Water as Medieval Intellectual Entity

Case Studies in Twelfth-Century Western Monasticism

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, the imagery of water serves as a point of focus for an inquiry into the composition of medieval abstract space. As a ubiquitous element of human life with distinct properties and connotations across time, water touches, and has ever touched upon, both what is historically and culturally unique and what is ongoing within environmental imagination. This study examines the significance and the deployment of environmental imagery in the composition, narration, and recollection of organised thought in the Middle Ages. I argue that images of environment in systematic ecological arrangement perform a key role in revealing medieval spaces of thought.

The intellectual and imaginative uses of water in medieval thought merge mind and environment, and bind intellection and phenomenon within the spaces of the inner world. This thesis suggests that the medieval logic of these patterned spaces links us intimately to the internal structures of sense-making in a distinct intellectual milieu—that of monastic, twelfth-century, Northern European Christendom—and to the understanding of environment that it implied, be it cultural, religious, or quotidian.

In this thesis, I analyse the imagery and the rhetoric of water in various texts as a means to explore the potential meanings of water as an abstract entity in medieval thought. Through literary case studies of water in various expressive forms—diagrammatic representation, poetry, landscape narrative, and epistolary communication—I trace its existence as a thought system within the history of ideas that is both uniquely medieval and suggestive of broader sense-making patterns.

The thesis opens with the interpretation of water as complex metaphor, both in terms of its *longue durée* and generalised use, and in a specifically medieval context. The second chapter delves deeper into the medieval properties of water metaphor through an exploration of three key themes: the role of water metaphor in the metaphysical, salvific and intellectual world of Western Christendom, the elemental properties of water and their metaphorical resonances, and the role of water metaphor in the shaping of rhetoric.

The third chapter focuses on the diagrammatic representation of Pierpont Morgan M. 982, a manuscript leaf depicting Lady Philosophia nourishing the Seven Liberal Arts with streams of knowledge. In this diagram, it is the thematics of water that give the representation a flow of energy and a sense of motion within an imagined hydrological cycle.

The fourth chapter comprises a reading of the *Fons Philosophiae*, a didactic poem by the Regular Canon Godfrey of Saint-Victor. In the poem, a river system pouring fourth from a lofty mountain flows across the plains of knowledge, providing a space for the poet's pilgrim-like persona to pass through and parse the Seven Liberal Arts, assessing the respective qualities of their rivers in a quest for their head waters in theology.

The fifth chapter interprets the epistolary style of the Benedictine Abbot Peter of Celle, a notable letter writer and Churchman. Within Peter's letters, small parables and metaphorical flourishes demonstrate the compressed power of complex water metaphor by intermingling scripture and aqueous imagery to enliven the moral message, using the properties of water as an aide. Furthermore, the use of aqueous metaphor suggests a hydrological imagining of intellectual and epistolary community.

The sixth and final chapter explores the anonymous *Description of Clairvaux*, a 'mirror' of monastic life in which moral and salvific meanings are imbued in a quotidian account. Descriptions of the landscape, hydrological practices and moral mission of Cistercianism merge within a seemingly simple scene of paradisal *locus amoenus* and virtuous labour, making water the channel connecting daily experience and a grander metaphysical purpose.

This thesis provides a contribution to a new understanding of environmental imagination and knowledge visualisation in twelfth-century monasticism, coupled with insights of wider relevance to the study of relationships between water and intellectual culture. By revealing links between the shaping of inner space and the composition of word and image, it enables a reading of primary sources and textual media rooted in the imaginative processes of their creators. The intellectual entity of water, through metaphor, becomes an image of the vital principle, the *vis naturae* or *élan vital*, in intellectual life. Furthermore, this intellectual life is ordered through a fundamental pattern of organised distribution, a flow of life source to its manifold manifestations.

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Candidate's Declaration:

This thesis **does not contain** work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

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…I have sent a cup full of mixed drink to be examined by the judgment of your learning; whether it is to stand or fall is in your hands. It contains a twofold mixture, namely, a variety of subject matter and skill…

…If during the drinking something tasteless to a delicate palate, or something bitter occurs, it is not because of the nature of the components, but rather the lack of skill of the artisan…

… If you should decide … that the whole drink is to be kept, this will be an argument of great value to me, even if I find it in the spices of your correction.

~A letter from Godfrey of Saint-Victor to Stephen of Tournai — the prologue of the *Fons Philosophiae*

INTRODUCTION

In the thirteenth century, the Dominican grammarian John of Genoa compiled his *Summa Grammaticalis*, also known as the *Catholicon*.[1] The treatise sketches out a lengthy rhetorical and mnemonic image of a river system in order to teach grammar. In discussing Priscian's description of the parts of speech, John proposed that the 'accidents' of a part of speech such as a noun (gender, number, case, etc.) were not part of the *species* or *primitive* category of grammar, but were derivatives (*derivativa*), or as we might understand them, subsets. He employed the use of figurative rhetorical techniques to argue that this structure is to be taken metaphorically (*transsumptive*):

> For "primitive" is taken from a spring [*fons*] where water coming through hidden channels first [*primus*] appears. "Derivative" is taken from the stream [*rivus*] that flows forth [*de*] from the spring itself. Hence just as a stream can be deduced from another stream, so one derivative originates from another. But spring and streams [*rivi*] flow down to produce a river [*flumen*]. For all rivers come out of the sea, and finally return to the sea. And the sea does not overflow [*redundat*]. Similarly, all sentences [*orationes*] take their origin from grammar, and they return to the same, and yet grammar is not redundant [*redundat*].[2]

The peculiarly aqueous nature of this simile might be taken at face value as a convenient device for explication, yet the roots of its efficacy go deep. The categorisation of syntax and the poetry of water exist side by side in a mutually supportive fashion, forming a network of words in which each part is related to each other, to their ends and to their origins through a flow of causality. The passage above reveals the core question of this thesis: how does water function as an intellectual entity within medieval thought, and what affordances does it lend to the practices of intellection and imagination?

The *Catholicon* suggests that metaphor is not rigid or inflexible, but dynamic.[3] John of Genoa deploys metaphorical evocation not as a superfluous ornament, but as an important means of understanding the interconnectedness and dynamism of language, of a distinct a way of thinking. Water continues to move within the imagination even when captured in static form upon the page, in image, or in words. For medieval thought, the painting of a picture within the mind rendered water as an ever-moving force, for the memory of its movement imbued it with all

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[1] The *Catholicon* was so popular that it was still in use in the fifteenth century when it became one of the first printed *incunabula* (1460 in Mainz). Copeland and Sluiter have traced many of its concepts to classical grammarians such as Priscian. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (eds), *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 360–361.

[2] Joannes Balbus's (John of Genoa's) *Catholicon*, in Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 361.

[3] It should be noted that although this section refers to the 'Middle Ages' more broadly, the specific focus of inquiry is the High Middle Ages. I have used examples outside of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries to present the historical development of the material studied in the twelfth, but the conclusions made here take historically distinct manifestations in the case study chapters to follow.

the force of true motion recreated within the spaces of the mind.[4] Its resonance with intellection and imagination forms a framework for meaning that is generative rather than reductive, causative rather than conventionally metaphorical. This process aids in the composition of mental images through rhetoric, which must be useful "to a person, whether acting as author or as audience, during the procedure of thought", as Mary Carruthers has described it.[5] Thought in the process of composition requires movement, and thus even seemingly inactive imagery comes to life through the thought act. Karl F. Morrison and Giselle de Nie have argued that the imitation of nature led to static and artificial images presented "like a snapshot, in mid-air" that "fixed the attention on that one, isolated instant".[6] This may be true at the point of phenomenal apprehension, and yet an image of nature was the fuel of thought, and not thought itself; motion occurred within the mind once the catalyst was provided.

This thesis will argue for the power of water as an ingredient in the motion of composition, providing an image of medieval graphicacy, or 'visual literacy', that is composed in a lively and motive fashion, and not confined to the pale artificiality presented by Morrison and de Nie.[7] In the thesis to follow, I will explore some of the medieval philosophies that underpinned the use of complex water metaphor through the reading of diverse texts. These readings will reveal some of the medieval ideas that allowed the generation of rhetorical expression from abstract water imagery. Just as John of Genoa maps out the familial relationships of grammar with an evocation of water's integrity, fluidity and interconnectivity, so too can water represent the spread of ideas from place to place along the paths of the mind.

The inquiry undertaken by this thesis has several goals. The first is to examine the link between medieval imaginations of water and practices of thought, particularly in High Medieval Western monasticism.[8] The second is to explore and explain the monastic rhetoric in which the properties of water were enlisted to express complex thought. The third is to use understandings drawn from these investigations to offer new readings of diverse texts generated by monastics and

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[4] Mary Carruthers has advanced this argument in 'Moving Images in the Mind's Eye', in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages,* Jeffrey J. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (eds), Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 287–305.

[5] Carruthers, 'Moving Images in the Mind's Eye', p. 288.

[6] Karl F. Morrison and Giselle de Nie, 'Introduction', in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert (eds), Turnhout, Brepols, 2005, pp. 10–11.

[7] Graphicacy is defined as "the ability to understand and present information in the form of sketches, photographs, diagrams, maps, plans, charts, graphs and other non-textual, twodimensional formats". In the case of medieval thought, an abstract form of graphicacy is at work. See F. Aldrich, and L. Sheppard. 'Graphicacy': the fourth 'R'?', *Primary Science Review*, vol. 64, no. 8–11, 2000, pp. 1–7.

[8] It is important to note at the outset of this thesis that there are three levels of inquiry at work within its argument. The first relates to the history of water and its role in the history of ideas, and has broader applicability. The second, as is the case for John of Genoa, relates to 'medieval' ideas in general, but should not be taken to be universally applicable to all medieval thought. The third relates to the High Middle Ages, and to the twelfth century in particular. It also explicitly relates to monastic thought. Each level of discussion informs the others, but I have taken care to avoid generalising. The relationship between these three levels will be explored in more detail shortly.

Augustinian canons of the twelfth century, bringing clarity to a specific facet of their thoughts. Finally, the overall aim is to provide new insights into the history of medieval thought and our understanding of water in the Middle Ages. The methodology applies an analysis of medieval water history within the framework of intellectual history, while attempting to extend knowledge of the symbolic meanings of water in the Middle Ages. It continues the conversation surrounding the agency of water in the composition of medieval thought, and grounds this analysis in historical case studies. Furthermore, it expands the repertoire of possible source material for the study of water beyond the textual and literary, using *water itself* as a primary source. These sources are then treated as texts, and read by following the methodological tools of the thesis.

At the heart of these inquiries lie a series of important questions: what do ideas of water in medieval thought teach us about the life-world of medieval people?[9] How is this life-world expressed through the thought-world, the realm of ideas that we glimpse when reading medieval texts, viewing medieval images, or interpreting medieval discourse? If the materials of memory shaped the thought-world of medieval thinkers, then what is the influence of environment on the shaping of memory? What can we glimpse of a medieval structural context for thought through another, visible, environmental context? Although modern understandings of structure and form differ from those of the Middle Ages, we share a basic experience and understanding of the properties of water as a phenomenal, entity. In this thesis, I address these questions by arguing that images of environment perform a key role in revealing medieval spaces of thought, for they are a point of commonality. Furthermore, I propose that water offers us a distinct and flexible subset of these images.

The mind, as understood in the Middle Ages, was thought to shape images of environmental phenomena from the *sensus communis*, to give them form, and to place them in context within the structure of the mind. Mediated through the Aristotelian tradition and that of his commentators, the medieval theory of intellection thought images (*imagines*) to be gathered together (*colligeri*) from raw sense data by the actions of phantasy (*fantasia*) and the power of making forms (the *vis formalis*).[10] Encountering such an entity was, in the words of Tim Ingold, "not a matter of affixing some meaning to the object—of recognising it as one of a certain kind to which certain uses might be attached—but of discovering meaning in the very process of use".[11] The literate medieval mind could then share this vision through the remediated powers of

9   A term coined by Edmund Husserl. For the English translation by David Carr, see *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1970, pp. 108–110

10   Mary Carruthers, 'Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture: The Role of "Place" in the Arts of Memory', in Laura H. Hollengreen (ed.), *Translatio, or the Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2008, p. 5.

11   See Tim Ingold, 'Point, Line and Counterpoint: From Environment to Fluid Space', in Alain Berthoz and Yves Christen (eds), *Neurobiology of "Umwelt": How Living Beings Perceive the World (Research and Perspectives in*

word and image, impressing this schema upon further minds through recursive use. It could gain what James J. Gibson has termed *affordances*, a trait that encourages a form of use over other forms. A chair, for example, has the affordance of seating a human being, despite having many other potential uses. Entities with affordances are possessed of a quality that is "neither an objective property nor a subjective property [...] it is both", relating both to the environment and to the observer.[12] The medieval affordances of water were increased through the activities of the intellectual elite, adding new meaning through the constant use of biblical trope, rhetorical flourish, historical detail, literary motif, or any number of read and recreated forms. The common currency of the Latinate churchmen and monastics featured in this thesis consisted of a collection of constructs drawn from a wide variety of sources, be they Scripture, trope, the classical *auctores*, theology, saintly *vitae*, contemporary commentary, treatise, or first-hand observation.[13] It was likely all of these things taken together in the melange of received and newly-acquired material that shaped medieval thought. Within these diverse sources, we see the beginning of affordances shaped by the composition, arrangement, and ordering of images, the practice of memory. The result, as Mary Carruthers has proposed, is a gathering of diverse inputs into a complex space remembered and recollected through the composition of thought:

> Because the art of memory was to such an important extent the basis of an art of composition, the primary goals when "preparing" material for memory were flexibility, security, and ease of recombining matters into new patterns and forms. Recollection/invention is a "gathering together" (*compositio*) into one "place" (*locus*) of materials previously stored in memory as images (*imagines*).[14]

Tracing water as a set of *imagines* in memory available for rhetorical composition, I shall argue, offers a unique glimpse into the internally cohesive structures of ordered thought in the Middle Ages. Ivan Illich has proposed that "[f]ollowing dream waters upstream, the historian will learn to distinguish the vast register of their voices".[15] This thesis follows water into medieval thought of

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Neurosciences), Berlin, Springer, 2009, p. 143.

[12] James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986, p. 129.

[13] It is interesting to note that the networks and the affordances that they enable are "riddled with dependencies", as Ian Hodder has put it. Thus, any use of water's affordances implies an inherent interplay of power relationships, the dependence of things on other things, and the dependence of things and humans upon each other. Within the flexibility of water metaphor, we glimpse the hierarchies, powers, and co-dependencies of medieval epistemology at work. See *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, esp. p. 51.

[14] Carruthers, 'Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture', p. 10. It is interesting to note that another recent water-based thesis on Early Modern waterscapes is based on a concept of composition, drawing its own distinct mix of methodologies, including a strong emphasis on the philosophy of Bruno Latour. See Lowell N. Duckert, 'Waterscapes of Desire: Composing with the Elements in Early Modern Drama and Travel Writing', unpublished PhD thesis, The George Washington University, 2012. This thesis forms an ideal companion piece for my research, both temporally and methodologically. For a water studies piece of research explicitly linking Latourian Actor-Network Theory to river systems outside of literary criticism, see Jarmo Kortelainen, 'The River as an Actor-Network: The Finnish Forest Industry Utilisation of Lake and River Systems', *Geoforum* vol. 30, no. 3, 1999, pp. 235–247.

[15] Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of Stuff (first edn)*, Dallas, TX, Dallas Inst. Humanities & Culture, 1985, p. 7.

the High Middle Ages and that of monasticism, elucidating previously hidden structures within the broader logic of medieval metaphor and thought-craft in the process. Like the dye used to map out paths through the human body in twenty-first century medicine, the significance granted to water reveals in passing the implicit structures of composition within the intellectual sciences of the twelfth century. The destinations are manifold and the paths complex, for the structures that are the focus of this thesis stretch out to link loci scattered across the thought-scape of diverse thinkers, by means of diverse media, and via diverse tropes. The images that gave water form in the Middle Ages and continue to do so today are not wholly abstract, nor are they wholly material: they are an admixture of both.

This work is about water not as a natural entity placed 'out there', but as an intellectual entity mirroring the external world within the very structure of ideas. As I will argue in the chapters to come, the similitude of aqueous metaphors in diverse contexts is guaranteed by their causal relationship, and it is this likeness that enables their powers of transmission and connectivity. Through diverse channels, the myriad nutrients that form the lifeblood of thought course through the venous spread of discourse. Water is an orientational metaphor *par excellence* in the terminology of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, a concept that "does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another", that is shaped by "up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral".[16] It serves as a connector within the mapped-out structures of medieval thought, uniting content in a dynamic whole, which is gathered by the *ars memoriae* into a construct "built upon remembered structures 'located' in one's mind as patterns, edifices, grids, and—most basically—association-fabricated networks of 'bits' in one's memory that must be "gathered" into an idea".[17]

The argument for a form-based understanding of water as a key tool for the understanding of content suggests a formal interpretation of its meaning interrelated with and yet independent of content. Just as the *stemma* is a mode for apprehending the patterns of textual transmission and the tree a mode for tracing lineage, water is a mode for showing the linkage of ideas that is appropriately flexible and agile, and similarly enmeshed with environment and ecological in its arrangement.[18] If the symbolic and allegorical potential of water forms a vocabulary of ideas and moral tropes, then it is the structural and hydrological nature of water

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[16] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1980 [2008], p. 14. For Lakoff and Johnson deployed within water studies, see Jeanne Féaux de la Croix, 'Moving Metaphors We Live By: Water and Flow in the Social Sciences and Around Hydroelectric Dams in Kyrgyzstan', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 30, no. 3–4, 2011, pp. 487–502.

[17] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 23.

[18] For a realignment of perspective through radical ecological thinking, see Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2010.

that forms the grammar, links the parts of speech. Aqueous ideas are paradigmatic, and hydrology is syntagmatic: the sum total of the former is expressed through the latter. The term that I give to this phenomenon is *abstract hydrology*, a cycle of the mind, of episteme, and of thought-world given form by the evocation of its environmental, aqueous counterpart. This notion will be demonstrated through primary source analysis in chapters to come, for each chapter is a reading of an abstract hydrology, a form linking symbolic content together.

This thesis is not a foil, but a complement, to pre-existing studies of water in the Middle Ages and to those focusing upon expressions of symbolism and significance.[19] As I have argued, it is not so much a thesis about water as it is a thesis about the articulation of water as an intellectual entity. It can be read alongside histories of water and histories of thought, juxtaposed with explorations of literature and connected to investigations in philosophy. It advances a hypothesis about the role of water within the articulation and interconnection of ideas in medieval intellectual culture, and tests this hypothesis by the focused case study of twelfth-century monastic writings[20] Furthermore, it argues for a uniquely medieval logic of interconnection that links to the broader intellectual history of water as metaphor of nature, with resonances peculiar to a medieval context. Water offered a *ductus*, a textual narrative of purposive movement that could resemble the course of life itself.[21]

The intellectual context of monasticism and the temporal context of the twelfth century frame the narrative of this thesis. In addition to providing a broader interpretation of water as an intellectual entity, the monastic context has thematic challenges of its own that this thesis addresses. The most significant contribution to the study of monasticism that this thesis aims to make is to improve understanding of the relationship between landscape use and inner life. The complex interplay of interaction with external environment and shaping of internal environment mingled the two, making their boundaries indistinct. This mingling was embedded within the monastic context, and we learn much from an understanding of the effects brought about by intellectual entities that are hybrids of internal structure and external structure. In *Negotiating the Landscape*, Ellen Arnold proposes that the task of understanding the medieval relationship between imagination and environment requires a broad and flexible approach:

> Monastic "environmental imagination" was complex, and cannot be accessed directly, nor through any single body of evidence. Instead, we must read across the

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[19] See below for a short review of the literature that constitutes a 'history' for this thesis.

[20] The term 'monasticism' is largely accurate, but must serve in the absence of a more elegant term. This thesis contains studies of regular monastic orders such as the Benedictines and Cistercians, but also focuses on the work of a Victorine canon regular, who cannot be correctly termed 'monastic'.

[21] Described by Mary Carruthers as "the movement within and throughout a work's various parts", reliant on movement because it is a composition that "guides a person to its various goals". See *The Craft of Thought*, p. 78. See also 'The Concept of *Ductus*, or Journeying Through a Work of Art', in Mary Carruthers (ed.), *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 190–213.

barriers of source genre, using both narrative and normative sources to reconstruct not only how medieval people used the environment, but also what they thought about the natural world.[22]

This is true not only of monasticism, but of the broader trends that frame it. The complex relationship between regulated inner lives and external encounters teaches us much about the environmental and intellectual history of the monks and canons who created the primary source material within this thesis. The cycle of environmental encounter, inner fashioning, and external expression is a key component of monastic thought. This thesis seeks to balance different genres and forms of expression, and to mingle disciplinary methods to provide a new approach. It draws upon several disciplines within medieval studies involved in the recent study of water, including the history of water, the study of medieval literature, the disciplines of anthropology and philosophy, and the growingly complex understanding of medieval knowledge-representation emerging within the study of memory, and the medieval 'landscape' of *topoi* and imagery.

I will now conduct a short survey of these histories to better explain the space within which this research resides, and its context as rooted in diverse influential disciplines. Each of these disciplines, as the reader apprehends, has a different story to tell, and each of these stories opens up hybrid possibilities. Each of the four following chapters analyses a different type of source, each a specific intellectual *milieu*. They are to intellectual thought-worlds what bio-regions are to the environment: parts of an inextricably linked whole. The four chapters are distinct and follow their own peculiar logics, and yet they are also one.

The study of water in medieval thought, spirituality, and culture, as it stands, has focused primarily on tropes and *topoi*, a topic of interest to the history of water, the study of culture, and the study of literature.[23] The biblical symbolism of water has been mapped out in studies of the liturgical, historical and material culture elements of baptism within medieval church history, and within the centuries preceding it.[24] This discourse has continued within the study of theology

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[22]   Ellen F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes*, Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 11.

[23]   A particularly common manifestation of this trend focuses upon Biblical tropes and *topoi*. For a particularly influential exemplar that has continued to be heavily cited, see Paul A. Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 5, 1950, pp. 41–138.

[24]   For examples of books contributing to the study of baptism in the late classical, early and high medieval eras, see: Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change In the Early Middle Ages, c. 20–c. 1150*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2003; Alexander Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study Of Baptism*, Yonkers, NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974; Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and theologies Of Baptism: From the New Testament To the Council Of Trent*, Farnham, UK, Ashgate, 2006. For a recent example, see Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens and Miguel A. Torrens, *The Visual Culture of Baptism in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Fonts, Settings and Beliefs*, Farnham, UK, Ashgate, 2013. We can see from a comparatively heavy emphasis on liturgical studies that not only the study of baptism but the study of religious ritual has come to speak loudly, both to the medievalist and to those seeking to use material on the Middle Ages to study other topics.

and religion within the Christian tradition.[25] There is a great deal of material investigating the role of water within diverse global spiritual traditions, offering a vision of some of the commonalities involved in human spiritual engagement with water. There have been anthropological attempts to engage with comparative spiritual beliefs through the study of water imagery, with particularly notable contributions from Terje Oestigaard in the area of comparative religion, and Veronica Strang within the context of indigenous societies.[26] A recent themed edition of the *Worldviews* journal, guest edited by Veronica Strang, has provided a host of new studies, together with a volume introduction that surveys a great deal of the recent literature.[27] A parallel strand of social science research based around the relationship between agency and materiality has dovetailed with that focused upon water. These works are particularly relevant to this thesis, for they support the complex relationship between material culture and human behaviour that underpins it.[28]

The discipline of history has a long relationship with the study of water. The focus of this research ranges across time from Antiquity, through the Middle Ages, and into modernity.[29] The disciplines of environmental history, the history of water management, and of hydraulics have focused on the use of technology, land management, and the logistics of everyday life. Paolo Squatriti, in particular, has covered a rich array of topics related to the use of water.[30] His research forms part of a large discourse on hydraulic technology in the classical, medieval and

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[25] For a historical view, see Jeffrey Weiss, 'A River Runs Through Them: World Religions: How Water Shaped Our Beliefs and Rituals', *Science & Spirit*, vol. 18, 2007, pp. 40–43. For signs of continued use and adaptation, see Colin A. Russell, 'Hydrotheology: towards a natural theology of water', *Science and Christian Belief*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2007, pp. 161–184.

[26] This is something of a *passim* statement, since these themes run through the entirety of Oestigaard and Strang's publication trajectories.

[27] See 'Living Water', in *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2013. See in particular the introduction by Franz Krause and Veronica Strang at pp. 95–102.

[28] The work of Tim Ingold, cited frequently, is the most apparent influence of the discourse of material agency upon this thesis. For a seminal study, see Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998. For further readings on this topic, see Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce (eds), *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*, London, Routledge, 2010; Andy Clark *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008; Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2010; Elizabeth DeMarrais et al. (eds), *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2005; Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (eds), *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies,* Ann Arbor, MI, Open Humanities Press, 2012; Hodder, *Entangled*; Carl Knappett, 'Meaning in Miniature: Semiotic Networks in Material Culture', in Niels Johannsen et al. (eds), *Excavating the Mind: Cross-sections Through Culture, Cognition and Materiality*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2012, pp. 87–109.

[29] There is a vast and interesting discourse on water use within the study of the Classical era that is not in the remit of this thesis, except in cases of reception outlined by some sources listed below.

[30] See, for example, André E. Guillerme, *The Age of Water: The Urban Environment in the North of France, AD 300–1800*, College Station, TX, Texas A & M University Press, 1988; Paolo Squatriti, 'Marshes and Mentalities in Early Medieval Ravenna', *Viator*, vol. 23, 1992, pp. 1–16; 'Water, Nature, and Culture in Early Medieval Lucca', *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 4, 1995, pp. 21–40; *Working with Water in Medieval Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 2000; Roberta Magnusson and Paolo Squatriti, 'The Technologies of Water in Medieval Italy', *Technology and Change in History*, vol. 3, 2000, pp. 217–266; *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, 400–1000*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

early modern periods.[31] Broader studies of environmental history have also sought to bring more nuanced understanding of the role of water in medieval culture and society. The history of water has often presented an interpretation of the Middle Ages mediated by a broader attempt to understand the relationship between water and society.[32] This includes an important collection of literature that blends history and philosophy, questioning the nature of water and its conceptual role in human life.[33] Within the secondary source material on the medieval exercise of control over water resources, we see a precedent for the modern debate about water in the spheres of environmental philosophy and water management. There is further material of interest beyond the topic of water, interpreting the place of environment in the conceptual framework of humankind, often with a broad temporal scope. Recent years have seen environmental history take a turn towards interdisciplinarity, as epitomised within the study of monasticism.[34] At present, discourse surrounding water history is making great progress in interpreting the legacies of water beliefs in the present, but also in reassessing what water meant to past cultures, how it shaped their intellectual worlds, and how this is relevant to present and future crises.[35]

Water imagery has generated a great deal of interest as a trope or symbol within studies of landscape in literature and history, with the pastoral and paradisal symbolism of water much in evidence.[36] Through these studies, scholars have deduced that the religious symbolism and iconography of water help to shape the meaning of the landscape within medieval thought, a

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[31] See Grenville G. Astill and John Langdon, *Medieval Farming and Technology: The Impact of Agricultural Change in Northwest Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 1997; John Blair, *Waterways and Canal-building in Medieval England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; Adam Lucas, *Wind, Water, Work: Ancient and Medieval Milling Technology*, Leiden, Brill, 2006; Roberta J. Magnusson, 'Water Technology in the Middle Ages: Cities, Monasteries, and Waterworks After the Roman Empire', *Metascience*, vol. 12, 2003, pp. 93–96 ; Stephen A. Walton (ed.), *Wind & Water in the Middle Ages: Fluid Technologies from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Tempe, AZ, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006; Lynn Townsend White Jr. (ed.), *Medieval Religion and Technology: Collected Essays*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1978.

[32] For examples of socio-cultural water history with contemporary applications, see in particular the History of Water series edited by Terje Tvedt and published by I.B Tauris. See also an article partially arising from the research of this thesis, Ruth A. Morgan and James L. Smith, 'Premodern Streams of Thought in Twenty-First Century Water Management', *Radical History Review*, vol. 116, 2013, pp. 105–129.

[33] See in particular Linton, *What Is Water?*.

[34] See in particular Ellen F. Arnold, 'Engineering Miracles: Water Control, Conversion and the Creation of a Religious Landscape in the Medieval Ardennes', *Environment and History*, vol. 13, 2007, pp. 477–502, and *Negotiating the Landscape*. See also Arnold's recent project, entitled 'Cultural and Religious Views of Rivers in the Middle Ages', at the Rachael Carson Centre for Environment and Society. For a review essay outlining the state of medieval environmental history and with a particular emphasis on water history, see 'An Introduction to Medieval Environmental History', *History Compass*, vol. 6, 2008, pp. 898–916. For a comprehensive survey of medieval landscape history, see Megan Cassidy-Welch, 'Space and Place in Medieval Contexts', *Parergon*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1–12.

[35] Although it is not within the remit of this thesis, I have sought to link historical beliefs to future problems. See, for example James L. Smith, 'I, River: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives towards Non-Human Riparian Personification', in Vicky Walters (ed.), *Water Democracies: Pathways to Justice*, forthcoming 2015.

[36] Perhaps the most oft-repeated version of this topos appears in the description of the *Locus Amoenus* or 'pleasance' in *European literature and the Latin Middle Ages* by Ernst Robert Curtius and William R. Trask (trans) (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979 (first pub. 1953), pp. 195–200), in which the *locus amoenus* is discussed at length. The book has been cited repeatedly on this topic for over fifty years, becoming something of an academic trope.

model ultimately derived from the template of Scripture, from Eden to Jerusalem.[37] Other spaces with a tightly-woven web of garden-city symbolism appear within the study of medieval cities and monasteries.[38] The goal of these studies has largely been directed at a greater understanding of the role of *topoi* and images of water within medieval expressions of space and place.[39] These modes of inquiry have dovetailed with emerging trends within philosophy and anthropology that seek to re-orientate our understanding of water and of human society and environment by interrogating medieval ecological and environmental consciousness.[40] Recent and forthcoming work on elemental philosophy, ecocriticism and ecomaterialism has sought to re-introduce the elements into the interpretation of medieval thought and literature, to consider the Middle Ages from an ecomaterial perspective, and yet to place the medieval in a broader context.[41] In short, there is a trend within the study of literature away from symbolic and taxonomic studies of water imagery, and towards the exploration of the relationship between literature and environment, a movement towards framing structure and away from content alone.[42]

The result of these trends is a collection of resources for this thesis serving to support the specifically medieval studies of water discussed above. The growing medieval studies corpus focused around environmental imagination and human interaction with environment is a particularly useful trend in this respect, for like this thesis it merges studies of the medieval past and its specificities with a broader engagement with the material and ecological entanglements of

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[37] For examples of literature relating to this motif, see Naomi Miller, 'Paradise Regained: Medieval Garden Fountains', in *Medieval Gardens*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C., Meriden-Stinehour Press, 1986, pp. 135–154; D. W. Robertson, 'The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory', *Speculum*, vol. 26. 1951, pp. 24–49 ; Misty Rae Urban, 'Magic Fountains in Middle English Romance', in Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (eds), *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* ; Leiden, Brill, 2009, pp. 427–452.

[38] The monastery, as a consciously shaped paradise, has been thoroughly discussed in Giles Constable, 'Renewal and Reform in Religious Life: Concepts and Realities', in Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (eds), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1982, and William A. McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1983. The City, as worldly space like paradise or the heavenly Jerusalem, is a salient example. See Keith Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis: Moral Topographies of the Medieval City', *Environment and Planning D*, vol. 22, 2004, pp. 681–698 or 'Cities of God? Medieval Urban Forms and Their Christian Symbolism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 29, 2004, pp. 296–313, or 'The City as a Moral Universe', *Geographical Review*, vol. 78, 1988, pp. 316–324 and Yi-Fu Tuan, 'The City: Its Distance from Nature', *Geographical Review*, vol. 68, 1978, pp. 1–12.

[39] For a book of particular relevance to these developments in a twelfth-century monastic context, see Mette B. Bruun, *Parables: Bernard of Clairvaux's Mapping of Spiritual Topography,* Leiden, Brill, 2007.

[40] The work of Stacy Alaimo, Jane Bennett, Tim Ingold, David Macauley, and Veronica Strang have been particularly germane for me in this respect. I have merged anthropology and philosophy in this list, for both disciplines have contributed ideas that work together in a complimentary manner.

[41] See in particular the recent themed volume of *Postmedieval* edited by Jeffrey J. Cohen and Lowell Duckert on the topic of ecomaterialism (vol. 4, no. 1, 2013). See especially Sharon O'Dair, 'Water Love', in 'Ecomaterialism', *Postmedieval*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55–67. For an important contribution from environmental philosophy, see David Macauley, *Elemental Philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire and Water as Environmental Ideas*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2010. See also Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Stories of Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*, Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press (forthcoming 2015).

[42] See, for example, Alfred Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape,* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

human life. Within the context of this thesis, these arguments are set in the framework of intellectual history and the emerging study of the art of memory and abstraction. The vigour of this field can be seen at the convergence point of medieval intellectual history and memory studies found within a recent issue of *Nottingham Medieval Studies* in honour of Mary Carruthers.[43] To my mind, the essays included within this volume demonstrate a meeting of disciplines within medieval studies—memory studies, the history of ideas, literary criticism, and philosophy—that constitutes a distinct niche. It is within this new area that this thesis is situated and should be read, for it too seeks to expand the study of ideas, abstraction and memory in the Middle Ages in new directions, and through new source materials and methodologies. I will now explore the specificities of this thesis in more detail so that its specificities within the discipline of medieval studies become clearer.

This thesis does not seek to remedy a lacuna *per se*, but to expand inquiry into the formal principles of intellectual history, the history of schemata by which ideas are arranged and rendered into epistemic frameworks. I argue, and will argue throughout this thesis, that the exploration of water as an intellectual entity offers a mode for viewing both medieval ideas and diverse genres of source material within the arrangement in which they were intended by their medieval creators for their contemporary readers. It provides something new and valuable, a novel observer position for the elucidation of medieval thought.

There are several points that must be made regarding the scope of this thesis. The first concerns the relationship between my discussion of water, river, and hydrology. In order to make my focus clear, I wish to distinguish between the topic of this thesis in terms of *applicability*, and the topic of this thesis in terms of *argument*. The *applicability* concerns both water as an abstract entity, and all waters in a hydrological arrangement as intellectual entities, regardless of context. The *argument* of this thesis focuses on a single manifestation of this theme, namely flowing water in a riparian arrangement. The applicability of the theory within this thesis is broader than its argument: it can be related to all forms of water, and all parts of the hydrologic cycle, be they swamps, oceans, vapours, ice, or the myriad other forms in which one may encounter water.[44] Each of these areas of inquiry evokes a distinct subset of water as an abstraction, but each forms part of a broader whole that is the topic of this thesis, and can be understood by means of the argument as articulated in this thesis through rivers. This applies in equal measure to the temporal, cultural, religious, and geographical dimensions of this thesis. Although this thesis

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[43] See Laura Iseppi De Filippis (ed.), *Inventing a Path, Studies in Medieval Rhetoric in Honour of Mary Carruthers*, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, vol. 56, 2012. This volume is of particular value for taking the pulse of the convergent disciplines found within this thesis, containing applications of a wide range of intellectual history sub-disciplines to a series of medieval primary sources in diverse genres.

[44] See Lowell Duckert's thesis for a broader exploration of waterscapes in an Early Modern context. For an expansion of the research in this thesis beyond its specific focus, see James L. Smith 'Fluid: Fear, Opportunity, and their Ecology', in Jeffrey J. Cohen (ed.), *Ecologies of the Inhuman*, Washington, D.C., Oliphaunt Books, forthcoming 2014.

focuses upon twelfth-century, northern European, Latin Christian monasticism, its discussion is applicable to other possible times, places, cultures, and intellectual communities. Through an argument directed at a select set of texts within a potentially vast field of possibilities, I seek to provide insight into a distinct intellectual moment while simultaneously providing material to a much wider debate.

Second, it is important to note that while the literate churchmen responsible for creating and propagating the primary source material of this thesis are not representative of medieval intellectual culture as a whole, they do provide many telling insights of wider applicability. The terms 'medieval thought' and 'the thought of medieval elite culture' are not synonymous; this thesis primarily studies the latter. Although deliberate deployment of structural metaphor and Biblical typology is certainly the domain of those given to a life of abstract contemplation and learning, the patterns discussed in this thesis have relevance beyond this small (albeit powerful) stratum of medieval Christian society. It is my contention, as discussed in coming chapters, that there are distinct waters for distinct intellectual cultures, and one of the effects of this argument is to note the absence of a universal model. It is, however, plausible to claim that the natural rules, orders, and hierarchies taught by medieval scripture, philosophy and natural history had wider effects. Although a churchman might imagine knowledge as an aqueous entity within the confines of his own head and share this vision with others of an equivalent education, he might also choose to weave this content into a sermon or through liturgy, to influence visual arts and iconography or to illustrate a book meant for the eyes of a member of the aristocratic elite, male or female. From the specificity of monastic texts come wider engagements across permeable boundaries of social position, literacy, education, gender, language, and geography.[45]

Third, I wish to point out that this thesis is not strictly history, nor strictly philosophy, nor strictly literary criticism. It has outcomes in all of these, but is adaptable in its methodology. I invite those reading from a particular disciplinary perspective to interpret this thesis in the light of their discipline and others that it deploys, but also to note that it may not fully conform to any one discipline. I have attempted to mitigate or avoid this problem where possible, but the flexibility of hybrid disciplinarity must have some costs. The arrangement of the thesis is designed most effectively to address a single topic based on the logic of that topic in a medieval context, and not to define itself by modern disciplinary markers. It is not strictly interdisciplinary, but rather a mingling of disciplines. The logic of this arrangement effectively creates a hybrid methodology, also avoiding a potential problem discussed here by Brigitte Bedos-Rezak:

[I]nter-disciplinarity re-enforces an illusion that discipline-based research is natural

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[45] This will become particularly apparent within chapter six, in which the ideas of a literate minority—the choir monks of the Cistercian order—give abstract meaning to the labour of the illiterate lay monks, patterning the real landscape and turning bodies into parts within a construct of spiritual allegory.

when it is actually only a normative behavior that ignores the arbitrariness of its own configuration. Thus, a modern mixture of disciplines tends to bury the associative patterns of the past under the tangles of our own making.[46]

Like Michel Foucault, who admonished his readers to consider his work as a toolbox from which they should take that which was of greatest use, I see the influences of this thesis as mingled paradigmatic streams from which I have paused to sip and sample, combining their diverse liquids to form a mixed methodology.[47] Yet in my admixture, I hope that I have provided a combination in which diverse flavours have been balanced.

The thesis structure to follow consists of a pair of theoretical essays followed by four case studies. These six chapters are tied off with a synthesis section, and then concluded with a small essay that serves the dual purpose of opening the discussion up for broader application and speculating on the contribution of this thesis in broader discourse. The pattern of three and four, although initially accidental, has come to represent something of the structural logic of this thesis, a map for its navigation. Just as the three arts or *Trivium* of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric were thought to provide the fundamentals of medieval learning within the Seven Liberal Arts, so too do the theory chapters of this thesis provide the *ductus* by which the reader is 'inducted' into the argument. Just as the four arts or *quadrivium* of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy represent distinct practices of *scientia*, so too do the four case studies of this thesis apply the machinery of methodology to a reading of four diverse texts, so that their contents may be illuminated through their relations and provenance. The chapters divide from a unified source, and converge once more at the end to flow intermingled into conclusion.

Within the first chapter of the thesis, I explore some of the key principles of reading water as a metaphor and intellectual entity. I begin with a discussion of the modern problem of water interpretation, and the need to balance the broad appeal of water as a metaphorical entity with the specifics of medieval thought. I continue this discussion in the second section, exploring the problems of universality versus specificity within water interpretation in more depth. Third, I discuss water as a metaphor for intellection, and its role in creating spaces for thought mapped out through aqueous imagery. Fourth, I discuss the role of water as a complex metaphor through consideration of the microcosmic representation of greater order through the systematic arrangement of a river system. The fifth section continues by exploring the specific properties of water as an element, and the composition of traits through fundamental likenesses in the causative structure of life. The final section discusses the rhetorical *colores* (figures) of water, the affordances of the element for the shaping and articulation of argument and intellection.

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[46] Introduction to Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak , *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 4–5.

[47] An oft-quoted notion originally from 'Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir'. in *Dits et Ecrits,* vol. 11, Paris, Gallimard, 1994 [1974], pp. 523–4.

In each of the four chapters to follow, I test the core precepts and questions of this thesis against four related and yet distinct case studies, or textual readings, of twelfth-century monastic literature. All the primary source material studied in this thesis, although written, is not primarily a *documentary* form of communication. Rather than representing information in a specifically textual format, each source is in fact an account of a memorial or intellectual experience. It captures in text the structure of a world visualised, shaped by mnemotechnics, and related to a teleology—be it salvific, spiritual, didactic, interpersonal or, as is more likely the case, a mixture. Consequently, the hydrological dimension of medieval monastic thought is not solely a matter of reading texts, but also a glimpse into the inner life of monastic thinkers. Each chapter differs in terms of source type, monastic context, application and pattern, and yet each chapter demonstrates a different facet of a single whole, revealing the intermingling of aqueous formal principles and intellectual schemata.

In the first case study, entitled *"Seven Sources Flow Forth": Interpreting the Pierpont Morgan M. 982 Diagram*, I read the semantic qualities of a monastic representation of the Seven Liberal Arts. The patterns of hydrology and the patterns of medieval metaphysics, I will argue, merge with medieval diagrammatology in order to lend a flexibility to knowledge representation, and an intellectual structure to water. Through the blending of structure and causation with personification and agency, the image of Pierpont Morgan M. 982 presents a complex conceptual hybrid.

In the second case study, entitled *"An Unpolluted Spring": Godfrey Of Saint-Victor's* Fons Philosophiae *and The Riparian Liberal Arts,* the representation of the Liberal Arts as riparian continues within a Victorine poem detailing an imagined navigation of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* as rivers springing forth from the lofty font of Theology. Within this arrangement, the branching delta of rivers evoked through the power of Latin prose sketches out all of the diverse contents of classical, biblical and scholarly knowledge, its patterns and its pitfalls, and the mystical contemplation of their origin.

