need for it, keep open the path that leads toward it."¹⁰⁸

The anonymous author of the *Life of Saint Cuthbert* and his first audience were surely as familiar with outdoor asceticism and labor as they were with texts and study. Their own experience of corvine behavior would have sustained Cuthbert's sanctity quite differently from the authentication of textual precedent. For the latter sustenance, the Anonymous *Life* could evoke Noah's *corvus* that failed to return to the ark and Paul of Thebes's *corvus* bringing him a ration of bread.¹⁰⁹ Reduced to their basic structures, these textual precedents provide a spiritual lineage for Cuthbert's encounter: "Corvus disobedient or without virtue" in the Biblical text, "corvus bringing a gift" in the *Life of Paul*. Quite differently, the behavior of Cuthbert's *corvus* also invites meaning to come from the "present experiments" of contemporaries on Farne and Lindisfarne. The living *corvus* offers the textual *corvus* an authenticating correlative, but the living *corvus* authenticates differently from textual precedents. It unites Cuthbert with the created world, not this time by means of narrating his connection but by introducing a resonance between the narrative and the readers' experiences of the vivid begging behavior of corvines. Various inflected by wind, heat, damp, curiosity, incomprehension, irritation, contempt, fascination, or amusement, each reader's experience of the birds' gestures and cries would bring a unique somatic and memorial energy to reading the *Life*. "What exactly is a 'text'? Where does it begin, and where does it end?" asks Bonnefoy.¹¹⁰ Evoking a peculiar behavior of birds on Farne, the text of the Anonymous *Life* makes itself porous, opens its meaning to its readers'

material presence on earth. Their recollections that yes, birds do behave so, might reinforce their wonder that Cuthbert could so enmesh himself in the behavior, becoming its motive and controlling its outcome. Cuthbert's virtue infuses the created world by entering into its mysterious operations.

Throughout the anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, thought about Cuthbert's relation to his surroundings is integral to thought about Cuthbert's sanctity. The flash of mimetic intensity that represents a living bird's helpless pleading recognizes that the created world is both a discursive concept and a living place that is external to discourse. Animal encounters, that is, are not merely metaphoric in the early insular saints' lives. Cuthbert's encounter with the *corvus*, even as it models monastic penance and obedience, also significantly extends the reach of Cuthbert's control into a material realm that appears powerful and intractable wherever the saint does not intervene.

In this chapter I have emphasized in Irish monastic works a recurring fascination with the material presence of all creatures in an earthly sphere of cohabitation. The poet of "Pangur Bán" may have drawn on hagiography's appreciation for material presence in depicting the practical, mutually beneficial cohabitation of a scholar and a cat. The hagiographers find mutuality as well in the hospitable sea animals and the repentant ravens. Their modes of engagement do not fit with authoritative patristic exegesis concerning the uniquely human capacities for sin, reason, and repentance. This predominantly Augustinian tradition, which has roots as well in Classical philosophy, becomes a more proximate point of reference in twelfth-century fables, lays, and bestiaries. As they engage more directly with the church fathers concerning relationships among the creatures, these twelfth-century works speak to our contemporary engagements with philosophical tradition. Representing as well as revising this tradition, the fable, lay, and bestiary discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 ponder the complexities of embodied consciousness within and beyond the human.

4. Chaucer, *Riverside Chaucer, Canterbury Tales*, “Second Nun’s Tale,” 266 (VIII.288): “Whoso that troweth nat this, a beest he is.”
5. *Middle English Dictionary*, kinde (n.), 1, 5a, 9.
6. Timothy Morton, “Queer Ecology,” *PMLA* 125 (2010): 273–82; Derrida, *L’animal que donc je suis*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2006), 65–77. David Wood, “Comment ne pas manger: Deconstruction and Humanism,” in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 16, 29, calls *human* and *animal* “a form of deadening shorthand” but continues to explore both terms as “metaphysical categories requiring all sorts of police work, and . . . subject to the deepest forms of scrutiny that philosophy can devise.”
7. Peter Hammond, *Food and Feast in Medieval England* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1993, rev. ed. 2005), 135–36, 144–45; Anthony Richard Wagner, “The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight,” *Archaeologia* 97 (1959): 127–38; Isidore, “*Etymologies*” of *Isidore of Seville*, 264–65 (12.8.18): swans as signs of good luck; this information is repeated in most of the insular bestiaries.
8. Cross-species likeness is a radically unsettled subject at the cusp of scientific and philosophical writing. A few introductions relevant to my chapters are Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, eds., *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* (London: Continuum, 2004); Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen, and Gordon M. Burghardt, eds., *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, eds., *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Arien Mack, ed., *Humans and Other Animals* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); and Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
9. Alan Stewart, “Humanity at a Price: Erasmus, Budé, and the Poverty of Philology,” in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies, and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and S. J. Wiseman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 9–25; Peter Sloterdijk, “Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the *Letter on Humanism*,” trans. Mary Varney Rorty, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27 (2009): 12–28; David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 261–98.
10. Jonathan Burt, “The Illumination of the Animal Kingdom: The Role of Light and Electricity in Animal Representation,” *Society and Animals* 9 (2001): 203–28, 203. From earlier decades, monographs particularly important to the formation of animal studies were Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
11. Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Press, 2003), 42. Earlier monographs influential in medieval animal studies were Robert Delort, *Les animaux ont une histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1984); Elisabeth de Fontenay, *Le silence des bêtes: la philosophie à l’épreuve de l’animalité* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

