Animal Encounters
Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain

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THE MIDDLE AGES SERIES
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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 reflect 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 ensnared 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, pastured lands, 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. 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. 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/v, folios 60–72. 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,
Adept, 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 alve.
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 ying. 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 cross, makes a mark.⁴

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 (nice), my own mind is in my special craft.

I love to rest—better than any fame—at my bookder 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? ⁴

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 cat’s pet-keeping. “Equals” and “kindred spirits” are interpretive extensions of the lyric’s parallel phrasing in Stokes and Stacan, “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 absence of simply absence—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.” 1 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.” 19

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. 19 The Irish lyric instead depicts 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 intensely 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 riddles makes “our house” a microcosm of creation’s rightful hierarchy.

Anthropomorphic tactics for depicting the cat, however, puts 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 hunterman equipped with a net (his extended claws) as he performs “feats of valor.” 18 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 huntsman “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 musus, muri-legus, muri-legus, and muri-teps (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. The Welsh legal code of Hwael 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." 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.

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." 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 despised. 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, amused 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 2a, 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 in 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. 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 . . . nu 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 Meditaciones 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 exclusion 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.

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." 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." 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 "feast-sport" translates aíthe, whose meaning encompasses "ingenuity, sharpness, keenness" as well as "exploit, victory, successful feat."32 Aíthe 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, boom-boom." 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.33

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 aspect 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 "feast-sport" 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 metaphorical 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.34 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.35

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."36 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. Through generations of natural selection for tolerance of proximity to humans, cats became "neotenous": 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 neotenous 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. 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 neotenous creature: the scholar. Open to living with another species, capable of learning from his manuscripts throughout his life, the scholar exemplifies how deeply neotORIZED is Homo sapiens. Like the neotization of cats, the neotization of humans, many millennia in the past, involved no deliberate human manipulation; neotony produced its own favoring as it produced humans more and more adapted to cooperative living in tight quarters. Our own neotony is always credited with creating the conditions for culture-building specifically among humans, but neotony also makes a second stage of domestication possible—the stage in which various species adapted to living near humans become of interest to humans. Neotony 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 neotamous cat, "merely a rough first draft," comes to be "edited" and modified thereafter by human selection for individual traits such as superior rodent killing. 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" insist almost redundantly on Pangur's color. 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. The doubly 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 evolving artificial selection of litters for favored colors, Pangur's white coat could evoke for us the deepest past of feline neotization, 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. 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 mouse.

In presenting "our house" as a coordinated space of joyous fulfillment, "Pangur Bán" offers a more substantial and positive view of cohabitation with cats than do most medieval texts. The scholar's self-deprecating humility as he observes Pangur's hunting, together with his depiction of their tasks' symbiosis, well illustrate Coppen's and Smith's recommendation that "we should swallow our pride and accept our own inextricable interdependency with other domestics. The culture we pride ourselves on was, and remains, dependent on the success of domestication." 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 vīna 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. Weaving settlements and deserted places together as they move among them, they construct a single environment drawn into harmony through holiness. When St. Cianech 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. Finnán slips off to his reading lessons by recruiting two wolves to guard his father’s beehive; the wolves’ transformation convinces his father to let Finnán continue his religious studies. 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 “folklore fantasy” or “the common subject matter of hagiology”—transhistorical boleplate unworthy of scholarly attention. Separating Cianech’s miraculous stag so neatly from the rest of his vīna obscures the culturally specific meanings of his animal miracles. Cianech’s other miracles are not beyond the scholarly pale: T. M. Charles-Edwards finds substantial information about social organization and church rivalry in Cianech’s multiply miraculous rescue of a king from a burning fort. 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. 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. 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, and from shorter vīna in the Codex Salmantiensis cluster that Richard Sharpe has shown to preserve eighth-century lives of the seventh-century saints Cianech, Finnán, Lughid, and Finán Cam. 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. 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. 725) of the anonymous Life of Saint Cuthbert, he apologetic insertion constrains the meaning of Cuthbert’s correction of thieves’ raven: “It let 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.’” Similarly, on the grief of Columba’s watchhouse 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.” For many readers of hagiography, animals are ciphers or signs for human followers and teachings: 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. The Anonymous devotes a chapter to this incident "which I learned from the account of many good men, among whom is Plecgis a priest." 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 Cuthberti, inobstinita mente adpropinquans ad mare usque ad lum Dare in mediis fluctibus, isam enim aliquando usque ad ascellas tumultuante et fluctuante tinctus est. Dum autem de mare ascendens, et in arenosis locis littoris florenta genua orabat, venerantur statim post vestigia eius duo pusilla animalia maritima humili parant in terram, lambentes pedes eius, volutantes tergebant pellibus suis, et calefacientes odoribus suis. Post servitium autem et ministerio implo iter 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.

