Hector Munro Chadwick (1870-1947) was Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Cambridge from 1912 to 1941. Through the immense range of his scholarly publications, and through the vigorous enthusiasm which he brought to all aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies — philological and literary, historical and archaeological — he helped to define the field and to give it the interdisciplinary orientation which characterises it still. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, which owes its existence and its own interdisciplinary outlook to H.M. Chadwick, has wished to commemorate his enduring contribution to Anglo-Saxon studies by establishing an annual series of lectures in his name.

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ISABEL HENDERSON

Pictish Monsters:
Symbol, Text and Image

Pictish Monsters: Symbol, Text and Image

ISABEL HENDERSON

The conversion of the Picts to Christianity gained momentum through the missionary work of Columba's successors. By 700 Columban monasteries had been established within the Pictish regions of North Britain.[1] For much of the seventh century the Columban monastic network included foundations in Northumbria, so the Pictish church was not isolated. At the beginning of the eighth century a pious Pictish king was in touch with Bede's monastery at Jarrow seeking up-to-date guidance on liturgical and architectural matters.[2]

The extent to which the Pictish church took advantage of its rich cultural connexions has been queried because of the lack of surviving evidence for literary culture.[3] In contrast, Pictish art, particularly in the form of stone sculpture, has come down to us in considerable quantity and in diverse forms.[4]

The quarried and dressed cross-slabs carved in relief display the full range of ornament found in Insular art, in all media, from the seventh century to the ninth. On Pictish monuments the repertoire is used in a

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[1]   *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (Edinburgh, 1961; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1991), II.46 (pp. 178-80). For a recent assessment of the role of St Columba in the Pictish church, see *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, 1995), pp. 30-4.

[2]   *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), V.21 (pp. 532-52).

[3]   Kathleen Hughes, 'Where are the Writings of Early Scotland?', in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources by the late Kathleen Hughes*, ed. David Dumville (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 1-21.

[4]   J. Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903; repr. with an introduction by Isabel Henderson, 2 vols., Balgavies, 1993). The work is in three parts: pt I, pp. iii-cxxii, being Joseph Anderson's Rhind Lectures for 1892, with additional information from Allen; pt II, 'General Results... from the Archaeological Survey...', pp. 3-419; and pt III, '...Descriptive List of the Monuments...', pp. 3-522.

lively and ingenious fashion. It affords unshakable evidence that in terms of visual culture, the Picts belong in the mainstream. Can this art also provide much needed evidence for the extent of Pictish Christian literary culture, additional to basic scriptural and liturgical texts?

Pictish sculpture is distinctive in its use of animal imagery. Its incised representations of single animals, and its graceful fleeting hunting-scenes, are unique in Insular art. Around eighty monuments depict non-naturalistic animals, either singly or in combination. Some of these, such as the classical fabulous animals, the griffin, the hippocamp and the centaur are found elsewhere in the British Isles, but the majority of the Pictish types are unparalleled. Non-naturalistic animals are carved on some of the earliest and some of the latest of the relief monuments in both north and south Pictland (pl. I). This lecture focusses on these animals, but to understand them aright, they must be set in a wider context of Pictish animal imagery.

THE PICTS AND *PHYSIOLOGUS*

It is conventional wisdom that the fantastic animal art was derived from learned, illustrated compilations of animal lore, and so indeed comprises evidence that such texts were available to, and read by, Picts.[5] The notion that texts were prerequisite originated in the work of the nineteenth-century scholar Joseph Anderson. He believed that what was carved prominently on a Christian monument, such as a cross-slab, must be capable of a Christian interpretation.[6]

Current approaches to Insular art would support Anderson. The pervasive animal patterns, often admired solely for their decorative ingenuity are now 'read' as an explicit reference to the richness of God's creation, a visual commentary on the first chapter of *Genesis*, or

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[5]   Isabel Henderson, *The Picts* (London, 1967) pp. 137-8, fig. 29; the best modern account, with full bibliographical support, is Carola Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art* (Edinburgh, 1993). In her view Pictish monastic patrons would have had access to an illustrated text of *Physiologus* (p. 143).

[6]   Anderson, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt I, pp. xl-xlvii. Anderson's account is still useful.

on Psalm CIII.[7] Anderson, very reasonably, turned to the text known as *Physiologus* to explain what he regarded as a non-native element in Pictish sculpture. *Physiologus*, in the form that it was known in the early medieval period in the West, was the source of the whole mode of attributing spiritual allegories to animal behaviour.[8] Its text consists of short homilies, backed by scriptural quotations, about the various 'natures' of animals. These 'natures' were interpreted allegorically to aid understanding of the 'nature' of Christ, Salvation, Christian doctrine, proper Christian behaviour, the commoner heresies, and the consequences of sin. *Physiologus* was essentially, a pastoral text for moral instruction. The accounts have virtually nothing to do with natural history although the basic philosophical position is that every aspect of God's creation reflects an aspect of God.

The original Greek text of *Physiologus*, possibly without the allegories, dates to the early centuries A.D. Its Latin translation was immensely popular, material from it forming a substantial part of all later medieval bestiaries. The earliest surviving Latin texts, with both 'natures' and allegories, date to the eighth century. The earliest surviving, and very attractive, illustrated version, ninth-century Carolingian work, comprises fols. 7-22v of Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 318. The text ends with a brief extract from the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, so that its immediate model can be no earlier than the seventh century. The

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[7] For example, R.B.K. Stevenson, 'The Hunterston Brooch and its Significance', *Medieval Archaeology* 18 (1974), 16-42. In his discussion of the iconography of the animal ornament on the brooch (pp. 38-40) Stevenson acknowledges his debt to Victor Elbern and refers to Elbern's studies in this vein. See also Suzanne Lewis's influential paper 'Sacred Calligraphy: The Chi Rho Page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), 139-59, esp. 140-1, where she sets out the options of 'playful ornament without content' or 'awesome array of Christological and Eucharistic allusions'. [The psalm numbering, and all Bible references hereafter follow the Douai text.]

[8] The text of *Physiologus* in its various versions has been much studied. For the level of its currently perceived relevance to Insular art the reader is referred to *Physiologus*, trans. Michael J. Curley (Austin, TX, 1979). Curley uses the Latin versions of *Physiologus* as established by Francis Carmody. For an exhaustive textual and bibliographical survey, much of which concerns later periods, see Nikolaus Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter*, Hermaea n.s. 38 (Tübingen, 1976).

style of the Bern illustrations has obvious affinities with that of the Utrecht Psalter and so is generally regarded as a product of 'The school of Rheims'.[9] The Bern illustrations, as such, to my knowledge, have no reflection in Insular art, and certainly none in Pictish art.

Parts of *Physiologus*, 'natures' and allegories, were known to Anglo-Saxon writers of our period.[10] Itself a compilation, it was used in other equally popular compilations, such as Isidore's *Etymologiae*. The text of *Etymologiae* was known in Ireland in the seventh century but the material in it that coincides with *Physiologus* concerns the 'natures' only, not their allegorical interpretation.[11]

Anderson explained his failure to discern many close visual Pictish equivalents to the descriptions in *Physiologus* by pointing to the wide discrepancy between the creatures named and their pictorial representations in the later bestiaries. Nonetheless, some of the commoner identifications should present no difficulty, for example, the stag and its ancient enemy the serpent, an allegory of the Christian's struggle with evil. This subject is carved unambiguously in a prominent position on a cross-slab in Ireland, at Gallen Priory, Co. Offally, and is represented in filigree on the rim of the paten from Derrynaflan, Co.

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[9]   *Physiologus Bernensis. Voll-Faksimile-Ausgabe des Codex Bongarsianus 318 der Burgerbibliothek Bern*, ed. C. Steiger and O. Homburger (Basel, 1964); 'Bern Physiologus', in *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, ed. Koert van der Horst, William Noel and Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, published in conjunction with the exhibition Het Utrechts Psalter, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent ('t Goy-Houten, 1996), pp. 190-1 (no. 9).

[10]   These are in the tenth-century collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry known as the Exeter Book. They concern the panther, the whale, and probably the partridge. For English prose translations, see S.A.J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), pp. 352-7. For an interpretative study, see *The Old English Physiologus*, ed. Ann Squires (Durham, 1988).

[11]   For the use of *Physiologus* in *De animalibus* (Bk XII of the *Etymologiae*), see *Isidore de Séville, Étymologies Livre XII, Des animaux*, ed. and trans. J. André (Paris, 1986), pp. 19-30. See also individual references in Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus*, pp. 164-203. These are to the 'natures' of the animals only.

Tipperary.[12] The contexts of both these depictions of one of the 'natures' of the stag (described in *Etymologiae* XII.i.18) suggest that the *Physiologus* allegory in respect of this particular 'nature' was known in Ireland in the eighth century.[13] Stags and serpents are portrayed with striking accuracy in Pictish sculpture. Yet no wholly convincing

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[12]   Curley, *Physiologus*, pp. 58-60. For the Gallen Priory slab, see Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D)*, p. 123 and pl. 64. For the paten, see *The Derrynaflan Hoard.* I. *A Preliminary Account*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin, 1983), p. 20 and pl. 46.

[13]   The only reference which I have lighted on in an Irish text of an early medieval date which suggests knowledge of both the 'nature' and allegorical interpretation of a more obscure creature is the designation by an Irish exegete of Christ as the bird Charadrius, noted by Bernhard Bischoff in his 'Catalogue of the Latin Exegetical Literature, both Hiberno-Latin and that showing Irish Influence, up to the Beginning of the Ninth Century'. See the English translation of this work by Fr Colm O'Grady in *Biblical Studies: The Medieval Irish Contribution*, ed. Martin McNamara, Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association 1 (Dublin, 1976), 117. For Charadrius, see Curley, *Physiologus*, pp. 7-9. For other references to *Caladrius* (Charadrius), see Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus*, pp. 201-2. The account of the natures of the Lion in the *Leabhar Breac* are probably too late to be significant in this connexion. See, for example, *The Passions and the Homilies from Leabhar Breac*, ed. Robert Atkinson (Dublin, 1887), p. 385. The subject of the extent of Irish knowledge of *Physiologus*, 'natures' *and allegories*, awaits expert textual study. Historians of Insular art tend to assume that the full text was available by the eighth century. Much interesting work is being produced on monsters and the marvellous in Irish literary texts of diverse genres, for example, by Jean-Michel Picard, John Carey and Jacqueline Borsje. For the art-historian such studies can help to define the moral status of monsters (Borsje) or what Picard calls, 'the psychic universe', within which they operate. It is not obvious that the visual richness of this material is reflected in Irish sculpture. Only an art form that allowed a cycle of illustrations (comparable to an illustrated Apocalypse manuscript) could engage with its intricacies. See Jean-Michel Picard, 'The Marvellous in Irish and Continental Saints' Lives of the Merovingian Period', in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 113 (Oxford, 1981), 91-103; J. Borsje and D. Ó Cróinín, 'A Monster in the Indian Ocean', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 49 (1995), 1-11; and John Carey, 'The Sun's Night Journey: A Pharaonic Image in Medieval Ireland', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994), 14-34.

representation of the allegorical struggle between the two has been identified on the large corpus of Pictish sculpture. A fragment of a cross-slab at Forteviot, near Perth, shows a firmly designed, horned animal vigorously attacking a serpent. Like the stag in Bern 318 its shoulders are tensed and its head lowered to impale the serpent, but it has the pads of a predator, not the hoofs of a stag, and the serpent is also the serpent-headed tail of another predator, whose elongated body forms a margin of the slab.[14] A quadruped biting a serpent entangled with its antler-like crest on a slab at Meigle, in Perthshire, has a similar ambiguity of species.[15] It is conceivable that the sculptor of these images had the *Physiologus* allegory at the back of his mind, but neither is adequate evidence for Pictish copying of an illustrated version of the theme. On the other hand, the surprising and evidently innovatory predominance of serpent decoration in late eighth-century Pictish sculpture, the Iona high crosses and the Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College 58 (A.1.6)), might well have been motivated by specific knowledge of the rich allegorical interpretations of the 'natures' of the serpent in *Physiologus*, where the sloughing of its skin is identified with the renewal and re-birth at baptism; also with the resurrection of Christ. The serpent's habit of protecting its head when attacked, was compared to the behaviour of the martyrs, who suffered in their bodies, but who held firm in their minds.[16]

Physiologus opens with an account of the lion, King of the Beasts, and of the Lion of Judah (Gen. XLIX.9). The most powerful artistic response to *Physiologus* in this period is on 16v of the Codex Aureus of St Emmeram, a manuscript of the Court School of Charles the Bald. The splendid image of the Lion on the *Incipit* page to the Gospel of St

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[14]   The stag attacking the serpent is on 17r of Bern 318. For the Forteviot fragment, see Leslie Alcock and Elizabeth A. Alcock, 'Reconnaissance Excavations on Early Historic Fortifications and other Royal Sites in Scotland 1974-84', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 122 (1992), 215-87, esp. 222-3 with illus. 4.