12. Cary Wolfe, “Human, All Too Human: ‘Animal Studies’ and the Humanities,” *PMLA* 124 (2009): 567. Wolfe’s essay is a scintillating analysis of the state of play across disciplines in animal studies that accompanies “Theories and Methodologies: Animal Studies,” a cluster of twelve essays on literary animal studies in the September 2009 issue of *PMLA*. See also in this issue Bruce Holsinger, “Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal,” *PMLA* 124 (2009): 616–23. Clusters on medieval animal studies include “Symposium: Animal Methodologies,” with contributions by Susan Crane, Emma Gorst, Bruce Holsinger, Sarah Kay, Robert Mills, Sarah Novacich, and Sarah Stanbury, *New Medieval Literatures* 12 (2010): 117–77; *postmedieval* 2, 1 (Spring 2011), special issue “The Animal Turn,” with contributions by Susan Crane, Sarah Kay, Gary Lim, Peggy McCracken, Sarah Stanbury, Karl Steel, Peter W. Travis, and Cary Wolfe; and “Colloquium: Animalia,” with contributions by Jeffrey J. Cohen, Susan Crane, Lisa Kiser, Gillian Rudd, David Salter, David Scott-MacNab, and Karl Steel in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012).

13. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 7; Derrida, *L’animal que donc je suis*, 23: “Car la pensée de l’animal, s’il y en a, revient à la poésie, voilà une thèse, et c’est ce dont la philosophie, par essence, a dû se priver.”

14. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 50–51. Another example of the developmental model in animal studies is Laurie Shannon, “The Eight Animals in Shakespeare; or, Before the Human,” *PMLA* 124 (2009): 472–79; before Descartes “there is no such thing as ‘the animal’”; the “coming Cartesian dispensation . . . seeks to secure the human by according it a unique, positive attribute that all animals can be said to lack” (474, 477). See Chapters 2 and 3 on the antiquity of the human/animal binary and its grounding in exclusively human *logos*.

CHAPTER I. COHABITATION

1. T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 185–202, 314–26; Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 24–48; James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical. An Introduction and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929; rpt. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 424, 487–88.

2. According to Pierre Boglioni’s comprehensive survey of medieval hagiography, “Il santo e gli animali nell’alto medioevo,” in *Luomo di fronte al mondo animale nell’alto*

Medioevo: 7–13 aprile, 1983 (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1983), 935–93, the Irish Lives are more interested in cross-species relationships than are other traditions: compared with *vitae* of other regions, those of Ireland “constituiscono nel campo agiografico l’esempio estremo di simbiosi fra la figura del santo ed il mondo animale in tutte le sue dimensioni” (937): “constitute in the field of hagiography the strongest instance of symbioses between the saintly figure and the animal world in all its dimensions.” Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 220, concludes that Irish and northern British saints are “in close harmony with the animal world.”

3. Lisa M. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: Monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 66–79; Michael Herity, “The Building and Layout of Early Irish Monasteries Before the Year 1000,” *Monastic Studies* 14 (1983): 247–84.

4. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., “domesticate” (v.); on the genetic process in the contemporary meaning of *domestication*: Sandor Bökönyi, “Definitions of Animal Domestication,” in *The Walking Larder: Patterns of Domestication, Pastoralism, and Predation*, ed. Juliet Clutton-Brock (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 22–27; Juliet Clutton-Brock, “The Process of Domestication,” *Mammal Review* 22 (1992), 84: “it should be accepted that domestication is evolution”; Raymond P. Coppinger and Charles Kay Smith, “The Domestication of Evolution,” *Environmental Conservation* 10 (1983): 283–92.

5. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scolia, Prose and Verse*, 2 vols. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1901, 1903), 2:xxxii–xxxiv; for a full discussion of the poems in the context of the manuscript, see Hildegard L.C. Tristram, “Die irischen Gedichte im Reichenauer Schulheft,” in *Studia Celtica et Indogermanica. Festschrift für Wolfgang Meid zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Anreiter and Erzsébet Jerem (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 1999), 503–29. She concludes that the manuscript was produced in the ninth century in Ireland, possibly in Leinster. Gerald Murphy, in *Early Irish Lyrics, Eighth to Twelfth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 172, lists the contents of this booklet: the five Old Irish poems, “a Virgil commentary, examples of Greek paradigms, astronomical notes, and a selection of Latin hymns.”

