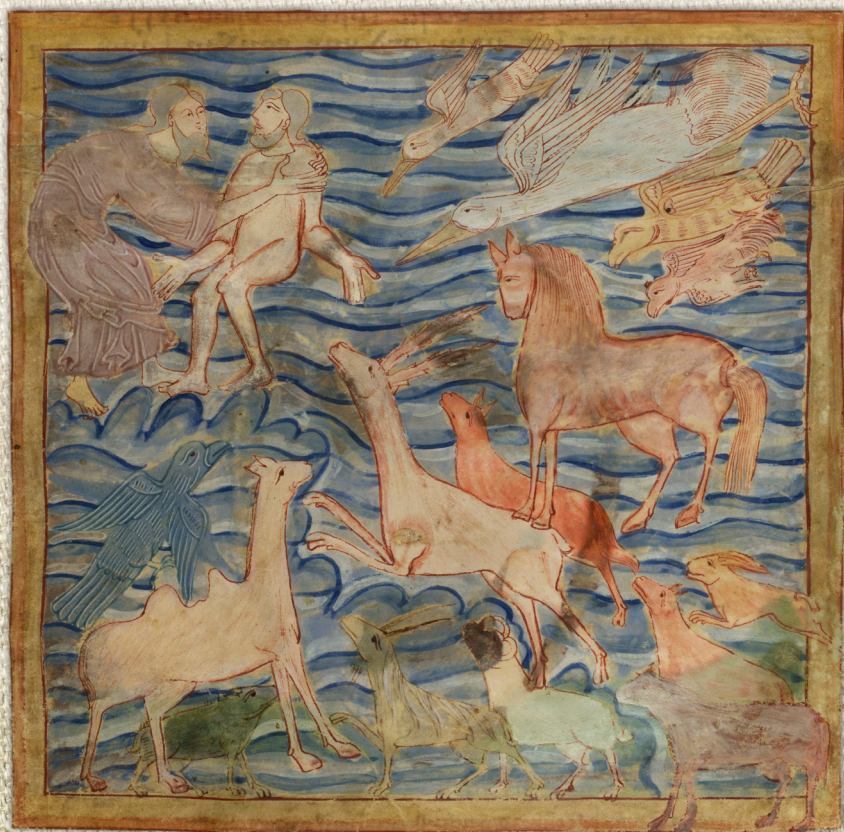




RESTORING CREATION

THE NATURAL WORLD IN THE
ANGLO-SAXON SAINTS' LIVES OF
CUTHBERT AND GUTHLAC



BRITTON ELLIOTT BROOKS



RESTORING CREATION

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The Natural World
in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of
Cuthbert and Guthlac

Britton Elliott Brooks

D. S. BREWER

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
Bede, HE	<i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , ed. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
BT	<i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth</i> , ed. by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898); <i>Supplement</i> ed. by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921); <i>Revised and Enlarged Addenda</i> , ed. by Alistair Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 201 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–2014). References are given to volume and page number(s)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 101 vols (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1866–2015). References are given to volume and page number(s)
DMLBS	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources Online</i> (Brepols) http://clt.brepolis.net/dmlbs/Default.aspx
DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English: A to I online</i> , ed. by Angus F. Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, and Antonette diPaolo Healey (pub. online, 2007) http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/dict/index.html

Abbreviations

Fontes	<i>Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project</i> , ed., <i>Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register</i> , http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
MÆ	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
OE Corpus	<i>Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus</i> , compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009) http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/
OEPG	<i>Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des hl. Guthlac</i> , ed. Paul Gonsler, <i>Anglistische Forschungen</i> 27 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1909)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: J-P. Garnier Frères, 1841–55). References are given to volume and column number(s)
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
VCA	Anonymous, <i>Vita Sancti Cuthberti</i> , in <i>Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life</i> , ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940)
VCM	Bede, <i>Vita Sancti Cuthberti</i> (Metrical), in <i>Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cuthberti</i> , ed. Werner Jaager, <i>Palaestra</i> 198 (Leipzig: Mayer and Müller, 1935)
VCP	Bede, <i>Vita Sancti Cuthberti</i> (Prose), in <i>Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life</i> , ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940)
VSG	<i>Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac</i> , ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

Introduction

EVERY HOUR CHIMES with a new example of ecological crisis: the warming oceans, the loss of biodiversity, and the rise of anti-environmental public policies. In response to our contemporary moment, the Humanities have begun to engage in earnest with questions of ecology. This present study seeks to bring medieval literature into dialogue with these issues, analysing medieval constructions and interpretations of the non-human world as expressed in literature, by considering them in their historical context. This approach highlights how medieval peoples actively reflected upon their own engagement with the non-human world, structured in great part by their theology and philosophy, and articulated them through the artistry of their literature.

*Restoring Creation: the Natural World in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac*¹ engages with the growing interest throughout medieval scholarship in the environmental humanities, evidenced by the number of monographs published in the past few years on such topics, including *Water in Medieval Literature* by Albrecht Classen; *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes: Ecotheory and the Environmental Imagination*, by Heidi Estes; and *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place*, by Nicole G. Discenza.² This engagement by medieval scholars is heartening, as the majority of the studies in the environmental humanities, in Estes's words, 'dismiss or ignore the medieval, or misrepresent it in discussions of the modern'.³ This is most evident in the wider, and erroneous, conceptions of the negative role of the natural world in medieval literature, particularly in relation to ecocritical scholarship. For example, Timothy Morton, one of the leading ecocritical theorists, describes the natural world in medieval texts in negative

¹ I use capitalised 'Creation' to refer to the physical world created during the Genesis narrative throughout this study.

² A. Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading* (Lanham, MD, 2017); H. Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes: Ecotheory and the Environmental Imagination* (Amsterdam, 2017); N. G. Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place* (Toronto, 2017).

³ Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, p. 10.

and dismissive terms: 'Nature, practically a synonym for evil in the Middle Ages, was considered the basis of social good by the Romantic Period.'⁴ This oversimplification of medieval literature is unfortunate, to say the least, and fundamentally distorting, both for the project of literary analysis as a whole, and also for broader discussions in the environmental humanities. The negative vision of the relationship between medieval people and the natural world also appears in more popular arenas, as evidenced by the scholar and writer Alexandra Harris. In her 2015 book *Weatherland: Writers and Artists under English Skies*, she characterises the Anglo-Saxon engagement with nature as follows: 'The impulse of this culture is to favour the controlled, man-made, and essentially social space of the hall – lit by fire and candle [...] The outdoor winter world is dreadful by contrast.'⁵ The non-human world was for Anglo-Saxons, according to Morton and Harris, evil, antagonistic, and often utilised as a negative template by which the anthropocentric positive could be defined. Connected but more nuanced views are also found in the work of medieval scholars, such as Jennifer Neville, who categorises the representation of the natural world in Old English poetry as fundamentally unconcerned with the natural world itself, and primarily anthropocentric:

What emerges is that the representation of the 'natural world' is never an end in itself and is always ancillary to other issues [...] the state of humanity and its position in the universe, the establishment and maintenance of society, the power of extraordinary individuals, the proximity of the deity to creation and the ability of writing to control and limit information.⁶

More recent medieval scholarship has called these views into question. Estes notes not only the multitude of relationships Anglo-Saxons conceived of themselves, 'the land and its non-human creatures', but also highlights how even the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a text anthropocentric in its very structure, 'contains

⁴ T. Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), p. 15.

⁵ A. Harris, *Weatherland: Writers and Artists under English Skies* (London, 2015), p. 28.

⁶ J. Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 18.

numerous references to natural phenomena separate from the mention of human endeavors, suggesting that they are of intrinsic interest'.⁷ Corinne Dale has provided a recent and convincing corrective to such anthropocentric readings of Anglo-Saxon literary depictions of the non-human in her 2017 monograph, *The Natural World in the Exeter Book Riddles*, where she carefully argues that 'there is a programme of resistance to anthropocentrism at work in the riddle collection, whereby the riddles challenge human-centered ways of depicting the created world'.⁸ This present study continues in this vein, and argues that early medieval constructions of the natural world were neither as negative nor as monolithic as is often argued, and that instead they reveal a sophisticated and considered engagement with the non-human world.

Where this study differs from the approaches taken by scholars like Estes is in its central argument that the relationship between humanity and the non-human world in Anglo-Saxon texts was defined in great part by contemporary theological and philosophical views. I therefore focus less on employing modern ecocritical theory, as Estes does in her book, and more on the manner in which environmental concerns would have been perceived from multiple medieval perspectives. This is an important distinction because often, in our pursuit of understanding the texts we love, we substitute our own views and theoretical perspectives for those expressed in those texts. Discenza begins her book *Inhabited Spaces* by highlighting this very danger:

As anyone who studies the past knows, it is all too easy to import modern modes of thought into earlier eras. We tend to assume, often unconsciously, that people think as we do. While we can never entirely leave ourselves behind, focused study can help us to identify our preconceptions and distinguish others', so that we recognize where they share our ideas and where they differ.⁹

⁷ Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, p. 13, notes the inclusion of 'astronomical phenomena such as comets (678, 892, 905, 995), lunar and solar eclipses (744, 773, 806, 809, 904), and, perhaps, the aurora borealis (926, 979)', where the descriptions are not explicitly tied to human concerns.

⁸ C. Dale, *The Natural World in the Exeter Book Riddles* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 2.

⁹ Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 3.

Restoring Creation: the Natural World in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac seeks to understand how the Anglo-Saxons themselves conceptualised their relationship with the natural world, and then how those conceptions shaped their literary productions. This study also differs in its subject matter: hagiography. While at first *Saints' Lives* might seem an odd choice, as they are some of the most conventional of all medieval literary genres,¹⁰ they are also some of the most connected to the physical landscape in which the Anglo-Saxons lived. As will be discussed below, early Anglo-Saxon hagiography was concerned with elevating particular saints from very specific locations in the English landscape, most often for the purpose of establishing and expanding their cult. These cult sites commonly became important religious centres, and as such the depictions of the natural world, whether it be elemental features like rivers and dales, mountains and forests, or animate creatures like birds, otters, and seals, are deeply connected to the physical reality which the Anglo-Saxons would have known. This inherent connectedness to the lived experience of these early medieval people allows a unique window into the ways they perceived their relationship with the non-human world, and how they chose to depict that relationship in their literary endeavours.

The Restoration of Creation: Received Exegesis

At the heart of this study of the early Anglo-Saxon *vitae* of saints Cuthbert and Guthlac is a specific exegetical interpretation of the Fall and its effects upon humanity and Creation. This interpretation argues that the indifferent Creation of the Fall can be restored to prelapsarian harmony with humanity by way of sanctity. Such a connection between medieval depictions of the natural world and Creation, Eden, and the Fall, has been noted by various scholars,

¹⁰ See M. Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 2nd edn, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 251–72, at 262, who notes how it 'was the overall intention of any hagiographer to demonstrate that his saintly subject belonged indisputably to the universal community of saints, and this entailed modelling each *vita* closely on those of earlier authors'.

including Catherine Clarke in her book *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400*, particularly in connecting the classical topos of the *locus amoenus* with the biblical vision of Eden.¹¹ Most recently, and in direct connection to the *vitae* of Cuthbert and Guthlac which are the focus of this study, Sally Shockro notes how ‘[t]he affinity between man and nature was ruptured by Adam’s fall, but it was not eternally broken [...] Through piety and purity, Cuthbert and Guthlac have repaired the breach, in themselves, between man and nature, and therefore are able to take their rightful place within the natural world’.¹² Yet Shockro provides little historical, theological, and exegetical context, and subsumes this into her primary argument highlighting the agency and mutuality of animals in these *vitae*. The restoration of Creation has its roots, however, in biblical and patristic eschatology.¹³ Acts 3:21 describes the second coming of Jesus Christ as bringing about a restoration of all things: ‘Quem oportet quidem caelum suscipere usque in tempora *restitutionis omnium*’ (Whom heaven indeed must receive, until the times of the *restitution of all things*).¹⁴ This was interpreted by Paul in Rom. 8:20–21, and by a number of the Church Fathers, as a reference to Creation (sometimes translated as ‘creature’ here) being restored to its prelapsarian state.¹⁵

¹¹ See C. A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (Cambridge, 2006), esp. pp. 7–36.

¹² S. Shockro, ‘Saints and Holy Beasts: Pious Animals in Early-Medieval Insular Saints’ *Vitae*’, in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. A. Langdon (Basingstoke, 2018), pp. 51–68, at 65.

¹³ It should be noted that Shockro, ‘Saints and Holy Beasts’, concludes her article with an eschatological turn, how ‘these stories perhaps present a more complicated statement on the advancement of Christian history than a simple desire to return to a time before the Fall [...] To a pious contemporary reader this might be a heartening sign of the imminent completion of Christian history, in which creation is once again unified under the Creator’, pp. 65–66.