The third case study, entitled *"Your Pen Poured Forth Good Words": Liquid Modes in the Epistolary Style of Peter of Celle*, traces the movement of illustrative rhetorical devices within the letters of a well-connected Benedictine Abbot and Churchman. Peter, as this chapter will argue, deployed his encyclopaedic knowledge of scriptural trope and allegory together with the use of water as rhetorical device to sketch brief but potent sketches of the waterscape of knowledge. Although each taken individually appears as a small flourish, they add up to provide a clear vision of the landscape of learning, friendship, and epistolary exchange imagined by Peter and his fellow monastics.

In the fourth and final case study, entitled *"To Serve You as a Mirror": Spiritual*

Topography and Monastic Waterscape in A Description of Clairvaux*,* I explore a Cistercian description of monastic landscape. The *Descriptio,* product of an anonymous commentator, maps out spiritual principles within a nature-textual representation of landscape for the purpose of Cistercian self-imagination. Through an account of the river Aube's percolation through monastic space for industry, contemplation and spiritual parable, the text becomes an act of intellectual shaping in which the landscape is reviewed through the lens of spiritual contemplation, serving in turn to create a charged understanding of environment that reinforces monastic self-imagination and the contours of a thought-space.

Collectively, these chapters seek to answer two key questions: First, what factor gives mental imagery the power to move, to create new meaning, and to aid cognition? Second, what unique role does water have to play in this schema? This thesis advances a position that provides insights into both questions, and the answer teaches us not only about water itself, but about medieval intellectual history in equal measure. The medieval mind was in need of compositional practices to serve in the painting of a mental image: the use of ekphrastic, kataskopic, and pre-visualisation techniques. Water formed the frame for a detailed *descriptio* of structured landscape that allowed the mind's eye to compose a system for organised *memoria,* a river network within which diverse elements were connected through mediating flow. This perspective on knowledge structure facilitated distance reading, as Franco Moretti has termed it, a vision of material in which emergent traits appear that would otherwise have been invisible. The flow of a river allowed pre-visualisation, guiding the mind's eye through a complex course of actions before performing them, a form of intellectual modelling. In all of these cases, water provided the primordial material properties, the Christological and metaphysical qualities, and the rhetorical properties to create extremely dynamic and complex thought-spaces. These spaces offered a *ductus,* a guided path through complex content and into contemplation and knowledge of the divine; it was the path of the Arts to Theology, the revelation of spiritual life through the description of landscape.

The *compositio* of images within a patterned space or collection of spaces gathered diverse materials from the images of the mind, and yet each image carried its own valences and rhetorical *colores.*[48] The result is generative rather than reductive, causative rather than conventionally metaphorical. I have started this thesis by making the distinction between the image of rhetorical constructs as paintings, frozen unnaturally in an instant of motion, and the image of motion evoked by the riparian grammatical *exemplum* constructed by John of Genoa. In the discussion to follow, I propose that this construct and others like it dispel the notion that

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[48] See the discussion in the introduction and chapter two.

medieval thought-craft was rigid and inflexible, while advancing a further insight into how profoundly images of environment shaped the complexity of medieval intellectual flexibility.

Water illustrates points of connection between the shaping of organised metaphorical imagination and the wider thought-world of the Middle Ages; scripture, environment, classical learning and quotidian experience mingled and condensed for diverse purposes. Jacques Le Goff once claimed that "psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology and the study of media have taught us that the life of men and societies depends just as much on images as it does on more palpable realities".[49] In this thesis, we apprehend that the two are not only interconnected, but mutually derived. Tim Ingold suggests that "the organism is not limited by the skin. *It, too, leaks*".[50] One could easily say the same of the endlessly permeable borders of thought-space. Nowhere is this more apparent than in medieval thought, and there are lessons that we moderns can take away from our experience of it. Sharing certain qualities with the environment shapes our intellectual lives, and profoundly influences our behaviour. Water is unique; it is the guiding metaphor for intellectual life: flexible, fluid, endless, formless, structured; it resolves a mass of seeming contradictions by bundling them into a single intellectual entity.

On one level, this thesis will demonstrate that intellectual entities are formed from every image conceivable to the mind and observable to the eye, drawing diverse content together to shape a mediating pattern that remains in motion, a machine of the memory and of the mind. This capacity need not be linked exclusively to water, indeed water is but one part of a mental world entirely formed and populated by entities of intellect. Just as an ecosystem is made up of countless components, so were the machines of monastic memory crafted from many parts. They were the space for thought, the means of thought, and the ingredients of thought in equal measure. This thesis is about their function, inspiration, and formal patterns. On another level, this thesis is about water, its properties, and their powerful influence on composition.

I have presented a variety of complex traits given by water to rhetoric—flexibility, a loose and yet logical structure, connectivity, nutritive transfer—and yet all of these are derived from a simple principle, *life*. The power of water as an intellectual entity stems from its power to fill the linear relationships between parts of a system with vitality, with a sense of the *vis naturae*, the power of nature. It allows complex abstract thought to be lively and organised, complex and yet comprehensible. The river in particular has an essential function, for it ties the knowable to the mysterious by its very nature. Rivers are a powerful balance between the visible and the esoteric, the exact same qualities occupying the extremes of the medieval continuum of Creation; they bridge the invisible source with diverse and visible destinations. A river is a mystery at its source,

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[49] Jacques Le Goff and Arthur Goldhammer (trans.), *The Medieval Imagination*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 5.
[50] Ingold, 'Point, Line and Counterpoint', p. 153.

but can be touched, interacted with, or manipulated when occupying the spaces of everyday life. The same water provides the link between each of these worlds, allowing everyday interactions while simultaneously drawing the mind to distant and imperfectly understood origins. What better metaphor could there be for the structure of medieval knowledge, for the framing of its epistemology?

The vitality of water is intrinsically linked to another essential trait of water, its ecological connotations. Water serves as an ideal reminder of the interconnectivity of all that it touches. It is difficult to overemphasise the metaphorical importance of water's life-bringing connectivity. Living as part of a largely agricultural society, medieval thinkers were frequently prompted to reflect upon a scriptural narrative shaped by a desert culture that valorised the life-giving properties of water. As Lakoff and Johnson argued in *Metaphors We Live By*, our choice of metaphor dictates the frame within which expression unfolds. The frequent valorisation of new growth engendered by irrigation takes on more than a socio-cultural dimension. If connectivity and agriculture are metaphorically 'condensed', as Umberto Eco put it, then the irrigation of the land cannot help but suggest other forms of connectivity, nor can connectivity fail to be agricultural.[51] Such a phenomenon also touches upon the assumed aesthetics of order as understood by medieval culture. By arranging intellectual entities based upon a model of agriculture, medieval thinkers also posited a vision of what was pleasing within structure, what was right, and what was to be improved upon.

Just as it was essential to understand how one element of the environment altered others, on a limited scale, to farm and to cultivate land, so too was there a need to understand the manner in which the agriculture of the mind and the soul functioned. In both cases, water provided the frame for the ecology. Even when the *realpolitik* of medieval life was very different from these ideals and the landscape was mismanaged, the superlative qualities of this agricultural thought-space sought to return the mind to the correct path. This idealised spiritual *ductus* was embedded within the imagination of landscape, highlighting contrasts between ideal and degraded reality, between temporal and spiritual. They encouraged what we might call 'best practice' in the use of and interaction with inner and outer environment.

If an agricultural mind-set translates into the cultivation of an episteme, then water is not the cause, but the means of all flourishing. It is the metaphor that enables intellectual life, just as a supply of water enables a settled agricultural existence. If one imagines the world as a barren desert such as the wilds of the Holy Land, then the veins of life that engender *viriditas* become the sole hope of advancing the position of humanity. We must never underestimate the formative metaphor of water as a medieval intellectual entity, because it is the the enabling means by which

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[51] See the discussion in chapter two.

newness, life, and striving is enabled. It sets a positive standard for a lively and healing form of intellectual life guided towards soothing and consoling ideas, refreshment for the endless thirst of temporal life. It provided all that the mind could require of a salvific structure: a differentiation of modes to divine knowledge, the strength and refreshment for the journey, the liveliness of dynamic life, and a vision of the pure fountainhead of knowledge, the very uncreated origin of the cosmos.

This thesis is a reminder of the impossibility of maintaining a separation between a nature 'out there' and culture. Furthermore, it is a reminder of interconnectivity that provides an elucidation of medieval thought-space, and the process by which environments within and without interact and interconnect. This process is inevitable within medieval thought for, as I argue in chapter two, the fundamental structural likeness of things ensured that it was so. Similar things are relatable within metaphor because they are similar by virtue of a common cause. This is a form of ecology that is uniquely medieval, a top-down form of interconnectivity in which everything is connected, not to everything else, but to a process of hierarchical differentiation from a shared cause. Lateral relationships stem not from democratic similarity, but from hierarchical similarity. Through the mapping of these relationships onto a river system, we see the mimetic repetition of abstract metaphysical hierarchies in the imagination of everyday life.

Organised thought need not be rigid and inflexible to represent hierarchy, gradation, and categorical division. Just as the graceful passage of celestial bodies was imagined as the music of the spheres, and the motions of the Earth as a world-machine without reducing them to the sum of their parts, so too are the machines of memory present in ecological networks that were imagined as an inscrutably ordered part of a greater whole.

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Before beginning a broad discussion of water as metaphor, it is important to begin with a caveat. Although it is necessary to understand how and why water is a conceptual metaphor, this should not immediately result in a reduction of all human expression to a series of catalogued tropes—water cannot be encapsulated by a list, a single mode, or a solitary interpretation. A notable example is the evocation of water in the Bible, a vision of ecology and hydrology of enduring cross-cultural and trans-historical meaning.[52] Scripture bound the apparatus of monastic meaning together in the twelfth century, linking divine and earthly wisdom through the interrogations of exegesis. In the twenty-first century, the same ideas continue to be read, to guide belief, and to shape thought-worlds:

> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth standeth for ever. The sun riseth, and goeth down, and returneth to his place: and there rising again, Maketh his round by the south, and turneth again to the north: the spirit goeth forward surveying all places round about, and returneth to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow: unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return, to flow again.[53]

The biblical book of Ecclesiastes is a salient example, for it speaks of the landscape and rivers of Israel, the abstract imagination of hydrology as metaphor for life-cycle, and to any and all contexts and genres in which Scripture is read and interpreted in any of the Abrahamic religions, both in their places of origin and in every corner of the earth touched by their teachings. A list of tropes does not suffice to explain it, nor does a single and universal explanation encapsulate its meaning. As the passage later proclaims, "nothing under the sun is new", and yet much has changed within the cognitive landscape of human beings.[54]

The meaning of water derives from a complex negotiation of commonalities and specificities across time and culture, forming the ingredients of a complex network for thinking in and with. In this chapter, I explore the balance of approaches necessary for the reading of such a negotiation. To read the river cycle of Ecclesiastes, for example, requires a notion of cultural specificity, commonality, and the form(s) in which this scriptural passage can be made to evoke metaphors of world-view. There are many broad human truths to be gleaned, and yet infinitely more contextual contingencies. The same is true for diverse other examples, including those that

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[52] Although the Bible is a piece of literature with broad applicability, many other cultures contain spiritual narratives with an equally complex comprehension of hydrology and ecology as abstract themes. The focus upon the Bible within this thesis is a result of its disciplinary and temporal focus, but not an endorsement of an exceptional status for Christian thought. The work of Veronica Strang, cited extensively within this thesis, demonstrates the full range of culturally diverse and cross-cultural commonalities exhibited by water in spiritual contexts, with particular emphasis on the beliefs and practices of Australia's indigenous peoples.

[53] Ecclesiastes I:1–7. All Biblical quotations in this thesis take their English translation and numbering from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate.

[54] Ecclesiastes I:10.

constitute the object of inquiry for this thesis. This discussion begins with an exploration of the idea behind water as a modern problem, as a balance of universality and specificity, and as an intellectual metaphor.

The Modern Problem of Water Interpretation

The metaphorical power of water, like the power of the human mind to apprehend it, is far greater than the sum of its conceivable parts. Furthermore, the very definition of 'water' is often difficult to pin down to one clear meaning. Although science has tended to treat water as H_2O, the molecule, there is another understanding of water: as a complex of concept, metaphorical structure and cognitive meaning that all cultures seem to construct about, around, and with the experience of water. In the terminology of water studies, water is *hydro-social* : it cannot be understood in terms of its scientific materiality or economic utility alone.[55] It is a social form of water—the abstract entity—that offers much potential for human sense-making, and many problems. It is the intellectual dimension of water, distinct from the scientific utility of H_2O, that provides a powerful fuel for the imagery of metaphor.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, now a seminal text on the understanding of metaphor as a building block of human activity, Lakoff and Johnson have proposed that "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature".[56] "The essence of metaphor", they propose, "is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another".[57]

> Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.[58]

The study of a culture's common metaphors allows us to understand the nature of the structures of meaning that culture creates and lives by. Broadly speaking, the intellectual connotations of water remind us how deeply we rely on material qualities in order to think with dynamism, and yet simultaneously reminds us that dynamism without form is chaos. Water captures the paradoxical nature of life: no matter how chaotic it may seem, it is a principle of order and of disorder for the mind in equal measure. It is filled with contradictions, as human life is filled with

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[55] This distinction has become a crucial insight in the management of water. See Erik Swyngedouw, *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water Flows of Power,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004; 'The political economy and political ecology of the hydro-social cycle', *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education*, vol. 142, 2009, pp. 56–60.
[56] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 3.
[57] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 5.
[58] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 7.

contradictions. Describing water can never exhaust its meaning, for it has a structure and logic, and yet reminds us of the infinite pluripotency of form that thought, and that the hydrological cycle, possess. In any given context, the abundant metaphorical affordances of water provide a powerful insight into the guiding principles of a thought-world. The structural logic of a complex metaphor reveals the structural logic of complex thoughts and their arrangement; it is the goal of this thesis to test this principle in a medieval context, and to reveal some of the more esoteric structural principles of the Middle Ages through the accessibility of water as metaphor.

Water is, fruitfully, an abundantly rich subject for such an analysis. Through the guiding structural logic of the path that it has scoured for itself across the face of the earth, the mobile waterscape is a myriad branching of lines of becoming wending through the landscapes of the planet, rivers. Rivers do not strictly connect anything to any other thing, but continue to move, bringing nutrition, hydration and vivification to the surrounding landscape.[59] There is not strictly such a thing as a river, but only the stages of the river: source, confluence, branch, estuary, and so on.[60] So it is with thought, for the matter of intellection is endlessly in motion, and yet its path leaves a deep pattern: mutability and stability in balance.

More important still, extended metaphor shapes the way in which we make sense of situations, behave, and make decisions in the real world. Lakoff and Johnson use the metaphorical axiom 'Argument is War' as a case study; this is not only an effective way of describing argument, but to some extent *makes* argument a war:

> It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war.[61]

What, we are asked, would happen if a culture linked argument metaphorically with dance? Debate and diplomacy would follow entirely different patterns, different behaviours would be valorised, and different decisions would carry moral weight. We must ask the same question of the metaphorical link between water and thought. Different metaphors carry different behaviours with them, and it is in this simple fact that the power of water is revealed. It is so strongly metaphorical that is represents thought across cultures, albeit in different manifestations. If argument is war, what is water? The question has countless answers, and each answer contributes

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[59] Tim Ingold references Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in claiming that "the river, running under the bridge in a direction orthogonal to the road, does not connect anything to anything else. Rather, it just flows, without beginning or end, scouring the banks on each side and picking up speed in the middle". Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description*, Oxford, Routledge, 2011, p. 14

[60] Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, p. 43.

[61] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 4.

meaning to a greater metaphorical framework. The implications of asking such questions are broad, for they move from the realm of abstraction into the realm of social action, and of behaviour. In the following section, I seek to provide an insight into what we should consider when we interpret water. There are many facets to water, far from a monolithic entity, and their complexity serves as a crucial frame for analysis.

Water, with its mutability, intimate relationship with human life, structural complexity and diverse moral applicability, has ever been a powerful enabler of human conceptual frameworks. Water breaks down boundaries, allowing dialogues across time, culture, and context that would otherwise be impossible. As Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard have put it, "water has played a role in all societies at all times and in the lives of all human beings".[62] Despite the universality of water in comparison to practices of marriage, or diet, or habitation, water is equally part of another broad story, the human interaction with the elements. This commonality is a great power of water and its co-elements, and explains much of its metaphorical influence. I propose, however, that there is a balance to be struck between the universal and specific meanings of water. We can recognise the broad meaning of water as a powerful metaphor for many intellectual activities, without forgetting which of myriad possible historical specificities of water we are discussing. Despite historical and cultural constancies across time and space, there is specificity to studying water derived from the unique manifestations of certain symbols and cultural constructs it evokes in different religious and cultural traditions. Waters from different contexts can be juxtaposed, mingled, and compared, and yet their specificity can be preserved. In short, we should not assume that water does not have very specific historically and culturally specific meanings across time and place just because it is an entity that has possessed universal cultural significance for human beings. Despite this historical and cultural specificity, it is equally important to remember the constancy of certain key symbolic and cultural connotations. There is specificity to studying water anchored in place by broad meanings, and yet differentiated by distinct historical contexts.

Without attention to the material nature of water, its study is not truly a study of 'water', but of the contexts in which water appears; it is a catalogue rather than a story. Without a historical framework in which to ground interpretation, water teaches much of *what* water *can* mean, but little of *why* it might mean these things. The result of multiple historical interpretations is not 'water' in a universal sense (the 'water' of H_2O), but 'waters'. This notion is best described by Tvedt and Oestigaard as "worlds of water", those "numerous life-worlds and

[62] Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard, 'A History of the Ideas of Water: Deconstructing Nature and Constructing Society', in *A History of Water, Series II, Volume 1: Ideas of Water from Ancient Societies to the Modern World*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2009, p. 2.

webs of significance people have spun around water as natural phenomena".[63] Water, they continue, "dissolves the traditional boundaries in Western cultures between science and religion, facts and beliefs, the sacred and the profane, and questions the scientific method and approaches by which we seek to analyse the world".[64] Taken as a wholly scientific entity, as two hydrogen molecules and an oxygen molecule, the cultural significance of water cannot be fully apprehended. Studying the conceptual and cognitive constructions of water forces us to reconstruct different epistemologies to modern scientific ones, for it is social and scientific in equal measure. This is true for the Middle Ages, the generator of epistemes derived from natural philosophy and religion in equal measure. This thesis embraces the notion that medieval thought and medieval thinking about 'medieval' water, is part of a greater story, and yet functions on its own terms, with its own rules, and within its own thought-world. It is part of a greater story that flows through many life-worlds and thought-worlds, each of which is unique, and each of which challenges many of our interpretive norms.[65] Only when these 'waters' recombine into a many-splendored story of water can we see both the specificities that add nuance to a rich intellectual history, and the sweeping commonalities that unite it.

Despite the complexities of water as imagery and as metaphor within diverse contexts, a study of specifically medieval metaphors of water should acknowledge their basic commonality with what seems an essential human experience., It must be admitted that across time, across place, we as human beings *feel* water on an intuitive and fundamental level, in spite of our endless investigation of its place in human culture, life, and thought. David Macauley describes this effectively:

> Beneath all this discussion […] the most compelling force at work may be that most humans simply prefer the aesthetic appearance of a wandering river or a wiggling stream to a linear flow. There may in fact be something within our learned or acquired perceptual sensibilities that loves the fluid, serpentine or meandering movement of fluids, perhaps originating with a form of "biophilia" that emerged from our evolutionary past as we humans have lived near flowing waters over many

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[63] Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard, 'Introduction', in Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard (eds), *A History of Water, Series I, Volume 3: The World of Water*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2009, p. xv.

[64] Tvedt and Oestigaard, 'Introduction', in *The World of Water*, p. xiii.

[65] Terje Oestigaard has written many other articles exploring many 'waters' with a sound mix of historical specificity and universal meaning: see, for example, 'Christianity and Islam as Nile Religions in Egypt: Syncretism and Continuity', in. *Water, Culture and Identity. Comparing Past and Present Traditions in the Nile Basin Region*, Bergen, BRIC Press, 2009, pp. 141–161; 'From Death to Life—The Hydrological Circle of Cosmos and Copulation', *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 121–144; 'Heavens, Havens and Hells of Water: Life and Death in Society and Religion', in Marnie Leybourne and Andrea Gaynor (eds), *Water: Histories, Culture, Ecologies,* Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 2006; 'The Topography of Holy Water in England after the Reformation', in Karen V. Lykke Syse and Terje Oestigaard (eds), in *Perceptions of Water in Britain from Early Modern Times to the Present: An Introduction,* Bergen, BRIC Press, 2010, pp. 15–34.

millennia.[66]

This can also be interpreted, conversely, as an implication that human beings *fear* water, and that this shapes our relationship. Just as we like water, we simultaneously distrust its fickleness, be it a torrential river, roiling ocean, or a violent event such as storm or flood. In a medieval context, Biblical tales of hydrophobia—the Flood, the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea—co-exist with joyous imagery such as the Psalmist's love of nutritive imagery, of new life engendered from water's life-giving qualities. Despite the multiplicity of the worlds of water within this thesis, it is also true that water has certain essential traits that transcend time and culture. Water unites the human and the non-human in a shared story of emotional ambiguities that dissolves the rigid dichotomies of nature and culture. The same is true of the wider elemental tetrad of Earth, Air, Fire and Water, and yet water does so with unique affordances. Water binds humanity together across vast gulfs of time and understanding, and this commonality is something to be valued as a tool for inquiry.

To veer too far away from acknowledging the commonality of water into excessive medieval exceptionalism would be a misleading move, and one that I do not intend to advance. Furthermore, it would negate one of the strongest powers given to water, its accessibility to both medieval and modern minds. Water is highly specific to time, culture, and place, and yet it binds the metaphorical imagery of diverse human beings together in a valuable bridging act. One must always remember when engaging in a hermeneutics of water that, as Veronica Strang has put it,

> Water's diversity is, in some respects, a key to its meanings. Here is an object that is endlessly transmutable, moving readily from one shape to another: from ice to stream, from vapour to rain, from fluid to steam. It has an equally broad range of scales of existence: from droplet to ocean, trickle to flood, cup to lake.[67]

Like systems of ideas, water is endlessly flexible and undergoes constant transmutation and translation from context to context in its never-ending journey through the hydrological cycle. It is little wonder, by such logic, that water binds the diverse human cultures of the world together in a shared experience, a phenomenon that Strang memorably describes as 'common senses'. I support the proposition that "water's diversity is, in some respects, a key to its meanings".[68] This is especially true of the caveat *in some respects*. Strang makes a valid point about the commonalities of perception within water that is worth considering:

> The ways in which humans experience [...] fluid qualities are as diverse as the

[66] David Macauley, 'The Domestication of Water: Filtering Nature through Technology', *Essays in Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 1, essay 23, n. p., *Philosophy Commons*, <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/vol6/iss1/23/>, 2005 (accessed 21 July 2012).

[67] Veronica Strang, 'Common Senses: Water, Sensory Experience and the Generation of Meaning', *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 10 no. 1, 2005, p. 98. See also 'Fluidscapes: Water, Identity and The Senses', *Worldviews*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2006, pp. 147–154.

[68] Strang, 'Common Senses', p. 99.

contexts in which this interaction occurs. Clearly there are some aspects of engagement with water—particularly in landscapes dominated by ice, or by other extreme conditions—that are highly specific to these environments, but even in these there are some experiences of water that are more broadly shared, and opportunities to observe universally consistent hydrological processes. Thus, if we accept that most of the qualities of water are present in most environments, and the 'multiple sensory pathways' engaging with them recurs cross-culturally, it is possible to pursue some broad themes.[69]

As Strang points out, experience of water as hydrology is a shared experience, and yet medieval thought still plays by its own rules. Strang's ideas apply just as well to variation across time as they do to variation across different landscapes. Strang's 'common senses' thesis is appealing to the historian, for it is essentialist but *also* relativist in a well-tuned balance. Broad themes are desirable within the interpretation of water as long as they produce rather than reduce meaning. They must allow room for flexibility and adaptation while simultaneously embracing the psychosocial commonalities of water.

Universality and Specificity

I have started this chapter with the essential, and now move into the relative through identifying the limits of the former and the necessity of the latter. Although this thesis seeks to explore the medieval and monastic manifestations of water, it is profitable for me to begin by placing the interplay between universal and specific interpretation in balance, and in context. I will then be in a position to depart from this universality, but not because I wish for it to be a straw man set up to be debunked. The goal of the exercise, rather, is to demonstrate that there is both one capacious metaphor of *water* and many nuanced metaphors of *waters*, the former shared and the latter embedded in context, be it cultural, religious, historical, personal, or one of manifold possibilities.

We, our medieval forebears, and humans to come, have all experienced, and will all experience water. And yet, as Heraclitus would remind us, "Everything changes and nothing remains still [...] and [...] you cannot step twice into the same stream".[70] No experience of water is truly identical to another, and no imagining of water is ever the same. Our modern epistemic frameworks encourage us to learn that similarities in nature, although they may be prompted by scientifically quantifiable laws and patterns, are a matter of human interpretation. Things are not metaphorically linked because they are alike at some fundamental level, but thinking makes it so:

> [...] metaphor is, in general, not based on similarity, as we argued throughout this book. Instead, it is typically based on cross-domain correlations in our experience,

[69] Strang, 'Common Senses', p. 99.
[70] Plato, *Cratylus*, 402a.

which give rise to the perceived similarities between the two domains within the metaphor. For example, the persistent use of a metaphor may create perceived similarities, as when a love relationship, conceived of metaphorically as a partnership, goes awry when responsibilities and benefits are not shared equally.[71]

Ivan Illich has argued that "as a vehicle for metaphors, water is a shifting mirror. Water remains a chaos until a creative story interprets its seeming equivocation as being the quivering ambiguity of life".[72] The story goes as follows: we shape water, mould it, give it meaning through our inner workings. We parse it into categories of metaphorical meaning. Yet such statements, like many other modern arguments, are contrary to the spirit of the medieval intellectual approach, which proposes water has a fundamental essence, the subtleties of which are revealed through inquiry.

For a medieval intellectual, I propose, natural meaning would not be deemed a product of human intellection: a thing already meant something, even if human faculties were unable to decipher its code. Water had the potential for chaos remaining within it from its primordial state, and yet it was tamed by the power of God at the beginning.[73] The shifting mirror humans saw in water was not the product of water itself, but of the vagaries of human perception. Water as intellectual metaphor for modern thinkers is a satisfying, essential and everlasting image of fluidity. Water as intellectual metaphor for medieval thinkers was a *proof* of divine order. It did not simply *explain* thought through nature but *justified* the structure of thought through nature. How then, can we reconcile these seemingly incompatible frameworks for the interpretation of water?

Strang proposes that water "retains its fluidity and transmutability in all contexts, and is therefore ubiquitously employed in metaphors concerned with flow, movement, and change over time".[74] Thoughts and metaphors shift and flow throughout the mind, across the page and throughout the complex web that is the history of ideas. Past and present, sacred and profane: everything flows; such is the anthropological perspective. The effects of this thinking should be quite clear: if water always bonds to thought due to its ontological symbolism, then *of course* medieval thinkers used it as a metaphor. So would Greek philosophers, or Chinese sages, or stone-age shamans, or ancient Egyptian priests. So do twenty-first century Muslims, modern poets, and contemporary authors. And yet where does this line of enquiry take us? Somewhere interesting and engaging to be sure, but is it somewhere *medieval?* In this section, I offer a point of departure for the scholar of medieval intellectual history that takes account of the broad polyvalence of

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[71] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* pp. 244–245.

[72] Illich is far more concerned for the historical specificity of water interpretation than others, and yet many of his observations encounter difficulties in a medieval context. Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness,* pp. 24–25.

[73] "And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters". Genesis 1:2.

[74] Veronica Strang, *Gardening the World: Agency, Identity and the Ownership Of Water,* Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2009, p. 30. See also *The Meaning of Water,* Oxford, Berg, 2004.

water while preserving a historicity of interpretation proper to the study of medieval thought. The extreme of an essentialist reading of water is perhaps best epitomised by the work of Mircea Eliade, a great believer in the universal and essential nature of water (and, indeed, of all symbols). The eternal semiological qualities of water, he argued, could be never change, only grow in potentiality.

> [...] the universal aquatic symbolism was neither abolished nor dismembered by [historical interpretations]. In other words: History cannot basically modify the structure of an archaic symbolism. History constantly adds new meanings, but they do not destroy the structure of the symbolism.[75]

The passage is problematic and yet fruitful. The notion of 'the universal aquatic symbolism' is an absurdity within the epistemic culture we inhabit, and yet Eliade has a point. Problems aside, it is true that there is a Judeo-Christian interpretation of water that contains a core of tropes and idioms not created, but inherited. Eliade presents a mixture of generalisation and astute observation. We do indeed inherit a legacy of archaic water symbols from our forebears, as did medieval thinkers from theirs. Yet the reception of Aristotle in the High Middle Ages created a *medieval* Aristotle, and likewise the reception of water symbols in the Middle Ages—be they from scripture, history, philosophy or simply from human intuition—created a *specifically medieval* water.[76] For the historian of medieval ideas, then, Eliade's logic does not stand.

The psychoanalytic tradition of water interpretation has long sought to track our engagement with water to something primal, something indivisible, something eternal. This interpretation is certainly not a falsehood, and yet an uncritical acceptance of this fact is problematic. William Niederland has expressed this link as a psycho-geographical thesis, a hypothesis that the space within mirrors the hydrology of the world without.

> How closely the ideas of river and body are connected can be seen in such terms as "river-head" (source), "arm" (branch) and "mouth". According to Onians (1951) the source of a stream is called its head because of the ancient belief that the head contained the life-fluid, the seed, and thus the source of life.[77]

Niederland's thesis follows the logic of Eliade, and yet uses psychoanalytic methodology to make its point rather than semiotics. I propose that the problem with such interpretations is not that they are untrue, but that they propose to *explain* all human interaction with water under one

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[75] Eliade is referring specifically to the symbolism of baptism in this passage, but switches to a much broader claim. If anything, this strengthens the message that universalising water leads to occlusion of historical detail. Mircea Eliade and William R. Trask (trans.), *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, San Diego, CA, Harvest Books, 1959, p. 137.

[76] Terming the water in this thesis 'Medieval Water', like any specific conception of water, is an effort to break down the monolithic entity known as 'water' in the 21st century. This approach should also be taken within the umbrella term of 'medieval' water to see further waters within. See Christopher Hamlin, "Waters' or 'Water'? — Master Narratives in Water History and Their Implications for Contemporary Water Policy', *Water Policy*, vol. 2, no. 4–5, 2000, pp. 313–325.

[77] William G. Niederland, 'River Symbolism—Part I', in Howard F. Stein and William G. Niederland (eds), *Maps From the Mind: Readings In Psychogeography*, Norman, OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 1989, p. 18.

unchanging rubric. Specificities emerge, but they are all part of an eternal pattern.[78] This is content-based analysis of tropes applied universally across history. It is at this point that I break away from the thesis, for this approach relies upon a raft of assumptions that oversimplify the medieval interpretation of water.

By the same logic, I argue, we must also avoid treating the domain of water as a complex code of symbols, universal in meaning and yet historically specific in manifestation. A study of symbolism is rewarding, for it gives a taxonomic possibility of capturing all the qualities that water *can mean*, what it *meant*, why symbolism *allows it to mean*. And yet, it plays into a debate in which water is exhaustible in its meaning, in which it is but a manifold representation of what we, humans, place within it. It also, most crucially, forces us to interpret medieval texts through a schema that is not part of their thought-world. It creates water that, although a potent metaphor and symbolic wellspring, is always about *us*, as Jamie Linton argues:

> Water is what we make of it. This is not a particularly novel assertion. The philosopher and historian of religions Mircea Eliade wrote that water "is *fons et origo*, the source of all possible existence [...] it will always exist, though never alone, for water is always germinative, containing the potentiality of all forms in their unbroken unity". Everyone knows that we can't exist without water. But neither can water, as *fons et origo*, exist without us. We give to water that which enables it to realize its potential. All by itself, water is supremely fluid, fluctuating, fleeting. We mix language, gods, bodies, and thought with water to produce the worlds and the selves we inhabit.[79]

Thinking of the *longue durée*, I agree with Linton's assessment. And yet to believe this idea, to participate in this discourse, is to break sharply from anything resembling a medieval thought-world. The notion that humanity *invented* the idea of water, that we thought it into being, ignores structures within medieval thought that place responsibility for meaning far beyond human control within the realm of God. Linton has appropriated *fons et origo*, a medieval concept, and reframed it in terms of human composition. This is an argument that is logical today, and yet problematic when applied to medieval thought.

Much of the symbolic interpretation of water highlights the scriptural or literary provenance of the source material; it presents the view that water is a trope to be played, strategically, like a card in a deck of symbolism.[80] These studies are often invaluable, and advance knowledge of their source material. This is often not enough, however, if one has made water

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[78] See for example Stephen A. Norwick, *The History of Metaphors of Nature: Science and Literature from Homer to Al Gore,* Vol. 1, New York, Edwin Mellen Press, 2007, a two volume compendium of metaphors and symbols mapped out in taxonomic but minimally critical detail.

[79] Jamie Linton, *What Is Water?: The History of a Modern Abstraction,* Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2010, p. 3.

[80] For recent volumes with many essays that interpret water by means of symbols and tropes, see Kosso and Scott (eds), *The Nature and Function of Water,* and Danièle James-Raoul and Claude Thomasset (eds), *Dans l'eau, sous l'eau: Le monde aquatique au Moyen Age,* Paris, Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002.

itself the topic of inquiry; symbolism is not a cause of water's affordances, but an effect. As Marcia Colish has proposed succinctly, argument by symbol alone is not an explanation of medieval thought:

> People who read books on the medieval mind are familiar with the dictum usually found on page one of any book on this subject: "Medieval man thought in terms of symbols". People who write books on the medieval mind acknowledge the symbolic mentality of the period with impartial and relentless frequency. Whether cited to attest to the clairvoyance or obscurantism, the subtlety or primitivism, the uniqueness or the universality of the Middle Ages, the symbolic attributes of the medieval mind have by now acquired the unexcogitated and prescriptive status of *idée reçue*.[81]

If we combine the axioms 'water is always water' and 'medieval people thought in terms of symbols', then we arrive at the conclusion that water in medieval symbolism is simply a tool at hand. Scripture has water in it, medieval people know water, and therefore there is water in medieval intellectual discourse.[82] The task remains to map out these symbols, and to understand their provenance, use, and qualities. And yet such an approach is reductive rather than productive. Moreover, as Colish proposes, it has the potential to introduce uncritical errors in interpretation:

> The assertion that medieval men thought in terms of symbols is usually treated as a canon of explanation. It has rarely been treated as susceptible to explanation itself. More rarely still have those who study the place of symbols in medieval epistemology avoided the tendency to interpret them in anachronistic or otherwise extraneous terms.[83]

There is, as Colish's argument would suggest, an entire genre of explanation devoted to the symbolism of water. The principal problem with texts of this genre is that they tend to treat water as part of a process to explain something else (religion, culture, sacrality, narrative, and so on), and in doing so tend to ignore what is true of water *in itself* in a particular context. Water does explain other concepts through its symbolism, and yet this is an incomplete picture. Much of the power of water as metaphor in a medieval context stems from its power to act as the environment and vehicle for meaning, not as the meaning in itself, as the medium rather than the message. Speaking metaphorically, it is an entity of content and of form in equal measure.

It is easy to claim that water provides many satisfying metaphors for human thought, life and imagination, to imply that humans are diverse and yet water is, 'essentially', *always just*

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[81] Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1968, p. vii.

[82] This has a tendency to result in studies of water in which the historical context of water becomes a function of symbolism, and this symbolism is read in relation to modern cultural behaviour. See in particular Mohamed Larbi Bouguerra, 'Water: Symbolism and Culture', Report no. 5, Paris, *Institut Veolia Environnement*, 2005, which is exhaustive in cross-cultural detail and of high quality, and yet implies that a study of water is intrinsically a study of symbolism, religion, and culture. Although Bouguerra is primarily aiming to provide a précis rather than a critical study, what is not discussed within the report is as telling as what appears.

[83] Colish, *The Mirror of Language*, p. vii.

water.[84] Water interpretation requires an attention to historical detail, for as Ivan Illich has argued, "[n]ot only does the way an epoch treats water and space have a history…[but also] the very substances that are shaped by the imagination—and thereby given explicit meanings—are themselves social creations to some degree".[85] Although water is never conceptually accessibly to human interaction as *just* water, and takes the shape of what we make of it, we must be attentive to the manner in which these diverse meanings manifest in particular historical contexts. This is especially important when considering a medieval intellectual context, since it must be approached from different intellectual premises than our own.

There is nothing 'natural' about water imagery, it is not an essential and eternal reality of human ontology that never adapts, never changes; it is a construct. I propose, as I have already and would like to reiterate, that for the medieval thinker, water was far from a simple explanatory device. Medieval Christians *knew* by the power of their faith that the origin of this mystery could be explained, and that to do so one need only turn one's eyes to the heavens, and downwards to the interrelated chain of divine creations that was nature. The meaning of water was inherited from antiquity and modified by Christian thought, and yet the entire epistemic world of the interpreter defined the logic of water.[86]

The flow of the world's hydrological systems ties in with our notions of human embodiment, the equilibrium of our lives and the structures of our thoughts themselves, and yet these factors are culturally specific. The gulf of time separating us from the Middle Ages makes assumptions regarding the commonality of modern and medieval interpretations problematic. Experiences of interaction with water are something that we can all share, and yet belief defines interpretation. In order to overcome these pitfalls, a good approach avoids confusion between modern and medieval ideas of metaphor, shuns over-universalisation of water interpretation, and yet avoids curmudgeonly repudiation of cross-temporal and cross-cultural commonality. Both are valid, and yet they are neither mutually exclusive nor synonymous.

Approaching Water as Intellectual Metaphor

Thinking of water is an act replete with possibility: the sounds, sights, motions, and colours mingle within the imagination to create a satisfying and deep amalgam of disparate forces. It is a material of certain puzzles and frustrations for the human interpreter, and with manifold hidden worlds beyond the purview of human life. Thinking *with* water takes the complexities of water as

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[84] Even in metaphor, water has taken on the characteristics of 'H₂O', a 'stuff' created by industrial society rather than something less instrumental and more ontological. See Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, esp. pp. 3–11.

[85] Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, p. 4.

[86] This will be discussed at greater length in my chapter two.

a palette from which to paint a picture of inner life, to populate the spaces of the mind with entities human, material, artificial, natural, to create a world *within which to* think, a world to think *with*.[87] This is a concept that has been advanced in the form of the cognitive ecology, a theory arguing that "an understanding of cognitive phenomena must include a consideration of the environments in which cognitive processes develop and operate".[88] Modern cognitive science, it seems, suggests that causal factors explaining patterns within a modality may lie within the patterns of other modalities.[89] Thus, inner patterns partially explain interactions of the body and with the environment, and external patterns conversely influence the pattern and function of inner modes. This insight has been transferred into the realm of literary and performance studies to advocate closer attention to "the multidimensional contexts in which we remember, feel, think, sense, communicate, imagine, and act, often collaboratively, on the fly, and in rich ongoing interaction with our environments".[90] We may also imagine this phenomenon to be a form of cognitive extension, an diffuse network of sense-making beyond the brainbound processes within.[91]

In the case of medieval thought, the cognitive ecology formed was both universal in experience and shaped by the structural specificities of sense-making in the Middle Ages. Mary Carruthers has proposed of the Middle Ages that "in order to develop the memory into a powerful engine of invention, it was conceived of in spatial and locational terms like a kind of map, with its places and routes plainly marked".[92] The cognitive system that I propose conforms to this model, for every distinct thought-world can be imagined to have such a map complete with its own coordinates, loci, and units of measurement. In each map, however, water forms a mediating principle, a fluid network for linking idea to idea, cause to effect. The rules differ, and yet the prominence of water remains. The locational mediation of water creates what John Urry has termed *scapes* and *flows*, the networks of paths by which abstract connections are formed and navigated, and the intellectual matter directed through them:

> Scapes are the networks of machines, technologies, organizations, texts and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes along which flows can be relayed. Such scapes reconfigure the dimensions of time and space. Once particular scapes have been established, then individuals and especially corporations within each society will normally try to become connected to them through being constituted as nodes

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[87] For an edited volume that has gone far in exploring this notion, see Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis (eds), *Thinking with Water*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.

[88] Edwin Hutchins, 'Cognitive Ecology', *Topics in Cognitive Science*, no. 2, 2010, p. 706.

[89] Hutchins, 'Cognitive Ecology', p. 710.

[90] Evelyn Tribble and John Sutton, 'Cognitive Ecology as a Framework for Shakespearean Studies', *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 39, 2011, p. 94.

[91] See Clark, *Supersizing the Mind* p. 45, in which the author argues that the creation of material symbols "creates a new realm of perceptible objects upon which to target basic capacities of statistical and associative learning".

[92] Mary Carruthers, 'Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture', p. 3.

within that particular network.[93]

This thesis studies the process by which the qualities of water, a sensibly apprehensible natural entity, came to fill the mind as a mediator of interior space, a mapper of its boundaries, and a flexible pattern of sense making, made through its similitude to the structure of intellection itself.[94] It provides framework through the hydrological pattern of its arrangement, and fills intellection with flows passing from locus to locus in a material representation of sense-making. This was a system of intellection bonded to a material metaphor that is uniquely medieval, despite sharing many commonalities with all thought systems. The intellectual entity provides both an aid to demarcation and mapping of inner space, and the motive transfers that bring systematic function and process to this space.

It is, to my mind, no exaggeration to claim that visible representation of that which is non-verbal and non-literary was the very essence of monastic thought, its motive force and its life-blood.[95] In order to develop a pedagogical framework to address the problems of complex inner visualisation, a comprehensive network of monastic intellectual imagery was required that communicated form; content; proper behaviour; a sense of motion; and, above all, a sense of metaphysical scope.[96] The stakes were high, for to dwell within a world of persistent and ever-relevant metaphysical influence is to demand a rigorous, powerful and flexible system of representation. To live in an intellectual culture in which all things, from the simplest happening to the vastest change, owe their cause to something invisible is to remain ever watchful of this realm. In order to communicate the ever-multiplying vicissitudes of a vast metaphysical reality, the image chosen to narrate such a reality needed to be commodious indeed. It is, given what I have presented, little surprise that water should pour so bountifully into the hidden channels giving form and structure to the invisible matrices of this reality.

