

BOOKS, BOOK SACHELS, AND SHRINES IN THE BOOK OF DEER
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by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History

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ABSTRACT

The Book of Deer (Cambridge University Library, MS Ii.6.32), a small gospel book usually dated to the late ninth or early tenth century CE and attributed to present-day Scotland, has inspired heightened scholarly interest in recent decades, although art historical inquiries remain relatively underexplored. Among the many questions posed by Deer's idiosyncratic art is the identity of the four full-page figures prefacing the gospel texts, whose inconsistencies with early medieval evangelist iconography have invited a host of alternate explanations. Amid these debates, the prominent house-shaped form resting over the mid-section of three of the four figures has received little critical scholarly attention aside from its identification as a book satchel or a house-shaped shrine. My thesis contends that this motif, far from being a mere attribute, was a locus for multiple meanings that, when considered alongside the possible function(s) of the Book of Deer, contributes crucial perspectives on the interpretation and function of its figural imagery.

After reviewing the art historical research to date on the Book of Deer, I employ a range of artistic, material, textual, and exegetical evidence to support my central claim that the Deer motif operated as a multivalent sign for both a house-shaped shrine and a book satchel for the gospels. I argue that the many levels of form, function, and symbolism upon which gospel books, book satchels, and house-shaped shrines were linked in the early medieval Insular world imbued the conflation of these forms in Deer with expansive yet circumscribed meanings that facilitated the book's performance of multiple, overlapping roles. My findings further support a reading of

the figures as different versions of Christ, a theory first proposed by Dominic Marner in a 2002 essay.

Introduction

Unlike most medieval manuscripts, the Book of Deer has its own website and volunteer organization. The mission of the locally run Book of Deer Project—to act as a “catalyst for renewed academic interest, research and community development in the North East of Scotland”—illustrates the degree to which this small gospel book has been called upon to bolster community pride and identity in the last two decades.¹ Heightened interest in the Book of Deer, usually dated by scholars to the late ninth or early tenth century CE, has resulted not only in the foundation of the Book of Deer Project, but also in the construction of a local visitor’s center, the online digitization of the manuscript, and even a coloring book.² Meanwhile, an attendant surge in academic

¹ The mission statement of the Book of Deer Project appears on their website, <http://www.bookofdeer.co.uk/>, launched in November of 1998. Also see Katherine Forsyth, preface and acknowledgments to *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), xv. According to Forsyth, the Book of Deer Project was established in 1996-97 by the Central Buchanan Tourism Group, Maud, with support of the Aberdeenshire Council and the local MP and Scottish National Party leader, Alex Salmond.

² Although Cambridge University Library has assisted the Book of Deer Project in providing wider access to the manuscript, the book’s location outside of Scotland has generated some controversy. As the manuscript was gaining wider exposure in the mid-1990s, the SNP and others began to call for its repatriation. For this issue, see Forsyth, preface to *Studies*, xiv. The Deer visitor’s center, staffed by the “Friends of the Book of Deer Project” was created in 2002 to provide a space for local interest. Sponsors of the Book of Deer Project funded the initial digitization of the manuscript for SCRAN (www.scran.ac.uk), a digital resource for Scottish history and culture under the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Shortly thereafter, Cambridge University Library created an online version at http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/book_of_deer/. The visitor’s center and both digitization

interest has led to several regional conference sessions and papers devoted to the book, including the recent symposium, “Cultural Icons of Medieval Scotland,” held in July of 2009 and sponsored by the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies. In addition, a comprehensive volume of new essays, published in 2008, is the result of two local conferences from the last decade.³

Yet amid this flurry of attention, art historical questions on the Book of Deer have remained relatively underexplored, perhaps due to the manuscript’s idiosyncratic iconography as well as its perceived lack of refinement in figural style.⁴ Although the gospel book has been known to scholars since its “rediscovery” in 1857 by Cambridge University librarian Henry Bradshaw, the first study substantially

projects are documented in Forsyth, preface to *Studies*, xv. The coloring book is published as Peter Berresford Ellis and Roy Ellsworth, *The Book of Deer*, Library of Celtic Illuminated Manuscripts (London: Constable & Company, 1994).

³ “Cultural Icons of Medieval Scotland,” a symposium held at the University of Aberdeen, July 22-23, 2009, co-sponsored by the Celtic department at the University of Aberdeen, the Friends of the Book of Deer, and the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies. Two symposia occurred in September 1997, the first of which was a small gathering organized by Katherine Forsyth to address the Book of Deer’s absence in studies of Scottish and Irish artifacts; the second comprised a “study day” by James Porter of the Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University, as part of the larger International Conference “After Columba, after Calvin: Community and Identity in the Religious Traditions of North East Scotland,” September 5-7, 1997. Several of these papers were later published in Katherine Forsyth, ed., *Studies on the Book of Deer* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008) (henceforth Forsyth, *Studies*).

⁴ For example, of the fifteen essays published in Forsyth, *Studies*, only one was fully devoted to art historical questions, a proportion that illustrates the wider trajectory of Deer scholarship in general. The imagery has been described as “crude,” “barbaric,” and “zany,” the latter used recently in Forsyth, preface to *Studies*, xiii.

devoted to art historical questions on the Book of Deer was not published until 1980, in a landmark essay by Kathleen Hughes.⁵

The art historical studies published since Hughes's article have paid special attention to the iconographic and stylistic problems posed by the manuscript's figurative art, especially the four full-page figures prefacing the gospel texts (fols. 4v, 16v, 29v, 41v) (figs. 3, 5, 8, 11).⁶ Although the location of these figures at the head of each gospel led Hughes to identify them as the four evangelists, their many inconsistencies with early medieval evangelist portrait iconography have caused others to seek alternate explanations. Proposals have ranged from identifying the four figures as evangelists, as Old Testament prophets, and as different versions of Christ. In the absence of a readily comparable figural program, these various attributions have been

⁵ Kathleen Hughes, "The Book of Deer (Cambridge University Library MS. li.6.32)," in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources*, ed. David Dumville, Studies in Celtic History (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1980), 22-37. Earlier studies with some analysis of art historical elements include John Stuart, *The Book of Deer* (Edinburgh: Spalding Club, 1869); O.K. Werckmeister, "Three Problems of Tradition in Pre-Carolingian Figure Style: From Visigothic to Insular Illumination," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Section C, 63 (1962-64): 167-189; and J. J. G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts: 6th to the 9th Century*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 1 (London: Harvey Miller, 1978), 87, no. 72; illus. 329-332, 334-340. For Bradshaw and the Book of Deer, see below note 12.

⁶ The numbering of the figures in this thesis follows the order of foliation in the Book of Deer. The three major art historical studies published since Hughes's article are: Jane Geddes, "The Art of the Book of Deer," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 128 (1998): 537-549; Dominic Marnier, "The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the Book of Deer," *Medieval Archaeology* 46 (2002): 1-28; and Isabel Henderson, "Understanding the Figurative Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer," in Forsyth, *Studies*, 32-66, superseding Isabel Henderson, "Abstracts: The Book of Deer," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. Ellis Evans et al. (Oxford, 1983), 278.

formed by piecing together iconographic and stylistic comparanda from throughout the Insular world.

While recognizing the value of these findings, this thesis will adopt a different approach. Specifically, it will examine the problem of the identify of the four full-page figures through the lens of an iconographical attribute that has yet to receive a sustained study: the prominent house-shaped form resting over the mid-section of three of the four figures, identified by scholars as a book satchel or a house-shaped shrine.⁷ By extracting and expanding upon the possible meanings embedded in this motif, along with a consideration of the potential function(s) of the Book of Deer, I hope to enrich current readings of the four full-page figures, while providing a new perspective on their identities.

⁷ Kenneth Jackson identified the motif as a house-shaped reliquary and *not* a book satchel, while Marner and Henderson identified it as a book satchel and *not* a reliquary. Kenneth Jackson, *The Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 10 n. 1; Marner, “Sword of Spirit,” 13-14; and Henderson, “Understanding Figurative Style,” 57 n. 10. Others admit both possibilities, including Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 87; Hughes, “Book of Deer,” 28; and Geddes, “Art of Deer,” 538.

Chapter 1

THE BOOK OF DEER

1.1. Description and Text

The Book of Deer was acquired by Cambridge University as part of the library of John Moore, bishop of Ely (1646-1714), whose impressive book collection was bequeathed to the college in 1715.⁸ Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the manuscript between Moore's library, where it is recorded in Edward Bernard's *Catalogi librorum manusccriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae* of 1697,⁹ and its location at the monastery of Deer in Aberdeenshire, at least by the first half of the twelfth century, is difficult to ascertain. The documentation concerning the 1587 dissolution of the Cistercian monastery, which may have received the original abbey's movable property, contains no information about its library.¹⁰ A single clue may reside in an entry from

⁸ The library was first sold to King George I who bequeathed it to Cambridge University. For Moore, his collection, and the bequest, see Peter Meadows, "Moore, John (1646–1714)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19126>; and Patrick Zutshi, "The Book of Deer after c. 1150," in Forsyth, *Studies*, 102-104 [98-115].

⁹ Edward Bernard, *Catalogi librorum manusccriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae*, vol. 2, part I (Oxford, 1697) no. 663, with a fuller description in "Addenda & Emendanda," 403; cited in Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 102-103.

¹⁰ Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 99, 101-102, with references to the deed of resignation. For more on the Cistercian monastery that replaced the original foundation, see below note 31.

the *Diary* of John Evelyn (1620-1706), dated March 10, 1695, which describes a book with textual characteristics strikingly similar to the Book of Deer.¹¹ After the manuscript's arrival at Cambridge University in the early eighteenth century, it remained relatively neglected until Henry Bradshaw noticed it in 1857, leading to the first published edition by John Stuart in 1869.¹²

Cambridge University Library, MS li.6.32 is a small gospel book measuring 153 x 110 mm (approximately 6 x 4.3 inches), comprised of 86 folios. The neat Insular minuscule of the biblical text is thought by most scholars to be the work

¹¹ When Evelyn saw the book, it was in the possession of the antiquarian Thomas Gale (1635/6-1702), then High Master of St. Paul's School, London. The entry states: "Dr. Gale shewed me a MS. of some parts of the New Test. in vulg: Lect: that had belonged to a Monastery in the north of Scotland, which he esteemed to be above 800 years old: some considerable various readings observable as in I: John [] & Genealogies of St. Luke, left out &c: query more." E. S. de Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*, vol. 5, *Kalendarium, 1690-1706* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 206; also quoted in Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 101. Zutshi surmised that Gale may have received the gospel book from the antiquarian John Aubrey (1626-1697), since Aubrey owned a sixteenth-century register that had belonged to the Cistercian abbey of Deer (*ibid.*, 101-102).

¹² Stuart, *Book of Deer*, as in note 5. For a detailed provenance history, see Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 98-115, which includes a discussion of Bradshaw's role along with an appendix of his unpublished writings on the Book of Deer. For more on Bradshaw, his interest in the Book of Deer, and his occasionally contentious relationship with Stuart, see Patrick Zutshi, "Henry Bradshaw and the Book of Deer," in *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill (D.S. Brewer & Yushodo Press, 2004), 467-474. Previous scholars erroneously stated the date of Bradshaw's "discovery" of Deer (a term he himself used) as 1860; see, for example, Stuart, *Book of Deer*, clviii; Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 8; and Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Biblical Text of the Book of Deer (C.U.L. li.6.32): Evidence for the Remains of a Division System from its Manuscript Ancestry," in Forsyth, *Studies*, 3 [3-31].

of a single scribe.¹³ Stuart's identification of the biblical text as an "Irish Vulgate" with some Old Latin mixed in has been corroborated by Kenneth Jackson and others.¹⁴ Scholars have explained the many textual errors, additions, and omissions as the result of a careless scribe or an inexperienced Latinist.¹⁵ The book contains none of the standard prefatory material that usually accompanies Vulgate gospel books, such as chapter lists and Canon Tables, although some supplementary texts have been added, as described below. A single Ammonian notation in the form of a 'u' (or 'V') has been retained immediately before John 1:14, marking a section from the third Eusebian Canon Table that compares this verse with the genealogies of Matthew and Luke (*qui non ex sanguinibus neque ex uoluntate carnis neque ex uoluntate uiri sed ex deo nati sunt · u · et uerbum caro factum est...*) (fol. 42v).¹⁶ The main lines of text, varying between twenty and twenty-six, are written continuously across the page, with some pages revealing drypoint ruling and double bounding lines for the enlarged initials

¹³ Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxvi; Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 8. Cf. David N. Dumville, "The Palaeography of 'The Book of Deer': the Original Manuscript and the Liturgical Addition," in *Celtic Essays 2001-2007*, vol. 1 (Aberdeen: The Centre for Celtic Studies, University of Aberdeen, 2007), 183-212, who is willing to accept more than one scribe.