[15]   Allen, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 313B.

[16]   Curley, *Physiologus*, pp. 16-19. For serpent imagery in the Book of Kells and related sculpture, see Isabel Henderson, 'The Book of Kells and the Snake-Boss Motif on Pictish Cross-Slabs and the Iona Crosses', in *Ireland and Insular Art AD 500-1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin, 1987), pp. 56-65; Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells* (London, 1974), p. 208.

Matthew, though grander in presentation, is stylistically similar to the Bern illustration of the lion 'rex bestiarum'.[17] The verse in the circular frame, taken from the dedicatory poem to the king, refers to two of the 'natures' of the lion expounded in *Physiologus* its power over death and 'ever vigilance', both of which are allegories of Christ.[18]

> *Hic leo surgendo portas confregit Averni*
> *Qui numquam dormit nusquam dormitat in aevum.*

The heraldic lions flanking the image of the Virgin and Child at the centre of the reverse of the cross-head of St Martin's Cross on Iona evoke the lion supports of the great throne of Solomon (III Kings X. 18-20), son of David, ancestor of Christ, whose deeds are depicted on the cross-shaft.[19] The obverse of the cross is filled with serpent imagery, and an allegorical association of the Virgin with lions made by *Physiologus* could also have motivated the depiction of flanking lions. It is one of the Lion's 'natures' to conceal its tracks from hunters by brushing the ground with its tail, just as, says *Physiologus*, the Saviour concealed his Godhead through incarnation in the Virgin's womb.[20] The notion of God concealed in Mary is echoed in a hymn to the Virgin written on Iona in the early eighth century, a generation or so before the carving of the cross, which begins 'Cantemus in omni die' and contains the lines:

> *Maria mater miranda*
> *patrem suum edidit.*

The carved image of the Virgin and Child is supported by angels as well as by the lions, and the concluding stanza of the poem also brings the imagery of the cross to mind.

> *Christi nomen invocemus*
> *angelis sub testibus.*

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[17] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 14000. For the *Incipit* page to Matthew, see Florentine Mütherich and Joachim E. Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting* (New York, 1976), pl. 36.

[18] For the text of the poem, see *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Poetae Latini Aevi Karolini* III (Berlin, 1896), 252-4, at 253.

[19] Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll 4: Iona* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 204-5.

[20] Curley, *Physiologus*, pp. 3-4.

It is not difficult to imagine 'Cantemus in omni die' being sung around St Martin's Cross, with all its concordant imagery reinforcing the text.[21]

The cross at Kildalton, on the island of Islay, a product of the Iona school of carving, is dominated by Christological imagery.[22] The reverse displays the Virgin and Child, supported by angels, a pair of peacocks pecking at a bunch of grapes (their ever-lasting flesh being strengthened by the wine of the Eucharist), also serpents, and lions. Lion imagery covers the obverse of the cross-head. The lion on the left arm has male attributes and the unidentifiable shape carved above his head, and above the genderless lion on the right arm, could represent the stillborn, unformed, cubs waiting for life to be breathed into them by their father, after three days, an allegory of Christ's resurrection. The lions on the upper and lower arms of the cross crouch in the position of the ever-vigilant lion in the Bern *Physiologus*. The lower lion is entangled with serpents, and the upper lion looks towards four small lion-like quadrupeds.

The theme of the lion breathing life into his cubs has been identified on a handful of Pictish cross-slabs, most convincingly on the three-metre high slab at Shandwick, Easter Ross.[23] The front of the slab is decorated with a spiral-filled cross, below which is a large panel of high relief bosses made up of matted serpents. An angel is on guard on either side of the shaft. Below the angel at the left, a heavy-headed animal nuzzles a small creature lying at its feet. The relationship between the two creatures is certainly not hostile, and is indeed suggestive of the lion breathing life into its young. On the opposite side

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[21]   For a text, translation and commentary of *Cantemus in omni die* (attributed to a monk of Iona, Cú Chuimne who died in 747), see Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Márkus, *Iona*: *The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 177-85, with notes at 256-7. The text makes it clear that the hymn was for singing by a choir and not for private devotion. For a close textual analysis of the hymn, see David Howlett, 'Five Experiments in Textual Reconstruction and Analysis', *Peritia* 9 (1995), 1-50, esp. 19-30. On the carvings, and the hymn, as evidence for a Cult of the Virgin on Iona in the first half of the eighth century, see *Argyll IV: Iona*, pp. 47 and 267 (n. 90).

[22]   Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll 5: Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Oronsay* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 208.

[23]   *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 66, 66A and 66B.

of the shaft an angry lion, swishing its tail, appears to be swallowing a serpent. A combat between a lion and a serpent does not figure in *Physiologus*, but as we have seen the entrapment of a lion by serpents is carved on the Kildalton cross. It also features predominently in the decoration of the Book of Kells. The significance of this combat in the manuscript will be discussed below.

A case for the existence of a specifically Pictish Bestiary could be founded on the single panel on the reverse of the Shandwick cross-slab, for it contains eighteen assorted animal, bird and figural motifs — a virtual pattern book.[24] Unfortunately it is not possible to relate any of the motifs to *Physiologus* types. This is not to say that the array is necessarily devoid of a coherent meaning, even though to our eyes they appear unrelated.

Exotic lion imagery appears in Pictish sculpture as an element in David iconography, when David is shown contending with the lion which had taken a lamb from his flock, and also, uniquely in Insular art, in the occasional depiction of lion-hunts. Both of these themes appear on the surviving figurative panel of the composite box-shaped shrine known as the St Andrews Sarcophagus, now in the Cathedral Museum at St Andrews, Fife.[25] Elsewhere I have argued that the choice of a lion-hunt, instead of the much more usual deer-hunt, implies access to a high-status model for a high-status monument.[26] The Sarcophagus lion-hunt takes place at the edge of a thicket made up of the spreading branches of a tree set in the upper left-hand corner of the panel. Within its branches lurk lions, and other creatures. These are not the lions of *Physiologus* constrained, as it were, by their artificial, allegorical equivalences, but vivid, literal personifications of the evil, prowling lions that one sees inhabiting the Utrecht Psalter.[27]

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[24]   *Ibid*. fig. 69.

[25]   *Ibid*. fig. 365.

[26]   Isabel Henderson, 'The Insular and Continental Context of the St Andrews Sarcophagus' in *Scotland in Dark Age Europe*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (St Andrews, 1994), pp. 71-102.

[27]   Isabel Henderson, 'Pictish Art and the Book of Kells', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 79-105, at 102-3.

On the other hand, it is possible that the pairs of monkey-like beasts carved on one of the end panels of the Sarcophagus, and the monkey placed among the branches of the thicket, have allegorical significance outwith scriptural metaphor. *Physiologus* interpreted the nature of the monkey as evil incarnate because it had no 'good end', that is, no tail, and so could have no 'good beginning'.[28] One of the monkeys in the thicket rides backwards on a deer. In late medieval art an ape riding backwards is a variant of the rider-mounted-backwards theme, a venerable symbol of folly and evil-doing. The ape is often shown riding on an animal that itself is of ill-repute, such as a goat or fox, but the mount can also be an animal, like a deer, without negative associations.[29]   The monkey riding backwards reinforces the interpretation of the monkeys on the Sarcophagus as not just exotic fauna, but symbols of evil to be hunted down.

Carola Hicks has recently suggested that the finely sculpted high-relief animals on an architectural frieze at Meigle could be portrayals of the hyena and panther of *Physiologus*.[30] Certainly the relaxed, *couchant* pose of the right-hand predator contrasts with the alert, purposeful stance of the heavy, more lion-like beast to the left. Such a pair would conform with the distinction made in *Physiologus* between the fierce lion and the mild panther, who on awaking from his sleep, on the third day, like the Saviour, exhales the sweet odour of Salvation. Without inscriptions there can be no certainty about such identifications, but friezes above entrances are where one would expect

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[28]   Curley, *Physiologus*, p. 39.

[29]   Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil', *Viator* 4 (1973), 153-76, esp. 169-71, with figs. 9-11. The image of a monkey riding backwards may be represented on a fragment from Tarbat, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 71. The sculpture at Tarbat belongs to the Easter Ross school of carving which relates closely to the St Andrews Sarcophagus.   There is no hint of the monkey-riding-backwards theme in *Physiologus*. The examples illustrated by Mellinkoff date from the thirteenth century.   For monkey-like degenerate humans on an eighth-century Northumbrian cross, see below. The gestures of the monkey on the end panel of the Sarcophagus may relate to the images of lustful men also discussed below.

[30]   *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 350; Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art*, p. 149.

to find allegorical beasts. The faint traces of animal motifs remaining on the frieze above the western doorway at Monkwearmouth, and the fragments of fine animal friezes at Hexham, carved in high relief similar to the Meigle beasts, may have displayed this genre of imagery and could have influenced Pictish carvers.[31]

The figure between the beasts on the Meigle architectural frieze is more difficult to account for.[32] Naked to the waist he sits with his elongated legs, with fish-tail feet, in a neat interlace. His arms are bent at the elbows and raised in the pose of an orant. With palms facing outwards, he grasps firmly ambiguous coils surrounding his head. This figure has often been compared to the naked Christ at the top of Canon II, on 2v of the Book of Kells, shown head and shoulders, with arms bent at the elbows grasping the coiled tongues of the lion heads that terminate the upper corner-pieces of the frame. Another parallel in Kells is within the Lucan genealogy, on 201r, where an interlinear naked figure has identically interlaced legs ending in fish tails. The figure holds on to the letter 't' in the line 'qui fuit Iona'. This association of the hybrid with the prophet Jonah accounts for his form, for Jonah is frequently shown in Christian art as a naked man emerging half-length from a fishy monster. The baptismal exegesis pervading this abbreviated Jonah and his accompanying dove imagery has recently been elucidated by Jennifer O'Reilly.[33] Jonah's sojourn in the whale is associated in exegesis with the descent into the waters of baptism and the doves exemplify the baptised imbued with the Holy Spirit. The unweathered surface of the Meigle frieze suggests that it always had an indoor setting. That it might have decorated an entrance to a baptistry is

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[31]   For the Monkwearmouth frieze and the Hexham frieze fragments, see Rosemary Cramp, *County Durham and Northumberland*, Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 1 (London, 1984) I, 127 and 189-90, and II, pls. 117 and 184-5.

[32]   Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art*, p. 149, suggests that a siren is represented. Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London, 1974), pp. 185-6, identifies the figure as the horned Celtic deity Cernunnos, with the flanking animals representing a bear and a wolf, or otter.

[33]   Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan Genealogy', in *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a Conference at Trinity College Dublin, 6-9 September 1992*, ed. Felicity O'Mahony (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 344-97, and pl. 39. See also pl. 2 for the Christ figure on 2v.

an attractive idea. The Meigle figure may conflate the Christological image of 2v with the baptismal figure of 201r.[34] The Meigle frieze could therefore show the masterful Christ who through the grace conferred by baptism, brings about Salvation further symbolised in the 'natures' of the lion and the panther.

If, then, some of the animal themes in Pictish sculpture could be explained in terms of the allegories of *Physiologus*, the subjects are restricted to the most common, the lion and the serpent, and possibly, the monkey and the panther. The connexions are obviously insufficient to support a claim for access to a full text of *Physiologus*, far less to an illustrated text. However, on the basis of the selection of images it may be conjectured that some of the more striking and basic allegories of *Physiologus* were known to the Picts through their use in oral homilies generally, from the time of the Iona mission onwards. The serpent and lion imagery on the crosses of the Iona school and in the Book of Kells suggest that knowledge of the *Physiologus* in the specifically Columban milieu was of the same kind. The use of such imagery on an architectural frieze may be due to Pictish contacts with Northumbria directly concerned with church building. It is worth noting, however, that two ways of thinking about, and depicting animals, that of *Physiologus* and that of the Utrecht Psalter, were understood and employed in Pictish culture. No direct connexions having chronological implications can be established, but this awareness of aspects of the 'thought world' and conventions of Early Christian art in general, locates Pictish sculpture within the culture of early medieval art in Europe. On the more specific question as to whether a full text of *Physiologus* complete with allegories was available in Britain or Ireland, the evidence from art is positive, but inconclusive.

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[34] Such a relationship to the imagery of the Book of Kells is compatible with the many other similarities between the Book and the sculpture produced at Meigle. See Henderson, 'Pictish Art and the Book of Kells'. A figure mastering serpents may have topped the slab in the grounds of Elgin Cathedral, Moray. See Henderson, 'The Insular and Continental Context', pp. 81-3, with figs. 5.6 and 5.7, with references to comparable imagery in Anglo-Saxon sculpture and Irish metalwork.