I propose that there are several distinct dimensions of medieval—and monastic—thought that need to be considered when placing hydrological imagery in context. I propose that aqueous imagery supports these notions and offers a point of departure into new dimensions of medieval intellectual culture. The first dimension in question, that of visualisation, concerns the

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[93] John Urry, 'Mobile Sociology', *British Journal of Sociology,* vol. 51, no. 1, 2000, p. 193. For more sociologically derived fluid space terminology, see the work of Manuel Castells and Zygmunt Bauman.

[94] Carruthers describes similitude or 'likeness' not as the likeness of exact copies, but as a schematic drawing seeking to represent an object. 'Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture', p. 5.

[95] A claim substantiated by the interest in the topic demonstrated within the ongoing Brepols *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* series. Within this debate, see in particular Marco Mostert, *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1999; Marielle Hageman and Marco Mostert (eds), *Reading Images and Texts*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000, and Giselle De Nie, Karl F. Morrison and Marco Mostert (eds), *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003.

[96] For some particularly useful monastic case studies for the role of this process in the narration of the self, see Ineke van 't Spijker, *Fictions of the Inner Life: Religious Literature and Formation of the Self in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004.

underlying necessity for visible image attached to an invisible concept. Through the second dimension of mnemotechnics, images attached to invisible concepts were arranged and shaped into a mechanism for intellection. The third dimension, teleology, suggests that an ordered system of intellection occurs not only to promote the practice of thought, but, by virtue of the process itself, to guide the mind to those higher things that inspire thought.

A fourth dimension is that of associative or typological thought, and is perhaps more important than the other three combined. When inquiring into the nature of medieval abstract thought, it is absolutely crucial to acknowledge the endless linkage of associations that any one image can evoke. An image of water cannot be understood as water alone—as the chapter to follow will elucidate—but must instead be understood in terms of its likeness to other, similar, images. We should understand 'similar' not in terms or visual resemblance, although this may be the case, but in terms of association. A river, for example, is possessed of a likeness to every river mentioned in the Bible, and by association to the acts and miracles that revolve around such a link. This in turn brings the entire exegetic and theological apparatus in its train. In the realm of intellectual metaphor, as is the case for thought in general, everything refers to everything. It it the paths by which these links are made that differ, and the media by which they are facilitated. In a step towards a more interior understanding of the hydrological cycle, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux explicitly connected the functioning of the terrestrial waters to a spiritual and interior abstraction.[97] There is no point at which scriptural exegesis ends and evocation of natural order begins; all modes are carried out simultaneously:

> If all waters seek incessantly to return to the sea, making their way thither sometimes by hidden and subterranean channels, so that they may go forth from it again in continual and untiring circuit, becoming visible once more to man and available for his service, why are not these spiritual streams rendered back constantly, and without reserve to their legitimate source, that they may not cease to water the fields in our hearts? Let the rivers of diverse graces return from whence they came that they may flow anew. Let the heavenly shower rise again to its heavenly source, that it may be poured anew and still more plentifully upon the earth.[98]

Through the imagery of Ecclesiastes that appeared as an epigram in the chapter, the sights, sounds, and touch of water, the reader might come to bond river, life, spirit, Scripture, and history in one great gathering. In the passage from Bernard of Clairvaux above, this image of a fluid path for life and knowledge is placed in a distinct context and tied to the realm of spiritual metaphor. All of these factors merge to form the complex hybrid water metaphor that will shortly feature in the central chapters of this thesis. The implications of this gathering,

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[97] For further discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux's rhetoric and the evocation of the elements, see Susan Warrener Smith, 'Bernard of Clairvaux and the Natural Realm: Images Related to the Four Elements', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly,* vol. 31, 1996, pp. 3–19

[98] Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon XIII on the Song of Songs, as cited in Yi-fu Tuan, *The Hydrologic Cycle and the Wisdom of God: A Theme in Geoteleology,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 43.

interpreted in a particular time, place, and intellectual culture, engendered diverse meanings. By merging mind and environment into a collection of affordances, the experience and intellectual *use* of water encountered in mind and environment bonded intellection and phenomenon. These uses were, as I have argued above, both shared and distinctly medieval. The logic of this pattern both links us intimately to the internal structures of sense-making in a distinct intellectual *milieu,* and to the understanding of environment that it implies, be it cultural, religious, or quotidian. It simultaneously presents a point of difference that must be crossed before interpretation occurs. Water serves to create a form of ecosophical template, a convergence of ideas pertaining to the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity.[99] As a result, it has wide-ranging trans-cultural and trans-historical significance that is as relevant to modern life as to historical analysis.

There was similitude in the structure of ideas and that of rivers for medieval thinkers, less than an isometric relationship, and yet far more than what we might call a metaphorical likeness. Rivers flowed to open places, secret places, distant places, and surprising places. They filled the world with life, with *vis naturae*, bridging the gap between hidden source and arid destination, bringing forth water from the hidden font of Paradise. Their structure, although often enigmatic and convoluted, was the pattern by which life emerged, the shape of causation. Their image, once apprehended and imagined, produced a kind of *vis aestimativa*, an instinctive feeling brought on by the sensing of an image: this pattern, this form, *means* something.[100] This meaning found its object within the structural faculty of thought—what we today might call systems thinking—the force that imbues human life with the vivacity of cognition, bridging the gap between conception and action, carrying interpretation in their wake. In the chapter to follow, I discuss the conditions of knowledge from which a medieval intellectual metaphor drew efficacy, the means by which water could enable meaning within such a metaphor, and the applications of such a system within the expression of complex thought.

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[99] For the origins of the term 'ecosophy', see Félix Guattari, Ian Pindar, and Paul Sutton (eds), *The Three Ecologies*, London, Athlone, 2000, esp. .p 28.

[100] Carruthers, 'Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture', p. 5.

When placed together within medieval thought through structural metaphors of human sense-making, water and intellection formed an entity of branches, flows, and mediated spaces. The mind, through similitude, acquired a material culture that was historical, textual, moral, and spiritual in equal measure. This thesis explores the infusion of mental space with lines of flow, and the pouring of diverse channels throughout the diverse corners of medieval thought. Through these patterns, it argues, complex patterns of medieval logic emerge. Although the boundary between description of natural processes and the exploration of hidden realities is a blurry one, we are occasionally presented with examples demonstrating a clear step from the realm of natural philosophy into abstract allegoresis.

For monastic minds, the reading of the invisible world was a task of paramount importance. The ultimate aim of all monastic knowledge was the divine, and yet the divine could not be apprehended by direct observation. It could be deduced only by exegesis, both of scripture and of the created world. As a result, the monastic thinker was continually working in the space, the relationship, between the material and the abstract worlds. Abstractions varied in complexity within medieval thought, from a simple simile to a vast edifice of allegorical interconnectivity. The case studies to come reveal visual and textual constructs in which a seamless intermingling of hydrological order and spiritual order is revealed. Hydrology *is* spirituality, and spirituality *is* hydrological; the two are separate and yet causally linked. The binary of nature and culture is non-existent; they explain each other, for both stem from a single causative principle. There is no contradiction.

In the chapter to follow, I will explore some of the key principles necessary for an understanding of the logic under which the claims in the above paragraph operate. This analysis begins with a discussion of knowledge through Christ and Cosmos, the path of epistemology that water is able to delineate through flow. The conditions of knowledge, the role of Christology, and the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm all combine to create a complex set of conditions for the mapping and realisation of knowledge, and explain the niche occupied by water in the medieval metaphorical framework. The chapter continues with a discussion of water as one of the four elements, a primordial matter possessed of simple qualities from which all composites are derived. By placing water within a schema of material commonality, I argue, it is possible to understand the facility with which aqueous traits fit within a broader expression of esoteric fluid notions. The discussion ends with at a point suited for the transition to the case study chapters that follow, the application of water to the composition of rhetoric. In this ultimate section, I posit a register of rhetorical *colores* derived from the affordances of water.

Fluid Knowledge through Christ and Cosmos

The need to understand one's context in a wider story is perhaps one of the most fundamental requirements of thought. In order to make sense of the need for a linking structure and narrative for the components found within medieval thought, I must first explore some of the key properties of this story. Within the context of this thesis, I propose that part of the power of water as an abstraction and a metaphor stems from its function as a framework through which to form a microcosm of wider order, a hydrological rendering of the cosmos around diverse focus points of Christian salvation history. The provenance and patterns of reality and the causation of knowledge followed a hydrological pattern because this pattern served to guide the path between principles that enabled a contextual understanding of a larger order. Furthermore, it elucidated the steps of learning and of action required to negotiate such a context.

In *Creation of the Sacred*, Walter Burkert postulated that all of the tools available to the human intellect have long been directed to a single end; they work towards the expansion of imaginative worlds, augmenting both their scope and their diversity.[101] When human minds are exposed to the multiform complexity of the sensible world, wrote Burkert, "they are subject to a plethora of sense-impressions that stream from a vastly complicated universe".[102] Without context, it is not possible to correlate the contents of the mind and extrapolate the patterns and hierarchies inherent in the ordering of the intellectual world. Simply put, knowledge requires a template, a pattern, to make sense of vast and incomprehensible complexity. Human beings need a pattern for ascertaining what should be known, what should not be known, and why some things cannot be known in part or in full, and how these diverse paths of learning fit together.

The nature, possibility and providence of knowledge define the terms of its pursuit, and exist at the heart of any theory pertaining to knowledge. For the Middle Ages, the provenance of knowledge was possessed of traits that were distinctly fluvial, rendering the division of ideas from the primary causes as flowing forth from a lofty fountain. The course of knowing, like the course of water, followed a type of 'gravity'. By parsing the categories of knowable things, by delineating the relationship between cause and effect and by forming an image by which the unknowable could be intuited, water gave shape to epistemology. Nicholas Wolterstorff writes that a religious epistemology resolves questions of knowledge (what is knowable, how, and why) by "allowing certain metaphors and images to shape one's actions and perception of reality".[103] Although vertical in nature, the celestial hierarchy was not a single continuum, but a series of separate

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[101] Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religion*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 161.

[102] Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p. 161.

[103] Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Epistemology of Religion', in John Greco and Ernest Sosa. (eds), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, Malden, MA, Oxford, Carlton, Blackwell, 1999, p. 303.

hierarchies combined to form the ordered construct of Creation. They functioned differently depending on the hierarchy in which it participated: the celestial hierarchy and the mundane hierarchy, although linked, existed as distinct entities with their own rules and dynamics. The chain of being, the emanation of the source, streams of knowledge divided into the Liberal Arts: this thesis is replete with epistemic mappings based on the systems theory of water. By rendering this liquefied and manifold causal chain as an intellectual entity, it was possible to address questions of Christian motivation, individual morality, interconnectivity and teleology on a day to day basis, but also to apprehend something of the vast context within which such strivings took place.

It was within the essence of the Trinity, the ultimate source and concentration of reality, that all thought within a medieval world found its ultimate consummation. For the medieval mind, the process of knowing was a religious endeavour, a quest to overcome the deficiencies of the human intellect in order to feel the presence of God within thought itself. In the words of Hugh of Saint-Victor, the mind must seek "that wisdom which is the sole primordial ideal or pattern of things".[104] Within the journey towards the realisation of this sole truth, we find the original principle of knowledge: God was the source of knowledge and its ultimate principle, and thus defined and guaranteed knowledge in equal measure. Through religious experience, the medieval mind felt to the profundity of Creation as *created,* marvelling in the minuteness of some facets, marvelling at the immensity of others while delighting in the intricacies of others.[105] Hugh also proposed that wisdom should govern all human actions and pursuits, for only through the contemplation of truth and the practice of virtue could humanity restore itself to the image of God.[106]

The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus taught that through *emanation* (literally to flow out, from the latin *emanatio*) the essence of the One created the world through a series of existential realisations.[107] This principle, received and adapted within the Christian tradition, came to represent the outpouring of divine essence and causation from a triune source. Emanation never ceased, the whole process moving continuously outward from God. The seminal Christian Platonist philosophy of Pseudo-Dionysius demonstrates an emerging Christian notion of *emanatio*; the *Celestial Hierarchy,* presents a description of divine emanation at the very beginning of the text:

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[104] *Didascalicon,* I.IV, as cited in Rafey Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present,* London, Blackwell, 2005, p. 181.

[105] Wolterstorff, 'Epistemology of Religion', p. 303.

[106] Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism,* p. 181.

[107] It is important to note that Plotinus never used the term 'emanation' in his writings. The theory of emanation represented the results of later Neoplatonist interpretations of his ideas. The principle worked as follows: the events of Genesis took place as a result of the essence of God *radiating* outwards, creating the heavens and the earth as it went.

[...] every divine procession of radiance from the Father, while constantly bounteously flowing to us, fills us anew as though with a unifying power, by recalling us to things above, and leading us to the unity of the Shepherding Father and to the Divine One.[108]

The non-specific One of Plotinus has transformed through Christianisation into the One that is Three of the Trinity, albeit not yet distinct in its articulation of this principle. The Creator spilled out in endless abundance, a never ceasing flow of meaning from the highest apex down to the borders of non-being. His eternal wellspring was not simply a passive phenomenon, for it actively sought to pull those who felt its touch back to its source. The source exerted a magnetism that drew like to like, tugging at the spiritual faculties of the human mind. The One, in this formulation, "becomes manyness and proceeds into manifestation for the uplifting of those creatures governed by Its providence", yet "abides eternally within Itself in changeless sameness [...] and elevates to Itself, according to their capacity, those who turn towards It".[109] Dionysius clamed, furthermore that "hierarchy, to me, is sacred order, knowledge, and activity assimilating itself, as far as it can, to the likeness of God, and raising itself to its utmost, by means of the illuminations granted by God, to the likeness of God".[110] Thus, hierarchy and the flow of emanation became fundamentally linked at a metaphysical level for Christian Platonists, a principle still very much alive within the intellectual culture of the High Middle Ages.

The upwards gaze of Christian epistemology was, to some degree, an attempt to reconcile the perfection of the heavens with the imperfection of the world that surrounded one's daily life. In order to do so, the mind traversed a vertically ascendant hierarchy, a continuum of existence extending from the highest of celestial principles through a multi-faceted and strictly hierarchical cosmic order down to the mind of the human being. Within the Neoplatonic tradition, the human 'all-soul' had three phases: the intellective soul, the reasoning soul and the unreasoning soul. The first was purely extant within the realm of spirit and contemplated the Divine Intellect alone, the second bridged the gap between body and soul through discursive reasoning and the third was wholly a thing of the body, controlling the faculties of sense, imagination and sense memory.[111]

Within this hierarchy existed a continuum of knowledge: the purest form of knowledge existed in a state of *propinquitas*, or nearness, to God: it was the *cognitio matutina* or 'morning knowledge', existing in its clearest form. As knowledge descended through the celestial hierarchy,

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[108] Chapter One, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in Colm Luibhéid (trans.), *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works,* Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 145.

[109] Chapter One, in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 149.

[110] David E. Luscombe, 'Hierarchy', in Arthur Stephen McGrade (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 60.

[111] Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 64–65.

it was occluded by the disharmonious nature of the world it interacted with, becoming *cognitio vespertina* or 'evening knowledge'. As knowledge emanated from the One, it gradually became less divine, progressing (as all things within the world must) through a life cycle from birth, through life and to death. According to Plotinus, the soul—by virtue of neighborhood to divinity—is more closely modelled upon the ideas of the Divine Intellect.[112] In its natural state, the soul exists in a state of perpetual contemplation of or communion with the intellect of God. The body, however, exerted a strong downwards pull on the spirit, tugging the gaze of humanity into time and into memory. At the outer limit of knowledge, true understanding became almost impossible: within the sinful world, the emanations faded to nothing, dissipating like the ripples from a stone dropped in water. It was here, at the sunset of knowledge, that the ripples of divine emanation ended.[113]

What had, according to Christian Platonism, started in the Divine Intellect and radiated ever outwards, reached its final end at the very point where the limited intellect of humanity was able to perceive it. Thus was the problem of medieval epistemology keenly felt: within the chaos of the world, the true nature of things was felt as the faintest of touches, intuitively perceived but dimly understood. In the ninth-century *Periphyseon*, John Scottus Eriugena described the descent of knowledge in strongly Platonic terms, as a river of intellect emanating from the heavens and flowing into the world:

> [T]he whole river first flows from its source, and through its channel the water which first wells up in the source continues to flow always without any break to whatever distance it extends. So the Divine Goodness and Essence [...] first flow down into the primordial causes [...] flowing forth continuously through the higher to the lower; and return back again to their source".[114]

Not only was the greater world pouring itself onto the lesser realms below, but through the saving doctrine of Christianity, the waters miraculously returned to the heavens whence they came, uniting the enriched spirits of the faithful with their fountainhead.[115] In order for the intellect to traverse the shifting ambiguities of existence, the whole of Creation was imagined within an all-encompassing cosmic order. In the *Enneads,* Plotinus claimed that the physical world was a 'second cosmos' that "at every point copies the archetype: it has life and being in copy [...] In its

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[112]   Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, p. 66.

[113]   An appropriate term, for in Latin, the West of the world was the *Occident*, from the Latin *occidere* or to fall. As with many Latin words, this word has telling etymological depth. *Occidere* not only means to fall, but also to decline or to end.

[114]   *Periphyseon*, III, 632 B-C, as cited in Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 37.

[115]   This motif bears a strong resemblance to the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, after which the river reversed its flow, returning from whence it came. The motif is a powerful one: the saving grace resulting by Christ's ministry on earth (initiated with his baptism) had the power to transcend natural laws, to reverse the ordinary dynamics of knowledge.

character of image it holds, too, that divine perpetuity".[116] Drawing on the Platonic tradition of *eidos* (εἶδος) or form, the Christian epistemological tradition grew and changed over time, taking shape through a series of reforms, doctrinal changes and re-evaluations.[117]

The belief that the imperfect world of experience was a representation of a higher, perfect realm led the inquiry of the mind upwards to the contemplation of perfection. As gravity causes water to flow from the heights to the depths, so too was the celestial hierarchy imbued with a cognitive gravity, causing ideas to descend from the heavens to the world below. Through this process, the eternal reasons (*rationes aeternae*) that dwelt within the heavens and explained the nature of things made their way into the world inhabited by humanity. The necessity of a medieval Christian epistemology stemmed from the grand creation narrative of humanity laid out within the pages of Scripture. It was a tale that carries within it the greatest failing of humanity, while simultaneously offering hope of its greatest triumph, the reversal of its flaws. The Fall from and recuperation of knowledge existed at the very heart of medieval Christianity, motivating many of its spiritual strivings and framing its quest for knowledge. The dynamics of epistemology guided the Christian mind in its quest to know what was knowable, shun what was undesirable, and endure what must be endured to reach a spiritual destination in heaven.

To undertake this search required instruction, for only through guidance could one remain on the path, to act in a fashion conducive to knowledge: although Christian spirituality had a strong intuitive element, there was also an equally strong need for a pedagogical and didactic tradition within its epistemology. In his *Didascalicon,* Hugh of Saint-Victor explains knowledge as struggle; it is the ability to follow a path by accepting the good and rejecting the bad:

> The man who seeks knowledge of the virtues and a way of life from the Sacred Word ought to study especially those books which urge contempt for this world and inflame the mind with love for its creator; which teach the straight road of life and show how virtues may be acquired and vices turned aside. […] Do you desire to reach your goal? Then learn how a man reaches the goal you are after.[118]

In *The Mirror of Language*, Marcia Colish proposes that the New Covenant carried with it a duty to teach, a professional responsibility inherited by the learned Christian. The goal, according to Colish, was not simply to attain knowledge of God, but to teach the Word of God to others.[119] The interpretation of sacred scripture, according to Hugh of Saint-Victor, "either instructs the mind with knowledge or it equips it with morals. It teaches us what it delights us to know and what it behooves us to imitate".[120] The goal was clear, yet the path to its realisation was obscured

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[116] *Enneads*, V.VIII.12, as cited in Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 135–136.
[117] For further discussion of this theme, see chapters three and four.
[118] Jerome Taylor (trans.), *The Didascalicon Of Hugh Of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts,* New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 128.
[119] Colish, *The Mirror of Language*, pp. 2–3.
[120] *Didascalicon,* V.VI, as cited in Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, p. 181.

by the veil of ignorance, placed in a remote location by the spiritual gulf that separated humanity from the celestial realm.

Just as a river was, to medieval thinkers, 'directed' *to* its source by providence and yet also *from* its source by its flow, so too were the emanating ideas of the divine thought to flow *from*, and simultaneously point *to* their divine source. Within this dynamic, the river acts as the conduit through which the human mind attempts a communion with divinity. This strong correlation was noticed and exploited by medieval exegetes for the purposes of exposition. In his commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scottus Eriugena elaborated on the liberal arts using aqueous symbolism:

> [J]ust as many waters come together and flow down into the bed of one river from different fountainheads, so do the natural and liberal disciplines coalesce to form one, same meaning of inward contemplation, which is the highest fountainhead of all wisdom, that is to say Christ, insinuated into every quarter through the different speculations of theology.[121]

By the thirteenth century, a conflation of river imagery and the abstract dimensions of knowledge appeared in a mature form.[122] In the commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Thomas Aquinas describes the providence of divine knowledge as an aqueduct, for Christ was an engineer fruitfully and artificially dividing his infinite bounty (and through him, that of the whole Trinity) into diverse channels of spiritual meaning:

> Fruit is designated from where it is said *like an aqueduct*: for just as many aqueducts divided are produced from one source to make fertile the earth, so from Christ flowed forth the kinds of diverse graces to plant the Church, as it said in Ephesians 4, 11: *He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, others evangelists, others shepherds and teachers, for the completeness of the saints in the work of ministry, for building the body of Christ.*[123]

Aquinas' turn of phrase draws on a precedent within medieval thought that played on the resemblance between the branching tributaries of a river and knowledge in motion as a broadly applicable trope. Not only was the greater world pouring itself onto the lesser realms below, but through the saving doctrine of Christianity, the waters miraculously returned to the heavens from whence they came, uniting the enriched spirits of the faithful with their fountainhead.[124] In order for the intellect to traverse the shifting ambiguities of existence, the whole of Creation was

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[121] John Scottus Eriugena, as cited in Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000, p. 42.

[122] Although it is important to note that the proliferation of Aristotelian ideas by this time complicates the picture. This passage and other like it, however, fall very much inside a Christian Platonist frame.

[123] Alexis Bugnolo (trans.), 'Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: On the Prologue to the Sentences', *Franciscan Archive*, <http://www.franciscan-archive.org> (accessed August 12 2011).

[124] This motif bears a strong resemblance to the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, after which the river reversed its flow, returning from whence it came. The motif is a powerful one: the saving grace resulting by Christ's ministry on earth (initiated with his baptism) had the power to transcend natural laws, to reverse the ordinary dynamics of knowledge.

imagined within an all-encompassing cosmic order. In the *Enneads*, Plotinus had claimed that the physical world was a 'second cosmos' that "at every point copies the archetype: it has life and being in copy [...] In its character of image it holds, too, that divine perpetuity".[125]

The river system and the metaphysical continuum of high medieval thought made comfortable companions. The relationship of the lofty heights of divinity and the lonely realms of lesser beings corresponded with the gravity that powers the flow of water. The evaporation of water that completes the cycle is an image for transcendence, the breaking of earthly shackles, a Jacob's ladder for the soul. The varied terrain of spiritual life's long and multifurcated river recalls the complexities of moral life, the forces at play in the pilgrimage of life from birth to death, from prelapsarian sin to purification. The interrelationship of hydrology and metaphysics can be clearly apprehended in the description of the twelfth-century cosmos by Marie-Dominique Chenu:

> The universe, then, is an admirably ordered unity [...] The integration—at once ontological and noetic—of all the beings it contains in its hierarchical order implies a "continuity" that is at once dynamic and static in principle. Between each of these beings in their separate ranks exists an intimate bond: the greater intensity of the superior being exerts an attractive force upon the one next below it and draws it upward toward its own higher level; and out of this attraction arises the fulfillment of the lower being, or, if it is a spiritual being, its happiness. We are far from a discontinuous universe in which each being possesses its dynamism and intelligibility wholly and only within itself.[126]

Water, like the continuum suggested by Chenu, provides a differentiated and yet uninterrupted movement of essence from an abundant source—the self-generative spring of Plotinian thought—that is both dynamic and static in principle. The paradox of dynamism and stasis, so difficult to grasp, finds eloquent expression within a hydrology. A watershed is dynamic by nature, ever in motion and ever pulsing with the vital force of fluid. A watershed is also a stable system, at least to the limited perception of humanity. Although the course of a river system and the contours of the coast are constantly in motion within the grand temporality of nature, it appears to offer a stable conduit through which the dynamic motion of water may be mediated. Each component of a river system is indeed intimately bonded, the outpouring essence of its source exerting a powerful pull to reciprocity. It is within this Platonic fusion of river and metaphysical continuum that the primary source material of this thesis appears, intrinsically whole and yet possessed of manifold hierarchical components.

The means and the end of religious thought was this single, crucial goal, a goal that was undertaken within the soul of each and every Christian. Saint Augustine tells us, "although it is

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[125] *Enneads*, V.VIII.12, as cited in Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 135–136.
[126] Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997, p. 24.

our homeland, [salvation] has also made itself the road to our homeland".[127] The goal was also the missing ingredient necessary to realise the goal: the journey mirrored the destination. The journey to into knowledge was that of a traveller on a long and winding road who, while facing much hardship and privation, would return to the lost homeland by the grace of God. The apprehension of abstraction through the structural logic of environment acted as a form of signposting on the road to knowledge. The natural world was not only a means to knowledge by virtue of its resemblance to God through similarity, but a series of guided signs set out by the Trinity, actively seeking to impart wisdom through the compulsion of the Holy Spirit. In the *Didascalicon* and the *Institutio Novitiorum*, Hugh of Saint-Victor described the *materialis manuductio*, identified by Ineke van 't Spijker as a "guiding by visible, material signs", and described as follows:

> Materially taking by hand (*manuductio*) is to be understood as 'the corporeal signs, which the human mind uses as a *manuductio*, that it is directed by the visible to the imitation and contemplation of the invisible. To imitation by the practice of virtue, to contemplation by knowledge of truth'.[128]

Natural imagery conforms to invisible realities for two reasons. First, it was God who created nature, and thus all realities in higher realms resemble mundane images through a common creator. Second, the incarnation of God in Christ—the archetypal act of image-making—renders that which is invisible and unknowable familiar through a divine act of conformation. This made the interpretation of abstract imagery all the more significant, for it was a salvific act, and thus a process of spiritual edification of itself, regardless of the message communicated:

> Corresponding to the beauty of the visible things is their function as signs of the invisible. Ultimately this is the result of how God conforms himself to man, in the double *conditio* and *dispositio* of the visible, a conformation which has its apogee in the incarnation: 'He has conformed himself to what is ours, so that by what is ours he would become known to us'.[129]

For the Middle Ages, the association between knowledge and perfection was compelling, and yet the human race found itself in an imperfect state in which knowledge was difficult, veiled and imperfect at best. Attempts to address questions of knowledge were often fraught with complexities—some of which were a failing of humanity, some of which derived from the postlapsatian darkening of the natural world—that prompted many centuries of elaborate debate. The philosophers of the classical world, with Plato and Aristotle in prominent display, became epistemological guides who mapped out new and increasingly elaborate quests for human

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[127] I.XI.II, in R. P. H. Green (trans.), *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, New York, Clarendon Press, 1995. p. 23.

[128] Ineke van 't Spijker, 'Hugh of Saint Victor: Theology and Interiority', in *Fictions of the Inner Life: Religious Literature and Formation of the Self in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, p. 83.

[129] van t' Spijker, 'Theology and Interiority', p. 83.

knowledge. Within ever-changing yet religiously unified systems, the desire to seek wisdom required the knower ask a series of increasingly problematic questions.

Within the grand narrative of human history as imagined within medieval thought and internalised by the monastics of Europe, water flowed throughout time, space, and the ontological essence of humanity.[130] The spring of paradise, once hidden, flowed with the life-giving force of Christ, becoming the manifold rivers of the Gospel, preached at all corners of the earth. Carried by its swift and majestic flow of salvific momentum and guided by the conduit of the Church, the faithful would be carried to that final and universal headwater, teeming with life eternal. In his second homily on the *Song of Songs*, Gregory of Nyssa reflects upon Christ's crucifixion as font of salvation. Gregory was particular interested in the passage in which the bride expresses a desire to the groom—interpreted by medieval exegetes as Christ—to drink from the fountain of his lips: "And running to you, the fountain, I will drink from the divine stream which you cause to spring up for those thirsting after you. Water pours out from your side and the spear has opened that vein".[131] Referring to the mixed water and blood that poured from the side of Christ at the crucifixion (John 19:34), Christ becomes a fountainhead of salvific water.[132] There is no quenching of this thirst, for the drinker in turn becomes the fountain "springing up into life everlasting" (John 4:14).

The 'seal of flesh' was pressed upon Christ as upon a letter, hiding his divine bounty behind a veil of outward physicality. Only through the spring of Mother Church could the fountain be unsealed, and the divine bounty hidden beneath be unleashed.[133] This theme is continued by Bernard of Clairvaux within his letters, in which he frequently makes use of Biblical and Christological allegory to illustrate his arguments.

> Let him who has ears to hear, hear him crying out in the Temple: 'Whoever thirsts, let him come and drink', and: 'Come unto me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you'. Are you afraid that you will break down where Truth himself has promised to refresh you? Certainly if the 'dark waters from the clouds of the air' please you so much, you will be more than delighted with the clear water that springs from the fountains of the Saviour.[134]

By referring to the fountain typology of Christ's crucifixion and the corresponding fountain of

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[130] Although this chapter deals primarily with Christology, the four case study chapters to come offer further expansion of Christ's typological symbolism into other areas of medieval thought.

[131] M. S. Laird, 'The Fountain of His Lips: Desire and Divine Union in Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Song of Songs', *Spiritus,* vol. 7, no. 1, 2007, p. 43.

[132] It is interesting to note that in the *commixtio* or the mingling of water and wine, it is the water that represents Christ's humility and humanity, whereas the blood or wine represents His divinity. Thus, by pouring forth a torrent of water, the figure of Christ, the greatest exemplar of the Supreme Good discussed by Boethius of Dacia, renders salvation as a flood of human essence from the perfect human being to all lesser human beings, nourishing the human race and saving them through his abundant and shared essence.

[133] Richard A. Norris Jr. (trans.), *The Song of Songs: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators,* Cambridge, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003, p. 184.

[134] Letter 107, in Bruno Scott James (trans.), *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux,* London, Burns & Oates, 1953, p. 155.

theology it enabled, Gregory tapped into the intellectual core of Christian salvific imagination. In his own twelfth-century sermons on the *Song of Songs*, Bernard made use of skilled mystical exegesis to paint a picture of Christ as a saving fountain: "He is the fountain of life, a sealed fountain, brimming over from within the enclosed garden through the pipe of St. Paul's mouth".[135] True wisdom, "drawn out of secret places", is a particularly powerful image for students of the monastic tradition. When writing these words, it is not difficult to imagine that Bernard may have been imagining the bountiful waters of his monasteries, piped and channelled for the edification of men.[136] In his sermons on the *Song of Songs*, Bernard makes frequent use of the symbolism of water for the typology of Christ, comparing him to a river, a fountain, and the ocean. In *The Hydrologic Cycle and the Wisdom of God*, Yi-Fu Tuan wrote that "Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs are richly metaphorical. Parts of the water cycle appear again and again to illustrate relationships in the spiritual realm".[137]

Only through the understanding of good (*bonum*) behind the material, could one come to wisdom (*sapientia*), symbolised in the Augustinian tradition within the second person of the Trinity, Christ the Son.[138] In the words of Hugh of Saint-Victor, "He is the Form, He is the Medicine, He is the Example, He is your remedy".[139] God became man and bridged the links in the chain between humanity and God, allowing for the possibility of knowledge. Without Christ, the human mind languished near the bottom of a very long and ascending continuum, from which there was no escape; the darkness of a world without knowledge was its fate. Through Christ, the mind could be enriched, the thirst for knowledge quenched, the cup of the mind filled to overflowing.

The coming of Christ and the introduction of grace into the world caused the barrier blocking the fountain to burst, allowing the rivers of salvation to flow into the world once more. In the words of Bruno of Segni, with the waters came the riches of spiritual understanding:

> [J]ust as the breath of the Lord releases the teeming waters, opening up the closed garden and unsealing the blocked up fountain, so does the Spirit that breathes at the coming of the incarnate Word open up the garden of Scripture, causing floods of spiritual understanding to gush forth from its fountains.[140]

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[135] Sermon 22:4, in Killian J. Walsh (trans.), *Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs: Vol. 1*, Shannon, Irish University Press, 1971, pp. 16–17.

[136] Sermon 22:4, in *On the Song of Songs*, pp. 16–17.

[137] Tuan, *The Hydrologic Cycle and the Wisdom of God*, p. 43.

[138] Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's* Didascalicon, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[139] Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, p. 10.

[140] Bruno of Segni is originally quoted as follows: "You have cleft open springs and brooks. Springs and Brooks are understood to be the books of law and the prophets and both testaments. These springs were closed and stopped up. But the Lord opened up their water courses, and broke open the tight-fitting fetters that bound them, and bade an abundance of waters to flow from them". De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1*, p. 257, p. 450 (endnotes for p. 257).

Finally, in the apocalyptic vision in Revelation, Christ the lamb proclaims "Behold, I make all things new". In the New Jerusalem, beyond time, suffering and death, Christ will "give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely".[141] Thereafter, a "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal", flows through the heavenly Jerusalem, causing the tree of life to bloom on either side.[142] Through this strong scriptural association, the symbolism of the river came to signify the providence of divine knowledge in the form of an entity within the intellectual and material landscape.

Knowledge through Christ and Cosmos occurred through the mediating channels of intellectual inquiry and spiritual intuition. In the case of the Cosmos, an understanding of natural philosophy was a key skill for the discoverer of knowledge. In the section to follow, I explore the material qualities of thought when rendered in the likeness of an element. Through the shared structure of Creation and Salvation History, the diverse perishable forms of the temporal world were linked. Through the shared elemental tetrad of earth, air, fire, and water, the primordial traits of matter were replicated in many forms, speaking of a fundamental causative and structural pattern within the arrangement of Creation that was replicated within the structure of thought-craft.

The Likeness of an Element

In the case of John of Genoa's forcefully riparian sentence discussed earlier, the commonality of riverine and grammatical interconnectivity was more than explanatory. It was the bridge between categories of temporal existence that, despite their seemingly disparate nature, could be traced back to the primordial source of things by shared pathways. Similarity can easily be overemphasised, but it was the causation of similarity that gave meaning to likeness for medieval thinkers. Caroline Walker Bynum points to the classical trope of "like from like" prevalent within medieval thinking. As she describes it, "like is generated from like, like returns to like, like knows like via likeness".[143] Speculation upon these links was, in the words of Robert Javelet, a vision of the truth navigated "by the mediation of likenesses".[144] Dale Coulter describes the hermeneutic effects of these likenesses upon the arts of memory and composition as an escalating process of meditation upon the links from the visible to the invisible:

The inner structure of the human mind is such that it can receive the "forms" of all

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[141] Revelation 21:6.

[142] Revelation 22:1–2.

[143] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity,* New York, Zone Books, 2001, p. 24.

[144] As cited and translated in Dale M. Coulter, 'Contemplation as "Speculation": A Comparison of Boethius, Hugh of St. Victor, and Richard of St. Victor', in E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith (eds), *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond - Essays in Honour of Grover A. Zinn Jr.,* Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2013, p. 205

created things. This happens as images or forms are impressed upon the memory, which serve as their organizing center. The mental image is itself a reflection of the created object. As such the mind can begin to meditate upon it and to investigate its various features. Investigation of individual features prepares the mind to extract analogies that serve as windows into other realities.[145]

Similitudes whisper to each other across the gulf of seemingly incomprehensible categories, reminding us that we are not looking at many things, but the many faces of one thing. Like, in the act of coming into being, generates its similitudes; it causes like things to be and shapes their form. The essence of knowledge blurs different forms of knowing, different modes of knowing, and different things to be known into a single principle, a material flow from origin to destination, an endless outpouring of divine sentience across Creation, ultimate cause of all possible ends. Thus, likeness has a generative and causative quality. Like speaks to that which it is like through its likeness, and the evocation of metaphor is not merely peripheral and illustrative as a result. It is a hermeneutic process delving into the heart of spiritual truth through the exploration of similitudes, the painting of a theological picture.

Likeness is fundamental and intrinsic to the Reality, in the Platonic sense, of the thing, the reason for its form and qualities. Like all medieval correlations, signification through similarity was far more than a mechanism of meaning. Human moral expression was redolent of natural forces: hot like flame, tempestuous like wind, solid like earth or mutable like water. Although these evocations may represent illustrative metaphors for we moderns, medieval thought gives moral qualities and natural qualities a similarity beyond demonstration. Nature was not simply useful as an illustration of morality; it was twinned to morality by real qualities. The rhetorical vocabulary of abstract thought stemmed from a position of endless mutability derived from ur-certainties. Just as we extrapolate a great many truths from the certainties of physics or chemistry as we currently understand them, so too could medieval abstractions be guaranteed their authority beyond simile. They were underpinned by medieval natural philosophy, and thus their efficacy was, in an odd but telling sense, *scientific*.

Through the dance of the elements, the *rhetor* gained a tool both reliable in its adherence to certain rules, and endlessly flexible in its emulation of elemental interplay. In the likeness of something sensible, medieval intellection and imagination could conceive of a 'concept of the soul' that mirrored nature. Intellectual entities were *like* natural entities and *behaved* like them because they were all alike in common with God in the causative sense. They corresponded through their shared resemblance to their Creator, for like knows like through likeness. Moreover, the Creator was held to have created a world in which the structural reality of things were intelligible in their likeness. The fourteenth-century Carmelite John of Hildesheim explicitly

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[145] Coulter, 'Contemplation as "Speculation"', p. 224.

conflated the source of life (literally the *fons vitae*), the causation of all things and their position in the divine hierarchy, and the vital essence of Creation. To his mind and that of many others, this was not an *ad hoc* lathering of metaphor for the purposes of exposition, but a common path to a single truth. Spreading forth from the trinity, the essence of life derives from the "innate fecund perfection of the living source":[146]

> *The multiple abundance of the Living Source*
>
> > *11. From this primitive source of all life, which is to the highest degree living, issued in the beginning the external heavens, that is, the entire universe with all angelic and intelligent life.*
> >
> > *12. The Life Source which produced this first outflow poured life into beings through the outpouring of itself. So the outpouring must continue, for if it were checked for an instant all created life would cease to exist.*
> >
> > *13. Every intelligent living being which flows immediately from the first one remains so inexhaustibly and continuously alive that, according to the law established by the first one, at no moment could it of itself cease or interrupt its being.*
> >
> > *14. Such is the integrity, unity, and indivisibility of every living thing that no being can properly be said to be half alive.*

Thus it is through the holistic imagery of water that like flows into like, and the chain of being flows from its uncreated source into all causes. It is within the elemental traits of medieval thought that we gain an insight into the powers peculiar to water as a narrative of thought. Gaston Bachelard ascribed to water the gift of *binding together*; it was the glue of matter, for water tempers the other elements, making them malleable.[147] This was true of medieval thought in a manner peculiar to medieval thought: water was the glue of cosmological order on every level, be it elemental and primary, substantial and composite or abstract and of the mind. This idea made sense to medieval thinkers, for the material traits of water created the flexible intermediation required to bind substance together. Indeed, the commonality of a hydrology and a sentence were not a large stretch of the imagination; they were common derivatives of a shared source.

The ecumenical properties of water extend comfortably into the mystical and affective realm; they are derived from the ability to unite disparate locales within a landscape. Just as ideas pass from God to human minds through the mediating hierarchy of creation, so too did acts of

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[146] Chapter 2, 'De viui fontis multiplici exuberacione', in Frank Schaer (trans.), 'John of Hildesheim: The Mirror of the Source of Life', *Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies (ORB)*, < http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/culture/philos/fonstrans.html>, 1996 (accessed 5 May 2013).

[147] Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard, Subversive Humanist: Texts and Readings, Science and Literature*, Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, pp. 102–103.

grace span this gap with lightning clarity. A fitting *exemplum* appears within the *vita* of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, the creation of the thirteenth-century Cistercian Goswin of Bossut. In her early life, we are told that Ida has performed many good works, but that "*God had not yet rained* any shower of tears *on the soil* of her heart (Gen. 2.5)".[148] The Lord, "not to delay such saving shows any longer", engenders the growth of her spirit through divine rain:

> Suddenly and unexpectedly *the floodgates* of Ida's eyes and head *burst open* (Gen 7.11) and out poured such a flood of tears that scarce could she hold back their onrush [...] Such was her first visitation. In it the Lord moistened the dryness of her heart with and outpouring as abundant as it was mild, and *irrigation* at once *from below and from on high* (Josh. 15.19). Such progress and growth did this bring her that from that day on her mind was deservedly called the *fountain of never-failing waters* (Isa. 58.11).[149]

This pouring out of spiritual revelation is an influx of knowledge in equal measure. It will be discussed within this thesis at greater length within the chapters to come, for it is a core characteristic of the abstractions within this thesis. 'Knowledge' as defined for the purposes of this study is not confined to intellection alone, but to the immanence of mystical revelation.

As an idea, 'water' was primary and thus a set of qualities rather than an actual substantial entity: the same is true of intellection. David Macauley has proposed that water is defined by the *via negativa*, by what it is not. Water, he claims, "is typically colorless, tasteless, and odorless. It lacks form but becomes a matrix of form for other things, providing shape, contour, and texture to the landscape as well as more discrete objects".[150] To my mind, one could just as easily say the same of thought, a flexible and yet intangible medium for ideas. For the medieval thinkers I am discussing, both thought and water were ideas of form, and were meaningful not only through their inherent properties, but through the manner of their transmission; water carried life, thought carried ideas. Through the medieval rules of similitude, water's resemblance to the processes of thought reflected true reality, and created images within the mind, concepts of the spirit attached to structures of inner life. Through participation in composites, be they systems within the mind or material entities within the world without, water and its traits embodied and represented a principle of fluidity in medieval thought.

