

Categorising the *cynocephali*¹

In an article which appeared in 1983 Patrick Gautier Dalché argued that modern scholarship had badly underestimated the work of Carolingian Cosmographers, and that far from being writers who merely copied Classical authorities unthinkingly, Dicuil and the author of the *De situ orbis*, Dalché's chosen examples, were carefully adapting their antique sources to reflect ninth-century reality.² Dalché's general hypothesis is attractive, and has justifiably initiated likeminded discussion.³ Yet even Dalché failed to give one cosmographical work its due. In his assessment of the sources of the *De situ orbis*, he comments on the so-called *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister in the following manner: "œuvre dont l'attribution reste douteuse, qui se donne faussement pour traduite du grec; elle a un caractère fantastique prononcé, l'incohérence y règne et sa latinité est si barbare que l'Anonyme [i.e. the author of the *De situ orbis*] n'hésite pas à la corriger."⁴ Certainly the identification of the compiler of the *Cosmographia* remains uncertain, although the work may have been compiled in the region of south Germany or the Salzburg region in the early eighth century.⁵ The author's Latin is undoubtedly bizarre. Whether his work is incoherent or not, however, may reflect our inability to understand its structure, intention and meaning.⁶ Its popularity in the Middle Ages and its citation even on so holy an object as the Hereford cathedral altar-piece known as the *Mappa Mundi*, suggest that medieval scholars and artists did not find it as lightweight a text as does Dalché.⁷ Nor did they use it simply for what we might regard as the less fantastic of its contents. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, for instance, explicitly cites the account of dog-headed men, the *cynocephali*, to be found in the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister.

My intention in this paper is to argue that the fantastical could be and was sometimes used to define aspects of experience every bit as precisely as the measurements set down by Dicuil and admired by Dalché.⁸ I sug-

¹ This is a slightly revised version of a paper which was originally published as 'Kynokephali: kto oni?', in *Drevneyshnye gosudarstva vostochnoy evropi* (2003) 13–35. I have not, however, taken the opportunity to incorporate ideas from two articles published in *Insignis Sophiae Arcator. Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Michael Herren on his 65th Birthday*, ed. Gernot R. Wieland/Carin Ruff/Ross G. Arthur (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 6, Turnhout 2006): Scott Bruce, *Hagiography as monstrous ethnography: a note on Ratramnus of Corbie's Letter concerning the conversion of the cynocephali* (45–56) and Danuta Shanzer, *The Cosmographia attributed to Aethicus Ister as Philosophen- or Reiseroman* (57–86), both of which make important points, but do not lead me to wish to alter my line of argument. A shorter version of my paper, under the title "The frontiers of the cynocephali" was given at a conference at the CEU in Budapest in April 1999. Some additional material has been drawn from a paper entitled "Heads, shoulders and the frontiers of the Other", delivered at a conference on "Mismatched bodies? Animal-human hybrids in Western Iconography and literature", held in the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of Leeds in June 2001. Further additions largely concern the *Passio Christophori*, on which I have learnt much from Max Diesenberger. For reasons that will become apparent, I would like to dedicate this to the memory of Mary Douglas, who was delighted with some of the ideas expressed.

² Patrick Gautier Dalché, *Tradition et renouvellement dans la représentation de l'espace géographique au IX^e siècle*, in: *Studi Medievali* 3 (1983) 121–165.

³ For a sympathetic response to Dalché's work in general see Natalia Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor 2000).

⁴ Dalché, *Tradition* 141; Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book* 31–33, 150–152, is less dismissive, seeing the work, with some justification, as a parody, but without providing any insight into the purpose of the parody, beyond a desire to subvert then-current geographical traditions.

⁵ See the discussion, with reference to earlier work, in the edition of Otto Prinz, *Die Kosmographie des Aethicus* (MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 14, München 1993) 10–18.

⁶ For a recent attempt to deal with this, see Ian N. Wood, *Aethicus Ister: an exercise in difference*, in: *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 1, Wien 2000) 197–208.

⁷ Paul D.A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: the Hereford World Map* (London 1996) 45–47.

⁸ Although my concerns overlap with those of David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Exeter 1996), our approaches have little in common. While his examination of the impact of the philosophical origins of the concept of the monster has much to offer, it leaves certain issues unexplored.

gest that modern, anthropologically-inspired work, like that of Stephen Greenblatt on such texts as William de Mandeville's *Travels*, shows how the medievalist ought to be tackling works as apparently bizarre as the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister.⁹ What this allows us to do is to consider a work of fantasy as being the response of an individual author to the changing world in which he was writing, and indeed to make some attempt at understanding it. In the case of the anonymous author of the *Cosmographia* we cannot be certain where or even when he was writing, but we can identify one of his earliest audiences: mid-eighth-century Bavaria. And we can be certain that those readers and the generations that followed them were discovering something meaningful in the text that helped them to understand the changing world in which they lived. Indeed, the fantastic was arguably a means of addressing the unfamiliar both for the original author and for the Carolingian and Ottonian writers who used him, or who made use of similarly fantastic creatures.

In arguing this case I will take not the whole of Aethicus' work, but one description – that of the *cynocephali*. I will work from the *Cosmographia* to other texts, in particular to a letter of Ratramnus of Corbie to Rimbart, first to examine what the changing functions of descriptions of dog-headed men might have been in the ethnographic imagination of the late-Merovingian, Carolingian and Ottonian periods, and second, and more briefly, to consider what the bases for belief in the *cynocephali* may have been. This last issue may help us to understand the interest shown in this one particular monstrous people during the early Middle Ages. A number of monstrous races, of course, are the subject of equal attention in the pages of Aethicus Ister and of other early medieval writers.¹⁰ Several of them could serve as points of departure for a discussion of systems of classification and their function in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries, although, as we shall see, there may be something special about dog-headed beings, as opposed to most other categories of monster.¹¹ Indeed, few other monstrous beings can be subjected to the same type of investigation.

Before turning to the *Cosmographer*, however, it is useful to emphasise the fact that the existence of *cynocephali* is recorded in earlier sources. Obviously the Egyptians culted a *cynocephalus*, Anubis, as a god of the underworld. Less exotically, dog-headed beings are recorded by Pliny,¹² Augustine,¹³ and by Isidore.¹⁴ Pliny's comments are particularly intriguing, because they describe the *gens Menisminorum*, who live to the north of the Ethiopians, as keeping herds of female *cynocephali* for their milk¹⁵ – elsewhere, as we shall see, *cynocephali* are very specifically seen as male. Augustine, by contrast, concentrates his attention on the issue of whether such monstrous beings were human, *id est animal rationale* – an issue which was to be of major concern in the ninth century: unlike some subsequent writers Augustine doubted whether they could be so categorised.¹⁶ Isidore, inevitably, concentrated on the etymology of the name of the monstrous race.

