Contemplating the Trinity: Text, Image, and the Origins of the Rothschild Canticles

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Abstract

This article revisits the Rothschild Canticles, specifically the Trinity cycle, through a close study of the Latin text. It identifies previously unknown sources, demonstrating the compiler's wide frame of reference and confirming that the most recent texts date from the 1290s. Further, it argues that the Trinity painter developed a vocabulary of apophatic literalism to give visual form even to such unlikely statements as "Truly you are a hidden God" and "My center is everywhere, my circumference nowhere." The intimate link between text and miniatures suggests that the designer of these paintings was a seasoned contemplative, almost certainly a monk. In its second section, the article considers the collaboration of compiler, artist, and scribe, proposing that the compiler himself designed the miniatures, although they were executed by a professional artist from Saint-Omer. Another perplexing feature lies in the scribe's carelessness and failure to understand the material. The essay asks why and where such a sophisticated painter would have collaborated with a minimally competent scribe. Finally, it turns to one extremely rare text, tracing it to a hagiographic work by the eleventh-century monk Drogo, unknown outside his abbey of Bergues-Saint-Winnoc. On this ground it argues that the compiler was a monk of Saint-Winnoc, where the manuscript was produced—possibly for a canoness at the local abbey of Saint-Victor. That Bergues was not known at this time for professional book production could explain the inexpert scribal work. A postscript seeks to identify the coat of arms on fol. 1.

Ever since Jeffrey Hamburger published *The Rothschild Canticles* in 1990, that small, richly illuminated manuscript (Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 404) has been an indispensable reference point for anyone interested in mysticism and medieval art. Hamburger demonstrated that the Rothschild Canticles dates from about 1300, and the style of its miniatures suggests an origin in "the former diocese of Thérouanne—an ecclesiastical jurisdiction that nestled between Flanders and France and included the towns of Boulogne, St. Omer, and Ypres."[1] Alison Stones has linked the book's two principal artists with a small set of manuscripts produced at Saint-Omer in the decades on either side of 1300.[2] The most important of these are two copies of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* (Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque municipale, MSS 130 and 131, the latter produced in 1297); a book of hours in Baltimore (Walters Art Museum, MS W. 90, after 1297); and the Sellers Hours (Dallas, Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, MS 13).[3] As for the patron, nothing is known. Hamburger thought the manuscript was created for a nun or canoness, since it was most often women who owned such elaborate private prayer books—though, in principle, monks and clerics could also identify with the persona of the mystical Bride.[4] But the purely contemplative spirituality of the Canticles is typical of what we find in female hagiography and women's mystical writings, such as those produced at

1. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12.

2. Alison Stones, "La production de manuscrits littéraires aux environs de 1300: les mécènes et les liens stylistiques entre leurs peintres entre Cambrai et Saint-Omer," in *La moisson des lettres: l'invention littéraire autour de 1300*, ed. Hélène Bellon-Méguelle et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 81–104; and eadem, *The Minnesota Vincent of Beauvais Manuscript and Cistercian Thirteenth-Century Book Decoration* (Minneapolis: Associates of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, 1977).

3. For further parallels, see Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 11–14; on the Sellers Hours, see John McQuillen, "Who Was St Thomas of Lancaster? New Manuscript Evidence," in *Fourteenth-Century England IV*, ed. J. S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2006), 1–25.

4. Sarah Bromberg, "Gendered and Ungendered Readings of the *Rothschild Canticles*," *Different Visions* 1 (2008): 1–26; and Sherry C. M. Lindquist, "Gender," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 113–30.

the famous convent of Helfta in the 1290s. The latinity of the manuscript, its spiritual optimism, its complete lack of interest in the active life, and the lavishness of its illuminations, replete with gold leaf, all indicate a woman of means—hence a nun or canoness rather than a beguine.[5] Meant as a work of mystagogy, the manuscript leads its user step by step through meditations on paradise, the Song of Songs, and the Virgin Mary to mystical union, and, finally, contemplation of the Trinity.

Since 1990, the Rothschild Canticles has often been cited and its miniatures widely reproduced,[6] but there has been a dearth of work on its text, especially that of part 1—a unique florilegium designed expressly to accompany the miniatures. So it is from that direction that we may yet hope for new insights. The sole important study since Hamburger, a 2001 article by Wybren Scheepsma, begins by discussing a single passage that was added soon after the manuscript was finished—a vernacular quotation from the *Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius, copied on fol. 190r. Scheepsma showed that the language of this quotation, identified by Hamburger as Ripuarian (the dialect of Cologne), is in fact Middle Dutch, although it "shows strong traces of interaction with Middle High German."[7] Thus, the vernacular text is compatible with a Flemish origin for the Rothschild Canticles. It also helps to resolve one of Hamburger's perplexities: a puzzling discrepancy between the Franco-Flemish style of the paintings and a number of textual and iconographic motifs that point toward the Rhineland. Thanks to a minor boom in the study of Middle Dutch literature, it has become increasingly clear that the Low Countries served as a meeting place for northern French, German, and indigenous Dutch traditions. Traveling along the basins of the Seine, the Meuse, and the Rhine, devotional writers and artists established important interregional networks. "The *Rothschild Canticles*," Scheepsma concludes, "is unmistakably the product of this breeding ground."[8] Even though the Franco-Flemish origin of the Canticles seems

secure, it has yet to be linked to any particular monastery in that region.

This article aims to advance discussion by focusing on one discrete section, the bifolios devoted to the Trinity (fols. 39v–44r and 74v–106r), consisting of nineteen full-page miniatures and twenty text pages. Given the ascending theological order of the sections, it seems likely that these separate portions were originally meant as a unit. Further, damage and rebinding over time have resulted in the loss of one miniature and some dislocation in fols. 83v–87r.[9] I have chosen to revisit the Trinity section for several reasons: its paintings demonstrate the most stunning iconographic creativity; its text is a remarkable florilegium, bearing witness to a distinctive Trinitarian theology that is also expressed in the miniatures; and, finally, the text contains a clue that enables us at last to pinpoint the Canticles' place of origin.

As a dwarf standing on a giant's shoulders, I have identified most of the elusive texts that escaped Hamburger's pre-Internet search. In the first section I discuss the compiler's range of sources, reflecting on how each is used, how textual motifs are translated to visual ones, and how image and text alike highlight certain aspects of Trinitarian thought. I argue that the Trinity paintings illustrate particular texts even more closely than Hamburger thought, exploring the implications of this uncommonly close collaboration (or even identity) between compiler and artist. Next I look at the perplexing deficiencies of the scribe, whose work falls far below the artist's standard, to ask what factors might account for this unusual pairing of superb illumination with inferior scribal work. Finally, I use one extremely rare text to localize the manuscript and investigate what I will propose as the site of its production.

The Trinity Texts and the Art of the Apophatic

No other painter in the history of Western art has been inspired to such brilliant, prolific invention by the daunting theme of the Trinity as the artist of the Rothschild Canticles. The subject of the Trinity gave rise to relatively few standard treatments, and each had its own theological slant. The image of three identical Christomorphic men stresses the unity and equality of the three persons. Alternatively, an artist might play up the paradox of Three-in-One by depicting a single body with three heads, though at the risk of producing a grotesque "monster" Trinity. Some painters used mandalas—geometric designs built around circles or triangles—to highlight

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5. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 155–67. For a lay female patron from the same period and region, see Adelaide Bennett, "Devotional Literacy of a Noblewoman in a Book of Hours of ca. 1300 in Cambrai," in *Manuscripts in Transition: Recycling Manuscripts, Texts and Images*, ed. Brigitte Dekeyzer and Jan van der Stock (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 149–57.

6. Hamburger has published the complete manuscript, which is also available online (in color) at http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu /vufind/Record/3432521. Hence, I reproduce only a selection of the images I discuss.

7. Wybren Scheepsma, "Filling the Blanks: A Middle Dutch Dionysius Quotation and the Origins of the *Rothschild Canticles*," *Medium Aevum* 70 (2001): 278–303, at 278.

8. Ibid., 293.

9. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 223, 233 (proposed reconstruction), and pls. 52–54. For another error in binding, see fols. 26v–27r, where a verso from the Song of Songs cycle faces an obviously mismatched Desert Father drawing.

the perfection and unknowability of God.[10] In Byzantium and Russia, icon painters depicted the Trinity in the guise of three angels seated around a table, a motif based on the "hospitality of Abraham" (Gen. 18), with Eucharistic connotations. The most common Trinity in the late medieval West was the *Gnadenstuhl*, or Throne of Grace. This type became immensely popular because it joins the Trinity to the cross, thus declaring that the whole Trinity (rather than Christ alone) enacted the work of redemption. God the Father, enthroned, holds a crucifix that displays his dead or dying Son, while the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovers between their heads. In addition to these types, we find the ubiquitous Marian Trinities of the fifteenth century, which depict Father, Mother, and Son (along with an inconspicuous Spirit-dove) in extratemporal scenes of salvation, such as the Coronation of the Virgin and the Double Intercession.[11]

The Throne of Grace and Marian Trinities share several features, all the more notable by their absence in the Rothschild Canticles. For instance, they all place the Trinity in a narrative context; all depict the triune God as redeemer by including either Mary or the cross; all emphasize the principle of hierarchy rather than equality, though in varying ways; and all marginalize the Holy Spirit, for the little dove never attracts as much attention as the two or three anthropomorphic figures. Moreover, all project a notably solemn tone. The Throne of Grace is a hieratic, frontal image that demands the viewer's reverence and awe. It alludes to the majesty of God as King along with the tragic suffering of Christ. In the Rothschild Canticles, by contrast, we find a completely different affect: a playful, intimate approach to the triune God, marked by spontaneity rather than solemnity, dynamism rather than hieratic stasis, wit rather than awe. There is no hint of narrative, but something more like an eternal dance. Mary, important earlier in the manuscript, has disappeared. But the Spirit-dove is prominent, on a par with the human forms representing Father and Son, or even the dominant figure in a composition (fols. 42r, 77r, 83r; Fig. 1). The divine persons are caught up in an everlasting game of hide-and-seek with humans while they enact among themselves, in ever-changing ways, that mutual coinherence that the Greek fathers called
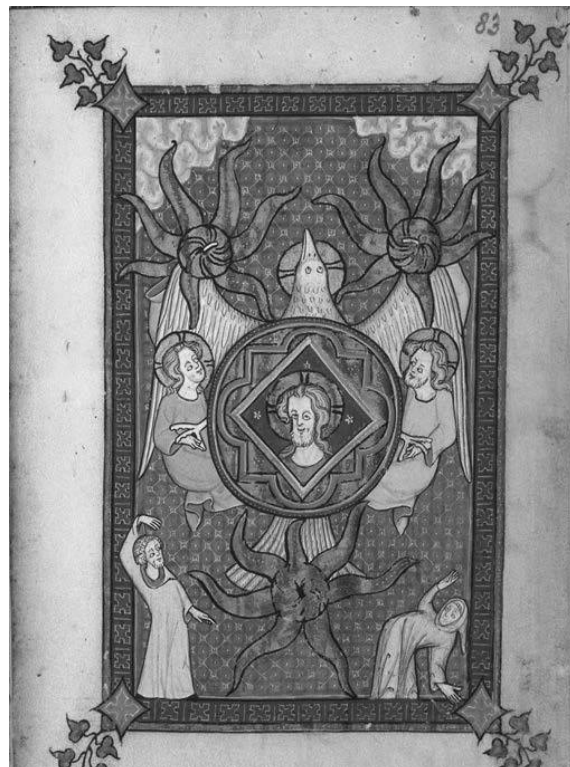

Figure 1. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 83r, "Trinus personaliter et unus essentialiter"* (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission). See the electronic edition of Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

perichoresis—literally, "dancing around one another."[12] This approach to the Trinity, considered in itself apart from the drama of redemption, represents a distinctive theological stance and a unique artistic choice. As Bernard McGinn puts it, the Trinity miniatures in the Rothschild Canticles "had little precedent in previous art; nor do they appear to have found real successors."[13]

For the artist or intended user, contemplating the Trinity seems like *fun*, if one dare say so. This joyous attitude, reverent but not solemn, is manifested most clearly in the musicians and pointing figures that play the role of implied viewers. Music-making angels often adorn images of heaven, but the Rothschild Canticles treats them just as inventively as the Trinity itself. On fol. 79r a celestial percussionist attacks a

10. For examples of these three types, see ibid., pls. 197, 199, 201, 203, and 209.

11. Barbara Newman, "Maria: Holy Trinity as Holy Family," in *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 245–90. See also Alfred Hackel, *Die Trinität in der Kunst: eine ikonographische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1931); and François Boespflug, *Dieu dans l'art: Sollicitudini Nostrae de Benoît XIV (1745) et l'affaire Crescence de Kaufbeuren* (Paris: Cerf, 1984).

12. Cf. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 139. For more on the concept, see Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–33.

13. Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany, 1300–1500* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 308.

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row of bells with mallets; on fol. 84r, angels in the upper left and right play a game of ringtoss; on fol. 88r (Fig. 2), musicians in all four corners play stringed instruments. While one holds a simple harp, the others strum whimsically shaped zithers embellished with animal heads. Even more remarkable are the half-column figures on the verso pages. With the exception of fol. 74v, every verso in the Trinity section includes such a personage pointing to the full-page miniature. Hamburger describes them as "seers," which they surely are—yet their comportment seems deliberately comic, recalling that of jongleurs.[14] They may be facing one way but pointing another (fols. 43v, 82v, 86v, 105v), wearing piebald clothing (fol. 93v) or funny hats (fols. 78v, 95v, 99v), or slouching like a negligent monk (fol. 85v). The barefoot, crippled youth on fol. 87v could be en route to a miraculous cure. Similar characters appear in the full-page miniatures, complementing the angels' music with what might be the semilewd gestures of a dance (fols. 83r, 94r; Fig. 1). In the lower right corner of fol. 96r, an elfin figure bends over backward to play an instrument whose pinwheel shape mimics the great solar wheel behind which divine Wisdom hides. Four characters in the corners of fol. 98r stretch their arms as if to join hands in a cosmic dance, while on fol. 100r (Fig. 3), three spectators raise their hands in wonder beneath a divine apparition, imitating the stunned postures of Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration. Such figures are not equivalent to the amusing marginalia, for these are integral to the primary image. Collectively, they seem to proclaim that the reader need not be ashamed or afraid, even though all human attempts to comprehend the Trinity are comically inept. Nonetheless, she can merrily follow the Lord of the Dance.