These systems and entities correspond to the Augustinian notion of *verba mentis* (words of the mind) as opposed to those upon the lips, abstractions of speech. They also span the two categories of signification identified by Peter Abelard: linguistic signs and the signification of

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[148] 'The Life of Ida of Nivelles', in Martinus Cawley (trans.), *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Rameé, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers, by Goswin of Bossut*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003, p. 33.

[149] 'The Life of Ida of Nivelles', p. 33.

[150] David Macauley, *Elemental Philosophy*, p. 44.

things. Things signify other things when perception of one can enable cognition of the other.[151] The semiotic link between word and thing is strong within the *Catholicon.* John's fusion of sentence and river system has the effect of merging words and things to create a network of *verba mentis* bonded to the qualities of things within the natural world. Not only are they a non-verbal language of the mind, but they are a *sentence of the mind.* Like a sentence analysed for its semiotic meaning, they have both paradigmatic meaning, and ever variable *syntagmata* that, when altered, engender new messages.

The systematisation of conceptual ecologies—networks of ideas modelled upon networks of natural entities—introduces a powerful insight into the organisational techniques of thought practised within the High Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas wrote that "whenever the intellect actually regards anything there must be at the same time be formed in us a phantasm, that is, *a likeness of something sensible*".[152] Within the intellectual discourse of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the characteristic interconnectivity of hydrological systems and their dynamic interrelation were mirrored by intangible *phantasmata.*[153]

In the likeness of an element—a sensible, substantial entity of the natural world— thought found a compelling technique of memorisation and organisation. Aqueous qualities drew from the primary traits of water as one of the four elements of the terrestrial world. Mary Carruthers writes that for medieval thinkers, "a memory is a mental picture [...] of a sort which Aristotle defines clearly in *De Anima,* an 'appearance' which is inscribed in a physical way upon the part of the body which constitutes memory".[154] In the space of the mind shaped by the practise of the *ars memoria,* these images then inscribed themselves upon the mind, adding to the great storehouse in which the memories resided, waiting for use by other faculties. Water and its fellow elements of earth, air and fire existed not only as ideas of matter, but as ideas enshrined in the composition of Creation, from the highest realms to the smallest of details. Once observed and inscribed upon the mind, the similitudes of the elements served to bring colour to visualisation of thought. The images completed their journey through the cycle of abstraction by enhancing the imagination of perceived material things. Together, objects of nature and objects

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[151] Stephan Meier-Oeser, 'Medieval Semiotics', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition),* <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/semiotics-medieval/>, 2011 (accessed 23 March 2012), n. p.

[152] Alastair Minnis, 'Medieval Imagination and Memory', in Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume II, The Middle Ages,* Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 240. My italics.

[153] In a Platonic context true meaning would more appropriately be a reflection of the forms. In an Aristotelian context (as was increasingly common throughout the thirteenth century), *phantasmata* were not deceptions but constructs created by the soul through experience. 'Medieval Imagination and Memory', p. 240. This notion was echoed centuries later by Hegel, who claimed that "in the idea of the four elements we have the elevation of sensuous ideas into thought" *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* as cited in Macauley, *Elemental Philosophy,* p. 3.

[154] Mary Jean Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture,* Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 18–19.

of thought were co-significant and co-creational.

The effect of causative likeness on signification resembles a phenomenon observed by Umberto Eco known as 'semiotic condensation'. As a result of an extended metaphor, in this case the two metaphors 'systems of thought are a hydrology' and 'thought is water', merge and their boundaries become indistinct. As Aristotle puts it in his *Poetics,* "by naming one thing with something else's name, one denies the first thing those qualities proper to it". As a result, "two images are conflated, two things become different from themselves, and yet remain recognisable, and there is born a visual (as well as conceptual) hybrid". Once the components of the metaphor are separated, they retain the traits of that with which they were in a metaphorical relationship, which is now a "secondary phenomenon", as a consequence of the preliminary metaphor.[155] The substance of elemental matter, like water, was active, mobile and persistent in qualities even when all other mutable things were in a state of flux. Elements were the raw materials of Creation, possessed of qualities that were both inseparable and integral. The substantial traits of the elements existed along axes of balance and correspondence within which the natural order was shaped. The elemental qualities of water were present in all things that were water-like; the *idea* manifested itself in diverse material *realities.*

Medieval thought could find no more potent mental concepts than the characteristics of an element, an entity defined by qualities deep within the makeup of cosmic composition. To Evelyn Edson and Emilie Savage-Smith, "elemental combinations led, in the medieval mind, to numerous correspondences—another characteristic of the universe, that all is connected".[156] The likeness of human intellectual discourse to these dynamics was not simply coincidental, but *causative.* That is to say, the elements caused ideas to be like them, and the ideas caused the elements to resemble their dynamics. The common source of their meaning was shared, and thus their form. Not only were they causative, but they were significative and significant as well. To use aqueous imagery was to evoke a true but inaccessible metaphysical order through a visible and natural order with cognate properties. As Robertson has observed, "[m]atter in the Middle Ages was not coextensive with materialism: in natural philosophy, it was seen to be a combination of the material and immaterial".[157]

Thomas Aquinas argued in his treatise on *The Mixture of the Elements* that "the powers of the substantial forms of simple bodies are preserved in mixed bodies". "Thus", wrote Aquinas, "the forms of the elements are in mixed [bodies] not actually but *virtually*". Although not remaining 'actually' in the new substance, Thomas believed that neither substance nor element

155 Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy Of Language,* Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 96.

156 Evelyn Edson, and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Views of the Cosmos,* Oxford, Bodleian Library, 2004, p. 13.

157 Kellie Robertson, 'Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto', *Exemplaria*, vol. 22, 2010, p. 115.

was corrupted, and the elemental power—namely its qualities—were preserved.[158] Thus, elemental properties such as denseness or coldness (those characterising water) were ideas of matter present in all composites. Aquinas claimed that the traits of the elements remained in virtuality even when the actuality of matter had been formed:

> So therefore, when the perfections (*excellentiis*) of the elementary qualities are relaxed, a kind of intermediate quality is constituted out of them that is the proper quality of the mixed body, yet differs in diverse [mixed bodies] according to the diverse proportion of the mixture.[159]

The quaternary correspondences found within many medieval treatises and their diagrams depicting the balance of forces, be they elemental traits, humours of the body, cardinal points or dispositions of the spirit—were essential to the proper apprehension of substance and its qualities. These qualities, usually placed on a four-point continuum with a balance represented in the centre, were all part of single, causative, divine holistic order. The balance of powers combined to form the substance of all, be it elemental, natural, geographical or bodily.

Within a vast and elaborate web of possible elemental traits, water—or more precisely the *idea* behind any aqueous behaviour in matter—had distinct and necessary qualities. In his twelfth-century text *De commixtionibus elementorum*, Urso of Calabria mapped out the traits of the elements in enormous detail. Each element was thought by Urso to have one essential quality as well as several accidental ones. The element of water was considered to be 'substantially' cold, and 'accidentally' wet, heavy, mobile, obtuse, soft, liquid, flowing, thick, white, and inclined 'to the centre' (*ad centrum*).[160] Together with its co-elements, water has truly essential properties at the level of simple behaviours like viscosity and mobility. As a result, any metaphor involving water was not simply a convenient mechanism for meaning but an evocation of traits primary to all of Creation.

From the moment of their generation, all substances participated in and together constituted a delicate elemental balance that would eventually succumb to corruption. When asked to define *substance*, William of Conches argued that "in the same way that the act of living is called life, so the act of subsisting is called substance". Referring to Aristotle, William argued that "[g]eneration is an entrance to substance; corruption is a departure from substance". Thus,

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[158] When reaching his conclusions as the nature of the elements, Aquinas first explains the theories of Averroës (c. 1126–1198) in his *De Caelo* and Avicenna (c. 980–1037) in his *Sufficienta* and commentary on Aristotle's *Generation and Corruption*, showing the influence of the Muslim theories of cosmology in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. Thomas Aquinas, 'The Mixture of the Elements', in *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, Malden, MA, Oxford, Carlton, Blackwell, 2007, p. 170. My italics.

[159] Aquinas, 'The Mixture of the Elements', p. 170.

[160] Richard Dales discusses the influence upon Urso's text, and identifies the influences upon *De commixtionibus elementorum* as follows: Alphanus' *Prenom Physicon*, Constantinius Africanus' *Liber Pantegni*, Plato's *Timaeus* with Chalcidius' commentary, Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis* and William of Conches' *Dragmaticon Philosophiae*. This places the text in a long line of medieval elemental treatises. Richard C. Dales, 'A Twelfth-Century Concept of the Natural Order', *Viator*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1978, p. 188.

the sum total of matter generation led to *substance*, the act of existing (or 'subsisting') as a composite entity with a fixed form. Substance was, to quote William, "a thing existing in itself".[161] Once substance had been created through the generation of matter, the elements were thought to replicate their character in the things that contained them. Thus, the act of existing as a corporeal being within the medieval natural order was, by definition, a participation in the traits of substance. As a result, substance was *ontological* as well as physical, for it formed the core identity of a thing. Furthermore, this identity was contingent upon the elemental qualities of substance. Within this thought-world, like calls to like, and thus the substance of the mind mirrors the substance of the elements.

Through the emanating pathways of knowledge and causal links of similarity, water was a mediating metaphor of particular efficacy. In the final section of this chapter, I explore the application of these qualities to the expression of rhetoric, the self-conscious deployment of water imagery.

The Rhetorical *Colores* of Water

There are bonds between water and thought that go beyond materiality and into the realm of application. The rhetorical deployment of water as a rich vocabulary for mapping thought is unique, for although it shares fundamental commonalities with all deployment of abstractions, the touch of water brings about something unique. Water has a unique register of traits that give it a distinct set of rhetorical qualities, and these qualities can be deployed In figurative expression. It assists in the mapping of complex content, for it presents practical and yet vivid structures within the mind for the negotiation and recollection of ideas. Water functions in all three of the compositional traditions identified by Mary Carruthers within the medieval art of graphical composition within the mind's eye:

> [T]here are three main strands of influence converging in [the] familiar medieval device for the craft of composition of a "picture" painted in and for the mind's eye. These are *ekphrasis* or *descriptio*,[162] a composition exercise taught as part of the craft of ancient rhetorical composition; the kataskopic view from above, taught as a spiritual exercise in ancient philosophy and mystical disciplines; and the exercise of previsualization that was practiced in many crafts [...] to which the composition of text was frequently likened in medieval rhetoric.[163]

It would be overly convenient to claim that no other entity can do as much in rhetoric as what

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[161] I.2, in Italo Ronca and Matthew Curr (trans.), *William of Conches: A Dialogue on Natural Philosophy (Dragmaticon Philosophiae)*, Notre Dame IN, Notre Dame Texts in Medieval Culture, 1997, p. 6.

[162] Note that the *Descriptio* of Clairvaux in chapter six can also be seen as a compositional exercise, rendering the literal landscape and its exegesis as a form of painting within the mind's eye of the reader.

[163] Carruthers, 'Moving Images in the Mind's Eye', p. 302.

water can, but it is certainly true that images played out through the frame of water engender unique effects and subtleties. Water is *ekphrastic*, for it provides a narrative frame within which an extensive evocation can take place. It is *kataskopic*, for the view of a river system from above provides a distant reading of structure. It allows *previsualisation*, for one can frame a moving river within the mind, shaping an ecological construct just as a mason might imagine a completed structure before putting chisel to stone. It is a broad and intuitive vision of knowledge as hydrological entity, and yet capable of great sophistication. Complex water metaphor within rhetoric is not presented as an *exemplum* (a mode of content), but is an aid to comprehension and a tool for further meditation (a mode of form).[164]

Thinkers such as those found within this thesis were no strangers to the manifold techniques of the rhetorical arts, and were particularly skilled in the art of the *figura* (the illustrative figure). Peter of Celle, the subject of chapter five, is a particularly relevant example. As a Benedictine practitioner of what can be described as the internal and external techniques of discipline and self-fashioning, Peter turns to the technique of expression through images. "[I]magination", Stahuljak et al. argue, "is one of the favourite tools that Peter uses to represent invisible realities, invisible because they are from another world or because they are internal".[165] His repeated deployment of visual evocation to signify invisible abstraction is particularly sophisticated. In her analysis of Peter, Mary Carruthers identifies a passage within his treatise *On Conscience* in which he addresses the reader, presenting an *exemplum*

> […] not by way of idolatrous error but by way of making abstract doctrine evident [to the eye of your mind], form in your mind something that at the same time may prick [*compungat*] your pious mind to devotion and raise your soul *from visible form to invisible contemplation*.[166]

Medieval monastics, through their love of *exempla*, were participating in the tradition of the medieval *ars rhetorica*, a skill intrinsically linked to literate monasticism.[167] They were practising a long tradition of rhetorical expression through the device of a figure or exemplar created to demonstrate an obscure or abstract point veiled in invisibility by way of an image for the mind. Through the stimulus of metaphor and the suggestive exegetic qualities of Scriptural evocation, such writing leads the mind of the reader down a path to greater patterns. These images could be, and frequently were, indebted to the material qualities of water, as the following passage from the *Metalogicon* of John of Salisbury demonstrates:

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[164] Carruthers, 'Moving Images in the Mind's Eye', p. 289.
[165] Zrinka Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2011, p. 64.
[166] My italics, in Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* p. 206.
[167] The original Ciceronian configuration, designed for public speaking, covered the essential skills of a successful *rhetor*. First came *inventio* (finding material), then *dispositio* (arranging it), then *elocutio* (putting words to invented material), then *pronuntiatio* (physical delivery) and finally *memoria* (retention of words, their order and their meanings). Peter deploys the *ars dictaminis*, a form of this technique adapted to letter writing. J. J. Murphy (trans.), *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. ix.

> Grammar and Poetry are poured without stint over the length and breadth of their [the classical authors'] works. Across this field [...] Logic, which contributes plausibility by its proofs, weaves the golden lightning of its reasons: while Rhetoric, where persuasion is in order, supplies the silvery lustre of its resplendent eloquence.[168]

The visual impact of painting such a picture was a powerful rhetorical technique. Through its use we apprehend not only the *image* but the *structural logic* of interrelated and interconnected fluidity—in this case the spread of grammar like a great flood of words—serving to enrich rhetoric with an additional layer of representative force. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* describes the rhetorical device of the simile as "the comparison of one figure with another, implying a certain resemblance between them".[169] The task of the monastic writer, and indeed of any rhetor, was to spin a dense web of imagery from the skeins of this likeness. The goal of the rhetorical mnemotechnical craft of thought was, in Carruthers' words, "to give the orator the means and wherewithal to invent his material, both beforehand and on the spot".[170] Thus, through the ad-hoc deployment of flexible images such as water, the rhetor was able to make use of the "compositional art" of *memoria* to shape his letters into something that functioned as both a creative exposition of ideas and a manner of remembering them.[171]

Within a schema of tense but expressive figurative rhetoric, water performed its own specific role, its uses shaped by its material and connective qualities. Water, as is the case in nature, links *loci*, shifts continuously, vivifies, nourishes, and participates in a repetitive cycle of ideas. Aqueous rhetoric enables a flexible and commodious network of ideas to emerge within the mind as *imago*. Due to preconceived notions of scripture, nature, and material behaviour of the reader, a tiny sentence unlocks a broader watery world. Monastics evoked this world by shaping their apprehension and retention of literature into a landscape to be navigated, as Mary Carruthers describes:

> [...] one "sees" one's reading, and one "walks" through it, not just to store it away conveniently and safely, in order to be able to reconstruct it as it was, but also in order to meditate on it, digest it, interpret it, and make it fully useful, ethically and compositionally.[172]

Although water is not the only form of intellectual metaphor, it is a distinctive one with particular useful qualities. A landscape of images must have not only rivers, but trees, rocks, a sky, ground, figures, structures, and so on. Within this landscape, the four elements occupy a primary

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[168] John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* I:xxiv, as cited in J. M. McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphases In the Educational Thought Of Vincent Of Beauvais*, Leiden, Brill, 1976, p. 87.
[169] Harry Caplan (trans.), *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Loeb Classical Library, London, Heinemann, 1954, p. 387.
[170] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 9.
[171] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 9.
[172] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 110.

and potent position. Each part of the tetrad has rhetorical value, and it is important to understand that each is but an ingredient of a subtle mixture.

One may very well ask why air cannot symbolise thought, for example, and indeed it can. Air, however, is light and warm where water is heavy and cold. Both flow thickly, and yet air attempts to escape to the heavens whereas water tends towards the centre. The rhetorical *colores* of water, the figures of speech that give meaning beyond literal interpretation, cannot be wholly replicated by any other element, nor can water replicate the effect of another form of rhetorical imagery. Air is an invisible, highly mobile and yet insubstantial liquid, whereas water is visible, less mobile, but more viscous. Air is very much an intellectual entity, and yet it does not appear to the mind's eye with the facility and flexibility of water; which is able to follow the path of a riverbed just as a structured network of ideas must follow the paths laid down for it from point to point, twisting back and forth between source and destination. Water, for that matter, must have a source and a destination, for its heavy fluidity demands it. Air can be anywhere and is thus, in a certain sense, nowhere. Water, on the other hand, is dense enough to be properly perceptible to humans, and yet also connects with the divine. It is flexible and dynamic within the visualised landscape, and yet organised enough to form a useful mental model. When the intellectual poetics of air are compared to those of water the former evokes fancy where the latter evokes contemplation.[173] The *denseness* of water makes it a fitting companion to thought, whereas the *diffuseness* of air lends to it intangibility unsuitable for logical and discursive thought. It is not fanciful to claim that in a very real sense, water was the very material epitome of a downward flow. In comparison to the flighty and ascending thought of air, however, water was dense and substantial, suitable for the traits imagined of thought. Steven Mentz puts it:

> Unlike the periodic rhythms of oceanic time, airy chronology expands, dissipates, gusts and vanishes. It leaves material traces, including wind-eroded rock formations, but never remains still long enough to be visible. It passes over and through all boundaries.[174]

The metaphorical power of air lies in its invisibility, whereas water fills in a gap in the chasm between idea and image by its appearance within the mind's eye. Rhetorical use of the material evokes a complex image with an economy of words, and yet its material register speaks with different *colores*, its structural arrangement evokes different thought-worlds. The language of the solid differs fundamentally from that of the liquid in its rhetorical function. Take the image of a building, and the materiality of dressed stone: carefully composed and enduring, the rhetoric of

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[173] Note that Gaston Bachelard titled his essay *Air and Dreams* an essay on 'the imagination of movement', whereas *Water and Dreams* was an essay on 'the imagination of matter'. For my further research on Gaston Bachelard derived from this thesis, see James L. Smith, 'New Bachelards?: Reveries, Elements, and Twenty-First Century Materialism', *Altre Modernità (Other Modernities)*, 2012, pp. 156–167.

[174] Steven Mentz, 'A Poetics of Nothing: Air in the Early Modern Imagination', in 'Ecomaterialism', *Postmedieval*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, p. 32.

edifice emulates the permanence of construction within speech brought about through a more structured, more persistent form of abstraction. Every material has a power and these powers often intermingle and yet an element, by its very nature, represents the stem of properties pertaining to its constituent traits: water, for instance, is the *simplest* thing that is cold and moist.[175]

Take for example, a passage on scriptural exegesis from the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of Saint-Victor, in which human attempts at biblical interpretation are likened to the building of an edifice in a neat and orderly fashion. "Divine Scripture", proposes Hugh, "is like a building, in which, after the foundation has first been laid, the structure itself is raised up; it is altogether like a building, for it too has its structure".[176] Hugh has painted a compositional picture, and yet this picture is distinctly craft-based. Having made his initial point, Hugh expands upon his compositional metaphor in more depth:

> Take a look at what the mason does. When the foundation has been laid, he stretches out his string in a straight line, he drops his perpendicular, and then, one by one, he lays the stones, and still others, and if by chance he finds some that do not fit with the fixed course he has laid, he takes his file, smooths off the protruding parts, files down the rough spots, and the places that do not fit, reduces to form, and so at last joins them to the rest of the stones set into the row.[177]

By evoking the rhetoric of edifice, Hugh builds something slow, solid, precise, and measured. Scripture, the great supporting pillar of medieval thought, is rendered as an enduring structure. The durability of the great edifice is a fitting memory house for the truths of things, the *sententiae*. It is a product of deliberation, craft, and attention to detail. Although such constructs decay and fall, as does the human mind, they echo the glory of an eternal and celestial archetype. The scale of their temporality is entirely different from that evoked by water, implying a fixed form rather than an ever-changing river which, as Heraclitus claimed, is impossible to step in twice. Edifice can be imagined as 'Scripture for the ages' rather than the dynamism of 'Scripture in interpretation', brought about one course at a time, one brick at a time, dressing by dressing. The source of meaning is shared, and yet the manner of its representation differs. Making a mark on such a solidified scriptural composite is both a trial and an enduring achievement. It is made of small and solid units that, when combined, form a great monolithic entity. Exegesis is the masonry of Scripture, its art:

> But if he finds some to be such that they cannot either be made smaller or be fitly shaped, he does not use these lest perhaps while he labors to grind down the stone he should break his file.[178]

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[175] Simplicity evokes both the divine simplicity of God, and the undifferentiated ur-properties of matter.

[176] 'Concerning Allegory', in Taylor, *The Didascalicon Of Hugh Of St. Victor*, p. 141.

[177] 'Concerning Allegory', in Taylor, *The Didascalicon Of Hugh Of St. Victor*, p. 141.

[178] 'Concerning Allegory', in Taylor, *The Didascalicon Of Hugh Of St. Victor*, p. 141.

Sacred science, unlike the subtleties of flowing water, is an act of artifice, the raising of a mighty, irreducible unity for the ages. It is the *product*, whereas water is the *medium*. Flaws are to be corrected, inaccuracies rectified, and pleasing lines and proportions retained throughout. Water requires rhetoric of natural dynamism, masonry requires rhetoric of human artifice. Whereas the assumption of aqueous rhetoric is often 'x is like y by virtue of a law of property of nature' (the inevitability of water falling from the sky, for example), rhetoric of edification assumes that 'x is like y because of a similarly planned structure'. The two forms of similitude may ultimately seem to be different facets of the same schema—all is, after all, derived from God's design—and yet the two operate in entirely different registers. In one case the forces that lend power to rhetoric draw on the properties of nature; in the other case, the properties of human beings and their arts shape nature. The rhetoric of each natural element, as with each constructed element, feature a different underpinning set of assumptions. Thus, the rhetoric of water contains within it dynamism and a flexibility that is unparalleled within figurative speech, if at least for a very specific set of purposes.

This distinction is a significant one and yet not a statement of mutual exclusivity. Many of the systems within the world that we might now call natural or ecological could have counted as *machinae* within a medieval definition—the world-system was, after all, the *machina mundi*. Alexander Neckam, when entering a discussion of firmament and mutable world, proposed that "the machine of the world [*machina mundi*] is divided into paired parts".[179] A machine need not be of human design, and there are few entities within medieval life that so blur the boundaries between human and non-human machination. Hydraulics, for example, is a melding of a human machine (the mill wheel, irrigation, the hydraulic trip hammer) and a non-human machine (the river, the watershed, the hydroscape of a region, the global hydrology).[180]

Although both Hugh's masonry of the soul and John of Genoa's river are seemingly disparate in material meaning, they are both machines in the sense that they are schemata. It matters little how they go about their function. It matters much more that they be similar by virtue of their common cause. In this way, water is a machine of meaning with much in common with other modes of knowledge visualisation. Furthermore, it performs this function in a manner that is specifically medieval, but is a function of broader qualities.

Water, as I have discussed, was not a single entity with a meaning consistent across time, but a historically specific material entity represented by traits of movement within the mind and within nature. Furthermore, water performs a specific function in the deployment of material imagery for the expression of intellectual abstraction. The medieval implications of water as an

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[179] [Diuiditur geminas in partes machina mundi…] Alexander Neckam, *Suppletio defectuum*, m distinctio: 2, versus: 1341 (pag.: 169), *Brepols Library of Latin Texts A (LLT-A)*.

[180] For this process at work in a monastic context, see chapter six of this thesis.

expression of a particular form of flow and downwards mobility placed it in the category of archetype, and yet not an archetype familiar to modern sensibilities. The element of water has vitality and dynamism of form and expression within medieval thought, for it and thought were co-constituted in a very real sense.[181]

Captured within the seemingly fixed system of the sentence-hydrology shaped by John of Genoa, we sense that there is dynamic change at work. There is flexibility of form and arrangement, coupled with a peculiar consistency. Water, ever in a consistent state of change, forbids an illusion of immutability. Although Hugh's masonry of the soul plays to the immutable and ideal form of architecture, the ideal of water is still water. Water is at every level of the celestial hierarchy, and thus thinking with water is both reliable and fickle. Its ideals lie with its divine Creator, and within the diverse path by which causation brings about the ever-changeable specificities of things. It is a queer entity, ubiquitous and yet resistant to codification and solidification of meaning.[182] Like a true hydrology, the hydro-grammatical system formed by John completes a full cycle; streams of words pour from the fountainhead of primary grammar through its derivatives and, as a sentence, return to the grammar from whence they came. It is a *minor mundus*, a little or lesser world within a sentence. It is a contraction that, through microcosm, mirrors the character of the whole in a fashion that would have been comfortable to the medieval thinker.

The bonds of water and intellection appear within a medieval context as an interlinked hydrology of abstraction, pulsing with the vitality of the *vis naturae*, the power of nature.[183] This motive force formed a medieval antecedent to the *élan vital* or vital impulse of Henri Bergson, the power of nature (*vis naturae*) rendered as intellectual vitality and connectivity. This is a form of inner vitality ripe for modern analysis and yet peculiarly medieval in expression. In the first of the four case study chapters to follow, I begin with a visual representation of the lines of force and complex symbolism involved in the articulation of water as a medieval intellectual entity. Within a single complex image, the image-making practices of twelfth-century monasticism reveal a great deal about a schema outlining the conditions, motivations, mediations and division of knowledge.

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[181] This expression takes on an extra level of meaning in the medieval context, for it was through common expression of the Platonic 'real' or Aristotelian divine pre-categorical singularity that intellection and water were one.

[182] Jeffrey Cohen and Lowell Duckert put this idea succinctly, arguing that "The elements – tangible, desirable – offer a queer yet pedestrian ecomaterialism, one that views the world askew 'from ground level', a horizontal or planar wandering *through* and *with* that engendered in the Middle Ages and Renaissance new narratives, possibilities and futures". Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, 'Howl', in 'Ecomaterialism', *Postmedieval,* vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, pp. 4–5.

[183] This image of medieval aqueous materialism draws much from the vibrant materialism of Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2010.

Before moving into the four primary source case studies of this thesis, it is necessary to highlight some of the decisions that I have made regarding the treatment and interpretation of primary source material.

The distinguishing feature of each source is derived not from genre, but from the form of reading. Each is a very different exemplar of medieval thought, and yet each is both a primary source and a form of text in equal measure; each source simultaneously tells us something about water imagery in the twelfth century, and should also be analysed as a formal structure of hydrological metaphor in itself. Each source is set up in an intellectual history context, namely as an artefact of twelfth-century thought with a distinct milieu and background. The historical frame serves as the vehicle for an approach more closely resembling the 'reading' of a text in the tradition of literary criticism. Both modes of interpretation work in tandem.

My final note concerns the treatment of content in the source material to follow, most specifically the evocation of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and the Classical *auctores*. I am indebted to the work of several accomplished editor-translators featured in this thesis for their mapping of references within their critical apparatuses. Although the four principle sources of the four coming chapters are teeming with the collective authority important to medieval thinkers, I have elected to focus more closely on the structural conceits of the source material; there is a practicality to these sources that is diluted by an overly exegetic reading. I have attempted to deal with these references only when they directly pertain to my reading, but a vast collection of links remain to be explored.

In chapter three, the content of the Pierpont Morgan M. 982 diagram ties into a vast complex of representations that my study has not come close to exhausting. In chapter four, the transcription of Pierre Michaud-Quentin, and the translations of Edward Synan and Hugh Feiss provide extensive footnotes for the allusions of the *Fons Philosophiae*. For chapter five, Julian Haseldine's facing page Latin and English edition of Peter of Celle's letters and Hugh Feiss' translation of Peter's selected works provide an excellent series of para-textual references. Furthermore, Haseldine's translation helpfully embeds scriptural references in the body of the English translation. In chapter six, the translation of the *Description of Clairvaux* by Pauline Matarasso provides an extensive list of allusions.

With the introductory section concluded, the thesis now moves to four case studies. Through each, this thesis explores a single facet of the complex prism that is water, a medieval intellectual entity. Each provides an insight into medieval intellectual culture, and into water's metaphorical power and influence.

Pierpont Morgan M. 982 is a twelfth-century manuscript fragment held by the Morgan library and museum of New York.[184] Within the intricate illustrations of its recto and verso sides, we are presented with a representation of the Seven Liberal Arts that mingles figurative human representation, an abstract representation of knowledge as river, and the personified agency of learning within medieval intellectual culture. Labelled within the collection as 'Philosophy nourishing the Liberal Arts, with Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and a fourth art instructing', M. 982 is the recto (see figure one) and verso (see figures two and three) sides of a single leaf of a twelfth-century manuscript. Described by its curators as an illustration in Romanesque style from the monastic scriptorium of Saint Peter's Abbey in Salzburg, Austria, the M. 982 leaf is thought to have been created during the second third of the twelfth century, c. 1133–1165.[185] The leaf is thought to be a section that has been cut from its original codex—possibly a frontispiece from a manuscript of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* of Martianus Capella, or another unknown encyclopaedic volume.[186] If its provenance is correct, M. 982 was the product of a well-established and influential node of manuscript production within the oldest monastery of German-speaking Europe.[187]

There is much to recommend this intriguing piece of medieval visual culture beyond its artistry and beauty. The uncertain provenance and reception of the manuscript must be acknowledged as a limitation, and yet the content speaks of a broader and germane intellectual context. It is a representation of medieval thought not only as an expression of allegorical art, but as a systematic arrangement of knowledge for the edification of the viewer. When M. 982 was selected by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art to feature in an exhibit entitled *Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages*, the curator highlighted the fact that the image "attests to both the learned concerns of medieval monastic audiences in the Salzburg region and to the iconographic innovations engendered by those interests".[188] It is in this context, as an artefact of

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[184] Hereafter referred to as M. 982. Although there are points in the discussion when I refer to the verso side of the leaf, all other references to 'M. 982' pertain to the recto, unless specifically stated otherwise.

[185] The most convincing hypothesis is that the leaf comes from Saint Peter's abbey in Salzburg, the origin of a frontispiece in a very similar style and arrangement depicting Saint Rupert of Worms (the first bishop of Salzburg) remaining in the collection of the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek. Melanie Holcomb et al., *Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New Haven, CT and London, Yale University Press, 2009, pp. 98, 100.

[186] Pierpont Morgan Library Dept. of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, 'M.0982v', *CORSAIR Collection Catalogue*, <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=257626>, (accessed 5 April 2012); Holcomb et al., *Pen and Parchment*, p. 98.

[187] For more information on Saint Peter's abbey and the manuscript production of medieval Salzburg, see the entry by Peter Dinzelbacher on Austria within the *Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (William M. Johnston (ed.), Oxford, Routledge, 2013, pp. 110–112).

[188] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'Drawing and the Learned Tradition', *Metmuseum.org Blog*, <http://blog.metmuseum.org/penandparchment/exhibition-images/cat250ar5_49c/>, 2009 (accessed 4

monastic thought, that I will discuss M. 982; it was drawn by monastic scribes in order to illustrate points in a text of relevance to the educated intellectual realm of monastic thought.

The recto image of M. 982 participates in a tradition of "complex 'visually exegetical' schemata" that were becoming increasingly popular in the twelfth century, and the verso image demonstrates the interactions engendered by such a schema.[189] The goal of images derived from this tradition, in the words of Annette Krüger and Gabrielle Runge, was to "demonstrate the relationships between parts of a theoretical system by means of the geometrical organisation and correlation of pictorial and textual elements", providing a complex schema for interpretation by those with the knowledge to read it.[190] The arrangement of the elements in such a diagram was topological, requiring accuracy of contiguity rather than of mathematical scale, angle, size, or shape.[191] It was a mapping of relationship, of the connection of a thing to all other things through elaborate multiform pathways. Rather than attempting to pin down the iconographic definition of the contents within the leaf, the goal of this chapter is to focus on the form, the arrangement. The exact contents of M. 982 are difficult to identify, and yet the systematic logic of the image offers an excellent subject of study.

The recto of M. 982 depicts Lady Philosophy dominating the centre of the image, dressed in full queenly regalia. Above her crowned head are the stars in the firmament; in her hands are a sceptre of power and books of knowledge. From her heart pour seven streams of fluvial matter, forming a delta pattern as they diverge across the page. Below the streams are the personified Liberal Arts, each carrying the tools that identify an art: a bowl for grammar, a sword and shield for rhetoric, a set square for geometry, a harp for music, and so on.[192] Each of the arts leans forward, drinking the life-blood, the essence, the emanation of Philosophy. Behind the scene rises a great wave, encapsulating all eight figures and bursting onto the scene with a detailed illustration of motion (see figure one). On the verso of the document, the transmission of knowledge continues, moving from an aqueous representation of knowledge into a more interpersonal image of communication. On the top left of the leaf, Arithmetic displays her arts to a mathematician, who counts an equation with his fingers. To the right, an angelic representation of Astronomy

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March 2013). See the accompanying volume for the exhibition, Holcomb et al., *Pen and Parchment*. The entry for M. 982 is at pp. 97–100, and the citation above appears at p. 97.

[189] Annette Krüger and Gabrielle Runge, 'Lifting the Veil: Two Typological Diagrams in the *Hortus deliciarum*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* vol. 60, 1997, p. 2.

[190] Krüger and Runge, 'Lifting the Veil', p. 2.

[191] Catherine Delano-Smith, 'Maps and Plans In Medieval Exegesis: Richard of St. Victor's *In visionem Ezechielis*', in E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith (eds), *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth–Century Scholars, and Beyond – Essays in Honour of Grover A. Zinn Jr.*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2013, p. 3.

[192] The personification of the figures is discussed in Laura Cleaver, ' Grammar and Her Children: Learning to Read in the Art of the Twelfth Century', *Marginalia*, vol. 9, 2009, n. p. There is still a great deal of confusion as to the exact identity of some of the figures. See Cleaver's discussion of the leaf, and Holcomb et al. p. 97, where identifying the iconography of M. 982 is described as "an endless and frustrating game".

points out and names the heavenly bodies, lecturing to a rapt audience (see figure two). Below and to the left is a music lesson, with the personified art teaching her pupil the subtleties of the lyre. To the right is a more ambiguous figure identified by curators as medicine, mixing a remedy using herbs delivered by a satyr, possibly a representation of wild nature (see figure three).

Within this orphan of a now-unknown codex, an artistic and diagrammatic visualisation of knowledge merges the systematic and material traits of water with the mediative functions of a human body.[193] Systematic, for the task of such an image is to provide an insight into the invisible interrelationship and provenance of knowledge with an image amenable to systematic narrative. Material, for the amorphous and yet distinctive traits of water—a descending, dense, moist entity—mirror those of thought, and yet leave ample room for other possible readings. Mediative, for the knowledge depicted in M. 982 has a provenance impossible to imagine, the essence of God, and yet an image is required in order to bridge the gap in apprehension through intuitive understanding. The recto image of M. 982, like many diagrammatic representations, is possessed of an intrinsic, independent systematic logic. Unlike non-figurative diagrams, it seeks to incorporate human action and natural motion into the network of ideas that it frames.

The Image as Diagram

In this introductory chapter, I begin my exploration of image making with the material and structural 'vocabulary' of water. The images found on both sides of the single leaf of M. 982 form an ideal bridge from the realm of the visual into the realm of the abstract, for they are both simultaneously. I have elected to place this chapter first in the set of four case studies to follow because M. 982 is an excellent introduction to the more esoteric representations in the chapters to follow. The visual accessibility of the image is an ideal bridge into analysis, for the creator(s) of the diagram chose to provide an image to the reader of a now unknown codex so that its complexities might be better apprehended. Abstract, because the resulting image visually signifies not only an arrangement of aesthetic and narrative value, but also an embedded infrastructure of invisible ideas underpinning the image. It displays many similarities to another image of the Seven Liberal arts within the *Hortus Deliciarum* of Herrad of Landsberg (see figure four), suggesting that the motif it displays, although arranged differently in many diverse contexts, was a relatively common representation of twelfth-century knowledge theory.[194]

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[193] The circumstances by which the M. 982 leaf came to be divorced from its original manuscript are unknown, and yet its location and condition lead me to suspect excision for separate sale, but it is not reasonable to do more than speculate.

[194] A point strengthened, in the case of the *Hortus Deliciarum*, by context. The *Hortus* was created as a pedagogical tool for novices, and is thought to have been a compendium of twelfth-century knowledge with deluxe illumination rather than a wholly *sui generis* text.

This inference is supported by the two images of the Liberal Arts in figure five, in which we apprehend a structural trope *sans* water, and yet of cognate arrangement. These two diagrams both demonstrate the conventionality of a branch structure demonstrating the manner in which philosophy is provided and divided. The earlier image, taken from a copy of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, bears the title *philosophia dividitur* (philosophy is divided), demonstrating the categories of learning through a decorated diagram.[195] The second, taken from a twelfth-century theological miscellany, is plainer in style and yet more complex in its vision of philosophy. If nothing else, these diagrams demonstrate the need for a visualisation of philosophy. The next step between the exemplars of figure five and M. 982 is hinted at in the commentary appearing in the top right corner of the *Hortus Deliciarum* diagram in figure four:

> Seven sources [*fontes*] flow forth from Philosophy, which are called the Liberal Arts. The Holy Spirit is the author [*inventor*] of the Seven Liberal Arts, which are grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.[196]

The image demonstrates the lines of force that united the parts of Liberal Arts knowledge into a machine for vital and lively spiritual life through learning; a transfer from *inventor* to human practitioner. The passage above demonstrates the step between the need to visualise Philosophy, and the need to enliven it with allusion to a series of flows. The process of monastic learning was both organised *techne* and *cursus*, and thus required a form of intellectual and spiritual induction to guide the mind onto the path to Christ.[197] This path, as Mette Bruun explores, "connotes a transversibility of the otherwise absolute demarcation between heaven and earth, between 'heres' and 'theres'".[198] Through the figure of Philosophy as a human woman, but simultaneously as a Marian fountainhead and a mediator of diverse branching paths, we gain both an image of the *here* denoted by the seven arts, and the *there* implied by the figure of Philosophia. Beyond *here*, we apprehend, lies the linchpin of salvific knowledge, a swift and straight channel by which the spirit may traverse the bottleneck of epistemology to Christ.

M. 982 displays a simultaneous application of water as medium of learning in an intellectual sense, and spiritual growth in a mystical sense. It both offers a mediated revelation of the divine origins of learning through the personification allegory of Philosophy, and presents a

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[195] A phrase repeated in the top left of figure four: [*Philosophia dividitur in tres partes, que sunt ethica, logica, [et] physica*]. These three parts are represented by three heads upon the crown of Philosophia, who in turn pours forth the stream of the *trivium* (right) and *quadrivium* (left). Below the throne Socrates and Plato sit writing under her inspiration, surrounded by the personifications of the seven. Outside of the circle of the Arts, poets and magi sit inspired by impure spirits (*immundis spiritibus*).

[196] For the Latin, see the accompanying text in the top right corner of figure four.

[197] "The term *ars* is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *techne* —a systematic and complete body of knowledge deriving from a clear beginning point (or principle)". Karl F. Morrison, 'Incentives for Studying the Liberal Arts', in David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1983, pp. 32–67.

[198] Bruun, *Parables*, p. 98.

visually rendered *cursus* for learning.[199] Both unknowing revelation in the form of Grace through miracles and visions, and knowing revelation in the form of intellectual self-edification through the Seven Liberal arts follow the same paths; they are mingled waters passing through channels visible and invisible. By describing the riverine qualities and structural conceits of M. 982 as a 'register', we understand that the image plays upon a vast range of medieval images, and that those related to water form a subset of these images with particular behaviours. The image operates by means of water imagery on two distinct dimensions, the *diagrammatic* and the *figurative*. Put more simply, we see that there is interplay between the mapping out of a diagram by means of hydrology, and the figurative representation of the *loci* within this hydrology through their personification. Through this process, we deduce that the hydrological dimension of this image comes not from the fact that the image is *about* water, but that it displays aqueous behaviours as an integral *component* of its complex abstraction.

M. 982 participates in a system of visual iconography familiar to many educated medieval readers through the tradition of Liberal Arts personification allegory. Despite containing no text and no explication, the layout of the recto diagram of lady Philosophia nourishing the personified liberal arts is effective. The image moves beyond personification allegory, hinting at a hidden reality of fluvial knowledge that is both characterised within the body of the Lady and mediated by the personified liberal arts, but equally represented as a stream of matter-energy spreading across the field of the image from high to low, following the laws of gravity and fluid distribution. The recto image of M. 982 is an ideal entry point into the realm of medieval image making involving water precisely because it so potently demonstrates that *sine qua non* given by water, something unique. A picture of the Arts in a purely diagrammatic form would be descriptive but not evocative, and would lack impact. Were the Liberal Arts mapped out as, say, a castle, the image would evoke an edifice with very different *colores*.[200] The question, then, is exactly what is special about the aqueous register in M. 982? What does the structure chosen for this image offer that is unique, departing as it does from a purely geometric representation of knowledge? The answer, I propose, lies within the diagrammatic qualities of water, their power to provide a more dynamic, more vital, more flexible version of obscure knowledge relationships.