¹⁴ All translations in this thesis are my own, in consultation with relevant editions, unless otherwise indicated. When I have used translations from standard editions, I have silently emended some features for the sake of consistency, such as capitalising ‘Creation’ throughout (as explained above), as well as orthographic features, e.g. today for to-day. All translations of the Bible are from the *Holy Bible Douay-Rheims Version, with Challoner Revisions 1749–52* (Baltimore, 1899), likewise silently emended for archaic features, e.g. walks for walketh.

¹⁵ Most modern translations render *creaturae* as ‘creation’ rather than ‘creature’ (*Douay-Rheims*), in great part due to the exegesis of the Church Fathers, which

Nam expectatio creaturae revelationem filiorum Dei expectat. Vanitati enim creatura subjecta est non volens, sed propter eum, qui subiecit eam in spe: Quia et ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei.

(For the expectation of the Creation waits for the revelation of the sons of God. For the Creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope: because the Creation also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.)

While several patristic texts interpret these verses in a similar manner, the most relevant here, given its influence and availability in Anglo-Saxon England, is St Ambrose's *Exameron*:¹⁶ 'quod Apostolicae quoque liceat astruere auctoritatis exemplo. scriptum est enim [Rom. 8:20] [...] liberabitur autem et ipsa creatura a servitute corruptionis, cum gratia diuinae remunerationis adfulserit'¹⁷ ('For this belief one may find authority also in the words of the Apostle. It is written [...] however, even Creation itself will also be delivered from its slavery to corruption when the grace of divine reward has shown forth'). Jerome likewise interprets this restoration (*restitutio*) as an eschatological vision of the return to an Edenic natural world: 'Quando autem filii Dei adsumpti fuerint, et ipsa creatura de hoc servitio liberatur'¹⁸ ('When, moreover, the sons of God shall have attained glory, Creation itself will also be delivered from this slavery'). This restoration of Creation, however, is not only relegated to an eschatological future, but is also glimpsed and made manifest in

I discuss below. I have therefore emended above. See, for example, the *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (Oxford, 1999); the *NKJV Study Bible* (Nashville, 2016); the *New English Bible* (Oxford, 1970); and *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (London, 2011).

¹⁶ Ambrose's *Exameron* is extant in four MSS, though most date from the tenth century or later; see *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: a Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, ed. H. Gneuss and M. Lapidge (Toronto, 2014), no. 20, 61.5, 194, and 778 (all references from this text will use the MS numbers allocated by the editors). The text was clearly known earlier, however, as evidenced by Bede's seventeen uses in his *In Genesim*; see M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), p. 194.

¹⁷ Ambrose, *Exameron* in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera pars prima, qua continentur libri*, ed. C. Schenkl, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna, 1896), p. 20.

¹⁸ Jerome, *Tractatus sive Homiliae in Psalmos*, in *Marci evangelium, aliaque Varia Argumenta*, ed. G. Morin, CCL 78 (Turnhout, 1958), p. 344.

the present via the power of saints. The specific exegesis that supports this reading, and which is most relevant for the Anglo-Saxon authors analysed in this study, is that of St Augustine of Hippo, later adapted by the Venerable Bede. The influence of Augustine's and Bede's shared exegesis is evident in the *vitae* of Cuthbert and Guthlac that are the focus of this study, primarily by the way the Anglo-Saxon authors incorporated, often nearly verbatim, sections of the exegesis in all but one of the Latin texts; in the single outlier (the *Anonymus Vita S. Cuthberti*) the underlying influence of the Augustinian interpretation can be discerned from its structure and content. In the case of the OE texts, the exegesis is evident in both the vernacular translation of the Latin sections, as well as in its influence over structure and content.

Patristic Exegesis and Anglo-Saxon Literature

The use of patristic exegesis in interpretations of Anglo-Saxon literature, particularly texts written in Old English, remains contentious. The debate has its roots in Bernard Huppé's 1959 *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry*, which employed Augustinian exegesis to interpret, among other texts, *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Genesis A*.¹⁹ Huppé viewed Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* as formulating a 'Christian theory of literature' which provided 'the basic program for a Christian culture', and influenced 'the early practice of poetry in the vernacular, specifically Old English'.²⁰ The force of Huppé's conviction, however, often led to an indiscriminate application of patristic exegesis, resulting in a number of distortions. Morton Bloomfield, for example, highlights how Huppé's suggestion that the parallel phrases '*Meotodes meahte, his modgeþanc, and weorc Wuldorfæder*' in *Cædmon's Hymn* 'may suggest the Trinity' relies on Huppé translating *modgeþanc* as 'wisdom', which Bloomfield argues can only be translated thus 'by a great

¹⁹ B. F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York, 1959).

²⁰ Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry*, p. v.

freedom'.²¹ Bloomfield and later scholars did not, however, reject the notion of using patristic exegesis as an interpretative tool, but argued for a more measured approach. Judith Garde and Bernard Muir, for example, advocate an approach based on 'the necessary concurrence of *appropriate* patristic analogues and close examination of a text' rather than Huppé's 'indiscriminate imposition', primarily via the liturgy, which they argue is the most profitable avenue for patristic influence on OE poetry.²² More recently critics such as Larry McKill and Nina Boyd have further argued against Huppé's open application of patristic exegesis.²³ McKill, for example, highlights how Huppé's analysis of *Genesis A* distorts 'the poem's own explicit theme' by its 'exegetical imposition'.²⁴ What most recent critics agree on is the measured and appropriate application of patristic exegesis, whether via the liturgy, or demonstrable contemporary knowledge of such exegesis.²⁵ This study will follow in a similar measured vein, and will argue the application of the specific Augustinian and Bedan exegesis is justified for the following reasons: first, the majority of the texts analysed in this thesis are in Anglo-Latin, where the influence of patristic exegesis is much easier to identify; second, as mentioned above, there is a section of the exegesis incorporated nearly verbatim in all the Latin texts except for the *VCA*; third, the OE texts are necessarily influenced by the exegesis as they are translations and adaptations of the Anglo-Latin *vitae*.

²¹ M. W. Bloomfield, 'Patristics and Old English Literature: Notes on Some Poems', *Comparative Literature* 14 (1962), 36–43, at 41.

²² J. N. Garde and B. J. Muir, 'Patristic Influence and the Poetic Intention in Old English Religious Verse', *Literature and Theology* 2 (1988), 49–68, at 49, 58.