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 confitemini uno modo indulgetur, si vobis voveris, numquam te esse quandam vivere narrarnum").

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." ("sic leones in veteri legimus Danielo servire"). Like the desert saints of antiquity as well as other monks in the Irish tradition, Cuthbert practices ascetic immersion in cold water. 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 visum 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." 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. The deserts and settlements of early Irish hagiography are more contiguous; both can offer appropriate settings for ascetic practice and saintly heroes. Columba's founding of Iona and his administrative work there are at least as worthy as his follower Bahtain's effort "to seek a desert in the ocean...[on] long circuitous voyaging through windy seas." Columba arriving on Iona and Cuthbert arriving on Farne both find their islands haunted, but their visum spend only a line or two on the demons' expulsion. 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 Bitel, hospitality in this period was also a legal obligation, widely understood as the practice that held society together as well as expressing its hierarchies. 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." 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" ("Ministrae namque hospitibus advententibus... electus est... Putans adhuc hominem esse, et non angulum, lavatis manibus et pedibus linteaminibusque tegens et manibus suis humiliter propter frigorem fricans et calefaciens pedes eius"). 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. Hospitality is the authoritative language chosen to express the saint's unifications, illustrating but also enlarging Bittel'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." 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.

Orasques sibi ad Dominum, vidit equum caput sursum elevatnam ad tecta dormuculit parsenque fonsis tectorum avis ad prehendens tract ad se. Et cum quod statim panis calidus et caro in toletus in panne linea diligitur doctum candidis emet evasit. Ille vero consummam oratione probavit, animadvertitque sibi esse cibum a Deo predestinatum per emissionem angelii qui sepe in angustiis sus adiuvavit surn, 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, drew 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.

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). Striving, in Otto Picht'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. 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.

Adomnan'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 Ecuusiae regione quaeam hospita gru venit per longos aeris spinita circuitus... superveniet"). 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 perpetuari), it will return with fully recovered strength to the sweet district of Ireland from which it first
it came."60 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.61 Earlier in his life Columba himself had journeyed from that district to Iona, "wishing to be a pilgrim for Christ (pro Christo perigrinari volens)."62 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.63 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.64 It is certainly possible that the Garden of Eden was a substantial 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).65 As these citations suggest, animal encounters in my set of early insular vita 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 vita 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.66 When mice gnaw his shoes on the island of Ithdon in Scotland, Cainnech instructs all the island's mice to drown themselves, "and
on that island no mice are to be seen even today."
Columba reproaches a
man who is poaching "the sea calves that pertain to us (marini nostri juris
vitulis)" near the monastery of Iona by asking him, "Why do you repeatedly
steal other people's property (res alienas), transgressing the divine command-
ment?"
Finán Cam and Caimnech reward their hosts by replacing and re-
aminating livestock that were killed in hospitality for them. As part of his
missionary work, Columba reveals that some milk a pagan priest has appar-
etly 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. Deploying their power over natural processes, the saints achieve
both religious and practical ends.
Many of these saints, particularly in their youth, manage cattle miracu-
ulously. 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." Finán, Caimnech, and
Finán command wolves to guard cattle "like ordinary dogs." These innova-
tions 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 disciplin-
ary 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 depend-
ence on cattle. That dependence is neatly conveyed in Lugaid's vita as he
sets out to found his first monastery, "taking with him a few monks and five
cows."
Cuthbert and his Irish predecessors sometimes arrive at mutually sustain-
arrangements with animals. Flashes of reciprocity and experiments in co-
habitation supplement the saints' authoritative control. A first example from
the anonymous Life of Saint Cuthbert contrasts with its biblical and patriar-
chal analogues. Ravens feed Elijah and Paul of Thebes in their desert isolation,
but no reciprocity marks the encounters. 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 pisc-
torti nostro ieiunatur partem ad versendum non dedisti? Tunc vero puer, sicut
praeceperat homo Dei, partim piscis aquilae dedisti").