6. “Pangur Bán,” trans. with commentary by Seamus Heaney, *Poetry (Modern Poetry Association)* 188, 1 (April 2006): 3–5. Hereafter this translation is quoted without line references.

7. “Pangur Bán,” ed. and trans. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scolia, Prose and Verse*, vol. 2 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1903), 293–94. Hereafter this translation is quoted in my text without line references. Robert Welch, “Sacrament and Significance: Some Reflections on Religion and the Irish,” *Religion and Literature* 28, 2–3 (Summer–Autumn 1996): 101–13, provides a rich close reading of the poem’s language. On versification see Eleanor Knott and Gerald Murphy, *Early Irish Literature* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 23–28; and Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, 172: “The metre is *deibide* (seven syllables in each line with an unstressed final syllable in *b* rhyming with a stressed final syllable in *a*, and

an unstressed final syllable in *d* with a stressed final syllable in *c*). Alliteration is frequent.” For the happy few who can enjoy the original lyric, it is read aloud on the Archipelago website, <http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-3/II.htm>; its text in Murphy’s *Early Irish Lyrics* reads:

1. Messe ocus Pangur Bán,
cechtar nathar fri saindán:
bíth a menma-sam fri seilgg,
mu menma cēin im saincheird.
2. Caraim-se fos, ferr cach clú,
oc mu lebrán, léir ingnu;
ní foirmtech frimm Pangur Bán:
caraid cesin a maccdán.
3. Ó ru biam, scél cen scá,
innar tegdaís, ar n-úendís;
táithiunn, d’chérfchide cluis,
ní fris tarddam ar n-áthius.
4. Gnáth, h-úaraib, ar gressaib gal
glenaid luch inna linsam;
os mé, du-fuit im lín chéin
dliged n-doraid cu n-dronchéill.
5. Fúachaíd-sem fri frega fál
a rosc, a n-glése comlán;
fúachimm chéin fri fégi fis
mu rosc réil, cesu imdis.
6. Fágaid-sem cu n-déne dul
hi n-glen luch inna gérchrub;
hi tucu cheist n-doraid n-dil
os mé chene am fágaid.
7. Cia beinnmi a-min nach ré
ní derban cách a chéle:
maith la cechtar nár a dán;
subaigthius a óenurán.
8. h-ú fesin as choimsid dáu
in muid du-ngní cach úenláu;
du thabairt doraid du glé
for mo mud cēin am messe.

8. W. H. Auden, “The Monk and His Cat,” in Samuel Barber, *Hermit Songs*, no. 8, *Leontyne Price and Samuel Barber: Historic Performances (1938, 1953)* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Bridge Records, 2004).

9. Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Press, 2003), 47–48. Love between scholar and cat widely characterizes general readers' interpretations as well. For example, the lyric's scholar "was a warm-hearted fellow who loved his cat and could not resist the tribute," <http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/poetry/PangurBan.html>; "Little did he know that 1,200 years later, others would fall in love with Pangur too," <http://www.fishcaters.com/pangurban.html>.

10. Harriet Ritvo, "The Emergence of Modern Pet-Keeping," in *Animals and People Sharing the World*, ed. Andrew N. Rowan (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 13–31, traces how affection became the dominant meaning of modern animal ownership. James A. Serpell, "Pet-Keeping and Animal Domestication: A Reappraisal," in Clutton-Brock, *The Walking Larder*, 10–21, shows that keeping tame animals for pleasure is not a recent or affluent phenomenon but rather a phenomenon broadly characteristic of all societies. What changed in the modern industrial era was the gradual dominance of affectionate pet-keeping over all other kinds of animal keeping and the ideological configuration of pet-keeping as a morally upright and socially prestigious behavior.

11. Heaney, "Pangur Bán," translator's note. Fuller's earth is a highly absorbent claylike material that was used in medieval cloth production to draw impurities such as lanolin out of wool. Among its uses today is as a drying agent in commercial kitty litter.

12. Net fighting is evoked in 1 Corinthians 7:35 and probably in Job 19:6 and Micah 7:2; see the commentaries on these verses in Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible; Containing the Old and New Testament, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts*, new ed. Thornley Smith, 6 vols. (London: Ward, Lock & Bowden, 1881). On the Roman *retiarium* or net-fighter, see also D.L. Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre* (London: Routledge, 2001), 114–15.