Visualising Esoteric Flows

The evocation of the Seven Arts as rivers follows a self-consciously riparian evocation of

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[199] See chapter four of this thesis for an extended treatment of this process through the medium of poetry.
[200] See the discussion in chapter two.

structure immediately followed by a list of branches.[201] The trope of river survey as exposition of knowledge taxonomy occurs in many places throughout this thesis, and provides insight into what I will term the diagrammatic dimension not only of M. 982, but of hydrological abstraction as a whole. The efficacy of this link is clear: the river is both a structure of knowledge in mimesis and evocative of a mobile, fluid, vital transfer. Rivers, together with many other structures within nature, follow a fractal branching pattern from a single source to a series of diffuse subsets. They are, in short, excellent natural evocations of the diagram. It is what is known in contemporary systems theory as a *cascading system*, familiar to most people in the shape of a family tree or a river system.[202]

The river system forms a moving, flowing, shifting and visually vibrant network; it is a transfer of nutritive force, diffusion from a single, unified source to diverse and distant locations through extension in space. It is within this principle that we apprehend the unique salience of a *hydrological arrangement* of knowledge for medieval visualisation. Put more simply, the use of a riverine structure has unique affordances in the narration of a story detailing the relationship between esoteric and invisible principles, and in the manner by which they make the transition from the realm of metaphysics into everyday life. The two are endlessly connected, and yet the key to daily life in Western Christendom had a lock at the border between knowable and unknowable. The paths followed by the practice of the Arts allowed small glimpses into the overall layout of these realms, a distant reading of knowledge arrangement.[203]

The branch-like structure of a river has unique resonances within medieval thought, for it not only follows the pattern of cascading diffusion, but it is visually and audibly in motion. Unlike other more subtle branches, there can never be any doubt that a river is always already in motion. It is possessed of a subtle and ideal blend of solid and liquid. Within a human scale of temporality, a riverbed is not going anywhere fast, despite the possibility of ebb and flow, flood and drought. It may shift its bed over many years, and yet day in and day out it remains solid, fixed, and consistent. Its contents are the source of change and changeability, and equally the secret to its intellectual resonances. If we understand the knowledge schema represented within M. 982 as a discrete object of medieval thought discourse, we see that it does not and need not follow our assumptions of how a network can and should function. Although most modern

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[201] The *Hortus Deliciarum*, although destroyed during the Second World War, was meticulously reconstructed in Rosalie Green (ed.), *Hortus Deliciarum: Manuscript Reconstruction w. Commentary*, London, Studies of the Warburg Institute, 1979.

[202] The focus of inquiry when studying such a system is, in systems theory terminology, the "the flow of energy and/or matter from one element to another and [understanding of] the processes that cause this movement". Michael Pidwirny, 'Definitions of Systems and Models', *Fundamentals of Physical Geography, 2nd Edition*, <http://www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/4b.html>, 2006 (accessed 22 October 2013).

[203] For a discussion of the much more ambitious knowledge visualisation of Hugh of Saint-Victor's *Mystic Ark* diagram, see Conrad Rudolph, *"First, I find the Center Point": Reading the Text of Hugh of Saint Victor's* The Mystic Ark, Philadelphia, PA, American Philosophical Society, 2004.

readers may not believe that it is possible for a network of transfer to appear from a single uncreated node, it is perfectly feasible within medieval Christian Platonist understandings of the emanation of reality from a divine source.[204]

When *viewing* an image of an abstraction rather than a series of sentences *describing* an abstract—in Latin, in the case of this thesis—then we must ask ourselves this: why an image? Although the relationship between text and image in medieval manuscript culture has a long history of discussion, there is something different about an image with the diagrammatic eloquence of M. 982. Franco Moretti has proposed, in the case of maps found within literary sources, that there is something about visual representation that is exceptional, a task that cannot be performed with words alone.

> There is a very simple question about literary maps: what exactly do they do? What do they do that cannot be done with words, that is; because, if it can be done with words, then maps are superfluous.[205]

As Moretti proposes in the case of literary maps, there is much to see in M. 982 that words cannot represent. A riverine structure raises many questions and simultaneously seeks to answer them. Where does any given point fit in? What path should one seek to divine wisdom? How is the structure of the natural world related to the structure of knowledge? How is the structure of knowledge related to the origin of knowledge? The network is a fertile field on which a vast blooming of ontological and epistemological questions occurs. The network, rather than simply raising questions, attempts to provide a structure of transfers, relations and movements that provides, if not the answer to questions, then the framework for their answer in context.

There is another dimension in which Moretti's observation rings true. Within the study of diagrammatology, the term mereology describes the theory of parts and wholes.[206] There are, according to Frederik Stjernfelt, two possible positions on the relationship of parts to the whole: a reductionist approach, and a compositional approach. The latter approach, rather than claiming that a whole is merely the sum of its parts, presents parts as "expanding the possibilities of the whole and making its signification in the single case more precise". This is, to refer back to Moretti, something that a map or a diagram can do that words cannot. The parts, partitioned and visually represented, signify a whole that contains emergent properties by virtue of its divisions. The parts generate a greater whole and a collection of new wholes, rather than simply existing as latent components waiting for a whole.[207]

Like all branching patterns, a riverine structure is a system of transfer from a shared

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[204] See the discussion in chapter two.
[205] Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*, London, Verso Books, 2005, p. 35.
[206] Frederik Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology: An Investigation of the Borderlines of Phenomenology, Ontology, and Semiotics*, London, Springer, 2007, p. 161.
[207] Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, p. 161.

origin to diverse points. Its parts diverge and reconverge, creating an assemblage of terraqueous, vegetative, animal and social elements in the process; it is, mereologically, more than its parts. In the case of M. 982, this image is simplified to a series of separated and unified streams, a partial mapping of water on to a more rigid cascading diagram model. These parts, when placed together, point to a broader system of transfer greater than their visible interactions. This pattern, due to the conceits of High Medieval philosophy, was ideal for the expression of ideas. In a world of primitive and unitary causes and derivative and categorical effects, the branch is king. In his account of branch structures, Philip Ball describes the medieval origin of this imagery as expressed in the thought of Leonardo da Vinci as an "allusion to the venous structure of the network" which was "not just pretty word play but was rooted in Neoplatonism".[208] The nature of all branching structures, be they trees, rivers or veins, was rooted in the notion that the structure of the macrocosm would be mirrored in the microcosm.[209] As we can see in the *Enneads* of Plotinus, reality is already, metaphysically, a river:

> Imagine a Spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains always integrally as it was; the tides that proceed from it are at one within it before they run their several ways, yet all, in some sense, known beforehand down what channels they will pour their streams.[210]

Ball has argued that rivers are "arguably the grandfather of all branching patterns".[211] One can take this observation even further, and observe that any distributed pattern is governed by the same principles. It is unsurprising and yet intriguing that a thought network would be conducive to a branch-like structure, a spread from the one to the many. Nor is it surprising that the river, a mobile form of branching structure, would form an ideal framework for a system of abstraction. The fractal dispersion from one to many follows the logic of many other entities: trees, cracks, blood vessels. The beauty of the river as a pattern of organisation is that it not only brings matter from its source into a greatly enlarged fan-shaped space, but it also prompts imagination to follow its path back to the source, to complete the cycle through intuition and to dream of observing it. The mystery of a distant source in unknown lands—a *there* unexplored to refer back to Bruun's description—provides a superb vehicle for the spiritual return to God by means of the paths, the *viae,* by which epistemology has bridged intellect and spirit, worldly knowledge and knowledge of

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[208] Although it is also important to point out that 'venous' should not necessarily be associated with the fluid image of blood circulating through veins within High Medieval thought. It was only in Leonardo Da Vinci's time that an understanding of the human circulatory system as we understand it began to develop. Philip Ball, *Branches: Nature's Patterns, A Tapestry in Three Parts,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 102. See another of Ball's tripartite book series on the topic of fluid for more.

[209] For a further study of the tree as a form of 'spiritual arborescence', "a practice that mediates the individual meditant's relationship with the larger religious community and with Christ", see Sara Ritchey, 'Spiritual Arborescence: Trees in the Medieval Christian Imagination', *Spiritus*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2008, pp. 64–82.

[210] III.8 [10], in Stephen MacKenna (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads,* London, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 245. Cf. Neoplatonic emanation imagery also found in Chapter Two.

[211] Ball, *Branches*, p. 100.

the divine.

In the case of M. 982, we see a commonality between the systematic logic of a cascade, and the interrelationship of elements in the diagram. This, I argue, is something that cannot be done by words alone. Although the coming example of the *Fons Philosophiae* poem in chapter four demonstrates the narration of a riverine system with words alone, it fails to capture the qualities of a system at distance, its unique emergent traits. Water may appear to us both as a close-up image, and as a set of systematic traits, observable only at a distance. Diagrams provide this insight, but at the expense of detail. They do, however, offer an insight into an entirely different scale of detail. Examples from natural processes, as understood through observation, offer a template for mimesis within the landscape of abstract expression. Take the example of the cascading system:

> Cascading systems are composed of connected chains of subsystems, through and between which may flow a cascade of mass or energy. Thus the output from one subsystem may, in whole or part, become the input for another, perhaps triggering off threshold reactions or complex resonances in the latter.[212]

In the case of M. 982, we see a simplified visualisation of many systems and subsystems, from One, to Trinity, to Theology, to Arts, to human life, and then onwards further still; we are presented with a simple allegory denoting a complex unfurling of effects. Outputs become inputs, for just as God engenders Philosophy, so too does Philosophy enter the Arts, which in turn enter human life. The divine harmony of the spheres becomes the proportion and tone of music, which in turn becomes the personified allegory of music, which all leads to the playing of a lyre. Through the outpouring and simultaneous division of categories in the form of streams, the knowledge-essence of the cascade engenders new effects, providing the essence for a new stratum of interactions. This notion, taken from systems theory, provides a satisfying link to the medieval chain of being and to the Seven Liberal Arts that serve as the ancestor of modern scientific disciplinary arrangement. M. 982 represented the resonances between the *divisiones philosophiae*, the categories of the Arts, and the cascading of a riverine network.

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[212] Richard J. Chorley, Stanley A. Schumm, and David E. Sugden, *Geomorphology*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 43.

Figure 1: *Philosophy nourishing the seven liberal arts, with Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and a fourth art instructing.* Pierpont Morgan MS M. 982ʳ.

Figure 2: Arithmetic and Astronomy, *Philosophy nourishing the seven liberal arts, with Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and a fourth art instructing.* Pierpont Morgan MS M. 982ᵛ, upper half of leaf.

Figure 3: Music and a figure believed to represent Medicine, *Philosophy nourishing the seven liberal arts, with Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and a fourth art instructing.* Pierpont Morgan MS M. 982ᵛ, lower half of leaf.

Figure 4: Philosophy and the Seven Liberal Arts, with Philosophers and 'Poets and Magi' inspired by 'impure spirits'. The *Hortus Deliciarum* of Herrad of Landsberg, 1818 Museum of Alsace Engelhardt facsimile, f. 32ʳ of a c. 1170 Strasbourg manuscript (now destroyed).
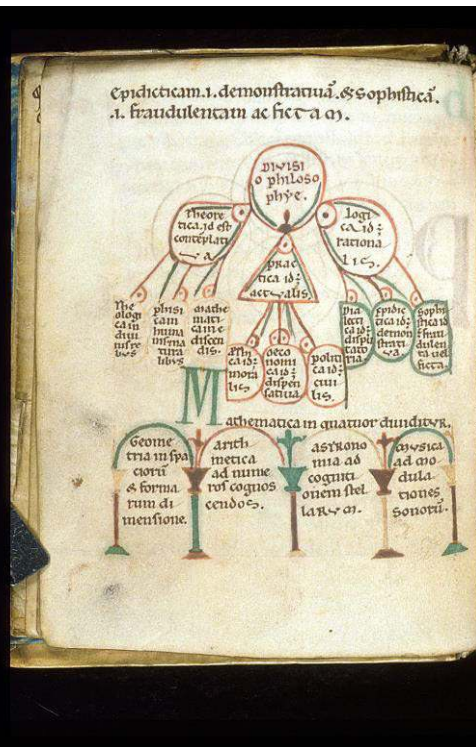
Figure 5: Examples of the cascading division of Philosophy into the Liberal Arts from the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus in the ninth-century British Library MS. Harley 2637 f. 15ᵛ (left), and a mid twelfth-century theological miscellany in British Library MS. Royal D II f. 9ᵛ (right).

Figure 6: Christ in Majesty and the Rivers of Paradise, c.1265 Westminster Psalter *Mappa mundi,* British Library Add. MS 28681, f. 9.

Figure 7: The River of the Waters of Life pouring from the throne upon the Tree of Life, Revelation 22:1-2, English Apocalypse Manuscript, c. 1250-1260, Oxford Bodleian Library MS. Auct. D. 4.17, f. 013ʳ.

The nature of metaphysics within medieval thought, be it Neoplatonic or Aristotelian, was bound up in gradations, hierarchies, and categories. That which differentiated human from beast, animate from inanimate, lofty from lowly, retained coherence only through strict categorisation. The reality of the cosmic gradation might demonstrate to us that these categories were actually blurred and confused, and yet categorisation provided a comforting schema for classification in an intellectual realm in which these ambiguities were less pronounced. The rigid-ambiguous combination offered by the image of a river seems, to my mind, highly appropriate and structurally eloquent. After all, what is more predictably unpredictable than water? Categories blur, and rivers shift their banks to fit new conditions.

When viewed as a diagram, M. 982 shares many traits with a broader collection of twelfth-century representations of knowledge. Unlike many of these images—take, for example, the Liberal Arts schema from the *Hortus Deliciarum* in figure four—it eschews the concisely arranged circles and arcs of sacred geometry for a rougher, vaguer, more artistic hermeneutic framework. Yet, as is the case with any image found within a medieval manuscript, it is far more than decoration alone. M. 982 retains a diagrammatic dimension in the absence of strict geometric rules governing meaning like many of its fellows. This is possible by virtue of a 'fuzzy logic' gifted to it by the flexible structure of hydrology. When grafted upon a framework of Liberal Arts interrelation, the aqueous register of the image lends a powerful intuitive edge, a holism and yet also an internal self-classification.

Prosopopoeia

The majestic form of Philosophia, female avatar of organised knowledge, is best known from her depiction in the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, one of the possible texts from which M. 982 is thought to have derived. As voice of authority and guide to Boethius in his quest for truth in the face of imminent execution, the Lady has found her way into the very core of epistemic symbolism commonly associated with medieval philosophy. Together with the fickle Lady Fortuna and her wheel of fortune (*rota fortunae*), Philosophia is one of Boethius' most famous creations.[213] In the *Consolatione*, her majestic form fills the prison cell of the soon-to-die narrator, impressing her power upon him:

> While I was quietly thinking [despairing] thoughts over to myself and giving vent to my sorrow with the help of my pen, I became aware of a woman standing over me. She was of awe-inspiring appearance, her eyes burning and keen beyond the usual power of men.[214]

As Boethius sees the form of the Lady, what are the implications of her bodily distillation of

[213] Although neither figure is *sui generis*. Philosophia and Fortuna both have deep roots in the Classical tradition.
[214] I:I, in Victor Watts (trans.), *Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy*, Oxford, Penguin Books, 1999, pp. 3–4.

pure knowledge and learning? What does it mean to give human face to an inhuman thing? The use of figurative imagery brings a subtle and powerful valence to the complexity of non-human interconnectivity. The cipher of the human form could contain a mythical goddess, a series of iconographic components (crown, sceptre, and books), a river, the pattern of the Liberal Arts, the transfer of knowledge, and the metaphysical order of the Cosmos.[215] By giving bodily form to philosophy, the process of mediation merges with that of the aqueous medium to combine human agency and the distributive power of a river system. The flow of knowledge is then 'imbibed' by means of the 'mouths' of the Liberal Arts, each given a form appropriate to its role. Behind the speaking and expressive façade of a living countenance lies a world of invisible abstractions given form, character and the power of speech through allegory of personification. The *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* describes the technique of *prosopopoeia* that enables this process, as follows:

> Personification consists in representing an absent person as present, or in making a mute thing or one lacking form articulate, and attributing to it a definite form and a language or a certain behaviour appropriate to its character […] Personification may be applied to a variety of things, mute and inanimate.[216]

The blending of *prosopopoeia* and aqueous abstraction within M. 982 is a particularly powerful technique; it merges the power of the human figure to represent the abstract principles intention and mediation behind knowledge with the material and connective force of water. Although the human form is immensely powerful at the origin or destination of the knowledge flow, it is water that must bridge the space between subject and object. The Lady Philosophy participates in a series of encapsulations and typological resemblances. Mary, whom she resembles through iconography and gender symbolism, bore the infant Christ in her womb, Christ in turn bore the sins of the world in his death, the divine *Logos* in his speech and the superlative form of humanity in his role as Saviour. The garden of Eden was womb to Adam and Eve, the source of its rivers womb to the waters of the world. Mary is associated with the fountain of spiritual grace, as is Christ. Angels stand by to catch the salvific flow of blood-and-water from the side of Christ in many images of the Crucifixion, and so too do the Arts wait to catch the outpouring essence of the Lady distilled into a pure flow of learning. Through an assemblage of diverse connotations, Philosophia brings a human face to the myriad generative principles of Creation. Water, as the mediator of this source, represents both the undifferentiated source of a hidden reservoir (the great wave behind the image) and the pouring forth of essence.

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[215] For an intriguing discussion of the multiple levels upon which a personified force could operate in medieval interpretation, see Jane Chance's discussion of Eridanus, who was image, myth, icon, river, star constellation, and text in antique sources in equal measure. *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177*, vol. 1, Gainsville, FL, University Press of Florida, 1994, pp. 6–10. See also volume 2, which covers the latter twelfth-century to the end of the medieval period.

[216] IV:66–LIII, in Caplan, *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, p. 399.

To return to the diagrammatic dimension for a moment, let us consider the role of the human body (or indeed the non-human body) in the construction of meaning. In the passage below, Sybille Krämer proposes that the process of creating a diagram provides a conduit by which the hidden universals of our world become intuitively 'available' to our senses. They are cloaked, so to speak, in an integument of aesthetic experience:

> Diagrammatic inscriptions, among which we include graphic artefacts ranging from notations to diagrams to maps, are media that provide a point of linkage between thinking and intuiting, between the 'noetic' and the 'aisthetic'. By means of this interstitial graphic world, the universal becomes intuitable to the senses and the conceptual *becomes embodied* […][217]

Through the embodiment of thought through visual and diagrammatic representation, "the difference between the perceptible and the intelligible [in diagrams] is thus at the same time bridged—and constituted".[218] The non-human body of the hydrological and the human body of the personification allegory merge to create a space for the spark of understanding to leap between the unyielding surface of abstraction and the channels by which phenomenal meaning is made. At the same time, the hidden origin of knowledge remains invisible, behind the frame of personhood presented by Philosophia. Just as the walled inaccessibility of Eden is bridged by the ecumenical connection of water, so too is knowledge rendered invisible and yet present in the personhood of its avatar.

Within this process, water is the moving, shifting transfer between minds, representing the tree of knowledge in the most effective expression of human (or human-like through allegory) and non-figurative tangibility. The technique of personification allegory lends, as James Paxson claims, "a figural manoeuvre distinct from lending "a definite form" to something without physical contour, something insubstantial".[219] The aqueous component of the image lends a flexible and non-definitive form, giving an apprehensible reality to an invisible process of intellectual transfer on a metaphysical scale. Human behaviour mapped over inhuman forces merges the affective power of the body with the inhuman affective force of the material world apparent within water. Through the merging of two forms of substance, the allegory is enabled on a double level.[220]

To place this process into a broader context, let us consider the image of Christ in Majesty

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[217] Sybille Krämer, 'Epistemology of the Line: Reflections on the Diagrammatic Mind', in Olga Pombo and Alexander Gerner (eds), *Studies in Diagrammatology and Diagram Praxis*, London, College Publications, 2010, p. 13. My italics.

[218] Krämer, 'Epistemology of the Line', p. 13.

[219] James J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 14.

[220] This enables what Stacy Alaimo has termed 'trans-corporeality' - the interfusion of human and environmtal bodies—in the realm of allegory, and through a uniquely medieval articulation. See Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2010, esp. p. 11.

found within the thirteenth-century Westminster psalter map (figure six). Within this famous *mappa mundi*, the representation of Christ expresses a similar sentiment to the following passage from Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the Gospel of John, in which a similar outpouring is implied:

> [I]t is of the same manner of speaking, just as if someone taking up water from the river were to say: "this water is not of the river, but is of the fountain: indeed it is not the origin of the river", and so on. Thus, the Lord says "whoever believes in me, does not believe in me, but in he who sent me"; as if he says: "I am not the beginning in and of myself, but divinity is mine from another, that is, from the Father: and so he who believes in me, does not believe in me, except in as much as that I am from the Father".[221]

As is the case with Lady Philosophia, Christ is but an expression of a hidden river-source, an outpouring of wisdom from the Father. Thus, like the Gospels, this knowledge-network allows the approach of divinity through the apprehension of the intermediate links. These intermediaries are not true Theology, and yet through their hydrology they show their *fons et origo* (see Christ *pantocrator* in figure six). What would otherwise be obtuse is shown to be a path to a higher origin. There is evidence from other twelfth-century sources and the literature of preceding centuries that the trope of 'drinking' from the 'streams' of the Liberal Arts was a common one.[222] In his tenth-century *vita*, for example, it is said that Bishop Stephen of Laon "drank from the streams of the Liberal Arts all the more swiftly for being filled with the love of God".[223] The act of drinking, of imbibing sustenance, redolent of the Biblical link between the drawing of pure waters and the foretaste of divinity to be found within the stirrings of the Holy Spirit and the *exemplum* of Christ. To drink is to sample a taste of the Divine, a filling of an empty vessel with pious plenitude. And yet it is also a thirst for a more intellectual form of knowledge wedded to this religious devotion in an intermingled union. The iconographic representation of a flow from invisible to visible via a mediating authority is replicated within the imagery of figure seven, in which the stream of salvation from the throne of Christ spreads across the tree of life, engendering fruit "for the healing of nations".[224]

The nourishing mother figure of Philosophia, as is the case with lofty relative Christ (see

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[221] [Et est similis modus loquendi, sicut si aliquis hauriens de aqua fluminis dicat: ista aqua non est fluminis, sed est fontis: non est quidem fluminis originalis etc. Sic ergo dominus dicit qui credit in me, non credit in me, sed in eum qui misit me; quasi dicat: non sum principium mei ipsius, sed divinitas est mihi ab alio, idest a patre: unde qui credit in me, non credit in me, nisi in quantum sum a patre]. Thomas de Aquino—*Super Euangelium Iohannis reportatio,* caput: 12 lectio: 8, numerus: 1711, linea: 30 (pag.: 319), *Brepols Library of Latin Texts A (LLT-A).*

[222] See chapters four and five for pertinent examples of this image.

[223] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideas in Medieval Europe, 950–1200,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, p. 28.

[224] "And he shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month: the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations". Revelation 22:1–2. This passage is visually represented in figure seven.

figure six), is the fountainhead of the system. From the unitary source represented by her heart, the gateway to divine wisdom, pours forth streams of lively fluvial knowledge-stuff, the pure distillation of divinely gifted wisdom divided through providence into seven streams. Surrounded by the crest of a great wave, the figures of the liberal arts and their divinely mandated source represent an outpouring from the empyrean heaven (represented above), a burst of movement through a cascading system emanating from the One. Through this dividing network, the Liberal Arts grow strong and distinct, able to pass on their knowledge to humanity (as we see allegorically in figures two and three).

Although containing a great deal of human agency, the image of M. 982 recto is arranged in the shape of a watercourse. The lady, through explicit imagery, is the Marian garden enclosed, the *Fons et Origo* of Christ, the spring in the Garden of Eden, and the mistress of epistemology, queen of the where, why, what and how of knowledge. Behind her, or within her, lies a link to the true source of knowledge in God. Above her the lights of the firmament glitter, demonstrating a gravity of knowledge. The crown upon her brow represents her sovereignty, the sceptre her authority, the twin books in her hand Scripture and Nature. Together, these two books formed the compendium of human insight into Creation, intertwined and mutually supportive. First was Scripture, which Henri De Lubac has described as "furnish[ing] matter for the most ingenious contrivances" with its four senses.[225] Next was Nature, which in the words of Hugh of Saint-Victor was "a kind of book", "written by the finger of God".[226] The former offered insight into the actions of God throughout Salvation history and His plan for humanity, the latter the qualities of the created world as derived from the causative force of divine agency. Both, through the Arts, were intertwined paths to theology.[227]

The humanity and the containment of the human body shape a bodily avatar for the force of the great wave of knowledge that rises behind her. The differentiated powers of the arts force themselves forth from the aperture of the human heart. The trope of love as a bountiful and outpouring f horce is a theme that the reader will notice with great frequency in chapters to come.[228] This very human expression of knowledge as an affective process of entanglement and composition would not be possible without a bodily conduit through which the mind might connect and intuit the appropriate emotions. This power, coupled with the might of the waves

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[225] The four senses being the literal, the allegorical, the moral or tropological, and the anagogical. De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1*, p. 13.

[226] Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De tribus diebus*, Chapter 4, ll. 96–98, as cited in Grover A. Zinn, 'Minding Matter: Materia and the World in the Spirituality and Theology of Hugh of St. Victor', in Cary J. Nederman, Nancy Van Deusen, and E. Ann Matter (eds), Mind Matters: Studies Of Medieval and Early-Modern Intellectual History In Honour Of Marcia Colish, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010, p. 61.

[227] The two books, typologically speaking, could also represent the Old and New Testaments. A distinction need not be rigidly drawn, since Nature was filled with the narrative *topoi* of biblical history, and Scripture was a teacher of the forced at work behind the veil of nature.

[228] See chapters four, five, and six for different manifestations of this trope.

and the force of the rivers, enables M. 982 to perform a form of cathexis.

Like the many exegeses of the *Song of Songs*, the overtly gendered implications of this image need not be read as a single meaning alone—indeed, it would diminish the power of the image to do so. In an interesting twist—be it unintentional or deliberate—the lines of the Lady's cloak meet at her breast at the point of her brooch, circular and set with a stone. The brooch bears a striking similarity to the image of Eden at the apex of many *mappae mundi* (see figure six), representing the locus that 'pins' the heavenly and worldly together. The streams of knowledge, like the spreading of the gospels and the flowing of the rivers, peregrinate to all corners of the image, ending in the act of consumption by the arts. Thus, the structural resonances of water lurk in striking force behind every spatial and iconographic decision within the image, acting in tandem with the more visually literal fluviality of the streams. The power of the image stems from its pluripotency, for it does not attempt to restrict reading to a single interpretation. The human body represents the intellect and human faculty of a faceless thing through allegory, the mediation of the arts that Lady Philosophy and her seven attendants represent.

In the body of the Lady lies a complex of unitary power: the generative valence of the source, the authority of a monarch, the unity of the Church, and the distribution of essence from one to many. Each of the streams of life-stuff, like tributaries of a great river, has its own path to follow. At the point where each stream flows into the open mouth of a liberal art, we discern a second mediation. Once derived from the source of Philosophy, the act of a personified art 'drinking' knowledge represents that passing of pure and undifferentiated knowledge from the realm of material image—determined by motion, spatial distribution, and arrangement—into the realm of the personal. The art is 'schooled' by Philosophy, educating the human mind in its discipline in turn. Human knowledge, as we see on figures two and three, succeeds the division of aqueous knowledge from metaphysical to intellectual, and disseminates through the 'flow' of knowledge represented by the pedagogical process.

The word 'nourishment' provides an interesting entry point into the image, for the most obvious interpretation of the streams of matter pouring from the chest of Lady Philosophia into the waiting mouths of the personified liberal arts evokes the image of breast-feeding. Through the image of a human body, we see the principle of mediation and distribution, a kind of non-human agency, through the figure of the Lady. Her intellect, the will behind the distributive power of knowledge, personifies the division of the *fons*. Flowing forth from her breast—an image of spiritual or motherly nourishment, or preferably a mixture of both—are the manifold nourishments of the arts. She is *alma mater*, providing the sustenance of water's nutrition through an allegory of human intentionality. At the same time she is the female body under a masculine

intellectual schema, exhibiting both female generative power and the influence of a strict regime of structure and control.[229] These lines resemble an umbilical cord, or a flow of milk as much as they do a river or a flow of blood. The depiction of the Lady demonstrates a distinctly bodily resonance tied through similitude to the imagery of hydrology. As Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated, images of motherly nourishment could take forms within High Medieval spiritual allegory that are highly unusual to modern sensibilities.[230] Breast milk, for example, was held by high medieval natural philosophy to be processed blood. Just as the pelican, symbol of Christ, fed its young with the blood of its breast, so too did the mother rear the child from their very bodily matter. Blood, milk, and river all flowed from a hidden reservoir of energy, feeding the offspring—spiritual or physical alike. The chain of nourishment stretched from the Trinity: God created Adam, from whom Eve was created and Mary was impregnated by divine power through immaculate conception, generating Christ as man from her bodily matter. Mary, as mediatrix of graces, was the conduit by which the power of the Son spread and divided among the followers of Christ.[231] M. 982 represents this symbolism, and yet transposes it upon Philosophia, typologically linking the flow of nutritive force from Trinity to Creation with the flow of learning from Trinity to Creation. In both cases, the flowing forth of life-matter from a generative mediatrix charts the path of salvation history through a complex diagrammatic representation of nourishment.

Nevertheless, to dismiss the imagery of M. 982 as a slightly unusual expression of a common iconographic motif would be to occlude the distinctly hydrological nature of this image, the implied network of flowing and nutritive knowledge at its heart. The image reminds us that within any hydrological resides a vast array of potential and yet unexpressed or inchoate meanings. This image, through an overlay of gender, body, river, hydrology and interconnectivity, teaches us to see the half realised outlines of meaning *in potentia* within abstractions of aqueous material.

Conclusion: Principles of Arrangement in Pierpont Morgan M. 982

In *Visual Complexity*, network visualisation theorist Manuel Lima proposes that the tree structure of pre-modern thought, no longer relevant to a world of endless interconnections, has

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[229] For a detailed discussion of the transition from feminine imagery to masculine control in water imagery and its contraflows, see Veronica Strang, 'Lording it Over the Goddess: Water, Gender, and Human-Environmental Relations', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2014, pp. 83–107.

[230] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages,* Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 1982.

[231] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 132–133.

given way to the structure of a web, or of a rhizome.[232] Lima argues that "[t]he idea of capturing the entirety of human knowledge and classifying it by means of a tree is an aged aspiration, a meme hundreds of years old".[233] A tree of knowledge is an excellent abstraction for the fixed and codified interrelationships of formal knowledge, and yet the tree is only a superficial quality, a single manifestation of a deeper fluid pattern.[234] If fluidity is the abstract hydrology of motion, then a riverine structure is the abstract hydrology of delineated motion, of patterned movement in a form that is visually eloquent. All worldly things move and follow patterns, and yet only the river is so obviously in motion and so obviously patterned.[235] Analysis must be very cautious in order to avoid the assumption that knowledge visualisation has a single line of evolution. The historical reality of medieval branch-like systems of abstraction is at risk of being occluded by the desire for new, more 'sophisticated', models. Lima, for example, cites Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus,* claiming that "trees are a condition of theoretical rigidness and unidirectional progress, where everything returns to a central trunk through vertical and linear connections".[236] In the text itself, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the tree makes sense "only if there is a strong principal unity available, that of the pivotal taproot supporting the secondary roots", and that this is a model that "that doesn't get us very far".[237]

This is far from the only way to view the matter, for there is indeed a very strong unitary principle at work in Pierpont Morgan M. 982, a principle that makes an episteme based on branches not only useful, but essential.[238] Charles Sanders Peirce once argued that "[I]t is by icons only that we really reason, and abstract statements are valueless in reasoning except so far they aid us to construct diagrams".[239] In this light, M. 982 and the other source material in this thesis can be seen as an attempt to collate the abstract principles of medieval thought into something that coheres, something systematic; it seeks to delineate the paths of inquiry by which the root of the tree, the headwaters of the river, may be reached. If this is the case, then the branch structure is

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[232] For a profitable comparison of elemental theory and Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatics, see David Macauley, 'The Flowering of Environmental Roots and the Four Elements in Presocratic Philosophy: From Empedocles to Deleuze and Guattari', *Worldviews,* vol. 9, no. 3, 2005, pp. 281–314

[233] Manuel Lima, *Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of Information,* New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2011, p. 25.

[234] This branching pattern is then shared in common with many other branch-like constructs. When discussing the branches of trees, for example, he notes that the algorithmic rules governing arboreal growth are the same as those for the river. This occurs because a tree is in essence a series of pipes, a "mesh of cellular channels, the phloem and the xylem, that carry water and sugar-rich liquid to and from the extremities", and therefore follows the same dynamics of fluid distribution as it branches. Ball, *Branches,* p. 130.

[235] See Pippa Salonius and Andrea Worm (eds), *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought,* Turnhout, Brepols, forthcoming 2014.

[236] Lima, *Visual Complexity,* p. 44.

[237] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi (trans.), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 5.

[238] Although it is fair to say that there are many other possible models of connection within medieval thought. The point is that the tree is not a 'bad' model.

[239] Charles S. Peirce, 'The Logic of Quantity', in Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (eds), *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce,* vol. 8, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1958, 4.127.

not rigid and redundant, but an act of discovery and construction. The fact that we now construct differently does not negate the efficacy of past models within the logic of their creation.

Although modernity may demand new affordances of its knowledge visualisation patterns, the move on from the tree model helps to explain the transitions in thinking between medieval and modern. The notion of the return of all to a single source is very much a guiding logic for medieval thinking; there was a *reason* for the popularity of the tree model, and for the interchange between tree and its branching cognates.[240] Pierpont Morgan M. 982 helps to dispel the notion that this model was unimaginative or unitary in its construction. As this thesis demonstrates, the riparian branch and its fellows are more capacious as complex metaphors than is initially apparent.

The image within M. 982—together with the representations presented within the three chapters to follow—provides powerful insights into the process by which image signifies that which is absent. It stands in for a reality veiled by invisibility; its aqueous components, behaviours, structures, and qualities infuse the invisible with a specific set of behaviours. These insights, which I shall discuss by way of a conclusion, apply not only to this chapter, but also to the thesis as a whole. Through the accessible visual framework of Pierpont Morgan M. 982, we are able to apprehend something of the mechanism of abstract image-making in progress. Through the image-making process, we are able in turn to apprehend the specific affordances of water to the narration of the invisible.

By delving into the manner in which aqueous imagery—or the implication of aqueous imagery—underpins and shapes the image, we gain insight into the manner in which medieval image-making functions, and some of the aqueous resonances contained within it. Through a relatively simple depiction of an image from the memory—a wave, a river, a woman, clothing, the Arts as tools, and so on in the case of M. 982—a system of interconnected parts can be pulled together into a complex metaphor or an allegory. Contemplation of this image may not provide all of the details needed to understand the knowledge that is maps, but it provides the framework for the viewer to embed further knowledge into their mnemonic space. Thus the image of a building described as an allegory for knowledge might become a mind palace, or an image of the cosmos in diagrammatic form might become an abstract imagining of macrocosmic order. It is a technique for weaving the imagined and imaginable into an image at a scale beyond comprehension or facility of memory access.

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[240] A fluid and aqueous system of abstraction incorporates many of the traits defined by *A Thousand Plateaus* as undesirable or deficient. We must simultaneously admit that many of these qualities have the exact opposite utility for medieval thought. Medieval thought is, in some senses, a foil for the rhizomatic or assemblage-based theory of Deleuze and Guattari. This is only a problem in relation to modern thought.

Furthermore, this chapter serves as a companion to its successor, an exploration of the *Fons Philosophiae* of Godfrey of Saint-Victor. When reading the chapter to come, it will be profitable for the reader to notice the similarities between the visible representations of the Liberal Arts within M. 982 and the poetic representation of Godfrey's poem. In the image presented within M. 982, the Lady Philosophy presides on high above the images as fountainhead, type of Christ and type of Mary, streams of knowledge pouring forth from her heart into the waiting mouths of seven figures, each a personified Liberal art of the *trivium* or *quadrivium.* Behind the bodies of the arts rises a great wave of knowledge bursting forth from the frame as if ready to wash across the landscape of the page. Inchoate motion provides a strong hint at the distinct value of water as a means of mediation.[241]

As a story of the relationship between human knowledge and its origin in Divine knowledge, M. 982 maps out the terrain that defines medieval learning, and suggests the means by which knowledge can and should be approached. The historically distinct representation of knowledge evoked by M. 982 is best understood, I suggest, coupled with a schema that explores a complex cycle of cognition and hermeneutics. The amalgamation of medieval diagrammatology, personification allegory, and the imagery of hydrology presents something that plays upon many registers of medieval abstraction. As a diagram, M. 982 relates ideas to ideas by causal and teleological links, placing them in a hierarchy with distinct divisions. As a personification allegory, M. 982 participates in religious tropes surrounding the body as a point of interaction between human and divine. As a hydrological image, M. 982 demonstrates the crucial point that one register of abstraction is effective, but can be mingled with others for greater effect. Water is a satisfying representation of knowledge, but is flexible enough that it can merge with others to become more eloquent.

I would, by way of a final conclusion, like to make some interpretations of broader relevance to the chapters to follow. The recto image of M. 982 serves as an excellent introduction to the more esoteric—and verbally constructed—imagery analysed in the chapters to come. First, we learn that in a complex system of abstract representation, every distinct theme of image has a unique function derived from factors such as scriptural resonances, material properties, and manner of interconnection with its fellows. Second, we discover that in such a system, mindful application of creative image-making was a valuable skill for those seeking to deploy the rhetorical and image-making arts. Third, we apprehend that water, as an intellectual entity with its own role to play, has a specific register of behaviours that augment this process.

The diagrammatology applied to the design of M. 982 provides a point of access to forms

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[241] The image is a visual representation of the ideas found in text within the *Fons Philosophiae*, the topic of chapter four.

of hydrological evocation that are more enigmatic, less explicated, and more tenuous. Although the mapping of fluid properties onto the mechanism of a medieval diagram locks down the traits of water and prevents them from exercising their full freedom of expression, it does provide an opportunity to understand the role of water. It brings a sense of the distribution of cause and effect across hierarchies, the continuous transfer of flow, and the meandering force of rivers visible and invisible as they infuse the Arts with meaning. It demonstrates the allegorical potency concentrated in the source, a typological multitude of related images. Most importantly, it demonstrates that any diagram, no matter how elegantly it imitates the broader patterns of the Cosmos, is always more than any individual manifestation. It demonstrates that a diagram seeks to represent the spatial and causal relationships between principles, but does not fully encapsulate them.

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CHAPTER FOUR — "AN UNPOLLUTED SPRING": GODFREY OF SAINT-VICTOR'S *FONS PHILOSOPHIAE* AND THE RIPARIAN LIBERAL ARTS

The chapter to follow expands upon the imagery of Pierpont Morgan M. 982, demonstrating that different registers of hydrological representation can narrate not only the diagram simplified diagrammatic representation of the Seven Liberal Arts, but an extremely extensive and complex survey of the key actors, categories, histories and motivations of Victorine intellectual and spiritual philosophy. In this chapter we encounter a twelfth-century didactic poem—the *Fons Philosophiae* or Fountain of Philosophy—that merges the cascading hydrological structure discussed in the former chapter with the narrative structure of a poem, forming an entity that verbally sketches out a watercourse from divine source to intellectual destination, and then provides a course of navigation throughout its length and breadth that melds intuition, the multi-faceted application of a course (*cursus*) of study, and the challenges of nature-based poetry into a capacious and ecologically potent expression of an episteme. Within this chapter, we encounter an infinitely more complex and yet very differently articulated vision of the Liberal Arts. If Pierpont Morgan M. 982 was a visual guide to an already-assimilated collection of principles, then the *Fons Philosophiae* is the guide to the merit and arrangement of these principles.

The focal text of this chapter, the *Fons Philosophiae*, is a rhyming didactic poem presented by Godfrey of Saint-Victor in honour of his ecclesiastical patron Stephen of Tournai, newly appointed Abbot of Saint Genevieve.[242] Stephen became Abbot in 1176, and although it is unclear exactly when Godfrey wrote and presented his treatises, it must have followed this date.[243] In the *Fons Philosophiae*, Godfrey framed in verse the Victorine educational pathway of spiritual endeavour that could lead and induce the spiritual pilgrim into proximity with God.[244] This knowledge, in keeping with the Victorine penchant for mysticism coupled with Liberal Arts scholarship, would consist of a divine revelation facilitated by the exercise of intellectual enquiry. Godfrey like his predecessor Hugh, strictly observed the rigour of Liberal Arts learning while simultaneously sensitive to the mystical ends of such learning for the reformation of the soul.[245]

Edward Synan wrote in the preface to his translation that the poem is a "joyous memoir"

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[242] Introduction, Edward A. Synan (trans.), *The Fountain of Philosophy: A Translation of the Twelfth-Century Fons Philosophiae of Godfrey of Saint Victor*, Toronto, The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972, p. 21. Synan's introduction has recently been expanded upon and, to my mind, improved upon by Hugh Feiss in a recent introduction to selections from Godfrey's *Microcosmus*. See 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *Microcosm* (Chapters 203–227) – Introduction and Translation by Hugh Feiss, OSB', in Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter (eds), *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard, and Adam of St Victor*, Victorine Texts in Translation vol. 2, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010, pp. 301–312.

[243] Stephen of Tournai is also thought to have been a friend of Godfrey's, and both men may have studied law in Bologna at the same time. Feiss, 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *Microcosm*', p. 304.

[244] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 20.

[245] See Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Theology of Hugh of St. Victor: An Interpretation*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010 for a good overview of Hugh's theology.

with a "mnemonic pulse and beat".[246] It is an interior spiritual journey that is explained, conducted and structured by a literary work.[247] In the words of Synan in his introduction to the English isometric translation of the poem, it has a 'jangling' quality to it: his poetry served to represent the inexorable burbling flow of the river within the metre of the Latin verse itself.[248] Take, for example, lines 17–20:

Curro properantius | cupidus uidere,

Sitis extinguende spem | signa prebuere;

Namque meis auribus | mox obstrepuere,

Murmure dulcisono | riui mille fere.[249]

The text is, at every level imaginable, bubbling with aqueous imagery, as if the pages that contain the text are a thin *integumentum* hiding a vast, powerful and complex river in abstraction. For its imagined medieval reader, it seems to me, the text would have unleashed a powerful flow of matter-energy-water from the hidden source, a flow that would wash into the mind of the reader, illuminating the mystery and excitement of the river source. The power of the poem comes from the structure it provides, a guide to the successful navigation of this flow.