Like the insular saints
who work with cattle, Cuthbert acknowledges his need for a sustaining phys-
ical environment and his interest in how to maintain it.
Caimnech's interest in a dog's welfare inspires a penance built on reciproc-
ity. Called to a rich man's home, Caimnech 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 dederis, et tu prandium canis comedas"). Performing this
penance, the wife soon dies; Caimnech then raises her from the dead.
Standards for both moral and material well-being inform Caimnech'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.
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 for it.
The exchange of diets makes for a practical lesson in empathy.
Cuthbert's interaction with two birds (corvus, 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 qudum die in insula futiens, sulubat terram, primum
enim dubios vel tribus annis de opere manuum suorum equatam
clausus obstructis iam natus igitur manere, laborans cutiam vitam ac-
ceptaverat, sciens dictum esse, Qui non laborat nec manducet, vidit duos
corvos ante illico tempore manentes tecla domus navigantium in
portum positi disstantes, nichique sibi facientes. Prohibuit autem
eos leni modo manam, ne habe iuventutem fratrum nihil lucantem
facientes. Illis vero neglegentibus postremo mosso spiritum, austere praecipitius
in nomine Iesu Christi de insula discedere exterminavit. Illis igitur nec
requies, nec moria patria secundum preceptum eius desentibus, post
triduum alter et duobus revertens ante pedes hominum Dei folenti iam
ei terram supra sulum expansis alias, et inclinato capite, sedens et me-
rens humili voce veniam indulgentiae deposcens, crocicrere cepit. Servus
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 which had been there a long time, rearing 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 remained 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.\textsuperscript{35}

Cuthbert expects to work, in a postlapsarian mode, "knowing that it is said: 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat.'” \textsuperscript{36} 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 Finán Cam is visiting a virtuous man named Mokelloc, a wolf kills Mokelloc's only calf. Finán 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 Finán; he next requires the wolf to find a replacement calf and finally to spend the rest of his life guarding Mokelloc's cattle.\textsuperscript{36} As the wolf moves through these three roles, he is thrice useful to Finán's host, but the wolf's lifelong role as guardian of the calf 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. Finán'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."\textsuperscript{39} 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 exile to eremitic solitude toward greater emphasis on the religious community, where obedience was the guiding principle for all interactions. 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 reproaches, 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. 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." 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. 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 *vita*e 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 Finnán Can. 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 virtuosity (turkedove and phoenix, for example) or an inborn viciousness (fox and wolf, for example), but this innate virtue or vice is not subject to revision. 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. 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 omne animal rerum sapit sensu quo justerit ipse creator"). 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" ("luctu plangere uestequit quasi homo lactimas in gremium sancti fundere, et valde spumans flere"). 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 flatus effundat amarsiim wonderfulus").

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 scavenger for animal flesh after understanding that it is wrong to take thistles 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 ravenously, 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.108 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.120

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.”109 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 fairly across the ages with the environmental thought of Timothy Morton, Katherine Hayles, or Ursula Heise.109 These and other post-humanist interpreters urge that modern society and nature, humans and other animals, are intricately entangled 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.”110 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.”110 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-spread wings, they make “lament sounds” to solicit attention and care.116 The posture is that of Cuthbert’s repentant *corvs*, 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 *corvus* 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, Revs 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 incapacity 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." 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."  