¹⁴ Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxix; Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 9; Hughes, "Book of Deer," 25-26; O'Loughlin, "Biblical Text," 3-31.

¹⁵ Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxix-xxx; Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 10; Hughes, "Book of Deer," 25-26; O'Loughlin, "Biblical Text," 4-5.

¹⁶ Transcribed in Stuart, *Book of Deer* (38), who explained the anomaly as a scribal error (*ibid.*, xxvii n. 2). Henderson suggested it may have been deliberately retained due to its significance for Christ's genealogy or inadvertently copied due to the scribe's familiarity with the section. Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 32-33. Also see below note 138.

scattered throughout the text.¹⁷ Deer's eight quires consist of an opening gathering of four (less one), six regular gatherings of twelve, and a concluding gathering of ten, with the addition of an inserted folio between Mark and Luke (fol. 28).¹⁸ Both the recto of the first leaf and the verso of the last leaf are blank. Several scholars have taken the regular quires, ruling, and practiced hand of the scribe as evidence that the Book of Deer (hereafter Deer) was produced in a competent scriptorium, although the whereabouts of this alleged writing center remain a topic for debate, as discussed in more detail below.¹⁹

Aside from John, all of the gospel texts are abbreviated in Deer. Matthew's text stops after chapter 7, verse 23 following a section from the Sermon on the Mount warning against false prophets (*et tunc confitebor illis quia nunquam novi uos discedite a me qui operamini iniquitatem*) (fol. 15r).²⁰ Mark ends abruptly at chapter 5, halfway through verse 35, after Christ's healing of the woman with the issue of blood, but before the raising of Jairus's daughter (*adhuc eo loquente ueniunt abarchi sinagogo*) (fol. 27v).²¹ Luke concludes at the beginning of chapter 4, verse 2

¹⁷ Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxvi; Hughes, "Book of Deer," 23-24, 26; Dumville counted twenty to twenty-three lines. Dumville, "Palaeography," 185.

¹⁸ For the quiring and contents, see Dumville, "Palaeography," 184.

¹⁹ See, for example, Hughes, "Book of Deer," 37.

²⁰ Transcribed in Stuart, *Book of Deer*, 15. Vulg. Mt 7:23: *et tunc confitebor illis quia nunquam novi vos discedite a me qui operamini iniquitatem*. The use of the Vulgate in this thesis follows *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th ed., ed. Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

²¹ Transcribed in Stuart, *Book of Deer*, 26. Vulg. Mc 5:35: *adhuc eo loquente ueniunt ab archisynagogo dicentes quia filia tua mortua est quid ultra vexas magistrum*.

at the onset of Christ's temptation in the desert (*His autem plenus spiritu sancto regressus est tum abiordane et agebatur in spiritu in desertum / et temptabatur a diabulo*) (40r) (fig. 10).²² While some scholars believe the texts were left unfinished, others have argued that the breaches were deliberate.²³ Dominic Marner has made a comprehensive case for the latter by connecting the texts' stopping points to themes, echoed in the imagery, of Christ's power as the Word to heal, protect, and conquer evil. However, as I shall propose below, there may be another explanation for the location of at least one of these breaches.

Deer's supplementary texts include the Apostle's Creed, a scribal colophon in Old Irish, and an Office for the Visitation of the Sick. The Creed, facing John's *explicit*, fills the top half of folio 85r, and is followed directly on the same page by the colophon stating: "May it be on the conscience of everyone with whom the splendid little book shall be, that he should give his blessing on the soul of the poor

²² Transcribed in Stuart, *Book of Deer*, 37 and plate XIV. Vulg. Lk 4:1-2: *Iesus autem plenus Spiritu Sancto regressus est ab Iordane et agebatur in Spiritu in desertum* (v. 2) *diebus quadraginta et temptabatur a diabolo. Et nihil manducavit in diebus illis et consummatus illis esuriit.*

²³ For the contention that the texts were unfinished, see Hughes, "Book of Deer," 24-25; and Geddes, "Art of Deer," 537-538. Those arguing that the breaches were intentional include Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 3, 10-13, 22; and Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 32, both citing the Book of Cerne as a precedent for a gospel book comprised of biblical excerpts. See Michelle P. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London: British Library, 1996). Henderson thought the scribe was copying from a complete gospel book but abbreviated the texts for purposes of personal devotion and informal pastoral use; Marner thought the scribe was torn between his desire to produce a book like the pocket gospel books, in which a single gospel is contained on a single quire, and the wish to conform with established scriptorium practices of regular quires. By way of compromise, he chose to end on points in the text with special significance (*ibid.*, 12). Also see Dumville, "Palaeography," 183. No one argued for a defective textual model.

wretch who has written it.” (*For chubus caich duini i mbia arrath in lebrán collí ara tardda a bendacht for anmain in truagain ro-d scribai*) (fig. 14). Both Creed and colophon appear to be written in the same hand as the biblical text.²⁴

An Office for the Visitation of the Sick was begun on the verso of the blank singleton inserted between Mark and Luke, and continued onto the first leaf of the next gathering (fols. 28v- 29r) (fig. 7a-b). An Old Irish instruction in the same hand and contained within the body of the text immediately following the verse *Libera nos Domine a malo*, states: “Here he gives him the sacrament.” (*Hi sund du-beir sacorfaic dáu.*)²⁵ Gilbert Márkus characterized the Office as a shortened communion rite for the dying to be performed outside of the mass, most likely by a traveling priest.²⁶ David Dumville’s recent dating of the script to circa 850-1000 CE suggests the Office may have been inserted at the same time as, or relatively close to the time of the book’s original production.²⁷

²⁴ Transcribed and translated in Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 8-9. Geddes identified the Creed as a later addition alongside the Office of the Sick. Since the Creed was written in the main scribal hand and is located in the middle of a gathering, I follow the general scholarly opinion that it is contemporaneous with the gospel text. Geddes, “Art of Deer,” 537.

²⁵ Transcribed and translated in Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 9.

²⁶ Gilbert Márkus, “The Sick and the Dying in the Book of Deer,” in Forsyth, *Studies*, 67-97, esp. 67-68. According to Márkus, starting the Office on the verso of the singleton rather than the recto would have placed the full text on facing pages, thus allowing the priest to have a free hand throughout the ceremony (*ibid.*, 69).

²⁷ Followed by Márkus, “Sick and Dying,” 67. Dumville refuted the early twelfth-century date employed by David Howlett, whom he presumed was following Lapidge and Sharpe. David Dumville, review of *Caledonian Craftsmanship: The Scottish Latin Tradition*, by David Howlett, *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 466 (April 2001): 455-456; and Dumville, “Palaeography,” 211, where a more specific date of the

In the first half of the twelfth century, several Scottish Gaelic property records and a Latin charter naming King David (r. 1124-1153) and the abbey of Deer (*clerici de Der*) were inscribed in blank spaces and margins throughout the text (figs. 3-4).²⁸ One of these notes (I, Hand A) records the foundation legend of the original Deer monastery, which was allegedly given to a local saint named Drostán by Saint Columba himself, who, it states, received the lands from a Pictish lord after performing a healing miracle.²⁹ This story follows a common formula of Celtic

later tenth century is proposed. Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1985), no. 1032.

²⁸ The fundamental source for the Gaelic property records is Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, with earlier bibliography on viii-xi. Jackson identified four different hands for the Gaelic property records and one for the Latin charter. Based on internal evidence derived from named individuals in the texts, and corroborated by paleographical and linguistic features, he dated these five hands to a period between the late 1130s and c.1150, neither contending nor ruling out that they could be contemporaneous (*ibid.*, 11-16, 89-97). For an updated translation of the Gaelic records, see Katherine Forsyth, Dauvit Broun, and Thomas Clancy, “The Property Records: Text and Translation,” in Forsyth, *Studies*, 121-144. For a recent transcription of the Latin charter with earlier literature, see G. S. W. Barrow, ed., *The Charters of King David I: The Written Acts of David I King of Scots, 1124-53, and of his Son Henry, Earl of Northumberland, 1139-52* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1999), 119, no. 136, with a proposed date of 1139-1153 or 1145-1153. The fact that the monks entered these valuable documents into the pages of the text itself suggests the high esteem they accorded the Book of Deer at least by the twelfth century. The practice of inscribing property records in books honored as sacred relics by monastic communities is discussed in Dauvit Broun, *The Charters of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland in the Early and Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1995), 30-37, with special emphasis on the Gaelic records in Deer and the Book of Kells.

²⁹ For a fuller discussion of the foundation story as well as Drostán’s regional popularity, see Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 2-6, with transcription and translation of the text at 30, 33. For Drostán in the context of local church formation in northeastern Scotland, see Thomas Owen Clancy, “Deer and the Early Church in North-Eastern Scotland,” in Forsyth, *Studies*, 382-385 [363-307].

monastic foundation literature and should be used with caution when seeking information on the otherwise obscure origins of the monastery.³⁰ All that is known for certain about the original foundation, which has since entirely disappeared, is that a Cistercian monastery erected on a nearby site replaced it in 1219.³¹

1.2 Miniatures and Decorative Features

Deer's comprehensive image program contains seven full-page miniatures, one half-page miniature, and six decorated initials (figs. 1-6, 8-9, 11-16). Based on similarities between the decoration and textual embellishments, scholars agree that the scribe of the biblical text, colophon, and Apostle's Creed was also probably the artist.³² The average size of the full-page miniatures ranges from between 70-80 mm wide and 102-116 mm high. Basic geometric forms, including triangles, rectangles, lines, dots, and ovals, form the building blocks for the highly schematic frontal figures as well as the other decorative elements in the book. The overall palette is a minimal color scheme of yellow, pink, and brown, although the degree to which the colors may

³⁰ According to Jackson, this narrative may have served to legitimize the monastery by providing it with a "historical origin" and "title deed" in the context of legal battles to free the monastery from lay influence. Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 2-3, 88-97.

³¹ For details on the Cistercian foundation, see most recently, Richard Fawcett, "The Cistercian Abbey of Deer," in Forsyth, *Studies*, 439-462. The only evidence for the original monastery derives from the Gaelic notes themselves. The argument that a misspelled place-name in the Annals of Ulster may indicate the presence of a monastery at Deer in the years 623 and 679 was recently refuted by Clancy, "Deer and the Early Church," 367-368.

³² Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 87; Hughes, "Book of Deer," 33; and Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 32. Alexander's contention that the scribe is named in the colophon as Forchubus seems to be a misreading of the Gaelic, transcribed by Jackson as part of the blessing (*for chubus*). See above and note 24.

have faded over time has not been ascertained. Each miniature and *incipit* page is enclosed by a decorative frame articulated with bands of color and familiar Insular patterns, such as four-cord plaits, cruciform key-patterns, and straight spirals.³³

Five decorated initial pages mark the openings to the gospels, which for Matthew includes both the preface, in the form of the *Liber generationis* (verses 1-17), and the opening of the gospel text at *Christi autem* (verse 18) (fols. 2r, 5r, 17r, 30r, 42r) (figs. 2, 4, 6, 9, 12). The relatively modest initials remain attached to the upper left corner of the frames and in no case extend far beyond the center of the page. The letterforms are comprised of black strapwork animals, whose bodies sometimes meet in a knot at the center. The lines, dots, plaid, and cruciform key-patterns that fill the empty spaces of the initials match the decorative repertory found elsewhere in the manuscript. This style of initial, both with and without the decorative filling, was well known in Insular manuscripts of the ninth to eleventh centuries as evident, for example, in the eighth- or ninth-century Book of Mulling fragment (Dublin, Trinity College 60)³⁴ as well as several tenth- and eleventh-century Irish Psalters.³⁵ The

³³ Hughes, “Book of Deer,” 27.

³⁴ Henderson, “Understanding Figurative Style,” 49. For the manuscript, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 67-68, no. 45 (included in entry for the Mulling Gospels), with earlier literature.