²³ L. N. McKill, 'Patterns of the Fall: Adam and Eve in the Old English *Genesis A*', *Florilegium* 14 (1995–96), 25–41; N. Boyd, 'Doctrine and Criticism: A Reevaluation of *Genesis A*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 83 (1982), 230–38. See also C. D. Wright, 'Genesis A ad litteram', in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. M. Fox and M. Sharma (Toronto, 2012), pp. 121–71, for a reading which emphasises the literal, rather than allegorical, meaning of the text.

²⁴ McKill, 'Patterns of the Fall', 26.

²⁵ Garde and Muir, 'Patristic Influence', 58; McKill, 'Patterns of the Fall', 26–27.

Saint Augustine of Hippo's Exegesis

Augustinian exegesis is often difficult to delineate, as his ideas evolved throughout his forty-year exegetical career.²⁶ This included five attempts at explicating the Genesis narrative: *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388–90); *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* (c.393); the last three books of the *Confessiones* (397–400); *De Genesi ad litteram* (404–15); and book eleven of *De civitate Dei* (417–18).²⁷ The result of this development in Augustine's thinking about Creation is helpfully summarised by Karla Pollmann, who argues that Augustine has two distinct, though related, positions concerning the effects of the Fall on Creation in Genesis: an early pessimistic view, which gives way to a more optimistic outlook as his thinking matured.²⁸ In Augustine's early *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, he perceives the relationship between Creation and humanity through Classical and Hebraic notions of a pessimistic cosmos that starts with a Golden Age of Paradise that is distorted, and which subsequently declines. Augustine's earlier vision understands Creation itself to be transformed by the actions of humans, and that any inimical elements within it are a consequence of those actions.²⁹ In addition to these classical and Jewish influences, Augustine was also influenced in his early perception by Christian exegetes like Basil the Great and St Ambrose who posit that, though Paradise was itself cursed in the Fall, Creation is now used by God for the development of humanity towards redemption.³⁰ It is this vision of Creation which shapes Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, evidenced by his interpretation of the critical verse Gen. 3:18, 'spinas et tribulos germinabit tibi et comedes herbas terrae' ('[t]horns and thistles shall it bring

²⁶ Numerous scholars have noted the evolution of Augustine's ideas. For example, H. Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16–21* (Leiden, 2006), p. 159.

²⁷ For a summary see St Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. R. J. Teske (Washington, DC, 1990), p. 3.

²⁸ K. Pollmann, 'Human Sin and Natural Environment: Augustine's Two Positions on Genesis 3:18', *Augustinian Studies* 41 (2010), 69–85, at 70.

²⁹ Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 71.

³⁰ Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 71.

forth to you: and you shall eat the herbs of the earth'),³¹ as portraying a harmonious Creation that only becomes inimical to humanity after the Fall: 'Ergo dicendum est, quod per peccatum hominis terra maledicta sit, ut spinas pareret' ('Therefore it should be said, that through the sin of man the earth was cursed, so as to bring forth thorns').³² As noted by Hanneke Reuling, Augustine likewise follows the exegeses of Basil and Ambrose in interpreting this punishment as functioning to push humanity towards redemption:³³

sed ut peccati humani crimen semper hominibus ante oculos poneret, quo admonerentur aliquando averti a peccatis et ad dei praecepta converti.³⁴

(But so that it should always place before the eyes of men the judgment of human sin, whereby they might from time to time be admonished by it to turn away from their sins and back to God's commandments.)

Augustine is not completely convinced by his own exegesis, however, and is incapable of reconciling the prelapsarian Paradise described in Gen. 1:24–25, where God declares that all the beasts (including reptiles) he made are good, with the existence of seemingly useless creatures, including flies and worms.³⁵ Augustine resolves this paradox by joining these hardships with the exegesis above, where the creatures can function in the same manner as the thorns in Gen. 3: to help push humanity towards redemption.

In Augustine's later work, *De Genesi ad litteram*, the uncertainty expressed in his earlier commentary is replaced by a fully formed and consistent exegesis, and his central interpretation of the Fall has shifted: where before Creation was cursed by the Fall, Augustine here argues that Creation is wholly good, suffering no transformational effects. In his commentary on the same verse, Gen. 3:18,

³¹ All biblical quotations taken from *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber and R. Gryson, 5th edn (Stuttgart, 2007).

³² Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, ed. D. Weber, CSEL 91 (Vienna, 1998), p. 85; see also Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 72–73.

³³ See Reuling, *After Eden*, p. 178.

³⁴ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, p. 85.

³⁵ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, pp. 92–93; see Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 75.

Augustine reinterprets the emergence of thorns to represent not transformation on the part of Creation, but instead an ontological separation based on the fallen state of humanity:

*Spinās et tribulos pariet tibi, ut haec etiam antea terra pariens non tamen homini pareret ad laborem, sed cuiusque modi animalibus conuenientem cibum [...] tunc autem coeperit ista homini parere ad aerumnosum negotium, cum post peccatum coepit in terra laborare.*³⁶

(It will bring forth thorns and spiny plants for you, this may also [be interpreted] that the earth brought them forth before, not to submit man to work, but as fitting food for animals of this kind [...] then, however, that began to subject man to wretched work, when after sin he began to labour on the earth.)

Reuling notes how Augustine's interpretation centres on the pronoun *tibi*, where the thorns and thistles were always present in Creation, but have now 'changed their purpose [...] before sin the thorns and thistles grew for other reasons, and after sin, they were produced *for Adam*'.³⁷ Charles Mathewes likewise argues that Augustine here sees Creation as inherently good: 'for reasons both Scriptural and metaphysical, Augustine holds that it is the quality of orientation to that world that is the source of our malady'.³⁸ In Augustine's mature exegesis it is our relational orientation that has been distorted by the Fall, not Creation itself. The harmonious or antagonistic relationship between Creation and humanity depends on, in Pollmann's words, 'the measure of agreement ("congruentia") with deficient (i.e., post-lapsarian) human nature'.³⁹ The focus of the exegesis is entirely anthropocentric, and Creation retains its status of good regardless of what our perception of it may be. Augustine has re-sanctified Creation and allowed the problem of natural evil to be seen much as the problem of moral evil: a non-entity based purely upon humanity's fallen state of being in relation to God

³⁶ Augustine, *Sancti Aureli Augustini De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 28.1 (Vienna, 1895), p. 84.

³⁷ Reuling, *After Eden*, p. 196.

³⁸ C. Mathewes, 'A Worldly Augustinianism: Augustine's Sacramental Vision of Creation', *Augustinian Studies* 41 (2010), 333–48, at 341.