Gifted with such a playful imagination, the artist reveled in a kind of inspired literalism, which offsets the sharply apophatic character of his text. As a potpourri of biblical verses, liturgical praise, dogmatic formulas, exegesis, and theological aphorisms, that text develops a theology (and epistemology) that might be summed up as follows. God is infinite, unknowable, immutable, and beyond time (fols. 43v, 97v, 105v); his power is supreme, his presence ubiquitous (fol. 91v). Graced by revelation, humans know *that* such a God exists but not *what* he is (fol. 103v). Paradoxically, this divine incomprehensibility sets the imagination free, for, as Augustine says, we cannot keep our minds from imagining bodily forms, try as we might (fols. 39v, 85v).[15] We are at liberty to do so, then, so long as the eye of faith fixes itself not on these images but

on the ineffable realities they convey. By analogy, biblical exegetes insisted that prophetic images cannot be taken literally because this leads to absurdity. For instance, Moses invokes the "eye of the earth." Since this is plainly a figure of speech, there must necessarily be an allegorical sense (fols. 80v, 95v). In point of fact, however, the Rothschild Canticles is not about biblical exegesis. The designer(s) could have cited this truism about scriptural images so the user would apply it to the book's painted images, for it is these that must be understood figuratively.[16] Having established this principle, the artist can develop an iconography of startling richness and novelty in the service of a profoundly apophatic theology.

Scripture is the most prolific source, not only of texts but also of visual motifs. I count fifty biblical verses in the Trinity section alone, twenty-two cited independently, twenty-eight quoted in other sources. In selecting these, the compiler eschewed narrative, instead choosing either symbolic or apophatic texts, often lightly modified by quotation from memory or liturgical use. Statements of pure theology are rare in the Bible, but he cites them disproportionately:

Tu es vere Deus absconditus. (Truly you are a hidden God.) (Isa. 45:15; fol. 43v)

Ego sum qui sum. (I am who I am.) (Exod. 3:14; fols. 43v, 99v, 105v)

O altitudo divitiarum sapientie et scientie Dei! Quam innumerabilia sunt iuditia tua et investigabiles vie tue. (O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How innumerable are your judgments, and how unsearchable your ways.) (Rom. 11:33; fol. 43v)

Ego sum Alpha et O, primus et novissimus. (I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.) (Rev. 22:13; fol. 74v)

Incomprehensibilis est omni cogitatu. (He is incomprehensible by all thought.) (Jer. 32:19; fol. 85v)

In me omnis potestas in celo et in terra. (In me is all power in heaven and on earth.) (Matt. 28:18; fol. 91v)

Ego qui non mutor sed movens omnia. (I am the one who does not change, but moves all things.) (Mal. 3:6; Wisd. of Sol. 7:24, 27; fol. 97v)

Deum nemo vidit unquam. (No one has ever seen God.) (John 1:18; fol. 105v)

Even the most apophatic verses yield motifs central to the artist's repertoire. The Deus absconditus itself is such a motif, for God is literally hidden behind bursts of radiant light (fols. 40r, 98r) or golden sun wheels (fols. 44r, 96r, 100r, 106r;

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14. In *Rothschild Canticles*, 125–27, Hamburger also compares the pointing figures to dancers (cf. fols. 13r, 30r, 51r) and to rustics in the Annunciation to the Shepherds.

15. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.7, trans. and notes P. Agaësse and J. Moingt (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 2:40.

16. On the manuscript's "theory of mystical perception," see Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 123–25.

Figure 2. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 88r, "In nidulo meo moriar" (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission).*

Figure 3. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 100r, "abscondes eos in abscondito faciei tue"* (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission). *See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

Figure 4. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 106r, "Deum nemo vidit unquam"* (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission). *See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*
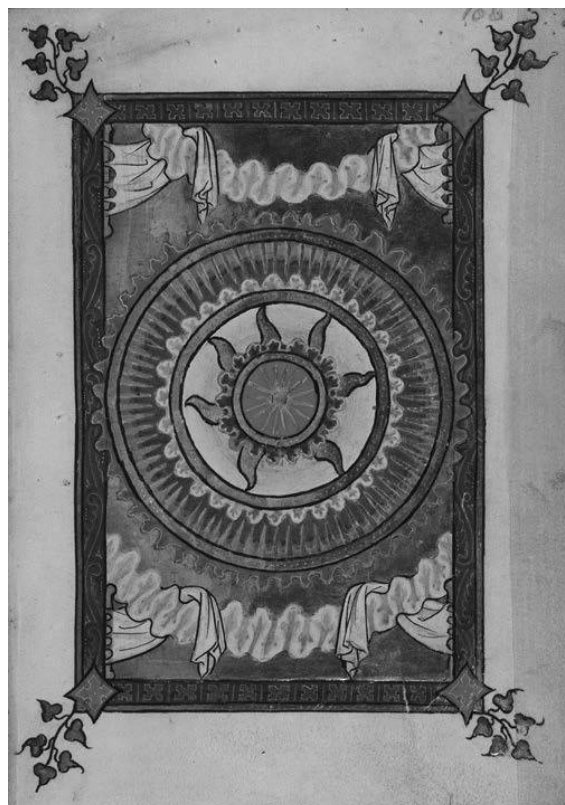
Figs. 3–4). Like the lover in the Song of Songs, illustrated earlier, this God delights in teasing his beloved with a game of now-you-see-me, now-you-don't. Other textual cues include *facies/caput* (face or head), *lux solis* (sunlight), *velamentum* (veil), *circuitus* (circular path), and *rota in medio rote* (a wheel in the middle of a wheel, illustrated on fol. 102r). As Hamburger notes, the artist applied the rather old-fashioned technique of word illustration, often used in Psalters, to the more difficult challenge of the Trinity illuminations.[17] One telling example is "the hem of his garment" (fimbria vestimenti eius). On fol. 80v the compiler cites a Gospel verse about the woman who suffered an issue of blood: "She said within herself, if I touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed" (Matt. 9:21, Luke 8:44). On the facing fol. 81r (Fig. 5), two figures on their knees touch the "hems" or loose ends of a veil, signifying divine presence, that has been braided around a circle

enclosing the Trinity. This motif is echoed on fol. 92r (Fig. 6), where the ends of the same veil tempt human touch, and on fol. 98r, where a figure touches the actual hem of God's garment.

Another, even quirkier instance occurs on fols. 87v–88r. Here the compiler paired two verses, "Dominus Deus tuus Deus unus est" (The Lord your God is one God; Mark 12:29) and "In nidulo meo moriar et sicut palma multiplicabo dies" (I shall die in my nest and multiply my days like a palm tree; Job 29:18). In the biblical context, Job is brooding wistfully on the long, happy life he might have led if only God had left him alone. The artist, ignoring this, links the two verses in a most unexpected way (Fig. 2). To illustrate that the Lord is one, he depicted one divine figure instead of his usual three, and he looped the versatile veil to form a hammock-like nest inside the sun, in which God serenely rests. Neither the liturgy nor any logical connection unites these verses, though Latin phonology suggests an obscure link. *Moriar* calls to mind the similar-sounding verb *morabor*, "I shall dwell in my

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17. Ibid., 32–33.

Figure 5. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 81r, "Ipse est qui facit ex utroque unum" (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission).*

Figure 6. *Rothschild Canticles, fols. 91v–92r, "O fortis manus nimium nimiumque prevalida" (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission).*

nest"—which is just what the speaker, reinterpreted as the one God, is doing. Further, the mention of a palm tree could pleasingly recall the *palma contemplationis* pictured on fol. 5r.[18] I spin out this little fantasia only to show how idiosyncratically, yet inextricably, the miniature fuses two otherwise unrelated verses. These links, such as they are, strongly point to the workings of an individual mind. It is such moments—and there are many—that persuade me that the compiler of the Trinity text himself designed, even if he did not personally execute, its miniatures.

Liturgical verses are treated the same way as scriptural ones. The compiler selected mainly antiphons, the simple, biblically based phrases of plainchant sung before and after psalms. Most of his choices cluster around the more joyful feasts of the church year: Easter and Eastertide, All Saints, the dedication of a church, the common for martyrs and evangelists.

It may seem strange that the Feast of the Trinity itself is not represented—but this merely confirms the manuscript's terminus ante quem. That feast was not widely celebrated until Pope John XXII (r. 1316–34) promoted it, perhaps thirty years after the Rothschild Canticles was completed.[19]

As in the earlier paradise sequence, the liturgical texts emphasize the reward of the saints, which the user may eagerly anticipate. For instance, fol. 99v features a psalm verse along with two antiphons and a responsory from the common of martyrs:

In circuitu tuo, Domine, lumen est, et in eternum non deficiet; ibi requiescunt sanctorum anime. Sanctum est verum lumen et admirabile, ministrans lucem hiis qui permanserunt in agone certaminis; accipiunt ab ipso splendorem sempiternam in quo assidue felices letantur. Quoniam abscondes eos in abscondito faciei tue a

18. The bird nesting on top of the palm tree is a phoenix, suggesting a link with the Hebrew sense of Job 29:18—"I shall multiply my days like the phoenix"—because only the phoenix can first die in its nest, then multiply its days. On the *palma contemplationis* allegory, see ibid., 35–42.

19. The antiphon "Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus" (Blessed be the holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit) on fol. 89v predates the office composed by John Peckham (d. 1292).

contradictione hominum. [Ps. 30:21] Gloriosus Deus in sanctis suis.

[Around you, O Lord, is light that unto eternity shall never fail; there rest the souls of the saints. Holy and marvelous is the true light, ministering light to those who have persevered in the struggle; they receive from him everlasting splendor in which they rejoice, forever happy. For you shall hide them in the hidden place of your countenance from the strife of men. Glorious is God in his holy ones.]

Once again, the illustration (fol. 100r; Fig. 3) is both apophatic and strangely literal. God's *circuitus*, the circuit of his glory, is represented by seven concentric circles filled with celestial light, "ministering light" in turn to those around it. Three hands and three robed feet—again evoking the "hem of his garment"—emerge from this mandala to denote the Trinity concealed within it. But the saints are truly hidden "in the hidden place of [God's] countenance," insofar as we see neither it nor them. Instead, an architectural frieze in the top register—the only such element in the whole sequence— pictures the city of God in which these hidden ones dwell. In its central chamber, a divine hand is raised in blessing. Another instance of apophatic literalism occurs on fol. 96r to illustrate the words of Sapientia: "I have circled the vault of heaven alone" (Ecclus. 24:8). Straddled in the shape of a great *X*, barely visible behind a sun wheel, Wisdom "circles the vault of heaven" in such a way that his oversize hands and feet stretch beyond the rings of cloud and light that constitute the imagined cosmos.

A third source category is doctrinal formulas. Two of these stem from the Athanasian Creed, while the rest are theological commonplaces. Orthodoxy matters to the artist, for the dogma itself—the astonishing, endlessly productive Three-in-Oneness of the divine—inspires his contemplation and creative élan.

Pater complacet sibi in Filio et Filius in Patre, et Spiritus sanctus ab utroque. (The Father is well pleased in the Son and the Son in the Father, and the Holy Spirit is from both.)[20] (fol. 76v)

Equalis Patri secundum divinitatem, minor Patre secundum humanitatem. (Equal to the Father according to his divinity, less than the Father according to his humanity.) (Athanasian Creed; fol. 78v)

Trinus personaliter et unus essentialiter. (Three in persons and one in essence.)[21] (fol. 82v)

Pater a nullo factus est, nec creatus, nec genitus. Filius a Patre solo, non factus, nec creatus, sed genitus. Spiritus sanctus a Patre et Filio, non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens. (The Father is from no one, neither made, nor created, nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.) (Athanasian Creed; fol. 86v)

Tres vidit et unum adoravit. (He saw three and worshipped one.) (Responsory for Quinquagesima; fol. 93v)

Such texts seem to defy visual imagination even more than the scriptural verses. Yet the artist invented some simple devices to keep the paradox of triunity before the mind's eye at all times. For example, a prime signifier of divinity—the golden sun with its waving, tentacle-like rays—is sometimes single (fols. 44r, 81r, 88r, 90r; Figs. 2 and 5), sometimes triple (fols. 40r, 83r, 94r; Fig. 1). Elsewhere the artist complicated this formula. On fol. 79r, three small suns for each person are superimposed on one large sun; fols. 92r and 100r insert a smaller sun inside a bigger one (Figs. 3 and 6); and on fol. 96r, two suns interlock to form a double wheel with spokes radiating both inward and outward. Usually the Father and Son are indicated by two heads or torsos, the Holy Spirit by a dove. In two miniatures, however, the artist depicted four figures, boldly attempting to represent the three persons as well as the singular Godhead. One visual antecedent for such designs is the tetramorph, a symbol that represents the four evangelists as the "four living creatures" of Ezekiel's vision (Fig. 7).[22] Some tetramorphs group the heads of man, lion, ox, and eagle around a single winged figure that gives the composition a vertical axis, as the Spirit-dove sometimes does in the Rothschild Canticles (fols. 77r, 83r, 90r).

On fol. 83r (Fig. 1), illustrating the formula "three in persons and one in essence," the dove with outspread wings frames the whole composition; a sun disk flames above each wing and a third covers its tail. Father and Son are sheltered

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20. The first clause is from Peter of Celle, *Sermo XI in Nativitate Domini IV*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64) (hereafter cited as Migne, *PL*), 202 (1855): col. 668A. The second is a Western theological commonplace, the *Filioque*.

21. Paulus of Saint-Pierre of Chartres, *Vetus Agano* 8.23, in Migne, *PL* 155 (1854): col. 364A. Cf. Hincmar of Reims, *De una et non trina deitate* 2, in Migne, *PL* 125 (1852): col. 526C: "Unus est potentialiter, id est substantialiter, sicut Augustinus dicit, et trinus personaliter."

22. On the history and symbolism of the tetramorph, see Anna C. Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas: A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam: Gorcum, 1978), 47–53.

Figure 7. *Nicholas of Lyra,* Postille*, Troyes, Médiathèque de l'Agglomération Troyenne, MS 152, fol. 291r, tetramorph (photo: Médiathèque, by permission). See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

within the dove's wings, each grasped by one talon. In the center appears a single divine face, set off by three stars and triply framed inside a diamond, a quatrefoil, and a circle. Hamburger is surely right to say that, in this unusual image, the central face represents not the incarnate Christ but the One God.[23] This composition is echoed on fol. 94r, where the three persons, each wearing a sun as a collar, surround one central face. The accompanying liturgical verse, "tres vidit et unum adoravit," refers to a famous Trinitarian epiphany in Genesis 18:1–3. The patriarch Abraham saw three men (*tres viri*), fell down in worship (*adoravit in terram*), then addressed his divine visitors in the singular (*Domine*).