³⁵ Hughes, “Book of Deer,” 26, where she cites (1) the Psalter of St. Ouen, Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 24; (2) London, British Museum, Cotton MS. Vitellius F.XI (Alexander, 88, no. 73; illus. 347-349); (3) the Southampton Psalter, Cambridge, St. John’s College MS C.9 (Alexander, 88, no. 74; illus. 350-353); (4) the Edinburgh Psalter, Edinburgh, University Library, MS 56; and (5) the Welsh Psalter of Ricemarch, Dublin, Trinity College, MS A.4.20. For dates and further literature on these five Psalters, see Françoise Henry, *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions (800-1020 A.D.)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 106 (henceforth *Irish Art II*). For a side-by-side comparison of the initial-type in the St. Ouen, Southampton, and Cotton

human heads that inhabit Deer's *Chi-rho* initial are also a feature of the Book of Kells (fig. 4).³⁶ Isabel Henderson observed that the animals forming the descenders of the "In" and "Q" initials on fols. 17r, 30r, and 42r (figs. 6, 9, 12) point to specific locations within the text. In the gospel of Mark, the animal lappet points to the words *vox clamantis in deserto* [*sic*], referring to John the Baptist; in Luke, the highlighted word is *viderunt*, referring to the witnesses of Christ's ministry; and in John, the emphasized words are *erat lux hominum*.³⁷

The program of figural miniatures begins on fol. 1v with a depiction of four figures surrounding a cross and central rosette (fig. 1). Figures and frame are decorated with solid blocks of color, with white dots covering much of the background. The bodies of the upper figures are rendered as simple, rectangular shapes overlaid with a saltire cross, whereas the more complex lower figures have bodies (not including the head or feet) comprised of three overlapping registers. These registers include an upper body represented as a series of concentric ovular bands, followed by two smaller ellipses or "petal" shapes, which may or may not represent part of a garment, followed by a square or rectangular form that may or may not signify the

Psalters (and also the Book of Kells), see Françoise Henry, "Remarks on the Decoration of Three Irish Psalters," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Section C, 61 (1960/1961): plate XVI [23-40]; this article also identifies instances of the type in other manuscripts.

³⁶ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 46; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 71-76, no. 52; illus. 244.

³⁷ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 49, 50, 52.

bottom of a robe.³⁸ The lower figures are shown with a house-shaped form covering their torsos and hands.

Although Hughes identified the image on fol. 1v as a representation of the four evangelists, other scholars have questioned her interpretation due to the presence of two different and hierarchically distinguished figural types.³⁹ Jane Geddes, for example, thought the figures might represent two evangelists and two winged angels or two Matthew figures with two man-symbols.⁴⁰ Marner and Henderson, following Michelle Brown, preferred Geddes's former solution as the most likely.⁴¹

The next miniatures in the manuscript comprise the four full-length figures preceding the gospel texts, each contained on a verso facing a decorated initial page (fols. 4v, 16v, 29v, 41v) (figs. 3, 5, 8, 11). The ambiguous situation of the figures

³⁸ In addition to corresponding with the figural style in Insular gospel books such as the Book of Dimma (see below note 72) and the Echternach Gospels (see below note 78), the Deer figures also bear a resemblance to the Christ in Majesty of the Gundohinus Gospels, Bibl. Municipale, Autun, M3, fol. 12v, revealing the presence of this style outside of the British Isles as well. See Lawrence Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels*, Medieval Academy Books 95 (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1987), plate 18.

³⁹ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 23. The representation of two different evangelist types did occur in early medieval gospel books, albeit in a different stylistic and compositional context. See Rainer Kahsnitz, "'Mattheus ex ore Christi scripsit': Zum Bild der Berufung und Inspiration der Evangelisten," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. Christopher Moss and Katherine Kiefer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 169-176.

⁴⁰ Geddes, "Art of Deer," 538.

⁴¹ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 4; Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 40-41; Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 99, where fol. 1v is described as a crucifixion scene.

in the space makes it difficult to ascertain whether they are seated or standing.⁴² All four have different attributes. The ‘Matthew’ figure, which differs in many ways from the other full-page figures, holds a long sword between his knees and wears a beard separated into four sections.⁴³ The clean-shaven ‘Mark’ figure has a halo with rays extending out from his ears and the top of his head, although whether or whether not the intent is to make it cruciform is debatable.⁴⁴ The ‘Luke’ figure, also beardless, stretches his arms out to breach the frame in a cruciform pose. ‘John,’ wearing a mustache, is shown in the company of six smaller figures that could be angels; a small cross is located between his feet and the frame, its top touching the bottom of the hem of his garment and its bottom touching the lower frame.

The bodies of the three full-page figures associated with Mark, Luke, and John resemble those of the lower figures on fol. 1v (fig. 1) with a more complex and detailed treatment. Areas of the body that were left as solid blocks of color in the opening miniature are enhanced with multicolored lines and patterns in the full-page images, while a more variegated scheme of lines, dots, and geometric shapes fill the

⁴² Hughes pointed out that the horizontal lines behind the figures could echo the traditional Insular ladder throne, whose earliest manifestation Nancy Netzer traced to the Matthew figure in the Echternach Gospels (see below note 78). However, Netzer cautioned that the presence of this throne does not always indicate a seated evangelist type. Hughes, “Book of Deer,” 28; Nancy Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century: The Trier Gospels and the Making of a Scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 90-91.

⁴³ For the special treatment sometimes afforded to Matthew and John as the evangelists who received the scriptures directly from Christ, see Lawrence Nees, “Reading Aldred’s Colophon for the Lindisfarne Gospels,” *Speculum* 78, no. 2 (April 2003): 333-377, esp. 349-351; and Kahsnitz, “Mattheus ex ore Christi,” 169-176.

⁴⁴ Cf. Marner, “Sword of Spirit,” 14-15, for whom the halo is not cruciform.

spaces between figure and frame. The house-shaped form is more prominent in the full-page figures and is decorated with various cross patterns. Also unique is the scaling pattern that fills the area between the three vertical strips extending upwards from the body of the motif, a significant feature that will be discussed later on.

The next miniature in the manuscript, an image depicting two figures side-by-side in a frame joined at the center, appears at the end of John's gospel on the lower half of its *explicit* page (fol. 84v) (fig. 13).⁴⁵ Their facial features and hairstyles are identical, and the pattern of coloring in the shapes of their body is nearly so. Both figures again belong to the same type as the lower figures on fol. 1v (fig. 1). Although lacking the cross patterns, their house-shaped forms are articulated with the same scaling in their "peaks" as those belonging to the full-page figures.

Henderson interpreted this miniature as an image of God the Son and God the Father, noting the alignment of the tops of their head with the text from the Apostle's Creed on the facing recto, *sedit addexteram dei patris* (fol. 85r) (fig. 14). She correlated the prominent hand of the figure on the right to the word(s) *addexteram*, which in the text corresponds with God the Father, and saw in the accentuated double frame of the adjacent figure's house-shaped form a representation of Christ the Word, "holding a symbol of himself."⁴⁶ She drew precedents for what

⁴⁵ John is thus singled out as the only gospel to contain the complete biblical text and two figural miniatures. John's special treatment in Insular art is discussed in Hughes, "Book of Deer," 32-33; Nees, "Reading Aldred's Colophon," esp. 349-351; and Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 32.

⁴⁶ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 53. Hughes proposed the figures represented Peter and John, while Marner suggested they were Peter and Christ. Hughes, "The Book of Deer," 29; Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 21.

would constitute an exceedingly rare early medieval anthropomorphic representation of God the Father in a bust medallion from the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, cod. Amiatino I, fol. VIr), and three Pictish cross-slabs from Aldbar, St. Vigean's No. 11, and Lethendy.⁴⁷ For Henderson, the alleged presence of the enthroned God the Father and God the Son on these cross-slabs provided plausible iconographic support for a Pictish origin for the Book of Deer.⁴⁸

The gospel book concludes with a two-page illuminated spread showing, on the left, two pairs of figures surrounding a cross and central medallion, and, on the right, a richly patterned cross page also inhabited with figures (fols. 85v-86r) (figs. 15-16). The cross page on fol. 86r (fig. 16), the last miniature in the book, is marked by a large triple, concentric medallion decorated with square spirals and intersected by a large equal-armed and saltire cross that extend to the edges of the frame.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁷ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 53 n. 8; citing George Henderson and Isabel Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 143-144. For the bust medallion of God the Father in the Codex Amiatinus, which forms part of a larger Trinitarian series, see Lawrence Nees, "Problems of Form and Function in Early Medieval Illustrated Bibles from Northwest Europe," in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. John Williams (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 165-172 [121-177], fig. 22 and color plate XII. For the Pictish cross-slabs, see Henderson and Henderson, *ibid.*, 133, 144, nos. 193, 209, 210. The rarity of images of the anthropomorphic Trinity before the eleventh century is discussed in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "The Quinity of Winchester," *Art Bulletin* 29, no. 2 (June 1947): 73-85. Although not mentioned by Henderson, Kantorowicz gives several precedents for enthroned pairs of figures in late Roman imperial coins and early Christian gold-glass.

⁴⁸ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 53.

⁴⁹ The Book of Mulling also terminates with a circular medallion that is often, albeit questionably, identified as a plan for an Irish monastery. The problematic nature of this

interstices formed between the medallion and two crosses are filled with cross patterns and color washes, creating a dense field that nearly hides the four inhabited figures.

Like fols. 1v and 86r (figs. 1, 16), the miniature on fol. 85v (fig. 15) also contains two pairs of figural types, although these are distinct in several ways. The figures in the upper register recall those in the same position on fol. 1v, except here they have long arms and hands that breach the boundaries of the frame in an *orans* position. The bodies of the lower figures have the same simple, rectangular construction as the upper figures, but are larger and treated in a more elaborate fashion. The front of the figure on the left is decorated with a double saltire, while the arms of the figure on the right extend out horizontally to breach the frame, a variation of the motif seen in the figures in the upper register with their arms raised over their heads. Above the heads of both lower figures extend rows of wavy lines that could signify an elaborate headdress or, alternatively, bands of light.⁵⁰ These four figures lack the house-shaped motif found elsewhere in the manuscript.

This enigmatic image has also sparked a lively scholarly debate. While Hughes thought the figures represented the four evangelists, Marner argued for their identification as angels, postulating the three with outstretched arms as the archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Geddes and Henderson, in contrast, offered a Christological interpretation. For Geddes, the figure in the lower right with his arms

identification, along with a reassessment of the medallion in terms of its function and physical context within the Book of Mulling is discussed in Lawrence Nees, "The Colophon Drawing in the Book of Mulling: A Supposed Irish Monastery Plan and the Tradition of Terminal Illustration in Early Medieval Manuscripts," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (1983): 67-91.

⁵⁰ Both options are considered in Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 54.

stretched out signified Christ Crucified, whereas Henderson, noting the absence of other crucifixion imagery, interpreted the figure as Christ Risen, with a symbol of the blessed man to his proper right and witnessing angels above. The adjacent cross-page (fol. 86r) (fig. 16), to which the Risen Christ appears to gesture with his left hand, Henderson accordingly identified as the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁵¹

1.3 Localization and Dating

Among the many issues complicating the assessment of Deer's art are the manuscript's uncertain origin and date of production. While the Gaelic property records allow the book to be placed at the pre-Cistercian abbey of Deer as early as the first half of the twelfth century, there is no evidence to confirm that it was also created there or anywhere nearby.⁵² This obstacle has not deterred scholars from attempting to determine the site of its production nevertheless. Observing the signs of scriptorium practices in features such as the neat script, regular quires, well-prepared vellum, and ruled pages, several locations for a writing center have been proposed. As the following summary will show, nearly all scholars have posited an alleged scriptorium within the vicinity of northeastern or central Scotland, notwithstanding the many visual and textual features Deer shares with Irish productions.⁵³

⁵¹ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 23; Geddes, "Art of Deer," 541; Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 21-22; Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 54-55, 62.

⁵² According to Jackson, "There is nothing to show where it was written, whether in Ireland or Scotland, whether at Deer itself or somewhere else within the Gaelic Christian world." Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 9. Although the Cistercian abbey likely received the movable goods of the earlier monastery, including its books, Zutshi stressed the lack of direct evidence for an exchange. Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 99.

⁵³ This point was also made in Zutshi, "Henry Bradshaw," 467.

Although Stuart accepted the abbey of Deer as the probable origin of the manuscript, Hughes was willing to concede only a “provincial scriptorium” with possible links to Deer.⁵⁴ For Hughes, the “peculiar” style and design of Deer’s art—when compared to earlier Irish productions like the MacDurnan Gospels (London, Lambeth Palace, MS 1370)⁵⁵ and later Irish gospel books such as British Library Harley 1023 and Harley 1802—suggested a location related to, but on the “fringes” of an Irish center. Her analysis, substantiated with few concrete details from the works themselves, was based upon her own negative judgment of the imagery’s quality.

Geddes followed Stuart’s earlier assessment in identifying the vicinity of Deer as the likely origin of the manuscript. She observed additional traces of one of the book’s key-patterns—identified by Allen and Anderson (no. 1004) in Monifieth (Angus), Dupplin (Perthshire), and Lindisfarne (Northumbria)—in two monuments from Aberdeenshire, leading her to characterize the motif as distinctive to northeast Scotland.⁵⁶ In addition, she argued that since ‘Matthew’s’ long sword, with its

⁵⁴ Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxi-xxv; Hughes, “Book of Deer,” 36-37.