13. *Felis catus* is only marginally domesticated, with the impact of artificial selection remaining small in comparison to that on dogs and species raised for meat. For thousands of years, however, cats have been valued as rodent killers; the best would likely have been favored through artificial selection. Well into the twentieth century, drowning kittens not mothered by "good mousers" was widespread, as was distributing kittens of "good mousers" across the community.

14. Kevin R. Crooks and Michael E. Soulé, "Mesopredator Release and Avifaunal Extinctions in a Fragmented System," *Nature* 400 (5 August 1999): 565. By "recreational hunters" the authors mean that domestic cats continue to hunt even when they are fed by owners and do not need to consume their prey. A British field study of carcasses brought home by domestic cats estimates that in Britain as a whole, cats bring home more than 200 million uneaten carcasses per year: Michael Woods et al., "Predation of Wildlife by Domestic Cats *Felis catus* in Great Britain," *Mammal Review* 33 (2003): 174.

15. Frederick Zeuner, *A History of Domesticated Animals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 389, 396; cats are pictured with rodents in the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels; Leslie Alcock, "From Realism to Caricature: Reflections on Insular Depictions of Animals and People," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 128 (1998): 522–24.

16. Juliet Clutton-Brock, "The Animal Resources," in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. David M. Wilson (London: Methuen, 1976), 384, 392. Although this code is

usually dated to c. 945, Catherine McKenna has informed me that it may not predate its high medieval manuscript.

17. Gherardo Ortalli, "Gli animali nella vita quotidiana dell'alto Medioevo: Termini di un rapporto," in *Luomo di fronte al mondo animale*, 1420, 1424.

18. John the Deacon, *Johannis Diaconi Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita*, PL 75:124: "nihil in mundo possidebat praeter unam gattam, quam, blandiens crebro, quasi cohabitaticem in suis gremiis refovebat." Laurence Bobis, "L'évolution de la place du chat dans l'espace social et dans l'imaginaire occidental du Moyen Âge au XVIII^e siècle," in *L'homme, l'animal domestique et l'environnement du Moyen Âge au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Robert Durand, Centre de recherches sur l'histoire du monde atlantique, Enquêtes et documents 19 (Nantes: Ouest Editions, 1993), 77, notes the frequency with which this anecdote was repeated by later medieval writers.

19. An excellent study of Classical and early Christian commentary on the minds of animals is Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), 1993.

20. José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*, trans. Howard B. Wescott (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 54.

21. Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945), 27.

22. Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 334.

23. Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, 244, headword áith; *Dictionary of the Irish Language Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials*, gen. ed. E. G. Quin (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913–76), headword áith.

24. Richard Feynman, "Take the World from Another Point of View," Yorkshire Television interview, <http://calteches.library.caltech.edu/35/2/PointofView.htm>, transcript lightly corrected by comparison with the videotape.

25. See Coppinger and Smith, "The Domestication of Evolution," for scientific versions of domestication; Karl Tobias Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 61–91, for medieval thought on taming and controlling animals.

26. E.g., Helmut Hemmer, *Domestication: The Decline of Environmental Appreciation*, trans. Neil Beckhaus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1–12; Tim Ingold, "From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations," in *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*, ed. Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–22; Paul Leyhausen, "The Tame and the Wild—Another Just-So Story?" in *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of Its Behaviour*, ed. Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 57–66. For the more traditional view that domestication is a one-way process initiated by humans, see Clutton-Brock, "The Process of Domestication": for Clutton-Brock, ownership and control of reproduction are definitional, so that *Felis catus* is not clearly a domesticated species.