The writings of Augustine and Isidore, together with such works as the apocryphal Letter of Alexander to Aristotle and the equally imaginative *Wonders of the East*, were exploited by the author of the *Liber monstrorum*, a work which may be dated to the period 650 to 750, and which might have been written in the British Isles.¹⁷ Brunhölzl has said of the work: “Ce livre typique est du nombre de ces petits manuels, qui furent très

⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford 1991) esp. 26–51; Wood, Aethicus Ister.

¹⁰ John B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Thought* (Cambridge-Mass. 1981, Harvard 1984, rev. edn., Syracuse 2000).

¹¹ The Amazons, who are closely related to the *cynocephali* in certain texts, are most similar in the possibilities they raise for interpretation.

¹² Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 7, 3, 2 (ed. Robert Schilling, Paris 1977).

¹³ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16, 8 (ed. Bernhard Dombart/Alphons Kalb, CC SL 48, 2, Turnhout 1955) 508–510.

¹⁴ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XI, 3, 12, 15; XII, 2, 32 (ed. Wallace M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911).

¹⁵ Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 7, 3, 2: *Animalium, quae cynocephalos vocamus, lacte vivit* [i.e. *gens Menisminorum*], *quorum armenta pascit maribus interemptis, praeterquam subolis causa*.

¹⁶ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16, 8, ed. Dombart/Kalb 508f.: *Quid dicam de Cynocephalis, quorum canina capita atque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines conficitur? Sed omnia genera hominum, quae dicuntur esse, credere non est necesse. Verum quisquis usquam nascitur homo, id est animal rationale, quamlibet nostris inusitatam sensibus gerat corporis formam seu colorem sive motum sive sonum sive qualibet vi, qualibet parte, qualibet qualitate naturam: ex illo uno protoplasto originem ducere nullus fidelium dubitaverit*. The significance of Augustine's views is well discussed in: Geneviève Bühner-Thierry, *Des païens comme chiens dans le monde germanique et slave du Haut Moyen Âge*, in: *Impies et païens entre Antiquité et Moyen Âge*, ed. Lionel Mary/Michel Sot (Paris 2000) 175–187. See also Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*.

¹⁷ Michael Lapidge, *Beowulf, Aldhelm, the Liber monstrorum and Wessex*, in: id., *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London 1996) 282–296; Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript* (Cambridge 1995) 86. The argument, however, is challenged by Franz Brunhölzl, *Histoire de la littérature latine du moyen âge* 1, 1, *l'époque mérovingienne* (Leiden 1990) 148–150, 274, who ascribes the work to Gaul. Works which deal with the *mirabilia* of India are discussed briefly

répandus dans l'Antiquité tardive et encore appréciés au haut Moyen Age et qui ont eu leur importance comme véhicule de la science en certains domaines particuliers. La plupart sont perdus aujourd'hui."¹⁸ It has also been noted that the *Liber monstrorum*, and indeed other accounts of monsters, may well have had a moral purpose, notably a critique of pride.¹⁹ The monstrous world in these accounts of the marvels of the animal world can be seen as having a moral rather than a geographical purpose.

All the surviving guides to *mirabilia* cited above provide comments on the *cynocephali*, although in each case those comments are short. Discussing the region between Babylonia and Persia the author of the *Wonders of the East* remarks: "Similarly *cynocephali*, which we call *conopoenas*, are also born there, having the manes of horses, teeth of boars, dogs' heads, breathing fire and flame."²⁰ The *Liber monstrorum* has two such descriptions: "*Cynocephali*, who have the heads of dogs, are also said to be born in India, and spoil everything they say with mingled barks, and do not imitate humans but the beasts themselves in eating raw flesh."²¹ "And in Persis they imagine that there are beasts which they call *Conopeni*, beneath the dog-shaped heads of which a horse-like mane hangs from their neck, and they breathe fire and flame from their mouth and nostrils."²² The dependence of this second passage on the *Wonders of the East* is immediately apparent.

These accounts of *mirabilia* have more than a little in common with the *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*, although comparison is rarely made between them.²³ They share, among other things, an interest in Alexander, and they also exhibit a sense of humour. It has been commented of the *Liber monstrorum* that it displays "mischievous witticism directed at readers who knew their Vergil".²⁴ The *Cosmographer* has been seen as having a laugh at the expense of Boniface.²⁵ This view may not be correct, but it is indicative of the author's wit.

Although the *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister* shares with texts such as the *Liber monstrorum* a somewhat humorous interest in *mirabilia*, its discussions of individual peoples and creatures are distinguished by the length and detail of the descriptions it provides. Quite simply, the comments on the monsters which feature in the *Cosmography* tend to be longer than those in other sources. Turning to the *Cosmographer's* account of the *cynocephali*, in translation it runs roughly as follows, though I stress that the grammar and orthography are not such as to leave certainty about the exact meaning of every phrase:

"He describes the northern island Munitia. Considering the dog-headed men excessively, with famous investigation, they have the likeness of a dog's head, but their other limbs are human in form; their hands and feet are like those of the other type of men; they are greater in height; their aspect is savage; and monsters are unheard of among them. The peoples who are their neighbours call them male Canaanites, for their women do not present a likeness to them. A polluted people, whom no history discusses except this philosopher. The people of Germania, especially those who administer taxes and their tradesmen, say that they often travel by sea to their island, and that they call that people Canaanite. Those foreigners travel (incendunt for incedunt) with bare legs; they preserve their hair, anointing it with oil giving off an excessive greasy smell; they lead the most foul life, eating unlawful meat of unclean quadrupeds, mice, moles and so forth. They have no worthy houses, but beams with woven tents, in wooded and out-of-the-way places, marshes and reedy spots, with numerous herds and flocks of birds and many sheep. Worshipping demons and auguries, they have no king; they make use of lead [reading stannum for stagnum] rather than silver, saying that lead is softer and clearer than silver, for it is not found in those regions unless it is brought from elsewhere. Gold is found

by Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen âge* (Paris 1977) 286, but his suggestion that the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle only circulated "dès 800 environ" is disproved by the date of the *Liber monstrorum*.

¹⁸ Brunhölzl, *Histoire de la littérature latine* 148.

¹⁹ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; but for a specific example in the *Liber monstrorum* see *ibid.* 100.

²⁰ *Wonders of the East* 7 (ed. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies. Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, Cambridge 1995) 176.

²¹ *Liber monstrorum* 1, 16 (ed. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies. Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, Cambridge 1995) 268f. The translation is a slight adaptation of that given by Orchard.

²² *Liber monstrorum* 2, 13, ed. Orchard 296f.

²³ The comparison deserves consideration, despite the lack of any identified citation of earlier guides to *mirabilia* in the edition of the *Cosmographia* by Prinz, *Die Kosmographie des Aethicus* 323–328. One might also note that, although Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book*, discusses Aethicus Ister in the context of geographical knowledge, she makes no attempt to include the guides to *mirabilia* within that same tradition.