For the theme of the monstrous, rather than the merely exotic, *Physiologus* cannot be the source of Pictish portrayals of unnatural creatures, no matter how much latitude is allowed for artistic licence. The only aspect of creatures in *Physiologus* that could be described as monstrous is the highly unnatural methods of conception and parturition ascribed to some of the creatures, none of which, mercifully, are even hinted at in Pictish sculpture.

INCISED PICTISH ANIMAL DESIGNS

Recent study of Pictish art has been fragmented: archaeologists and anthropologists concern themselves with the symbol stones; art-historians, seeking the support of comparanda in Insular art, concentrate on the relief sculpture, even to the extent of ignoring the symbols displayed on it. This division of interest masks the complexity of the artistic and cultural phenomena presented by the continuity of the Pictish monumental tradition. Basically, of course, the symbols remained 'relevant'. It seems arbitrary to consider attitudes to non-naturalistic animal art as somehow sealed off from the earlier animal designs. In the attempt to understand the monstrous, it may be useful first to look briefly at the natural.

The incised Pictish animal designs are widely acknowledged as possessing extraordinary power. For example, Francis Klingender, familiar with the animal art of many cultures, described them as 'the most spirited realistic animal drawings of their time outside the Byzantine sphere of influence'.[35] Françoise Henry, comparing the Pictish designs with prehistoric cave art, maintained that the economy of means used to evoke the animals could only have come from a hunter's capacity to identify himself with the animals he pursued.[36] Detailed accuracy of observation, all the salmon's fins in place, all the

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[35] Francis Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages* (London, 1971), p. 121. Klingender died in 1955; the book was edited for publication with some additional bibliography by Evelyn Antal and John Harthan.

[36] Cecil L. Curle and Françoise Henry, 'Early Christian Art in Scotland', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6th ser. 24 (1943), 257-72. The passage on pp. 261-2 bears the unmistakable tone of Françoise Henry's prose style.

tines of the red deer, declares the art of the hunter. But the character of movement of the whole beast, the smooth onwards lope of the wolf, the static heavy tread of the bull, is equally well evoked. In this art, observation has long since been matured into style. The Pictish animal designs do not actually resemble the animals of prehistoric cave painting. They are not impressionistic. Each beast, bird and fish is depicted alone, with a firm outline, in strict profile, essentially formalised. Their masterly naturalism is reinforced by stylization, Françoise Henry's 'economy of means'.

The stylization offers a clue as to the immediate prototypes of the designs. The curves, lobes, and scrolls, the compact profile pose, the exact depiction of variegated musculature are all indications of an origin in metalwork. The craft tradition ultimately lying behind these designs is readily recognized in the techniques and forms of the early Celtic metalwork produced at the turn of the Christian era in the Pictish area. The characteristic Pictish body markings are not joint scrolls, as is so often said. Rather they express the hollow areas created by muscle volume. In the art of repoussé or cast three-dimensional metalwork plaques in shallow relief these areas are defined by ridges and deep recessions which would allow for the swell of the belly and the roundness of the shoulder and haunch. The lobed scrolls on the bodies of Pictish beasts and birds, are drawn versions of these ridges and recessions.[37]

Not all the Pictish animals are full-length. Some are represented only by profile heads and necks. These animal busts may belong with the artefact symbols such as the mirror and the comb, recognizable in archaeological contexts. The beast heads look like finials for poles, or

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[37]   For the classic statement on the range of possible relationships between Pictish animal designs and La Tène art, see Charles Thomas, 'The Animal Art of the Scottish Iron Age and its Origins', *The Archaeological Journal* 118 (1961), 14-64. In my Rhind Lectures for 1976-7 I pointed to the extent to which features of the internal decoration of the abstract Pictish symbols, juxtapositions of curves, hatchings and other features, supported his view of the fossilization of the early style in two-dimensions.

could even be helmet-like masks. Such gear is part of the impedimenta of the kind of society that could have produced the animal designs.[38]

In addition, there is what is known as 'the Pictish beast', one of the commonest symbols in both incised and relief Pictish monumental art. The creature, drawn in fluent profile, has been interpreted variously as an extract from the ornamental repertoire of eighth-century Insular art, as a stylized stag, or as the portrayal of a native dolphin. I think that it should be accepted for what manifestly it is, an imaginative composite made up of parts of animals, including horned and marine creatures, but essentially a pure hybrid with no core species, a concept of animalness that was beyond nature and which existed side by side with depictions of animals in the natural world. That this hybrid belongs with the animal designs is apparent from the use of the same body-marking convention.[39] It would be strange if this fixed and enduring symbol had no bearing on later portrayals of non-naturalistic animals and I will return to this issue later. From the art of the incised animals, therefore, we learn that in a context clearly unaffected by literary texts (including the Bible, with its abundant animal imagery), the single naturalistic animal motif was expressive of some aspect of Pictish culture, and the concept of a hybrid animal co-existed within that expression.

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[38] Thomas, 'Animal Art', *passim*. For striking images of small (17 cm) pole-tops, in the form of the necks and heads of mules, see Boris Piotrovsky, Liudmila Galanina and Nonna Grach, *Scythian Art* (Oxford, 1987), pl. 60. In his paper Thomas raises the possibility of the influence on Pictish artists of the animal iconography of Roman 'official' art between the Walls (pp. 38-9). The role of Roman art is developed in Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art*, pp. 50-3. To the present writer the consistent, evidently long established, style of the Pictish naturalistic animal designs overrides any necessity for it to depend, in any fundamental way, on provincial Roman naturalistic animal art.

[39] This shared convention supports the view that the incised animal designs are themselves symbols. There can be no doubt that whether or not the animals belong to the same symbolic system as the abstract symbols, they have some symbolic meaning. See Thomas, 'Animal Art', p. 39.

MONSTROUS MEN AND WORTHY MONSTERS

In Pictish sculpture there are no representations of the anatomically bizarre men listed in the well-known passage in Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei* XVI.8, and vividly portrayed in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries.[40] Recent finds, however, suggest that a well defined image of an aberrant man was in fact a surprisingly persistent feature of the Pictish artistic repertoire.

In 1978 an irregular slab incised with the figure of a man, just over a metre high, was found in a field at Barflat, near Rhynie, Aberdeenshire (pl. II), an area with no surviving relief sculpture but rich in symbol stones.[41] The man is shown in profile and below the neck has anatomically accurate body proportions. His hands grasp a weapon firmly. The wrist of his right hand is bent deftly backwards to take the weight. His head, however, is disproportionately large, the 'hair' long, the brow jutting, the eye frontal, and the nose a sharp, prominent beak. The lips are bared to reveal pointed teeth — a confirmation of 'ogre' status. The figure which has a slightly barrel-shaped chest, wears a knee-length tunic neatly belted at the waist. His weapon is a very accurate representation of what is known from Anglo-Saxon archaeological contexts as an axe-hammer. A weapon of this kind, with the same impractically long thin shaft, was part of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial deposit. That example has been interpreted as possibly a ceremonial object.[42]

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[40]   J.B. Friedman, 'The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art', in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, Studies in Medieval Culture 20 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1986), 319-41.

[41]   I.A.G. Shepherd and A.N. Shepherd, 'An Incised Pictish Figure and a New Symbol Stone from Barflat, Rhynie, Gordon District', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 109 (1977-8), 211-22; George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells* (London, 1987), pp. 50-1, with pl. 58.

[42]   David M. Wilson, 'Craft and Industry', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. David M. Wilson (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 253-81, at 257. Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London, 1986), pp. 41-2, fig.23.

Even more sinisterly monstrous is the bearded beast-headed man incised on a slab found in 1992 in the graveyard at Mail in Shetland.[43] The figure is less confidently drawn than the Rhynie man but the costume is the same, as is the profile pose and the well articulated hands. The Mail man carries two weapons, an axe-hammer and a club with a knob at the holding end. Three other figures of this type are recorded in the archive of Pictish sculpture, one at Balblair, near Inverness, where a bird-headed man wearing a tunic carries a club, held downwards as in the case of the Mail man, another at Strathmartine in Angus, where a beast-headed figure carried what was probably an adze over his shoulder. The third stone incised with a weapon-carrying profile figure is at Rhynie itself but it is too worn to be certain of other details. All these figures are carved on irregularly shaped stones and are apparently without accompanying imagery or designs.[44]

On the relief-carved, quarried and shaped cross-slabs the same axe-bearing beast-headed, or ogre-headed, men struggle in pairs. On a slab at Glamis in Angus two short-tuniced axe-carriers, with grotesque features, are locked in combat.[45] On a later monument, recently identified as a long side-panel of a box-shrine, at Murthly, Perthshire, two men, one with a bird's head and the other with a beast's head, fight with swords and bossed shields. The bird-headed man wears the characteristic short tunic of the incised figures. A single figure of the

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[43] Val Turner, 'The Mail Stone: an Incised Pictish Figure from Mail, Cunningsburgh, Shetland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 124 (1994), 315-25.

[44] Shepherd and Shepherd, 'Pictish Figure', fig. 3, show drawings of the figures at Balblair and Strathmartine. The Strathmartine figure is known only from a drawing made available to John Stuart for reproduction in *The Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1856) I, 44 and pl. 138. The figure is shown shouldering a cross with two transverse bars. It seems very likely that the amateur artist misrepresented an adze or axe as such a cross. On axes represented in Pictish sculpture of all periods, see Lloyd Laing and Jennifer Laing, 'Archaeological Notes on some Scottish Early Christian Sculptures', *Proceedings Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 114 (1984), 277-87 at 282, with illus. 2 b, c, e and h.

[45] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 234A.

distinctive type, with tunic, two weapons, and grotesque features, is incised on a slab with a relief-carved cross at Golspie, Sutherland.[46]

As aggressive males of their species shown alone, in incision on irregularly shaped stones, the single figures of men stand in the same relation to the symbols as do the incised animal designs. Although their heads vary, costumes and weaponry show a significant degree of standardization. So we may have a man symbol, a hybrid animal/man symbol, which played a part in the belief-system that controlled the animal designs. The hybrid, or ogre-like, man continued into the relief cross-slab repertoire, as did the hybrid animal design, 'the Pictish beast'.

This stereotype figure, with its monstrous head, cannot easily be related to the pleasing, markedly naturalistic, huntsmen and warriors depicted elsewhere in Pictish relief sculpture. On the other hand, the anatomically correct body proportions of the grotesque figures do correspond to the naturalism of the incised animals, and the 'man symbol', in this respect may help to account for the naturalism of the Pictish rider, just as the archaic animal designs might account for the naturalism of his mount.[47]

'Beast-heads', and 'dog-heads' in particular, feature in the group of monster texts recently analyzed by Andy Orchard but even the dog-headed St Christopher, and the baptized Christianus who feature in the apocryphal Acts of the apostle Andrew, are conceived more as wild men, not as neatly-clothed weapon-bearers.[48] Orchard points to an interest in dog-heads in general in Celtic countries, and certainly amorphous dog-heads are depicted on sculpture dating to the pre-1000

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[46]   *Ibid*. figs. 321 (Murthly) and 48B (Golspie), respectively.

[47]   It is possible that the naturalistic figure of a naked man over a metre high, incised on a prehistoric standing-stone at Collessie, Fife, is a lone survivor of another man 'symbol'. He has a prominent nose and an unusual hairstyle. His head and legs are in profile, but unlike the clothed figure, his shoulders are shown frontally and he is armed with a shield and javelin. A horseshoe symbol is carved next to the figure. See Marianna Lines in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1989* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 17 and fig. 3.

[48]   Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 12-18.

period in the west of Scotland, in the Isle of Man and on Viking-Age sculpture in England.[49] On these monuments the dog-heads are usually placed on either side of a cross-shaft, or as attendants at a more explicit Crucifixion. They may therefore be literal illustrations of Psalm XXI, the Passion psalm, at verse 17: 'For many dogs have encompassed me: the council of the malignant hath besieged me. They have dug [into] my hands and feet'.[50] Pictish hybrid men never appear on either side of the cross, so this interpretation can be ruled out. Orchard quotes from a poem in the twelfth-century collection of early Welsh verse, the Black Book of Carmarthen, in which Arthur fights with dog-heads on the 'mountain of Edinburgh'.[51] He makes the general point that dog-heads were a suitable quarry for heroic kings because of their 'fierce and martial nature'. The Pictish hybrid or ogre-like men are fierce and martial and their struggles with each other may be heroic, but they are never depicted fighting with normal men, or even with fierce beasts. I do not think that we can attribute the non-naturalistic men on Pictish monuments to knowledge of Latin wonder texts or homilies on Christian dog-heads, or to the literal illustration of psalm text. The Pictish dog-, bird-, and ogre-heads, if we can understand them at all, seem more likely to be part of the native culture, the Picts' own particular 'monstrous race', part of a ritual glimpsed on the cross-slab at Rossie Priory, near Perth, where the bird-head is shown in the pose of a Roman *victimarius* sacrificing other creatures, a visual pattern later to be normalized as a more conventional confrontation by masked performers, as depicted on the Murthly shrine panel.[52]

How the Picts came in due course to regard these ogres and beast-heads may perhaps be perceived in the well-known conventional imagery for the temptation of St Antony. Long ago, Kingsley Porter identified the motif of a frontal figure oppressed by flanking profile

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[49] Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 15.