27. Bökönyi, "Definitions of Animal Domestication," 24.

28. Hemmer, *Domestication*, 45–49; Carlos A. Driscoll et al., “The Near Eastern Origin of Cat Domestication,” *Science* 317 (27 July 2007): 519–23.
29. A landmark study of neoteny is Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); a brief introduction is Stephen Budiansky, *Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Chose Domestication* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 97–100.
30. We differ from our nearest primate relatives in qualities ranging from our retention of juvenile skull shape to lifelong learning capacity to exceptionally high tolerance for living in proximity to our own and other species: Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 352–404.
31. Coppinger and Smith, “The Domestication of Evolution,” 287. *Felis catus*, as noted above, is not so thoroughly “edited” as many domesticants. Hemmer, *Domestication*, 81–83, notes that domestic cats hunt in excess of their need for food, as well as showing several neotenuous traits.
32. The redundancy is noted by David Greene and Frank O’Connor, ed. and trans., *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry, A.D. 600–1200* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 81. If Pangur were an Irish name then the cat’s name would be evidently pleonastic, but possibly the Welsh name was supplemented with the Irish word for “white” because Irish speakers were not familiar with the noun *pangur* for a man working with pale fuller’s earth: I thank Catharine McKenna for this observation.
33. Bobis, “L’évolution de la place du chat,” 77.
34. Lyudmila N. Trut, “Early Canid Domestication: The Farm-Fox Experiment,” *American Scientist* 87 (March–April 1999): 163–64, 168. The Cornell University website for the fox farm experiment shows a nearly white fox: <http://cbsu.tc.cornell.edu/ccgr/behaviour/index.htm>.
35. For representations of cats as promiscuous, lawless, vain, and evil, see Douglas Gray, “Notes on Some Medieval Mystical, Magical and Moral Cats,” in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition*, ed. Helen Philipps (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 185–202; Sara Lipton, “Jews, Heretics, and the Sign of the Cat in the *Bible Moralisée*,” *Word and Image* 8 (1992): 362–77.
36. Coppinger and Smith, “The Domestication of Evolution,” 284.
37. On the northern commingling of monastic and solitary ways of life, Clare Stancliffe, “Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary,” in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), 39, cites a letter of Columbanus: “you know that I love the salvation of many, and seclusion for myself: the one for the progress of the Lord, that is, of His church; the other for my own desire.” Columbanus emigrated from Ireland to the continent rather than to Britain, placing his *vita* just outside the subset of *vitae* I examine here. On the Biblical and antique precedents for the “desert” of the North (Latin *desertum* and *eremus*): Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47–59; Dee Dyas, “Wilderness is Anlich Lif of Ancre Wununge: The Wilderness and Medieval Anchoritic Spirituality,” in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, ed. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), 19–33; Dyas points out, 20, that both *désert* and *wilderness* translate Hebrew *midbar* and Greek *éremos*.
38. *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, ed. W. W. Heist, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 28 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), *Vita S. Cainnechi*, 193, at chap. 43; *Vita Prior S. Fintani*, 198–99, at chap. 3. Hereafter cited in my notes as *VSH*.
39. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 219; “the common subject matter of hagiology”: Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical*, 395. Similarly, Charles Doherty, “The Irish Hagiographer: Resources, Aims, Results,” in *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*, ed. Tom Dunne and Charles Doherty (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), II, judges the *vitae* to be “a goldmine for the historian of social conditions, values, and mental horizons of the people of the Middle Ages,” but his survey of the goldmine makes no mention of the saints’ animal miracles.
40. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 262–64.
41. Boglioni, “Il santo e gli animali nell’alto medioevo,” 969–71, makes the point that animal miracles must be situated within the saints’ wider field of powers. He objects to scholarship on animals in isolation from other aspects of saintly authority, e.g., Mary Donatus MacNickle, “Beasts and Birds in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1934), but MacNickle’s study is nonetheless a useful collation of animal detail covering several centuries of hagiography. On Irish hagiography more broadly, see Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Nathalie Stalrnan, *Saints d’Irlande: Analyse critique des sources hagiographiques (VII^e–IX^e siècles)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003).
42. *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede’s Prose Life*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 60–139. Hereafter Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*.
43. Adomnán of Iona, *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (London: Nelson, 1961). Adomnán was the ninth abbot of Iona, the Irish foothold off Scotland founded by Columba in 565. Hereafter Adomnán, *Life of Columba*.
44. Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints’ Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 297–339, establishes a source MS of about 750–850 for nine *vitae* in the Codex Salmanticensis; “their composition should almost certainly be dated earlier than about 800” (334). On the fidelity of the Codex Salmanticensis to its source MSS, 245–46.
45. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 5, concludes “it is clear that [Cuthbert] belongs to the Celtic rather than to the Roman tradition, and that . . . he lived and died after the manner of the typical Irish monk”; see also Colgrave, “St. Cuthbert and His Times,” in *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. C. F. Battiscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 115–43; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 282–343; Harold Mytum, *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1992), 21–52; Kathleen Hughes, “Evidence for

Contacts between the Churches of the Irish and English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age,” in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 49–67. My seventh- and eighth-century Irish and Irish-trained saints form an interrelated group. Saints Cainnech, Fintán, Lúgaid, and Finán Cam were contemporaries, dying between about 600 and 630 soon after Columba’s death; Cuthbert’s dates are 634–687. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, mentions Columba’s contacts with Cainnech, 220–21 (1.4), 352–57 (2.13–14), 500–501 (3.17). Fintán just misses studying with Columba according to *VSH, Vita Prior S. Fintani*, 199–200 (chap. 7); Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 206–15 (1.2). Cuthbert’s abbey of Lindisfarne was founded in Cuthbert’s infancy by Aidan of Iona, and Lindisfarne’s next two bishops also came from Iona. Although Roman discipline shifted Irish practice during the later seventh century, the change in belief was gradual and not at first profound: Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 314–26, 391–415; Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, 24–48.