⁵⁵ For the manuscript, see below note 72.

⁵⁶ Geddes, “Art of Deer,” 541. The two monuments are vaguely described, with no further references, as “Fyvie Church in Aberdeenshire” and “a stone from Cairn O’Mount, now in Marischal Museum, Aberdeenshire.” References for these monuments are provided in Katherine Forsyth, “The Stones of Deer,” in Forsyth, *Studies*, 415- 416, 432-433 [398-438], who, nevertheless, argues (contra Geddes) that the key patterns are not the same as Allen no. 1004. For an image of the Fyvie relief-carved stone, see Forsyth, 425, fig. 13.6; the Cairn O’Mount cross-slab fragment may be viewed online at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/virtual_museum (search by item #39615), referenced in Forsyth, 423 n. 44. J. Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, with an introduction by Isabel Henderson, 2 vols (Balgavies, Angus: Pinkfoot Press, 1993; first published in 1903 by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland), vol. 1: 359, no. 1004.

downturned lower guard and terminals, was a type of weapon that originated in Britain, from whence it spread to Scotland and Scandinavia, Deer's illuminations were probably not produced in Ireland, whose pre-Viking-era sword type was shorter.⁵⁷ The problem of relying upon a single decorative motif for questions of origin, however, was addressed earlier by Hughes, who stated in regard to the same key-pattern: "These motifs are traditional patterns still in use in the tenth century, and they give little help in locating the book."⁵⁸ Furthermore, as Geddes herself conceded, a survey comparable to Allen and Anderson's publication has not been conducted for Ireland, disrupting the balance of the evidence that these motifs can offer for larger Insular contacts. At the same time, her assessment of the "Anglo-Saxon" sword type, two examples of which have been found in Ireland, presupposes an unrealistically static separation between Ireland and Britain during this time.⁵⁹

For Marner, an origin in Perthshire seemed most likely based, in part, upon shared decorative and iconographic features between Deer and monuments such as the Dupplin Cross, the Forteviot arch (fig. 17), Monifeith No. 1, and the Kirriemuir cross-slab.⁶⁰ Due to the political and religious upheavals in the region of Perthshire during the ninth and tenth centuries, this location corroborated Marner's reading of

⁵⁷ Geddes, "Art of Deer," 545-548.

⁵⁸ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 27.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Benjamin T. Hudson, "Kings and Church in Early Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review* 73, no. 196, Part 2 (October 1994): 145-170.

⁶⁰ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 24-25, figs. 11, 12. For the Dupplin Cross, Forteviot arch, and Kirriemuir cross-slab, see, respectively, Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 136, 211, 126, figs. 196, 211, 183. For the Monifeith No. 1 cross slab, see Allen and Anderson, *ECMS 2*: fig. 241a-b.

Deer as a protective talisman, conveying in its imagery and text themes of the protective Word of God. Like Geddes, however, Marner's use of decorative motifs to secure an origin is problematic, whereas his comparison of 'Mark's' hairstyle in Deer to that of the reclining profile figure on the Forteviot arch is rather obscure due to the different orientations of the figures (fig. 17-17a).⁶¹

Recently, Katherine Forsyth lent renewed support for a connection to Deer based upon stone monuments found in the area.⁶² A cross or cross-slab fragment found in 2003 near Ravenscraig, Inverugie (near Peterhead) and dating, according to Forsyth, between the ninth and eleventh centuries, contained a partially preserved inscription in a Roman display script that, for Forsyth, provided tentative evidence for a local scriptorium.⁶³ At the same time, the presence of a frontal figure on the same monument, who may have originally formed part of a pair, along with the description of a book-holding figure on a now lost monument, provided iconographic support for a local "economic, social and artistic context in which the creation of such an object [the Book of Deer] was possible."⁶⁴

Henderson took the most cautious approach to origin, noting iconographical connections between Deer's figural art and stone monuments in Angus

⁶¹ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 22-28; Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 61 n. 13.

⁶² Forsyth, "Stones of Deer," 398-438.

⁶³ Ibid., 417-426, 431, figs. 13.7-13.9. Her transcription of the inscription as '[.][i]DR[o]—' or '[.][i]DR[u]—' led her to tentatively consider an association with Saint Drostan.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 433. The "stone sculptured with the likeness of a man and a book," refers to the Skellybogs/*Crux Medici* cross (-slab) fragment (ibid., 413).

and Perthshire, as well as stylistic links to Irish manuscript art in such elements as the design of the garments. However, rather than emphasizing the need to find a specific origin for the gospel book, she preferred to conceive of its art broadly within a context of changing, innovative designs in the Insular world.⁶⁵ On balance, Henderson's approach seems the most reasonable given the lack of concrete evidence for scriptoria in tenth-century Scotland,⁶⁶ along with the steady intercommunication between Ireland and eastern Scotland since at least the early eighth century.⁶⁷ It also seems

⁶⁵ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 57-63.

⁶⁶ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 33. The excavations undertaken at the Portmahomack Monastery on the Tarbat peninsula under the direction of Martin Carver recently brought to light the remains of a vellum-making workshop that flourished in the late seventh to eighth centuries, although by the ninth to tenth centuries, the workshop had been transformed into a site for metalworking. The large-scale production of parchment, more than the amount needed for a single monastic establishment, led Carver to place Portmahomack amid the expansion of monastic networks in eighth-century north Scotland, thus implying that its vellum and/or books were produced, at least to some degree, for export. Martin Carver, *Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), esp. 118-126, 134-135, pl. 7a; and Martin Carver, *The Pictish Monastery at Portmahomack*, Jarrow Lecture, 2008. Although Carver presumed the existence of a scriptorium at Portmahomack as the necessary recipient of the parchment produced there, neither publication indicates that the remains of a writing center were found. His assertion that the community was literate and that it had scribes is based upon a Latin inscription found on a stone near St. Colman's church (ibid., *Pictish Monastery*, 7, 11).

⁶⁷ For the intercommunication between these areas, see Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D.)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 146 (henceforth *Irish Art I*). Cf. Stuart's assertion that communication had effectively ended by the time of Deer's production. Stuart, *Book of Deer*, xxiv.

prudent given Dumville's recent assessment of the script, which he dated 850-1000, as capable of having been written "anywhere in Ireland or Celtic Britain."⁶⁸

1.4 Comparative Material

Adding to the problems in assessing Deer's art is the relative dearth of contemporary related material, assuming one accepts a date within a late ninth- to early tenth-century range as most scholars have done. The absence of manuscripts (aside from Deer) and known writing centers in Scotland from this period is compounded by a shortage of other types of material remains, such as sculpture and metalwork.⁶⁹ Nor do any contemporary Irish gospel books survive that might allow for comparisons with Deer's art.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the difficulties in dating Pictish stone monuments, which have also been used as aids in art historical analyses of the Book of Deer, do not much help the situation.⁷¹

In spite of these barriers, there is one group of manuscripts to which the Book of Deer can be usefully compared—the so-called Irish pocket gospel books. The members of this group of eight gospel books, identified in a still authoritative article by Patrick McGurk, range in size from 175 x 142 mm to 125 x 112 mm and are

⁶⁸ Dumville, "Paleography," 204. He also found traces of Anglo-Saxon influence in the script although declined to speculate on its mode of transmission (*ibid.*, 203-204).

⁶⁹ Forsyth, "Stones of Deer," 429. The documentation from this region is even more scant than the already meager records from early medieval Scotland.

⁷⁰ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 33, 36. The only decorated Irish manuscripts that appear to have survived from the tenth century are Psalters. For this issue, see Henry, *Irish Art II*, 106.

⁷¹ Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 11-12.

conventionally dated to the eighth and ninth centuries.⁷² At 153 x 110 mm, the Book of Deer fits within the average dimensions of this group, and also like them, it lacks the prefatory material that is found in the majority of other, larger gospel books from this period. There are also significant textual relationships. For example, the Office for the Visitation of the Sick in Deer belongs to the same family as those in the Book of Dimma (Dublin, Trinity College 59) (fig. 20) and the Book of Mulling (Dublin, Trinity College 60).⁷³ Finally, like Deer, the Irish pocket books typically contain illustrated gospel openings with an evangelist portrait or evangelist symbol facing a decorated framed initial page.⁷⁴

Another distinguishing feature of the Irish pocket gospel books is that they were frequently copied with different text sections on separate quires and may have

⁷² Patrick McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book," *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956): 249-270. The group of eight includes: (1) Berne, Staatbibl. 671; (2) Dublin, RIA D.II.3, Stowe St. John (Alexander, 68-69, no. 47; illus. 209, 220); (3) Dublin, Trinity College 59, Book of Dimma (Alexander, 69, no. 48; illus. 219, 222-225); (4) Dublin, Trinity College 60, Book of Mulling (Alexander, 67-68, no. 45; illus. 210-212, 214-216, 218); (5) Dublin, Trinity College 60, Mulling Fragment (Alexander, 67-68, no. 45); (6) Fulda, Landesbibl. Bonif. 3, Cadmug Gospels (Alexander, 70, no. 49, illus. 228); (7) London, British Museum Add. 40618 (Alexander, 68, no. 46; illus. 213); (8) London, Lambeth Palace MS 1370, MacDurnan Gospels (Alexander, 86-87, no. 70; illus. 321-328, 354). Aside from Berne, Staatbil. 671, which he does not include in his catalogue, Alexander dated all these books to the eighth and ninth centuries. Cf. McGurk whose proposed range included the seventh century as well (ibid., 250-251).

⁷³ F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1881; repr. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1987), 163-173; Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 9; Márkus, "Sick and Dying," esp. 71-75, with appendix to textual comparisons on 91-95. For the Book of Dimma and the Book of Mulling, see above note 72. Also included in this group is the Stowe Missal, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D.II.3, ff. 12-67 (Alexander, 70, no. 51; illus. 217).

⁷⁴ McGurk, "Irish Pocket Gospel," 255.

been carried, bound or unbound, in book satchels.⁷⁵ Deer's demonstrable association with this group of manuscripts, along with other features of its art and text, led Marner to propose that it too may have been worn around the neck as an amulet, perhaps within a leather satchel.⁷⁶ Lending possible support to this argument are the blank front and back pages, which, as at least two scholars have noted, may imply the absence of an original binding.⁷⁷

The figural type and style of the full-length figures in Deer also find their closest comparisons in members of this group. While the depiction of a frontal figure, situated in an abstract space and segmented into blocks of geometric pattern, fits a wide range of Insular gospel books—for instance, the well-known Matthew symbol from the Echternach Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 9389, fol. 18v) (fig. 18)⁷⁸—other attributes show more specific affinities with the Irish pocket gospel books. Hughes and Geddes, for example, found an effective comparison for the Deer figures' ovular torsos, "petal" forms, and rectangular lower sections in the evangelist portraits from the Book of Dimma (fig. 20).⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid., 254-255.

⁷⁶ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 22. The depiction of the "book satchel" is one of his supporting points.

⁷⁷ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 22; Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 2. The present binding of 1963 replaced the earlier calfskin binding, which was probably not older than the eighteenth century; no traces of an earlier binding or flyleaves exist. See Zutshi, "Deer after c. 1150," 106.

⁷⁸ For the manuscript, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 42-43, no. 11; illus. 48, 51-56, 59.

⁷⁹ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 27-28; Geddes, "Art of Deer," 538. For the manuscript, see above note 72.

Due to the similarities in format and decoration between the Irish pocket gospel books and Deer, it is reasonable to imagine they performed in a related functional context as well. McGurk proposed that the Irish pocket gospel books served as personal copies of the gospels, gifts, traveling books, or relics of the saints associated with them.⁸⁰ Deer's inclusion of texts such as the Apostle's Creed and the Office for the Visitation of the Sick accordingly fits the notion of a traveling pastoral book, while its several textual mistakes, lack of corrections, and abbreviated gospel texts lessen the likelihood of its use for liturgical reading or scriptural study.⁸¹ The Old Irish rubric instruction in the Office for the Sick, along with Deer's worn pages, further supports a context of active use.⁸²

Yet scholars have also cautioned against drawing exclusive connections between the Irish pocket gospel books and Deer. The latter is commonly thought to be somewhat later than the average pocket gospel book and differs in its regular quire system, spacious text and margins, and neat, orderly script.⁸³ These features, in addition to the comprehensive nature of Deer's image program, have led some scholars to propose more elaborate gospel books as parallels. Geddes, for example, thought the position of the hands, the striped bands across the shoulders, and the

⁸⁰ McGurk, "Irish Pocket Gospel," 249-50, 269.