³⁹ Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 83; See also, Augustine, *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De moribus Manichaeorum libri duo*, ed. J. B. Bauer, CSEL 90 (Vienna, 1992), Bk II.17, p. 102.

and Creation.⁴⁰ This disharmony with nature is therefore dependent upon the level of moral and spiritual holiness of the individual human and, as Pollmann argues, the inimical relational position between humanity and Creation can be sometimes reversed.⁴¹

The Venerable Bede's Exegesis

Bede's *In Genesim* is an early text in his career, composed sometime between 717 and 725, which places it after the VCM (705–16), and either concurrent with or slightly before his VCP (c.721).⁴² In the text Bede's interpretation of the Fall in the pivotal Gen. 3:18 verse draws heavily on Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*:⁴³

Per peccatum enim hominis terra maledicta est, ut spinas pareret, non ut ipsa poenas sentiret quae sine sensu est, sed ut peccati humani crimen semper hominibus ante oculos poneret, quo admonerentur aliquando auerti a peccatis et ad Dei precepta conuerti.⁴⁴

(For through the sin of man the earth was cursed, so that it brings forth thorns, not so that the earth itself, which is without sense, would feel the punishments, but so that it should always place before the eyes of men the judgment of human sin, whereby they might from

⁴⁰ This is a reference to Augustine's argument for evil as a non-entity. For example, D. X. Burt, 'Courageous Optimism: Augustine on the Good of Creation', *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 55–66, at 56, summarises the argument: 'Augustine finally came to understand that evil is not a substance as the Manichaeans claimed. It is not a "thing" at all. Quite the opposite, it is a "no-thing", an absence of being. Disease in animals is an absence of health. Vice in humans is an absence of virtue'. Also, see C. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* (Cambridge, 2001), esp. p. 75, for a more in-depth exploration of the topic.

⁴¹ Pollmann, 'Two Positions', 83.

⁴² For the date of *In Genesim*, see Bede, *On Genesis*, ed. C. B. Kendall (Liverpool, 2008), pp. 45–53; for the VCM see M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), p. 34; and for the VCP, see *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), p. 16.

⁴³ See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 282, for evidence of the circulation of *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* in England.

⁴⁴ Bede, *In Genesim, Bedae Venerabilis opera. Pars 2, Opera exegetica*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967), p. 68. All references are from this edition by page number. Italics indicate text derived from Augustine.

time to time be admonished by it to turn away from their sins and back to God's commandments.)

Bede likewise includes the section in which Augustine highlights the pedagogical function of fallen Creation which, via a metaphor of unfruitful trees, points to the allegorical orthodoxy to be learnt from the book of Creation:

Nam et herbae uenenosae ad poenam uel ad exercitationem mortalium creatae sunt. [...] Per infructuosas quoque arbores insultatur hominibus, ut intellegant quam sit erubescendum sine fructu bonorum operum esse in agro Dei.⁴⁵

(For poisonous plants were created for the punishment and discipline of mortals. [...] Likewise men are insulted by unfruitful trees, so that they might know how shameful it is to be without the fruit of good works in the field of God.)

Bede diverges, however, from Augustine's initial exegesis while commenting on Gen. 1:29–30, by arguing explicitly that the animal kingdom was equally harmonious before the Fall:

ne ipsae aues raptu infirmorum alitum uiuebant, nec lupo insidias explorabat ouilia circum [...] uniuersa concorditer herbis uirentibus ac fructibus uescebantur arborum.⁴⁶

(Birds themselves did not live by stealing the food of weaker animals, nor did the wolf seek an ambush around the sheepfold [...] everything in harmony fed on the green plants and the fruits of the trees.)

Bede's *In Genesim*, therefore, presents Creation as transformed by the sin of Adam into its present state of predation and decay. He agrees with Augustine that the function of such facets of Creation is to push humanity towards redemption. Bede also believes, however, that this postlapsarian relationship between humanity and Creation is not fixed, as it is fundamentally tied to Adam and Eve's fall from perfect holiness. Thus, Bede argues, the relationship can be restored to a prelapsarian state by way of saints, whose sanctity is great enough that the relational effects of the Fall are taken away: 'Denique testimonium primae creationis legimus uiris

⁴⁵ Bede, *In Genesim*, p. 68.

⁴⁶ Bede, *In Genesim*, pp. 29–30.

sanctis atque humiliter Deo seruientibus et aues obsequium praeuisse' ('Finally, as evidence of the first creation, we read that birds have rendered obedience to saints humbly serving God').⁴⁷ The obedience of the saints results in the restoration of humanity's place in the divine hierarchy, regaining the dominion that God originally gave it in Gen. 1:28.⁴⁸ This is exegetically connected to the common interpretation of Jesus as the New Adam, a role which the saints typologically take on here.⁴⁹ That Bede utilises the image of a bird and saint in his exegesis here speaks to the influence of texts like the *VCA* in his interpretative development, and also highlights the importance of Cuthbert in Bede's thought. Likewise, Bede's emphasis of this otherwise minor detail highlights the importance of this Augustinian exegesis in his thought, and given Bede's influence over Anglo-Saxon hagiography in general, as well as the specific saints explored here, their shared interpretation has far-reaching implications. These two exegetes therefore share an understanding of three key points that are central to the depiction of the relationship between Creation and the saints Cuthbert and Guthlac in their early Anglo-Saxon *vitae*: first, that the unpleasant and indifferent portions of Creation function in the postlapsarian world to urge humanity, the saints included, towards greater holiness and eventual redemption; second, that the Fall produced a relational breach between humanity and Creation (whether actual or ontological); third, that the effects of the Fall can be temporarily removed by restoring a portion of Creation into its prelapsarian state by means of sanctity.⁵⁰ This shared exegetical position creates

⁴⁷ Bede, *In Genesim*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ Augustine in particular was focused on the sense of order in the cosmos, though Bede likewise perceived of the universe in hierarchical terms. See C. Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford, 1992), p. 132, for a discussion of this order in relation to Creation and beauty.

⁴⁹ The typological interpretation of Christ as the New Adam was an exegetical commonplace. See P. J. Stapleton, 'Kontrastimitation and Typology in Alcuin's York Poem', *Viator* 43 (2012), 67–78, at 76, for a discussion of its relevance in an Anglo-Saxon context. For St Paul's Christological interpretation of Adam in Scripture, see 1 Cor. 15: 21–22, 47–48, and Rom. 5.