²⁴ Lapidge, *Beowulf* 288.

²⁵ Heinz Löwe, *Ein literarischer Widersacher des Bonifatius. Virgil von Salzburg und die Kosmographie des Aethicus Ister* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz. Geistes- und sozialwissenschaftl. Klasse 1951, Wiesbaden 1952). See the bibliography in Brunhölzl, *Histoire de la littérature latine* 251f.

on their shores; fruit does not grow nor vegetables; there is plenty of milk, but little honey. All this the philosopher described in pagan fashion.”²⁶

It is easy to see why Dalché and others dismiss the *Cosmographia*, or see it essentially as a work of parody.²⁷ It is, however, worth looking with some care at the information given. The philosopher whom the author claims to be citing is the apparently-invented Aethicus of the work’s title – for the author, who appears to have been writing some time before the mid-eighth century, refers to himself as Jerome. Despite the assertion that no one has previously discussed the *cynocephali*, there is, as we have already seen, plenty of evidence to the contrary, even in authors known to have been read by the author of the *Cosmography*. Among Latin writers we have already noted Pliny, and more recently Augustine and Isidore – although in the latter case the information is paltry and goes little further than saying that *cynocephali* are monsters, like *Gygantes* and *Ciclopes*, and that they derived their name from the fact that they are dog-headed.²⁸ Among other works concerned with dog-heads, the *Liber monstrorum* must be nearly contemporary with Aethicus’ *Cosmography*, but the *Letter of Alexander* and the *Wonders of the East* would seem to be earlier.

There is unquestionably a problem about Pseudo-Jerome’s presentation of the origin of his information – and indeed about the standing which he wishes to give to it. While he claims (apparently fictitiously) to rely on the work of a philosopher, the Istrian Aethicus, he leaves us in no doubt that the philosopher (of his imagination) is pagan²⁹ – a point of possible importance in that a Christian *Cosmography* was necessarily concerned with the Creation of a Christian God. The attitude of Pseudo-Jerome towards the information he is presenting, and towards his supposed sources, is a difficult and important issue, although it is not one that need concern us here.³⁰

As for the *cynocephali* themselves, the description provided is detailed – much more so than Pliny’s or Isidore’s – and allows us to analyse the author’s approach towards the categorisation of the monstrous in some detail. The *cynocephali* are situated on the island of Munitia, which Prinz, the latest editor of the text, identified with Scandinavia.³¹ A Baltic connection for the *cynocephali* is attested elsewhere, and will concern us later, but more probably the author had in mind the island of Monabia, which occurs in an equivalent place in Orosius’ account of the world, and which should be identified as the Isle of Man.³² Oddly enough there is a place name, Conchan, on Man which appears to refer to dogs, and the locality boasts a cluster of Viking-Age crosses which portray *cynocephali*.³³ The sculpture is later than the work of the *Cosmographer*, but it does raise the possibility (although it certainly does not prove) that there were long-standing traditions linking *cynocephali* with the Isle of Man. Regardless of the identification of Munitia, it is clear that the *Cosmographer* is placing the *cynocephali* in the North, rather than in Ethiopia, Persia or India, where they are to be found in Pliny, the *Letter of Alexander*, the *Wonders of the East* and the *Liber monstrorum*.³⁴ This geographical difference may well be of some significance: dog-headed beings here belong not to the exotic East, but to the northern periphery of the author’s world.

In Aethicus Ister the *cynocephali* themselves, who are described in very much more detail than in the other texts discussed so far, are portrayed as a marginal people in more ways than one. Physically they are human except for their heads – and it is in fact only the males among them that have canine features, a gender issue that may be taken alongside other indications that they are in certain respects male counterparts to the Amazons.³⁵

²⁶ Aethicus Ister, *Cosmographia* II, ed. Prinz 114–116.

²⁷ Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book* 150–152, summarizes a long tradition of scholarship on Aethicus Ister, while adding the interesting gloss that it sheds important light on the nature of geographical thought in the early Middle Ages.

²⁸ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XI, 3, 12, 15, ed. Lindsay; *ibid.* XII, 2, 32, ed. Lindsay.

²⁹ See the use of the phrase *profana mentione*, Aethicus, *Cosmographia* II, ed. Prinz 116. For an equivalent attitude towards the pagan past in the *Liber monstrorum* (among other texts), see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies* 114f.

³⁰ See Wood, Aethicus Ister.

³¹ Aethicus, *Cosmographia*, ed. Prinz 114, n. 155. Claude Lecouteux, *Les Cynocéphales. Étude d’une tradition tératologique de l’Antiquité au XII^e siècle*, in: *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 24 (1981) 117–128, at 121, suggests Finland.

³² Wood, Aethicus Ister 199.

³³ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies* 15, with the bibliography in n. 93.

³⁴ This point flatly contradicts the assertion of Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen âge* 291: “Seul Adam de Brême tentera de transplanter les *mirabilia Indiae* dans le monde du nord.” Adam clearly belonged to an established tradition which would seem to have been established in Hamburg-Bremen in the days of Anskar.

³⁵ See Wood, Aethicus Ister 201f.

This notion is one that was fully developed by the time of Adam of Bremen in the late eleventh century, who in describing the Amazons on the north Baltic coast, claimed that “there are, however, those who say that they [the Amazons] become pregnant by those merchants who pass by, or from those whom they hold captive, or from other monsters which are not held to be rare there, and this we think more worthy of credence: and when they come to give birth, those that are masculine in gender become *cynocephali*, and those that are feminine very beautiful women.”³⁶ As we shall see the male nature of the *cynocephali* may have further significance. Yet while they are monstrous, they are quite explicitly not monsters: “monsters”, claims the Istrian Aethicus, “are unheard of among them” – an observation which seems to imply that they are human, but leaves the reader in some doubt. Like their appearance, their lifestyle is marginal – that is, also in certain crucial respects human: they pay attention to their looks – arguably an indication of cultivation – but their method of doing so involves greasing their hair, something which was regarded at least within Roman tradition as execrable, as Sidonius Apollinaris’ description of Burgundians makes clear.³⁷ Their houses are similarly marginal: that is they do have dwellings, but tents rather than buildings which would make them truly civilised, and they pitch these tents in marshes – at first sight an odd combination, since one might associate tents, but not marsh-dwelling, with nomads: but marsh-dwelling does appear to have been compatible with the semi-nomadism of the tenth-century Magyars.³⁸ Their clothing is scarcely noted, but they travel barelegged, which is clearly unseemly. Their food places them further beyond the margins, and certainly justifies the description of them as polluted: the unclean quadrupeds of their diet are surely intended to point to the abominations of Leviticus, where “whatsoever goeth upon his paws”³⁹ and “the creeping things that creep upon the earth”, among them mice,⁴⁰ are listed as being improper for human consumption.⁴¹ And their unclean food may be further indicated by the absence of fruit and vegetables.