[50] See Richard N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980), p. 152.

[51] Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 16 (the translation is by Patrick Sims-Williams).

[52] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 321 and 322A. The ogre figure on the cross-slab from Golspie, Sutherland, fig. 48B, is also shown about to sacrifice a beast.

'beast-heads', on Irish High Crosses, as an abbreviated image of St Antony's encounters with demons in the form of animals, as reported in Athanasius's *Life* of the saint, known in the west in the Latin version of Evagrius.[53] The motif appears, for example, on the Market Cross at Kells, Co. Meath, and on the reassembled cross at Moone, Co. Kildare.[54] On the Moone cross it is placed next to a panel showing the hermit saints, Paul and Antony breaking bread in the desert, thereby, establishing a connexion between the motif and Antony. The theme is depicted in identical terms on the handsome but worn Pictish cross-slab at Kettins, Angus.[55] The oppressive hybrid tempters on a cross-slab at Papil in Shetland, are slightly different.[56] The front of the slab has a monastic feel. It shows four cowled ecclesiastics. On the reverse, two 'bird-heads', with short tunics from which emerge impressive bird legs, convey their insidious messages into the ears of a human head, apparently all that survives of a full-length body lost through surface flaking. Each raises an arm to its beak in a gesture of speech. Both shoulder a long-handled axe. Clearly a new role had been found for the old beast/ogre-head images. These are now cast as malevolent forces to be resisted by the Christian. Whether the hybrid figures were always regarded as evil or have been, typically, down-graded in a Christian context, can only be conjectured. The supernatural force of the figure-type is, however, confirmed. Irish representations of the tempters do not carry weapons and it is reasonable to suppose that the form taken by the Irish beast-headed tempter had its origin in Pictland rather than in the remote Egyptian parallels for beast-heads cited by Kingsley Porter.[57]

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[53] Arthur Kingsley Porter, 'An Egyptian Legend in Ireland', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 5 (1930), 25-38. For knowledge on Iona of Evagrius's *Life of St Antony*, see Sharpe, *Adomnán*, pp. 372 and 376.

[54] Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 3 vols. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Monographien 17 (Bonn, 1992) III, figs. 949 and 950.

[55] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 236.

[56] *Ibid*. fig. 6.

[57] Helen Roe rejected Kingsley Porter's Egyptian parallels, and with them his identification of the motif of the man beset by flanking animal-headed men as representing the Temptation of St Antony. She attributed the motif to Irish and Germanic traditional and literary sources, ascribing to it a generalised meaning of temptation by demons. The new Pictish material makes available a more tangible Insular native origin for the form taken by the tempters. See Helen M.

The most convincing case for Pictish access to Latin texts can be made not in respect of Athanasius's somewhat abstruse *Life of St Antony*, but in respect of the much simpler *Life of St Paul* by Jerome.[58] This is the *Life* that contains the story of the raven bringing, not the usual half-loaf, but a whole loaf, when Antony visits Paul. The fullest visualisation of this episode in Insular art is within the pediment-like top to the Pictish cross-slab at Nigg, Easter Ross.[59] Under a canopy formed of Paul's date palms (also described by Jerome) the raven deposits the loaf on a stemmed vessel, thus emphasising the Eucharistic symbolism of the heavenly bread. A lion crouches on either side of the vessel, presumably the lions that were to help Antony bury Paul. The Picts therefore also knew, from the *Life*, the circumstances of Antony's second journey to Paul, which ended with the burial.

The account of Antony's second journey is a scaled-down version of a traveller's tale. As Antony makes his way through the desert he encounters various legendary monsters, but these are not demons, rather creatures worthy of emulation. A well-disposed, although tongue-tied, hippocentaur gives the saint directions. A more articulate satyr asks Antony to intercede on his behalf to Christ 'whom', he says, 'we know [*cognovimus*] came for the world's salvation [*in salutem mundi*]'. This vocabulary from Jerome's *Life*, is used in the caption to the panel on the Ruthwell Cross showing Christ standing over the beasts [*bestiae et dracones cognoverunt in deserto salvatorem mundi*]. Immediately below that panel Paul and Antony are shown breaking bread. The miraculous narrative element — the helpful raven — is omitted by the Ruthwell sculptor in order to focus on the liturgical practice.[60]

Roe, 'An Interpretation of Certain Symbolic Sculptures of Early Christian Ireland', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 75 (1945), 1-23.

[58] Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus...Series (Latina) Prima*, 23 (Paris, 1845), cols. 17-28.

[59] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 72.

[60] Elisabeth Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 110. For the two panels, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony: Visual and Literary Uses of a Eucharistic Motif', in *Keimelia*: *Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney*, ed. Patrick Wallace and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Galway, 1988), pp. 1-58, at 3-6, with pls. I(a) and I(b)). On the use of

There are some visual clues that Pictish artists also wanted to make a reference to the beasts in the desert who recognized Christ. An imported model for a centaur was apparently available to them. Its exact nature is difficult to determine since the body and legs of Pictish carvings of centaurs are designed in the style and pose of the native Pictish profile horse. However, some of the Pictish centaurs show the head and torso turned frontally. This is a new pose in Pictish art and presumably comes from the foreign model, along with the leafy branch carried by the centaur. Pictish centaurs regularly carry axes, raising them aloft, with their arms held in an 'orant' position. The branch, then, is awkwardly tucked under one arm. The axes are of a type associated with the hybrid figures, and we can tell that the artists had these figures in front of them when they were designing their centaurs, for a version of a hybrid figure is used for the human part of one of the centaurs on the roadside cross-slab at Aberlemno, Angus.[61] Here the centaur's torso, head and arms are in profile. He carries the distinctive axe in the distinctive fashion over his shoulder. He wears a curiously divided short tunic and apparently (the figure is weathered) a close-fitting headdress. We can see, then, the process of transfer from 'beast-head' carrying an axe to the axe-bearing centaur. In the context of St Antony such a centaur is not malevolent, indeed the 'orant' position may neatly convey the centaur's attitude to Christ and hope for salvation. At Aberlemno the panel adjacent to the centaurs shows the salvation image of David, the Shepherd, fighting the lion. The finest Pictish centaur, spread across the principal cross-slab at Meigle is adjacent to another Old Testament salvation image — Daniel, with his hands stretched out stopping the mouths of the lions.[62] All this is very different from the

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Jerome's *Vita S. Pauli* by the Ruthwell sculptor, see K.E. Haney, 'The Christ and the Beasts Panel on the Ruthwell Cross', *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985), 215-31.

[61] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 228B; Anna Ritchie *Picts* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 27. A second much smaller centaur can be discerned between the forelegs of the branch-carrying centaur. The duplication of creatures and their profile pose is suggestive of a narrative illustration.

[62] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 311B and 311C. The more accomplished depiction of the branch, in comparison with that of the Aberlemno centaur, is noteworthy, although the problem of holding a branch while the hands are occupied with axes remains. For a suggestion that the

attitude to centaurs in *Physiologus*, such beasts, he says, 'represent the figures of devils'.[63]

Peter Harbison, after completing his comprehensive study of the iconography of the Irish High Crosses concluded that it was necessary to suppose that an unknown cycle illustrating events in the lives of Paul and Antony was available to Irish sculptors.[64] The frequency and richness of the representations of these saints in Pictish sculpture might support such a view. Nonetheless one wonders if anything other than the texts themselves were necessary, particularly given the visual diversity of the imagery on Northumbrian, Pictish and Irish sculpture, and in the light of the evidence for creative improvisation and adaptation by the Picts of existing native and imported imagery.

A seemingly enigmatic scene on a cross-slab at St Vigean's, Angus, presents another telling instance of Pictish interest in the exchanges between Antony and the desert beasts. The satyr confesses to Antony his faith in Christ, despite his acknowledgement that 'it and its kind' are worshipped by the heathen. Antony is moved to hear the beasts 'speak of Christ' when so many men remain idolators.[65] This sensitive response may explain the scene carved below the hermit saints receiving and breaking bread on the St Vigean's slab.[66] Here, a naked ill-shapen figure raises a long-bladed knife to slit the throat of a horned beast (designed in a typically Pictish fashion) standing on a block. The figure's tongue is extended, ready to savour the blood. The pair of images, the saints' celebrating, and the devil's bloody sacrifice reflect the subject matter of I Corinthians X, where the Apostle Paul contrasts the communion of the body and blood of Christ, with the lapses into idolatory of the children of Israel, where they eat and drink the sacrifices of the altar: 'You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the

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model for the Pictish centaurs was an illuminated medical manuscript owned by a Pictish monastery, see R.B.K. Stevenson, 'Further Thoughts on some Well Known Problems', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, ed. R. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 16-26, at 24.

[63] Curley, *Physiologus*, p. 24.
[64] Harbison, *Irish High Crosses* I, 302-9.
[65] 'Bestiae Christum loquuntur': Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli*, col. 24.
[66] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 278.

chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils'.[67] The juxtaposed images of the Pictish slab make this point succinctly.

The stories associated with Paul and Antony embrace animals of all sorts and conditions: the raven bringing nourishment; the helpful lions; the devils in animal disguise; the half men, half animals, themselves objects of heathen worship, but aspiring to the salvation of Christ. There can be no doubt that the main interest of Paul and Antony for the Picts was their monastic status and their enactment of the saving Eucharistic ritual, but the *dramatis bestiae* could have had special appeal for a society that observed, valued and respected animals and who encapsulated, for symbolic purposes, their force in a hybrid animal, 'the Pictish beast', and hybrid men, the beast-head/ogre figure. That Pictish artists were able to use native animal designs to convey Christian hagiographical subject matter shows a creditable economy of means but it may also tell us something about the Picts relationship with the animal world, a relationship perhaps too fundamental, too complex to accommodate comfortably the more detached didactic formulations of *Physiologus*.

THE PICTS AND FABULOUS CREATURES FROM CLASSICAL ART

The centaur was not the only fabulous creature of classical origin familiar to Pictish artists. They also had models for the hippocamp (sea-horse), *ketos*, which swallowed Jonah, and the griffin. This contact with objects from the Roman world could have occurred directly at the time of the Roman occupation of southern Scotland, or later as a consequence of the general opening up of Mediterranean culture by the process of Christianization. The elegant pair of confronted hippocamps carved on the obverse of an early cross-slab in the churchyard at Aberlemno are treated as a discrete appliqué-like motif and were presumably based on a model that took that form.[68] Nevertheless they have the heads and forelegs of the naturalistic profile Pictish horse. A

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[67] I Cor. X.20-1.
[68] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 227A.

suitably ambiguous mane/fin springs from their shoulders. The fish-bodies are elongated to allow them to interlock. The leaf-like pelvic fins are enclosed within the crescentic, rayed, tail fins.

In accuracy of detail these hippocamps compare to the great fish that is seen swallowing Jonah on the obverse of the cross-slab at Dunfallandy, Perthshire. In it we have a direct copy of an Early Christian *ketos*, a dog-headed, fish-tailed creature with a dorsal fin, and forelegs that end in heavily taloned paws.[69] Both hippocamp and *ketos* were reduced in later Pictish sculpture to a simple S-shaped serpent with a dog-head and leg-less coiled body. On the later slabs these non-naturalistic 'dragons' were regularly placed one on either side of the cross-shaft, where they performed a simple protective role, or perhaps more ambitiously were intended to recall the beginning of the Old Latin version of the *Canticle of Habakkuk*, 'you will be revealed in the midst of two animals', interpreted by Jerome as a reference to Christ. These S-dragons and their ancestor, the hippocamp, certainly seem to have been regarded as benign. The pairs are placed not only flanking the cross, but on the top surface of a recumbent gravemaker or in a central position on a shrine panel.[70]

When analyzing the wingless griffins that decorate the ninth-century Irish Derrynaflan Chalice, Michael Ryan was able to establish their Eucharistic significance through their ultimate relationship to the motif of griffins flanking a chalice.[71] There is no hint of such a role for the griffins in Pictish sculpture. Pictish griffins are consistently destructive, closer to the role of the griffin in classical funerary art where they symbolize the power of death, and closer still to the Byzantine griffin combats with domestic animals, themselves heirs

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[69]　*Ibid*. fig. 305A.

[70]　For S-dragons on either side of the cross, see *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 29; for paired hippocamps on a grave marker, fig. 318A, and on a shrine panel, fig. 321. For paired S-dragons on the corner-post of a stone shrine, see A. Small, C. Thomas and D.M. Wilson, *St Ninian's Isle and its Treasure*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1973) II, pl. IVa. For Jerome's commentary on 'in medio duorum animalium', see Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony', pp. 27-9.