⁸¹ For the textual mistakes and lack of corrections, see, most recently, O'Loughlin, "Biblical Text," 4-5, 5 n. 13.

⁸² The worn pages are mentioned in Stuart, *Book of Deer*, clix.

⁸³ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 24. Henderson contests the use of the Irish pocket gospel books as a "norm against which Deer must be evaluated." Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 62 n. 15.

placement of certain loops and triangles in the robes of the 'Matthew' figure, displayed affinities to Mark from the St Gall Gospels, a manuscript usually, although not indisputably, attributed to Ireland and dated to the second half of the eighth century (St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 51, p. 78) (fig. 19).⁸⁴ For Marner, the complexity of Deer's iconographic program suggested the artist was aware of grander manuscripts such as the Book of Kells (fig. 27).⁸⁵ Finally, Henderson stressed the artist's familiarity with the wider practices of Insular book illumination, as evidenced in the choice and layout of illustrations, as well as the use of a standard decorative repertoire.⁸⁶ This mixed combination of elements, along with Deer's probable later date, also raises the possibility of an archaizing intention although no scholar has made this suggestion to date.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Geddes, "Art of Deer," 543, fig. 12, who also compared the loops above the feet of the Deer 'Matthew' to the St. Gall 51 John. For St. Gall 51, with traditional dating and attribution, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 66-67, no. 44; illus. 200, 201, 203-208. Nees raised the possibility of an origin for this manuscript at the abbey of St. Gall, based on links to continental manuscripts in the text, the arrangement of miniatures, and certain iconographical features. See Lawrence Nees, "The Irish Manuscripts at St. Gall and Their Continental Affiliations," in *Sangallensia in Washington: The Arts and Letters in Medieval and Baroque St. Gall Viewed from the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. James C. King (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 95-132, esp. 103-107.

⁸⁵ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 2.

⁸⁶ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 37.

⁸⁷ Nees discussed the growing interest in earlier books on both sides of the English Channel in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries. Among the examples cited was an Irish pocket gospel book that received later alterations in its portraits and initials (London, British Library, Add MS 40618; see above note 72). Lawrence Nees, "Between Carolingian and Romanesque in France: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 19 and its Relatives," in *The Cambridge Illuminations: The Conference Papers*, edited by Stella Panayotova (London: Harvey Miller, 2007), 31-43. Although

When scholars have been unable to trace artistic elements in Deer to manuscript art, they have frequently sought them in Pictish stone monuments. This has been the case especially for iconographical features. Hughes, for example, compared the half-page figural miniature at the end of John's gospel (fig. 13), unusual in manuscript art, to the pair of enthroned figures adorning the top register of the Class III stone at Aldbar in Angus (fig. 21).⁸⁸ Henderson added further instances of this figural grouping in the Lethendy cross-slab from Perthshire and Saint Vigeans No. 11 from Angus.⁸⁹ Another iconographical attribute not known to occur in manuscripts but frequently linked to Pictish stones is the figures' "book satchel," to be discussed in more detail below.

Of all the stylistic and iconographical challenges facing scholars of Deer's art, perhaps the most perplexing surround the identities of the four full-page figures preceding the gospel texts. Hughes thought these figures represented the four evangelists and sought parallels for their unusual iconography in Insular manuscripts and Pictish monuments. Geddes, citing visual evidence from Insular manuscripts, metalwork, and the same sword type discussed in connection with Deer's origin, suggested that the 'Matthew' figure represented Matthew the apostle, 'Mark'

Deer is conventionally dated slightly earlier, the later tenth century does not remain outside the realm of possibility. Dumville, for example, thought the script could date anywhere from 850 to 1000 CE. See above and note 68.

⁸⁸ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 29, 31, fig. 3.

⁸⁹ Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 53, 59. For the Lethendy and St. Vigeans stones, see Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 144, nos. 209, 210. For Isabel Henderson, these frontal-facing, paired figures constituted a new development in Pictish art that may have been due to the increasing availability of gospel books (ibid., "Understanding Figurative Style," 58-59).

represented the evangelist Mark, 'Luke' was a conflation of the evangelist Luke and Zacharias, and, 'John,' following Henderson, was Christ. Marnier combined evidence from Insular manuscript art, biblical exegesis, and Deer's text to posit a Christological program according to which the 'Matthew' figure represented Christ as Warrior and Judge, 'Mark' was Christ as Healer, 'Luke' was Christ Triumphant on the Cross, and 'John' was Christ in the Last Judgment. Finally, Henderson considered the biblical text along with Insular manuscript comparanda to assert a different kind of Christological reading. For Henderson, the 'Matthew' figure could be identified as Abraham, the ancestor of Christ, 'Mark' as Isaiah, the prophet of Christ, 'Luke' as a conflation of the (praying) evangelist Luke and Zacharias, and 'John' as Christ himself.⁹⁰

As these conflicting interpretations attest, efforts to identify the Deer figures by piecing together details from a wide array of stylistic and iconographic sources have been generally unsatisfactory. Indeed, without a comparable program readily available, it remains doubtful whether the identities of the four full-page figures in Deer can ever be determined with complete certainty. Nevertheless, a new way of looking at one motif, in light of the possible function(s) of the book, while not purporting to offer a definitive solution to the problem of the figures' identities, may offer a reading that tilts the balance in favor of one interpretation over the other.

⁹⁰ Hughes, "Book of Deer"; Geddes, "Art of Deer"; Marnier, "Sword of Spirit"; Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style." *passim*.

Chapter 2

THE HOUSE-SHAPED MOTIF

Most scholars have treated the house-shaped form covering the torsos of three of the four full-length figures in *Deer* as a book satchel hanging from the figures' necks (figs. 5, 8, 11). Although not otherwise known in the repertoire of early medieval manuscript art, the identification is based upon the frequency with which figures associated with the gospels are shown with books, as well as the need to explain the objects' apparent presence on the body instead of carried in the hand.⁹¹ It will be helpful to begin this chapter by weighing the evidence for this interpretation.

2.1 Medieval Book Satchels and the Deer Motif

Only a few physical remains of medieval book satchels survive. Early examples include a late tenth-century satchel excavated in Dublin (National Museum of Ireland, Fishamble Street I, E141: 5213) and the remains of another from Argyll, Scotland, discovered in an archaeological site revealing occasional activity from between the second and fourth centuries CE to the ninth century CE.⁹² Three later,

⁹¹ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 28; Geddes, "Art of Deer," 538; Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 13-14 ff; and Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 57 n. 10.

⁹² Bernard Meehan, "Book Satchels in Medieval Scotland and Ireland," in Anne Crone and Ewan Campbell, *A Crannog of the First Millennium AD: Excavations by Jack Scott at Loch Glashan, Argyll, 1960*, with contributions by Colleen Batey et al. (Edinburgh: Society for the Antiquaries of Scotland, 2005), 85-92; for the Argyll satchel, see also Rob Lewis, "The History, Conservation and Re-interpretation of SF105, The Satchel," in *Crannog*, 81-85. The Dublin satchel measures 500-600 x 300-

well-preserved satchels survive in Ireland, including the Armagh Satchel, associated with the ninth-century Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College 52);⁹³ the Corpus Christi satchel (Corpus Christi College, Oxford MS 282), containing a twelfth-century Irish missal (fig. 22); and the Breac Moedóc satchel, which was, remarkably, stretched from its original shape to fit a house-shaped shrine (fig. 23).⁹⁴ Of these later examples, the Corpus Christi satchel, measuring 190 x 140 x 57 mm, is small enough to have been intended for a pocket-size book, lending possible support to McGurk's assertion that the Irish pocket gospel books were worn on the body in leather satchels.⁹⁵

A greater number of literary sources attest to the existence of early medieval book satchels.⁹⁶ Adomnán's early eighth-century *Life of Columba*, to which we will return later on, recounts two closely related episodes in which leather book

400 x c.130 mm, and the Argyll satchel measures 370 x 370 x 50-120 mm. Although larger than the standard gospel book, Meehan described the former as "greatly deformed" (ibid., 86).

⁹³ For the manuscript, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 76-77, no. 53; illus. 221, 226, 227, 229, 230.

⁹⁴ Meehan, "Book Satchels," 85-86, plate 25; 88, plate 26. For an image of the Corpus Christi satchel with its gospel book, see Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Romanesque Period (1020-1170 A.D.)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), plate 1. The Armagh and Breac Moedóc satchels have been dated most recently to the fifteenth century based upon the style and decoration of the tooling. Colum Hourihane, *Gothic Art in Ireland, 1169-1550: Enduring Vitality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 148-152, with a reference to the earlier bibliography on the Armagh Satchel in Michael Ryan, ed., *Treasures of Ireland: Irish Art 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1983), 178-179.

⁹⁵ McGurk, "Irish Pocket Gospel," 255. The Armagh satchel measures 320 x 290 x 57 mm; the Breac Moedóc measures 267 x 222 x c. 80 mm.

⁹⁶ For several literary references to book satchels, see Meehan, "Book Satchels," 87.

satchels containing parchments written by Saint Columba were drowned in a river but found later to have miraculously preserved Columba's texts intact.⁹⁷ A short composition on book satchels, *De taberna*, was also included in a collection of Latin texts known as the *Hisperica Famina*, probably written as a scholastic manual in an Irish context between the fifth and seventh centuries CE, and preserved in its only complete form in a ninth or tenth century copy.⁹⁸ The practice of wearing book satchels around the neck, moreover, is explicitly mentioned in the preceding composition from the *Hisperica*, entitled *De plurimis*:

Many [scholars] heap up motley raiment around their fleshly frames,
Gather together purple vestments,
Support yellow caps on the crowns of their heads,
Smooth their curly locks,
Tie their yellow braids,
And carry bright *booksacks* on their necks.

*(Plurifici storn<in>os carnali compage globant amictus,
ostreas pastricant armellosas,*

⁹⁷ Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, II.8-9, ed. and trans. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 104-107.

⁹⁸ Michael W. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina: I. The A-Text. A New Critical Edition with English Translation and Philological Commentary* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 104-107. Out of the four surviving *codex unicus* recensions, the A-Text is the only complete version (Vaticanus Reginensis Latinus 81, fols. 1-12). According to Herren, F. J. H. Jenkinson and A. Wilmart agreed that this manuscript dated to the ninth or tenth century and that it was copied from an Irish exemplar, with Wilmart suggesting Fleury as a provenance (*ibid.*, 10-11); F. J. H. Jenkinson, *The Hisperic Famina* (Cambridge, 1908); reference to Wilmart not provided.

*giluas uerticibus alunt mitras,
crispososque sedant cincinnos,
ac libosas copulant tricarias,
nitentes ceruicibus gestant curuanas.)*⁹⁹

For artistic depictions of book satchels, scholars have turned primarily to Pictish stone sculptures, several of which represent figures in profile wearing what have been identified as books around their shoulders. Recently, Bernard Meehan singled out five monuments bearing this imagery, including (1) an eighth- to ninth-century cross in the Meigle Museum, Perthshire; (2) Saint Vigean, Angus, no. 7; (3) a Class III cross-slab from Papil, Shetland (National Museum of Scotland IB 46) (fig. 24); (4) a cross-slab from the Isle of Bressay, Shetland (NMS IB 109); and (5) the Papil Shrine panel, discovered in 1943.¹⁰⁰ In addition to these monuments, Hughes and Geddes observed frontally oriented figures wearing what they identified as book satchels on the Elgin Cathedral cross-slab, although Henderson stressed the unreliability of the drawing in Allen and Anderson upon which both scholars relied.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *De plurimis*, lines 503-508; transcribed and translated in Herren, *Hisperica Famina*, 104-105.

¹⁰⁰ Meehan, "Book Satchels," 89, who identified the figures as ecclesiastics in all cases. For St. Vigean no. 7, see Allen and Anderson, *ECMS 2*: fig. 278; for the Papil cross-slab, see Meehan, 92, plate 30; and Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 157, fig. 228; for the Bressay cross slab, see Allen and Anderson, *ibid.*, figs. 4-4a; and for the Papil shrine panel, see Henderson and Henderson, *ibid.*, 204, fig. 301. I have been unable to consult Meehan's reference for the Meigle stone in John Stuart, *The Sculpted Stones of Scotland II* (Edinburgh: 1867), plate VII.

¹⁰¹ Hughes, "Book of Deer," 28, 30, fig. 2; Geddes, "Art of Deer," 538; Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 57-58; Allen and Anderson, *ECMS 2*: p. 134. Cf. the photo of the cross-slab in Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 149, fig. 216.