If the Rothschild Canticles were in fact produced for a devout woman, this fascination with Trinitarian mysteries is precisely what we would expect in a thirteenth-century Netherlandish milieu. Hadewijch of Antwerp, unknown to

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23. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 128.

the compiler, was a penetrating Trinitarian theologian whose works are filled with meditations on the relationship of the three persons to one another and to the divine essence.[24] The hagiographer of Beatrice of Nazareth, a Cistercian prioress (d. 1268), laid special emphasis on her contemplation of the Trinity: "With the lively clear understanding of her purified mind she deserved to investigate the Son eternally born of the Father, the Spirit proceeding from them both, the distinction of persons, the unity of the divine essence and power, and the other holy mysteries of the Trinity."[25] Elsewhere he writes:

> Beatrice conceived a great desire to know the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Although the Trinity is totally incomprehensible to human understanding, she aspired to the unattainable with great confidence. . . . Not in vain either, for sometimes when she was diligently and keenly inquiring after what she sought, using books on the Holy Trinity, a supply of which she kept on hand, and sometimes when she was alertly attending to meditation and prayer, it happened that the light of heavenly truth flowed like lightning into her open heart.[26]

Beatrice's vita notes that she owned and avidly studied books about the Trinity, while Hadewijch devoted a whole vision to her relationship with her favorite theologian, St. Augustine.[27] Like Beatrice, the user of the Rothschild Canticles is encouraged to aspire "to the unattainable with great confidence," even though she knows that "the Trinity is totally incomprehensible to human understanding." Like Hadewijch, the compiler was deeply indebted to Augustine's *De Trinitate*, from which he drew no fewer than fourteen passages. The church father's prominence is signaled by an inset miniature on fol. 74v, the only one in which a throned bishop with crook and miter replaces the usual acrobat, solemnly pointing to the design on the facing page. This bishop is undoubtedly meant as Augustine, although (ironically) the Trinitarian text on that page is actually from a sermon of Pope Leo the Great.[28] The text in question *sounds* like Augustine, though,

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24. Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, trans. Columba Hart (New York: Paulist, 1980). See esp. Letters 17, 28, and 30.

25. *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth* 2.164, ed. Léonce Reypens, trans. Roger De Ganck and John B. Hasbrouck (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 193.

26. Ibid., 3.213, p. 247.

27. Hadewijch, Vision 11, in *Complete Works*, 289–93.

28. "Bene ergo ipsa difficultas loquendi cor nostrum ad intelligentiam trahit, et per infirmitatem nostram celestis doctrina nos adiuvat; ut quia in deitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti nec singularitas est, nec diversitas cogitanda, vera unitas et vera Trinitas possit quidem mente simul sentiri, sed non possit simul ore proferri." Leo I, *Sermo* 76.2 for Pentecost, in Migne, *PL* 54 (1846): col. 405B.

and its inclusion indicates—not surprisingly—that the compiler found his Augustinian material in a florilegium rather than in a complete text of *De Trinitate*. Another bit of Pseudo-Augustine, as noted by Hamburger, is a passage from John of Fécamp's *Confessio fidei* on fol. 82v.[29] The compiler never identified his sources, for why should he? As Sara Poor observes, devotional miscellanies disregard such niceties because "this tradition conventionally elevates the authorship of God over that of humans."[30]

Unlike the biblical and liturgical verses, the patristic texts are not illustrated directly. Instead, they offer directives on how to think about the Trinity, how to assess the value of images and imagination, and how to contemplate God through love and knowledge. As I demonstrate below, these excerpts have been mangled by the scribe, so for clarity's sake I here reunite the *disjecta membra* that he has put asunder and correct his errors. Despite this scribal malfeasance, the central Augustinian themes are clear, commenting fruitfully on both the artist's and the contemplative's project. Space permits me to discuss only a few passages, including this key text on anthropomorphism and its limits:

> When we believe in any physical things that we have heard or read about but have not seen, we cannot help our imaginations fabricating something with the shape and outline of bodies as it may occur to our thoughts, and this will either not be true, or if it is true, which can only happen extremely rarely, this is not what it profits us to hold on faith. Our faith is directed to some other useful thing [aliud aliquid utile] which is represented by this picture in our imagination [fol. 85v]. . . . Even the physical face of the Lord is pictured with infinite variety by countless imaginations, though whatever it was like he certainly only had one. Nor as regards the faith we have in the Lord Jesus Christ is it in the least relevant to salvation what our imaginations picture him like, which may be quite different from the reality [fol. 39v].[31]

In other words, no one knows what Jesus looked like, but every believer has a mental image of him. While these images are surely false, they are harmless, even useful (*utile*), insofar as they help the mind cling to the real but invisible Jesus. If this is true of the God-man, it must be true a fortiori of the immaterial Godhead. Elsewhere in the Rothschild Canticles, Augustine says,

> we are at least able to know what [God] is not. He is certainly not the earth, nor the heavens, . . . nor any such thing as we see in the heavens, nor any such thing as we do not see. . . . Nor if you increase the light of the sun in your imagination as much as you can, whether to make it greater or brighter a thousand times even or to infinity, not even that is God [fol. 76v].[32]

Nevertheless, the artist gives us countless dazzling sunbursts and iterations of Christ's face, admittedly "quite different from the reality." Though apophatic theology more often eschews images, the Rothschild Canticles represents a road less taken: reveling in their profusion with a clear profession of their limits. The user's challenge, as she beholds endless variations on a small set of motifs—faces, doves, veils, clouds, sunbursts, geometric forms—is to conceive of "some other useful thing," some aspect of divine reality, shadowed forth by each.

One such aspect is the coinherence of the Three. As Augustine puts it, "they are each in each and all in each, and each in all and all in all, and all are one. Whoever sees this even in part, or in a puzzling manner in a mirror (1 Cor. 13:12), should rejoice at knowing God" (fol. 89v).[33] Few images of the Trinity even attempt to convey this quality of being "all in each, and each in all." But in the Rothschild Canticles, coinherence is the dimension of Trinitarian theology to which the artist seems most profoundly committed. The complex relationality of the three persons is conveyed through a delicate interplay of touch, gesture, and changing positions.

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29. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 119.

30. Sara Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 130.

31. "Necesse est autem, cum aliqua corporalia lecta vel audita que non vidimus, credimus, fingat sibi animus aliquid in liniamentis formisque corporum, sicut occurrerit cogitanti, quod aut verum [non] sit, aut et si verum est, quod rarissime potest accidere: non hoc tamen fide ut teneamus quicquam prodest, sed [ad] aliud aliquid utile, quod per hoc insinuatur [fol. 85v]. . . . Nam et ipsius Dominice facies carnis innumerabilium cogitationum diversitate variatur et fingitur, que tamen una erat, quecumque erat. [Neque] est in fide nostra [quam] de Domino Ihesu Christo habemus, illud

salub*ere* [est] quod si[bi] animus fingit, longe fortasse aliter quam se res habet." Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.7, in Agaësse and Moingt, 2:40; translation lightly modified from *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 246.

32. "Possimus iam scire quid non sit. Non est enim certe, nec terra, nec celum, . . . nec tale aliquid quale videmus in celo, nec quicquid tale non videmus. . . . Nec si augeas ymaginatio*ne* cogitatio*nis* lucem solis, quantum potes, sive quo sit maior, sive quo sit clarior, milies [tantum], aut innumerabiliter, necque hoc est Deus." Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.3, in Agaësse and Moingt, 2:30; Hill, *The Trinity*, 243.

33. "Ita et singula sunt in singulis, et omnia in singulis, et singula in omnibus, et omnia in omnibus, et unum omnia. Qui videt *hec* vel ex parte, vel per speculum et in enigmate, gaudeat cognoscens Deum." Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6.12, trans. and notes M. Mellet and Th. Camelot (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 1:500; Hill, *The Trinity*, 214.
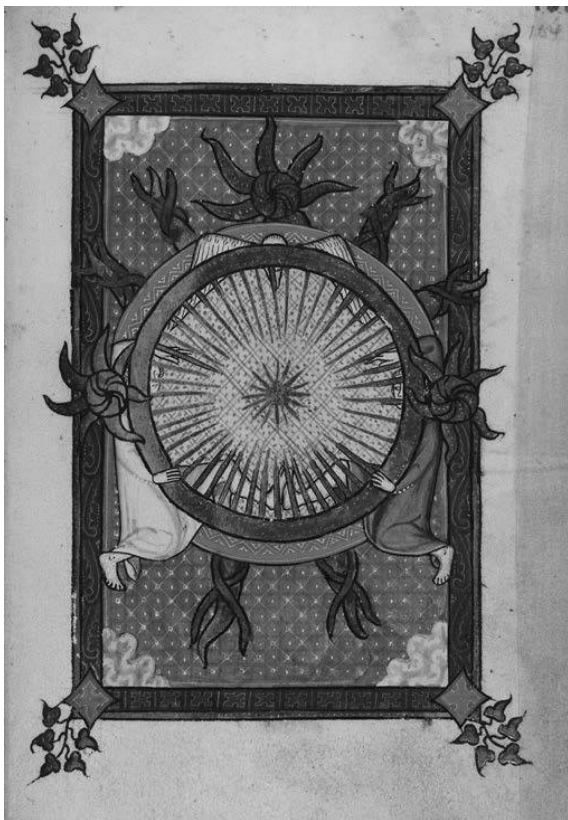
Figure 8. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 104r, "Centrum meum ubique, circumferentia nusquam" (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission). See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

Sometimes the Father and Son join hands; on fol. 104r (Fig. 8) they touch feet behind the wheel they hold. Sometimes they grasp the sides, wings, or talons of the dove, and sometimes they unite around a fourth figure representing the Divine Essence. On fols. 80v–81r, the Holy Spirit is the person "qui facit ex utroque unum" (who makes both one; cf. Eph. 2:14). This is another moment that strongly urges the identity of compiler and artist. The compiler has surprisingly adapted Paul's statement about Jews and Gentiles being one in Christ to assert the Augustinian doctrine of the Holy Spirit as personified Love, uniting Father and Son. To illustrate this concept, the artist portrays the dove in a rare three-quarter view. Father and Son nestle close to its head, sharing a single nimbus, and lovingly caress its wings (Fig. 5).

Another exegetical source, previously unidentified, is less predictable. This is the *Dialogi contra Judaeos* (*Dialogues Against the Jews*) of Petrus Alfonsi, a Sephardic Jew who converted to Christianity in 1106. Leaving his native Spain, he taught in England for a while before moving to northern France.[34] Alfonsi's work takes the form of a series of dialogues between the Jew "Moyses" and the Christian "Petrus," representing the author's own pre- and postbaptismal selves. The excerpts cited in the Rothschild Canticles all come from one brief portion, which argues that God has no true image or likeness (fol. 93v) and that allegorical interpretation is required to grasp the meaning of prophetic imagery (fols. 80v, 95v, 101v). Petrus's rhetorical question "Numquid terra oculum habet?" (Does the earth have an eye?; fols. 80v, 95v) may have attracted the artist's attention because he was so fascinated with the themes of blindness and vision. In a sense, the entire Trinity sequence is about earthly eyes that try to gaze on heaven. But on the whole, Petrus Alfonsi adds little to the Augustinian material. Since either the compiler or the scribe effaced all sign of the dialogue format, the anti-Jewish polemic virtually disappears.

Nonetheless, Alfonsi's work is of great interest because it may have been a visual as well as a textual source. If the artist had access to a complete manuscript of the *Dialogi* (a work well known in his region),[35] he would have seen the geometric diagram Alfonsi devised to convey his belief that the Christian mystery of the Trinity explicates the Jewish mystery of the Divine Name (Fig. 9). The singularity of God's name, Alfonsi writes, "pertains to the unity of substance; its triplicity, to the Trinity of persons."[36] His diagram places the letter combinations *IE*, *EV*, and *VE* in roundels at the corners of a triangle; in the center the full (latinized) name *IEVE* appears. Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich thought that Alfonsi's diagram had influenced the famous Trinitarian figures of Joachim of Fiore.[37] It may also have influenced the

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34. John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 11.

35. Tolan (ibid., 182–98) lists sixty-three surviving manuscripts. Of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts whose provenances are known, northern French exemplars come from Anchin, Cameron (Hainaut), Cîteaux, Clairvaux, Fécamp, Fontenay, Metz, Saint-Vaast (Arras), Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Paris), Saint-Martin-des-Champs (Paris), Saint-Victor (Paris), and Vaucelles.

36. "Sed quod unum est, ad unitatem substantiae, quod vero tria, ad Trinitatem respicit personarum." Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogi contra Judaeos*, in Migne, *PL* 157 (1854): col. 611B. By "triplicity" Alfonsi meant that there are actually just three letters in the name, since one is repeated. The Hebrew letters anglicized as *YHWH* were latinized as *IEVE*.

37. Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, *The* Figurae *of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 40–43. Tolan (*Petrus Alfonsi*, 240n45) argues that Reeves and Hirsch-Reich misconstrued this influence because they consulted only Migne's edition. This was based on a 1536 printed edition from Cologne that
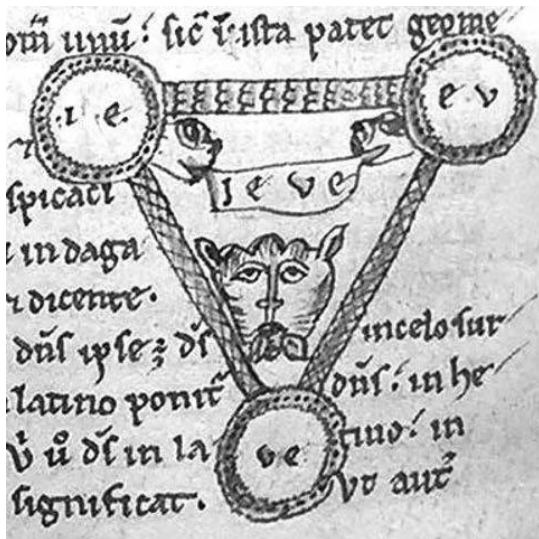
Figure 9. *Petrus Alfonsi,* Dialogi contra Judaeos*, Cambridge, St. John's College, MS E.4, fol. 153v, Trinity-Tetragrammaton diagram (photo: Wikimedia Commons). See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

Figure 10. Scutum fidei *diagram (photo: Wikimedia Commons).*

Rothschild Canticles. In his desire to represent the Trinity as both personal and ineffable, the artist constantly sought new ways to combine the figural with the diagrammatic. Though his designs are more complex, the compositions on fols. 94r and 83r (Fig. 1) recall the structure of Alfonsi's diagram.