[71]　Michael Ryan, 'The Menagerie of the Derrynaflan Chalice', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, ed. Spearman and Higgitt, pp. 151-61, at 156-8.

to a remote tradition. A model was clearly available for the finely carved, virtually three-dimensional, image of a griffin pinning down a foal and biting into its neck with its beak, carved on the figurative panel of the St Andrews Sarcophagus. This sculpture poignantly illustrates Isidore's statement that griffins hated horses, though the origin of this belief might have been just such a pictorial image.

A vigorous portrayal of a griffin (now lacking its head) is carved on the reverse of a broken cross-slab at Meigle. It has the fierce fore-claws of an eagle and the hindquarters of a predator. A pig dangles in front of it, presumably from its beak. This image appears in a similar form in the twelfth-century Cambridge Bestiary. The bestiary text does not refer to the pig, here held in the griffin's fore-claws. It is hard to know how these two images are linked historically.[72]

All Pictish representations of griffins have heads on the end of their tails, a feature unparalleled, I believe, elsewhere in Insular art. This further intensification of menace in an already hybrid creature is a puzzle, to which I will return later.

Pictish artists will have come upon classical fabulous animals through access to portable artefacts in precious materials, some acquired

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[72]   On the griffin as enemy of the horse, and as part lion, having the strength to carry a domesticated animal, see Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, University of North Carolina Studies in Romance Languages 33 (rev. ed., Chapel Hill, NC, 1962), 122-3. All the Pictish griffins have their prey in their beaks, not in their fore-claws. For Pictish representations of griffins, see *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 365 (St Andrews Sarcophagus); figs. 313B, 318C and 343B (Meigle); and fig. 258A (Woodway). For the Cambridge Bestiary griffin, see M.R. James, *The Bestiary, being a Reproduction in full of the MS Ii.4.26 in the University Library, Cambridge* (Oxford, 1928), 6v. On the occurrence of the motif of a griffin attacking a bull, outside the Insular context, see Tamara Talbot Rice, 'Animal Combat Scenes in Byzantine Art', in *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice* ed. Giles Robertson and George Henderson (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 17-23 at 18, with figs. 7c and 7d. A griffin on the cross-slab at Kettins may hold a man in its beak. See the drawing in Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *South-East Perth, an Archaeological Landscape* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 97.

no doubt in gift exchange, but the animals were soon assimilated into native art in form and style. They were treated not as mere decorative exotics, but used accurately either in their own Christian context (*ketos*), or to promote Christian precepts in terms of native views of hybridization (the worthy centaurs) or to express native and Christian attitudes to guardianship (hippocamps) and the power of death (griffins).

PICTISH ANIMAL STYLES IN RELIEF

Not all the Pictish incised animal designs were carried over into the relief art. The Pictish hybrid 'beast' (like its human counterpart), appears frequently but the beast head, the serpent, the eagle and the salmon are carved on only a few relief monuments. Other animals, of course, appear in the many hunting-scenes, the horse, deer, hawk and boar. The Pictish capacity for naturalistic portrayal was retained undiminished. For example, the stag in a panel of the Dunfallandy cross-slab differs from the incised stag on a symbol stone at Grantown, Moray, only in being carved in shallow relief, and in its pose, looking back over its shoulder, a compact composition that still allows the antlered head to be shown in profile.[73] In this instance the naturalism of the animal is not reinforced by the use of volume-defining scrolls, but some of the animals carved in relief retain that convention, so that there was no break in artistic tradition when relief superseded incision. Nevertheless, new mannerisms are detectable. At first sight they appear insignificant, but in fact they tie together many of the depictions of non-naturalistic animals — to the extent that they create a distinctive new animal style. This, somewhat paradoxically, I shall call the relief linear style. One of these new traits is to employ the 'ball and claw' foot, a modification of the naturalistic pad with claws extended into a round shape with a single claw attached. Another is the use of a single, lightly incised, centrally placed line following the flow of the animal's neck and body. A third is the rendering in relief of a double contour line so as to create a sunken area, the main body of the animal being depicted, as it were, in reserve. Not all Pictish animals carved in relief have these characteristics but they occur often enough to give a glimpse

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[73] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 305A and 131.

of the influence of new models. The 'ball and claw' convention appears in Insular metalwork and manuscript decoration. By the time of the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library Cotton Nero D.iv), it is already common. In Pictish art a 'dew claw' at the hinder part of the foot is sometimes added, a feature carried over from the incised animal designs, and present in the most accurate version of 'the Pictish beast'. The incised centrally placed body-marking is not a usual design feature of Insular zoomorphic art, and like the earlier scroll body-marking should be an indicator of dimensional metalworking.[74] Animals with contour lines are very common in Insular art, particularly in manuscripts. This translation of a linear, artistic convention into one-plane relief can be paralleled in many design elements of Pictish art, but on occasion the degree of recession between the raised border is suggestive of the use of a model where settings in other materials were employed.

All these new features in Pictish animal design reinforce the view, argued earlier, that metalwork was a significant element in defining the forms found in Pictish sculpture. From design traits in the relief animal style we can see that this later (equally hypothetical) Pictish metalwork evolved in parallel with the subtly changing conventions used elsewhere in Insular zoomorphic ornament.[75] The adoption of the entire decorative repertoire used in Insular productions for the decoration of other aspects

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[74] There are no comparable designs described or illustrated in the comprehensive review by Niamh Whitfield, 'Formal Conventions in the Depiction of Animals on Celtic Metalwork', in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast, 1994), pp. 89-104. In correspondence, Dr Whitfield referred me to a bronze-gilt mounting from Phoenix Park, Dublin, now in the British Museum, showing a pair of confronted animals with 'ball and claw' feet and a central neck and body line joined in a whorl. The mounting has been dated to the first half of the eighth century. See R.A. Hall, 'A Viking Grave in the Phoenix Park, Co Dublin', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 104 (1974), 39-43, at 40-2.

[75] The zoomorphic ornament used to decorate some of the silver objects in the St Ninian's Isle treasure can be convincingly related to all-over zoomorphic patterns used to fill panels in Pictish sculpture, but this is a different line of development from the discrete, potentially 'monstrous' animal motifs. The two repertoires will to some degree, of course, have influenced each other.

of the cross-slab, such as the motif of the cross itself, made this inevitable. Three monuments, Gask, Rossie Priory, and St Vigean's, will now be considered in detail. The unique Pictish contribution to the genre of monstrous beasts can only be appreciated by looking at their extraordinary range and variety in the context of a whole monument.

Gask, Perthshire (pl. IV)

The cross-slab from Gask in Perthshire is erected in the grounds of Moncrieffe House, near Perth.[76] The top is broken off. What remains is approximately two metres high and one metre wide. Both sides of the slab have full-length ringed crosses carved in relief, that project beyond the plane of the relief sculpture in the background. The hollows of the arms are pierced through so that the monument closely approximates to a free-standing cross. On one side the remains of a boss at the crossing of the arms show that it was the obverse of the slab. The sculpture on this side of the monument is virtually unreadable, although some idea of its nature can be appreciated from the drawing published by John Stuart.[77] The background of the cross on the reverse has carved on it two horsemen and a hound, two of the Pictish symbols, and eight animals. The animals are arranged singly in rows, one below the other on either side of the shaft. The obverse of the slab had a further eight animals similarly disposed. Romilly Allen rightly wrote of this ensemble, 'the collection of animals represented is one of the most remarkable on any early Christian monument in Great Britain'. Only the better preserved animals on the reverse will be described here.

A predator swallowing a serpent is carved immediately under the right-facing quadrant of the cross-head. The same motif appears in this position in the Shandwick cross. Below, one beneath the other, are two boars in profile, with stylised dorsal bristles forming stiff wire-like points. The only differentiation of these two is that the near side hind leg of the upper boar moves forwards while that of the lower boar moves backwards. This minor elegant variation allows their tails to interlace differently with their hind legs. The same decoration variation

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[76]   *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 307 and 307A.
[77]   John Stuart, *Sculptured Stones*, pl. 104. Ross Trench-Jellicoe is currently working on the decipherment of the obverse of the slab.

of the position of the rear legs is observed in the two human-headed quadrupeds carved on the other side of the cross-shaft, opposite the boars. The front feet of the quadrupeds are trotters. The back feet are clawed pads, similar to the anomalous feet of the two boars. The elaborately coiled right lock of the upper creature's hair is balanced by the longer more elaborately coiled tail of the lower one.

The compiler of the probably contemporary Insular text known as the *Liber monstrorum* refers to the 'innumerable monsters'... 'said in books to have been on the borders of the Circean land, lions and bears, boars also and wolves, who, whilst the rest of their body kept the nature of wild beasts, had human faces'. From the vocabulary used in this account Orchard has shown that the writer has had Virgil's account in the *Aeneid* of Circe's spells in mind.[78] In spite of the human faces, the trotters and the boars, I think that at Gask we must exclude this source. Elsewhere in Pictish sculpture a human-headed beast pursues a naked man. This is usually said to be a representation of the human-headed beast known in bestiaries as the *manticora*, but no comparable image of a *manticora* belonging to the early period has survived.[79] Moving backwards in time a human-headed horse features on Celtic metalwork of the fifth-century B.C., and on Celtic coins at the turn of the Christian era.[80]

All that can be said is that the Picts were aware of the general notion of a human-headed beast, perhaps simply as a striking image of hybridization, a reversal of the more familiar beast-headed men. The

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[78]   Ch. IV of Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, is devoted to the analysis of the content and structure of the *Liber monstrorum*. The Latin text, a translation and a discussion of sources and analogues are, respectively, Appendices III a-c. The passage quoted is on p. 281. For the extensive use in the text of the *Aeneid*, including this echo of Bk VII, see his lists on pp. 318-20. For the date and origin of the compilation, see Michael Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982), 151-92.
[79]   On the ancient literary sources and later medieval portrayals of the *manticora*, see McCulloch, *Medieval Bestiaries*, pp. 142-3. Neither the *manticora*, nor any creature with similar habits, appears in texts of *Physiologus*.
[80]   *Celtic Art*, ed. Barry Raftery (Paris, 1990), pp. 23 and 78.

minor, but still surprising, reversal of trotters and clawed pads shows the degree to which hybridization permeates their animal art.

Below the pair of human-headed beasts are two less bizarre animal portrayals, a small ungulate, possibly a goat, but with a long tail lying along its back, and a heavily horned animal with its body and neck in profile, but its head turned *en face*. The final image in this sequence is a hoofed animal moving forward, in full profile, with its head duplicated on the end of its tail lying along its back.

This array of animal art with its skilful interplay of design and composition does not allow easy interpretation, but some observations can be made. The replication of the predator swallowing the serpent in the identical position in the Shandwick cross hints at some degree of standardization in the handling of this kind of imagery, or at the least a sharing of a compositional pattern. The riders on the slab, as is usual, move from right to left. All the animals on the slab move in this direction also, but there is no hint of confrontation between the riders and the animals, of pursuit or combat; the imagery appears to be quite separate. The incised Pictish animals regularly face right, but the Gask animals do share with the earlier designs scroll body-marking. The horned animal with its slightly tilted frontal face bears a marked resemblance to the design of Luke's calf symbol in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Lichfield Gospels (Lichfield Cathedral Library). The *en face* pose for the head is certainly non-native.[81]

Hybridization is present in at least five of the eight motifs. We have seen that the concept of the hybrid was represented in incision by 'the Pictish beast' and the beast-headed man. Without undue speculation the Gask animals can therefore be seen as a continuation of older attitudes to the animal world. The habit of hybridizing is widespread in Pictish sculpture and for want of any credible pictorial or textual parallel one may surmise that its occurrence in relief art is an extension of a native principle that to hybridize is to strengthen and expand the range of powerful animals and men: the much less fundamental *en face* pose is

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[81]   J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts 6th to the 9th Century*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 1 (London, 1978), ills. 30 and 81.

another matter, since analogies in contemporary art are readily available.