46. Bede, prose *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Colgrave, 224–25. Hereafter cited as Bede, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*. Bede’s insertion exemplifies his discomfort with Cuthbert’s animal contacts: he also revises Cuthbert’s youthful shepherding to appear the supervision of shepherds rather than cattle, and in general turns animal encounters into didactic lessons for monks. Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 61–62, attributes Bede’s discomfort to his closer relations to Roman than to Irish tradition. Boglioni, “Les animaux dans l’hagiographie monastique,” in *L’animal exemplaire au Moyen Age (V^e–XV^e siècle)*, ed. Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 60, 78, comments similarly on Bede’s revisions.

47. Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 60.

48. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 80–81 (“post servitium autem et ministerio impleto”). The sea animals are called “lutrae” (otters) in Bede’s *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 191. In the Middle English translation of Bede’s version, “twa bestes come fra the depe se, / Thai seimed as otyrs forto be” (two beasts came up from the deep sea; they appeared to be otters): *The Life of St. Cuthbert in English Verse, c. A.D. 1450*, ed. J. T. Fowler, Publications of the Surtees Society 87 (Durham: Andrews, 1891), 50.

49. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 78–79: “quod relatu multorum bonorum agnovi. Ex quibus est Plecgils presbiter. . .”

50. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 80–81.

51. *Ibid.*, 82–83.

52. *Ibid.*

53. For this practice see Michael Herity, “Early Irish Hermitages in the Light of the Lives of Cuthbert,” in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), 52–53. On northern adaptations of the *vitae* of the desert saints of antiquity, see Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, 57–84; *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Colgrave, 11–13.

54. Evagrius, *Vita Beati Antonii Abbatis, Auctore Sancto Athanasio*, PL 73:133, 134, 149 (chaps. 11, 14, 25); Evagrius, “Life of Antony by Athanasius,” in *Early Christian Lives*, ed. and trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 1998), 17 (chap. 12): snakes flee him “as if they had been chased” (“quasi persecutorem passa”); 19 (chap. 15): crocodiles do not harm him; 40 (chap. 50): animals avoid his hermitage “as if they were afraid” (“quasi timentes”).

55. Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae*, PL 23:25, 27 (chaps. 10, 16); Jerome, “Life of Paul of Thebes by Jerome,” in White, *Early Christian Lives*, 80 (chap. 10); 83 (chap. 16). Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 81–101, argues that the antique *vitae* value desert asceticism so highly above social contact because of a strong social malaise arising in the fourth century and inspiring “a dogged concern with creating a new identity by social death and by prolonged introspection” (91). Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, 47, notes that the antique saints’ contact with animals “signalled alienation from humanity” rather than relationship of any kind.

56. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 248–49 (1.20); “benedici á sancto petivit, cum ceteris in mari herimum quaesiturus. . . . Baitanus post longos per ventosa circuitus equora herimo non reperta ad patriam reversus.” See note 66 for similar wording applied to a crane’s wanderings.

57. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 194–95 (1.1); Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 96–97 (3.1).

58. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, 194–221 (quotation 197). The full ritual of hospitality would include washing, feeding, sheltering, and attending religious services. The sequence is cut short in the Anonymous *Life* by the angel’s departure before eating, making the chapter on angel hosting quite parallel to the following chapter on animal hosting.

59. The oldest surviving MS of the Anonymous *Life* titles chapters 2.2 and 2.3 “De eo quod angelo ministravit” and “De servientibus illi animalibus marinis”: Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 76, 78. On this oldest and other surviving MSS, see Colgrave’s introduction, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 17–20.

60. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 76–77 (2.2).

61. The term “ministerium” for the sea animals’ gestures recalls the title of the preceding chapter, “De eo quod angelo ministravit”: Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 76, 80.

62. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, 194, 196; see also Catherine Marie O’Sullivan, *Hospitality in Medieval Ireland, 900–1500* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 164–210.

63. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 70–71 (1.6).

64. London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS 26, folio 14 recto.

65. Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1.

66. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 312–13 (1.48): note the similarity in language to that for Baitan’s peregrinations, note 56 above.

67. *Ibid.*, 312–13 (1.48); Columba later praises the monk, “you have tended well the pilgrim guest” (“Benedicat te deus, mi filii, quia peregrinae bene ministrasti hospite”), 314–15 (1.48).