Yet they do have herds and flocks, and thus milk, which are all clearly acceptable indications of culture. On the other hand there is no indication that they go in for arable cultivation, which would – at least within the modern categories of the cultivated and the natural adumbrated by Lévi-Strauss⁴² – be a surer sign of civilisation. The Cosmographer’s claim that they have milk may call to mind the comments of Pliny noted above,⁴³ but the fact that they are also explicitly said to have had no honey may rather suggest an invitation to consider the famous promise of the Lord in Exodus 3, 8 in which the Promised Land is described as flowing with milk and honey: having the former without the latter may be a deliberate hint that the land of the *cynocephali* is only half civilised. In fact the whole Biblical verse is worth quoting: “And I am come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, and unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” Here mention of the Canaanites may be relevant to the account of the Cosmographer, who describes the *cynocephali* as nothing other than male Canaanites. The significance of Canaan will concern us again shortly.

The attitude of the *cynocephali* to wealth is as hard to categorise as is their agriculture: they might be seen as fortunate in living in gold-rich lands, and they might also be seen as virtuous, at least in classical terms, in

³⁶ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* 4, 19 (ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [2], Hannover/Leipzig 1917) 247: *Sunt etiam, qui referunt eas fieri pregnantes ab his, qui pretereunt, negaciotores, vel ab his, quos inter se habent captivos, sive ab aliis monstribus quae ibi non rare habentur, et hoc credimus etiam fide dignius: Cumque pervenerint ad partum, si quid masculini generis est, fiunt cynocephali, si quid feminini, speciosissimae mulieres.* Cf. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (ed. Werner Trillmich, Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches. Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Darmstadt 1961) 458, n. 56, notes that Solinus and Martianus Capella link the same story to the African Blemmyes, and Adam himself cites Solinus in 4, 25, where he also reveals that his informant for one monstrous race in Halsingland was the king of the Danes.

³⁷ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* XII, 1, 7 (ed. Christian Luetjohann, MGH AA 8, Berlin 1887) 230f.

³⁸ László Kontler, *Millennium in Central Europe: A History of Hungary* (Budapest 1999) 45.

³⁹ Leviticus 11, 27: “And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean to you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even. (28) And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean to you.”

⁴⁰ Leviticus 11, 29: “They also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind!”

⁴¹ For an analysis of such taboos, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London 1966) chapter 3.

⁴² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (trans. R. Needham, Harmondsworth 1969) 84f., 173–175.

⁴³ Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 7, 3, 2.

ignoring silver⁴⁴ – and one should perhaps note the psychological plausibility of their preference for a metal which is not locally available – but their delight in lead could also be taken as another sign of their peculiarity. So too, the absence of a king and the author's silence over any other indication of political order suggests that they are primitive, while their religion is clearly contemptible – but one should note that they are human enough to have a religion, or at least to revere demons and auguries.

Even the quickest of analyses, like that just given, makes it abundantly clear that the description of the *cynocephali* portrays them as marginal at a number of different levels. They are not totally monstrous, but they are not entirely civilised either. Their status is, in a sense, negotiable. One might further note that they are not a neighbouring people from the author's point of view, rather they live beyond *Germania*,⁴⁵ and are thus separated from the author by at least one other group of peoples. The introduction of the neighbouring *Germani* as the source of information on the *cynocephali* is a distancing device in more ways than one: for it is the taxmen and traders of *Germania* who are the source of the information, and they might not be the most trustworthy of commentators, at least within the Christian tradition – and it is in any case clear from elsewhere that the author, who claims to have come from Istria, but who may have been a Bavarian,⁴⁶ disliked the *Germani*, to whom he clearly did not belong. Indeed he depicts them as being almost as marginal as the *cynocephali* themselves.⁴⁷

The function of marginality in the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus is open to question – but it is reasonable to conclude that the *cynocephali*, and indeed other monsters, have a different meaning in the *Cosmographia* than they do in the other accounts of *mirabilia* already discussed, not least because the detail of the description provided by the *Cosmographer* allows a much more nuanced assessment of the race in question. It is reasonable to conclude that the detailed comments of Aethicus, as opposed to those, for instance, in the *Liber monstrorum*, are an important aspect of the author's strategy. Subsequent developments in the presentation of monsters bring us to rather firmer conclusions. To examine these it is necessary to look beyond cosmographical works to other types of source, and first to hagiography.

In his *Life of Adalbert of Prague*, Bruno of Querfurt, writing in the first decade of the eleventh century, claimed that among the Prussians who jeered at the saint in the run-up to his martyrdom were dog-headed beings.⁴⁸ This may seem to be a fantastic and worthless statement, yet it is of value, since Bruno himself held Adalbert up as a model and was determined to continue his missionary work. Indeed he revised his account of the *Passio Adalberti* in 1008, when he was preparing for his own final, fatal, journey to the Prussians.⁴⁹ Thus, in describing Adalbert's audience, Bruno was effectively visualising the peoples among whom he expected to work. Moreover, in mentioning the existence of dog-headed beings in the crowd round Adalbert, Bruno was going one degree further than the author of an earlier *Vita Adalberti* that he had certainly read, for the earlier text only states that the crowd snarled like dogs.⁵⁰ Curiously, Bruno, who was closer to the Prussian frontier than was his source, is more explicit in acknowledging the existence of a monstrous race: monsters were not necessarily the product of the imagination of those who lived furthest from their supposed habitats.⁵¹ The *cynocephali* were thought to be real, and although Bruno had not himself seen them, he does not distance himself from them in quite the same way that Aethicus Ister, or rather Pseudo-Jerome, does. Indeed, he must have expected to meet them very soon.

⁴⁴ Compare Tacitus, *Germania* 5 (ed. John G.C. Anderson, Oxford 1938), together with the comments in James B. Rives, *Tacitus Germania* (Oxford 1999); Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* 4, 18, ed. Schmeidler 245f., on the Prussians.

⁴⁵ Aethicus, *Cosmographia* II, ed. Prinz 115.

⁴⁶ See the discussion in Wood, *Aethicus Ister*.

⁴⁷ Aethicus, *Cosmographia* IV, ed. Prinz 118, 123f.; Wood, *Aethicus Ister* 203f.

⁴⁸ Bruno, *Passio Adalberti* 25 (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4, Hannover 1841) 596–612, at 608; Ian N. Wood, *Missionaries and the Christian frontier*, in: *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl/Ian N. Wood/Helmut Reimitz (*The Transformation of the Roman World* 10, Leiden 2000) 213–215; id., *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050* (London 2001) 251f.; Geneviève Bühner-Thierry, *Étrangers par la foi, étrangers par la langue: les missionnaires du monde germanique à la rencontre des peuples païens*, in: *L'étranger au Moyen Âge. Actes du XXX^e congrès de la SHMESP* (Paris 2000) 259–270, at 261; Bühner-Thierry, *Des païens comme chiens* 183.