The anonymous author of the Life of Saints 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 corvus 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. Reduced to their basic structures, these textual predecessors 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 reader's experience of the vivid begging behavior of corvines. Variously infected by wind, heat, damp, curiosity, incomprenension, 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. Evoking a peculiar behavior of birds on Farne, the text of the Anonymous Life makes itself porous, opens itself to its readers' material presence on earth. Their recollections that yes, birds do behave so, might reinforce their wonder that Cuthbert could so ennoble 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 metaphorical 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 earthy 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 patriarchal 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.


14. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 50–51. Another example of the development-mental model in animal studies is Laurie Shannon, "The Eight Animals in Shakespeare’s *Romance of the Beasts*, and the Human,* " *PMLA* 114 (2009): 472–79: before Desccare "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 logic.

15. For our purpose here, it is important to note that dog and cat are both unambiguously domesticated, that is, they are both domesticates, they are both "nothing but" domesticates, and that, if there is a "place for them" in the human world, it is as objects of human intellectual interest, not as subjects of human interest. They are not animals, they are objects of human interest, and they are not, as we might say, "the animals in the world" as we see them, but rather "the animals as we see them" as objects of human interest, and as such, they are not animals, they are objects of human interest, and they are not, as we might say, "the animals in the world" as we see them, but rather "the animals as we see them" as objects of human interest, and as such, they are not animals, they are objects of human interest, and they are not, as we might say, "the animals in the world" as we see them, but rather "the animals as we see them" as objects of human interest, and as such, they are not animals, they are objects of human interest, and they are not, as we might say, "the animals in the world" as we see them, but rather "the animals as we see them" as objects of human interest.

16. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 50–51. Another example of the development-mental model in animal studies is Laurie Shannon, "The Eight Animals in Shakespeare's *Romance of the Beasts*, and the Human,* " *PMLA* 114 (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 logic.


Medieval: 7-13 April, 1985 (Sponseri: Presso la sede del Centro, 1985), 93-95; the Irish Lives are more interested in cross-species relationships than are other traditions (compared with those of other regions, those of Ireland "constitute a field of evidence for the evolution of simian fauna with its attendant co-evolution of the animal world in all its dimensions.


1. Mese occa Pangur Bán,
coccupocu nathar f’iri sanfànsu;  
both a monna-sam fi selig;  
mu mana éisin im saoilcuid;  
2. Caoin-effus, fer, fer, eis dé,  
oc mu leis-fhí, ligis lagosu;  
iol fóirmích frínnu Pangur Bán;  
céalaí ré in m. macadáin.

3. Ó ru haim, sufi ceo cea,  
naír, regáin, ar a-ghaidh  
tiagaistu, d’fhaide chuis,  
rí f’ir na sead is ar m-aithis;  
4. Gníith, h-bhí sléab, ar greasaí gal  
gleasaí udh inna lisan;  
ois ní, du-faith im lha chín  
diog de d-saol is a-dromhuch;  
5. Fhíosrec-dhám fí féig fá  
 nó par, a-nghal comol;  
fhaicheadh chín fí féig fás  
mu rúsc éigil, cosa tóra;  
6. Fhílgaidh-sa ce a-méad dhu  
lí n-glen leh inna ghecirib;  
lí thuigí cheist a d-dóil  
eis ní chur ag a fhíl.  
7. Cú bláinn u-áin nach ré  
áid bena cé s’ú chín;  
ual d’l ba chás naí a dún;  
subhaídhus a d-éadan;  
8. h-bhí fhionn as choilmid dhu  
in muid du-nigil each iaschta;  
du n-fhoireadh dhu g’fhí  
fó thuairse dhu g’fhí.  
9. Yeiric u-áin u-áin as aIr  


usually dated to c. 545, Catherine McKenna has informed me that it may not predate its high medieval manuscript.