The same influence could have been conveyed indirectly through the so-called *scutum fidei* (shield of faith), a triangular diagram that likewise uses three roundels to represent Pater, Filius, and Spiritus sanctus, with a fourth in the center labeled "Deus" (Fig. 10). The words *est* and *non est* on the linking lines proclaim that, while each person is individually God, yet the Father is not the Son, and so forth. Inspired by Alfonsi's diagram, the *scutum fidei* is first attested in a manuscript of Peter of Poitiers about 1210. It was promoted by Robert Grosseteste and Matthew Paris in Anglo-French circles and by 1300 had been widely diffused.[38] Familiarity with this design could have inspired the artist of the Canticles with his peculiar idea of depicting the three persons and the one substance in the same image, replacing the Latin tags with
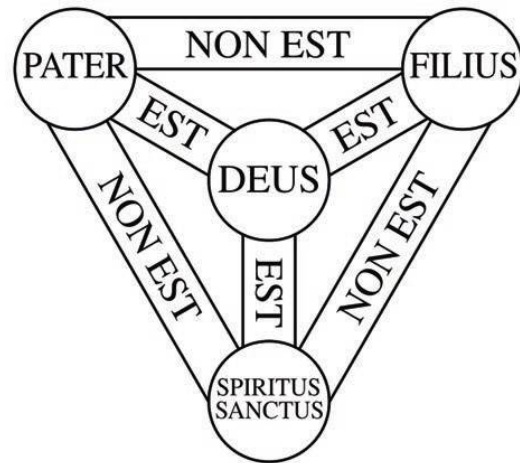
faces. As Michael Evans remarks, books like the prophecies of Joachim, the Lucca manuscript of Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber divinorum operum*, and the Rothschild Canticles combine the mystical with the diagrammatic in ways that are not always obvious at first sight.[39]

The compiler's remaining aphoristic sources display a surprisingly wide frame of reference. Fol. 39v begins with the axiom, "Dominus in orisunte eternitatis et supra tempus" (The Lord is on the horizon of eternity and beyond time). This turns out to be a radically altered proposition from the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis*, a work of Neoplatonic metaphysics translated by Gerard of Cremona in the twelfth century. Alan of Lille was the first to quote the little tract in his *Contra hereticos*, but in 1255 it became required reading at the University of Paris, where Giles of Rome, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas all wrote commentaries on it.[40] Our compiler could have picked up the saying almost anywhere, though it is not impossible that he himself had studied in Paris. In its original form the proposition reads, "Esse vero quod est post aeternitatem et supra tempus est anima, quoniam est in horizonte aeternitatis inferius et supra tempus" (the being that is after eternity and beyond time is Soul, because it is on the horizon

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did not reproduce Alfonsi's original, triangular diagram, but a tricircular version modified by the reciprocal influence of Joachim.

38. Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 76–81.

39. Michael Evans, "The Geometry of the Mind," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1980): 32–55, at 46–47.

40. *Le "Liber de causis": édition établie à l'aide de 90 manuscrits*, ed. Adriaan Pattin (Leuven: Uitgave van Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 1966); *The Book of Causes*, trans. Dennis J. Brand, 2nd rev. ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984), 1–2; and Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica contra haereticos* 1.30, in Migne, *PL* 210 (1855): col. 332C.

of eternity from below and beyond time).[41] The version in the Rothschild Canticles could have been garbled by the scribe, like so many others, but this time I suspect the change was deliberate. The Neoplatonist wrote to establish a metaphysical hierarchy: the divine mind exists in eternity, nature in time, and souls in between. The compiler simply wanted to make a statement about God and in the process introduce a teasing metaphor—"the horizon of eternity"—that sounds visual without actually being so.

The penultimate Trinity verso begins with a celebrated hermetic paradox diffused in the twelfth century, once again by Alan of Lille. "God is an intelligible sphere," Alan wrote in his *Theologicae regulae*, "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."[42] The axiom was subsequently popularized by Bonaventure and even by Jean de Meun in the *Romance of the Rose*.[43] But only the Rothschild Canticles places it in the first person:[44] "Centrum meum ubique locorum, circumferentia autem nusquam" (My center is in all places, my circumference nowhere; fol. 103v). This paradox inspired the most bizarre of the miniatures (fol. 104r), the one Hamburger calls a "Trinitarian implosion" (Fig. 8).[45] Here the artist turned the normal circular frame of his compositions inside out, precisely to illustrate the reversal of center and circumference. The three divine figures who usually appear inside the circle are now outside, peering in. The three suns that accompany them are also outside, while the tendril-like rays of a larger, hidden sun point outward beyond the circle. Within it, Father and Son appear to spin the wheel by pressing each other's bare feet. While the image is too bewildering to be wholly successful, one can only admire the artist's audacity in trying to give the paradox a visual form at all. The attempted effect mirrors that moment in *Paradiso* 28 when Dante turns his cosmology inside out, so that the outermost sphere of heaven—the empyrean where God dwells—is suddenly revealed as the luminous center.

Farther down, the same verso cites a popular Latin epigram, although it is garbled because two half lines have been omitted, and the verse is written as prose: "Quod Deus est, scimus. Quid sit, si scire velimus, / Ultimus et primus. Quod scit, summus et ymus" (fol. 103v). This epigram, with variants, circulated throughout Europe in the twelfth century. The full version emphasizes the limits of human knowledge:

> Quod Deus est, scimus. Quid sit, si scire velimus,
> Contra nos imus. Qui cum sit summus et imus,
> Ultimus et primus, satis est; plus scire nequimus.
>
> [We know *that* God is; if we wish to know *what* he is,
> We go against ourselves. That he is the highest and the
>   lowest,
> The last and the first, is enough; we can know no more.]
> (emphasis added)

At some point this epigram became attached to an anonymous poem, "De esse et essencia divina" ("On the Divine Being and Essence"), which found its way into the *Carmina* of Petrus Pictor, a canon of Saint-Omer.[46] This poet worked in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries; he is among the writers represented in the *Liber floridus* (1120) of his colleague, Lambert of Saint-Omer. As his name suggests, Pictor was also a painter who wrote a technical treatise, *De coloribus faciendis* (*On Mixing Colors*).[47] Since the Rothschild Canticles is linked stylistically to manuscripts from Saint-Omer, it seems likely that the compiler found the epigram among Petrus Pictor's works, and perhaps knew something of Pictor's career from local tradition. This painter-poet active two centuries earlier could have supplied him with an encouraging model.

There remain three apophatic passages, probably from a single source, which I have not been able to identify. These occur on the last three versos:

> Optime et pulcrius loquitur qui de Deo tacet. (fol. 101v)
>
> [He speaks best and most beautifully who is silent about God.]

41. *Liber de causis* 2.22, ed. Pattin, 50; *Book of Causes*, trans. Brand, 21.

42. "Deus est spaera intelligibilis, cujus centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam." Alan of Lille, *Theologicae regulae* 7, in Migne, *PL* 210 (1855): col. 627A; "Sermo de sphaera intelligibili," in *Alain de Lille: textes inédits*, ed. Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny (Paris: Vrin, 1965), 297–306. The original source is the hermetic *Book of the Twenty-Four Masters*: Joseph Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI], *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 144.

43. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 5.8 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1956), 86; and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1974), 508, lines 19129–39.

44. McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, 609n46.

45. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 135.

46. Jürgen Stohlmann, "Zur Überlieferung und Nachwirkung der *Carmina* des Petrus Pictor," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 11 (1976): 53–91. See also Hans Walther, ed., *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, vol. 2, pt. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 446, no. 72; and Ludwig Bertalot, "Die älteste gedruckte lateinische Epitaphiensammlung," in *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1975), 1:269–99, at 291, no. 56.

47. Petrus Pictor, *"Carmina" and "Liber de coloribus faciendis,"* Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis (hereafter cited as CCCM) 25, ed. Lieven Van Acker (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972).

Deus fuit semper et erit sine fine; ubi semper fuit, ibi nunc est.

Et ubi nunc est ibi fuit tunc. (fol. 103v)

[God always was and shall be without end; where he always was, there he is now. And where he is now, there he was then.]

I interpret the third passage as a dialogue, which incorporates a liturgical verse:

—Domine, duc me in desertum tue deitatis et tenebrositatem tui luminis, et duc me ubi tu non es.
—Mea nox obscurum non habet, sed lux glorie mee omnia inlucessit. [Antiphon for St. Lawrence]
—Bernardus oravit: Domine duc me ubi es.
—Dixit ei: Barnarde, non facio, quoniam si ducerem te ubi sum, annichilareris michi et tibi. (fol. 105v)

[—Lord, lead me into the desert of your divinity and the darkness of your light; and lead me where you are not.
—My night has no darkness, but the light of my glory illumines all things.
—Bernard prayed, Lord, lead me where you are.
—He said to him, Bernard, I will not, for if I led you where I am, you would be annihilated both to me and to yourself.]

These passages are not only the most apophatic but also the most recent in the volume. All the other post-Augustinian texts stem from the late eleventh to the mid-twelfth century, a period in which the compiler's library seems to have been especially strong. But these are contemporary with the Canticles itself, belonging to the world of Dionysian and Eckhartian mysticism that beckoned so many aspiring souls in the decades around 1300. The compiler's source might even have been oral, for the term *annihilatio* and its equivalents gained real currency only in the 1290s, appearing in the works of Mechthild of Hackeborn, Angela of Foligno, and Marguerite Porete (writing in nearby Valenciennes), all at roughly the same time.[48] But the manuscript does not endorse Margue-

rite's mysticism of the annihilated soul. As McGinn points out, the final dialogue, which ends the Trinity sequence, has a double valence. While it expresses an extreme longing for God even at the cost of self-annihilation, it also voices a critique of that desire, for God denies the request of "Bernard"— echoing his response to Moses, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Exod. 33:20).[49] Accordingly, the artist here abandoned all figural representation. Fol. 106r, the last miniature in part 1, depicts nine concentric rings of alternating fire and cloud. These spheres are framed by two parallel bands of cloud, over which the ends of God's veil are cryptically and theatrically draped in a grand finale (Fig. 4).

Compiler, Artist, and Scribe: A Baffling Collaboration

In the prologue to his *Sentences* commentary (ca. 1250), Bonaventure described four kinds of activity involved in producing texts. The scribe or *scriptor* merely copies, "adding or changing nothing." The *compilator* compiles the words of others, adding nothing of his own, while the *commentator* clarifies the material of others with his own. Only the *auctor* writes primarily his own material.[50] In medieval practice, however, as Alastair Minnis has shown, these four types of writers were not wholly distinct; they occupied rungs on a hierarchical ladder. Hence, a person might fill one role with regard to those above him and another with respect to those below.[51] Whoever assembled the text of the Rothschild Canticles was, in Bonaventure's terms, a *compilator* who linked the material of many authors without adding his own. Yet such compilation is itself a form of creative work, an act of choice among infinite options. A *compilator* could in turn function as *auctor* for the person beneath him on the totem pole, the *scriptor* whose task was to copy, "adding or changing nothing." But, as we all know, medieval scribes added or changed a great deal, whether intentionally as a form of tacit commentary or unwittingly as error.

48. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Liber specialis gratiae* 2.17, in *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae*, ed. monks of Solesmes (Poitiers: Oudin, 1877), 2:152; *Il libro della beata Angela da Foligno: edizione critica*, ed. Ludger Thier and Abele Calufetti, 2nd ed. (Rome: Quaracchi, 1985), Instructio 2, 436–38; Marguerite Porete, *Le mirouer des simples âmes*, ed. Romana Guarnieri, with facing-page Latin translation, *Speculum simplicium animarum*, CCCM 69, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), passim; and Bernard McGinn,

"The Abyss of Love: The Language of Mystical Union among Medieval Women," in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God: Studies in Honor of Jean Leclercq*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 95–120.

49. McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, 309; and idem, "Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition," *Journal of Religion* 74, no. 2 (1994): 155–81, at 173–74. Cf. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 125.

50. Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*, Prooemium, q. 4, Conclusio, in *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols. (Rome: Quaracchi, 1882), 1:14–15.

51. Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 102.

In the making of the Rothschild Canticles we can discern four analogous functions—patron, compiler, artist, and scribe—but we cannot assume that these were four distinct persons; they may have been more or fewer. Hamburger has identified the hands of three scribes (counting the late vernacular addition) and the work of three artists (counting the Desert Father drawings).[52] Still, nothing precludes a single person performing multiple functions. The unknown patron, for example, could have supplied all or part of the text. Hamburger even proposes that she could have been its chief scribe, as I will discuss below. It is the collaboration of artist and compiler, though, that proves most perplexing. In the transitional period around 1300, illuminated manuscripts were produced in both traditional monastic scriptoria and professional ateliers. During the course of production, personnel as well as unfinished books could shuttle back and forth between workplaces. As we have seen, Stones identifies the Trinity painter as a professional (presumably lay) artist working in Saint-Omer, where he illuminated other, less unusual manuscripts in and after 1297. But my examination of the text reveals its compiler to have been a rather learned, contemplative monk from a house that I will identify shortly, not far from Saint-Omer.

Such a division of labor would not be unusual, except that in the Rothschild Canticles, the relationship between text and image is uncannily close. Both the Trinity florilegium and the miniatures are so unusual, and the links between specific designs and their accompanying text so intricate, that both seem to bear the impress of a single mind. In fact, it is hard to imagine any sane patron presenting an artist with such unlikely matter for illustration as "Three in persons and one in essence," "Truly you are a hidden God," "The Lord your God is one God," or "My center is everywhere and my circumference nowhere." Yet the artist finds visual corollaries for each of these. From the keen theological insight apparent in these images, I would venture to say that he was trained not only as an artist but also as a contemplative. In Hamburger's words, the designer of the images "had an intimate knowledge of their subject matter, a knowledge that, one is tempted to say, extended beyond the merely conceptual into the realm of experience. . . . Above all, the formal complexity of the Trinitarian miniatures translates into an emblematic rich-

ness that indicates a profound understanding not only of Trinitarian theology but also of the potential of the image as a vehicle of mystical elevation."[53]

Several hypotheses, all speculative, could account for this puzzling situation. One is that artist and compiler were simply the same person. We know of several monastic and clerical artists such as Petrus Pictor, who was both poet and painter, though none of his paintings can be identified today. His colleague Lambert of Saint-Omer is thought to have crafted the images as well as the text of his famous encyclopedia, the *Liber floridus*.[54] Such dual craftsmen were more common in the eleventh and twelfth centuries than in the thirteenth, but Jonathan Alexander identifies a few from later periods, such as the monastic scribe, artist, and historian Matthew Paris of Saint Albans.[55] In 1299 the Franciscan Johannes von Valkenburg was illuminating graduals in Cologne.[56] But since the Canticles artist is known to have been active in Saint-Omer in 1297, he could only have filled the double role I have posited if, after several years as a lay artist, he chose to enter a monastery, where he continued to illuminate manuscripts. Such a conversion is not impossible.