That some narrative element is present in the selection of the Gask animals is suggested by the representation of two of the motifs, two boars and two human-headed quadrupeds. This repeated pairing seems significant. Had these motifs been merely decorative we would expect that they would not have been arranged to fall together, or if they had been selected for allegorical import, repetition of images would have been unnecessary. A clue as to a meaning might be the low position given to the riders. If human riders are represented, as it were, on the earth, then possibly the other creatures are inhabitants of another world. Just as the cross belongs to a supernatural world, the strange animals might belong elsewhere, not in heaven and not on earth. That the margins of sacred objects were considered the appropriate location for images of force in early medieval art has been argued convincingly by Meyer Schapiro, but what is of particular interest in a monument like Gask is the nature of the images of force, which go beyond a hunter's prey.[82] Boars and fiercely horned animals have their place, but the hybrid represents a very special kind of force. This is a very different phenomenon from decorative fantasies or the essentially contrived nature of bestiary animals, and could account for what has been facilely described as 'the Pictish fascination with monsters'.[83]

Rossie Priory, Perthshire (pl. V)

The cross-slab, now inside the old church (refurbished as the Kinnaird funerary chapel) at Rossie Priory, is first recorded as standing in the adjacent churchyard. It is 1.7 metres high and 1.2 metres wide, and

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[82]   Meyer Schapiro, 'The Bowman and the Bird on the Ruthwell Cross and Other Works: The Interpretation of Secular Themes in Early Medieval Religious Art', *The Art Bulletin* 45 (1963), 351-5.
[83]   Compare the view of Orchard that 'the *Liber monstrorum*, far from being a casual compendium of the bizarre and outlandish, is in fact the rather subtle and sophisticated work of a learned author who drew on and cunningly manipulated a number of disparate texts to offer a cogent (if uncomforting) view of the monstrous in nature' (*Pride and Prodigies*, p. 87). I would argue that the Pictish portrayal of monsters had a similar, if possibly more instinctive, didactic undertow which was far removed from the merely curious.

displays sculpture of uniformly high quality and complexity.[84] Like the monument at Gask it has a cross on both faces. The cross on the obverse projects in higher relief than that on the reverse, and has a raised quadrilobate ring surrounding the cross-head. Like Gask, the reverse is carved with riders, here five in number, and two of the very common Pictish symbols also appear, 'the Pictish beast' and the crescent and v-rod.

The background of the cross on the obverse is filled with non-naturalistic animals. The motifs are all the same size and are discrete, but they are laid out with a fine sense of balance and rhythm that give cohesion to the decoration.

The *en face* horned bovine to the right of the shaft appears to be the same as the one on Gask, but as with the Gask boars, the style is moving away from naturalism. 'Ball and claw' feet have been substituted for the naturalistic hoofs and the tail is an exaggeratedly waving plume, instead of the markedly naturalistic fall of the tail of the Gask animal. Ears are omitted. The curiously segmented muzzle and the lidded eyes set upright in the head show the problem the Pictish artist experienced when drawing a frontal head.[85] The change observable in these two images is a change of style, a shedding of naturalism that is not a shift towards the monstrous, but a move towards the purely decorative.

The carving above the bovine, immediately under the right arm of the cross, shows a dog-headed animal swallowing a serpent. The subject-matter and the position repeat the arrangement on the Shandwick and Gask slabs. Here, however, there is a total change of style, for the devouring beast is a fully linear animal in the terms described above. The large mastiff-like head has a triangular ear with raised contour lines. It has 'ball and claw' feet. The body is marked with an incised centrally placed line, the vertical line on the neck

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[84]   *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 322A and 322B.

[85]   The 'upright' eyes may come from the model. Compare the same feature in the Calf of Luke on 137v of the Lindisfarne Gospels, Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, illus. 30, and the related design on St Cuthbert's Coffin, *ibid*., fig. 5. See similarly set eyes on the head of a quadruped on the cross slab from Woodwray, Angus, in *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 258A.

hooking neatly into the horizontal line on the ribbon-like body. The serpent penetrates these formal body lines to end up in the beast's jaws. The transition from naturalism is complete.

At the bottom left of the slab, similar, but horned and confronted, beasts make up a finely composed symmetrical motif. These creatures are in combat with birds whose heads lie within their jaws. The birds necks, wrenched backwards, swing out under the raised, restraining, forelegs of the beasts so that their closed wings form the margins of the contained motif. This is motif design of a high order depending on complicated asymmetrical interlockings and voids reminiscent of openwork metalwork plaquettes.

The beast and bird motif is balanced by another symmetrical pair at the bottom right of the slab. Here, two quadrupeds with 'ball and claw' hind-feet but with human fore-feet, and human, bearded heads, are fused into a single motif by placing one astride the back of the other. Their dramatically elongated tails swing out in a wide curve to enter the space between their long necks. The tails link, so that the heads which terminate them can bite their hair. To complete this *tour de force*, fins, or perhaps embryonic wings, with raised contours meet in the centre to counterbalance the outward-looking tail-heads. These creatures also have incised line body-marking, though here set off-centre, which hooks together at the juncture of the neck and body.

One might compare this multi-hybrid pair with the 'half-dogs' described in the text known as the *Wonders of the East*, that have horses' manes, boars' tusks and dogs' heads, but these Pictish motifs seem to have little to do with illustrating such wonders.[86] Rather they show a brilliant awareness of the decorative possibilities of animal combat, and hybridization, having no significance for the sculptor beyond their artistic form, created out of his own inventiveness on the basis of older, more traditional models. A similar process can be seen in the Rossie sculptor's treatment of the 'traditional', meaningful, hybrid, 'the Pictish beast', on the reverse of the slab. On this superlatively carved monument it comes as a shock to see the old scroll body-marking of the incised animals and 'Pictish beast' replaced by the

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86 Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 189.

incised line formula. On the other hand, the vignette above the right arm of the obverse cross has no decorative overlay. Here the standardized barrel-chested, short-tuniced beast-head wields his axe against a bird, the severed head of a beast lying at his feet. The beast-head's counterpoise, a human-headed beast fills the opposite corner of the slab. This conscious juxtaposition of antithetical hybrids gives us a glimpse into the mind of the designer where knowledge of a functioning beast-headed axe-bearer obviously lived on.

The primarily decorative linear animals such as are carved on the Rossie slab have, as argued above, affinity with the developing animal styles in Insular art. The relationship between the Rossie motifs and zoomorphic ornament in the Book of Kells is particularly strong. In his brief but perceptive account of animal ornament in the Book of Kells, Bernard Meehan suggests that the basic vocabulary of the initial and interlinear text ornament comprises recognizable symbols of Christ, such as the lion, the snake, the eagle and the peacock.[87] He sees the animal ornament as, in the main, 'programmatic', not merely ingeniously decorative. It is Christological both in single instances and in what he term's the 'varying and striking conjunctions'. An example of such a conjunction is the tangle of zoomorphic initials for Luke XV on 250v where a lion, contorted to form the letter T, bites the neck of a peacock (or eagle) that clutches a fish. The bird's tail feathers are bitten by a lion, itself attacked by another lion that pins down a snake, whose tail is in the beak of an eagle.[88] The simpler decorative arrangement of symmetrical peacocks in the bottom left corner of Canon I, 2r, allows for the numeration CCCLII to be enclosed within their beaks. This directs the reader to the text in Matthew XXVIII, describing the resurrection. The aptness of the choice of peacocks, famed in classical funerary art for their immortality, to frame that particular number demonstrates the validity of Meehan's general interpretation of the animal ornament.[89] Some of the animals employed, the lion, the snake, the eagle and the dove, feature in *Physiologus* and so afford another faint hint that the text, with its allegories, was indeed known in Ireland

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[87] Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London, 1994), pp. 50-4.
[88] *Ibid*. pp. 62-3 and pl. 79.
[89] For the peacock in Kells, see *ibid*. pp. 57-63. Pl. 65 shows the detail on fol. 2 (wrongly captioned).

in the eighth century. *Physiologus* does not mention the peacock, and the transmission of this symbol, which appears most strikingly in the Book of Kells in the great set-piece of the portrait of Christ on 32v, is likely to have been through artistic models rather than as a direct response to the accounts of the peacock in St Augustine, or the *Etymologiae*, for in neither is the Christian symbolism of the bird's incorruptability commented upon.

We have seen above that the cross at Kildalton on Islay, a product of the Iona school of sculpture, is rich in Christological animal imagery, including peacocks. We have, therefore, another strand of evidence linking the Book of Kells with Iona. Certainly an obsessive repetition of ornament made up of Christological animal symbols would accord with the similarly repetitive use of Evangelists' symbols in the book.

Meehan points out that his 'programmatic' interpretation of the animal ornament would mean, as he puts it, a loss of a 'degree of whimsy in the book'.[90] This is true, but more important for assessing the many suggestive connexions between its art and that of Pictish sculpture, is the loss of the apparently aggressively combatant nature of the decoration, the pervasive animal combats being reduced to formal conjunctions of recognizably Christological symbols.[91] While the combatant art in Kells relates easily to the themes in Pictish animal art in relief, I do not think that the Christological interpretation is transferrable to the majority of either single instances or striking conjunctions of animals in Pictish sculpture. One of the few instances which might apply is on the cross-slab at Dunfallandy where a 'lion' with a snake in its mouth is placed above a stag within the same panel.[92] The panel immediately underneath shows Jonah being swallowed by the whale, so that this otherwise isolated Old Testament salvation image could be consciously juxtaposed with Christological animal symbols. Higher up the slab, on the opposite side of the shaft, are two angels, so there is a spatial logic in the lay out, angels above, terrestrial symbolic

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[90] Meehan, *The Book of Kells*, p. 62.
[91] Isabel Henderson, 'Pictish Art and the Book of Kells', pp. 93-4, where the pervasive biting imagery in the Meigle school of sculpture is compared to biting imagery in the Book of Kells.
[92] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 305A.

animals in the middle, and the sea-creature at the bottom. Dunfallandy is one of the slabs with the motif of a lion breathing life into his young so that the display of Christological imagery might indeed be the intention of the sculptor. Even so, four other panels containing non-naturalistic creatures, one human-headed, are unaccounted for by such an interpretation.

In general, what remains after Meehan's analysis is the undeniable sharing of a decorative, linear style by Pictish sculptors and the artists of the Book of Kells. The creatures carved on the cross-slabs at Gask and Rossie Priory are not Christological images, or indeed illustrations of monsters that inspired awe or disgust or wonder at the bizarre creatures that dwelt in far-off lands. What they display is a sophisticated animal style, which manifestly contributed and responded to the development of zoomorphic styles in the period between the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells. The simplest and common-sense view would be to see them simply as examples of brilliant decorative art. However, there are indications that aspects of the repertoire were still motivated by the distinctive preoccupations of native animal art; in other words, the relationship between this Pictish animal art of the later eighth century and mainstream Insular art is precisely the same as it was in the seventh century, when aspects of the Pictish incised designs, having their own strongly motivated function, were absorbed into the repertoire of Insular art, and Pictish artists, in turn, responded to and no doubt contributed to the decorative style of the earlier gospelbooks and the metalwork that lay behind it.

Without question the dominant theme in Pictish relief animal art is the animal combat, combat between naturalistic animals, such as that between two bulls on a Meigle gravemaker, between monstrous animals and domesticated animals, like the griffin and pig referred to earlier, monsters and snakes, or monstrous carnivores and domesticated herbivores. The 'monster' can be designed in a linear style, or be hybridized, or be a fully realised, anatomically rational, 'monstrous' animal. A fine portrayal of this last type is carved at the bottom of the reverse of the 'Daniel' slab in the Meigle collection. Here a fully anatomical monster throws its neck round to haul and twist the head of a

ruminant that braces its legs against the drag of its jaws. This is clearly not a Christological conjunction.[93]

This particular combination of animal themes portrayed in styles both plastic and naturalistic and linear and stylised cannot be paralleled elsewhere in Insular art, and indeed is only convincingly paralleled in other arts far removed in date and place which were also in origin hunters' art, and which display the so-called Eurasiatic 'animal art' style. Lacking contemporary analogies it is useful to look at this art in order to help define the nature of the Pictish phenomenon.[94]

Both arts have a preference for depicting strong aggressive male animals. The powerful shoulders, lowered horns, flick of the tail and heavy hoofs of the bulls from Burghead, Moray, (pl. III (a)) are exactly paralleled in the hunched compact design of a third-century BC bronze belt plaque from Inner Mongolia in the form of a yak pawing the ground.[95] Equally, both arts are capable of sensitive, empathetic studies of horses. The little foal pinioned by the griffin on the St Andrews Sarcophagus and depicted elsewhere without its persecutor, is found in identical pose, with its legs tucked under its body, and the same mood of defeat on an Inner Mongolian belt plaque of a horse, of the same date as the yak.[96]

In the ancient Eurasian art the style used does not merely copy nature but captures the essence of the animal. It defines the volume of the musculature by means of bevelled surfaces. The well-known, 30 cms-long gold shield mount of a stag, in the Hermitage Museum, is a

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[93] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 311B.
[94] For a well-focussed general description of the Eurasian animal style, see Piotrovsky *et al*., *Scythian Art*, pp. 17-21. Some of the formulations used concerning similarities with Pictish animal art in content, style and composition, are adopted directly from this account.
[95] For the bulls at Burghead, see *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 123-8. For the yak, see Jenny F. So and Emma C. Bunker, *Traders and Raiders on China's Northern Frontier* (Seattle and London, 1995), pp. 140-1 (no. 59 of the catalogue).
[96] For the foals, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, figs. 365 and 318B. For the Ordos horse, see Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Scythians* (London, 1957), pl. 61.

classic example, where recessions and planes convey the taut strength and stretch of the shoulder and haunch of the stag with its head up, poised for action.[97] This method of defining the muscles is used on smaller objects such as an Inner Mongolian plaque of a grazing ibex, where in lower relief the impression of volume created by the shape of the recessions closely resembles Pictish body-scrolls (pl. III (b)). In this piece the horn of the ibex is anchored to its back in order to maintain the continuous outline of the plaque and to emphasise the linear rhythm of the design. Similar effects are achieved by each of the variants of the Burghead bull design.