68. *Ibid.*, 312–13 (1.48).
69. *Ibid.*, 186–187 (Second Preface).
70. *Ibid.*, 314–15 (1.48): the crane “after studying the way for a while in the air, crossed the expanse of ocean, and in calm weather took its way back to Ireland, in a straight line of flight” (“paulisperque in aere viam speculata, ociani transvadato equore ad Everniam recto volatus cursu die repedavit tranquillo”).
71. David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), titles his chapter on saints and animals “Return to Paradise.” Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, 57, 59 writes specifically of the Irish saints that they recover “a miraculously peaceful Eden” through their “reversal of normal relations between humans and nature.” Jacques Voisenet, *Bêtes et hommes dans le monde médiéval: Le bestiaire des clercs du V^e au XII^e siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 252, concludes that saints’ contact with animals accomplishes a “retour à l’âge d’or paradisiaque où Adam régnait sur la faune” (a return to the golden age in paradise when Adam reigned over the animals). Bede, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 224–25 (chap. 21), tacitly invokes Genesis 1:26 in revising the Anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert*: the ravens’ obedience to Cuthbert shows that “if a man faithfully and wholeheartedly serves the maker of all created things, it is no wonder though all creation should minister to his commands and wishes. But for the most part we lose dominion over the creation which was made subject to us, because we ourselves neglect to serve the Lord and Creator of all things” (“Qui enim auctori omnium creaturarum fideliter et integro corde famulatur, non est mirandum si eius imperiis ac votis omnis creatura deseruiat. At nos pierunque iccirco subiecta nobis creaturae dominium perdimus, quia Domino et creatori omnium ipsi servire negligemus”).
72. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 82–83 (2.4), 86–87 (2.5), 100–101 (3.5).
73. C. Ferguson O’Meara, “Saint Columba and the Conversion of the Animals in Early Insular Art.” *Micrologus* 8, 1 (2000): 79–101; Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*.
74. *VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi*, 189 (chap. 29): “et in illa insula usque hodie mures non vixerunt.”
75. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 294–97 (1.41).
76. *VSH, Vita S. Finani*, 155 (chap. 13); *VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi*, 197 (chap. 58).
77. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 362–63 (2.17); 386–89 (2.27). Luguid also masters a water monster: *VSH, Vita Prior S. Lugidi*, 136 (chap. 26). On animals in relation to pagan beliefs see Boglioni, “Il santo e gli animali nell’alto medioevo,” 943–44, 970–72.
78. *VSH, Vita S. Finani*, 153 (chap. 3): “Finanus traxit baculum suum post se per terram, et non ausus est unus eorum transire vestigium baculi sancti.”
79. *VSH, Vita Prior S. Fintani*, 199 (chap. 3): two wolves guard the herd “velut canes comunes”; *VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi*, 197–98 (chap. 59); *VSH, Vita S. Finani*, 159 (chap. 32): the wolf is to guard “quasi canis modestus.”
80. Tangential to this chapter’s concerns is the extent to which medieval Christianity may have fostered or resisted the exploitation of nature. A first influential statement on this question was Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–7. White answers criticism of that essay in “Continuing the Conversation,” in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 55–64. Michael W. George, “Gawain’s Struggle with Ecology: Attitudes Toward the Natural World in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,” *Journal of Ecocriticism* 2, 2 (July 2010): 30–44, reviews recent discussion of ecological thought in medieval Christianity.
81. *VSH, Vita Prior S. Lugidi*, 137 (chap. 31): “assumptis secum paucis monachis et quinque vaccis, in itinere venit. . . .” On the founding of Luguid’s (Mo Lúa’s) settlements: Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 257–58.
82. Elijah: 1 Kings 17:3–6; Paul of Thebes: *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae*, 25 (chap. 10); Jerome, “Life of Paul of Thebes by Jerome,” in White, *Early Christian Lives*, 80 (chap. 10).
83. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 86–87 (2.5).
84. *VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi*, 191 (chap. 34). The element of reciprocity is stressed in calling both meals “prandium,” normally a “breakfast” or “lunch” rather than an animal’s meal.
85. Pithy examples are *VSH, Vita Prior S. Lugidi*, 136 (ch. 28); 137 (ch. 32). In the latter chapter, Luguid formalizes his avoidance of a flock of sheep into a maxim: “for wherever there is a sheep, there will be a woman; and where there is a woman, there is sin, and where sin is, the devil is, and where the devil is, there is hell.”
86. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 100–103 (3.5).
87. 2 Thessalonians 3:10. On monastic labor before and during the transition to Roman practices, see Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, 128–44.
88. *VSH, Vita S. Finani*, 159 (chap. 32): “Lupus vero iste, quasi canis modestus, erit custos vinulorum tuorum usque ad mortem suam et non nocebit ulli animanti” (“Truly that wolf, like a humble dog, will guard your calves until his death and will not harm any living thing”).
89. Columbanus, “Regula Monachorum,” *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. and trans. G. S. M. Walker, *Scriptores Latini Hibernici* 2 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), 125. Columbanus (c. 540–615) was an Irish missionary credited with several foundations on the continent and this monastic rule combining Celtic and Benedictine features.
90. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 380–88; Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 90–93.
91. Anonymous, *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, 90–91 (2.7): “auxilium Dei.”
92. *Ibid.*, 98–99 (3.4): “quia potens est Deus de rupe petrina petenti aquam suscitare.”
93. *Ibid.*, 100–101 (3.4): “Quod vero a fratribus deprecens non perpetrasset, et hoc illis Deus non inputet in malum nisi a Domino nostro Iesu Christo facta oratione adiutorium accepisset. Nam cum eadem nocte mare fluctibus undans in honorem servi Dei, stipitem xii pedum detulens specialiter, iam ad hostium scopuli ubi ponendus erat in aedificium natantem deportavit.”
94. *Ibid.*, 102–3 (3.5); *VSH, Vita S. Finani*, 159 (chap. 32): “cum humilitate et