Another, more mundane hypothesis is that the patron hired a professional artist from Saint-Omer and brought him to illuminate the manuscript on-site. There he could have discussed the commission in detail with the person who compiled the text. It seems unlikely, however, that mere verbal instruction, whether written or oral, could have enabled the unprecedented Trinity designs. Even the completed miniatures beggar description—as I have learned too well in my attempts to describe them.

A third possibility would require us to separate the design of these paintings from their execution—a distinction that, despite modern ideas of artistic creation, seems to have been fairly common at the time. The abbess Herrad of Hohenbourg almost certainly designed the iconographic program of her *Hortus deliciarum* (1170s), although the execution was prob-

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52. Hamburger attributes only the two Virgins on fols. 61r and 64r to a painter distinct from the main artist: *Rothschild Canticles*, 10–11. But Alison Stones ascribes the whole Trinity cycle, as well as these Virgins and the spiritual marriage on fol. 66r, to the artist she calls "Hand 2": Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts, c. 1260–1320: A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in France* (London: Harvey Miller, 2012), 672–85, at 682, cat. no. III-119. Both agree that the Desert Father drawings were produced by a third hand.

53. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 162.

54. Albert Derolez, *The Autograph Manuscript of the "Liber Floridus": A Key to the Encyclopedia of Lambert of Saint-Omer* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).

55. Jonathan J. G. Alexander, "Scribes as Artists: The Arabesque Initial in Twelfth-Century English Manuscripts," in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar Press, 1978), 87–116.

56. Judith Oliver, "The Mosan Origins of Johannes von Valke," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 40 (1978): 23–37; and Jennifer Hülsberg, "Untersuchungen zum Valkenburg-Graduale," in *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Kölner Dombibliothek: zweites Symposion*, ed. Heinz Finger (Cologne: Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek, 2008), 301–19.

ably left to others.[57] In thirteenth-century illumination, new or unusual subjects were sometimes sketched in preliminary drawings in the margin, where they could later be erased or cut away when the pages were trimmed in the process of binding. These sketches were often rough, but occasionally quite detailed; they could even be drawn by the head of an atelier as guidance for his assistants.[58] So the compiler may have designed the Trinity paintings himself yet left their execution to a trained professional hand. Mystical and visionary thinkers seem often to have worked this way, the most famous being Hildegard of Bingen. Although she is sometimes identified (without evidence) as the illuminator of the lost Rupertsberg *Scivias* manuscript, it is more likely that, as Madeline Caviness was the first to suggest, she produced sketches on wax tablets and delivered these, along with color indications, to the actual painter.[59] Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogi* included not only the Trinity diagram mentioned above but several celestial and terrestrial maps, and Joachim of Fiore illustrated his radical doctrine of the Trinity in history with numerous *figurae*.[60] In fourteenth-century Germany, Henry Suso's *Exemplar* included a significant program of didactic, devotional, and mystagogic illustrations.[61] All of these images, designed in the first instance by the authors, were elaborated by later manuscript illuminators. Some such collaboration might account for the Trinity miniatures in the Rothschild Canticles while preserving the separate identities of monk compiler and lay illuminator.

Another conundrum is posed by the poor quality of the scribal work. In this case *compilator* and *scriptor* (or *scriptrix*, if Hamburger is right) cannot have been the same person, for the scribe miscopied or demonstrably failed to understand many passages of the text. The result, especially in the Trinity section, is a unique composite—a blend of straightforward citation, abridgment, free alteration, and outright error. In some places it is hard to tell whether a given text has been intentionally changed or simply miscopied. In others, the mistakes are so egregious that the copied text makes no sense without recourse to its original. Scribe 1, who wrote all of part 1 and most of part 2, is the sole copyist responsible for the Trinity texts. Hamburger describes this person's work as follows:

> In virtually every respect, Scribe I has the more practiced script [than Scribe II]; nevertheless she (or he) writes in an unsteady gothic bookhand (*littera textualis*) replete with grammatical and orthographical errors. The script holds the line reasonably well, even if it lacks the assurance and accuracy of . . . a professional hand. Errors in some of the decorated initials suggest that Scribe I (or the *enlumineur*, if they are not identical) may not have been fully literate. . . . [Because of the highly unorthodox system of ruling, no] two text pages are exactly alike. The number of lines of text varies from eighteen to twenty-one not only between gatherings but also from page to page, and the interlinear spaces on individual text pages also vary by as much as two millimeters. Clearly, the scribe was more concerned with preserving the integrity of each "diptych" of text and miniature than with the niceties of appearance.[62]

Despite these failings, the hand is easily legible. Yet the small size of the pages (only 118 x 84 mm) and the need to match each text page with its corresponding miniature, without overflow, required heavy abbreviation and much abridgment, especially of Augustine's long, rhetorically complex sentences. Some of these abridgments might have been made on the spot when the scribe realized that, even with the narrowest possible rulings, the copy text could not be squeezed into the available space. As a result, some quotations are truncated to the point of incoherence. If the copyist worked from an already abbreviated draft on wax tablets or scraps of parchment,[63] lacked the context of quotations, and/or was a bit wobbly in Latin, he or she could easily have made mistakes when expanding abbreviations in the exemplar. A look at some representative

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57. Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 123–25.

58. Jonathan J. G. Alexander, "Preliminary Marginal Drawings in Medieval Manuscripts," in *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge: colloque international 1983*, ed. Xavier Barral i Altet (Paris: Picard, 1990), 3:307–19; and Alison Stones, "Indications écrites et modèles picturaux, guides aux peintres de manuscrits enluminés aux environs de 1300," in ibid., 3:321–49.

59. Madeline Caviness, "Hildegard as Designer of the Illustrations to her Works," in *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art*, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke (London: Warburg Institute, 1998), 29–62; and eadem, "Artist: 'To See, Hear, and Know All at Once,'" in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 110–24. In a dissenting view, Lieselotte Saurma-Jeltsch argues that these illuminations were produced after Hildegard's death: Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen im "Liber Scivias" der Hildegard von Bingen: die Wucht der Vision und die Ordnung der Bilder* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1998).

60. Reeves and Hirsch-Reich, *The* Figurae *of Joachim of Fiore*.

61. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, "Medieval Self-fashioning: Authorship, Authority, and Autobiography in Suso's *Exemplar*," in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 233–78.

62. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 222.

63. Ibid.

errors can substantiate these remarks and help us understand the scribe's unconventional working methods.

Fol. 39v: the first text cited from *De Trinitate* opens with the phrase "Que scriptura illa testatur" (what that scripture testifies). This is not the beginning of a sentence in Augustine but concludes a previous sentence that is not cited, suggesting that the scribe was abridging material from a lengthier copy text but failed to understand its syntax. A similar error occurs on fol. 85v, where the opening words, "Apostolus dicit" (the apostle says), belong to a previous sentence, not the one cited.

Fol. 41v: At the end of this verso the scribe ran out of space and abridged his text in such a way that he cut off one half of a paradox. Augustine says the three divine persons "seem both to be bounded or determined by each other, and yet in themselves to be unbounded or infinite." The second clause is lopped off, with considerable loss of sense. Yet the missing words, "in se infinita sunt," turn up later on fol. 89v, where the passage unexpectedly resumes—in an even more garbled form.

Fol. 80v: This page quotes the words of a woman healed by Jesus: "Dixit enim intra se, si tetigero fimbriam vestimenti eius salva ero" (For she said within herself, if I touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed). The Gospel verse is a composite of Matthew 9:21 and Luke 8:44. Instead of *salva*, the manuscript has the nonsense word *psabrus*, with the *p* lightly scratched out. This inept correction intimates that the scribe may have intended the masculine form *salvus*, a perplexing change. Now, as Hamburger admits, the textual evidence for a female patron is weak,[64] and if we take this verse as a pronoun shift from feminine to masculine, it becomes yet weaker. More likely, however, it is simply a botched correction, a striking demonstration of the scribe's carelessness.

Fol. 82v: A prayer by John of Fécamp should begin with the words "Da mihi in via hac, qua te duce gradior, intellectum" (Give me understanding in this way that I walk with your guidance). The scribe has written instead, "Domine, in via homo qua te duce ingredimur." This is a complex case. The transposition from first-person singular (*gradior*) to plural (*ingredimur*) must be intentional, for it is carried out consistently in the rest of the passage. The prayer thus becomes appropriate for communal use. But the first four words are

garbled, probably because the scribe misread abbreviations in his exemplar.

Fol. 87v: In this instance, it is hard to distinguish between a mistake and an inspired emendation. Augustine writes that in the present life, where we walk by faith, not by sight, "nondum utique videmus Deum sicut idem ait aut facie ad faciem" (we do not yet see God face to face, as [the apostle Paul] said) (1 Cor. 13:12). Instead of "sicut idem ait," the manuscript reads "sicuti est," improving the flow: "we do not yet see God *as he is*, or face to face" (emphasis added). The added citation from 1 John 3:2 makes good sense and rhetorically strengthens the passage. This revision may already have been present in the florilegium the compiler used as a source.

Fol. 93v: In copying the responsory "Tres vidit et unum adoravit" (he saw three and worshipped one), the scribe began the sentence with "Moyses" and a decorated initial *M*. It was not Moses, however, but Abraham who had such a vision. Catching the error, which may have been a lapse on the compiler's part, either the scribe or someone else tried to rub out "Moyses."

Fol. 99v: In the antiphon "Gloriosus Deus in sanctis suis" (Glorious is God in his saints), the initial *G* is omitted, though a blank space had been left for it, and the word *gloriosus* is abbreviated so oddly as to be indecipherable. It appears that the scribe, unfamiliar with this verse, could not make out his exemplar.

Aside from such individual errors, the order in which the texts appear demonstrates that something went wrong in the assembly of the manuscript. As mentioned earlier, a quire with three Trinitarian diptychs (fols. 39v–44r) somehow became separated from the main Trinity sequence at the end of part 1 (fols. 74v–106r). The image of Augustine on fol. 74v was presumably meant to introduce the whole series of citations from *De Trinitate*, but as the manuscript now stands, he has been quoted several times long before he appears.[65] In addition, the text on fol. 85v and the miniature on fol. 84r, which belong together, are bound out of sequence so that each faces a blank page, while the miniature that should appear on fol. 87r is lost. If we scrutinize the excerpts from Augustine and Petrus Alfonsi, we find further evidence of disarray in the copying process itself.

The Augustinian texts are arranged in no logical order, which is not in itself remarkable. What is stranger, though, is that in four cases, the same passage is divided between two or more widely separated pages, with some repetition and confusion. A text from *De Trinitate* 1.5 is split between fols. 82v and

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64. Hamburger (ibid., 296n1) cites only two textual arguments for female patronage. One is a Marian prayer by Fulbert of Chartres: "ora pro populo, interveni pro clero, intercede pro devoto femineo sexu" (pray for the people, plead for the clergy, intercede for consecrated women; fol. 60v), but this was a standard responsory verse for the Assumption. The other is a reference to a penitent sinner as *peccatrix* on fol. 142r, but the context is an exemplum about a specific woman.

65. Apart from the two Trinity sections, *De Trinitate* is also cited on fol. 67v. Augustine's *Confessions* are cited on fols. 65v and 69v, and his *De Genesi ad litteram* on fol. 33v.

86v, but at least the excerpt on each page is coherent. More baffling is the passage from *De Trinitate* 6.12, which is broken up among fols. 41v, 89v, and 78v, in that order. The second of these excerpts is mangled so badly that its first few clauses make no sense. Another section from *De Trinitate* 8.7 begins on fol. 85v but resumes only on fol. 39v. Each of these quotations starts in midsentence. One excerpt omits a *non* and the other changes a *neque* to an *enim*, making nonsense of Augustine's syntax—a problem aggravated by frequent abbreviations and a total lack of punctuation. Unless the reader was a significantly better Latinist than the scribe, she would have found these passages tough going. Finally, the manuscript makes an even more bewildering hash out of Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogi*. The passage selected by the compiler occupies little more than a column in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (157: cols. 553A–54A), but in the Rothschild Canticles it is parceled out among fols. 101v, 80v, 95v, 80v, and 93v, in that order. Fols. 80v and 95v repeat a portion of the same text, and on 95v, several lines have been erased. Both citations omit the names of speakers, intermingling the Jew's questions with the Christian's replies in a way sure to baffle any reader.

This textual disarray is hardly unique: medieval miscellanies frequently take snippets of text out of context, garble them, and copy verse as prose or dialogue as exposition.[66] But such miscellanies are rarely deluxe manuscripts. Given the Rothschild Canticles' lavish program of illumination, the expense of its materials, the brilliance of the artist, and the careful thought devoted to the spiritual and iconographic program of the manuscript, such negligence in copying and binding is unexpected. How did it happen? We can only speculate, but even educated guesses can bring us closer to understanding.

Stones observes that "as a Latin devotional miscellany this manuscript is remarkably *retardataire* for its period, by which time the vernacular had by and large taken over as the devotional language of choice."[67] Whether the use of Latin was the patron's, the compiler's, or a joint decision, this might explain why the scribe had only minimal competence in that language. Further, it is unlikely that he and the compiler occupied the same scriptorium at the same time, for the scribe seems to have worked without supervision. When he had trouble reading his exemplar, carelessly written as it may have been, he had no one to ask for help. Corrections are haphazard at best. Another possibility, of course, is that compiler and scribe did not collaborate more closely because he was

a monk and she a nun.[68] Hamburger cautiously remarks that the high rate of errors and "the undisciplined quality of the handwriting" could be explained if the inexpert scribe were the very woman for whom the manuscript was designed.[69] It is not sexist to propose that a Franco-Flemish nun about 1300, however privileged, would have been less proficient in Latin than a monk of the same milieu. Of course, not all male houses had top-of-the-line schools or scriptoria either.