⁵⁰ This study argues that the restoration accomplished by Cuthbert and Guthlac is temporary, and includes only specific portions of Creation. For the sake of brevity I will employ 'restoration of Creation' with this specific meaning throughout. For a discussion of the relationship between sanctity and the

a place for saints to work miracles, and is at the heart of each of the texts analysed in this book. In the VCA the Augustinian/Bedan exegesis of the Fall is implicit, while in the remaining texts (VCM, VCP, VSG, OEPG, and *Guthlac A*) it is physically present in part or whole.

The focus of this study is the early Anglo-Saxon *vitae* of Cuthbert and Guthlac in relation to the restoration of Creation, and in accordance with this focus I have imposed certain limitations. I have chosen these two eremitic saints because of their direct and transformative interaction with Creation, and have excluded other, non-eremitic, *vitae*, such as the *Vita S. Wilfridi*. As a structural frame, I have excluded all the later manifestations (post-950) of both saints, in text or material culture: for example, works such as the *Guthlac Roll* and the Old English poem *Durham*. I have also excluded Ælfric's adaptation of Cuthbertine material in his *Catholic Homilies* for the following reasons: first, Ælfric's *Homily II.X* was likely composed around 995,⁵¹ at least half a century later than the latest text analysed in the thesis, the *Old English Prose Life of Guthlac* (c. 920); second, the scholarship on Ælfrician hagiography is comparatively extensive, and this study seeks to redress that imbalance by focusing on the pre-Ælfrician corpus of Anglo-Saxon *vitae*; third, *Homily II.X* removes not only most of the landscape detail from the Cuthbertine tradition, but also removes the framing exegesis concerning the restoration of Creation discussed above, a point I address in the conclusion. Finally, I have not included the Old English poem *Guthlac B* in my analysis because, first, this study focuses on the saints' living relationship with Creation, and the content of *Guthlac B*, the saint's death and ascension, places it outside the scope of this study; and second, the only scene of Guthlac's interaction with Creation in *Guthlac B* is that of the birds who honour the saint by singing after he feeds them.⁵² This scene is used in the text as an

sanctification of the landscape in later Anglo-Saxon literature, see H. Powell, 'Sanctifying Landscapes: Topographical References in Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives', Unpub. D.Phil. (Oxford University, 2007).

⁵¹ Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies: the Second Series*, ed. M. Godden (London, 1979), p. xciii.

⁵² *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. J. Roberts (Oxford, 1979), ll. 916–923b.

allegorical parallel for Guthlac's support of pilgrims with spiritual sustenance, and is not primarily concerned with the relationship between the saint and physical Creation.

This book is organised in the chronological sequence in which the texts were composed, as each of the texts, after the first, draws on its predecessors. Chapter 1 considers how the Anonymous *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* explores Cuthbert's ability to restore Creation by means of obedience, focusing on the use of the Latin word *praecipio*. The VCA delineates how Cuthbert's monastic obedience contributes to the restoration of prelapsarian moments, and how the imitative order of a monastery is a part of how the world can be transformed. The author grounds this presentation of sanctity's transformative effect on Creation firmly in the world of eighth-century Northumbria through his highly physical depiction of the landscape, as well as his textual identification of potential sites for lay pilgrimage in the immediate landscape of Farne and Lindisfarne.

Chapter 2 analyses Bede's metrical *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, arguing that in this overlooked early text, Bede is already fashioning Cuthbert into a saint of universal relevance through his depiction of Cuthbert as an idealised Gregorian monk-pastor; this is in contrast with most previous studies that have located this transformation in Bede's later prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*. Bede achieves this transformation with a novel development in hagiography, where he focuses on the distinctly monastic obedience of Cuthbert to the Divine Office, and the role of that obedience in the restoration of Creation. I argue that the VCM, as the poetic first half of an *opus geminatum*, both in form and content, was not only a ruminative and poetic exercise for the young Bede himself, but also functioned as such for its intended readers. It is in the VCM that Augustine's exegetical framework of the Fall enters Anglo-Saxon hagiography.

Chapter 3 shows how Bede's second account of Cuthbert's life, the prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, further transforms Cuthbert into an idealised monk-pastor, harmoniously balancing the active and contemplative lives. Here Bede alters the very nature of Cuthbert's sanctity from the static predestination of the VCA and VCM, into a model of growth towards spiritual maturity based on the Evagrius *Vita Sancti Antonii*. The restoration miracles in the VCP are

made to function in two primary ways: first, to provide an impetus for Cuthbert's maturation; and second, to provide evidence of that saintly progression. Together with these changes Bede further develops the exegetical framework of the restoration of Creation by borrowing directly from Augustine in order to explain the miracles.

Chapter 4 transitions to St Guthlac, a warrior who renounced his aristocratic heritage to pursue the ascetic life on Crowland, an island amidst the East Anglian fens. This chapter focuses on the first *vita* of St Guthlac, Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, which details the life and death of the early eighth-century saint. Uniquely in early Anglo-Saxon hagiography, Felix's *Vita* was commissioned not by an ecclesiastical establishment, but instead at the request of King Ælfwald of the East Angles. I argue here that Felix presents a distinctively physical depiction of the landscape, as compared to the general depictions of his hagiographical sources (the *Vita Antonii* for example), employing structures of thought that echo representations of land and space seen in contemporary boundary clauses. Such a depiction connects to the likelihood that both Felix and his patron would have had first-hand knowledge of the East Anglian fens. I explore how Felix builds on Evagrian and Bedan models in order to display Guthlac's progression towards sanctity as centrally connected to this physical landscape. Felix takes the restoration of Creation further than his models and in the portrayal of Guthlac's death and ascension the entire island of Crowland and the surrounding fens are filled with ambrosial smells and heavenly light.

Chapter 5 discusses two of the vernacular *vitae* of Guthlac: the *Old English Prose Life of Guthlac* and *Guthlac A*. First, it shows how the OEPG adapts Felix's text to create a physical landscape of Anglo-Saxon England with deeper focus and wider appeal by utilising a lexis of landscape shared with contemporary boundary clauses. The result is a markedly physical vernacular landscape which emphasises to a greater degree than Felix the connection between Guthlac's spiritual progression and the delineated landscape. Second, it argues that *Guthlac A* not only exaggerates the role of the landscape to the extent that the central conflict lies in the competition between Guthlac and the demons for Crowland, but

also that the poem more explicitly connects Guthlac with the doctrine of replacement, which joins his arrival to the eremitic space even more with the Edenic paradise. The arrival of Guthlac is also imagined in terms connected to the arrival of Adam to Eden, where both are the rightful guardians of their respective landscapes; *Guthlac A* thereby depicts the saint finding a uniquely intense joy in his restored relationship with animate and elemental Creation.