30. We differ from our nearest primate relatives in qualities ranging from our retention of juvenile-shell shape to lifelong learning capacity to exceptionally high tolerance for living in proximity to our own and other species. Gould, Ontogeny and Phylogeny, 312–404.
31. Copinger and Smith, "The Domestication of Evolution," 287. Felt cats, noted above, is not so thoroughly "edited" as many domesticals. Hemmen, Domestication, 25–25, notes that domestic cats hunt in excess of their need for food, as well as showing several neotenic traits.
32. The redundancy is noted by David Greene and Frank O’Connor, eds. and trans., A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry, A.D. 600–1200 (London: Macmillan, 1967). St. If Parng was 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 name Parng for a man working with pale feline’s earth: I thank Catherine McKeown for this observation.
41. Boglotz, "Il santo e gli animali nell'alto medioevo," 959–71, makes the point that animal miracles must be situated within the saint's wider field of powers. He objects to scholarship on animals in isolation from other aspects of the saint's authority, e.g., Mary Deacono MacNickle, "Beasts and Birds in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1914), but MacNickle's study is nonetheless a useful collection 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 (Utarica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Nathalie Saltman, Saints d'Irlande: Amanique critique des sources hagiographique (VIII–XII siècles) (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003).
45. Colgrave, Two Lives of Saint Cathba, 9, concludes, "It is clear that [Cathba] beongs 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. Cathbert and His Times," in The Reise of Saint Cathba, ed. C. F. Bantocke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 177–91; Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 183–185; Harold Myrum, The Origins of Early Christian Ireland (London Routledge, 1992), 21–52; Kathleen Hughes, "Bedeans 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 Whittock, ed. Peter Clunies Ross and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 49-67. My seventh- and eighth-century Irish and English saints form an intertwined group. Saint Columban, Founded, Liquid, and Finn Can were contemporaries, dying between about 660 and 660 now after Columban's death; Cuthbert's dates are 634-687. Adomnán, Life of Columba, mentions Columba's contact with Caiminno, 220-21 (1.4), 432-37 (2.1-2.4), 522-23 (2.17). Tolaus then goes on to study with Columba according to VSF, Vita Prima S. Fantinti, 199-200 (chap. 7); Adomnán, Life of Columba, 206-65 (1.2). Cuthbert's abbey of Lindisfarne was founded in Cuthbert's infancy by Aidan of Iona, and Lindisfarne's next two bishop also came from Iona. Although Roman discipline shifted Irish practice during the later seventh century, the change in belief was gradual and not as first profound: Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 324-36, 337-41; Follett, Clio De in Ireland, 24-8.


48. Anonymous, Life of Saint Cuthbert, 80-81 ("post servitium autem et ministerio insitico"). The sea animals are called "lustra" (ostrea) in Bede's Life of Saint Cuthbert, 191. In the Middle English translation of Bede's version, "sea beasts come fra the depe se," (Thi sched to oysse forto be) (two beasts came up from the deep sea, they appeared to be otters): The Life of St. Cuthbert in English Verse, ed. A.D. 1458, ed. J. T. Fowler, Publications of the Surtees Society 87 (Durham: Andrews, 1891), 10.


52. Ibid.

53. For this practice see Michael Herity, "Early Irish Hermits in the Light of the Lives of Cuthbert," in St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community in AD 2000, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Standiffe (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), 52-75. 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, xi-xv.