Finally, Hughes and Geddes drew attention to a seated frontal figure on the Irish Cross of the Scriptures in Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, although the hanging object in this case appears to be round rather than rectangular, bearing a closer resemblance to the shields worn around the neck of figures in monuments like the Dupplin Cross.¹⁰²

However, the Deer motif is distinctive from these visual representations of book satchels in at least one significant way. Unlike the sculptural examples, which show the object hanging from the figures' shoulders in a 'V' shape, the motif in Deer appears to descend from a single peak behind the chin, resulting in a shape that strongly recalls a house-shaped shrine. The scaling that fills the spaces between the 'straps' contributes to this formal likeness, as seen, for instance, on the shingled roofs of the house structures that top several Irish High Crosses (fig. 25). These examples, deriving from the midland counties of Louth and Offaly, include the Muiredach Cross from Monasterboice, probably dated before 924, and the above-mentioned Cross of the Scriptures.¹⁰³ This manner of filling in the space is not seen on any of the sculptural

¹⁰² Hughes, "Book of Deer," 32 and plate I; Geddes, "Art of Deer," 538. For the image on the north side of the Cross of the Scriptures, see Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey*, 3 vols. (Dublin and Bonn: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte / Royal Irish Academy / Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1992), 2: fig. 143; and Henderson and Henderson, *Art of Picts*, 136, fig. 196. For the Dupplin Cross, see above note 60.

¹⁰³ Geddes independently observed the motif's likeness to a shingled roof in "Art of Deer," 538. For the Muiredach Cross, see Harbison, *High Crosses* 1: 140-146, no. 174; 2: figs. 472-487; for the Cross of the Scriptures, see Harbison 1: 48-53, no. 54; 2: figs. 132-146; Other monuments topped with a shingled-roof house from Harbison's survey include the Cross at Durrow, Co. Offaly (Harbison I: 79-82, no. 89; 2: figs. 247-258); the Tall Cross at Monasterboice, Co. Louth (Harbison 1: 146-152, no. 175; 2: figs. 488-499), and the Ringed Cross at Termonfeckin, Co. Louth (Harbison 1: 170-171, no. 209; 2: figs. 582-588). On the question of dating for this group of monuments, see Harbison I: 367-373, 385-386, who prefers the second half of the ninth century to

images that have been offered as the closest visual parallels for the book satchel identification, where, as one might expect, the space between the straps appears the same as the area surrounding the rest of the figure.¹⁰⁴

While scholars in the past have noted the Deer motif's likeness to a house-shaped shrine, it has rarely been treated as a viable alternative in iconographical analyses. Recently, Marner rejected the shrine attribution all together. Due to the overall consistency with which he characterized the manuscript, Marner argued that because the 'Luke' figure's outstretched arms would make it physically impossible for him to hold a shrine in his hands, the object must represent a book satchel hanging from his neck in this image as well as in all the others.¹⁰⁵ As the remainder of this paper hopes to show, Marner's dismissal results from a too literal reading of the imagery that allows insufficient room for its symbolic purpose or the inventiveness of the artist. By expanding the signifying capacity of the Deer motif to include both a house-shaped shrine *and* a book satchel, new and exciting readings of the full-length

(perhaps) the early tenth. Interestingly, all five come from the same general geographical region and depict the Crucifixion and Last Judgment.

¹⁰⁴ There may be one visual counterpart for a frontal figure bearing a house-shaped reliquary in a cross fragment from Downpatrick, Co. Down; see Harbison, *High Crosses* 1: 68, no. 73; 2: fig. 205 (left). A sixth-century apse mosaic in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč shows Saint Zacharias holding what appears to be a golden house-shaped shrine. However, Terry and Maguire identified the object as an incense burner based on iconographical traditions associated with Zacharias. Ann Terry and Henry Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč*, 2 vols. (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007), 1: 106, 201 n. 44; 2: plates 107, 110-112.

¹⁰⁵ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 13-14. Preferring to see the motif as a book, Henderson stated merely that the identification of a reliquary may be "set aside." Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 57 n. 10.

figures become possible. Before proceeding, however, I will examine reasons for interpreting Deer's motif as a house-shaped shrine in more detail.

2.2 House-Shaped Shrines and the Deer Motif

Michael Ryan characterized house-shaped shrines as seemingly “one of the most numerous objects in the early Church in Ireland and Scotland.”¹⁰⁶ Echoing the forms of tombs and churches, the house-shaped shrine was likely used as a container for corporeal relics in the Insular world as well as on the Continent (fig. 26).¹⁰⁷ Lisa Bitel implied an even more specific function for these objects as containers for healing relics in stating: “At the house-shaped shrines of some saints,

¹⁰⁶ Michael Ryan, “Church Metalwork in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,” in Susan Youngs, ed. *The Work of Angels: Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th-9th centuries AD*, with contributions by Paul T. Craddock et al. (Austin: University of Texas Press / London: British Museum Publications, 1990), p. 129. Thirteen relatively intact house-shaped shrines of probable Insular manufacture were counted in Ragnall Ó Floinn, “A Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard, Co. Meath,” *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 5 (1989/1990): 49-55; also see Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries of the Middle Ages* (Dublin: Country House / National Museum of Ireland, 1994), 14. However, it should be noted that there are serious problems in assigning dates and origins for these objects.

¹⁰⁷ Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines*, 14-15. Bede describes the tombs of Saint Chad and Saint Fursa, respectively, as *domunculi* and *domuncula*, meaning ‘little house.’ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiae* 4.3, 3.19, trans. J.E. King (London: William Heinemann, 1930; repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); cited in John Bannerman, “Comarba Coluim Chille and the Relics of Columba,” *Innes Review* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 19 [14-47]. Two house-shaped shrines still contain bodily remains; see Youngs, ed., *Work of Angels*, 134, no. 128; 138, no. 131; color illus. pp. 163, 164. But cf. John Soderberg, “A Lost Cultural Exchange: Reconsidering the Bologna Shrine’s Origin and Use,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 13 (1993): 156-165, who contends that “none of the shrines actually contains a relic” (*ibid.*, 156).

such as Saint Crónán, patients fondled the moldering bones in hope of a cure.”¹⁰⁸ House-shaped shrines may have also served as portable containers for holy oils and the Eucharist, essential items needed for communion, *viaticum*, and the anointing of the sick for church members who could not attend mass.¹⁰⁹ That the medieval Latin word for chrismal, *crismal(e)*, could also signify ‘reliquary’ suggests that these two proposed functions may have been perceived as complementary to contemporaries.¹¹⁰ Both chrismal, as a container for the Eucharist, and reliquary, containing the corporeal remains of saints, mediated connections to the divine through the miraculous transformation of physical matter.

Another point of contact between the Deer motif and house-shaped shrines derives from the early medieval practice of wearing relics in containers around the neck. In the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede tells the story of Saint Germanus’s healing of a blind girl while preaching in the “streets and the fields”:

¹⁰⁸ Lisa M. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: Monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 185.

¹⁰⁹ This purpose has been suggested for at least three house-shaped shrines possibly deriving from the British Isles: the Monymusk Reliquary, in Youngs, ed., *Work of Angels*, 134-135, no. 129; the Bologna shrine, in Soderberg, “Lost Cultural Exchange,” 156-165; and the Mortain Chrismal, in Leslie Webster and Janet Backhouse, eds., *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 175-176, no. 137. Mention should also be made of the “Anglo-Saxon Chrismatory,” reproduced in *Art of the Middle Ages* (London: Sam Fogg, 2007) no. 1, which, according to the catalogue entry, measures 15.8 x 13 x 6 cm and dates to the late eighth or early ninth century. For the traveling of the host to absent or sick church members in early medieval Ireland, see Soderberg, “Lost Cultural Exchange,” 162. For early medieval *viaticum* rites, see Márkus, “Sick and Dying,” who, however, notes the absence of an anointing ritual in Deer’s Office.

¹¹⁰ The Latin term is discussed in Henry, *Irish Art I*, 99 n. 6; and Webster and Backhouse, *Making of England*, 176, no. 137.

...Germanus full of the Holy Spirit, invoked the Trinity. He tore from his neck the little bag which hung down close to his side, containing relics of the saints. Grasping it firmly, he pressed it in the sight of all on the girl's eyelids; her eyes were immediately delivered from darkness and filled with the light of truth.

*...Germanus plenus Spiritu sancto, invocat Trinitatem; nec mora, adhaerentem lateri suo capsulam cum sanctorum reliquiis collo avulsam manibus comprehendit, eamque in conspectu omnium puellae oculis adplicavit, quos statim evacuatos tenebris lumen veritatis implevit.*¹¹¹

Although Bede reports that Germanus held the relics around his neck in a bag, the hanging attachments that remain on many surviving Insular house-shaped shrines demonstrate that they were likewise worn on the body, most likely on straps around the neck in a manner reminiscent of the Deer figures (fig. 26).¹¹²

Literary evidence supports the likelihood that house-shaped shrines were worn as reliquaries around the neck. The author of the late Irish *Life of Saint Moedóc* identifies a reliquary received by the monastery of Drumlane as a *minister* (Latin: *ministerium*), which in the context of the passage, according to the editor Charles Plummer, indicates a portable shrine carried on the breast.¹¹³ Following Plummer, Ó'Floinn demonstrated that descriptions of the same term in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick* (*meinistir*) and the Book of Leinster (*menistir*) suggest an object worn around

¹¹¹ Bede *Historia Ecclesiae* 1:18. English quoted from Judith McClure and Roger Collins, eds., *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Bertram Colgrave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-32.

¹¹² Ryan, "Church Metalwork," in Youngs, *Work of Angels*, 129, 134-140, nos. 128-132; Henry, *Irish Art I*, 99-100.

¹¹³ *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)* LXXII: "mo minister maisech móir-fhertach." Charles Plummer, *Bethada Náem n'Érenn: Lives of Irish Saints*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), I: 266; II: 258, 356 n. 232; cited in Ó'Floinn, "Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine," 54.

the neck and conforming in several features to a house-shaped shrine.¹¹⁴ These textual clues, however, may be superfluous, as the reliquary mentioned in the *Life of Saint Moedóc* appears to be the same house-shaped shrine discussed above that has survived with an accompanying leather satchel.¹¹⁵ Incidentally, Ó'Floinn also cited an instance from the *Life of Saint Finnbar of Cork* in which the term *meinistir* was used to describe a container for the host, supporting arguments for house-shaped shrines' dual functionality.¹¹⁶

The representation of a house-shaped shrine worn around the figures' necks would have been appropriate given Deer's probable function as a pastoral tool. As A. T. Lucas has discussed, enshrined saints' relics were widely used in conjunction with pastoral activities in the early middle ages. Relics were employed to satisfy a number of communal needs, including healing, the collection of dues, protection in battle, and swearing of oaths.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ *Vita Tr.* 86.3: “*meinistir no bith fo a coim.*” Plummer, *Lives* II: 356 n. 232, after Whitney Stokes, ed., *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, 2 vols., 1887; cited in Ó'Floinn, “Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine,” 54. Book of Leinster: “*-coro bris menistir Colium ro vui for a muin,*” cited in Ó'Floinn after A. O'Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 6 (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), 1579.

¹¹⁵ Ó' Floinn discussed another reliquary mentioned in the passage, which, along with the *breac*, held relics owned by the saint, and to which he contended *ministir* referred. However, Plummer's translation implies that the reliquary to which *ministir* referred was the *breac* itself. Ó' Floinn, “Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine,” 54; Plummer, *Lives* II: 258.

¹¹⁶ *Vita Ba.* X: “*a meinistir numha, cona shacarfaic.*” Plummer, *Lives* I: 16; II: 15; but cf. II: 325 n. 23, which notes an alternate version of the text; cited in Ó'Floinn, “Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine,” 54.

¹¹⁷ A.T. Lucas, “The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 116 (1986): 5-37.

Thus a range of factors, including material and visual parallels, literary evidence, and considerations of function combine to support the identification of the Deer motif as a house-shaped shrine. Yet while a solid case may be built in support of the shrine attribution, it is less easy to discard the book satchel identification all together. As we have seen for the Irish pocket gospels, books contained in satchels, like house-shaped shrines, also formed part of a traveling priest's apparatus, and books—not shrines—belonged to the standard repertoire of early medieval gospel illumination. Furthermore, the varied cross patterns decorating the Deer motifs bear notable correspondences to the tooled surfaces of surviving leather book satchels, such as the pattern on the back of the Breac Moedóc satchel (fig. 23). In this example, the central rosettes intersected by standard and saltire crosses closely echo the design on the house-shaped motif belonging to Deer's 'John' figure, as well as the compositional pattern of the final cross page (fols. 41v, 86r) (figs. 11, 16).