⁴⁹ Wood, *The Missionary Life* 207.

⁵⁰ Anonymus, *Passio Adalberti* 28 (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4, Hannover 1841) 581–595, at 593f. For the origins of this version see Jürgen Hoffmann, *Vita Adalberti. Früheste Textüberlieferungen der Lebensgeschichte Adalberts von Prag* (*Europäische Schriften der Adalbert-Stiftung-Krefeld* 2, Essen 2005).

⁵¹ Contrary to the position held by both Friedman, *The Monstrous Races* 1, 37, 58, and Williams, *Deformed Discourse* 14, 149.

This was certainly the feeling of Rimbert, the biographer and successor of Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. Rimbert, who like his predecessor and role-model was a missionary in Scandinavia, had heard that he was likely to encounter dog-headed men in the course of his missionary work. As a result he wrote, at some point before 865, to Ratramnus of Corbie for advice on how to deal with them: were they humans, descendants of Adam, and thus the potential object of mission, or were they animals, which could as a result be killed with impunity? This question of their humanity had been dealt with by Augustine, who implicitly came down in opposition to the notion of the *cynocephalus* being an *animal rationale*.⁵² Although Rimbert's letter has not survived, Ratramnus' reply fortunately has, and it takes us further into an understanding of the *cynocephali*, or rather descriptions of them, in the Carolingian and Ottonian periods.⁵³

Ratramnus goes through Rimbert's information of the *cynocephali* with some care:⁵⁴ they live according to custom (*societatis iura*) in *villa* communities (*villarum cohabitatio*): they plough and reap; they are not naked like beasts, but hide their genitals, a habit indicative of modesty; not only do they have skins but even woven clothes (*non solum pelles, sed etiam et vestes*). All these are indications of a rational nature. Indeed the fact that they obey law (*ius*) implies communal consent (*consensus communis*). Their agriculture shows skill (*peritia*) and the making of clothes is indicative of a rational soul (*rationalis animae*). Their modesty is suggestive of knowledge of honesty (*honestatis cognitio*). Honesty, law and skills could not exist without judgement of reason (*iudicio rationis*) and shrewdness of nature (*acumen ingenii*). Reason distinguishes man from the beasts – a point implicit in Augustine's *id est animal rationale*:⁵⁵ therefore the *cynocephali* are human.

Further points are advanced; the first is that St Christopher, a *cynocephalus*, whose life and martyrdom are marked out by miracles, was regarded as being a man and merited baptism. This prompts a discussion of Isidore's description of the *cynocephali* as *monstra hominum*, like the *Gygantes* and *Ciclopes*.⁵⁶ Although these seem to have been created against the law of nature, they are not, in fact, because of divine *dispositio*.⁵⁷ They are thus no different from Pigmies and *Antipodes* (or Antipodean Pigmyies?), *Hippopods* or *Macrobii*. As for the *Gygantes*, their humanity is assured by their appearance in the Bible.⁵⁸ The *cynocephali* must be categorised in the same way, not least because St Christopher was known to have been a *cynocephalus*. But, Ratramnus insists, not everything born of women is human, since women are known to have given birth to calves and snakes – a somewhat unexpected biological excursus, derived, no doubt, from some account of *prodigia*. Further, says Ratramnus, there is a record from the reign of Alexander of beings which were bestial from the waist down – a reference which suggests that Ratramnus was aware of some version of the Alexander legend. What determined whether such monstrous beings were human or not was their possession of reason. Thus Rimbert's information, which allowed an investigation into the rationality of the *cynocephali*, was crucial.

At this point Ratramnus remarks on one other point which has been passed on to him: the *cynocephali* keep domestic animals of the sort known in the Carolingian world. This they could not have done if they had bestial rather than rational souls, for we learn from Genesis about God's subjection of animals to men. Having many domestic animals, which they have tamed, the *cynocephali* must lack bestial savagery. The criterion – admittedly without its Biblical gloss – is one which Lévi-Strauss would have understood.⁵⁹

Ratramnus' response to Rimbert operates at a variety of levels. First, the whole assessment is subject to an appeal to authority, basically Biblical, albeit partially filtered through Isidore. Second, the information provided is assessed against the Aristotelian, or better Augustinian, criterion of rationality. Third, the main body of the assessment is conducted in a manner which in certain respects might be read as an anthropological analysis

⁵² Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16, 8, ed. Dombart/Kalb 508.

⁵³ Ratramnus = *Epistolae variorum* 12 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH EE 6, *Epistolae Karolini aevi* 4, Berlin 1925) 127–206, at 155f.; Ian N. Wood, *Pagans and Christians in ninth-century Scandinavia*, in: *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, ed. Birgit Sawyer/Peter Sawyer/Ian N. Wood (Alingsås 1987) 64–66; Wood, *Missionaries* 214f.; Wood, *The Missionary Life* 252f.

⁵⁴ There is a useful discussion in Friedman, *Monstrous Races* 188–190; see also Lecouteaux, *Cynocéphales* 122f.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16, 8, ed. Dombart/Kalb 508.

⁵⁶ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XI, 3, 12, ed. Lindsay.

⁵⁷ See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 21, 4 and 8, ed. Dombart/Kalb 761–764, 770–774. Compare Isidore, *Etymologiae* III, 1–2, ed. Lindsay.

⁵⁸ Genesis 6, 4. Also Numbers 1, 32–33, where the Israelite spies returning from Canaan comment that: *Hic monstra sunt de genere giganteo*. On Canaan and the *cynocephali* see below.

⁵⁹ E.g. Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* 84f., 173–175.

of Rimbert's information – an approach to which Ratramnus returns at the very end of his letter. And fourth, St Christopher is cited as a test case.

The comparison with St Christopher requires a short excursus. In some early traditions Christopher was a christian *cynocephalus*, whose aggressive style of evangelisation led to him being taken before the local ruler Dagan, on whose orders he was interrogated, tortured and martyred. Although the tradition of a dog-headed Christopher has survived in the Orthodox Church, in the West the saint is remembered rather as a giant who carries the infant Christ. Christopher was, however, known as being dog-headed in the early medieval West,⁶⁰ and this tradition is represented in what appears to be the earliest Latin version of the *Passio Christophori*, which is to be found in the so-called Homiliary of Burchard of Würzburg, a manuscript of the last quarter of the eighth century, compiled in southern Bavaria.⁶¹ The current dating of the manuscript prevents its being associated with Burchard (742–ca. 754), although the selection of homilies does suggest that the manuscript was made at the request of someone who had attitudes towards the issue of superstition⁶² similar to those of the compiler of the Bonifatian *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*,⁶³ and indeed of Boniface himself, as may be seen from the canons of the Concilium Germanicum.⁶⁴ Such concerns, however, need not indicate that the compiler of the Burchard Homiliary was active in a missionary area, if by this we mean a region awaiting christianisation, although they do indicate an interest in raising christian standards. The homilies themselves are, after all, drawn largely from Caesarius, who was bishop of a diocese that had long been officially christian. The Burchard Homiliary is not, therefore, necessarily an indication that we should see Christopher as being a saint whose cult was particularly appropriate to missionary zones, though one might come to such a conclusion both from the narrative of the *Passio*, with its emphasis on the martyr's missionising, and from Ratramnus' allusion to the saint in his letter to Rimbert. On the other hand one might equally set the *Passio Christophori* against the interest shown in *cynocephali* in Aethicus' *Cosmography*, which was certainly circulating not far from where the Burchard Homiliary was written.⁶⁵