It is significant, though, that the errors are not evenly distributed. The biblical, liturgical, and creedal texts, though hardly flawless, are free of major mistakes, while the more difficult exegetical passages are crammed with them. Not by chance, the texts in the first group are more closely related to the images; there is usually a direct link between verbal and visual motifs. Moreover, these passages always come first on the page. Toward the end of the sequence they often fill the whole verso (fols. 91v, 97v, 99v, 103v, 105v). The exegetical texts, by contrast, seem to be randomly placed, related to the contents as a whole, not to specific miniatures. One explanation might be that the scribe had two different exemplars on his worktable. One included a precise set of biblical, liturgical, and aphoristic texts to accompany each miniature. The other was a florilegium of exegetical works—mainly Augustine, but also including pseudo-Augustinian excerpts from Leo I, John of Fécamp, and possibly Petrus Alfonsi. Texts from the second exemplar were meant to be used as filler, so that longer or shorter passages could be chosen when more or less space remained on the page. Selecting material on that basis, without regard for continuity, could account for the strange gaps and repetitions. A few times the scribe seems to have forgotten which texts he had already copied. On this hypothesis, the scribe would have shared in the work of composing the Trinity text. The compiler provided guidelines, specific verses to match each miniature, and a florilegium of texts to fill the remaining space, while final decisions were left to the scribe, who proved sadly unequal to the task.

Whoever the copyist was, the combination of sophisticated style and exceptional originality with "the somewhat makeshift character of its construction" suggests, in Hamburger's words, that the Rothschild Canticles "might not have been executed in a professional scriptorium."[70] While we normally expect a luxury manuscript to emanate from a well-known,

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66. For examples in the mystical tradition, see Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg*, 94–131.

67. Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts*, 682.

68. For monks and nuns who collaborated in scribal work without violating cloister, see Alison Beach, "Claustration and Collaboration: The Nun-Scribes of Admont," in *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 65–103.

69. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 159.

70. Ibid.

well-documented center, the Rothschild Canticles is anomalous in more ways than one. In the next section I will propose, on textual grounds, that the book was produced at a now little-known abbey that did not have, or at any rate no longer had, a professional-quality scriptorium. The house in question did produce at least one superb illuminated manuscript, but that dates from the early twelfth century. Due to a disastrous series of fires and wars, the abbey's later medieval records, like its library and material fabric, have been damaged so massively that any subsequent history of book production is impossible to trace.

St. Lewinna, Bergues-Saint-Winnoc, and the Origins of the Rothschild Canticles

There is one previously unidentified text in the Rothschild Canticles that I have not yet discussed. At the bottom of fol. 91v we find a brief, jubilant prayer: "O fortis manus nimium nimiumque prevalida Omnipotentis! O pietas eterni regis, presens et propitia ac clemens sibi famulantibus!" (O strong, surpassingly potent hand of the Almighty! O kindness of the King eternal, present and gracious and merciful to those who serve him!) Though eloquent, indeed, a small gem of latinity, the prayer is unexceptional in content: there is nothing unusual about its claim that God is almighty and all-merciful. Yet the lines prove to be a historian's dream—the precise key that will finally enable us to give the Rothschild Canticles a local habitation and a name. For "O fortis manus" turns out to have a most unexpected source.

If one were on a quest for the most obscure and forgotten of all medieval saints, few candidates would have a better claim to that doubtful status than St. Lewinna. A virgin martyr, she is said to have lived under the English king Ecgberht of Kent (d. 673) and died in the time of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury (r. 668–90). Of her life, nothing at all is known. No vita was ever written, no church ever consecrated in her name. Much later, in the tenth century, her relics were rediscovered and enshrined in a minster on the Sussex coast, dedicated to St. Andrew. So thoroughly did all trace of her vanish that this church could not even be identified until 2004, when an archaeological find established its likely site as Bishopstone.[71] But Lewinna was not destined to remain there. In 1058 a Flemish monk named Balger, whose ship had been blown off course, made harbor in Seaford

Bay on Holy Saturday and, as fate would have it, celebrated Easter at St. Andrew's. Having observed St. Lewinna's shrine, he developed a sudden passion for the long-dead virgin and conceived the bold idea of a *furtum sacrum*, a holy theft, whereby he would steal her bones and take them home to his abbey in Flanders. After a harrowing voyage, he reached that abbey, Bergues-Saint-Winnoc, whose monks welcomed their new patron with a solemn *adventus*.[72]

We know of these events thanks to Balger's fellow monk, Drogo of Saint-Winnoc, who relayed this story in a lavish Virgilian style in his *Historia translationis S. Lewinnae*, written perhaps two or three years after the voyage.[73] Book 1 of Drogo's narrative recounts the translation, while book 2 tells of the *delatio* or relic tour: the monks made a circuit of maritime Flanders with their new acquisition, hoping for miracles to fund the construction of a new church and establish independence from their mother house, Saint-Bertin. Perhaps miffed at being stolen, Lewinna was reluctant at first to show her power. Yet after her relics had been activated, so to speak, by the monks' prayers, she worked her first sign, healing a paralytic. A few more miracles followed; the three *miraculées* were all residents of Bergues or its immediate vicinity.[74] The *Historia* concerns us because its author saw fit to celebrate Lewinna's first miracle with the joyful cry, "O fortis manus nimium nimiumque prevalida Omnipotentis! O pietas eterni regis, presens et propitia ac clemens sibi famulantibus!"[75]

After her sea voyage, Lewinna was liturgically venerated twice a year by the monks of Saint-Winnoc, on the anniversary of her translation (16 June) and her major feast (24 July). That worship continued unbroken until 1558, when her relics were destroyed in a French assault on Bergues, exactly five hundred years after their arrival. Significantly, however, there is no evidence that Lewinna's cult ever spread beyond Saint-Winnoc. For instance, she does not appear in the calendar of the *Liber floridus* (produced at Saint-Omer ca. 1120), which

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71. Chris Baker, "Archaeologists Solve Medieval Mystery," *Argus*, 14 June 2004; http://www.archaeology.ws/2004-6-17.htm. A team led by Gábor Thomas discovered a lost Anglo-Saxon village at Bishopstone, strengthening its claim against the rival churches of Alfriston and Jevington.

72. Nicolas Huyghebaert, "Un moine hagiographe: Drogon de Bergues-Saint-Winoc," *Sacris Erudiri* 20 (1971): 191–256; Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 76–78; and David Defries, "The Making of a Minor Saint in Drogo of Saint-Winnoc's *Historia translationis s. Lewinnae*," *Early Medieval Europe* 16, no. 4 (2008): 423–44.

73. Drogo of Saint-Winnoc, *Historia translationis S. Lewinnae ex Anglia in monasterium Bergense*, Acta Sanctorum (Antwerp: Société des Bollandistes, 1727), 24 July, 5:613–27.

74. Defries, "Making of a Minor Saint," 442.

75. Drogo, *Historia* 2.1.55, p. 624. On the exuberant language of this prayer, which is typical of Drogo's style, see Huyghebaert, "Un moine hagiographe," 238–39. *Praevalida* is a Virgilian term occurring only once in the Vulgate, where it has a negative connotation (Isa. 31:1).

includes St. Winnoc along with St. Omer, St. Bertin, and other local favorites.[76] Nor is she included in the litany or calendar of the twelfth-century Douce Psalter (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 293), although the English manuscript was based on a Franco-Flemish exemplar and its litany is directly indebted to the use of Bergues.[77] Closer to our period, Lewinna does not figure in the calendar of a recently discovered Psalter-Hours, use of Saint-Omer, produced at Thérouanne about 1285.[78] In short, the monks of Bergues-Saint-Winnoc made no attempt to diffuse their new saint's cult beyond their own monastery. David Defries argues that Drogo "deliberately cast her as a *minor* patron in order to avoid threatening Winnoc's pre-eminence."[79] It was only at Saint-Winnoc that the monks read the tale of Lewinna's miracles from the *Historia*, which is neatly divided into eight liturgical lessons. By another miracle, Drogo's work survived countless sackings and burnings, culminating in the Revolution, when the monastery was suppressed. It is one of a small handful of manuscripts that remain from the abbey's once-celebrated library and can still be found today in the Bibliothèque municipale de Bergues, MS 19.[80]

I must admit that, when I first discovered St. Lewinna in the depths of the *Acta Sanctorum*, I was incredulous, assuming that Drogo of Saint-Winnoc and the Rothschild Canticles must have a common source—perhaps Augustine or Bede. But they do not. A modern miracle, online searching with the aid of Google Books, shows that the little prayer occurs only in the *Historia translationis S. Lewinnae* and the Rothschild Canticles. As for Drogo's *Historia*, it survives in just three manuscripts. One of these is Bergues, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 19. The other two (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale

de France, MS lat. 5296B and St.-Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 716) are both massive legendaries. In the thirteenth-century Paris manuscript, a Flemish production, St. Lewinna's translation is the twenty-ninth of forty-four items (fols. 239–62 out of 399). The five-volume legendary now in St.-Omer, produced at the Cistercian abbey of Clairmarais, is even more ambitious. It constitutes only a portion of the *Magnum legendarium Flandrense*, a vast compendium of Flemish saints' lives that anticipates the work of the Bollandists. No complete copy of the nine-volume *Legendarium* survives, but the Clairmarais exemplar is among the fullest, and the only one that includes St. Lewinna.[81] The abbey probably had access to Drogo's text because it had entered into a confraternity of prayer with Saint-Winnoc in 1254.[82] In theory, the compiler of the Rothschild Canticles could have found "O fortis manus" in one of these legendaries or another like them. But I find this unlikely. To cull such a minuscule prayer from such a massive compendium would be to pull a slender needle from a very large haystack indeed, and there is no evidence that the compiler took a special interest in hagiography. He cites "O fortis manus" not for the sake of St. Lewinna but for what it says about God.

Most likely, then, the man we seek was a monk of Saint-Winnoc, where he would have read or heard this prayer twice every year on Lewinna's feast days. "O fortis manus" is transcribed verbatim, without error, because the compiler thought it a worthy gloss for his biblical verses on the power, wisdom, and omnipresence of God. In fact, the miscellany on fol. 91v (Fig. 6) is one of the most unified in the Trinity section. It begins with an antiphon for Easter week, "In me omnis potestas in celo et in terra" (In me is all power in heaven and on earth). There follows a verse on God's wisdom, as cited by Augustine: "sapientia sua, que pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter" (his wisdom, which reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly; Wisd. of Sol. 8:1). Augustine goes on to quote Psalm 138:7–8: "Quo ibo a spiritu tuo et quo a facie tua fugiam? Si ascendero in celum tu illic es; si descendero in infernum tu addes" (Where shall I go from your spirit and where shall I flee from your face? If I ascend to heaven you are there; if I descend to hell you are present.) "O fortis manus" concludes

76. Francis Wormald, "The Calendar of the *Liber Floridus*," in *Liber Floridus Colloquium*, ed. Albert Derolez (Ghent: Story-Scientia, 1973), 13–17.

77. Elżbieta Temple, "The Calendar of the Douce Psalter," *Bodleian Library Record* 12 (1985): 13–38; see esp. 17–19. It is impossible to say whether Lewinna was included in the massive eleventh-century legendary of Saint-Bertin, since its July portion is lost. Sarah Staats, "A Partial Reconstruction of Saint-Bertin's Late-Eleventh-Century Legendary: St-Omer 715, Vol. I, and its *membra disiecta*," *Scriptorium* 52, no. 2 (1998): 349–64.

78. Psalter-Hours, Use of Saint-Omer, fol. 4r (July calendar page). This manuscript, illustrated by the illuminator of Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 87, was advertised for sale at Les Enluminures as of this writing. I thank Sandra Hindman for sending me a photo of the relevant page.

79. Defries, "Making of a Minor Saint," 424.

80. Ibid., 443. For an early description of this manuscript (formerly MS 1), its contents, and its paintings, see Jules Lepreux, *Notice sur les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Bergues* (St.-Omer: Chanvin, 1851), 13–32.

81. François Dolbeau, "Nouvelles recherches sur le *Legendarium Flandrense*," *Recherches augustiniennes* 16 (1981): 399–455. The most complete recension of the *Legendarium* (which does not include Lewinna) stems from Cambron; other partial exemplars survive from Ter Doest, Vaucelles, Marchiennes, and Arrouaise.

82. F. Baix and L. Jadin, "Bergues-Saint-Winoc," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, ed. Alfred Baudrillart, vol. 8 (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1935), 474–86, at 484. This does not imply that Clairmarais itself observed Lewinna's feast.
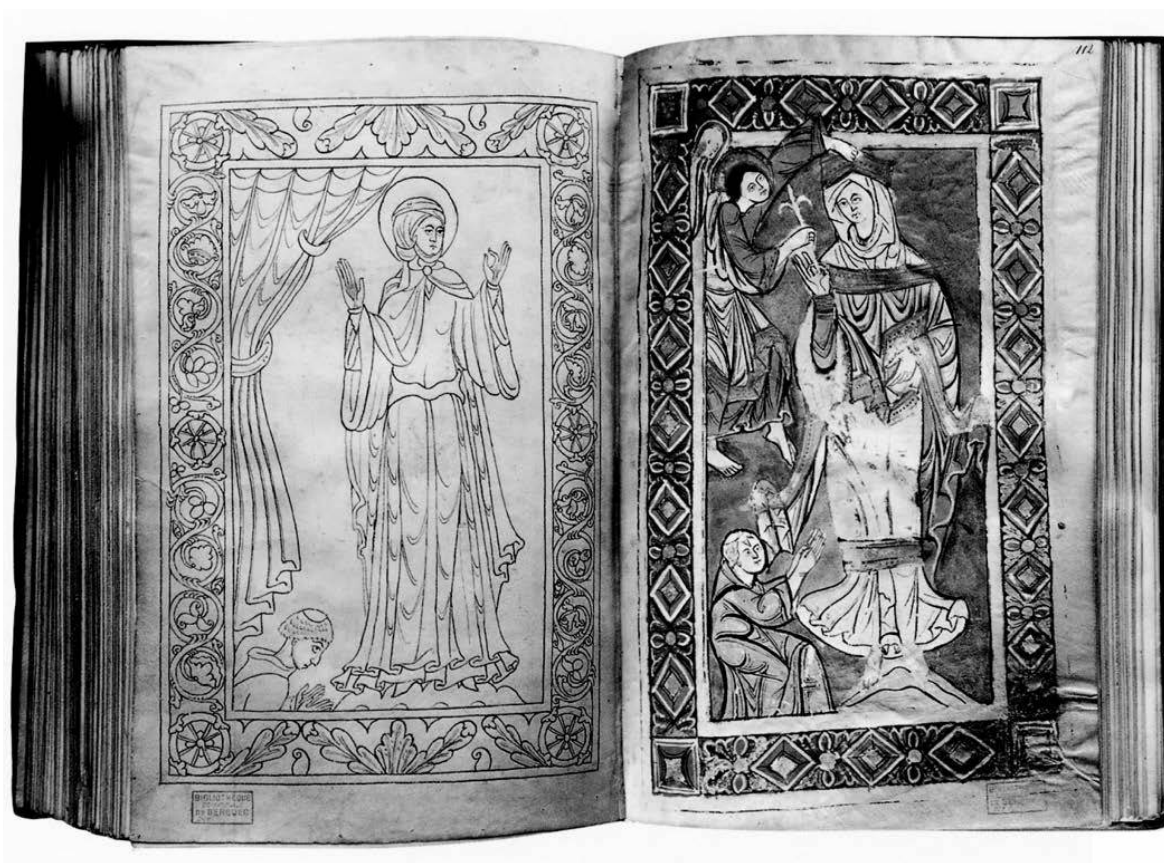
Figure 11. *Bergues, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 19, fols. 111v–12r, St. Lewinna (photo: Musée du Mont-de-Piété de Bergues). See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

this sequence: "O strong, surpassingly potent hand of the Almighty! O kindness of the King eternal, present and gracious and merciful to those who serve him!" Drogo's prayer fits perfectly; its balance of "fortis . . . ac clemens" even echoes the pairing of "fortiter et . . . suaviter" in the verse from Wisdom. In the miniature on fol. 92r (Fig. 6), the veil that signifies divine presence is tied in an elaborate loop with knots at the top and bottom. God's face peers out from a sun in the center as he extends both arms vertically, so that each hand clutches one of the knots. Thus, the divine figure literally "reaches from end to end mightily," extending from the heights to the depths, holding all power in his surpassingly potent hands.