Unlike the previous chapter, the discussion to come has a central figure in the form of of Godfrey, canon regular at the abbey of Saint-Victor, the home to some of the most famous twelfth-century mixtures of the mystical and the scholarly tradition.[250] A schoolman and master at the Paris schools from approximately 1144–55 prior to joining the Victorine order, Godfrey is thought by Françoise Gasparri to have studied and taught theology at the school of Petit-Pont

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[246] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 29.

[247] The poem is presented in the form of a meditative spiritual ascent, in the tradition of texts such as Augustine's Confessions, the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius, or later St. Anselm's *Proslogion* and followed in the thirteenth century by Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* and Dante's Divine Comedy in the fourteenth century. Robert McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, & Dante*, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2006.

[248] The Synan translation of the *Fons Philosophiae* from the Latin is somewhat florid, and reads suspiciously unlike Latin prose. It is by the admission of the translator an "isometric" English rendering of the Latin created in an attempt to capture its "jingling verse" and cadence. The result is, in the words of Synan, sugary and cloying, but entertaining to read nevertheless. It is for this reason that I have opted for my own prose translations, and the elegant but sensible rendering of Hugh Feiss. Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, pp. 28–29.

[249] Translated and fully referenced in the discussion below. It is worth explaining the scansion of the poem at this stage in the chapter. The poem consists of four line stanzas, each line consisting of thirteen syllables arranged into trochees with a *caesura* following the seventh syllable. There is a stress on the syllable before the caesura, and the rhyme of each line is carried by the pairing of a stressed and unstressed syllabic foot, carrying the rhyme of the line. I have maintained the *caesurae* in my Latin transcription of the poem (not part of the Michaud-Quentin rendering, but used by Feiss) for clarity. The extant manuscripts of the poem contained accented Latin, but this is not preserved in Michaud-Quentin.

[250] Notable examples are the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of Saint-Victor, a mixture of mystical and scholastic learning or the *De Trinitate* of Richard of Saint-Victor in which the author attempts to reconcile dogmatic theology and reason.

founded by Adam of Balsham (called Adam *Parvipontanus*) in 1132.[251] Upon joining the order of Augustinian canons at Saint-Victor abbey in Paris in about 1155–60, Godfrey turned his attention to creating a series of poems and treatises devoted to the cultivation of Liberal Arts wisdom and the mystical contemplation of human spirituality. In the tradition of his order, Godfrey was a schoolman, but also a mystic and metaphysician, exhibiting both the systematic intellectualism of a schoolmaster and the mystical emphasis of the Victorine order.[252]

Philippe Delhaye, transcriber of Godfrey's *Microcosmus*, describes the text as a simple versified summary (*résumé versifié*) of Hugh's *Didascalicon*, a work more strongly related to Hugh than to his predecessor Richard.[253] Gasparri has agreed with this assessment, arguing that although Godfrey was a contemporary of Richard, his ideas more closely reflect those of Hugh—the 'didascalic' tradition taught at the school at this time—with elements of Godfrey's exegetical liberal arts studies at Petit-Pont.[254] Hugh Feiss also notes strong resemblances between content in the poem and the *Metalogicon* of John of Salisbury.[255] As an eccentric rendering of a widely studied twelfth-century texts such as the *Didascalicon* and *Metalogicon*, the *Fons Philosophiae* offers an opportunity to study the role of what I characterise as a hydrological form serving as a framework for systematised Victorine—and twelfth-century scholastic—content.

My focus within this chapter is upon the characteristics of the *Fons Philosophiae* that stem not from its *contents* but from its hydrological *form*. Synan largely discounts the river structure of the poem as an allusion to "the image so often used by biblical authors, according to which wisdom is a complex of flowing streams".[256] I propose, conversely, that the hydrological structure of the poem creates a poetic form evocative of the hidden structures and interconnections of Victorine thought. Rather than a derivative mish-mash of tropes and *figurae*, Godfrey's hydrology must be appreciated and studied as irreducible complexity within the text. The diverse complexity of medieval knowledge flows between nodes within a system, waiting to be explained to the reader. Further study of this structure, I argue, can inform our understanding of Godfrey, his works and the late twelfth-century Victorine canons, and explore the narrative and structural conceits of medieval abstract visualisation through the deployment of water imagery in the *Fons Philosophiae*.

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[251] Françoise Gasparri, 'Philosophie Et Cosmologie: Godefroid De Saint-Victor', in *Notre Dame de Paris. Un manifeste chrétien (1160–1230). Colloque organisé à l'Institut de France le vendredi 12 Décembre 2003. Ed. Michel Lemoine*, Rencontres Médiévales Européennes 4, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, p. 120.

[252] R. N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-century Renaissance*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 19.

[253] Philippe Delhaye, *Le Microcosmus De Godefroy De Saint-Victor: Étude Théologique,* Lille, Facultés Catholiques, 1951, p. 13.

[254] Gasparri, 'Philosophie Et Cosmologie', pp. 120, 123.

[255] Hugh Feiss, 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *The Fountain of Philosophy*—Introduction and Translation by Hugh Feiss, OSB', in Franklin T. Harkins and Franz van Liere (eds), *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory*, Victorine Texts in Translation 3, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, pp. 380–381.

[256] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 21.

The text has much to recommend it as a study in medieval metaphysical abstraction, containing all that is necessary—in the view of the author and implied audience—to apprehend the conceits, delights, goals, and pitfalls of learning to a medieval mind in the form of a riverine network. Merging ecology and epistemology, the structure of knowledge appears bonded to the experience of navigating and drinking from a river system. It both forms a river system from the collected imagery of the natural and Biblical world, and then imbues this system with a self-perpetuating dynamism of imaginative and pedagogical force. Beyond pedagogy, the river system within the text manifests a structural representation of monastic thought *as imagined* by a monastic thinker and yet *as manifested* in poetics. The text, through the motif of the river, seeks to expose the main conceits of Victorine thought, identified by Brian FitzGerald as "the unity of all knowledge, the interrelationship of the liberal arts and their importance for an understanding of the divine".[257]

The *Fons Philosophiae* touches upon many popular themes of twelfth-century intellectual discourse—the categorisation and disposition of the Liberal Arts, the education of novices into an intellectual tradition, the dispute between philosophical schools and controversies, the praising or damning of certain ideas or forms of inquiry—it is an exploration of inner life, an allegory for the learning progress, a schema for the arrangement of ideas, and a guide to the cultivation of virtues and the extirpation of vices. It plays upon a long history of images and tropes, from the hallowed image of the *Fons Philosophiae* itself to the cataloguing of the best and brightest minds of the early Christian and Classical worlds.

Rich in imagery, the poem is given cohesion, holistic meaning and a mechanism for motion by the unifying power of riverine imagery. Water provides a fruitful object for study, both within this poem and within monastic thought as a whole, because it is the motive essence binding together and vivifying thought, providing order and mutability, structure and a hint of chaos. Through this binding of trope, idea and content into a hydrological whole, water gives the *Fons Philosophiae* the power to teach us of the aqueous resonances of medieval abstraction while simultaneously illuminating the process by which abstraction is formed from the nebulous mass of invisibility and networked into a logical system.

Godfrey of Saint-Victor and his Poem

The text of the *Fons Philosophiae* was originally one of three treatises, presented together with the *Anathomia Corporis Christi* (dissection of the body of Christ) and *De Spirituale corpore Christi* (on the spiritual body of Christ). Godfrey presented all three treatises to his patron as a

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[257] B. D. FitzGerald, 'Medieval theories of education: Hugh of St Victor and John of Salisbury', *Oxford Review of Education,* vol. 36, no. 5, 2010, p. 576.

matching set of spiritual works.[258] As members of an order with a great emphasis on teaching, the canons regular of Saint Victor held their own distinctive theories on the arrangement of knowledge, which are enshrined by and yet hidden within the structure of the poem. The poem is divided in two, with the first part being devoted to the Seven Liberal Arts, and the second part focusing on Theological Wisdom and the Sacred Page. This structure follows that of the *Didascalicon* of Hugh, likewise arranged into a section on the Arts, and a section on Scripture.[259] Its general model follows the apprehension of the *artes* into more divine waters, the study of theology. In both the case of the *Fons* and that of the *Didascalicon*, the two topics are not arbitrarily arranged, for following the rivers of the former Liberal Arts leads to the headwaters of philosophy, the practice of theology.[260] By structuring the poem in this manner, Godfrey created a fully articulated knowledge structure in aqueous form within a text coupled with a sense of dwelling within a structural hermeneutic system, of a being within its 'environment'. In this way, the text constitutes an interesting interpretation of the terms 'hydrology' and 'ecology', for it is both in detailed abstraction. It is water (*hydor*), an *oikos* (a dwelling place, in this case for the mind), and *logos* (a structured account).[261]

In the prefatory epistle to Abbot Stephen, Godfrey dedicated the poem with the rhetorical humility one would expect of a monastic addressing his superior, claiming that he submitted a "brimming mixed cup" for his judgement.[262] According to a marginal notation in the Mazarene 1002 copy of the poem, "the life of the author is written down metaphorically".[263] Thus, the poem is not only a figurative system of knowledge, but also a spiritual and pedagogical autobiography. According to Michaud-Quentin, the 836 verses of the poem retrace the steps of secular and religious training received by Godfrey, and the character of the author as philosopher, theologian and canon regular of the Victorine order. This knowledge, rooted in knowledge of Scripture, the Arts, the principal doctors of the Church, and the philosophical traditions of the twelfth century, differed from the more systematised epistemic frameworks of the Parisian schools. This was especially true in Godfrey's teleology of Liberal Arts learning, always presenting

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[258] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 19.

[259] Taylor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor*, pp. 44–45. There will be many citations of the *Didascalicon* in this chapter. This is a logical comparison, for reading of the *Fons Philosophiae* demonstrates that the poem follows the structure of the *Didascalicon* closely. This comparison is especially fruitful, for it sheds light not only on the *Fons*, but has a recursive impact on the reading of Hugh's treatise in equal measure.

[260] Part one takes up lines 45–464 of the poem, and part two takes up lines 465–836.

[261] In contrast to the diagrammatic resonances of chapter three, the more ad-hoc technique of chapter four, and the far more implicit representation of chapter six, the *Fons Philosophiae* is very much designed to perform this purpose.

[262] [Calicem plenum mixto vestre destinavi, Pater, eruditionis examinandum iudicio, quatinus utrumque sit in minibus vestris, eius videlicet vel status vel everso] Lines 6-8, Pierre Michaud-Quentin (ed.), *Fons Philosophiae. Texte Publié Et Annoté Par Pierre Michaud-Quentin*, Namur, Editions Godenne, 1956, p. 33. I have translated the Latin of the poem for use in my analysis, but all block quotes are taken from the recent prose translation by Hugh Feiss. See 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *The Fountain of Philosophy*', pp. 371–425. All references include the page numbers for both the Feiss translation and Michaud-Quentin's Latin.

[263] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 21.

a system that enables higher learning rather than being itself an end. The ultimate goal and final stanza of the poem highlights the ultimate human lesson, the nourishment of the path to philosophy:

> Imbibing many things about the man of God, That is, very God, I hid them in my heart; and so that they will not wickedly lie hidden, if I am able in any way, I am going to make them known to all who will believe them.[264]

For Godfrey, it was the role of the Liberal Arts to cultivate virtue and erudition for the purposes of greater Divine revelation, to imbibe knowledge about Christ and about human salvation. Thus, in the words of Philippe Delhaye, Godfrey was a 'theologian' and a 'psychologist', but by no means a 'scientist'.[265] More precisely, his interests were spiritual, narrative and pedagogical, not classificatory or expository. As a result of its structure, the *Fons Philosophiae* has a framework with a mission; it seeks to inculcate the reader in how best to assess the good and the bad in knowledge, how to harness the engine of learning that was the Seven Liberal Arts, how to follow the impetus of knowledge on a spiritual/educational *cursus*, and how to seek and apprehend the source of knowledge within the image of the fountain of philosophy. As Hugh puts it in his *Didascalicon,* the arts are ways (*viae*) by which "a quick mind enters into the secret places of wisdom".[266] In the following section, I map out the narrative of the text in a manner that explores both *what* is being taught, and the manner in which the branch-like river structure, the *viae* to knowledge, are embedded into the narrative induced and enable learning through the mapping of visible aqueous motifs onto invisible abstractions.[267]

The 'Watershed' of the Seven Liberal Arts

As the journey of the *Fons Philosophiae* begins, the 'rivers' of the liberal arts are presented as a series of flowing streams, pouring forth from a lofty source to irrigate the plains of knowledge. The liquid representation of knowledge divides into many channels, placed into categories (separate river beds) by the schematisation of the Seven Liberal Arts, irrigating the corners of the mind and drawing the attention of the pilgrim.[268] The river system acts—as the Liberal Arts themselves were thought to act—as a *techne*, a "complete system based on a clearly established

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264 Lines 833–836, Feiss, p. 416.

265 "Godefroy sera un théologien et un psychologue, certainement pas un scientifique" Delhaye.*Le Microcosmus De Godefroy De Saint-Victor*, p. 15.

266 Book Three, Chapter Three, in Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor*, p. 57.

267 Once these *viae* were established, they could be evoked in a more implicit fashion through allegory and allusion, as is the case in chapters five and six to follow. Godfrey is particularly interesting, since he is writing for an explicitly didactic purpose.

268 'The pilgrim' refers to the first person narrator of and traveller within the *Fons Philosophiae*. Although Godfrey makes no attempt to imply that the pilgrim is not him, his diagetic persona needs to be differentiated from Godfrey as author, since he has been placed in a figurative landscape and is, as a result, a figurative personification of the author as well as a synecdoche for all canons regular, and all inquirers into poem's subject matter.

principle—on several different levels".[269] In the *Didascalicon*, Hugh of Saint-Victor claimed that three levels of understanding were needed for reading: an understanding of what ought to be read, the order of reading and the manner in which things ought to be read, or to be imbibed.[270] The *Fons Philosophiae*, written in the didascalic vein as it is, seeks to provide induction into these necessary traits. It provides, through water, a gradation of knowledge based on its aqueous characteristics (purity, pollution, aesthetic appeal, taste, colour and so on), an order of reading predicated on the mapping of the river, and an account of the manifestations of 'reading' into the liberal arts in the form of a series of sights, vistas and figures encountered upon the journey. Initially separated, a survey of each river led the assayer to learn connective strategies—according to Godfrey, for example, "the study of speaking will connect the other [branches of philosophy]".[271]

The landscape of the poem is both a single system for the generation of meaning and the discovery of truth, and a disparate gathering of individual tropes. It is the unifying logic of the river, both holistic connection and dynamic material allegory for the behaviour of learning, that makes meaning from confusion. The unification of knowledge into a single schema by the mutual connecting power of water binds idea to idea, rhetorical *color* to material image, human to environment and source to destination. Unlike the more codified and detailed allegorical landscapes of later centuries—for example, the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost,* Langland's *Piers Plowman,* or Chaucer's *House of Fame*—Godfrey's landscape is structurally and materially as well as allegorically expressive. It provides moral allegory, but more importantly it provides a sense of how everything fits together and the dynamics of motion that drive spiritual life. The structure of the poem is, to a certain extent, the secret to its meaning. The content of the poem is, as has been discussed, largely derived from the Didascalic tradition of the Victorine order. The landscape, although be no means a wholly original formulation, creates a powerful device for the imagination of learning.

The narrative of the *Fons Philosophiae* begins with the awakening of the author from a dream by the experience of a thirst for divine knowledge. This urge, instilled by the motivation of the Holy Spirit, sets the pilgrim upon his way. This passage captures the initial motive force behind Godfrey's allegorical quest for the fountain of philosophy, providing us with a compelling image of piety. The text begins with hope and with trust, an unshakeable belief in the providence of the Holy Spirit, and above all, with faith:

> It was the end of the night and of my sleep, and the herald of day put to flight the
> darkness. I awake, ignorant of what is to come, led by sacred admonitions and a

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[269] J. F. Huntsman, 'Grammar', in David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 58.

[270] Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor,* p. 44.

[271] Feiss, 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *The Fountain of Philosophy*', line 300, p. 399.

godly instinct.

I go out at dawn under rising light, signing myself with the sign of the most holy cross. I ask for the grace of the Paraclete as my guide, saying, "God, direct me to the good you know".[272]

The dawn of a new day heralds the beginning of intellectual rebirth: the Holy Spirit prepares the soul for its journey, drawing it back to its source through the ascendency of grace.[273] A mobile process of self-seeking and divine drawing emerges, for whereas the pilgrim must seek self-enlightenment, God's motivation is ever-present in the form of Grace. The Divine Presence, according to McMahon, "is not only the End of the meditative quest but also its Origin".[274] This event is, simultaneously, the autobiographical beginning of *Godfrey's* training in the liberal arts, and the *generalised* beginning of an implied Victorine *cursus* towards the *Fons.* Its image-making is doubly effective, for it provides not only an account of how one senior Victorine had come to imagine the spiritual landscape of learning, but also a schema for others to follow in his footsteps.

Within the passage, Godrey gives the reader the *sine qua non* of the narrative: a motivation. The faith of the narrator provides the motive force behind the poem, faith in the much-needed guidance of the Holy Spirit in the seeking of the Good. It is within a faithful search for the Good that the reader finds the emotional heart of the poem. It is an expression of the Victorine desire to know philosophy through the Arts while simultaneously sensing the mystical pull of the divine forces at the fountainhead of philosophy. Through the mediating influence of water, the connector of everything, the pilgrim is given the image of a destination, a target for the pull of his heart towards God.[275] Hence the name *Fons Philosophiae,* for this font is both the motivation and the object of contemplation for Godfrey's poem. The pilgrim narrator hurries forward, motivated by a desire hear the liquid sound of knowledge in the distance:

I run more hurriedly, anxious to see, there have been signs holding out hope of quenching my thirst. For soon almost a thousand rivers astound my ears with their sweet murmuring.[276]

The path to knowledge begins, as many interactions with water do, with phenomenal impact. The

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[272] [Noctis erat terminus | et soporis mei, Et fugabat tenebras | nuntius diei. Expergiscor nescius | affuture rei, Sacris ductus monitis | et instinctu Dei. Exeo diluculo | sub exortu lucis, Signans me signaculo | sacrosancte crucis, Gratiam Pacliti | peto mihi ducis, Dicens: Deus dirige | me quo bonum tu scis] Lines 1–8, Feiss, p. 390, Michaud-Quentin, p. 35.

[273] When discussing the relationship between water symbolism and spirituality, Veronica Strang claims that "[b]eliefs about the Holy Spirit hinge on the idea of consciousness, the assumption that spiritual knowledge and wisdom permit conscious action, controlling the unconscious 'animal' drives of 'nature'". Strang, *The Meaning of Water,* p. 99.

[274] McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent,* p. 1.

[275] Or a thirst for God, as in such passages as Psalm 41:2, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God".

[276] [Curro properantius | cupidus uidere, Sitis extinguende spem | signa prebuere; Namque meis auribus | mox obstrepuere, Murmure dulcisono | riui mille fere] Lines 17–20, Feiss, p. 390, Michaud-Quentin, p. 35.

delectable potential of knowledge in fluvial form, as with the experience of all riverscapes, begins before the water itself is visible. The sound of roaring water implies it all: space, force, power and momentum. The roar of the rivers offers hope of plenitude. This is the first of many instances in the poem in which the experience of the river switches from an observer position to introspection of the emotional reaction excited by the rivers. In this manner Godfrey, through the apparatus of his pilgrim persona, explores his personal experiences of learning, and plots an affective path through the stages of learning. This is, to my mind, especially important, for desire for knowledge merges affect, structure and directionality as one.

Once Godfrey encounters the agency and fascination of the riverscape, the poem begins with full force, pushing ever onwards and upwards. In his introduction to the poem, Synan offers a good précis of the path taken by the narrative:

> Guided by the Holy Spirit, Godfrey prolonged his walking-tour in order to trace the streams of learning to their source, to the ultimate fountain, *fons*, from which they rise…Since [the] seven disciplines form an organic unity, an *enkuklios paideia*, Godfrey recognized that he must take them in their proper order, first the three arts of the *trivium* and then the four arts of the *quadrivium*.[277]

Thus, this episode is both a starting point to guide the learner (and simultaneously a narrative of Godfrey's experience) onto the correct path. It is reminiscent of the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*, in which the lost pilgrim is guided by the personified figure of Virgil to begin his quest. The pilgrim narrator of the poem, not long after the start of his journey, encounters the rivers of the Liberal Arts, flowing forth from the source of philosophy. Although the pilgrim is far from the remote and lofty origin of this knowledge, the structure of the poem grants him a vision of the source and a speculation as to its history and nature to guide his journey. He glimpses a vista of the rivers of knowledge in their entirety, from distant lofty origin to mountain's base:

> As I passed I counted seven streams, which I noticed flowed from this source. I committed to memory only the names of these; I did not bother to learn the rest by name.[278]

The reader is granted a powerful image of a figurative landscape, the form of which merges divine foreknowledge and visual memory to create a spatial imagining of the epistemically sufficient conditions of knowledge. The poem both implies that the rivers of knowledge are vast, manifold, and divided into categories, and establishes the superiority of the Seven Rivers of the Arts as a starting point. Through a combination of foreknowledge and engagement with the spatiality of the river in abstraction, the pilgrim makes a journey that is both inductive and mobile. This image feeds into the many methods by which the abstraction that is the Liberal Arts, has been

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[277] Introduction, Synan, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, p. 22.
[278] [Septem tamen transiens | riuos computaui, Quos ab hac origine | fluere notaui, Quorum sola nomina | mente consignaui; Ceteros nec nomine | discere curaui] Lines 41–44, Feiss, p. 391, Michaud-Quentin, p. 36.

represented—most notably in the form of personification allegory as women discussed in chapter three—and yet provides a logic that captures much that other images fail to express.

A part of the additional eloquence added to the imagination of knowledge stems from the complexity of the terrain. The eye of the pilgrim dwells upon a plain at the foot of a great mountain, is struck by its vast height, and is presented with a narrative of origin. It operates, unlike many other allegorical systems, in three dimensions. The terrain described by Godfrey has height, length, and width: it is a fully formed topological entity. The expression of the mental landscape of a place with a distinct series of axes allows both the sweep of the field and the vast height of the mountain to interplay, providing a fitting space for the motion of water and its myriad interactions. Casting the frame of the poem back to the Genesis myth, Godfrey imbues the distant peak of wisdom's mountain with a temporal as well as a spatial pull of origin:

> From the mountain's summit an unpolluted spring (*fons*) was flowing down, which nature had made in the earliest days; it was gushing, living, and inexhaustible. Coming down from the summit, it flowed to the lowest levels.[279]

At several points in the poem, this being the first, the nature of the *Fons Philosophiae*, like a manifestation of divine will, make something of itself visible to the observer. This passage gives the reader, and we observers of the text in modernity, a notion of the space within which knowledge operates, the history of its provision and the manner in which it moves, like water, from lofty origin to human locales. In this case, the panoramic view of knowledge's vista and the lofty height of the mountain establish the preconditions for movement. The pilgrim, as a man on the correct path to knowledge and guided by the Holy Spirit, is gifted with an understanding of how the river network he has encountered functions. Through this vision, one can imagine the sheer power and weight of liquid learning pouring, emanating, downwards by means of a metaphysical 'gravity'.

Every aqueous image must have a solid against which to define itself. In the case of the *Fons Philosophiae*, that solid is the terrain the river flows across. It provides the context within which water may have structural meaning, the immutability against which the mutability of water is contrasted so sharply. This is a *sine qua non* for any image of knowledge, for a schema of learning requires a mediating structure. Any riparian image means little without the terrain that surrounds it, for it is not water alone but its effect upon the earth that nourishes the ground, allows plant life, and allows surrounding ecologies to grow and flourish. The same is true of the image of a landscape presented within the poem—knowledge cannot exist without the supporting stasis of an encapsulating order.

Upon engaging with the seven rivers, the pilgrim discerns the three-fold flow of the

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[279] [Emanabat uertice | montis fons illimis, Quem natura fecerat | a diebus primis, Uiue scaturiginis | inexhaustus nimis, Qui de summo decidens | influebat nimis] Lines 45–48, Feiss, p. 391, Michaud-Quentin, p. 36.

trivium, the closest and most valorised of the seven. Like the three arts of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, these rivers must be traversed and imbibed, their unique tastes discerned, before the pilgrim can approach the remaining four. When understood laterally as a part of three arts learned in sequence but practiced together, this allows the poem to present a vision of the *trivium* as both part of a diachronic journey of discovery and a multi-partite whole. Once again, physical distance is equated with proximity within the path of learning necessary to master the seven. The first rivers to be encountered by the pilgrim represent the initial explorations necessary to follow the path to knowledge. All of the rivers are connected vertically to a common source, and yet each offers a unique insight. At the same time, the rivers must be taken in order, the experience of one allowing a journey to sample the next. The river of Grammar, first in the sequence, is described as a widely peregrinating and nutritive watercourse made straight by intellectual clarity:

> The first of these spreads out on a wider field, and runs down through level ground by a straighter way. This one creates shrubbery with its moisture and makes fruitful with another, fuller stream.[280]

The topography of the river-space reflects the impression of the grammatical art that Godfrey wishes to teach. Through the pilgrim, the reader apprehends the direct and purposeful 'straightness' of grammar, together with the broad range of intellectual 'spaces' with which it engages. The shoots engendered by the nutrition of the river may be imagined to be the products of correct grammar—they are the etymological meanings of single words, their forms, the full potential of diverse lexemes. Like the all-encompassing rivers of the gospels, this river spreads to all corners, nourishing the correct use of language. It is the foundational flow of the *trivium* and of the Liberal Arts.

The nutritive power of this all-pervasive art becomes clear through a transfer of *viriditas* from the art to all that it encounters, demonstrating visually the salutary effect of grammatical mastery. All these traits can be, and were, frequently explained as a core requirement of the liberal arts education, and yet this formulation speaks to the imagination, and thus the understanding, holistically, visually and spatially. The flourishing of spiritual and intellectual life is represented by the greening of the landscape engendered by the waters of the arts. Upon encountering the art of Logic or Dialectic, the abstract narrative continues:

> But the second, crossing hidden places, rocks, and woods, forces its way through rugged, trackless places; its way is narrower and broken (*amfractuosa*), its flow is stronger and more violent.[281]

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[280] [Horum primum spargitur | campo latiore, Et per plana labitur | uia rectiore; Hoc uirgulta tenera | suo creat rore, Hoc fecundat alia | uena pleniore] Lines 69–72, Feiss, p. 392, Michaud-Quentin, p. 37.

[281] [At secundus transiens | loca latebrosa, Rupes, lucos, inuia | frangit scrupulosa; Huius uia scrictior | et amfractuosa, Huius aqua fortior | et impetuosa] Lines 73–76, Feiss, p. 392, Michaud-Quentin, p. 37.

The interactions between fluid and solid, between riverbed and river, begin to emerge. It is as if knowledge, by being compressed by the rigorous constriction of the logical mode, becomes pressurised. It is a sharper, faster, more powerful, less clear-cut, and more dangerous form of knowledge. The image of rhetoric as a powerful, tortuous, treacherous and yet ultimately edifying path, a kind of testing ground, is presented in an imminent, phenomenal form. Through this testing river, we get an impression of the probing, rigorous, attacking tenacity of dialectic. The opponents of the logician lie in wait in the hiding places of the river, ready to demolish the unwary, to find the weakness in their argument. The choice of the adjective *impetuosa* is an interesting one, for it evokes not only the impatience or rapidity of human behaviour, but also the forcible rushing of a river.[282] The twisting and turning of the river represents the chicanes and pitfalls of dialectic and a material image in equal measure.

In the copious image of the river rhetoric, the beauty of verbal adornment is manifest:

> The third, frolicking through charming meadows, makes verdant with varied flowers. The painted hollows of this flood, wandering farther than the other, runs slowly at first, but then rapidly.[283]

The aesthetic quality and fecundity of the rhetorical art forms an interesting counterpart to its fellows, and yet presents an entirely different picture. It winds languorously and irrigates an idyllic landscape of flowers, comparable to the eleventh century *flores rhetorici* of Alberic of Monte Cassino, in which the author claims that the touch of the "sun" of Rhetoric produces "mind flowers" (*flores mentis*).[284] The perceived beauty of rhetoric achieved by the adornment of words appears as the landscape of knowledge bursts into blooms of variegated colour, the tropes and figures or *colores* of rhetoric. Feeding the blooming of the mind, the broad river of rhetoric continues on its way speeding up as the efficacy created by its bounty takes effect. One can imagine the initially pleasant and placid river of rhetoric, nourishing the beauty of adorned language (a garden of the mind, perhaps) while ever speeding up, passing through the rapids of the Ciceronian *constitutiones* (issues), from *dispositio* (arrangement) to *exordium* (introduction) to *narratio* (statement of the facts) into *partitio* (division), *confirmatio* (proof), *reprehensio* (refutation) and finally rushing into *conclusio* (the conclusion).[285] Rhetoric, through this image,

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[282] It is especially interesting to note that the word 'impetuous', although often associated with human behaviour, has a hydrological history. The OED entry for the word refers to a history of impetuous rivers and oceans stretching to the late Middle Ages. impetuous, adj., Second edition, 1989; online version June 2012. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/92386>, (accessed 19 June 2012).

[283] [Tertius lasciuiens | per amena prati, Uernat flore uario | sinus picturati, Huius fluctus ceteris | longius uagati, Primum tardi postea | currunt concitati] Lines 77–80, Feiss, p. 392, Michaud-Quentin, p. 38.

[284] [...radio Phebi tacta flores mens pariat]. Alberici Casinensis, *Flores rhetorici*, ed. D. M. Inguanez e H. M. Willard, Montecassino 1938, p. 33, on *ALIM—Archivio della latinità italiana del Medioevo*, <http://www.uan.it/alim/testi/xi/AlimAlbCasinensisFloresXIretpro.htm> (accessed 18 Jun 2012). The use of the word *flores* in the *Fons* also implies the compendium of passages from *auctores* within a *florilegium* codex, a 'gathering of flowers'.

[285] Martin Camargo, 'Rhetoric.', in Wagner, *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages,* p. 98.

engenders force and beauty in equal measure.

The river *rhetorica,* together with the broad spread of river *grammatica* and the vicious and treacherous bends of river *logica,* forms the three tributaries of the *trivium,* home to the intellectual cultures of antiquity.

> This is the widely celebrated *Trivium,* traveling far to all ends of the earth. On its banks sit many cities, to the citizens of which it once granted pre-eminence.[286]

Within this passage, we get a sense of the pedigree of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, as well as an indication of their widespread influence. Just as the river spreads to all corners of the earth, so too does the legacy of Classical learning. Godfrey betrays a certain nostalgia for better days, in which the pre-Christian 'towns' of scholars drinking profitably from the *trivium* were greater.[287] The distinct symbolism of the river makes itself particularly clear, allowing the truth of the source to peregrinate throughout the intellectual world, enabling the fundamentals of the *trivium* to test the traveller and nourish the landscape of the mind and intellect with their *vis.* This is Godfrey as schoolman, echoing the sentiment of his contemporary John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon* that the *trivium*—especially the dialectic and rhetorical arts and not simply grammar—must be respected and embraced before the sciences can be attempted.[288]

Through Godfrey's intimate topographical and hydrological rendering of grammar, logic, and rhetoric through the imagery of a three-fold river, the reader gains not only an understanding of the *trivium,* but an imaginal construct enabling personal and collective action. In the words of Beryl Smalley, "[a] Victorine was firmly persuaded that 'all good things go in threes'. He was obeying no mere convention when he expounded according to the three senses, but moving to the very rhythm of the universe".[289] Thus, in this context, the threefold art appears to be of particular interest to Godfrey. As a Canon Regular of Saint Victor schooled in the doctrine of his illustrious predecessors Hugh and Richard he appears aware of the significance of the three. To Pythagoras, three was the number of completion, indicative of a beginning, a middle and an end: a full cycle.[290] To the theologian, three was the number of the Trinity, and thus implied a vast array of higher meanings. In the section to follow, however, Godfrey's pilgrim passes beyond the realm of

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[286] [Hoc est illud triuium | late celebratum, Cunctis terre finibus | longe peruagatum, Cuius ripis plurime | site civitatum, Quarum quondam ciuibus | contulit primatum] Lines 81–84, Feiss, p. 392, Michaud-Quentin, p. 38.

[287] As C. Stephen Jaeger has demonstrated, nostalgia for earlier, putatively 'better', eras was a perpetual theme of high medieval, and particularly twelfth-century, intellectual discourse. See *The Envy of Angels* and more specifically, 'Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century "Renaissance"', *Speculum,* vol. 78, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1151–1183.

[288] For a discussion of the *Metalogicon* in comparison to the Victorine tradition, see FitzGerald, 'Medieval theories of education: Hugh of St Victor and John of Salisbury'. Note also that Hugh Feiss has included footnotes referencing resonances of the *Metalogicon* in his *Fons Philosophiae* translation. For the text of the *Metalogicon,* see D. D. McGarry (trans.), *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Art of the Trivium,* Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 1982.

[289] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, 3rd edn.,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, p. 87.

[290] Nigel Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door: Number and Geometry in Religious Architecture of the Greek and Latin Middle Ages,* Farnham, UK, Ashgate, 2007.

the *trivium* into the domain of *scientia*, and eventually knowledge of divinity through the cosmos.

Whereas spiritual knowledge leads the mind upwards to an illumination of what it is possible and desirable to know, worldly knowledge mistakes the path to knowledge as knowledge itself. The aqueous narrative of the *Fons Philosophiae* moves beyond a structural narrative of learning into a treatment of moral purity. This is achieved through a complex hybrid of material imagery, in which the pilgrim encounters the offensive and stagnant pool of the mechanical arts, more akin to swamp than to river:

> When I have come closer, first I find in the fields, at the very base of the mountain,
> a spring drawn up from the mud that people call "mechanical," soiled with the dung
> of wrestling frogs.[291]

By rendering the river of the mechanical arts overcrowded, polluted, and occluded, Godfrey has made an argument on many levels for another path. One gets the impression from this passage that Godfrey has appointed himself as spiritual 'dietician', attempting to judge the comparative nutritive merits of each river he encounters. This would make the mechanical arts a form of spiritual and intellectual 'junk food', appearing to offer satiety yet giving none: empty calories for the soul. Godfrey expresses his distaste for the mechanical arts by combining a lack of spiritual substance with the implication of moral turpitude through pollution.[292] It is important to note at this point that this seems to be a personal bias on the part of Godfrey, for the mechanical arts were commonly thought at the time—even by other Victorines—to remedy indigence of the body, one of the 'three plagues of man' identified in the twelfth-century *Dialectica Monacensis*.[293] By introducing the notion of knowledge valence through a distinction between aqueous purity and pollution, the text offers not only structure, but moral instruction.

In the description of the Liberal Arts, we see the manner in which Godfrey merges the hydrological form of the poem with his desired didactic message. On the topic of 'those who are students of the Arts, the poem uses the motif of drinking to urge caution and a focus on Divine things over hasty, foolish, intemperate clamouring for knowledge:

> Many drink eagerly from these waters. From them teenagers drink, from them adults
> drink. Each does so in his own way, whether he is wise or foolish, although the rash

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[291] [Cum uenissem proprius | inuenitur primo, Locis in campestribus | pede montis imo, Quem dicunt mechanicum | fons obductus limo, Ranarum palestrium | sordidatus fimo.] Lines 21–24, Feiss, p. 390, Michaud-Quentin, p. 36.

[292] In this, Godfrey disagrees with Hugh, whose template he usually follows. Hugh expresses more respect and sympathy for the mechanical arts, quoting the proverb "Ingenious want hath mothered all the Arts" to argue for the necessity of the *ars mechanica.* Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor*, p. 56.

[293] The three 'plagues' of human nature were as follows: ignorance of the soul, indigence of the body and vice of body and soul combined. Against these plagues three remedies were provided: the ability to acquire the liberal arts to school the soul, the mechanical arts to make the indigent body productive and the ability to acquire virtues for the negation of vice. 'Dialectica Monacensis (anonymous, twelfth-century) on the Division of Science', in Gyula Klima (ed.), with Fritz Allhoff and Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, Malden, MA, Oxford, Carlton, Blackwell, 2007, p. 43.

rush is without order.

Inexperienced in things, they run without order, they do not have the clear eye of reason. Therefore, they pass by without seeing the truth, unless finally the evening light shines for them.[294]

Godfrey appears to be arguing for due diligence in the experience of imbibing these waters. In addition to the structure and moral valence of the waters, there ever remains a human element to the interaction with this river. In seeking the source of the river, there is a correct time, and a correct place, to experience each taste, to view each stream, on the path to mystical revelation at the summit. And when the time is right, both in the implied course of Godfrey's own education and the desired rectitude of the reader's, the narrative moves on from the *Trivium* into the realm of the practical arts, the *Quadrivium* of natural philosophy.

The rivers of the *Quadrivium*—the arts of Geometry, Arithmetic, Music, and Astronomy—were characterised by their study of things within creation. Based on the fundamentals learned from the *trivium,* these four arts directed the natural philosopher to the hidden causes, or eternal reasons that dwelt within the *species*, the form, of things. Hidden within the properties of things through similitude the qualities of *microcosmus* of the natural world reflected the higher nature of the *megacosmus*.[295] Through their studies, scholars of the four scientific arts could delve the depths of Godfrey's rivers, bringing up new insights into the properties of things, and hence of their Creator. Classical erudition provided the analytical tools necessary to penetrate the mysteries of philosophy and, through philosophy, theology.

Godfrey describes the scientific arts with religious awe coupled with practical interest, for he placed them in greater propinquity with the *fons philosophiae* than those that had preceded them, and held them in high regard. They were the tools by which mystical contemplation gave way to divine knowledge, the medium for the apprehension of a hidden message. Godfrey calls them the 'practical Arts', flowing together with the 'theoretical arts', or knowledge of Scripture.[296] For a Victorine, they provided the framework and the theory necessary for religious thought through explication. In the eyes of the pilgrim, they seem to blur the boundary between matters mundane and heavenly, imbued with a touch of divine mystery.

By schooling the mind in systems of abstract thought such as arithmetic and geometry, the scholar perceived the fundamental regularity of creation, this hidden matrix of order

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[294] [His fluentis assident | haurientes multi. Hinc adolescentuli bibunt | hinc adulti, Quisquis suo modulo | sapientes, stulti, Quamuis preter ordinem | ruunt inconsulti…Cumque credant alia | gusto suauiora, Prima cece transeunt | ut abiectiora, Nec aduertunt stolidi | quod ulteriora, Sine fundamentis his | ruunt absque mora.] Lines 97–100, 105–108, Feiss, p. 393, Michaud-Quentin, p. 38.

[295] This was the question that preoccupied Godfrey of Saint-Victor in his *Megacosmus*, in which he explored the correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm in great detail.

[296] This division comes from Hugh's *Didascalicon*, in which he splits philosophy into four: the theoretical, the practical, the mechanical and the logical. See Introduction, Taylor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor*, pp. 7–8.

underpinning all things.[297] Through its apprehension, the mind became attuned to abstracts in general, and that once pierced, the veil of nature gave way to an all-encompassing causative schema. The quadrivial initiate could then delve the depths of natural mystery in search of its hidden causes, ultimately tracing them back to a singular cause. In the poem, Godfrey marvels at the transcendent and penetrating scope of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. He sees those who study the four as swimmers in the deep waters of natural mystery, like pearl divers braving the deep for hidden treasures. The poem claims that "all hidden by nature is brought to light, while they dive with watchful care one by one".[298]

The secrets of the Sun's rays, of the tides, of the trembling of the earth: all of these things were the essence of God writ large across the face of the earth. Everything that, although known to have a divine meaning, is obscured by the façade of nature was an object of interest, a natural question as the title of a treatise by Adelard of Bath (*Quaestiones naturales*) implies.[299] Thus, everything within nature was, by its provenance, imbued with the essence of its divine source. "There, marked down by the finger of the Supreme Scribe", wrote Bernard Silvestris in his *Cosmographia*, "can be read the text of time, the fated march of events, the disposition made of the ages".[300] To Bernard, "The sky is like a book with its pages spread out plainly, containing the future in secret letters".[301]

The four arts of the *quadrivium*, merging as one at beginning and end (*uno quod initio coeunt et fine*), were possessed of unique aqueous qualities akin to those of the *trivium*.[302] Each art was a separate flavour of natural philosophy diverging from the unitary and generative matrix of arithmetic. The river is full of counting stones (*plenus calculorum*) through which the water flows, providing both nutritive force and a source of the raw materials of mathematical analysis, and a vessel full of liquids (*plenum vas liquorum*).[303] The use of the word *vas* implies both a vessel and an instrument, thus making the bay of mathematics a meeting of waters and an instrument of all calculation (literally, since it is full of *calculi*) in equal measure. Surrounding the river are crowds of mathematicians playing games and performing mathematical feats with the stones of the river: it is the abode of scientific enquiry. From this nurturing mathematical

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[297] Adolf Katzenellenbogen, 'The Representation of the Seven Liberal Arts', in Marshall Clagett, Gaines Post, and Robert Reynolds (eds), *Twelfth-Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1966, p. 60

[298] [Ab his latens penitus | promitur natura, Dum rimantur singula | uigilanti cura] Lines 333–334, Michaud-Quentin, p. 46.

[299] See Charles Burnett (trans.), *Adelard of Bath: Conversations with his Nephew, On the Same and the Different, Questions on Natural Science and On Birds*, Cambridge Medieval Classics No. 9, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[300] Bernard Silvestris, as cited in Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, p. 117.

[301] Bernard Silvestris, *Cosmographia* 2.1.3 as cited in Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 39.

[302] Line 344, Michaud-Quentin.

[303] [Ex his primus alueus | plenus calculorum, inter quos it murmurans | lapsus fluentorum, ut nequeas tollere | plenum uas liquorum, nisi simul haurias | aliquos eorum.] Lines 345–348, Michaud-Quentin, p. 47.

confluence, the river then splits, pouring its analytical vigour into the rivers of the three remaining quadrivial arts. In the *Didascalicon,* Hugh claimed that Arithmetic was so named from the Greek *ares* (Latin, *virtus*) and *rithmus* (*numerus*), making the art the "power of numbers", namely the fact that all things have been formed in their likeness.[304] The river of arithmetic, flowing as it does into every other art, forms a visual, mobile representation of this notion, a *virtus* of number in liquid form.