Doubtless Christopher's supposed dog-headedness led, from the Greek word *κυνων* (*κυνων*), and more immediately for the western hagiographer via Latin, *canis*, to an association with Canaan, which could be misread as the Land of Dogs.⁶⁶ The switch from the word *canineus* to *cananeus* was only too easy.⁶⁷ We have

⁶⁰ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies* 14–15.

⁶¹ The manuscript, Würzburg, UB M. p. th. f. 28; Elias A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* 9 (Oxford 1959) 48, n. 1408, "pre-Caroline minuscule saec. VIII²", "The traditional connexion with St. Burghard († ca. 754) dates from the eighteenth century and is paleographically untenable"; Hans Thurn, *Die Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg* 3, 1: *Die Pergamenthandschriften der ehemaligen Dombibliothek* (Wiesbaden 1984) 19–21, "Südbayern, im ags. Missionsgebiet letztes Viertel 8. Jh.". For the text of the *Passio Cristofari*, *Acta Sanctorum*, June 6, 146: for the other contents, Germain Morin, *L'homélaire de Burchard de Würzburg*, in: *Revue Bénédictine* 13 (1896) 97–111. This is not the manuscript discussed by Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London 1977) 110. In 1984 I despaired of being able to track down the manuscript used in AASS, where it is identified as coming from Fulda: see Ian N. Wood, *Pagans* 66. In fact a full statement of the early manuscripts of the *Passio Christophori* is to be found in Hans Friedrich Rosenfeld, *Der heilige Christophorus: seine Verehrung und seine Legende. Eine Untersuchung zur Kultgeographie und Legendenbildung des Mittelalters* (Leipzig 1937) 362f. Bruce, *Hagiography* 53–55, discusses the importance of the reference to Christopher, but is not aware of the earliest manuscript of the *Passio*.

⁶² See for instance, from the Burchard Homiliary, homilies XX, *De his qui filios per aliquas sacrilegas superstitionis ... bere volunt*, "Solent, fratres karissimi, aliqui viri vel aliquae mulieres cum se viderint in coniugis positos filios" = Caesarius, *Homilia* 51 (ed. Germain Morin, CC SL 103, Turnhout 1953) 227–229: XXIV, *Ammonicio ut fana destuantur*, "Gratum nobis est, fratres dilectissimi" = Caesarius, *Homila* 53, ed. Morin 233–235: XXVI, *De martiribus et de de luna fectu et de avorsibus vel filacteriis*, "Sicut frequenter ammonui, fratres karissimi, iterum suggero" = Caesarius, *Homilia* 52, ed. Morin 230–233; one might also note homily XVIII of the Burchard Homiliary, *De Reddendis Decimis in Natale sancti Iohannis*, "Propitio Christo, fratres karissimi, iam prope sunt dies" = Caesarius, *Homila* 33, ed. Morin 142–147, on account of the importance of the question of tithes in the context of the christianisation of the Saxons.

⁶³ *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (ed. Alain Dierkens, *Superstitions, christianisme et paganisme à la fin de l'époque mérovingienne*, in: *Magie, sorcellerie, parapsychologie*, ed. Hervé Hasquin, Bruxelles 1985) 9–26.

⁶⁴ *Concilium Germanicum* (ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH LL 3, *Concilia* 2, 1, Hannover 1906–1908) 1–4.

⁶⁵ For the presence of the *Cosmography* in Bavaria, see Heinz Löwe, *Salzburg als Zentrum literarischen Schaffens im 8. Jahrhundert*, in: id., *Religiosität und Bildung im frühen Mittelalter* (Weimar 1994) 1–45; Winfried Stelzer, *Ein alt-Salzbürger Fragment der Kosmographie des Aethicus Ister*, in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 100 (1992) 132–149.

⁶⁶ The relationship of dogs and Canaanites is usefully explored by Bühner-Thierry, *Des païens comme chiens* 178f.

⁶⁷ Lecouteaux, *Cynocéphales* 122.

already seen that *cynocephali* were associated with Canaan by Aethicus Ister, and that the passage in Exodus dealing with the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, which also mentions the Canaanites,⁶⁸ may be subverted in the Cosmographer's description of the area from which the dog-headed beings came. What is more interesting is that Ratramnus makes very little of the notion that there was a dog-headed Christian saint, bringing in Christopher almost as an afterthought. The existence of a dog-headed Christopher was, like the some-time existence of *Gygantes*, a fact that was not debatable. Yet, despite being unquestioned, Christopher provides no more than an additional argument in favour of accepting the humanity of *cynocephali*, even though others found in the concept of a dog-headed missionary a fruitful paradox in the image of a monstrous Christian missionary being martyred by a cruel, but totally human, tyrant.⁶⁹ Ratramnus, however, pays much more attention to Rimbart's ethnographic information than he does to the evidence provided by traditions relating to Christopher.

The main part of Ratramnus' argument is, indeed, proto-anthropological. In its concern to describe the life-style of the *cynocephali* it throws further interesting light on the account given in the Aethicus Ister Cosmographia, for although the latter is in many respects fantastical, it is nevertheless an attempt to describe the society of the *cynocephali*. Ratramnus and the Cosmographer deal to a large extent with the same issues: appearance, dress, diet, housing and agriculture. However, whilst the account given by the Cosmographer effectively renders the *cynocephali* totally marginal, if not beyond the Pale, that of Ratramnus, derived from Rimbart, makes them essentially human. They are civilised because of their lifestyle: they cover their genitals, and their clothes are not just made of animal skins, but also of cloth: they live in ordered communities in *villae* or villages. Further, they practice arable agriculture and have domestic animals, both indications of civilisation. Each of these areas of description are covered by the Cosmographer, though with different information: in place of the bare-legged creatures of the Cosmographer – a characterisation which actually implies that in other respects they were not naked – we have the clothed beings of Ratramnus: in place of tents placed in marsh-land we have village-dwellers; and in place of herdsmen we have arable farmers, though for Ratramnus possession of domestic animals alone was an indication of humanity.