penitentia." Cainnech's stag, startled as he held the saint's book in his antlers as in a lectern, similarly returns with the saint's book "quasi monachus fugitivus ad suum abbatem" (like a wayward monk to his abbot): *VSH, Vita S. Cainnechi*, 193 (chap. 43).

95. Gillian Clark, "The Fathers and the Animals: The Rule of Reason?" in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions About Animals for Theology and Ethics*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 67–79; see also Chapter 3, "A Bestiary's Taxonomy of Creatures."

96. In her comprehensive review of philosophical traditions, Elisabeth de Fontenay, *Le silence des bêtes* (Paris: Fayard, 1998) points out that the Judeo-Christian definition of the human through Logos and Verbum requires that animals be without language, and indeed makes their speechlessness their most intransigent difference from humans. For Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 27, "logocentrism is first of all a thesis regarding the animal, the animal deprived of the *logos*, deprived of the *can-have-the-logos*." Medieval sign theory echoes the sharp theological distinctions between humans and animals. Grammarians note that chickens use different clucks for alarm and for food, that dogs use different barks for aggression and greeting, and so on. Such cases are sometimes classed as signs that work by inference—a certain bark should lead us to infer that a dog is angry, in the way smoke leads us to infer that there is a fire—or sometimes they are classed as voices that signify naturally, as a sick person's groan signifies pain. Surveying medieval "zoosemiotics," Umberto Eco and his working group note that the grammarians do not trouble over their differing classifications of animal sounds because their real concern is with defining the uniqueness of human language by contrasting it with all other noises, from barks to burps: Umberto Eco et al., "On Animal Language in the Medieval Classification of Signs," in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, ed. Umberto Eco and Costantino Marmo (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989), 3–41.

97. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, 522–23 (3.23).

98. *Ibid.*, 522–25 (3.23).

99. *Ibid.*, 524–25 (3.23).

100. *Ibid.*, 450–53 (2.4); 432–33 (2.39); 326–29 (2.2), 328–31 (2.3); *VSH, Vita S. Cainnechi*, 187 (chap. 20).

101. These episodes illustrate a conception of interpenetrating, non-dichotomous realms that pervades early Irish poetry. Alfred Siewers traces in this poetry "an intense overlap of social, personal, and spiritual place in regional landscape contexts, one that embodied itself textually": Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19–20.

102. Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 60.

103. Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

104. Stancliffe, "Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary," 27.

105. *Life of Saint Cuthbert in English Verse*, 69 n.4.

106. Konrad Z. Lorenz, *King Solomon's Ring: New Light on Animal Ways*, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1952), 158.

107. Yves Bonnefoy, "Lifting Our Eyes from the Page," trans. John Naughton, *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990): 806; Kate Rigby, "Ecocriticism," in *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 151–78.

108. Bonnefoy, "Lifting Our Eyes from the Page," 801–2.

109. Noah: Genesis 8:6–7; Paul of Thebes: Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae*, 15 (chap. 10); Jerome, "Life of Paul of Thebes by Jerome," 80 (chap. 10).

110. Bonnefoy, "Lifting Our Eyes from the Page," 797.

CHAPTER 2. WOLF, MAN, AND WOLF-MAN

1. Marie de France, *Les fables: Edition critique*, ed. Charles Brucker (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), Prologue, lines 5, 23–26. Hereafter cited in my text and notes by fable number and line number.

2. On antique and medieval collections of fables in the mode of Aesop (often called "Aesopic") including Marie's collection, see especially Thomas Honegger, *From Phoenix to Chanticleer: Medieval English Animal Poetry* (Tübingen: Francke, 1996); Hans Robert Jauss, *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Tierdichtung* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1959); Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Edward Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry, 750–1150* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

3. Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard*, 32. Anthropomorphism (locating human characteristics in other animals) can be an expansive and productive tactic for thinking about animals (see Chapter 6), but the anthropomorphism of fable tends to be reductive. Derrida dismisses fable in the essay most under consideration in this chapter: "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": Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 37; Jacques Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2006), 60: "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." Derrida later returned to beast fables when taking up the question of human sovereignty in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).