"O fortis manus," so eminently suited to its context, would have come readily to the mind of a monk from one house only—Bergues-Saint-Winnoc. Drogo's works, little known elsewhere, held an almost talismanic value for his own abbey.

In fact, Bergues, Bibliothèque municipale 19 is the single illuminated manuscript that was demonstrably produced at Saint-Winnoc.[83] Dated about 1125–50, it contains several hagiographic texts by Drogo in honor of the abbey's British patrons: the life and miracles of St. Winnoc, a hymn to that saint, the neumed offices of SS. Winnoc and Oswald, a life of St. Oswald, and the translation of St. Lewinna. All are marked with *lectio* designations for liturgical reading. The volume includes an author portrait of Drogo and two full-page illustrations of each saint. In Lewinna's case (Fig. 11), a line drawing depicts a monk in prayer at her feet, while a

83. Walter Cahn, *Romanesque Manuscripts: The Twelfth Century (A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in France)* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), 1: figs. 252, 253, and color pl. XIII; 2:124–26, cat. no. 102; and *La France romane au temps des premiers capétiens (987–1152)* (Paris: Musée du Louvre; Hazan, 2005), 148, cat. no. 100.

full-color painting represents her ascent into heaven. The line drawing reveals the saint through a drawn-back veil or curtain, a convention for divine revelation that could conceivably have suggested the veil iconography of the Rothschild Canticles.[84] In the painting, Lewinna is bound in bands of golden cloth as she receives her heavenly crown. The late eleventh-century line drawings predate the manuscript itself; they were presumably cut out of an earlier, worn-out codex and carefully pasted into the new one.

The periodic recopying of Drogo's works continued well after the production of the Rothschild Canticles, for the final section of the manuscript postdates the rest of the codex. Much of the *Historia*, including "O fortis manus" on fol. 148r, was recopied in the fourteenth century because the twelfth-century manuscript had in turn begun to wear out. These pages indicate the continuing presence of a scriptorium at Saint-Winnoc, though we cannot say how active it was. The fact that only one manuscript is known to survive from the abbey's first four centuries shows how highly the monks prized it. Drogo's volume must have been among the few priceless treasures that the abbot or sacristan smuggled to safety during every fire or enemy invasion. Its survival is no accident.[85]

I have been able to identify one other twelfth-century manuscript that is likely to have been produced at Bergues. This is a glossed Psalter (Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1005), with some pieces of chant, from the same period as the Drogo codex. It ends with a litany that includes SS. Omer, Winnoc, and Bertin (in that order), and even Lewinna— a clear pointer to Bergues-Saint-Winnoc.[86] Closer to the time of the Rothschild Canticles are two mid-thirteenth-century

Psalters that Kerstin Carlvant has linked with Bergues, both illuminated by the influential Bruges Master—an artist who played a key role in introducing the French High Gothic style into Flemish painting. A Psalter now in London (British Library, MS Add. 24683) features the litany of Bergues, including St. Lewinna, although it was probably destined for the community of Westkapelle near Bruges.[87] Another Psalter from about 1255 (Boston, Public Library, MS fMed 84) "was executed in collaboration with an otherwise unidentified scriptorium, possibly one located at Bergues-Saint-Winoc."[88] This manuscript may have been commissioned by Elizabeth of Roesbrugge, the widow of William of Béthune, who after her husband's death became a secular canoness at the Victorine community of Roesbrugge (Pont-Rouard). Elizabeth belonged to the family of the castellans of Bergues, so she would presumably have had her Psalter produced there rather than in rural Roesbrugge. Around the time this manuscript was created, the canonesses of Roesbrugge established ties with a daughter house in Bergues itself, known as Saint-Victor or the "New Cloister."[89] I will say more about this community below.

The cartulary of Bergues-Saint-Winnoc records that, sometime after 1330, Abbot John of Ypres ordered the production of two notated missals for the choir (*missales duos cantuales*), but these do not survive.[90] The municipal library at Bergues contains a handful of fifteenth-century manuscripts once owned by Saint-Winnoc: the works of St. Jerome on virginity; the *Legenda aurea*; Nicholas of Lyra's *Postille*; a book of hours in Latin and Flemish; a collection of Flemish Passion meditations; Jean de Meun's translation of Boethius; and a French version of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*.[91] This little collection indicates the trilingualism and literary culture of Saint-Winnoc in its later centuries, but it tells us nothing about book production, for not one of these volumes

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84. Cf. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 141 and pls. 216–19.

85. In correspondence with the Bollandist J. B. Sollerius in 1726, the abbot of Saint-Winnoc mentioned a copy of Drogo's works made by Antonius Olivarius in 1629, which he was sending to Sollerius. The Bollandist noted that this (now-lost) seventeenth-century copy fully agreed with the two medieval manuscripts ("apographis duobus") at his disposal, which had themselves been transcribed from an earlier codex ("ex antiquiori codice") dating to the eleventh century—presumably Bergues, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 19. He marveled that Drogo's text had survived to his own day in an unbroken chain of transmission, despite all the devastation and ruin at Bergues. *Acta Sanctorum*, 24 July, 5:612.

86. Victor Leroquais, *Les Psautiers: manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France* (Mâcon: Protat, 1940), 1:49. I have been unable as yet to consult this manuscript, but its hand, decorated initials, and neumes should be compared with Bergues, Bibliothèque municipale 19. In the late Middle Ages it belonged to the Celestines of Amiens and still later to Saint-Vaast of Arras, so it could have been among the manuscripts plundered from Bergues in 1383 (see below). Another early manuscript connected with Bergues was evidently produced elsewhere: Nicolas Huyghebaert, "Le sacramentaire de l'abbé Manassès de Bergues-Saint-Winoc," *Annales de la Société d'Émulation de Bruges* 84 (1947): 41–51.

87. Kerstin Carlvant, *Manuscript Painting in Thirteenth-Century Flanders: Bruges, Ghent and the Circle of the Counts* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2012), 145–49; and Maurice Coens, "Litanies de Bergues-Saint-Winoc dans un Psautier originaire de la Flandre maritime (Brit. Mus. Add. 24683)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965): 291–302.

88. Carlvant, *Manuscript Painting*, 25.

89. Ibid., 158–60; and Ernest Warlop, *De Vlaamse adel voor 1300* (Handzame: Familia et Patria, 1968), vol. 2, pt. 2, 541, 545.

90. Alexandre Pruvost, ed., *Chronique et cartulaire de l'abbaye de Bergues-Saint-Winoc de l'ordre de Saint-Benoît* (Bruges: De Zuttere, 1875), 1:263.

91. "Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Bergues," in *Catalogue générale des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France: Départements*, vol. 26, *Lille, Dunkerque, Bergues, Roye, Péronne, Ham, Le Châtre* (Paris: Plon, Nourrit, 1897), 653–73. See also Lepreux, *Notice*. The *Legenda aurea* and *Postille* might have come from a Dominican house at Bergues, founded in the mid-thirteenth century.

was written at the abbey. These early manuscripts are supplemented by some sixty more from the early modern era and three thousand printed books. No more remains of what must have been a much larger collection in the community's prime.[92]

Because Bergues-Saint-Winnoc is (literally) not on the art historical map,[93] a brief history is in order. Known in Dutch as Sint-Winoksbergen, the medieval town belonged to the county of Flanders and the diocese of Thérouanne; it was bilingual but primarily Flemish-speaking. Located at what is now the northern tip of France in the department of Nord-Pas de Calais, it is fifteen kilometers west of the Belgian border, nine kilometers south of Dunkirk, and about thirty kilometers northeast of St.-Omer. Now slightly inland, it was in the Middle Ages a small but prosperous port town in the Hanseatic League, with a charter granted in 1240 and a wool market opened in 1276, trading chiefly with England.[94] The abbey of Saint-Winnoc began life in the late seventh century as a daughter house of Saint-Bertin, in the town then called Sithiu but now St.-Omer.[95] Its eponymous founder, St. Winnoc, was of Breton birth. Emigrating to French Flanders, he became a disciple of St. Bertin, abbot of Sithiu, who eventually sent him to govern a monastic cell at Wormhout. There he died about 717. During the ninth-century Viking invasions, St. Winnoc's relics were taken for safekeeping to the church of Saint-Omer, and in 899 Count Baldwin the Bald moved them to the village of Bergues, which thus became Bergues-Saint-Winnoc. Finally, between 1022 and 1024 the saint's body was translated by Baldwin IV, count of Flanders, to a newly established Benedictine abbey there, supplanting an older foundation of regular canons. The abbey's privileges were confirmed by Baldwin V in 1067, and it flourished through the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in intimate rivalry with its neighbor, Saint-Bertin. In the eleventh century, Saint-Winnoc prospered at the expense of its older rival. About 1100 abbot Lambert of Saint-Bertin tried to get revenge by imposing reform on Saint-Winnoc through a forced affiliation with Cluny, but he overreached himself and failed.[96] After this time the chroniclers of Saint-Bertin no longer mention Saint-Winnoc.[97]

From the eleventh century until the end of the Middle Ages, the counts of Flanders were the abbey's patrons, remaining closely involved in its life. As a sometime comital residence, Bergues was one of several abbeys possessing an ecclesiastical lordship, with the right to administer justice in the count's name.[98] A new Romanesque abbey was completed in 1148, and privileges were extended by a succession of popes from Adrian IV (r. 1148–59) through Innocent III (r. 1198–1216). Between 1288 and 1310, the period of the Rothschild Canticles, Saint-Winnoc was flush enough to build a magnificent Gothic choir.[99] But this was also a turbulent era because of a war between the French king Philip the Fair and Count Gui de Dampierre, which raged intermittently between 1294 and 1304. Bergues' allegiance was bitterly torn. The town was invaded by French troops in 1297 and triumphantly welcomed Philip, but after a second siege in 1301, it welcomed his adversaries.[100] The abbot of Saint-Winnoc seems to have changed sides at least once, but ultimately reaffirmed his allegiance to the count, who made a donation of ten pounds in 1304.[101] If I am right about the Rothschild Canticles, this serenely transcendent, otherworldly book could scarcely have been born at a more tempestuous time and place.

92. According to "Manuscrits," 653, the library contained sixty thousand books (chiefly modern print volumes) at the time of its suppression. An unpublished catalogue from 1790 (St.-Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 864) lists eighty-eight manuscripts: A.-M. Genevois et al., *Bibliothèques de manuscrits médiévaux en France: relevé des inventaires du VIIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1987), 28, no. 224.

93. See the map of artistic centers in the diocese of Thérouanne in Marc Gil and Ludovic Nys, *Saint-Omer gothique: les arts figuratifs à Saint-Omer à la fin du Moyen Âge, 1250–1550* (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2004), 11. Bergues-Saint-Winnoc does not appear.

94. Émile Coornaert, *La Flandre française de langue flamande* (Paris: Éditions Ouvrières, 1970), 45, 49.

95. Unless otherwise noted, my account relies on the concise history by Baix and Jadin, "Bergues-Saint-Winoc."

96. Steven Vanderputten, "Crises of Cenobitism: Abbatial Leadership and Monastic Competition in Late Eleventh-Century Flanders," *English Historical Review* 127 (2012): 259–84.

97. Benjamin Guérard, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Bertin* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1841); and Johannes Iperius [John of Ypres], *Chronicon S. Bertini*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, ed. O. Holder-Egger (Hanover: Hahn, 1880), 25:736–866. The first source covers events through 1186, the second, through 1294.

98. François-L. Ganshof, *La Flandre sous les premiers comtes*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1944), 102.

99. Pruvost, *Chronique et cartulaire*, 1:255–57; and Baix and Jadin, "Bergues-Saint-Winoc," 484.

100. Coornaert, *La Flandre française*, 80. For more on this conflict, see David Nicholas, *Medieval Flanders* (London: Longman, 1992), 186–94.

101. Édouard de Moreau argues that the abbot was one of the French king's chief partisans, although his signature (perhaps constrained) appears on some but not all copies of a 1297 appeal to the pope, asserting the Flemish clergy's loyalty to Gui de Dampierre. Édouard de Moreau, *Histoire de l'église en Belgique* (Brussels: L'Édition Universelle, 1945), 3:263–71; and Pruvost, *Chronique et cartulaire*, 1:256–57. The contemporary chronicler John of Ypres at Saint-Bertin took a decidedly pro-Flemish view: *Chronicon S. Bertini*, 865–66.

Saint-Bertin, the mother house, was far more prominent than its daughter Saint-Winnoc; it also had a superb library.[102] Marc Gil and Ludovic Nys call it "incontestably the most important and most prestigious religious establishment of St.-Omer and its vicinity."[103] But if such a luxurious manuscript had been produced at Saint-Bertin, it is inconceivable that its scribal work would be so sloppy, its construction so haphazard. These defects are more easily explained by the sojourn of an exceptionally gifted, idiosyncratic painter in a scriptorium whose best days may have been behind it.