The Picts, like the Ordos metalworker, employed a range of imagery based on notions of the animal world that included naturalistic and fantastic animals. Some of the fabulous animals in the Ordos style originated in contacts with Greek art. A highly simplified Ordos beast ultimately derived from a realistic classical griffin shows the extent to which the emphasis could shift from literal description to a one-dimensional play of line. Its elongated beaked head, S-scroll body-marking and stylized ribbed feet are constructed exactly on the same principle as the design of 'the Pictish beast'.

Hybridization is, as we have seen, the other way to create a fantastical creature. The simple device of putting a head on the end of a tail is seen in both these regional arts, for example, in a small but very handsome gold winged lion, dated by excavation to the mid-fifth century B.C., and on a humbler, very stylized bronze quadruped of the same date.[98] Similarly, Pictish animals with heads on their tails can be either powerfully designed griffins or stylised linear animals. Finally, in both arts the arrangement of animal combats in a compact design so that the contestants fuse into a single motif results in some of their most impressive images. A Scythian image of a horned predator, each lock of whose mane, as well as its tail, ends in a bird head, rears to pounce on a tiger, the savage action compressed into a smoothly contoured gold plaque. This object can be compared to the many instances in Pictish

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[97]　For the stag, see Piotrovsky *et al*., *Scythian Art*, pl. 16.

[98]　For the gold winged-lion, see *ibid*. pl. 82. Slides of the stylized griffin and the bronze quadruped, both from a private collection, were shown at the lecture.

sculpture where animals are shown in combat, their limbs entangled and necks locked together. The Pictish pairs are on the whole more symmetrical or more spaced out than the metalwork plaque, but the effect of violent rending and strangulation, neatly packaged, is very similar.[99]

We may note, incidentally, that the putative association between three-dimensional metalwork, and one-dimensional linear incised designs on Pictish symbol stones is directly paralleled by the large slabs incised in 'animal style' found in Siberia and Mongolia accompanying royal tumuli. These so-called 'stag-stones' employ a linear style to depict principally stags, but also enigmatic symbols, weapons and other artefacts, all of which in these cases have direct parallels in contemporary metalwork.[100]

Having analyzed Pictish animal art in incision and relief we see that there is evidence for the deployment of a number of styles and conventions which have the consequence of creating 'monstrous' animals. We also see evidence for the interplay between metalwork and stone. This begs the question of the existence of a discrete corpus of Pictish metalwork within which such an interplay could have taken place. Although continental Celtic art shows knowledge of classical griffins, sea-monsters and the like it does not appear to provide an adequate source for the characteristic animal combat in Pictish art. The regional school of Insular Celtic art in the north, the impressive Caledonian metalwork, has some of the forms, the ridges, and semi-circular and lenticular shapes discernible in one dimension on some of the geometric Pictish symbols. But the coherent animal in plaque form is absent. One is led to the conclusion that either the Pictish animal style flourished in isolation from contemporary traditions or was derived from an as yet unidentified source. Such a conclusion requires one to recognize the difference between style, as epitomised by

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[99] For the Scythian combat, see Karl Jettmar, *Art of the Steppes: The Eurasian Animal Style* (London, 1967), p. 184 and pl. 36. For Pictish combats, see drawings of sculpture at Meigle reproduced on pp. 99-100 of Royal Commission of Scotland, *South-East Perth*.

[100] For pictures of 'stag-stones', see N. Tsultem, *Mongolian Sculpture* (Ulaan Baatar, 1989), pls. 1-14.

'the Pictish beast' and the linear style animals in relief, and content as illustrated by griffin images based on a classical notion of a griffin but transmuted by the Pictish artist into something wholly different. This process is in fact one of the basic principles of continental Celtic art but it had very different results. No more than their Celtic or Mongolian predecessors of the fifth century B.C., did the Pictish artists produce debased versions of what had been imported from the Mediterranean art. The scant surviving traces of the existence in metalwork of Pictish symbols (including the beast head) provide a tantalising glimpse of the loss of a Pictish locus which could have assimilated external influences but did not depend exclusively on them.[101]

St Vigean's, 'Drosten Stone' (pl. VI)

The third cross-slab to be considered in detail is in a different category from those at Gask and Rossie Priory. It is probably later in date, although it still prominently portrays Pictish symbols. It was carved in the St Vigean's workshop, in Angus, and is known as the 'Drosten Stone', because the name Drosten occurs in the first line of an

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[101] For a detailed argument by an archaeologist that there was a possible historical relationship between incised Pictish animal art (including 'the Pictish beast') and Eurasian animal art, see Charles Thomas, 'The Animal Art of the Scottish Iron Age and it Origins'. To establish a chain of connexion Thomas requires early Celtic artists to be the means of transmission. He rightly dismisses the relevance of the animal art of Celtic La Tène metalworkers and supposes the existence of a more compatible animal art displayed on the flatter surfaces of perishable material such as wood or leather (p. 57). The role of wood carving at some stage deserves serious consideration, but to the present writer the incised Pictish designs on stone betray an origin in not-too-distant metalwork prototypes. For the purposes of this study I wish to point only to the parallel phenomenon of the existence of two élite animal arts, both distinctive in their own immediate contexts, that simultaneously produced strikingly naturalistic portrayals and powerfully designed monstrous combats on objects with a similar function.

For a recent study suggesting similar historical continuities in Anglo-Saxon art, see G.P. Greis and M.N. Geselowitz, 'Sutton Hoo Art: Two Millennia of History', in *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, ed. C.B. Kendall and P.S. Wells, Medieval Studies at Minnesota 5 (Minneapolis, MN, 1992), 29-44.

inscription in Insular script neatly carved low down on one side. Like Gask and Rossie Priory it displays a sequence of fantastic animals flanking the shaft of a decorated cross but in design quite different in conception, owing nothing to the Pictish animal styles discussed above. The St Vigean's animals are rounded and misshapen, truly monstrous, with their long poking necks, pot-bellies and scaley, heavy heads. Here, indeed, we have a visualisation of the kinds of serpent that Alexander the Great described in his reputed letter to Aristotle, which 'slithered in an extraordinary fashion, with their bellies turned up, and travelling on their backs'. The types are not wholly divorced from the earlier images in that a splayed creature, like a spread out skin rather than a living animal, has a snake dangling from its mouth, and its immensely elongated tail has a head on the end of it. These flaccid creatures seem quite alien from the taut energy of earlier Pictish animal art.

In contrast, the reverse of the slab is carved with a scrap book array, in differing scales, of naturalistic animals: a graceful hind suckles her young; a bear paces to the right; a cowled archer aims at a tusked boar, the flanks of which have vestiges of scroll body-marking; an eagle perches on the back of a fish and pecks at its head.[102] This last motif appears in a number of Irish manuscripts, including the Book of Kells.[103] Isidore, in the *Etymologiae*, states that the eagle has such clear vision that it can drop from a great height on to its fishy prey and that when its sight and plumage need renewal it flys up to the sun.[104] *Physiologus* has the eagle flying up to the sun (Christ), but it then descends into a fountain (the Lord), bathes three times, and is made new again.[105] In the Gospel Books the fish is not being eaten, but is held in the claws of the eagle, the symbol of John the Evangelist. Like the account in Isidore of the griffin's hatred of the horse, the eagle's capacity to catch a fish from a height may depend on a venerable visual

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[102] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 250B.

[103] Kells, 250v; Book of Armagh, Dublin, Trinity College 52, 32v, Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, illus. 230, 90r, Meehan, *Kells*, pl. 41; St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 904, p. 164, in J. Duft and P. Meyer, *The Irish Miniatures in the Abbey Library of St Gall* (Olten, Berne and Lausanne, 1954), p. 109.

[104] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII.vii.10.

[105] Curley, *Physiologus*, pp. 12-13.

image, one which got into Insular art without the aid of a text. The Pictish version does not depend on Irish evangelist imagery.

Of the remaining animal motifs on the reverse of the 'Drosten Stone', one with a poking neck clearly belongs with the animals on the obverse of the slab, the other, a quadruped with a large horn and the feet of a predator, harks back to the Rossie Priory types.

To complete this stone catalogue of the Pictish repertoire of animal styles, the top of the reverse of the slab is carved with a handsomely antlered stag in purest Pictish style.[106] In contrast with this masterly portrait of a deer in flight, the front of the cross-slab is topped by a crouching, winged and horned, exhibitionist figure.[107] Perhaps this face of the slab depicts in the background of the cross the *dirae bestiae* of Hell overseen by a lustful devil. These St Vigean's monsters could well derive from a single stylistically uniform model. The alternative is that they are an inventive response to an unillustrated literary text.

On the basis of a re-examination of the inscription, the 'Drosten Stone' has recently been attributed to a literate Picto-Irish milieu of *c*. 840.[108] Similar disagreeable, ill-proportioned animals appear on a number of small cross-slabs in Angus, usually dated to the ninth century.[109] There are a few examples of the type in Perthshire but none north of the Grampians. A model at St Vigean's, or the 'Drosten Stone' itself, may have exerted its influence regionally at a time when a new non-Pictish cultural orientation was making itself felt as a consequence of the arrival in eastern Pictland of the Dalriadic Scots.

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[106] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 252B.

[107] *Ibid*. fig. 252A.

[108] Thomas Owen Clancy, 'The Drosten Stone: a New Reading', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 123 (1993), 345-53. Clancy's dating agrees with the art-historical analysis by Isabel Henderson in Elisabeth Okasha, 'The Non-Ogam Inscriptions of Pictland', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 9 (1985), 43-69, at 60-1.

[109] For example, the three creatures surrounding the hunting scene on the cross-slab from Inchbrayock, Angus. *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 235B.

THE PICTISH VISION OF HELL

All the types of Pictish relief animals described above, natural or imaginary, anatomical or linear, figure in another combat motif, that of the man-eating beast. The human victims are typically Pictish in style, well-proportioned and anatomically correct. They are small in relation to their attacker and are invariably portrayed naked. Nakedness is unusual but has a role in Insular art. The men are never shown in heroic combat with the predator or raptor.[110] They are snatched, often from behind, their head seized, in a frankly brutal manner that has nothing to do with artistic whimsy, ingenious design or mere conjunction. Nobody could look at these visual motifs with enjoyment.[111]

These vignettes of human fear, even agony, must surely convey the torments of Hell, a theme depicted on other Insular works of art. In the great Irish visualisation of the Last Judgement spread over the face of the cross-head of Muiredach's cross at Monasterboice, the righteous are comfortable in their long arguments, while the damned go naked to Hell.[112] Rosemary Cramp has suggested that the appropriately positioned lowest panel of the Anglo-Saxon Rothbury cross represents Hell. At the very bottom a small naked figure wrestles with encroaching reptiles, while further up the panel other reptiles gnaw at the limbs of two small monkey-like creatures whose genitals are

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[110] Contrast the comment made by Nora Chadwick that struggles with monsters 'are the very stuff of the hero's spiritual endeavour'; 'The Monsters and *Beowulf*', in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London, 1959), 171-203, at 172.

[111] There is only one motif in Pictish sculpture that could be described as a combat between a ravening beast and a man, and that is on a lost panel from Meigle where a huge naturalistic beast stands over a prostrate, apparently naked man and bites into his face. Allen published a version of a drawing of the panel reproduced in Stuart, *Sculptured Stones* I, pl. 76, where the man is shown knifing the throat of the beast. An earlier drawing, also made when the panel was within the church at Meigle, is reproduced in pl. 18 of Patrick Chalmers, *The Ancient Sculptured Monuments of the County of Angus* (Edinburgh, 1848). Here there is no indication of the beast being stabbed, or even of the man having a knife.

[112] Harbison, *Irish High Crosses* I, 142; II, fig. 473.

realistically portrayed — perhaps degraded personifications of human bestiality. As Cramp remarks 'despite the symmetry of the composition, genuine tension and horror is created'.[113]

On some of the Pictish cross-slabs the same apposite location of such scenes is observed. A man being mauled by a beast is carved at the bottom right of the cross-slab on the roadside at Aberlemno in Angus. The angels mourning on either side of the cross are on a higher level. The legs of the Aberlemno figure dangle like those of a similarly savaged figure on 130r of the Book of Kells.[114] This is the folio that begins the Gospel of St Mark, which in verse 15 of its first chapter warns: 'the time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel'.