The river of music flows in procession from that of arithmetic in Godfrey's riverine network, a mathematical art drawn from arithmetic but more profound (*calculosus etiam sed magis profundus*), pushing along with a measured and melodious sound (*cum canore strepitu*). It is imbued with delightful taste (*gustu delectabilis*) and with pleasant murmurs (*murmure iocundus*).[305] The river sings with many harmonious chords, presenting the mathematically derived art of musical proportion and beauty. Indeed Hugh explicitly claims in the *Didascalicon* that music "takes its name from the word "water", or *aqua* because no euphony, that is, pleasant sound, is possible without moisture".[306] Flowing forth from the pebble filled bed of arithmetic, the river of *musica* visually represents the imagined providence of its art through an abstract hydrological model.

Next comes geometry, the river that passes over mountain and valley (*pertransiens ualles et montana*) and measures whatever one likes, including the heights, lengths and planes of the world (*alta, longa, plana*) and all worldly spaces (*spatia mundana*).[307] The spatiality of the river reflects the true role of measurement, to take measure of the world in arithmetically derived dimensions. In the *Didascalicon,* Hugh traces the origins of geometry to a river, claiming that "this discipline was first discovered by the Egyptians, who, since the Nile in its inundation covered their territories with mud and obscured all boundaries, took to measuring the land with rods and lines".[308] In a fitting reversal, the entity that gave birth to codified measurement by its spatial obscurantism now serves, in the service of God, as measurer.

Finally comes astronomy, the greatest of the streams (*quadriuialium maximus riuorum*), imbued with the waters of all other arts and glittering with the sparkling face of the heavens.[309] The reflective nature of water is deployed to good effect by Godfrey to evoke the trope of a mirrored image of the heavens above doubled through the reflection of a pool of water. This imagery is equally relevant to all of the four, for their purpose is to reflect heavenly mysteries through the mirror of nature. The depths of the waters become a mirror filled with the twinkling

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[304] Book Two, Chapter Seven, in Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor,* p. 67.

[305] [Calculosus etiam | sed magis profundus, cum canore strepitu | labitur secundus, gustu delectabilis | murmure iocundus, armoniam resonat | qualem sonat mundus.] Lines 353–356, Michaud-Quentin, p. 47.

[306] Book Two, Chapter Eight, in Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor,* p. 67.

[307] [Inuestigat etiam | spatia mundana.] Line 371, Michaud-Quentin, p. 47.

[308] Book Two, Chapter Nine, in Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor,* p. 68.

[309] [Cunctas in se recepit | aquas aliorum, Yalina renitet | facie celorum.] Lines 356–357, Michaud-Quentin, p. 47.

of the empyrean realm, launching the imagination from worldly to celestial things and providing a *speculum* of heavenly glory. This image presents a rather different interpretation of the river as a vehicle of mediation; instead of the essence of divine knowledge flowing through the waters of the river, the reflective quality of water appears to present the purity of the stars through its reflective visage.

It was the duty and goal of the quadrivial scholar to penetrate the *integumentum* (outward literal meaning) of nature obscuring the true spiritual causes of Creation. In a peculiar resonance with the previous paragraph, this process *reflects* the divine through the imperfect lens of the natural. For to the medieval Christian mind, the world was a book of symbols, representing through signification the greatness of its Creator. In the words of Albertus Magnus, "the work of nature is the work of intelligence" (*opus naturae est opus intelligentiae*).[310] Thus, once the intelligence behind nature was perceived, one was no longer studying worldly things, but the Trinity. Through the piercing of nature's *integumentum* the four arts of the Quadrivium lead back to their origin, the headwaters of the *fons philosophiae.* It is here where all the flows derive, from the broadly infusing flows of grammar, logic and rhetoric to the delta of natural philosophy. It is as the pilgrim leaves the strivings of the arts behind that he passes into mysticism, into the realm of things divine. The preceding experiences have prepared him to push through the outward appearance of worldly life, and now he must journey into the heart of philosophy, the realm of theology.

Theologia, The Mystical End of Knowledge

At the passing of the pilgrim from the 'base curriculum' of the seven into the realm of theology and anagogy, he enters the waterscape closest to the source of knowledge. The reader feels that the narrative has crossed an unarticulated and yet powerful barrier between matters mundane, and matters divine.[311]

The process of Godfrey's riverine and pedagogical mapping of a liberal arts *techne* begins to lead to a mystical vision of perfection. The most apt analogy would be to compare this transition to that in the *Paradiso* of Dante Alighieri between purgatory and the celestial heavens. Practice is leading to divine insight, knowledge is leading to mystical glimpses of what is above at the source: this, for a Victorine, was the purpose of Liberal Arts school learning. Like Dante's pilgrim, exploration of the ascent to knowledge and exploration of its manifold topographical and human features allows a vision of divine inexpressibility and perfection. The language of

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[310] David E. Luscombe, *Medieval Thought*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 97.

[311] It is especially interesting to note that through the mystical valence given to the *quadrivium*, we gain a glimpse into Godfrey's associative memory and imagination, a very useful insight for intellectual history purposes.

anagogy begins to enter the *Fons Philosophiae* in the form of fluid quiescence, tranquillity and ascendency. The pilgrim begins to glimpse the rarified top of the *mons philosophiae*, the heights of moral 'gravity' and apex of the moral vertical axis. This is particularly apparent in the description of the river of theology, the ascendant theoretical art enabled by the practical quadrivial arts:

> The stream that arises on the heights flows quietly. Its waters are pure, its ways are hidden. On them those who spurn earthly things concentrate; they often exceed the limits of heaven.[312]

At this point in the journey, the pilgrim passes the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium* alike, suddenly converged into a headwater known as theology. At this point the pilgrim reaches the apex of his journey, experiencing the compressed singularity of the unitary source at close proximity. The realm of theology, like the quiescent space of the heavenly Jerusalem, is simpler and yet purer and more esoteric than that which precedes it in the poem. Through the mediation of the river, the reader apprehends that there are many paths by which this purity and unity pass from heavenly space into temporal space. If the poem begins with an understanding of the lofty heights of the mountain brought on by the experience of the senses, then the view down from the heights enables a sense of how the river system, and thus knowledge, is interrelated. It is here that the lofty source of theology emerges, only reachable by the chosen few:

> For theology carries its head higher and reaches towards God by a higher way. Through this way only the celibate strive upward, because it is rare and true wisdom.[313]

Following the straight road of theology, the Pilgrim passed from history into the higher mysteries, finally apprehending the nature of the *Fons Philosophiae* with a revelatory clarity. This journey, as Godfrey presents it, is for the celibate alone, the fruits of an observant, scholarly, and spiritual life. The headwaters of the Seven Liberal Arts is found in philosophy—characterised by Godfrey as the umbrella term for the sum total of the Arts—and the highest part of this is Theology. In the words of Adolf Katzenellenbogen, the Liberal Arts "were essential and, to most thinking until the Age of Scholasticism, sufficient for the ascension to the higher intellectual endeavours, which were the understanding of philosophy (especially sacred philosophy) and, through the reading of God's works in the world at large, the understanding of theology, the highest of man's intellectual attainments".[314]

Monastic thought existed to experience propinquity with the divine through regulated

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[312] [Quod in altum nititur | labitur quiete, Cuius aque munde sunt | semite secrete; His insistent quibus sunt | res mundane sprete, Quibus celi sepius | excedentur mete.] Lines 317–320, Feiss, p. 400, Michaud-Quentin, p. 46.

[313] [Namque caput altius | fert theologia, et ad Deum peruenit | celsiore uia; per hanc soli celibes | enituntur quia, rara sapientia | ueraque Sophia.] Lines 321–324, Feiss, p. 400, Michaud-Quentin, p. 46.

[314] Katzenellenbogen, 'The Representation of the Seven Liberal Arts', p. 61.

spiritual practice and Godfrey's pilgrim, through his journey, has reached the geographical equivalent of this experience at the top of a mountain. In the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, the question of *For what reason has a rational creature been made?* is partially answered as follows:

> [B]ecause one cannot prevail to exist as a sharer of His Beatitude, except through intelligence, which as much as It understands more, so much is It more fully had; God made the rational creature, which would understand the Most High Good and by understanding love (It) and by loving possess (It), and by possessing enjoy (It).[315]

Thus, the human being was *preconditioned* to seek out the source of love and enjoyment embodied in God as a condition of its very existence: indeed, it was its reason for existing. Peter continues as follows: "And if there is asked, "For what has the rational creature been created?" one responds: "To praise God, to serve him, (and) to enjoy Him".[316] God was quite literally the only knowledge for humanity, and all other things were to serve only as vehicles of knowledge, and not an object of knowledge in themselves.[317] Godfrey outlines not only the universal salvation message, but also the privileged role of monastics in this schema.[318]

The image of the fountainhead presented in the *Fons Philosophiae* perpetuates Lombard's rational seeking out and enjoyment of God; the intellectual quest of the narrative is motivated by a thirst aroused by the Holy Spirit, the motivation for the seeking of knowledge, and the apprehension of knowledge enables understanding of the Good. Knowledge of the Good, in turn, leads to a delectable vision of—or imbibing from—the fountainhead itself, the concentrated divine essence. The river of salvation inevitably pours back through time towards the heavenly kingdom, bringing the pilgrim to a vision of a New Jerusalem, a blessed city situated on the banks of a sacred river.[319] This is fitting, for the Apocalypse comes at the end of the Bible, and represents the culmination of salvation and scriptural time, the end of turbulence. Thus, through the realisation of correct exegesis, the spiritual pilgrim may share in this superlative principle in space and time, or more precisely, *outside* or *beyond* space and time. The narrative of the *Fons Philosophiae* enters the kingdom of Christ the Son, passing out of history and into the realm eternal, in which it encounters the fountainhead.

For humanity, time within the Christian salvation narrative tied all things together, linking it to a broader arc of spiritual progress. Within the *Fons Philosophiae*, the 'hydrological cycle' of Godfrey's schema bridged two powerful temporal and spiritual loci: the beginning of human

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[315] Alexis Bugnolo (trans.), 'Peter Lombard, *Second Book of Sentences*, Chapter 4', *Franciscan Archive*, <http://www.franciscan-archive.org>, (accessed November 2010).

[316] Peter Lombard, *Second Book of Sentences*, Chapter 4.

[317] In *De Doctrina Christiana,* Augustine distinguishes between *uti* and *frui,* things 'to be used' and things 'to be enjoyed'. Only divine things are to be enjoyed, the rest to be used. See Book One, Sections 7–12 in Green, *On Christian Teaching*, pp. 9–10.

[318] Similarly, Peter of Celle speculates on the unique spiritual strengths of monastics in chapter five.

[319] [Est ad huius fluminis | alueum fundata, Inclita Ierusalem | ciuitas beata] Lines 497–498, Michaud-Quentin, p. 52.

history and end of perfect knowledge within the Garden of Eden, and the resolution of time and knowledge alike outside of time at the coming of the New Jerusalem. In between these two points, the whole of human intellectual pursuit and the entirety of Biblical history were laid bare. Time has long been equated with a river flowing from origin to destination, and Godfrey's river traces the course of history and of knowledge in equal measure. The river is history, for the order of things stems from an unfolding of God's design within the temporality of Creation. The river is knowledge, for the cause and end of knowledge pour forth as a flow of water does from God, and returns to Him via the inspiration of human minds by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The fountain represents both the pilgrim's journey through life and a kind of pilgrimage back through time to the original creation. Simultaneously, the narrative flows into the anagogical realm—extant as a universal without change or flaw. The river of the Heavenly Jerusalem flows from the divine through typology, appearing throughout the New and Old testaments in the form of diverse miracles back to the creation of the universe, the moment at which the four rivers spring from the primordial paradise.

> A stream flows through the middle of the city, without noise bit lively in effect, an effective cure for every illness; it even drives out death itself.[320]

Reminiscent of the vision of John the Divine in Revelation, the following passage brings the journey to the headwaters of knowledge, to a locus that exists out of space and out of time, waiting in potential for the day of judgement. It is, in effect, the realisation of water symbolism; it is a perfect river from which all others flow, demarcating the boundary between this life and the next, between perfection and imperfection, and between the finite and the infinite. It is the last frontier of the changeable world, the point at which the human passes into eternity.

The essence of divinity, symbolised by the waters of eternal life, flows through the city at the culmination of Christian universal history, tying the highest locus of salvation history via symbolism to every river, every sea, every lake and every spring. This is, to my mind, the strongest anagogical water symbolism within the poem, for it refers directly to the Last Things, linking the spiritual experience of Godfrey directly to the final apotheosis of humanity or, more specifically, to the negation of mortality and beginning of everlasting life.

It is interesting to note that, while progressing ever upwards through a continuum of perfection, the waters of the *Fons Philosophiae* have become increasingly silent and tranquil, as if the very noise of the river represents the chaos and division of worldly knowledge. Within the realm of the spirit, the waters are stilled and their effect is intensified. The chaotic burbling of the river does not belong in this realm, where all is still, tranquil and perfected. In Revelation, the end

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[320] [Labitur per medium | ciuitatis riuus, nullo quidem strepitu | sed effectu uiuus, omnis efficaciter | morbi sanatiuus, et ipsius etiam | mortis expulsiuus.] Lines 525–528, Feiss, p. 406, Michaud-Quentin, p. 53.

of the world is accompanied by the passage "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea".[321] The primordial chaos of the waters has subsided, and only a pure stream of divine consciousness remains. Parent of all water, this river flows from the throne of Christ and the Lamb. It is within this undivided and tranquil state that the essence of divinity may be truly felt, rendered within the *Fons Philosophiae* as the waters from which all other waters spring:

> Here one drink is more sacred (*divinus*) than the rest, known more by experience (*usu*) and less by understanding. The capacity (*sinus*) of my mind does not grasp it completely: namely, that God is one and three.[322]

Once tasted, the waters of the divine river impart spiritual truth. When drinking from the fountainhead of divinity, Godfrey feels the full essence of Christ, and of the Trinity. Intellect is useless in comprehending these mysteries, for such truths require one to *feel* the truth, rather than think it. In the final section of the poem, the pilgrim is exposed to the full providence of the divine essence, filled with knowledge like a cup brimming over, the 'well springing up into eternal life'. The 'body' of the Pilgrim, an allegorical representation of the spirit, has moved beyond Liberal Arts learning towards the theological *telos* of learning, for which Godfrey had boundless enthusiasm.[323]

Water, by virtue of its symbolic relationship with thought, serves as an ideal representative of the principles present within the medieval imagination of anagogy. The rivers of Genesis, once released from the Garden's fountain, spread out through history like a watershed of twisted consciousness. These rivers were dammed, poisoned, navigated and cultivated by humanity, yet these functions belonged to an intermediate stage in the vast arc of salvation history. Once human nature had been perfected and the temporal world had passed away, the very same river that poured from the Garden flowed through the Heavenly Jerusalem. Water carries the history of humanity to its resolution with an inexorable power, its fluvial might representing the possibility of salvation through Victorine celibacy, piety, and learning. This dynamic is followed scrupulously within the *Fons Philosophiae,* culminating in a draught from the perfected river of human knowledge, from which the drinker gains a correspondingly perfect experience of the Supreme Good.

> I tried with the greatest effort to swallow what was poured into my gaping mouth, but reason could not do so by any means, until faith was there with its help.[324]

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[321] Revelation 21:1.

[322] [Unus hic pre ceteris | haustus est divinus, usu quidem notior | intellectu minus, quem nec totum caperet | mentis mee sinus: scilicet quod unus est | Deus atque trinus.] Lines 785–788, Feiss, p. 414, Michaud-Quentin, p. 62.

[323] Feiss, 'Godfrey of Saint-Victor: *The Fountain of Philosophy'*, p. 384.

[324] [Hinc infusum patulo | gutturis hyatu, Transglutire maximo | studiui conatu, Sed hoc nullo ratio | quiuit

The force and providence of this flow overwhelms the rational faculties of the soul, washing away the old and imperfect human form. Like the divinely mandated Flood of Genesis, this overflowing overwhelms and renews, bringing about the conditions needed for salvation in the form of knowledge. More specifically, the message of a distinctly human salvation is shared with the heart. The doctrine of the Church on earth taught the story of Christian salvation, yet only through a true experience of divinity could one truly *understand*. According to Augustine, "Ideas are archetypal forms, stable and immutable essences of things, not created but eternally and unchangeably existent within the divine intellect".[325] Thus, to understand that which was perfect and unchanging within knowledge (an end that would be the envy of most epistemologies), one must seek out a vision of these universals, these archetypes. In the final seven stanzas of the poem, Godfrey catalogues the truth 'absorbed' by spiritual osmosis from the waters of divinity, describing the historical and soteriological reality at the core of the Christian faith, welling from the *Fons Philosophiae* through divine mandate. In the final stanzas of the poem, the lessons learned from imbibing the draught of divine knowledge focus on the life of Christ, love for humanity, the mode of Creation, the Fall, the Crucifixion and the doctrines of salvation.[326] This is the point of emanation, the very heart of the poem.

The end of the poem, the overwhelming spiritual source of the *Fons Philosophiae*, provides a vision of divine reality couched in the form of a mystical revelation. In the *Vita Prima* of William of Auxerre, an anecdote is told regarding the great Bernard of Clairvaux. According to William, "[H]e once confessed that when meditating or praying, the whole sacred scripture appeared as if placed and explained beneath him".[327] The pilgrim of Godfrey's *Fons Philosophiae* is similarly presented with a holistic vision of the 'modes of creation'. Awareness of context is the most profound gift of divine revelation, a feeling of profundity and an ascendent perception of how Creation 'fits together'. To some extent, it is a brief glimpse into the mind of God that, although imperfect, represents the culmination of Supreme Good. Apotheosis is impossible for the human race within this world, yet through divine intervention, the mind may climb to a spiritual summit, and behold a glorious vision. It is at this perceptive locus that the fountain resides, from which the pilgrim may look back for an elevated glimpse of all that lies before him.

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apparatu, Donec fides affuit | suo famulatu] Lines 789–792, Feiss, p. 414, Michaud-Quentin, p. 62.

[325] Augustine of Hippo, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 46.2, as cited in Anthony Kenny, *Medieval Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 159.

[326] Lines 793–836, Michaud-Quentin, pp. 63–64. This ending is particularly relevant to the treatises thought to follow the *Fons Philosophiae*, the *Anathomia Corporis Christi* (dissection of the body of Christ) and *De Spirituale corpore Christi* (on the spiritual body of Christ). The source of the *Fons*, Christ and the Trinity, leads the reader into a detailed discussion of Christ as corporeal and spiritual.

[327] Bruun, *Parables*, p. 30.

Conclusion: The *Fons Philosophiae* as a Pedagogical Hydrology

By following the narrative, we can see the didactic purpose of the *Fons Philosophiae*: an embedding of knowledge into a riverine structure. The structure of the poem leads us through a complete course of knowledge previously walked by Godfrey. It outlines his life and the revelations gained from studies in the Abbey of Saint-Victor, and yet it overtly attempts to instruct the novice in the subtleties of this path. The poem is a personal narrative that reflects and constructs a model of self, a didactic narrative that constructs a set of desirable revelations in a mnemotechnical schema and a salvation narrative tracking the course of the human soul through a spiritual ascent and back into the heights. It is a cosmological narrative that maps out the great *macrocosmos* and the *microcosmos* of the human body, a philosophical primer that instructs in the *auctores*, and a satirical piece that lampoons those thinkers with whom Godfrey disagrees. All of these qualities are embedded in, and enabled by, the image of the river. More than a biblical allegory or an exegetic device, the hydrological abstraction that resides within the *Fons Philosophiae* is a structural articulation of Victorine—and to some extent twelfth-century— knowledge through a familiar aqueous material image.

Through the *Fons Philosophiae* and the stylistic and structural conceits of Godfrey of Saint-Victor, this chapter has sought to achieve a triple goal. First, it brings new critical attention on a text and author that have received little attention within discourse on the twelfth century. Second, it explores the form of the poem as a unique expression of natural imagery and its structural logic linked to hidden interconnections and forces within monastic and broader medieval thought. Finally, it visualises the hidden processes of medieval metaphysics and hermeneutics, albeit through the prism of a single text and author, that demonstrates both the visualisation of the invisible and the putative structure of thought with great clarity.

Once composed, the riverine structure of the poem exerts a form of agency. Material imagery and didactic content merge, we apprehend an abstract hydrology in which the poem is shaped, and in turn shapes, the reader. The river flowing forth from the fountain of philosophy is not simply a trope or a throwaway image, but a dynamic, self-contained, historically embedded manifestation of a Victorine episteme in aqueous form. Just as a waterscape in the world beyond the text is part of a complex web of interactions between human, water and the entirety of a vast ecological web, so too is this abstraction both subject to human interpretation and possessed of the ability to influence the interpreter. The use of the word 'influence' is more than incidental, for the river of the *Fons Philosophiae* does in some sense flow into the mind of the reader, spreading forth from its origins to provide a moveable, dynamic manifestation of knowledge in all of its potency, variability, nutritive power and structural eloquence.

The force of the narrative follows the flow of a river, equating the natural motion of water

obeying the laws of gravity with the impetus of knowledge obeying the neo-platonic principles under which it emanates from the Trinity. The contemplation of the source of the water, the seeking of the mystery behind the seemingly endless providence of water, denotes an ever-ascending mystical contemplation catalysed by Liberal Arts learning. Before the summits of philosophy could be reached, the discerning traveller on the road to knowledge had to learn not to be tempted by the illusion of depth within worldly things. In the *Didascalicon* Hugh claims that nature is "an artificer fire coming forth from a certain power to beget sensible objects".[328]

The *Fons Philosophiae* burns, and flows, with the force of a hidden reality, shaped into a coherent poetics through the labour of the poet. It is an act of literary artifice that brings forth something of the structural reality of Victorine knowledge through another forging, that of divine reality into the natural imagery of the river. It shepherds the reader through a difficult transition, the very academic and comprehensible labours of the Liberal Arts to the unknowable but spiritually intuitable revelations of theology. Thus, the poem is in some sense a shaping of natural matter shaped in turn by the hammer of the Creator.

What bearing, then, does the fluvial structure of the *Fons Philosophiae* have on wider readings of hydrological abstraction in other High Medieval texts? To my mind, the most immediate answer to this question is the refutation of the notion that the use of water—or indeed any ecological imagery—in medieval texts is an arbitrary evocation of tropes and idioms. I end this chapter by proposing that Godfrey demonstrates a strong sense of the flexible and commodious nature of hydrological imagery, albeit framed in a strong legacy of pre-scholastic and scholastic thought. The flexible imagery of water and its structural traits demonstrate a medieval technique of visualisation that links visible to invisible abstraction. Furthermore, the *Fons Philosophiae* shapes an aqueous structure and poetics expressing something of the hidden mystical space through by the Victorines to bridge the gap between things human and divine.

Through this structure and by means of these poetics, the poem uses the eloquence of nature, the agency of the visual efficacy of water to come alive within the mind of the reader, to shape them as it was shaped, to teach them as Godfrey was taught. All of this is made possible through a language of hydrology beyond metaphor and beyond words.

In the chapter to follow, this effect is fragmented into hundreds of smaller evocations—the flurry of communications involved in letter writing. Through the letters of Peter of Celle, we move to a form of rhetorical expression that deploys different strategies to shape a shared space for thought through the abstract imagery of water. In this patterned space, as in the *Fons Philosophiae*, content is shaped into an abstract metaphorical watershed, and yet the challenges of communicating such an image in a very limited number of words required the use of different

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[328] Taylor, *The* Didascalicon *of Hugh of Saint Victor*, p. 57.

affordances. The *Fons Philosophiae* was sent on its way to Stephen of Tournai with a letter commending the text to his learned judgement, a letter redolent of aqueous imagery. In chapter five, I explore the manner in which letter-writing made use of water as an intellectual entity to make connections between individuals and communities, to advocate for moral rectitude, and to share a vision of a socio-religious world in which shared spiritual community connected all with a mediating system of transfers.

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CHAPTER FIVE — "YOUR PEN POURED FORTH GOOD WORDS": LIQUID MODES IN THE EPISTOLARY STYLE OF PETER OF CELLE

The language of hydrology had manifold effects within the monastic imagination. In the diagrammatic logic of Pierpont Morgan M. 982 and the poetic logic of the *Fons Philosophiae*, the structure of a river system came to represent the entirety of education. In the chapter to follow, this method is fragmented into smaller units of rhetorical expression, uniquely adapted to the brevity of letter-based communication. The potency of a complex abstract landscape enabled the flow of meaning throughout the scattered members of the monastic community, whether a personal missive from individual to individual or a sharing of spiritual wisdom from one to many. This chapter studies the correspondence of Peter of Celle, Benedictine, master scriptural exegesis and complex allegory, profuse letter writer and incorrigible borrower of hydrological imagery. Peter, through his letters, patterned and walked through a complex landscape of his own, inviting his readers to follow in his footsteps.

In the title passage of this chapter, Peter begins a letter with a small but effective touch of fluid language. To Richard of Salisbury, he writes "your pen poured forth good words from a good and excellent vessel".[329] Like ink from a quill, like water from a vessel, the act of writing is linked not only to the flow of a stream, but to the whole river system of knowledge and spiritual wisdom. The pen, through this flow, pours forth eloquence enabled by the rhetorical and grammatical arts, offering a link to a wider world of meaning only glimpsed, but imagined through association. At this link between human artifice and a wider ecology of meaning, a simple sentence becomes suggestive of a complex metaphor for knowledge.

Peter of Celle was a twelfth-century Benedictine abbot, correspondence enthusiast, author of many treatises and letters, and ecclesiast of great repute. His corpus has garnered interest due to the richness of historical and social detail found within. [330] Peter has also been studied for his skilful writing: both Jean Leclercq and Mary Carruthers, the former inspiring the latter, have explored and admired his rhetorical style, his allegorical vocabulary and the vivid depiction of his ideas.[331] A man who knew the great and the good of his era and maintained

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[329] [De uase siquidem bono et optimo eructauit stilus tuus uerba bona]. Julian Haseldine (trans.), *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, Letter 166, to Richard of Salisbury, pp. 642–645.

[330] Peter's letters were first edited in nine books in 1613 by J. Sirmond, and reprinted by Dom Janvier in a collection of Peter's works. Sirmond's edition was later included by Migne in the *Patrologia Latina.* The current and definitive collection, collated from a variety of sources, is the product of Julian Haseldine in *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, a compilation of letters with the Latin and facing English translation. It is Haseldine's edition that provides the material for this chapter, unless otherwise indicated. Prior to the release of his Oxford edition of the letters, Haseldine catalogued the process of compiling Peter's corpus in meticulous detail within 'The Creation of a Literary Memorial: The Letter Collection of Peter of Celle', *Sacris Erudiri*, vol. 37, 1997, pp. 333–379.

[331] Jean Leclercq collated and transcribed the Latin of Peter's corpus in *La spiritualité de Pierre de Celle, 1115– 1183* (Paris, Études de Théologie et la Histoire de la Spiritualité, 1946) together with a valuable commentary. Hugh Feiss translated the Leclercq edition into English in *Peter of Celle: Selected Works* (Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1987), with further commentary. Mary Carruthers made use of both the original Latin

prolific communication with them, Peter has gained recognition for the same skill that also motivates this chapter: the complexity of his figurative evocations. Leclercq, a fellow Benedictine, was drawn to his medieval forebear by the complexity of his monastic ideas and the eloquence with which he expressed them. Carruthers, a scholar of memory and image making, was drawn to the power of his mnemotechnics and evocation of a spiritual landscape.[332] Peter demonstrated a spatial awareness of the waters of knowledge within his letters, and through their flow gave and received spiritual nourishment. And so in a letter to Hugh of Cluny, Peter delves deep into a shared intellectual space, delighting in its treasures and sating the thirst of his heart:

> Thus I rejoice at your worthiness, I am amazed at your eloquence, I run like the thirsty deer to the fountains of knowledge, to the deep well of thoughts, to the sweetness of exhortations.[333]

Playing upon the wording of Psalm 41:2, there is evidence of a desire for both religious expression and of the reception of learned ideas. The river that flows between ideas connects thinkers through a network of associations. As in the *Fons Philosophiae*, the thirst for divine knowledge motivates both inspiration in the writing of and edification in the receipt of a letter. Within the landscape of letters, water is both local and personal—the monastery fountain, the millpond, the *lavatorium*—and yet evokes something grander and more far reaching—the rivers of Paradise, the tropes of Scripture, the flow of waters from Eden to Jerusalem. The small scale spaces of human interaction mirror the little things within intellectual life—inner contemplation, small works of spiritual toil, personal and domestic life. These, like all sources of water, ultimately link to the grand narratives of Christian moral life—eschatology, salvation history, the universality of Christ's teachings. Water, like the endlessly intertwined tropes of small and large scale moral life, bridges scale. Within monastic letters, we apprehend the ability of water to illuminate not only grand macrocosmic details and spatially extended hydrologies, but small glimpses of ideas flowing past. It reveals focused evocations of larger interconnections for a single point, the infusion of water into the language of the everyday, the personal, and the social. Peter, through the evocation of landscape imagery, paints a picture of spirituality through what Carruthers describes as "a sight-seeing pilgrimage", playing with "variations of tempo and mood, the *colores* of the journey determined in each site".[334]

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and the Feiss translation in *The Craft of Thought*.

[332] Mary Carruthers has described his style as "couched in the commonplace tropes of meditative reading which include […] the language of educated *memoria*". Within her chapter '"Remember Heaven": the aesthetics of *mneme*', Carruthers devotes a case study to the mnemotechnical aesthetics of Peter within *On Affliction and Reading*. This reading, enclosed as it is within such a seminal work, provides invaluable connections between Peter's thought and Carruthers' broader methodology within *The Craft of Thought*, p. 108

[333] [Proinde exulto ad dignationem uestram, stupeo ad eloquentiam, curro sicut ceruus sitiens ad fontes historiarum, ad profunditatem sententiarum, ad suauitatem exhortationem], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 32, to Hugh of Cluny, pp. 120–121.

[334] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 109.

Peter's aqueous rhetoric fits into what Tim Ingold terms reading and writing as "modalities of travel", a tradition within a broader category of mind-walking. When viewed in this light, Peter and his correspondents participate in a collective self-imagining of the monk as "wayfarers, travelling in their minds from place to place, and composing their thoughts as they went along". This process "pulls in" ideas of places already visited, shaping an abstraction from prior experience.[335] The landscape in which Peter's mind walks is ecological, its aqueous elements forming an interconnected waterscape. By briefly alluding to the broader context of this letter-world, Peter can reveal an entire world of imagery and meaning densely encapsulated in a short rhetorical flourish.

Peter of Celle and His Letters

Peter of Celle (c. 1115–c.1183) was abbot of Montier-la-Celle (by c.1145) and Bishop of Chartres (c.1181).[336] Born at Aunoy-les Minimes to a Champenois family of the lesser nobility, Peter is thought to have been a monk for some time at the Benedictine monasteries of Saint-Martin-des-Champs and Montier-la-Celle—former home of Robert of Molesmes, founder of Cîteaux—before becoming abbot of the latter.[337] Peter later became Abbot of Saint Remi de Rheims from 1162 to 1181 and succeeded John of Salisbury as Bishop of Chartres for the last years of his life.[338] Unable to attend the Third Lateran Council due to ill health, Peter was denied the opportunity to become a cardinal despite being described in a letter of nomination to Alexander III as "by far outstanding among the other abbots of [his] land".[339] Peter was a regular correspondent of many of the key church figures of his age, including Peter the Venerable, Hugh of Cluny, Thomas Becket, and the brothers John and Richard of Salisbury. He was an enthusiastic supporter and correspondent of both the Cistercian community of Clairvaux and the Carthusian priory of Mont-Dieu.[340]

A blend of monk and church magnate, Peter demonstrates a mix of priorities in his writing. Described by Ronald Pepin as "a pious man of glad temperament whose interests were never far removed from religious concerns", Peter gravitated between scorn for worldly affairs and a manifest enjoyment of his literary friendships.[341] The fame of Peter in monastic circles is

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[335] Ingold, *Being Alive*, p. 198.
[336] Introduction, in Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, p. xxix.
[337] Mary Carruthers, 'On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument: Chaucer's Lachrymose Troilus in Context', *Representations*, vol. 93, 2006, p. 3; Introduction, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 1; Introduction, in Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, pp. xxx–xxxi
[338] Bibliographical notes in Anne Duggan, *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162–1170: Letters 176–329*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 1381.
[339] Introduction, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 6.
[340] Carruthers. 'On Affliction and Reading', p. 3.
[341] Ronald E. Pepin, '*Amicitia Jocosa*: Peter of Celle and John of Salisbury', *Florilegium*, vol. 5, 1983, pp. 140–141.

attested by Nicolas of Clairvaux, who in a rapt letter exclaimed that "[b]efore I set eyes upon you, I loved you, and the basis of the love was the testimony to your piety, which I heard of from religious men".[342] His network of correspondents was extensive, spanning northern France and southern England, and imparting a sense of spiritual friendship to many of the contemporary intellectual elite.[343]

In contrast to the more concise style of his official correspondence, Peter's personal missives are somewhat turgid, highly figurative, prolix and often cryptic.[344] Julian Haseldine describes some sections of the letter as "strings of quotations and allusions [that] run together and rise in a crescendo of biblical vocabulary to create a sort of scriptural compendium on the theme or subject-matter at hand".[345] Carruthers remarks upon the "sheer volume of lumber in [Peter's] memory" and his willingness to gather it together in such a great concentration without editing.[346] I argue that this complexity stems not from bombast, but from the evocation of complex thought-worlds through the practice of the rhetorical arts.

> What these collections […] present, to contemporaries and to posterity alike, is a controlled and selective image of the author, a distinctive literary persona. This was typically built around a number of themes which portray the author in his or her chosen light […][347]

Its goal was both political and social, its technique deliberate and subtle. Filled with allusive games created to engage and edify his educated friends and correspondents, Peter's letters are rich grounds for primary source analysis for those interested in his style.[348] As what Mary Carruthers has described as "a pastiche of (mixed) metaphors and tropes of memory", Peter's style provokes a multifaceted evocation of a literary landscape to be explored by the reader, its mysteries interpreted.[349] Each evocation is a glimpse into a landscape of learning with water flowing across its length and breadth.

It is important to note, as Jean Leclercq reminds us, that the intense demands of medieval letter writing are a key component of their meaning. The task of letter writing in the Middle

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[342] Julian Haseldine, 'Understanding the Language of Amicitia. The Friendship Circle of Peter of Celle (c. 1115–1183)', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 20, 1994, p. 238.

[343] By 'friendship', as Haseldine (p. 239) points out, we should understand a wider network of political and social ties than can be encapsulated by the modern use of the word. Haseldine, 'Understanding the Language of Amicitia', p. 241.

[344] Although turgor is often taken as a synonym for grandiloquence , its material imagery presents another story. Turgor is a swelling beneath the surface, a distension caused by a hidden build-up of fluid. This can be seen as a positive quality within medieval thought: the swelling of meaning within a contained vessel. Furthermore, turgor is a distinctly fluid swelling, suggesting the possibility of a bursting forth upon the release of pressure.

[345] Introduction, in Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, p. xxiii.

[346] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 109.

[347] Haseldine, 'The Creation of a Literary Memorial', p. 336.

[348] Although Haseldine has argued that Peter "has not been admired recently as a stylist" due to his "highly wrought, often enigmatic prose [lacking] the fluency of a John of Salisbury or the urgency of a St Bernard". Introduction, in Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, p. xxiii.

[349] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 109.

Ages was a time consuming and energy intensive task; one "engraved" a letter, "sculptured" it. To write, one scored the blank parchment—already a product of significant labour—as if by striking (*cudere*), transforming the very process of putting quill to parchment into an act of forging. The parchment, "even after careful preparation, always offered a certain resistance to the goose quill or the pen".[350] The brevity demanded by the *modus epistolarius* was necessary, for one never knew how much parchment would be available. The pieces of parchment used for personal letters (*schedulae*) were scraps, inferior in quality to the premium pages reserved for manuscript production.[351] We often forget what an age of communicative ease we inhabit; the medieval letter writer existed within an economy of communication entirely different from our own.

Within this tradition, the task of letter writing was neither convenient nor casually undertaken; the extraordinary attention to detail and prolific correspondence of Peter of Celle was no hobby, but a labour of love and effort. The very effort invested in letter writing is a clear demonstration of his devotion to the art and its incumbent labours. Although some of his missives are lengthy, addressing a group or a community, others are brief and yet potent. Peter, in alliance with his friend John of Salisbury, demonstrates an aversion to the pedantic excesses of "logic-chopping" in vogue at the time in the Paris schools, preferring instead to write vividly and without pedantry or excessive didacticism.[352] When the rigors of letter writing are considered, one begins to apprehend the need for densely illustrative language. Giles Constable has described medieval letters as "quasi-public literary documents" that were "often written with an eye to future collection and publication". They were to be correct and elegant, rather than original and spontaneous, and yet the mode of their elegance was a form of literary performance.[353] Written to share in impeccable form and maximum clarity, letters required compelling rhetoric to draw interest.

The aqueous simile formed part of Peter's wider strategy of communication; for the flowing of a river could be seen to resemble a flow of ideas, the ties that bind ideas great and small. The text goes further, giving examples of the simile as a device of great flexibility that could be employed within rhetoric for excitation of emotion in the hearer, whether for praise or censure.[354] The same is true of the metaphor, another device of figurative speech much in evidence within medieval rhetoric. If an argument can be *like* a river or knowledge *like* rain, then it becomes possible for a *rhetor* to use the language of nature to explain matters of human discourse. Furthermore, the structural logic of water could stand in for the many parts intermingling and functioning to form a figure for contemplation or for discussion.

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[350] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 177.
[351] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 177.
[352] Pepin, '*Amicitia Jocosa*', p. 149.
[353] Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, Typologie Des Sources vol. 17, Turnhout, Brepols, 1976, p. 11.
[354] Caplan, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, p. 387.

The Tongue of the Pen

For Peter of Celle, the act of shaping letters with the pen is rendered an act of metaphorical 'speech', a flow of words as a flow of ink. The act of writing upon the page and the pouring forth of words from the mouth were merged through metaphor, an enterprise made particularly significant through monastic valorisation of contemplative silence. A telling example occurs in a long-delayed letter by Peter to Richard of Salisbury, a frequent correspondent. In an attempt to placate Richard, potentially irate at Peter's tardy correspondence, the *exordium* (hortatory greeting) of the letter renders this silence a natural event, an inevitable drought of words. It is clear that it is in Peter's best interest to place culpability in deterministic natural forces, and a watery motif appears to address this need:

> Although 'there is speech in my tongue' from lack of knowledge, yet I have in my hands sign of the fullness of friendship. The springs, which in previous years have burst and opened causing 'a flood of many waters' have this year failed and run dry, causing a dearth of vegetation and trees. This dryness was able to touch the tongue indeed and the throat but did not touch the vein of love [...].[355]

Peter emphasises the new flow of communication to his recipient while apologising for the aridity of past correspondence—a rhetorical flourish that one suspects stems from apparent guilt over the inconstancy of communication on the part of the author. The textual flow of words blends seamlessly with the flow of water, presenting a composite image of great persuasiveness. The correspondence between Peter and Richard, rendered as a flow, fluctuates between a flood and a state of drought. Only through regular correspondence can the interpersonal connections of love continue to flow. Through the wider sharing of epistolary communication to the wider monastic community, this love could continue to spread and divide until many could listen to the words shaped by the tongue of the pen.

As an analogy of form and of function, the letter and its network of movement can be seen from a distance as a pulsing network of interconnections linking site to site, mind to mind. Flows of ink, flows of words, and flows of interaction span area of correspondence covered by letters. The experience of Julian Haseldine in compiling Peter's letters into a unified corpus has shown that the capture of such a complex network is problematic, and often provides only a small survey of a wider and more complex reality.[356] Many of the letters written to friends and acquaintances by Peter of Celle possess a strongly oral quality: the feeling that the letter is captured speech written for a group of listeners. This is unsurprising, given the essentially oral nature of the *dictamen*, a word stemming from the verb *dico, dicere,* 'to speak'.[357] A letter, by this

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[355] Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle,* Letter 165, to Richard of Salisbury, p. 643.

[356] See the introduction to Haseldine, 'The Creation of a Literary Memorial'.

[357] Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France,* London, Boydell & Brewer, 2010, pp. 6–7.

token, is speech captured in written form for transportation, but never fully divorced of the need to become words. Focused upon reading and hearing rather than on rhetorical speech in the Classical sense, these words supplemented monastic communication in contexts conducive to a contemplative life. Orality remained implicit in the *ars dictaminis,* since letters were often dictated to a scribe and read aloud by the recipient. For the monastic, regulated by licit and illicit contexts for speech, the proxy speech of a letter had a unique set of resonances. The letter spoke when the monk was silent, and the reproduction of letter-speech took place in the mandated setting of contemplation and spiritual devotion.

Speech had long been associated with the fluidity of eloquence, mingling the flow of words from the mouth with the enriching flow of a river. This was a natural correlation drawn between human faculties and their similes within the natural world. The outpouring qualities of water from an unseen source are a comfortable fit with the effluent nature of speech bursting forth from the mouth. This bond had a long pedigree, for in Plato's *Timaeus*—a text much read, glossed and commented upon in the twelfth century—this bond was stated as a fundamental property of human speech and intellection:

> Our makers fitted the mouth out with teeth, a tongue, and lips in their current arrangement, to accommodate both what is necessary and what is best: they designed the mouth as the entry passage for what is necessary and as the exit for what is best: for all that comes in and provides nourishment for the body is necessary, while that stream of speech that flows out through the mouth, that instrument of intelligence, is the fairest and best of all streams.[358]

The art of rhetoric—the adornment of this 'best of all streams' through eloquence—appears as a naturally flowing image of riparian bounty wedded to a human outpouring of words. This notion required modification in the monastic context, rendering the natural nourishment of speech through a textual metaphor of spiritual wisdom. The simile is powerful, for both bring nutrition (one natural, the other intellectual). If human beings—be they contemporary or medieval—come to think in fluid terms, then the thematic qualities of their narration of ideas undergo a shift towards liquidity. Thus, by engaging with the poetics of fluidity within rhetoric, this chapter seeks to reorientate medieval speech with that to which it bears a mimetic resemblance within nature. Through the analogy of nature, flowing speech is transmuted into the flow of the pen and of the mind in written rhetoric.