Although the descriptions of *cynocephali* provided by the Cosmographia of Aethicus Ister and by Ratramnus differ, they can both be seen as belonging to a single area of debate. Both writers were concerned to draw a boundary, and they used similar techniques to do so. They were faced with marginal beings, part human, part animal, and they had to decide whether to classify them as human, animal, or something in between. Ratramnus used the proto-anthropological information he had at hand to classify them as human, whilst the Cosmographer deployed the categories of Leviticus to portray them as being as marginal as possible, while still describing them by the term *gens*. In certain respects one might argue that, in his discreet emphasis on the Abominations of Leviticus, the Cosmographer emerges as the Mary Douglas of the eighth century, while Ratramnus, with his tendency to favour criteria linked to cultivation, is the Lévi-Strauss of the ninth.

The information on *cynocephali* provided by these texts can, then, be interpreted as a debate about the categorisation of beings, and hence about the definition of a frontier. Indeed, for some, although perhaps not for the devotees of St Christopher, the *cynocephali* would seem to provide the subject matter for a debate on the frontier,⁷⁰ and it is this, rather than the *cynocephali* themselves, which is really their significance in the writings of Pseudo-Jerome and Ratramnus. In neither the Cosmographia nor in the letter of Ratramnus is it a frontier of which the author himself has direct experience, indeed in the former case the author is at least one remove from that frontier. At the same time one might note that Rimbart, who clearly felt that he was much more likely to meet the *cynocephali* than did the Cosmographer, provided information which allowed them to be interpreted in a most human, that is normal, way. Similarly, as we have seen, Bruno of Querfurt, on the eve of his mission to the Prussians, explicitly acknowledged the existence of *cynocephali* in his intended area of missionary activity, while the anonymous leaves open the possibility that canine snarls are no more than a figure of speech.

The missionary concerns of both Rimbart and Bruno may shed a little further light on the function of the *cynocephali*. Rimbart, in his Life of Anskar, was absolutely convinced that the Scandinavian mission had taken

⁶⁸ Exodus 3, 8.

⁶⁹ For some of the ironies inherent in the notion of a dog-headed Christopher see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies* 12–17. On dog-headed men involved in mission, see Friedman, *The Monstrous Races* 61–75.

⁷⁰ Wood, *Missionaries* 214f.

its participants to the edge of the world. Collapsing several verses of Isaiah 49 (which he wrongly, but perhaps significantly ascribed to Jeremiah), Rimbert wrote, “‘Listen, o isles’, because almost all that territory (*patria*) is made up of islands, and what is added, ‘You will be salvation for them unto the end of the earth’, because the end of the earth in the northern parts lies in the regions of the Swedes.”⁷¹ This sense of coming to the end of the known world would also have had apocalyptic overtones, for according to St Matthew “the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”⁷² Ratramnus’ use of the *cynocephali* to examine the limits of humanity should, therefore, be understood as having an apocalyptic context.

For Rimbert, Ratramnus and later Bruno the *cynocephali* were thought to be part of the world, or rather world’s end, in which they worked. It is worth pausing to ask not only why this should be, but also why it is only the *cynocephali* which are cited in this particular debate about the ends of humanity, and not the numerous other monsters of the Letter of Alexander, the Wonders of the East and the Liber monstrorum. Why, indeed, were the *cynocephali*, who are placed in the region between Persia and India in these other texts, also placed in the Baltic region?

First, the classical and post-classical tradition which included Pliny, Augustine and Isidore, took the existence of the *cynocephali* for granted. Second, a well-respected saint, Christopher, was regarded as being a *cynocephalus*, and his dog-headedness either derived from or prompted his association with Canaan. *Cynocephali* were, thus, a recognised category of beings from Antiquity onwards. Third, there are other Carolingian authors who deal with *cynocephali*. Paul the Deacon relates that at the dawn of their history the Lombards spread rumours of there being in their camp *cynocephali* who drank human blood, to overawe the neighbouring *Assipiti*.⁷³ Although no reliance can be placed on Paul’s account of the Lombards in northern *Germania*,⁷⁴ the information points to one obvious explanation for the existence of tales of *cynocephali*: they were circulated in order to frighten neighbours. The monstrous races must always have had the potential of being bogey men. And as Paul’s evidence makes clear, it is not only Aethicus Ister, Rimbert and Bruno who associated the *cynocephali* with northern Europe.

There may be more to stories of *cynocephali* than the circulation of rumour. Among the many remarkable finds from the harbour at Haithabu were a number of felt masks, of astonishingly lifelike appearance, some of them plausibly interpreted as being intended to represent dogs.⁷⁵ Not only might stories of *cynocephali* have been circulated to terrorise neighbours, but some people were also prepared to dress up in a manner that might well have confirmed the stories. A possibility is that such masks were used in shamanic rites.⁷⁶ At this point one should also note later Scandinavian literary evidence on *Hundsköpfe*, which Otto Höfler interpreted as showing the existence of warrior clans or societies.⁷⁷ Whilst much of Höfler’s work is problematic, not least because of its growing Nazism, the evidence of the Haithabu masks might be seen as giving substance to a not-implausible theory. One of the animal figures on the Torslunda plaques may even be a representation of such a warrior, since a close inspection suggests that the wolf-like figure following the dancing warrior has human legs and may be wearing shoes.⁷⁸ The date of these plaques, which come from the Vendel (i.e. pre-Viking) period, could imply that dog-headed costumes were in existence during the migration period, the period of the conflict between the Lombards and *Assipiti* as related by Paul. Nor are the Torslunda plaques the only objects which appear to have representations of dog-headed warriors: migration-period examples from the Alamannic region are to be found

⁷¹ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii* 25 (ed. Werner Trillmich, *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches. Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 11, Darmstadt 1961) 16–133, at 33f.: citing Isaiah 49, 1 and 6. See also Wood, *Christians and pagans* 63.

⁷² Matthew 24, 14.

⁷³ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 11 (ed. Ludwig Bethmann/Georg Waitz, *MGH SS rer. Langob.*, Hannover 1878) 12–187, at 53.

⁷⁴ See most recently, Neil Christie, *The Lombards* (Oxford 1995) 1–14.

⁷⁵ Inga Hägg, *Die Textilfunde aus dem Hafen von Haithabu*, in: *Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu* 20 (Neumünster 1984) 69–72.

⁷⁶ Bühner-Thierry, *Des païens comme chiens* 184. I have doubts, however, about the relevance of the Odin cult in this context.