Another possibility is that the manuscript was made for a woman of Bergues. Until the mid-thirteenth century, Saint-Winnoc was the only religious house in town. In 1227 Guillaume de Spycker and his wife founded a hospital staffed by religious women, and from that institution there sprang two female communities. One was a court beguinage, the other an abbey of canonesses, Saint-Victor, established in 1252–53 by Countess Margaret and her son, Gui de Dampierre.[104] The women of Saint-Victor, called the New Cloister, followed the Augustinian rule, subject to the abbot of Bergues and guided by the Roesbrugge canonesses. Walter Simons suggests that the beguinage of Bergues was formed to accommodate those hospital sisters who did not wish to enter the cloistered abbey.[105] Perhaps the more privileged women chose Saint-Victor, while those of modest means preferred the beguinage. The sisters might also have divided along the lines of preference for active vis-à-vis contemplative lives. Although Saint-Victor survived until its suppression in 1792, its early documentation is even more sparse than that of Saint-Winnoc.[106] If the Rothschild Canticles was produced for a local woman, she is much more likely to have been a canoness than a beguine. Nothing precludes the manuscript's having been made for a mystically inclined daughter of the local aristocracy, perhaps even with her assistance, at Saint-Victor. But no concrete evidence exists to support this or any other guess about the patron.

For readers who may be skeptical about Bergues as a site of production, I can offer two rejoinders. The first is simply that textual evidence matters. "O fortis manus" derives from an extremely rare work, and it did not find its way into the Rothschild Canticles by chance. Given that Drogo's writings were cherished at Bergues-Saint-Winnoc and all but unheard of elsewhere, "O fortis manus" necessarily implies a connection with that abbey.

My second point is that, in our fascination with the splendid works of medieval art that survive, we may forget the magnitude of our loss. The sad fate of Saint-Winnoc, once illustrious, is a case in point. During the Great Schism the abbey suffered for its loyalty to Clement VII, who had been bishop of Thérouanne before he was raised to the Avignon papacy. Most Flemings supported Urban VI, and in 1383 an English army invaded Flanders to expel the Clementines. Thus, Bergues was first seized by the English, then besieged and stormed by the French, whose troops pillaged the town, attacked the monastery, and carried off its most precious reliquaries, ornaments, and manuscripts.[107] This was one of many calamities that account for the near-total loss of Saint-Winnoc's medieval library. Another was a catastrophic fire in 1543. After the monks rebuilt, the French invaded again in 1558, burning town and monastery alike. Once more the library was destroyed, and at this time Lewinna's relics were dispersed. Only eight years later, a band of Calvinist rebels against Spanish rule attacked Bergues, pillaging and ruining the abbey. When Saint-Winnoc was finally suppressed in 1790, most of its monks fled into exile, and in 1809 the monastic buildings were put up for sale. By 1812 all had been demolished except for a massive eleventh-century tower and spire, long reserved for the use of the French navy.[108] Today, Bergues' reputation as an unsophisticated backwater has earned it the dubious distinction of being featured in a 2008 comedy film, *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (*Welcome to the Sticks*). Of Saint-Winnoc's thousand-year history, little remains except those crumbling towers (financed with the help of St. Lewinna's relics), the volume of Drogo's collected works, and, as I have argued, the Rothschild Canticles.

102. Its twelfth-century catalogue lists 305 volumes, including 28 of Augustine's works. Gustavus Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* (Bonn: Cohen, 1885; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 2003), 181–84.

103. Gil and Nys, *Saint-Omer gothique*, 145.

104. Alexandre Bonvarlet, "Chronique de l'abbaye des dames de Saint-Victor, dite du Nouveau Cloître, à Bergues," *Mémoires de la Société Dunkerquoise*, 1857–58, 260–77, at 260. See also Daniel Haigneré, "Documents inédits (1254–1286) pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Victor du Nouveau-Cloître à Bergues-St-Winoc," *Annales du Comité flamand de France* 18 (1890): 249–62.

105. Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 265.

106. Bonvarlet, "Chronique de l'abbaye des dames." The cartulary of Saint-Winnoc mentions that in 1272, the abbot resolved a dispute between the abbess of Saint-Victor and a parish priest over a burial. Pruvost, *Chronique et cartulaire*, 1:248.

107. Baix and Jadin, "Bergues-Saint-Winoc," 477–78.

108. For descriptions of these ruins on the eve of World War I, see George Wharton Edwards, *Some Old Flemish Towns* (New York: Moffatt, Yard, 1911), 71–72; and Léon Bocquet, *Villes du Nord: Lille, Douai, Cambrai, Valenciennes, Bergues, Dunkerque* (Brussels: Van Oest, 1918), 53–57. Bocquet includes a photograph. There is an evocative watercolor in George Wharton Edwards, *Vanished Towers and Chimes of Flanders* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing, 1916), facing p. 94.
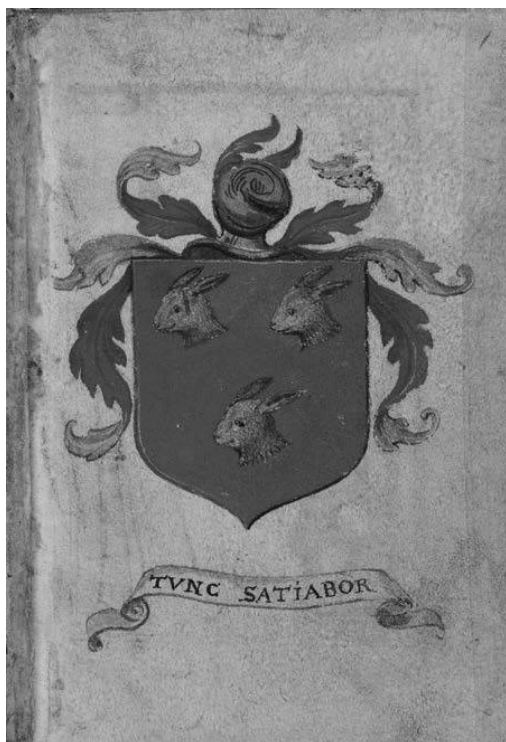
Figure 12. *Rothschild Canticles, fol. 1r, coat of arms (photo: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, by permission). See the electronic edition of* Gesta *for a color version of this image.*

Postscript: The Coat of Arms on Fol. 1

Wherever the manuscript was produced, it did not long remain there. One frustration for students of the Rothschild Canticles is that it lacks any provenance before 1856. What ought to be an identifying feature, a nineteenth-century coat of arms on fol. 1r (Fig. 12), has proved stubbornly elusive. Like others before me, no doubt, I have scoured numerous books of heraldry for gules, three hares' heads proper, with the motto "Tunc satiabor." My search has been inconclusive but not altogether fruitless.

According to a note on a now-lost flyleaf, the manuscript was given to the Reverend Walter Sneyd in 1856 by a Scottish nobleman, William Alexander Douglas (1811–1863), eleventh duke of Hamilton and Brandon.[109] Sneyd (1809–1888), a "famously idle" clergyman, retired in his mid-twenties to his family seat, Keele Hall in Staffordshire, where he created a superb private collection of rare books and manuscripts.[110]

At the Sneyd sale in 1903, the manuscript was purchased by Bernard Quaritch. It subsequently came into the hands of Edmond de Rothschild, from whom it received its name. After the Rothschild sale in 1968, it was acquired by Yale University from H. P. Kraus as a gift of Edwin J. Beinecke.[111] Beyond this, nothing is known. Neither Douglas's nor Sneyd's arms resemble those on fol. 1.

Because hares do not symbolize nobility or valor, they appear in heraldry exclusively as cants on a family name. John Harewell, bishop of Bath and Wells (r. 1367–86), used three hares' heads on his arms, but these do not match the escutcheon in the Rothschild Canticles.[112] The Conesby or Coningsby family, with branches in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and Herefordshire, bore arms blazoned "gules, three coneys sejant argent within a bordure engrailed sable."[113] Though similar, these arms are not equivalent to "three hares' heads proper" (in their natural form and color). No French source has produced a match, nor has the four-volume Netherlandish armory.[114]

The nearest match I have been able to find is Georg Hasenkopf (1299–1335), a knight in the service of Hermann von Maltzan, bishop of Schwerin in Mecklenburg (r. 1314–22).[115] First documented about 1200, the male line of the Hasenkopf family died out in 1494; their arms featured three hares' heads with no other charge (Fig. 13). These are now attested only in seal impressions, which do not reveal the tincture, but an armory of defunct Mecklenburg families blazons them as azure, three hares' heads gold (*or*).[116] This information is probably based on the extant Maltzan arms. The

109. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 245n1.

110. "A Brief History of the Sneyd Family, the Keele Estate and the Origins of Keele University," http://www.keele.ac.uk/alumni /keelesheritage/briefhistory/.

111. Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts*, 684.

112. John W. Papworth and Alfred W. Morant, *An Alphabetical Dictionary of Coats of Arms Belonging to Families in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Richards, 1874; repr., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1965), 792.

113. James Parker and Henry Gough, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Heraldry* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970), s.v. "Hare," last modified by Jim Trigg, 8 July 2004, at www.heraldsnet.org/saitou /parker/Jpglossa.htm; Bernard Burke, *The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales* (London: Harrison, 1884), 220–21; and Douglas Richardson and Kimball G. Everingham, *Magna Carta Ancestry: A Study in Colonial and Medieval Families* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2005), 264.

114. Johann-Theodor de Raadt, *Sceaux armoriés des Pays-Bas et des pays avoisinants (Belgique—Royaume des Pays-Bas—Luxembourg—Allemagne—France): recueil historique et héraldique*, 4 vols. (Brussels: Société Belge de Librairie, 1898–1901).

115. Georg Christian Friedrich Lisch, *Urkunden-Sammlung zur Geschichte des Geschlechts von Maltzan* (Schwerin: Stiller, 1851), 3:xx–xxi; illustration facing p. xxx. I thank Kimberly Frodelius for directing me to this source.

116. Johann Siebmacher and George Adalbert von Mülverstedt, *Ausgestorbener Mecklenburgischer Adel*, rev. ed. (Nuremberg: Bauer
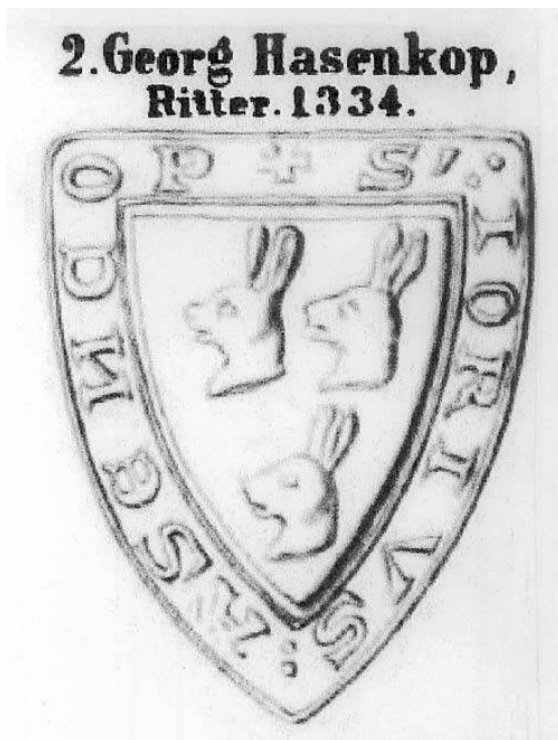
2. Georg Hasenkop, Ritter. 1334.

Figure 13. *Hasenkopf arms (photo: from Georg Christian Friedrich Lisch,* Urkunden-Sammlung zur Geschichte des Geschlechts von Maltzan *[Schwerin: Stiller, 1851], 3: Table VIII, no. 2, facing p. xxx).*

two families were closely allied, and to acknowledge this alliance, the left side of the Maltzan escutcheon displays two hares' heads, or, on a field azure. If this tincture mirrors the original Hasenkopf arms, it is not a true match, unless we assume some slippage between the original and the nineteenth-century copy or overpainting. On geographic grounds, it would be quite convenient if Georg Hasenkopf or one of his heirs were among the Rothschild Canticles' early owners. Mecklenburg is in a Low German dialect area (a language closely related to Middle Dutch). So the Middle Dutch quotation from

Dionysius would make sense in such a context, as would Hamburger's supposition that "shortly after or even during its manufacture, the manuscript was in the hands of a German or Netherlandic speaker who understood its contents."[117] The last surviving member of the Hasenkopf family was a nun at Rehna about 1500.[118]

The motto "Tunc satiabor" could be a personal rather than a familial device. It is adapted from Psalm 16:15, "satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua" (I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed), and has a strongly mystical character. Gertrud of Helfta's *Spiritual Exercises*, a work contemporary with the Rothschild Canticles, includes the yearning words "Certe *tunc satiabor* et adimplebor de torrente illius voluptatis, quae mihi nunc tamdiu clausa latet in apothecis divinitatis" (Surely then I will be satisfied and filled by the torrent of his voluptuousness, which, locked away for so long now, lies hidden for me in the storehouse of divinity).[119] I have located three individuals who used this motto—all French, the most famous being the Jesuit historian Jacques Vignier de Ricey (1603–1669).[120] None, however, bore the arms depicted in the Rothschild Canticles. I suspect, therefore, that this device was inserted by an owner who used the manuscript much as its makers intended. The same motto functions in a pseudoheraldic way in at least one other devotional manuscript. In the Hours of Marie Chantault (early sixteenth century), the initial miniature depicts the Christ child standing on an IHS shield within a crown of thorns. Below him a man and a woman kneel with a banderole between them; its legend reads "cum apparuerit gloria, tunc satiabor" (when he appears in glory, then I shall be satisfied).[121]

& Raspe, 1902), 46–47 and pl. 25. I thank Antje Koolman, the archivist of Schwerin, for directing me to this source.

117. Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 161.

118. Lisch, *Urkunden-Sammlung*, 3:xxxvii.

119. Gertrud of Helfta, *Exercitia Spiritualia* 5, in *Oeuvres spirituelles*, Sources chrétiennes 127, ed. J. Hourlier and A. Schmitt (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 1:176; and Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Gertrud Jaron Lewis and Jack Lewis (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 82.

120. Alphonse Chassant and Henri Tausin, *Dictionnaire des devises historiques et héraldiques* (Paris: Dumoulin, 1878), 340, 702; Joseph de Champeaux, *Devises: cris de guerre, légendes, dictons* (Dijon: Lamarche, 1890), 28; and Jean Lebeuf, Fernand Bournon, and Adrien Augier, *Histoire de la ville et de tout le diocèse de Paris* (Paris: Féchoz et Letouzey, 1883), 2:167–68.

121. Victor Leroquais, *Supplément aux livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Mâcon: Protat, 1943), xix and pl. 35.