On the reverse of the tall cross-slab at Fowlis Wester in Perthshire, now very worn, one can just make out at the bottom, a violent depiction of a man seized from behind, his head clamped in the jaws of a monster (pl. VII (b)). A similar wrenching back is made more terrible on the Rossie Priory slab. Here the fanged monster bites the back of the man's head while his body is pulled by a snake that grasps him by the right ankle — a tug-of-war, with a man in the middle. What characterises these images is the naturalism of the figures. There is nothing decorative or stylised about them to soften the impact of their predicament.[115]

We can compare this imagery to the subject matter within the decorated *Incipit* to Luke on 188r of the Book of Kells.[116] On the top of the frame a monster has the head of a clothed figure in its jaws. This can be interpreted as Hell mouth, an image comparable to that of the

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[113]   Cramp, *County Durham and Northumberland* I, 220; II, pls. 214 and 1223.

[114]   Henderson, 'Pictish Art and the Book of Kells', p. 95 and pl. Xa. For the Aberlemno figure, see Ritchie, *Picts*, p. 26.

[115]   For Fowlis Wester, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 306B. In 'Pictish Art and the Book of Kells', p. 93, I described the Rossie motif as having 'the appearance of a direct extract from the Book of Kells repertoire of animal letter combinations'. The observation stands, but as we have seen above, such combinations are now regarded as bearing meaning.

[116]   Meehan, *Kells*, pls. 94 and 95.

figure with his head within the jaws of the Hellish mouth of a monster at the bottom right corner of the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, depicting the Last Judgement.[117] In the Kells miniature we move from Hell mouth between the letters of *Quoniam* through tangled scenes of semi-nakedness, licentiousness and drunkenness until we see two monster-headed serifs on the strokes of the letter 'm' sink their teeth into the crowns of the heads of two intertwined figures. The identical image is used on a cross-shaft at St Andrews although here the monstrous heads are attached to thick-bodied reptiles.[118] Some of the pairs of entangled men in Kells fol. 188 hold each others wrists and this pose is paralleled on the recently discovered end panel of the shrine from Pittensorn, Murthly, Perthshire, and on the tall cross-slab near Forres in Moray, known as 'Sueno's Stone'.[119] The pairs immediately below Hell mouth in the Kells miniature are dishevelled in dress and pull each other's beard in a covert sexual gesture.[120] Just above the letter 'n', figures with their

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[117] John Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in Early Medieval England* (London, 1972), pp. 118-19, and ills. 1 and 16 (cat. no. 4).

[118] David Hay Fleming, *St Andrews Cathedral Museum* (London, 1931), frontispiece.

[119] Isabel Henderson, 'Sculpture North of the Forth after the Take-Over by the Scots', in *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Sculpture and its Context*, ed. James Lang, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 49 (Oxford, 1978), 47-74, with pls. 3.8 and 3.12. The Pittensorn panel is in the care of Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

[120] For the interpretation of the semi-naked beard pullers carved on the bottom of the north side of the shaft of Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, Co. Louth, as symbolic of Lust, see Anthony Weir, *Early Ireland: a Field Guide* (Belfast, 1980), p. 181. For a study of this theme of 'désordre' centred on its appearance in the initial to Ps. LXXIX of the Corbie Psalter (Amiens, Bibliothèque Municipale, 18), see Christian de Mérindol, 'Du Livre de Kells et du Psautier de Corbie à l'art Roman: origine, diffusion et signification du thème des personnages se saisissant à la barbe', in *The Book of Kells*, ed. O'Mahony, pp. 290-300. The Psalter initial on 73r (pl. 103) shows two men pulling each other's beard with their near-side hands while clasping their off-side hands. The Scottish pairs have interlaced legs and hold each other's wrists. The 'grooming' gestures of the pairs of monkeys on the end panel of the St Andrews Sarcophagus may relate to this iconography. The images of lone beard pullers cited below are clearly erotic.

garments riding up over their thighs slip between the letter strokes with arms raised as if in an attempt to reach figures looking on from above.

This image of a man slipping down within a narrow space is vividly parallel in the finest Pictish rendering of the Hell's monsters theme, on the Meigle, 'Daniel' cross-slab (pl. VIII). A figure perched, kneeling, on the left volute of the cross-shaft, carved in rounded almost three-dimensional relief, stretches down in an effort to hoist up another figure whose back is arched and who has one leg raised as the other leg falls towards the jaws of a rearing whale-like monster below.[121]

The carving and disposition of the figures are remarkable for the effective portrayal of strained and contorted muscular action. The scene, indisputably in my view, is an explicit illustration of the infernal chasm and monsters of Hell motifs so vividly expressed in Irish and Anglo-Saxon 'Vision of Hell' literature, and in the dialogues attributed to Gregory the Great.[122] That this view of the fate of the wicked was current on Iona, no later than the seventh century, is evident from the words of the notably grim and Apocalyptic poem *Altus prosator*:[123]

> *It seems doubtful to no one that there is a hell down below*
> *where there are held to be darkness, worms and dreadful animals;*

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[121] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 311A. See also the drawing in Royal Commission Scotland, *South-East Perth*, p. 99.

[122] A number of textual and analytical studies of this literature has been made of late. For the genre in the seventh and eighth centuries, see Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 243-72. Sims-Williams points out that the Latin literary visionary tradition may have been fed by accounts of actual psychotic experiences, and how, at all periods, it had its own life as a 'monastic folktale'. The spectacularly visual account of the otherworld experiences of Dryhthelm, later a monk at Melrose (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, V.12) brings such narratives within the cultural world of the Picts. The Pictish vignettes clearly belong to this genre (perhaps at a sub-literary level) rather than to the formal Apocalyptic imagery of the Last Judgement which Bede, in his *Historia abbatum*, tells us hung on the north wall of St Peter's Church at Monkwearmouth. For the expansion of one of the texts of the *Wonders of the East* by the inclusion of a similarly admonitory tale, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 20-1.

[123] The translation is from Clancy and Márkus, *Iona*, p. 49.

where there is sulphurous fire burning with voracious flames;
where there is screaming of men, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The prevalence in Pictish sculpture of the motif of the naked man violently assaulted by a monster, which I shall call the 'fate of the wicked', supports the view that the Picts were aware of this genre of texts and were further aware of the opinion of Gregory, taken up by Bede, that reporting on visits to Hell served as a warning to men that should lead to speedy amendment of life. Safety from such a fate, lay in the cross, the central image on the monuments, and the warning of damnation was no doubt aimed particularly at the section of society symbolised by the armed proud riders. The fact that the Picts had a rich repertoire of monsters and an innate capacity to draw well-articulated human figures suggests that in this case the artists would have been well able to construct their own motifs in response to a text without the use of a model. On the other hand the close similarities between the Hell of Pictish artists and the Hell of the artists of the Book of Kells required knowledge of each other's work or of common models.

Another visualisation in sculpture of Hell in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period is on the fragment of a cross found outside the Mercian mausoleum at Repton. On its reverse it shows a gigantic, beast-headed serpent devouring two men. Peter Clemoes has recently expanded our appreciation of this image in its literary context as an image of Hell mouth.[124] In a very full discussion of its artistic context Martin and Birthe Biddle referred to the possible relevance of the erotic figure trapped in the central column of Canon I, on fol. I of the Rome Gospels, under the impassive gaze of a disembodied, hirsute, head. The Biddles dismiss this surprising image as 'purely decorative and without specific meaning'.[125] But surely this beard-pulling, priapic figure being

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[124] Peter Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 12 (Cambridge, 1995), 58-66. Clemoes points out (p. 64) that the idea that hell was a man-swallower would have come naturally to Anglo-Saxons since their verb to swallow (*swelgan*) was also used for the consuming action of fire.

[125] Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barberini Lat. 570. For the erotic figure, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, illus. 173, as well as Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'The Repton Stone', *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985), 233-92, at 277.

nibbled at the neck and genitals by four winged lacertines is another abbreviated Hell scene? The figure, in virtually identical pose, appears on the edge of a cross-arm at Pictish Strathmartine in Angus (pl. VII (a)), and on the top of the side of a slab at Applecross, opposite Skye, in Wester Ross, though here the figure covers his genitals with his right hand while his left hand holds his right wrist.[126] The Applecross slab displays many decorative connexions with sculpture at St Vigean's where we have seen the exhibitionist figure in the form of a devil. In all this infernal imagery Pictish artists occupy the mainstream of Insular culture, exploring the diversity of images observable in the art and literature of this period.

CONCLUSION

In looking for the origins of the Pictish repertoire of non-naturalistic animals I have based my analysis on both subject-matter and style.

We have seen that Pictish incised animal art consisted of natural, native, creatures and a composite, hybrid, beast, all portrayed in profile and in varying degrees of stylization compatible with a postulated 'hunters' art' which had expressed itself in objects of metalwork. When sculpted in relief, some animal portrayals, now in a variety of poses, became fully naturalistic, while others became more stylized.

The major change between incised animal art and animal art in relief is the extent to which the animals are shown in combat. Depending on the style chosen by the artist, these combats take the form of brilliantly designed, symmetrically paired motifs in the linear style displayed also in contemporary manuscript art, or are combats between different species of animals, anatomically coherent but again depicted in various degrees of stylization, and frequently hybridized so as to heighten the struggle. These combats, unparalleled in Insular art, need not be divorced from the ancient 'hunters' art' that may lie behind the Pictish incised animal designs if the parallel evolution of the ancient

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[126] Strathmartine cross-arm, *Early Christian Monuments*, pt III, fig. 277B. Recorded by Allen as lost but now found. For Applecross, see Joanna Close-Brooks, *The Highlands*, Exploring Scotland's Heritage (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 123.

Eurasian 'animal art' style is borne in mind. To these native styles the stock monsters of classical art were added from imported models. These monsters were portrayed, on occasions, faithfully, but also reconstructed in terms of both the Pictish natural and linear styles.

In relief art, the human hybridized or ogre-ised figures engaged in combats with each other, or occasionally slaughtered passive animal victims. They did not develop into epic heroes portrayed in successful combat with monsters. Men and animals in Pictish relief carving have either the relationship of the hunter to the hunted within the aristocratic, social, ritual of the hunt, or of the wicked snatched as the prey of the Hellish underworld monster at the Last Judgement. Only the great Old Testament heroes, Daniel and David, are displayed as having total mastery over predators. Returning to the original question as to whether the nature of the non-naturalistic beasts and men on Pictish monuments requires Pictish access to literary texts other than the Bible, the answer is a reasonably confident affirmative for thoses derived from the *Lives* of the hermit saints. In the case of *Physiologus*, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and contemporary eschatological literature, I feel that some general knowledge of the contents is the most that the visual evidence supports. I cannot see any close connexion with the Anglo-Saxon monster texts.[127] Obviously there is common ground in taste, in the eclectic approach, and most significantly in a shared seriousness of intention. The only non-classical monstrous animals that appear alien to the internal development of Pictish art are of the type carved on the front of the 'Drosten Stone' at St Vigean's, which appears also on the later small cross-slabs of Angus. This type could derive from an otherwise unknown set of monster models, perhaps coming from an Irish, possibly Columban milieu.

If images do indeed, as Aby Warburg believed,[128] reflect the attitudes of the cultures that produce them then this study of this aspect of Pictish sculpture shows, not just a commonplace contemporary

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[127] The absence of evidence in the sculpture does not, in itself, of course, prove the absence of knowledge or possession of texts.

[128] For the implications of Warburg's views, on the study of Insular art generally, see Brendan Cassidy, 'The Later Life of the Ruthwell Cross', in *The Ruthwell Cross*, ed. B. Cassidy (Princeton, 1992), pp. 31-2.

fascination with monsters, but an enduring Pictish cultural preoccupation with the complex nature of animal force, man's respect for it, and fear of it, and desire to emulate it — attitudes which found expression and release in a highly individual and powerful animal art. [129]

ISABEL HENDERSON

Pictish Monsters: Symbol, Text and Image

The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic offers programmes of study, at both undergraduate and graduate level, on the pre-Norman culture of the British Isles in its various aspects: historical, literary, linguistic, palaeographical, archaeological. The Department also serves as a focal point for scholars visiting Cambridge from various parts of the world, who are attracted to Cambridge by the University Library (one of the largest in the world), the collections of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic manuscripts in the University and various college libraries, the collection of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Scandinavian coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, or the rich collection of Anglo-Saxon artefacts in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. It is possible for the Department to host a small number of Visiting Scholars each year.

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Hector Munro Chadwick (1870-1947) was Elrington and Bosworth Professor
of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Cambridge from 1912 to 1941. Through
the immense range of his scholarly publications, and through the vigorous
enthusiasm which he brought to all aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies —
philological and literary, historical and archaeological — he helped to define
the field and to give it the interdisciplinary orientation which characterises it
still. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, which owes its
existence and its own interdisciplinary outlook to H.M. Chadwick, has wished
to commemorate his enduring contribution to Anglo-Saxon studies by
establishing an annual series of lectures in his name.