⁷⁷ Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt 1934); see also Löwe, *Salzburg* 131, n. 139.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Ann Sandwall, *Vendeltid* (Stockholm 1980) 25, with the short discussion 351f., or, more accessibly, the photo in: *The Northern World. The History and Heritage of Northern Europe A.D. 400–1110*, ed. David M. Wilson (London 1980) 131.

on the Gutenstein scabbard, which appears to represent a warrior in wolf- or dog-costume, and on a fragment of foil from Obrigheim, which seems to have had a design similar to the Torslunda plaque already mentioned.⁷⁹ That northern warriors continued to wear dog-masks on occasion, might be suggested by Notker's reference to the Vikings as *cynocephali*.⁸⁰ Further, if one were to accept that male military confraternities were one of the factors which underlay stories about the *cynocephali*, one would then have an additional possible explanation for the peculiarly gendered account provided in the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister – the oddity of which is highlighted by Pliny's contrasting insistence that female *cynocephali* were kept for their milk.⁸¹ It may be that the women of the so-called 'Canaanites' did not have dog-like features in northern tradition, because the *cynocephali* were in fact warrior-groups that distinguished themselves by wearing dog-masks. There were, thus, no female *cynocephali* by definition.

It is not, however, the reality of the *cynocephali* that concerns me here. I am much more concerned with intellectual frontiers, than with the possible escapades of warrior groups. This approach leaves one further question. Why is it that the longest surviving descriptions of the *cynocephali* come from the eighth (or just possibly the seventh) and ninth centuries. Here it is important to return to the contexts in which the author of the Aethicus Ister *Cosmography* and Ratramnus were writing. The latter was responding to a question from a missionary:⁸² although the former is not a missionary work, if I am right it is a text concerned with conceptual frontiers, and it was certainly read in Bavaria, which can reasonably be seen as a frontier zone.⁸³ I would suggest that it is the expansion of the Frankish world which transformed the *cynocephali* into a vehicle to debate frontiers. Further, in the case of Ratramnus, one should remember that he was replying to Rimbert, who was not merely a missionary, but one who explicitly saw Anskar's missions in Scandinavia as taking place at the ends of the earth.⁸⁴ A people which had been very much at the furthest limits of a Roman conception of the world, had been turned into a means of debating the limits of civilisation, as Anskar and Rimbert brought Christianity to the Scandinavians. For the author of Aethicus Ister, the *cynocephali*, were not a neighbouring people, but they were one step further off. For Rimbert, however, as for Bruno of Querfurt, encountering a *cynocephalus* was a very real possibility.

Outside the world of the missionary, *cynocephali* were, as we have already seen, incorporated into other debates.⁸⁵ The *Liber monstrorum* was written about the same time as the *Cosmography* of Aethicus. At roughly the time that Bruno of Querfurt was writing his *Life of Adalbert of Prague* an Anglo-Saxon scribe was transcribing Old English versions of the *Passion of Christopher*, the *Wonders of the East* and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* into what is known as the *Beowulf* manuscript. In these texts *cynocephali* feature as one group of monsters among many, and all may have been chosen as being amenable to a single moralising gloss.⁸⁶ The very fact that other monstrous races were not exploited by Rimbert, Ratramnus and Bruno makes their discussion of the *cynocephali* all the more striking.

My concern has been to suggest that, however much a modern reader defines the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister as comic or subversive, the author's use of fantasy is not necessarily any less scientific than Dicuil's use of measurements, and that fantasy needs to be treated as a serious element in the establishment of categories. I have pursued this line through a consideration of dog-headed men. I might have chosen one of the other

⁷⁹ Dieter Quast, *Opferplätze und heidnische Götter*, in: *Die Alamannen. Begleitband zur Ausstellung „Die Alamannen“*, 14. Juni 1997 bis 14. September 1997, SüdwestLB-Forum, Stuttgart 24. Oktober 1997 bis 25. Januar 1998, Schweizerisches Landesmuseum Zürich; 6. Mai 1998 bis 7. Juni 1998, Römisches Museum der Stadt Augsburg (Stuttgart 1997) 433–440, at 437f. I see no reason, however, to link such figures automatically to Woden. Although Woden is famously accompanied in saga literature by wolves, there is nothing in early-medieval references to *cynocephali* to suggest that there was a link between them and Woden.

⁸⁰ Notker, *Gesta Karoli II*, 13 (ed. Hans Haefele, MGH SS rer. Germ., N.S. 12, Berlin 1959) 76.

⁸¹ Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 7, 3, 2.

⁸² The importance of the missionary context for some accounts of the monstrous races is noted by Friedman, *The Monstrous Races* 59–86; Bühner-Thierry, *Étrangers par la foi*, also emphasises the missionary context.

⁸³ Wood, *Aethicus Ister*. C.f. also Helmut Reimitz, *Conversion and control: the establishment of liturgical frontiers in Carolingian Pannonia*, in: *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl/Ian N. Wood/Helmut Reimitz (*The Transformation of the Roman World* 10, Leiden 2000) 189–207.

⁸⁴ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii* 25, ed. Trillmich 33f.

⁸⁵ For later debates, Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen âge* 240; also Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*; Williams, *Deformed Discourse*.

⁸⁶ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*.

groups whose description in the *Cosmography* is at the least semi-mythical, notably the Amazons⁸⁷ – and as in the case of the *cynocephali*, they would have prompted some discussion of the realities underlying descriptions of them. As we have seen, the *cynocephali* and the Amazons were even thought, in some early medieval traditions, to have been related. No less a figure than the emperor Otto I informed the Arab geographer Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub that they were to be found to the west of the Rus.⁸⁸ And it is possible that some early medieval descriptions of Amazons relate in some way to communities of the northern Baltic, whose menfolk went to the far north on expeditions in the summer, leaving their women alone at the only time of year in which continental traders might have ventured across the Baltic.⁸⁹ The *cynocephali*, however, are considerably more amenable to study because of the letter of Ratramnus of Corbie, which reveals clearly the extent to which this monstrous race at least could be exploited to define the frontiers of humanity. At the same time one should not lose sight of the fact that not all authors of the period treated *cynocephali* in the same way, and that no other monstrous group is known to have received quite the attention lavished on it that Ratramnus dedicated to the dog-headed beings of Rimbart's imagination. As we have seen, the interest shown in *cynocephali* by missionaries in Scandinavia and later in Prussia may be related to the use of dog-masks in the Baltic region in the migration and Viking periods.

Yet, even if categorising the *cynocephali* was an exercise of the imagination of a limited number of individuals, the resulting descriptions are no less interesting for being imaginary: they show how detailed description, even of the monstrous, could be a serious contribution to the categorisation of the natural world. In this respect the fantastical cosmography of Aethicus Ister, and, even more, the questioning of Rimbart and the expectations of Bruno of Querfurt, can be seen as attempts to adapt antique traditions to the realities of the Carolingian and Ottonian worlds. The *Cosmographer*, Rimbart and Bruno in their own ways were being as scientific as Dicuil and the author of the *De situ orbis*.

⁸⁷ Aethicus, *Cosmographia* II, ed. Prinz 178f. I have indeed discussed the Amazons and the Turks as parallels to the *cynocephali* in: Wood, *Aethicus Ister*.

⁸⁸ Georg Jacob, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1927) 14, 17.

⁸⁹ An observation I owe to Professor Peter Sawyer.