83. Ibid., 312–13 (3.48).
84. Ibid., 316–17 (3.48) (Second Preface).
85. Ibid., 316–17 (3.48): 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" ("pavilionque in aeru viam speculata, ocelar transvecto exorue ad servitum recto volutur cura elle repetitum tranquillitate").
86. David Saber, Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), 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 "interven in normal relations between humans and nature." Jacques Voisines, Beasts and humans dans le monde médiéval: Le bestiaire des cîtes du V au XVe siècle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 354, concludes that animals' contact with animals accomplishes a "retour à l'âge d'or paradisiaque où Adam régna sur la faune" (a return to the golden age in paradise when Adam reigned over the animals).
87. Bede, Life of Saint Cuthbert, 272–273 (chap. 21), tacitly invokes Genesis 17:6 in revising the Anonymous Life of Saint Cuthbert; the ravens' obedience to Cuthbert shows that "it's a man faithfully and heartily serves the major 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 auctor omnium creaturarum tiditer et integro corde humiliter et non mirandum si eis imperatis quod omnis creatura detreciat. At nos plerumque loco subiecto nobis creaturarum dominium perdere, quaæ dominum et creator omnium servire neglegimus").
88. Anonymous, Life of Saint Cuthbert, 82–83 (2.0.), 86–87 (2.1.), 100–101 (3.5).
90. VSH, Vita S. Caimechii, 189 (chap. 29): "et in illa insula unque hodie naturis non viarios.
91. Adamnania, Life of Columba, 294–97 (1.48).
92. VSH, Vita S. Finiani, 155 (chap. 23); VSH, Vita S. Caimechii, 197 (chap. 18).
94. VSH, Vita S. Finiani, 153 (chap. 3): "Flanuin modit bactinam suas omnem post se terram, et non assissa est unus eorum canem vestigium facere conterit.
95. VSH, Vita Prior S. Finiani, 159 (chap. 3): two wolves guard the herd "velut canes comenses"; VSH, Vita S. Caimechii, 197–98 (chap. 29); VSH, Vita S. Finiani, 159 (chap. 32): the wolf is to guard "quasi canes modestiues.
96. Tangential to this chapter's concerns is the extent to which medieval Christianity may have fostered or restored 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).}

98. Anonymous, Life of Saint Cuthbert, 86–87 (3.5).
99. VSH, Vita S. Caimechii, 192 (chap. 34). The element of reciprocity is stressed in calling both meals "prandium," normally a "breakfast" or "lunch" rather than an animal's meal.
100. Pithy examples are VSH, Vita Prior S. Lugodi, 316 (ch. 28); 317 (ch. 32). In the latter chapter, Lugudus 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." 101. Anonymous, Life of Saint Cuthbert, 100–101 (3.5).
102. 2 Thessalonians 3:7. On monastic labor before and during the transition to Roman practice, see Risel, Life of the Saints, 128–44.
103. VSH, Vita S. Finiani, 159 (chap. 32): "Lupus vero ister, quasi canis modestus, erit canes villorum tuorum usque ad marest munem et non nocibit ulle animanici" ("Truly that wolf; like a humble dog, will guard your caives until his death and will not harm any living thing").
104. Columbanus, "Regula Monachorum," Sancti Columbani Opera, ed. and trans. G. S. M. Walker, Scriptores Latinae Hibernicae 1 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1959), 125. Columbanus (c. 540–595) was an Irish missionary credited with several foundations on the continent; this monastic rule combining Celtic and Benedictine features.
109. Ibid., 102–3 (3.5); VSH, Vita S. Finiani, 159 (chap. 33): "cum humiliata et
panteria." Caimnech's stag, started as he held the saint's book in his ancles as in a lectern, similarly returns with the saint's book "quasi monachus fugitivus ad stum a bbebatem" (like a wayward monk to his abbey); VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi, 193 (chap. 43).


96. In her comprehensive review of philosophical traditions, Elisabeth de Fontenay, Le silence des bêtes (Paris: Payot, 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 intransitive 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 at the root of 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 cheeps 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; this is, to many minds, a false—sometimes they are classified as voice that signify naturally, as a sick person's groan signifies pain. Surveying medieval "zooonomies," 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 bats to humans: Umberto Eco et al., "On Animal Language in the Medieval Classification of Signs," in On the Medieval Theory of Signs, ed. Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (Amsterdam: Benjamin, 1989), 1–41.

98. Ibid., 532–53 (3.23).
99. Ibid., 534–53 (3.23).
100. Ibid., 470–75 (3.4), 475–53 (3.39); 326–29 (2.2); 248–31 (2.3); VSH, Vita S. Caimnechi, 197 (chap. 40).
102. Alexander, Saint and Animals, 60.

104. Stendhal, "Cuthbert and the Polarity between Patrician and Solitary," 27.
105. Life of Saint Cuthbert in English Verse, 69 n.4.

CHAPTER 2. WOLF, MAN, AND WOLF-MAN