However, this challenge may also point to a possible solution. In the early medieval Insular world, house-shaped shrines, book satchels, and gospel books were linked on several, overlapping levels of form, function, and symbolism. If we consider the motif within this context as a multivalent sign, referring at once to a shrine and a book satchel, a number of new readings for Deer's figural art become possible.

Chapter 3

THE DEER MOTIF AS A MULTIVALENT SIGN

3.1 Satchels, Shrines, and Gospel Books

Book satchels, house-shaped shrines, and gospel books—especially pocket gospel books—shared many features in the early medieval Insular world. House-shaped shrines and pocket gospel books were, first of all, linked in terms of size, although this point is rarely emphasized in scholarship.¹¹⁸ They were also related through their mutual identification with relics. As McGurk observed, several of the Irish pocket gospel books, to which Deer has been compared, were revered as relics themselves due to their associations with the saints who owned them. Some of these books, such as the Stowe Saint John (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D.II.3, ff. 1-11) and the Book of Dimma were later enshrined in metal *cumdachs* and others may have been worn around the neck as talismans.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Four of the six shrines in Youngs, *Work of Angels*, 134-140, average between 10.8 and 13.5 cm (l), 4.2 and 5.3 cm (w), and 9.8 and 12 cm (h).

¹¹⁹ McGurk, “Irish Pocket Gospel,” 251, 269. For the Stowe St. John and the Book of Dimma *cumdachs*, see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 71, no. 51; and 69, no. 48. Alexander dated the Stowe *cumdach* to the mid-eleventh century, and the Dimma *cumdach* to the mid-twelfth. The Book of Durrow, Dublin, Trinity College 57 (Alexander, 30-32, no. 6; illus., 11-22, fig. 4), also considered a relic, was thought to have had a *cumdach* dating to the early tenth century, while the recently discovered book shrine from Lough Kinale, Co. Longford probably dates as early as the eighth century; see Ryan, “Church Metalwork,” in Youngs, *Work of Angels*, p. 129.

Important parallels between house-shaped shrines and book satchels also existed. As we have seen, both satchels and shrines were worn around the neck as containers for holy objects, whether for sacred texts, relics, or the Eucharist. In addition, house-shaped shrines were themselves held in leather satchels, as the Breac Moedóc example strikingly reveals (fig. 23). While this satchel is thought to be later than the conventional date assigned to Deer, another house-shaped shrine, recently excavated in Clonmore, Co. Armagh and tentatively dated to the seventh century, was found with mounts that suggest it too was once held in a satchel.¹²⁰ Accordingly, it should be noted that the medieval Irish word for a book satchel, *tiag*, could also be used to signify a carrying case for relics.¹²¹

Yet evidence suggests that even more intimate connections existed between book satchels and shrines. In the episodes recounted above from Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, the author likened the drowned leather satchel that protected the saint's sacred writings to a *scrinio* or a *scriniolo*, a term Anderson and Anderson translated as 'coffer':

When his body [the messenger] was brought back to dry land, and the satchel was opened, among the pages of other books which were not merely damaged, but even rotten, the page written by the holy fingers of Saint Columba was found dry, and not at all injured, as though it had been kept in a coffer.

Cuius etiam ad aridam reportato cadauere, et aperto sacco, folium sancti Columbae sanctis scriptum degitulis inter aliorum folia librorum

¹²⁰ Cormac Bourke, "The Blackwater Shrine," *Dúiche Néill* 6 (1991): 103-106.

¹²¹ The word derives from the Latin *theca*, meaning a case, envelope, or covering. Meehan, "Book Satchels," 85.

*non tantum corrupta sed et putrefacta inuentum est siccum et nullo modo corruptum, acsi in scriniolo esset reconditum.*¹²²

And:

When Iógenán [a “Pictish” priest] opened the satchel, he found his book undamaged, and as clean and dry as if it had remained all that time in a coffer, and had never fallen into the water.

*Quem scilicet sacculum idem Iogenanus aperiens suum incorruptum libellum inuenit, et ita nitidum et siccum acsi in scrinio tanto permansisset tempore et numquam in aquas cecidisset.*¹²³

Whereas the Latin term *scrinium* indicates a case, chest, or box for keeping valuable documents, the derivation *scriniolum* maintains additional meaning as “a little case, box, or shrine.”¹²⁴ Jerome (c. 347-420), for example, used the latter term in his circa 399 eulogy of the recently deceased Christian woman, Fabiola. Describing Fabiola’s zeal for learning the holy scriptures, Jerome stated that she stored the answers to her questions *in scriniolo pectoris sui*, or “in the shrine of her breast.”¹²⁵ Moreover, the Old Gaelic version of the same word, *scrín*, was used in contemporary sources to

¹²² Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, II.8; trans. Anderson and Anderson, 104-105.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, II.9; trans. 106-107.

¹²⁴ Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933 [1879]), s.v. “scriniolum,” “scrinium.”

¹²⁵ Jerome, *Ep. 77.7*, ed. Isidor Hilberg, *CSEL 55* (Vienna: F. Tempsky / Leipzig, G. Freytag, 1912; repr. New York, 1961), 44. In the first half of the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury regularly used the term *scrinium* to indicate a shrine or reliquary. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificorum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), e.g. 1: v.236, pp. 582-583; 1: v.246, pp. 592-593. This reference was first brought to my attention in a paper entitled “The First Seven Miracles Performed by Aldhelm of Malmesbury,” by Eric Knibbs at the meeting of the Delaware Valley Medieval Association on September 26, 2009.

describe portable containers for saints' relics, which most likely took the form, if not necessarily the size, of house-shaped shrines.¹²⁶ Thus, in his choice of words, Adomnán appears to have been making a specific parallel between a book satchel and a shrine, perhaps even a house-shaped shrine.

The likelihood that the artist of the Book of Deer was drawing upon this analogy is supported by Jerome's description of the *scriniolum* as a place that resides in the breast. This matches the precise location of the motif on the Deer figures, and evokes the idea of a dwelling for sacred knowledge worn in and/or over the heart. A similar comparison occurs in Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *Riddles*, a seventh-century text used in early medieval monastic schools and existing in numerous ninth- and tenth-century copies.¹²⁷ A verse from the composition entitled *De arca libraria* ('On the Book-Chest') reads:

My inside is filled with divine words

And my entire heart carries sacred books.

(Nunc mea diuinis complentur uiscera uerbis

*Totaque sacratos gestant precordia biblos.)*¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Bannerman, "Comarba Coluim Chille," 19-22. Since *scrín* is used to describe shrines containing most or all of a saint's bones, Bannerman is unwilling to equate it with the small, surviving house-shaped shrines, which he refers to throughout as "single-relic shrines."

¹²⁷ Nancy Porter Stork, *Through a Gloss Darkly: Aldhelm's Riddles in the British Library MS Royal 12.C.xxiii*, Studies and Texts 98 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990). Of the 31 surviving manuscripts and fragments listed in Stork's Appendix (25-26), 16 are listed as saec. IX, IX/X, or X; 3 as VIII/IX, and 4 as X/XI.

¹²⁸ *Enigma* 89, lines 1-2; transcribed and translated in Stork, *Through a Gloss*, 213.

While the Latin word *precordia* can also be translated as ‘breast,’ the word *gestanti*, deriving from the verb *gestare*, can also mean ‘wear.’ Like Jerome’s text, then, Aldhelm’s distinct combination of terms creates a notable parallel to the location of the motif on the front torso of the Deer figures. At the same time, the word *arca*, contained within the poem’s title, bears additional meaning as a ‘coffin’ or ‘shrine’ and evokes associations with the Ark of the Covenant, lending a Christological significance to the theme that, as we shall see, may also have significance for Deer.

Such striking linguistic clues suggest the existence of symbolic and, as I will argue, perhaps theologically significant links among book satchels, shrines, and sacred books that are central to readings of the Deer motif. In the next section, I will discuss how the conflation of these elements in Deer generated meaningful readings of the imagery while elucidating and facilitating the book’s performance of multiple roles.

3.2 Interpreting the Satchel/Shrine Motif in Deer’s Full-Page Figures

The act of depicting a multivalent image referring at once to a shrine and a book satchel for the gospels would not be out of place within an early medieval conceptual and artistic framework.¹²⁹ Carol Farr’s multivalent interpretation of the Temptation miniature in the Book of Kells is not only convincing but also relevant on

¹²⁹ Kitzinger, for example, argued persuasively for a multivalent reading of the Ruthwell cross, a work generally dated in proximity to the Book of Deer. Ernst Kitzinger, “Icons and Interlace: Form and Function in Early Insular Art,” in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland. Proceedings from the 2nd International Conference on Insular Art, National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, 3-6 Jan., 1991* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993), 3-15.

several levels for Deer (Dublin, Trinity College MS 58, fol. 202v) (fig. 27).¹³⁰ The Kells miniature, which shows a bust of Christ on top of a richly decorated house-shaped structure, resides opposite the beginning of the Temptation narrative at Luke 4:1 (fol. 203r).¹³¹ Although ostensibly an illustration of the Temple from the biblical narrative, Farr's interpretation of the image as referring at once to the Temple of Jerusalem, the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and ultimately Christ as all of these structures combined in the living Church, was based upon a Pauline notion of ecclesiology favored by early Christian and medieval exegetes that defined the Church as Christ's body of which he is the heavenly head.¹³² As Farr observed, the Kells artist gave visual expression to this idea by representing Christ as physically emerging from the structure rather than standing on its top as is more common in Temptation iconography. Although Farr suggested this theme possessed a liturgical significance, early Christian authors such as Augustine (354-430 CE) and Shenoute of Atripe (c. 348-466 CE) used it in sermons as well, a context that would suit Deer's proposed pastoral function.¹³³

¹³⁰ Carol Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience* (London: British Library/University of Toronto Press, 1997), 51-103, 33, plate I.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 34, plate II.

¹³² Paul describes the Temple as the living body of Christians in 1 Cor. 3:16, 1 Cor. 6:19, and 2 Cor. 6:16; cited in Farr, *Book of Kells*, 96 n. 39. According to Farr, the figure of the living body of the Church became standard in western exegesis after the North African Donatist, Tyconius, employed it in his late fourth-century *Liber Regularum*. She also discussed Augustine's use of the metaphor (*ibid.*, 66-72).

¹³³ Michele Pellegrino, introduction to *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, part 3, vol. 1, Sermons 1-19, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Brooklyn, NY: New York City Press, 1990), 61-64. Caroline T. Schroeder, *Monastic*

The exegetical framework employed by Farr to elucidate the Kells miniature—a manuscript that, as we have seen, also shares many of Deer’s decorative features—may help explain certain aspects of Deer’s house-shaped form. In his study of the Bologna shrine, John Soderberg observed that several house-shaped shrines contained a second small house on top of their ridgepoles. Following Farr, he proposed that this doubling of the house structure served, like the Kells Temptation miniature, as a means to evoke the dual roles of the Church as Christ’s earthly body and heavenly head.¹³⁴ In the context of his argument, he pointed to the detached ridgepole of an otherwise lost house-shaped shrine that contained a human head at its center instead of a house (National Museum of Ireland, Reg. No. R.2953) (fig. 28).¹³⁵ In this example, the representation of a detached head emerging, as it were, out of a house-shaped form recalls the composition of the Deer miniatures and argues for a relationship within the conceptual framework proposed by Farr and Soderberg.

Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 100-105 ff.

¹³⁴ Of the seven shrines with ridgepoles, four have a small house and two have the remains of one. Soderberg, “Lost Cultural Exchange,” 160-163, citing Carol Farr, “Liturgical Influences on the Decoration of the Book of Kells,” in *Studies in Insular Art and Archaeology*, eds. Catherine Karkov and Robert Farrel (Oxford, OH: American Early Medieval Studies / Miami University School of Fine Arts, 1991), 127-141. The Bologna shrine’s ridgepole house is decorated with an interlaced cross. See Youngs, *Work of Angels*, 139-140, no. 132; color illus., 164.

¹³⁵ Soderberg, “Lost Cultural Exchange,” 161; reproduced and described with further literature in Adolf Mahr and Joseph Raftery, *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland*, 2 vols in 1 (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1976; repr. of 1932-1941), 111 and plate 18:1, where it is dated to c. 750 CE. The measurements of this ridgepole (4.65 inches) caused Ó Floinn to propose that it may have once belonged to the Clonard Co. shrine. Ó Floinn, “Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine,” 52.