The journey this book makes reveals the ways Anglo-Saxons actively considered humanity's relationship with the non-human world, and represented it in their literary endeavours: representations shaped by Augustinian and Bedan exegesis, but which were altered, developed, added to, and subtracted from, creating distinct and potent images of Cuthbert and Guthlac interacting with a Creation experientially familiar to many who heard or read these *vitae*. There is a solidity to such an analysis that seeks for inclusion in our discourses about the ways humans have interacted with the non-human throughout history. It reminds us that people, even within a coherent cultural tradition, are never monolithic, but are syncretic, developmental, reflective, and that we should approach the medieval period with care and discernment, as well as a healthy humility of perspective. *Restoring Creation: the Natural World in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac*, I hope, reminds us as well that our interactions with the non-human are equally syncretic, shaped by a variety of cultural, philosophical, theological, linguistic, literary, and personal factors, and that the stories we tell about such interactions are born from this rich soil.

Monastic Obedience and Prelapsarian Cosmography: The Anonymous *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*

THE ANONYMOUS *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (VCA)¹ has typically been interpreted as the ground from which Bede built his two lives of Cuthbert, rather than as a text with its own internal coherence, structure, and themes.² Cuthbert's interactions with Creation in the VCA have likewise been read in relation to Bede's adaptation of them in his *vitae*. When the VCA is examined on its own, however, in the light of its theological context, which informs the thematic and structural choices in the text, these miracles are better understood as functioning within a postlapsarian world delineated by Augustinian/Bedan exegesis. The VCA explores the nature of Cuthbert's ability to restore Creation by means of obedience, focusing on the fundamental moment of disobedience at the Fall; by Cuthbert's perfect saintly obedience humanity's rightful place in the divine hierarchy is restored, and for a moment the world returns to its prelapsarian state. Creation in these miracles is not merely a set of

¹ *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940).

² For example, C. Newlands, 'Bede and Images of Saint Cuthbert', *Traditio* 52 (1997), 73–109; S. Shockro, 'Bede and the Rewriting of Sanctity', *Haskins Society Journal* 21 (2009), 1–19; P. Cavill, 'Some Dynamics of Story-Telling: Animals in the Early *Lives* of St Cuthbert', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 43 (1999), 1–20; M. Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. P. E. Szarmach (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 147–75, esp. 155–56; S. Coates, 'The Bishop as Pastor and Solitary: Bede and the Spiritual Authority of the Monk-Bishop', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996), 601–19, at 613.

signifiers pointing to divine truth, nor is it a simple point of contrast for humanity. The VCA instead reveals how monastic obedience can participate in the restoration of prelapsarian divine cosmography, how the imitative nature of order in the monastery is not purely an earthly construct, but part of how the world is transformed. The VCA grounds this depiction of sanctity's transformative ability in the world of early eighth-century Northumbria through physical descriptions of the landscape, as well as by the textual creation of potential sites for a specific kind of pilgrimage. The result is a set of miracles firmly fixed in the traversable and familiar landscape, which points to the ability of the obedient to transform the daily hardships of life, and thereby participate in the miraculous.

The VCA was composed at some time between the translation of Cuthbert's uncorrupt corpse in 698 and the death of King Aldfrith in 705.³ This was a period of novel stability for the monastery at Lindisfarne after considerable turmoil, including the excommunication of Bishop Wilfrid and his followers after the council at Austerfield in 703.⁴ In light of this stability, it is unsurprising that Lindisfarne was keen to promote its newly translated saint and expand its influence. As has been noted by a number of scholars, the structure of monastic life at Lindisfarne was fundamentally synchronistic, involving elements from Irish, Gaulish, and Roman forms of monasticism.⁵ The ordering of a monastery like Lindisfarne would have involved some form of *regula mixta*, drawn from the authoritative sources available.⁶ As will be discussed in more

³ See C. Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D. 1200*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason, and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 21–44, at 24; A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Saint Cuthbert', *ibid.*, pp. 103–22, at 115; A. Thacker, 'The Making of a Local Saint', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 45–74.

⁴ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins', p. 117.

⁵ For example, S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 56; A. Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background to Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiography', Unpub. D.Phil. (Oxford, 1976), pp. 93–96.

⁶ R. Jayatilaka, 'The *Regula Sancti Benedicti* in Late Anglo-Saxon England: The Manuscripts and Their Readers', Unpub. D.Phil. (Oxford University, 1996), pp. 30–39.

detail later, the *VCA* states that Cuthbert himself compiled just such a mixed rule upon his arrival at Lindisfarne.⁷ This type of organisation was in part representative of early insular monasticism, as Sarah Foot has demonstrated, whereby the leaders of communities would craft a 'synthetic model of holy living for the guidance of their own communities',⁸ drawn from a common stock of authorities, including the rules of Augustine, Basil, Benedict, and Cassian.⁹ For Lindisfarne, texts by the Irish St Columbanus would also have been influential,¹⁰ and thus the milieu in which Cuthbert's *vita* was produced was structured in part on texts like the twin *regulae* written by Columbanus: the *Regula monachorum* and the *Regula coenobialis*. The *Regula monachorum* is notable for what Jane Barbara Stevenson calls its 'extraordinary integrity and rigour',¹¹ and its focus on the role of obedience,¹² for example insisting that the monks should obey their superiors even to death.¹³ While the *VCA* is not primarily a cenobitic text, it shares this focus on the role of obedience and may, I would suggest, have been composed with a monastic audience in mind.

⁷ See below, pp. 42–3.

⁸ Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 52.

⁹ Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 53.

¹⁰ Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background', notes the influence of Gallic monasteries at Lindisfarne, p. 94.

¹¹ J. B. Stevenson, 'The Monastic Rules of Columbanus', in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. M. Lapidge (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 203–16, at 216.

¹² Stevenson, 'Rule of Columbanus', p. 207: 'The most common problems which the community faced, if this *regula* is anything to go by, were related to anger and failure of absolute obedience. Monks seem to have found it far more difficult to subdue their will absolutely to that of the abbot than to undertake a life of poverty, chastity and physical hardship.'

¹³ *Sancti Columbani opera, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae II*, ed. and trans. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin, 1957), p. 124. It should be noted that a focus on obedience is not restricted to the *Regula* of Columbanus, as it is a fundamental part of monastic practice. What is unique, as suggested above, is the level to which this becomes the central focus of Columbanus' *Regula*.

