

Punctuation

by [Barbara Crooker](#) in the [December 7, 2016](#) issue

Some parts of the Book of Kells are punctuated, not by ordinary marks like ampersands, colons, exclamations, commas, but like this: a horseman's foot points like an arrow on a one-way street, drawing the eye to the text *Et tertia die resurget*. Instead of brackets, tiny animals. When a word didn't fit on the line, they placed the extra syllable in the space over the line or tucked carefully under the unfinished word, guarded by the outstretched wing of a bird or the front paws of a dog. The scribes called this "putting the head under the wing" or "taking the turn down the path."

I'd like to insert little animals into modern English: ladybugs instead of periods, question mark earthworms, starfish asterisks, squirrel-tail commas, and ellipses, a fine line of industrious ants, ever marching. . . .