Soderberg's remarks upon the relationship of house-shaped shrines to the Eucharist are also significant for readings of the Deer motif. In the aforementioned study, he recalled Ignatius of Antioch's (d. 98-117) description of the host as a means for dispersed Christian communities to "gather as unto one shrine."¹³⁶ For Soderberg, this particular conception of the host supported his argument that house-shaped shrines were used to carry the Eucharist, and perhaps provided travelers with protection when employed in this capacity. This apotropaic quality would fit readings of Deer's imagery, a book that may have been worn on the body at least in part for protective purposes.¹³⁷

These Eucharistic associations also introduce the notion of a Christological significance for Deer's art that, I would argue, the imagery evokes in other ways. In the period we have been considering, both house-shaped shrines and book satchels, like those associated with the Irish pocket gospels, functioned as containers for Christocentric objects with mediating powers between the physical and spiritual worlds. The gospels were seen not as mere texts, but as the physical manifestation of Christ himself—the "Word made Flesh."¹³⁸ Likewise, the relics of saints and martyrs, Christ's model imitators, were believed to have miraculous

¹³⁶ Ignatius of Antioch, *Magn.* 7, quoted in Soderberg, "Lost Cultural Exchange," 162, after J. H. Srawley, *The Early History of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 232.

¹³⁷ As suggested by Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 3, 22.

¹³⁸ John 1:14. Incidentally, this is the same verse with the single retained Ammonian section in Deer. See above note 16. Andrew Louth, "The Theology of the Word Made Flesh," in *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. John L. Sharpe III and Kimberly Van Kampen (London: British Library / New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 223-228.

properties that transcended the boundaries between heaven and earth.¹³⁹ The Eucharistic host, finally, was perceived as the body of Christ himself, constituting a perpetual reminder of his sacrifice for the faithful. The mediating quality shared by these objects echoes the mystery of Christ himself, whose dual nature is both fully human and fully divine. Given these connections, it is reasonable to think that the enlarged conflated satchel/shrine motif in Deer, positioned at the center of each miniature and decorated with meaningful cross patterns, may have stood as a sign for Christ himself, who is both human and divine, body and word, contained in one vessel.¹⁴⁰

A Christological reading of the motif would support Marner's interpretation of the Deer figures as different versions of Christ. Marner's theory is attractive considering that early medieval exegetes, following patristic traditions, linked the four evangelists, through their symbols, to four different, but ultimately harmonizing aspects of Christ's nature.¹⁴¹ This tradition was followed by Jerome,

¹³⁹ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

¹⁴⁰ In the episodes discussed from the *Life of Columba*, Adomnán describes the satchel (*sacculo pellicio*) as *non solum madefacto sed etiam putrefacto* ("not only sodden, but even rotten") while the preserved texts within remain *candidissimum et lucidissimum* ("extraordinarily white and clear"). The striking juxtaposition of the decay of the leather satchel in corporeal terms, in contrast to the incorruptible purity of the parchment, appears to go beyond the merely descriptive and could merit further examination.

¹⁴¹ Eg. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.8.11, 4.20, 10-11, ed. F. Sagnard, *Sources Chrétiennes* 34 (Paris, 1952); cited in Jennifer O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography," in *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età Romanobarbarica*, A. M. Luiselli Fadda and É. Ó Carragáin, eds (Rome: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 1998), 49-94, with an extended discussion of symbolic

whose two explanatory prefaces, the *Plures Fuisse*, and the *Novum Opus*, became standard in early medieval Vulgate gospel books.¹⁴² Such a reading might also clarify some of the more unusual attributes of the Deer figures. Mark's symbol of the lion, signifying Christ's royalty, might elucidate the rayed halo of the figure on fol. 16v (fig. 5); the sacrificial connotations of Luke's ox would provide a context for the cruciform pose of the figure on fol. 29v (fig. 8); and John's eagle symbol, associated with Christ's ascension and divinity, might be identified with the figure floating above the cross on fol. 41v (fig. 11).¹⁴³ Due to exegetical links between the symbolic beasts and the opening of the gospel texts, moreover, this solution might also explain the use of animal lappets to point to significant points in the texts of Deer's *incipit* pages, such as the *vox clamantis in deserto* of Mark 1:3 (fig. 6).¹⁴⁴

quaternities in Hiberno-Latin exegesis. Also available online at University College, Cork, The Latin Bible Project, <http://www.ucc.ie/latinbible/oreilly.htm>.

¹⁴² Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* (Paris-Brussels, 1961), 7-8. Although these prefatory texts are not included in Deer, the notion of the harmony of the gospels was likely widespread enough by this time to have had an influence on the artist's design.

¹⁴³ Ir., *Adv. Haer.* 3.11.8; Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.6.9, ed. Francis Wehrich, *CSEL* 43.4 (Vienna: F. Tempsky / Leipzig, G. Freytag, 1904; repr. New York, 1963), 9; Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum, Praefatio* 59-67, eds. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, *CCSL* 77/1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 1-6. Eng. trans. Just, Felix, "Symbols of the Four Evangelists," Catholic Resources for Bible, Liturgy, Art, and Theology, http://catholic-resources.org/Art/Evangelists_Symbols.htm.

¹⁴⁴ See above Ch. 1.2. O'Reilly discussed the exegetical tradition of linking of the symbolic beasts—interpreted as different natures of Christ—to the words of the gospel openings. O'Reilly, "Exegesis and Iconography," 55.

Although not common, the connection between Christ and the four evangelists is made visible in at least one early medieval gospel book: the Gospels of Sta Maria ad Martyres, perhaps from Echternach or Trier (Trier Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 23) (fig. 29).¹⁴⁵ Each gospel *incipit* page from this early ninth-century manuscript contains an ornamental arched frame with roundels of the four evangelist symbols at the corners and a bust of Christ on the top. In each case, Christ is treated in a slightly different manner in accordance with the respective gospels. While this manuscript participates in a different iconographical and compositional tradition than Deer, it reveals the existence of an early medieval visual tradition in which the evangelists were aligned with different manifestations of Christ.

Yet since the harmony of the gospels depends on the four evangelists and the four corresponding natures of Christ, it is appropriate to ask why only three rather than all four of the full-length figures in Deer display the shrine/satchel, assuming this Christological interpretation is correct. On one level, I would tentatively suggest that the choice of three creates an extra layer of meaning with Trinitarian connotations. The manuscript appears to exhibit a Trinitarian interest elsewhere, for example, in the many triangles repeated throughout the decoration and the concentric circles adorning the cross pages.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the decorative emphasis on three in many of the

¹⁴⁵ *Medieval Mastery: Book Illumination from Charlemagne to Charles the Bold, 800-1475*, published in conjunction with the exhibition held at the Stedelijk Museum Vander Kelen-Mertens, Leuven, September 21-December 8, 2002 (Brepols: 2002), 108-109, no. 4, catalogue entry by Isabelle Lachat.

¹⁴⁶ Henderson initially proposed a Trinitarian significance for the concentric circles in Deer. Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style," 55. The partially cropped inscription in the upper margin of fol. 5r, *in nomine Sancte Trinitatis*, was recently, albeit tentatively, dated to the period in which the Gaelic note VI was written, rather than earlier as Jackson thought. Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 13 n. 2. Cf. Forsyth et al.,

surviving house-shaped shrines, particularly in the bosses adorning their fronts or backs, suggests that a Trinitarian significance may have been assigned to these objects as well (fig. 26).¹⁴⁷ In this case, the enigmatic halo of Deer's 'Mark' figure might recall the divine aspects of God the Father, the cruciform pose of 'Luke' might signify Christ, and the image of 'John's' ascension above the cross in the company of angels might signify the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸ Nor does the fact that the 'Matthew' figure is shown without a satchel/shrine preclude his identification as Christ. Based upon his attribute of the sword and other features, Marner was able to identify this figure as Christ the Word in the guise of Warrior and Judge.¹⁴⁹

The Book of Kells may again support at least one aspect of this proposed reading. In Deer, the gospel text of Luke stops at nearly the same point as the verse associated with the Temptation miniature in Kells (Luke 4:1) (figs. 10, 27).¹⁵⁰ As Farr

"Property Records," 134-135, with further literature, where the inscription's likeness to a rare charter invocation from the period is observed.

¹⁴⁷ This observation was made by Brian Gearin, class discussion, April 20, 2009. See the examples in Youngs, *Work of Angels*, 134-140, nos. 128, 129, 130b, 131, 132; color illus. 163-164.

¹⁴⁸ If 'Mark's' halo is cruciform, the Trinitarian interpretation may be problematic, as the cruciform halo is most often linked with the second, rather than the first person of the Trinity. See Kantorowicz, "Quinity," 73-85. Nees proposed that the cruciform halo of the figure on the St. Gall 1395 Miscellany leaf may indicate Christ or a merging of Christ with the evangelist, noting "Nowhere in Insular art do Evangelists have a cruciform nimbus." Nees, "Irish Manuscripts at St. Gall," 115, fig. 14. But note the possible exceptions in the Book of Kells (*ibid.*, 130 n. 95).

¹⁴⁹ Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 7-12. The question of why Matthew should be the evangelist without the Trinitarian satchel/shrine merits further investigation.

¹⁵⁰ Marner also noted this parallel in "Sword of Spirit," 18. In Deer, the text extends slightly past 4:1 to include the words *et temptabatur diabulo* from 4:2. However, Deer

explained, the Lucan version of the Temptation, in contrast to that of Matthew and Mark, places the Temple episode last, serving to link it with the beginning of the Passion narrative when the devil enters into Judas (Luke 22:3).¹⁵¹ The connections drawn by Farr between the Temple, the Temptation, and the Passion complement the pairing of the cruciform pose with the satchel/shrine motif in Deer's 'Luke' figure, and reinforce the figure's identification with the second person of the Trinity.

The coincidence with the Kells Lucan passage may also offer another explanation for one of the text breaks in Deer. It has not yet been suggested that the writing on fol. 40r stopped half way down the page at the beginning of Luke 4:2 because, like Kells, the artist's model had an image there, or because the artist was familiar with such a tradition. As the gospel of John ended with a half-page miniature, it is not difficult to imagine that the same was intended for Luke. Such an explanation might also shed light on the ending of Mark at 5:35. Although I have been unable to determine a similar exegetical significance for this verse as for Luke 4:1, the fact that the text ends mid-verse on the word *sinagoga* seems meaningful given the architectural symbolism of Deer's imagery.¹⁵²

omits the words *diebus quadraginta* which, in the Vulgate, precede *et temptabatur a diabolo*. For the full Vulgate transcription of these verses, see above note 22.

¹⁵¹ For a general discussion of the exegetical connections between the Temptation and the Passion, see K. M. Openshaw, "The Battle Between Christ and Satan in the Tiberius Psalter," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989): 18 n. 23 [14-33]; also cited in Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 18.

¹⁵² Marner observed an arabesque in the text highlighting John 2:19, *cum ego resurrexisset a mortuis*, which forms part of the passage, "Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,'" making for another connection to architectural symbolism. Marner, "Sword of Spirit," 21.

3.3 Conclusions

The several layers of readings that I have proposed for Deer's motif rely on analogies that are at once specific and general. As broad concepts, "gospel book" and "shrine" evoke objects with mediating properties between body and spirit and elucidate the doctrine of Christ's dual natures. Yet the motif is far more specific in its reference to a portable, wearable gospel book. Through Deer's kinship to the Irish pocket gospel books in its structure, association with relics, and the representation of a book satchel, the artist's choice of imagery emphasizes the local, functional context of the book as well. Finally, in its guise as a house-shaped shrine, the motif imparts exegetical and homiletic themes that profoundly expand the symbolic and didactic potential of the imagery.

This multivalency would have accommodated several objectives within a traveling pastoral context. The imagery's visual explication of complex concepts such as Christ's dual natures, the harmony of the gospels, and the Trinity would have aided in teaching and proselytizing, as well as reinforcing homiletic themes such as the Church as the body of Christ. In emphasizing the miraculous, intervening properties of relics, the Eucharist, and the Word, a viewer could have also received comfort from the message of salvation promised through Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. Finally, the program's exegetical connotations lend themselves for more extended contemplation by a monastic viewer. Such a merging of functions would have been useful given the limited resources that were most likely available in a traveling or rural, pastoral context.

This essay has proposed how one early medieval artist may have employed a single iconographical attribute to both express a series of complicated concepts and respond to the specific needs of the user or users. The many levels of interpretation

that have been offered in this short examination suggest that Deer's image program constitutes a complex system of meaning that has only begun to be unraveled. This is not surprising considering the tendency for early medieval artists, authors, and theologians to perceive the world in multiple dimensions, as part of a divinely ordered mystery comprising separate but simultaneously coexistent layers of truth. In this light, it is more productive to view the miniatures as inventive solutions for individual needs rather than poor emulations of more sophisticated stylistic forms.

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