Physical and Spiritual Miracles

Scholars have often interpreted Creation's role in hagiography in terms of its allegorical function, treating every appearance of animal or natural force as little more than either a signifier for divine truth, or a mirror for human society.¹⁴ Susan Crane, however, has rebutted this interpretative paradigm, arguing instead that the Creation miracles are focused on the respective saints' interactions with postlapsarian reality.¹⁵ Likewise, Shockro, referencing both Cuthbert and Guthlac, argues that animals are 'colleagues in God's creation' that 'are able to participate in productive relationships with saints'.¹⁶ This study builds on such approaches, and argues that the *VCA* focuses on the physical landscape in which Cuthbert lived, with a predilection towards an almost proto-historical compiling of place names and relevant physical descriptions.¹⁷ The author of the *VCA* has provided his own answer to these charges with an interpretation taken from, as I have argued elsewhere, Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew*.¹⁸ The *VCA* utilises the material from the commentary to make a distinction between physical and spiritual miracles in the vision given to Cuthbert of Bishop Aidan's soul ascending to heaven. The vision itself has hagiographical precedent, employing the familiar visionary trope as well as the biblical source of Jacob and his ladder.¹⁹ The *VCA* alters the depiction of this hagiographical commonplace by delineating how the opening of heaven is

¹⁴ See, for example, D. Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 60–61, where he discusses this in relation to Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, and pp. 148–49 in relation to Cuthbert; see also Neville, *Representations*.

¹⁵ See S. Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia, 2012).

¹⁶ Shockro, 'Saints and Holy Beasts', p. 51.

¹⁷ This can be seen in his consistent use of place names and the naturalistic detail of Cuthbert's journeys. For example, see *VCA* I.5, in which Cuthbert is described guarding sheep near the river Leader, or *VCA* II.5, in which the river Teviot is named in the eagle-and-fish miracle.

¹⁸ For the full version of this argument, see my article, 'A New Source for the Anonymous *Vita S. Cuthberti*', *Notes and Queries* 62 (2015), 356–58.

¹⁹ The narrative of Jacob's Ladder occurs in Gen. 28:11–12; though patristic exegesis interpreted the image of angels ascending and descending in John 1:51 as related, and therefore applied Christological typology to both.

specifically a blessing of holy perception, rather than a description of the physical world:

Jerome:

*Aperiuntur autem caeli non
reseratione elementorum, sed
spiritualibus oculis quibus
et Hiezechiel in principio
uoluminis sui apertos eos
esse commemorate.*²⁰

(The heavens are opened,
however, not by an unfastening of the elements, but
[they are opened] to the
spiritual eyes; just as Ezekiel
at the beginning of his book
records that they were
opened.)

VCA:

*hoc est coelo aperto non
reseratione elementorum, sed
spiritualibus oculis intuens.*²¹

(For through the opened
heaven – not by a parting
asunder of the natural ele-
ments but by the sight of his
spiritual eyes –)

The inclusion of this interpretative line has no precedent in hagiographical history, and its application here can be read as a deliberate alteration in the VCA to delineate interaction between types of miracles and Creation. Whereas Bede later allegorises this moment,²² the VCA explicitly demonstrates that certain miracles do not directly affect Creation, while others do. The subsequent miracles, therefore, involving the restoration of Creation, belong to the category of physical miracle, a transformation of a physical portion of the postlapsarian world.

The same lexical care is taken by the author in a parallel episode to the vision of Aidan's soul, VCA IV.10, the only other vision Cuthbert is given of heaven, where he sees the soul of a brother being led to heaven in the hands of angels.²³ While sharing little in terms of

²⁰ *Sancti Hieronymi Presbyteri. Commentariorum in Mathaeum libri iv*, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adrian, CCSL 77 (Turnhout, 1969), p. 19. Shared lines are in italics.

²¹ VCA, pp. 68–69. Shared lines are in italics.

²² See VCP, p. 166.

²³ VCA, p. 126. The image of the choir of saints set amid the angels in heaven has a lexical parallel in Cassiodorus' *Expositions on the Psalms*. Compare VCA, 'et in choro angelorum sanctorum martyrum collocatam',

phrasing with the vision of Aidan, and including no biblical framing, the first sentence of this chapter makes the same distinction: ‘Fidelissima abbatissa Aelfleda de sancto episcopo aliud *scientie spiritalis miraculum* mihi reuelauit’ (‘The most faithful abbess Ælf-flæd related to me another *miracle of spiritual knowledge* concerning the holy bishop’).²⁴ This is the only time the *VCA* describes something specifically as a spiritual miracle, and it aligns precisely with the vision of Aidan and the description of Cuthbert’s spiritual eyes. The *VCA* thereby distinguishes between miracles that are primarily physical and those that are of a different order, primarily spiritual, which do not affect Creation.

The contrast between these spiritual miracles and those that directly affect the created world is displayed in the most unadorned of all the restoration miracles in the *VCA*, where Cuthbert saves his foster-mother’s house from a fire in the village of Hruringham (II.7). While the miracle has its hagiographical precedent in Sulpicius Severus’ *Vita Martini*, the *VCA*’s presentation of Cuthbert’s power over wind bears little lexical similarity with this influential *vita*, and functions distinctly. In the *Vita Martini*, St Martin lights a fire to destroy an important pagan shrine, and it is only when the fire threatens an adjoining house that Martin climbs up in front of the blaze and miraculously deflects it.²⁵ Sulpicius interprets this as the fire acting on the orders of Martin: ‘Ita vertute Martini ibi tantum ignis est operatus, ubi iussus est’ (‘Thus, by the virtue of Martin, the fire only acted where *it was ordered to do so*’).²⁶ This episode is distinct from Cuthbert’s fire miracle in two fundamental ways: first, the fire is the direct result of Martin’s actions, whereas the fire Cuthbert

with *Expositio Psalmorum*, Library of Latin Texts (based on CCSL 97–98, ed. M. Adriaen), online (Turnhout, 2010), Ps. 118, linea 449, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx?ctx=1108218>. All references taken from this edition: ‘Ecce de illo *choro sanctorum et martyrum* uerba sonuerunt’.

²⁴ *VCA*, pp. 126–27. I have emended Colgrave’s spelling of the Abbess’ name from ‘Aelfflæd’ to ‘Ælf-flæd’ to reflect Old English orthographic convention.

²⁵ *Vita di Martino, Vita di Ilarione, in memoria di Paola*, ed. C. Mohrmann, A. A. R. Bastiaensen, J. W. Smit, L. Canali, and C. Moreschini’ (Milan, 1983), Ch. XIV.2, p. 36. All references to this text will be from this edition.

²⁶ *Vita Martini*, Ch. XIV.2, p. 36.