Through an explicit link between human eloquence and the flowing forth of a water source, Peter's rhetoric demonstrates water's material imagery imbued into human expression. The valorisation of speech, however, is not as simple as it first appears. The motif of verbal expression becomes especially important in a monastic context, for it was the practice of reading and writing

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[358] Donald J. Zeyl (trans.) *Timaeus*, Indianapolis, IN, Hackett Publishing, 2000, 75e, p. 70.

and not that of speech that formed the licit medium of communication. The speech of the letter is all the more valuable, for it captures the expression of words without the need to utter them. When uttered in the reading or sharing of a letter, these words were not superfluous, but instead served as food for contemplation in future silence. The absence of speech in favour of reading, confession and prayer, claimed Peter in *The School of the Cloister,* "nourishes the good seed under the shade of its seal and causes it to reach maturity".[359] Peter is explicit in communicating this point:

> If a tongue which tries to negotiate a slippery spot moves without the support of the fear of God, it finds it difficult to avoid slipping and it will most likely fall. Let it not open the doors of the lips, except perhaps on the Sabbath day and the first day of the month in order to recall future rest and the joys of the saints. In such silence holy desires, peace of heart, and tranquillity with true purity increase and multiply.[360]

In the figurative world of letters, redundant speech is substituted for the salvific effects of inner discourse issuing from a spiritual mouth. Letters and letter writing, as Jean Leclercq has described, "harmonised with the silence enjoined by the *Rule,* with the vow of stability, and with cloistered life".[361] Furthermore, he argued, "[m]onastic milieux, their intense life, and their psychology could not be really understood if their epistolary literature were not taken into account".[362] "They enable us […] to picture almost every aspect of monastic life; indeed, some aspects are known to us only through letters".[363] In a world of contemplative silence, the textual representation of speech and the permitted reading and recitation of these words offer an insight into a shared inner monologue. The landscape of letters offers representations of speech acts in a world where orality was a complex phenomenon.[364]

The facility of the tongue and the agility of the pen are fluid modes of communication, and the metaphorical connotations of water evoke both. The outpouring of knowledge from mind to mind formed apprehensible streams of thought to follow with the mind, an intuitive path through the disorder and universal chaos of the world. When recalling the previous missive of Richard of Salisbury, Peter immediately sketches a hydrology of words in which wisdom bursts forth through the proxy of the pen, drenching the pages of correspondence with wisdom:

> […] your pen poured forth good words from a good and excellent vessel, consoling words which call me forth from the 'flood of many waters' to the ark of Noah,

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[359] 'The School of the Cloister', XVIII.1, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 101.

[360] 'The School of the Cloister', XVIII.1, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 101.

[361] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study in Monastic Culture*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1982, p. 176.

[362] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 179.

[363] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 179.

[364] This theme is the productive focus of a collection of essays within the Brepols *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* series. See Stephen Vanderputten (ed.), *Understanding monastic practices of oral communication. (Western Europe, tenth–thirteenth centuries)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011.

which is interpreted as rest, and beg me not only to think about cloistered discipline but also write about it.[365]

Decanting knowledge from the vessel of the mind, the letter becomes a flow of good ideas with remediating effect. Through their purity and clarity, they dispel the confusion of the World, shaping a peaceful world of spiritual friendship. The sea of the world motif, coupled with the stalwart navigating the chaos, sets up a moral drama of compelling complexity. There are, in fact, two forms of fluid motif at work in this passage: the fountain of words, with ink equated to a saving spring and the turbulent ocean as setting. The passage has two functions. First, it reveals a common understanding of a moral, quasi-biblical, moral landscape, or at least an assumption on the part of Peter of such a common understanding. Second, we perceive a rhetorical argument, a mobilisation of flattery to put the reader in an amenable frame of mind. The reminded "not only to think about cloistered discipline but also to write about it" is key, for what is common monastic life without community? The flow of words between correspondents is a reminder that ideas must flow between human being and human being laterally so that many may learn how better to approach the lofty object of their religious devotion.

In making use of these two layers of greeting, Peter has both put forth an image of temporal turmoil, with Peter cast adrift in the distracting affairs of worldly life. The recipient is cast as a second Noah (himself a type of Christ) redeeming Peter with his saving correspondence and inspiring him to write, not only for the sake of the reader, but for his own salvation from idleness. In this context, rhetoric demonstrates both the violent turbulence of Worldly life and the sweet and thirst-quenching nature of spiritual wisdom gleaned through correspondence. In certain cases the boundaries between body and landscape—meaningless as they are within a world of abstraction—twist and blur. In the case below, we observe the constant interplay between flesh and soil, bodily moisture and landscape moisture:

> When [monastics] look out their windows at any time, a mist, distilled by I know not what rains, appears. You would hear their hearts groaning like giants under the waters.[366] Neither are they dried up, although their body be a dry tree, and I wonder whence comes such a lamentation of the heart, since strength has almost given out in the body; whence comes such a flow of tears, since the river of natural moisture has dried up through the river of abstinence.[367]

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[365] [De uase siquidem bono et optimo eructauit stilus tuus uerba bona, uerba consolatoria que me a 'diluuio aquarum multarum' ad archam Noe, qui interpretatur requies prouocant et de claustrali disciplina non solum cogitare sed et scribere exorant], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 166, to Richard of Salisbury, pp. 642–645.

[366] "Behold the giants groan under the waters, and they that dwell with them. Hell is naked before him, and there is no covering for destruction". Job 26:5–6.

[367] [Cum per fenestras suas aliquando prospiciunt, perfusus nescio quibus stillicidiis humectatus apparet. Audires pectora corum tanquam gigantes gemere sub aquis. Neque enim aridi sunt licet lignum aridum sit corpus eorum; et mirror cum uirtus in corpore pene defecerit unde tantus gemitus in pectore, cum fluuius humorum naturalium rigore abstinentie exhaustus sit unde tantus impetus lacrimarium.], Haseldine , *The Letters of Peter of Celle*,

The moisture of the soul contrasts strikingly with the aridity of the austere and celibate body. The moisture of the heart and tears of abundant spiritual contrition are set in contradistinction to the 'dry tree' of the body, an austere desert devoid of concupiscence.[368] In this desert water is all the more precious, a miraculous fecundity of spiritual life brought forth by the observation of the monastic rule. The tree of the body may be dry, but the celibate has a special place in Heaven, an anguished longing from beneath the flood of temporal life. Like the miracle *ex nihilo* of the rock of Horeb pouring forth water into the desert, so too is the spirit a font of salvific force with powerful biblical resonance. All is connected in the cycle of spirituality, and Peter captures both the evaporation of sin and the welling up of virtue through dense Biblical allusion and a powerful rhetorical flourish. It is through the nourishing flow of words, and through the bounty of the pen, that the rivers of community flowed across great geographical and mental distance, bringing the burgeoning twelfth-century epistolary network closer together.

The Agriculture of Community

Drawing on a rich collection of tropes and allegories, Peter frequently sketches out varied and elaborate but small and self-contained *exempla* for the edification of his readers. The effort and dedication that clearly radiates from these paragraphs reveals the amount of emotional investment imbued in his words. His expression of knowledge, through Scripture and through advice, is a powerful investment in a common monastic Good. In *The School of the Cloister*, Peter renders the act of reading as an expression of agriculture:

> [...] reading is a very rich pasturage, in which small and large animals prepare fat holocausts for the Lord by continual browsing, when they ruminate within themselves the sweetest flowers of divine scripture and have nothing else in their hearts or in their mouths. Thus, constant and attentive reading done devoutly purifies our innards of the bones of dead men and the corpses of thought which should be cut out.[369]

In many ways, it is apt to render Peter of Celle as a farmer of souls; more precisely, it may be even more apt to see him as both a farmer and an agriculturalist more broadly. His task is to fertilise the soil for his readers and take care of his herd or flock, to watch over their flourishing, direct the growth of new spiritual vegetation and to eradicate the weeds of folly and vice. Peter makes use of this image in *On Conscience,* admonishing that "[w]e must water, trench, prune and fortify the tender religious life in our novices, until it is rooted underneath and bears fruit

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Letter 28, to Hardouin of Larrivour, pp. 98–99.

[368] The 'dry tree' refers to the Lord commanding "let not the eunuch say: Behold I am a dry tree", for "I will give to them in my house, and within my walls, a place, and a name better than sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name which shall never perish". Isaias 53:3–5.

[369] The School of the Cloister, XIX.2, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 103.

above".[370] This brings the notion of pastoral care to a new level, for one can almost see Peter roaming the abstraction he has so carefully shaped, tending it, protecting the uninitiated from ruin and chiding transgressions.

In such a world hydrological awareness is essential; no agricultural endeavour in the material world can hope to succeed without appropriate irrigation, and the world of abstraction is no exception. There is an economy of what we might call *vis naturae*, the force of nature, flowing through the landscape of Peter's letters. Like water, it transfers from constituent part to constituent part of a vast network, bringing new life and energy in its wake. Correspondence, to Peter, is a field of earth that, like its literal counterpart, must be irrigated with speech, sowed with the seeds of wisdom and harvested for the cause of mutual edification and friendship. The literary *amicitia* shaped by his style translates the reward and erudition gained from spiritual correspondence into new life engendered by the nourishing transfer of moisture into a dry landscape.

In his paternal role as spiritual pastor and 'farmer' of the soul, Peter solicitously and studiously nourishes worlds of moisture and nourishment in the pages of his epistolary corpus. His hydrology emerges through a collection of structural evocations that add up to an effect greater than the sum of their parts. His hydrologies are not only evocations of the interconnectivity of ideas with other ideas, but the vast, dynamic and ever-shifting web of interconnections between monastic communities, between figures of spiritual authority and their diverse admirers. In a missive to Archbishop Eshil of Lund, Peter describes his words as a rain that falls upon the landscape of discourse, permeating the very ground and bringing forth the cultivated bounty of correspondence, a verdant flowering of shared wisdom:

> For the sower first sows in the hope of gathering harvest, then he does not pour out the seed but scatters it, finally he entrusts his seed only to cultivated land. Rain is not at all like this, but loses itself, so to speak, in the bowels of the earth so that afterwards, rising again with the greatest burden of fruit, it brings forth produce thirty, sixty, and on hundredfold.[371]

The agricultural metaphor was a common trope of spiritual language, utilised repeatedly within metaphysical imagery. The image of flowing water transferring celestial qualities from on high into the hidden womb of the earth was a powerful material visualisation. Peter is ever mindful that although the flow of learning is transitory, the effects it engenders endure, inspiring further bloomings of spiritual endeavour in turn. Spiritual learning cannot prosper without an awareness of the interconnections between principles, the structural logic of inner life. In another letter

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[370] 'On Conscience', 67, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 173.

[371] [Nam qui seminat primum in spe percipiendi fructus seminat, deinde non fundit sed spargit, postremo non nisi culte terre semen suum credit. Horum nichil imitatur pluuia, sed se ipsam, ut sic dicam, perdit in terre uisceribus ut postea resurgens cum maxima frugum prole afferat fructum triscesimum, sexagesimum et centesimum.], Haseldine , *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 12, to Archbishop Eshil of Lund, pp. 28–29.

addressing the general chapter of the Carthusians, an order whom Peter greatly admired and encouraged in his correspondence, the spiritual bounty of the priors becomes the outpouring of the sealed fountain:

> That 'garden' of God 'enclosed', that 'fountain sealed up' is watered by a more abundant outpouring as often as the water pipes and channels of the kindly Spirit of God converge in one place, not to fill the cups of Babylon but to purge the dregs of Jacob and to make the barren wombs fruitful.[372]

The one-to-many form of this letter is telling, addressed as it is from one learned master to many disciples. It flows, like a manifold river, from a unitary source for the enrichment of many. The 'irrigative' effect of Carthusian priors is a little exemplum reflecting on the vivifying effect of pious conference. By likening human activity to material interaction through the power of rhetoric, Peter likens the cyclical nature of interpersonal correspondence to the hydrological cycle. Furthermore, the evocation of particular *loci* within Scripture merges physical motion through space with moral action on an individual level, and salvation history as a whole. Within *On Affliction and Reading*, Peter forms the link between the events of Genesis and the profits of reading:

> [Reading Genesis] with the appropriate gratitude you will find out about the first channels of God's goodness, which because of his bountiful fullness, flowed out into the creation of the world and overflowed in the array of the works of the [first] six days.[373]

Peter puts forth a fluid representation of the complexities and fecundity of the sacred page as a means of broader edification and by means of his mastery of exegesis, *figura* and parable. His evocation of Genesis is, in many ways, a typological history of the water within his rhetoric. The original waters divided from one source to fill the world with bounty. Christ, by life and by deed, continued the saga by bringing new vitality to a human race parched by the aridity of the Fall. Peter, like a spiritual type of Christ, seeks to distribute the bounty of his words. This is done not in arrogance (although not without a certain flair) but in imitation. By linking Scripture to water, he ensures the enduring strength of the allegorical link and the irrigation of his correspondents. In the role of biblical exegete, he uses a similar rhetorical devices to that deployed by Guy of Bazoches, his contemporary:

> The fountain of saving doctrine gushes out abundantly, and it brings forth three crystal-clear streams, as it were, in order to irrigate the fields of our minds. It divides the spiritual understanding of the sacred page into three parts, rendering it

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[372] [Refusione uberiore irrigatur 'hortus' Dei ille 'conclusus, fons signatus', quotiens in unum conueniunt fistule et canales benigni spiritus Dei, non ad calices Babylonicos absorbendos sed ad feces Iacob expurgandas et uentres steriles fecundandos.], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 35, to Prior Basil of La Grande Chartreuse and the general chapter of the Carthusian order, pp. 132, 133.

[373] 'On Affliciton and Reading', 15, in Feiss, Peter of Celle, p. 137.

historically, allegorically and morally.[374]

Both of the above passages, explicitly created for a didactic purpose, shed light on the more subtle use of imagery found within the medium of the letter. The smaller landscape of the letter, traversed within the mind's eye, teaches through its form every bit as much as Scriptural hermeneutics. Peter demonstrates a key principle of medieval figurative expression, the scalability of meaning from the large to the small. Water infuses and illuminated at every level, from the microcosm of the *figurae* found within letters to the great flow of time narrated within Scripture.

The fall of rain, as well as the flow of the river, permeates the landscape of the letter. The transfer of knowledge, the blessing of humanity by divine favour and the gifts of Christ's death and rebirth are all likened to the immediate and sensually satisfying image of water falling from the sky. In falling, this transfer of power to earth from the heights participates in a vast web of interconnections, maps of ideas in the image of a hydrological cycle. Rain, to quote scripture, falls on all regardless of their moral worthiness; it is a gift of God's inclusive love:

> [...] I perceive in rain another token of love, that it waters without distinction the fruitful and the unfruitful, the fertile field and the sterile, the chosen seed and the rejected shoot. Is it a mark of virtue or of vice, this prodigality of blessings and favours? But this is of God and no other vice is found in Him but that He is kind to the ungrateful, generous to the greedy, and merciful to the wicked.[375]

Peter continues with his allegory, explaining rhetorically that the verbal *viriditas* of his pen, unlike the narrow attention of one sowing seed, is a universally nourishing influence. Words, like the gift of rain, are to Peter a manifest sign of divine providence, a gift from God. Like Christ, who died and rose once more with the fruit of salvation, the waters that fall to earth as rain, must rise again through the fruit that they irrigate. No matter how recalcitrant or morally bankrupt the readers, eloquent, saving words have the power to spread the Good across the face of the earth. Like the four rivers of paradise watering the corners of the earth and the four gospels that must be heard across the world, sacred words are a universal rain of fluid eloquence. Through this eloquence, it seems, even the most churlish reader will be educated in moral rectitude. Although many of Peter's letters are kindly in nature, the above passage demonstrates that his rhetoric is effective not only for gentler advice, but for stern admonishment couched in a genial framework.

In a letter to his friend John of Salisbury, Peter expands upon his agricultural theme, extending it to a metaphysical grandeur. Peter, through the image of a seed nourished by the germane effects of words, likens his friendship with John of Salisbury to the growth of a great

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[374] As cited in De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, p. 71.

[375] [Aliud…caritatis indicium in pluuia reperio quia sine delectu rigat fecunda et infecunda, fertilem agrum et sterilem, granum electum et germen reprobum. Estne uirtutis an uitii, hec bonitatis et beneficiorum prodigalitas? Sed hoc Dei, nec aliud in eo inuenitur uitium nisi quod benignus ad ingratum, largus ad auarum, pius ad impium existit.] Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 12, to Archbishop Eshil of Lund, p. 29.

bounty from a concentrated beginning:

> You in your wisdom know that 'unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit'. I hope that I will receive back the hundredfold fruit of our little seed, partly through a fruitful watering of celestial dew, partly through the joyous fecundity of the field which the Lord has blessed.[376]

Peter is comfortable in his role as the spiritual agriculturalist in the passage above, sketching out the allegory of a potent seed, collectively shaped through mutual amity and planted within the sanctified field of the monastic soul. Just as the farmer is attentive to his crops, so too is Peter emotionally attentive to the care of friendship. As all farmers know, the effort placed in the cultivation of plant life is returned in abundance upon the fruition of the mature plant. So too is the case in the figurative world of Peter's labours, as he clearly explains:

> For a numerous progeny of blessings arises from the accession of, the best gift, the perfect gift, with the free will of a good man. For where grace flows in by springing with the force of the eternal emanations, what does the soul do except overflow with life?[377]

In this case, the seed planted in the spirit of spiritual correspondence is blessed by divine will, bursting forth as an abundance of eloquent spiritual meaning. Through the mobilisation of an elaborate rhetorical array of tropes, it appears that Peter hopes to impress upon John the profitability of letter writing, and simply to impress him. Ending with a reminder of the lofty providence of grace, this passage is equally a moral admonition, a rhetorical flourish from one skilled practitioner to another, and an expression of pious hope for bounty to come.

The image of a garden within the mind and soul watered by the rain of good deeds and wisdom is understandably well suited to the conventions of letter writing, a genre of medieval textual practice replete with personal and collective spiritual advice. As with Hugh of Foilloy's *De Claustro Anime,* a treatise in which the soul and all of its manifold properties are rendered as a cloister, monastic letter writing often contains a characteristic liking for architectural, natural and agricultural imagery. Peter plays with this trope through repetition, using various *colores* to suit the point at hand.

Through the peculiar and unique material qualities of fluidity, Peter imbues his figurative language with the flexibility of that in nature from which it draws inspiration. Images of eloquence in contrast to the sterility of ignorance demonstrate the peculiar qualities given to

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[376] [Nouit prudential tua quod 'granum frumenti cadens in terram nisi mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet, si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert'. Granuli nostri fructum centesimum spero me recepturum, partim roris superni fecunda infusione, partim agri quem benedixit Dominus leta fecunditate.] Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 169, to John of Salisbury, p. 653.

[377] [Prouenit namque numerosa proles benedictionum ex accessu dati optimi siue doni perfecti cum libero arbitrio boni hominis. Ubi enim gratia saliendo cum impetu eterne emanationis influit, quid anima nisi uita refluit?], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle,* Letter 169, to John of Salisbury, pp. 652–653.

rhetoric in letter writing by the use of fluid language. Rhetoric, through the language of the hydrological cycle and human engagement with its bounty, taps into the language of nourishment and of life. Words thus become regenerating entities, providing fertile ground for the growth of virtue, wisdom and erudition. Through this process, rhetoric presents Peter with the opportunity to link human interior spirituality with something visible within the natural world in a dynamic, nutritive role.

Peter often turns to the task of warning his readers away from the perils of worldly things, an important pastoral duty for a man in ecclesiastical authority. In the example below, from a letter with an implied group audience, the listener is warned of the impermanence of worldly things. The world dissolves away, and only appropriate monastic *contemptus mundi* can allow an appreciation of higher, more appropriate things:

> The varying course of affairs, irretrievably entangled with the instability of worldly things, proves by manifest reason that there is in it nothing stable, nothing everlasting. Anything while worldly we can ever lay hold on runs, flows, flees, slips away, and vanishes. Lack outruns satisfaction, attainment flows beyond the reach of longing, the smoke of glory escapes the precinct of desire, the image of happiness steps away from its possessor, life vanishes from the living because 'while I was beginning he cut me off'.[378]

The fleeting fluidity of worldly things makes a point of comparison with the permanence of Jerusalem's rivers. Both are fluid, and yet one flows from the throne of Christ eternally while the other slips into decay, irrelevance, and negation.[379] Elemental traits emerge within the metaphor: worldly impermanence rises hot and dry like smoke, while spiritual meaning falls cold and wet. In both cases it is the traits of fluidity that sustain the vision of the letter writer, and yet each case focuses on a very different moral message. Fluidity can be seen clearly narrating but not always representing spiritual meaning. That is, the moral message is sustained by the invocation of water's rich biblical and spiritual imagery, and yet the object of interest is something else entirely. The sea of the world, a motif popular with monastic writers, emerges once more within a complex interplay of ocean and human artifice, the stability of spirituality and the wrecking force of sin:

> As long as reason slumbered the barque of conscience in the world was shaken by the troughs of the sea, so that the prow of leading counsel was buffeted by the blows of carnal impulses, and the stern of reasoned judgement was dashed in a collision with dangerous rocks, that is, temptations which rise up frequently. The whole

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[378] [Varius rerum cursus, seculorum uolubulitate irremediabiliter innexus, nichil eternum sibi inesse euidenti ratione approbat. Currit, fluit, fugit, labitur et euanescit quicquid unquam habere potest mundanus usus. Precurrit defectus satietatem, preterfluit adeptio appetitum, effugit instantiam desiderii fumus glorie, elabitur utenti imago felicitates, euanescit a uiuentibus uita, quia 'dum ordider succidit me'], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 59, to Prior Simon and the community of Mont-Dieu, pp. 276–277.

[379] "And he shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb", Revelation 22:1.

perimeter of the soul was spun around in a single gyration into a deep failure.[380]

This passage, once again, shapes a powerful compound image with few words. All is present: the ship of conscience, the seething ocean of the World, the jagged rocks of sin and the abyss of spiritual failure.[381] Together these principles define the interconnectivity, force of motion, promise and consequence of moral life in a single taut passage. Fluid imagery serves to link both the opportunities and challenges of worldly life to the failures and eternal possibilities of spiritual life; all *loci* exist within a complex map of spiritual possibilities illuminated by Peter in his letters, fed by and enlarged through the reader's pre-existing knowledge of Scripture and monastic spiritual beliefs. The space admonishes and encourages by comparing moral *topoi* and spatially connecting them. The abyss, the sea of the world, the river of life, the ship of the Church: all of these figures exist as a shared imagining perpetuated through shared reading, a community imagining of moral life, its perils, and its possibilities.[382]

The more ambiguous scriptural allusions and figurative parables are accompanied by more explicit scriptural exegesis and invocation of paradise, both Eden and Jerusalem. Moral absolutes help to provide ideals to aspire to in monastic life. This reveals another facet of Peter's letter writing style, the letter-as-sermon. Previous examples, although stylised and highly rhetorical, are aimed as a single correspondent: a friend, superior or colleague. The water allegory employed relates more closely to the dynamics of speech, be it the fecundity of spiritual correspondence, the flow of words or the outpouring of the pen. In the passage to follow, Peter addresses a group of his brothers with a salutary message, inviting imagination:

> [...] enter and see the site and arrangement of the city whose broad streets are paved with fine gold, where living waters flow forth in fullness of blessings through glass, or rather crystalline, channels, that is by invisible inspiration, from the throne to each of the cells, as it were, of holy consciences, whether for drinking for the sake of pleasure, of for washing for the sake of cleanliness, of for irrigation for the sake of fertility.[383]

This passage compares particularly well to the arts of preaching, for this is a letter that was undoubtedly written, as much correspondence was, to be read out loud in the classical style for collective monastic edification. The aqueous component has moved from the narration of speech

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[380] 'On Conscience', 58, in Feiss, *Peter of Celle,* pp. 167–168.

[381] I have researched and discussed Sea of the World topos at length in 'Fluid: Fear, Opportunity, and their Ecology', an essay forthcoming in Cohen, *Ecologies of the Inhuman.*

[382] In an interesting parallel, Hugh of Saint-Victor attributes the creation of his *De Archa Noe,* to anxieties within his community of Victorine canons as to the cause of the "instability and restlessness" of the human heart. His response was to create the Moral Ark, a mnemotechnical construct for the imagination and navigation of temporal instability. Zinn, 'Minding Matter', pp. 47–48.

[383] [...intra et uide situm et dispositionem ciuitatis cuius platee sternuntur auro mundo, ubi uitreis canalibus, immo cristallinis, id est inspiratione inuisibili, aque uiue do trono ad singulas sanctarum conscientarum tanquam cellas in plenitudine gratiarum profluunt siue ad bibendum propter gandum propter fecunditatem.], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle,* Letter 42, to Brother A and the Community of Montier-la-Celle, pp. 170–171.

itself to the object, the contemplation of crystalline Jerusalem with its saving rivers. The ultimate end of spiritual moisture, through allegory, links the rivers of monastic piety to their ultimate source and destination outside of time. The anagogical Jerusalem serves as an inspiration for moral behaviour in the temporal world, the two spaces connected by the mediating flow of water. This is an effective rhetorical employment of fluidity, an aide to imagination in a short glimpse of perfection. Images of bodily purity and of the ritual washing away of sin are likewise invoked. By describing the river of eternal life, Peter seems to employ the nutritive qualities of fluidity as a tantalising companion to his moral exhortations. By inviting the reader to see the crystalline streams and imagine the miraculous properties of their waters, Peter includes the implied audience of the letter in his vision of monastic good conduct. The image of flowing water assists in the fecundity of this image, its dynamism, and its purity.

In the next example, Peter's letter makes use of a figurative flow of cleansing spiritual meaning as a tool of moral admonition. In this case, the water is a source of good moral behaviour. As is often the case, the ridiculous wastefulness of failing to take full advantage of this divine bounty is expounded upon at length:

> Keep your vessels clean, for water flows past nearby and within your sight. But is it in vain? But is it without reward? Clearly the indolent and gross negligence of individuals is to be blames if all things are nor pure when for these individuals and abundance of water flows, and suitable times exist in plenty, and love of complete cleanliness is incumbent, and the custom of the order does not stand in the way.[384]

Once the blindness of those who have failed to fully appreciate the flowing bounty of good moral conduct has been exposed, Peter turns to self-evaluation. In a characteristically monastic vein of self-deprecation, he implies that the he has not felt the cleansing effect of appropriate moral contrition in sufficient quantities. The fluid link from God to human being can be interacted with, and the abstract corpus of the soul can be washed by the waters of eternal life. The existence of this link is a source of anguish when ignored, and teaches a lesson to those living the regular life. If one is too observant of the minutiae of monastic life without thought to their spiritual meaning, then the mind is misdirected when true ablution is required within the soul. The water of salvation waits, but must be sought with the heart and not replaced with mundane gestures:

> So it is, I have seen it, I have been present, and if only I had purified my heart as often and as keenly as I have often and incessantly rinsed my hands and face day and

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[384] [Habete uascula munda, iuxta namque et in oculis preterfluit aqua. Sed numquid uane? Sed numquid gratis? Plane supine et crassa negligentia imputanda est singulis nisi sint omnia munda, quibus et copia aquarum redundat et temporis opportunitas superest et amor incumbit totius munditie et ordinis consuetude regragatur], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 62, to G, a priest of Hastings, pp. 285–287.

night, not with tears but with water.[385]

Some of the most powerful hydrologies within Peter's letters emerge through the interactions of the waters within and the waters without. By demonstrating the interconnectivity of inner flows and motions with the wider macrocosmic undulations of the cosmos, Peter demonstrates that the body is tied to all other things. By comparing the cleanliness within—the 'washing' of the heart—with the washing of the body, Peter demonstrates a truly hydrological point. There exists a river of diverse spiritual channels linking the human soul to God at all times, all is connected through Creation. Despite the Fall, the mind can follow this link back to its source. By sharing this link through the broader network of monastic correspondence, the wisdom needed for spiritual edification can spread, nourishing souls and recalling minds to the source.

Conclusion: Rhetorical Flows and Dictaminal Nodes

As a result of his enthusiasm for figurative writing, Peter of Celle crafted not one but many aqueous abstractions within his work, each created for a rhetorical purpose and yet more commodious than his powerful command of metaphor and simile alone can explain. Peter deployed a self-conscious mobilisation of figurative language as a strategy of communication, an evocation with words of a world within the mind's eye. His letters constructed and continue to construct a rich visual landscape filled with complex amalgams of tropes designed to convince, entertain, edify and enlighten. Enabled by a comprehensive understanding of Biblical exegesis and an encyclopaedic knowledge of Scripture, they bring together a vast array of ideas and bind them in a matrix of meaning. To refer back to John Urry, the aqueous rhetorical thought-space was populated by flows, lines of thought-stuff translated into words and moving back and forth between the nodes of a monastic intellectual thoughtscape. It is the mode by which the relay of moral and intepersonal content passed between loci. Peter, as a particularly well connected node in this system, was able to draw upon rhetorical *colores* to set the space for the complex transactions of monastic letter-writing.

Eloquence, a trait often associated with fluidity, fundamental to Peter's epistolary style. Redolent of biblical learning and spiritual reflexivity, many of his letters made use of aqueous motifs in the description of spiritual yearnings, appreciation of spiritual erudition and expression of friendship and good will towards the recipient. Ronald Witt claims that within the rules of the twelfth-century *ars dictaminis*, "[t]he tone of letters, even when they were supposedly personal

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[385] [Sic est, ego uidi, ego interfui, et utinam totiens et tam sedulo cor expurgassem quotiens et quam indesinenter manus et faciem die et nocte rigaui, non lacrimus sed aquis], Haseldine, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, Letter 62, to G, a priest of Hastings, pp. 286–287.

communications, was formal and consciously crafted to evoke the desired response".[386] In the case of Peter of Celle, many of his surviving missives are intended for friends, close acquaintances, or at the very least regular correspondents. Leclercq, a monastic himself, paints a picture of a world of letters in which lack of physical proximity makes friendship more perfect, in which absence ignites spiritual passion, conferring spiritual friendship with the incorporeal intimacy of a relationship with God.[387]

Through vivid imagery of flowing water, the recipient or recipients of a letter from Peter of Celle would have found assistance in the apprehension of the many moral points contained therein. It would appear that the conventions of ecclesiastical—and especially of monastic—correspondence placed a premium on the accessibility of moral learning. For Peter, the flexible moral meaning and physical properties of fluidity served as a narrator of the moral point he wished to expound. The use of fluidity in his letters ranges from a simple use of common human experience of water in daily life to complicated anagogic images of a deeply devotional nature. Within Peter's letters, many requirements of the *ars dictaminis* are met with the aid of fluidity. Aqueous traits combine with a wide range of moral tropes and images to expedite an essential task: the mutual spiritual edification of writer and recipient.

I see the value of Peter of Celle and the *ars dictaminis* as distinct in two key respects. Unlike many of the other interconnected intellectual abstractions studied within this thesis, the medium of the letter allows for a wide variation in scale: one can easily place several evocations of hydrology within a single text. Instead of attempting to capture an entire self-contained thought-world in a single evocation of aqueous imagery, Peter instead makes use of water as a rhetorical *color*. Water, as a distinct register of rhetorical expression, is extremely versatile and engages imaginatively with Scriptural typology, spatiality, motion, nutrition, germination and the cyclicality of nature, to name but a few. Water is rich and flexible, flowing through the mind as ink flows across the page from the nib of a quill. The multivocality of water bridges the boundaries between ideas, transcends scales of being, and allows for great rhetorical agility. Peter presents a glimpse into a world seldom seen: the hidden correspondence of the twelfth-century letter writing community. We, as observers, can never truly inhabit this world and yet, through the accessibility of an environment predicated on abstraction, it appears to us in the mind's eye. As Mary Carruthers has dedicated a great deal of research to demonstrating, the likeness of something experienced appears within the realm of abstraction as an enabling device for comprehension and memory. In the unique realm of the letter, every sentence is precious, crafted

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[386] Ronald G. Witt, 'The arts of letter-writing', in Alastair Minnis, and George A. Kennedy (eds), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Vol. II: The Middle Ages,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 71.
[387] Introduction, in Leclercq, *La spiritualité de Pierre de Celle,* pp. 18–19.

with precision as a gift for the intended recipient or recipients. In the monastic realm—predicated as it was upon strategies of non-verbal communication and dependent as it was upon the tools of inner contemplation—a complex image for the apprehension of truths great and small is a great gift indeed. Peter of Celle was a skilled rhetorician in all endeavours, and yet his epistolary practise presents a vast collection of views into a shared imagining, into a landscape walked by the minds of the monastic communities. Within such a world, the endless dynamism of water brought new ideas into the realm of comprehension, infusing intellectual life with a pouring forth of good words.

What can we learn from this image of monastic thought? First, it is certainly an episode of image-making in practice, and illuminates many subtleties within the relationship between materiality and abstract image. In a world of correspondence predicated upon the efficacy of its abstractions, it is valuable to undertake a sustained analysis of the process by which images communicate abstract meaning. Second, it demonstrates the unique material and structural qualities of water in the practice of rhetoric. It supports the notion that simply mapping biblical allusions and classical tropes is not sufficient grounds for an understanding of the imagination at work, both within letter writing and within a wider milieu of abstract communication. There is something mercurial and yet redolent of natural patterns within non-figurative abstract imagery. Third and finally, it demonstrates the point that has often been made regarding Peter of Celle by highlighting the skill of his epistolary style. Beyond content, Peter was a truly committed communicator, seeking to illuminate the inner world with the enlivening and vivifying power of words.

Finally, Peter and his letters demonstrate with great clarity that textual communities are not about sharing ideas alone, but can to some extent embed the form of their transfers into the abstract realm. Through the medium of the letter, the reader and writer can co-compose a world shaped from the stuff of nature. The waters of good words, like the flow of a river, bring life to every corner of this would, nourishing the carefully cultivated pieces of wisdom cultivated therein. Letter writing is a process of transaction, and yet the flowing riparian bonds that bond disparate minds together demonstrate that this transfer is not occasional or staccato, but continuous. A system of epistolary communication, like a river system, brings life when it flows with freedom and restriction, and yet leads to aridity and interior depletion when interrupted.

In the chapter to come, the inner bonds of monastic life come into contact and interaction with the landscape of the monastery. The link of spiritual and mundane emerges from a seemingly descriptive account of Clairvaux abbey and its grounds that soon enfolds into the hidden corners of the Cistercian imagination. The moralisation of a managed landscape becomes a mapping of internal landscape upon external environment, and the reciprocal alteration of the

management and interpretation of the landscape. The letter as a machine for meaning shapes a hidden world in which water mediates moral concepts and interpersonal relationships, and yet the evocation of these interconnections within the *Description of Clairvaux* brings inner life in front of the eyes, makes it amenable to the senses, and provides a mirror for metaphysics within daily behaviour.

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Words, in addition to their power to vivify the spirit, also served a key function in the memorialisation and self-explanation of the environment of monasticism. For the Cistercian Order of the twelfth century, scarce established following their break from the greater Benedictine movement, the telling of landscape stories was not only a form of praise of the purity and simplicity of their prayer, toil, and seclusion, but the practice of a powerful and endlessly circular hermeneutic of spiritual place, space, and motion. To be Cistercian was to shape a rich and devotional inner space in contradistinction to an austere exterior—at least such was the rhetoric of self-characterisation. Furthermore, to be Cistercian was to shape the landscape to serve as a vehicle for the cultivation of inner space, and to shape inner space in communion with environment in turn. The role of hydrology in this process, the focus of this chapter, was twofold. Rivers served the community and gave them the means of industry, subsistence, and eventually wealth. Within a rich vocabulary of inner abstraction, waterways were also conduits for the flow of spiritual force within and the industry, subsistence, and wealth of the soul.

In the following chapter, I explore a monastic hydrology that is abstract and material in equal measure. Elizabeth Freeman has argued that it is impossible to fully understand Cistercian spiritual practices without the context of the *res gestae* found within their historical record, and vice versa.[388] It is equally true that narratives of daily life such as the primary source material for this chapter are incomprehensible without spiritual context, and that this context is conversely difficult to understand without recourse to historical narrative. More specifically, the chapter interprets a waterscape with textual and landscape dimensions in which the bonds of monastic landscape as lived experience and monastic space as abstraction of mental and spiritual life merge in a dense web of interpretations and influences. It seeks to ask, as Ellen Arnold puts it. "how nature informed cultural metaphors, how it shaped the monks' religious identity, and how religious culture in turn influenced how the monks acted in their landscape, and used their resources".[389]

Monastic landscape-eloquence is particularly evident, and particularly fruitful for reading, within the textual treatment of water. These expressions of a space or spaces enlivened by water constantly and commodiously imply mystical and moral meaning and yet interact with nature on a mundane and practical level. The effect of this process is a monastic landscape consciousness in which hydrology participates in daily life and an implied cosmic order in equal measure. The

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[388] Elizabeth Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150–1220*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2002, p. 14.

[389] Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape*, p. 3.

resulting space is a *locus sanctissimus*, shaped and defended by its monastic inhabitants.[390] The river, in this context, infuses a space that is holy, useful, pleasant and testing in equal measure, providing sacred balm, labour, enjoyment and challenge. By reading those texts created by monastic orders in order to narrate the meaning of landscape—the Cistercians, in the case of this chapter—we can aspire to a historical and a literary goal; the former an exploration of Cistercian thought, the latter an exploration of the intersections of environment and literature within Cistercian textual practice.

The establishment of an interrelated hydrology is often evident within monastic narration of spiritual abstraction using the language of landscape. Once this process has occurred, constructs of thought appear that show the signs of this natural engagement: ideas become hydrologically charged. A good example occurs in the sermons of Aelred of Rievaulx, in which a vision of paradise is linked to the internal landscape of the soul:

> If we should wish, my brothers, to have this [second] Adam [Jesus Christ] dwell in our heart, we must there prepare a paradise for him. May the soil of our heart be fertile and fecund, abounding in virtues like spiritual trees. May the Spirit be there, like a never-failing fountain which irrigates us spiritually with grace, devotion, and all sorts of spiritual delight. May the four virtues be there, like four rivers which wash us clean of all the grime of vice and render us unsullied and unstained. All this so that we may be fit for the Lord's embrace![391]

Aelred's garden is within and without in equal measure, bringing the topography of paradise to the monastic experience, and the imagery of the material abbey to the invisible world of the spirit.[392] The image works on three levels, for it is an image of the earthly paradise, an evocation of a real monastic landscape, and a figure for the space of the individual soul. In this case, the already-familiar fountain trope forms the primary focal point. The soul-as-garden is both a reflection on the potential of the landscape to influence the qualities of the soul, and the potential of the soul, through the causative nature of its similarity to the garden, to flourish with careful cultivation. The resonance with the *Song of Songs* is strong within this trope. Guerric of Igny plays upon the theme in a similar vein:

> As I see it, the man who enters the Lord's garden becomes a garden himself; his soul is like a watered garden, so that the Bridegroom says in his praise: 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride.' Gardens they surely are, those in whom the gardener's words come true…saying: 'Listen to me, slips of the divine stock: bloom like the rose that is planted by the watercourse; give off a sweet smell of incense, blossom like the lily'

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[390] For a discussion of this process in the monastery of Cluny, see Jennifer Harris, 'Building Heaven on Earth: Cluny as *locus sanctissimus* in the eleventh century', in Isabelle Cochelin & Susan Boynton (eds), *From Dead of Night to End of Day: The Medieval Customs of Cluny / Du coeur de la nuit à la fin du jour: les coutumes clunisiennes au Moyen Age*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2005, p. 132.

[391] Aelred of Rievaulx, Sermon 39:18, as cited in John R. Sommerfeldt (trans.), *Aelred of Rievaulx: Pursuing Perfect Happiness*, Mahwah, NJ, Newman Press, 2005, pp. 122–123.

[392] See chapter five for a repetition of the *topoi* of spiritual irrigation and spiritual purification by Peter of Celle.

[...]³⁹³

Through this process, the causative nature of medieval metaphor superimposes Edenic waters, natural waters and spiritual movements. The result is a world in which the physical is coextensive with the abstract, a quality expressed within literature and philosophy to great effect. As the rivers of the Arts represent the rivers of Eden and Jerusalem through the typological links of the *Fons Philosophiae*, so too does the *Descriptio* merge biblical and spiritual pattern with the space of thought and religious imagination.

Le Corbusier famously described houses as 'machines for living', and in many respects monastic space was a machine for transcendence: its workings enabled the transition from the literal to the anagogical. In a letter to Bishop Alexander of Lincoln penned c. 1129, Bernard of Clairvaux proclaimed that "Clairvaux is itself Jerusalem", and "it is one with the Jerusalem in heaven in wholehearted devotion of the mind, in similarity of life, and in spiritual kinship".[394] As with the two cities of Augustine's *City of God*, there were two realms in which humanity could reside, the worldly city, Babylon, or the heavenly city, Jerusalem.[395] By tying the aqueous components of this trope—the rivers of paradise flowing from a Trinitarian source into the diverse corners of time and space—to monastic spaces, salvation was expressed by the arrangement of the landscape. In such a space, every act was meaningful, every change significant, every connection morally charged. This process became even more complicated in the act of narrative, fixing the perceptions of these bonds in text, and shaping abstract entities of ecological form. Through this image, Clairvaux became more than landscape; it became a vehicle of hermeneutics. The landscape, shaping and shaped by Bernard and his order, came to life, one with Jerusalem and yet engaged in the temporal. It was, as Alfred Siewers has termed it, an 'overlay landscape', in which "engaging story is overlaid in effect on physical topography and geographical features to produce a reciprocally formed culture and nature of place".[396]

This chapter explores the shaping of and encounter with the landscape of Clairvaux Abbey, a space that is in the process of being modified or has been modified by humans, and yet seems controlled by a more than human power—the landscape modifies the modifier. The argument will be broken into two key components, a study of the hydrological register — the collection of *colores* and tropes — of the monastery, and the study of a monastery grounds as an exploration of this hydrology. The textual subject of this chapter is the anonymous *Descriptio*

³⁹³ Guerric of Igny, 'From a Sermon for Arousing Devotion at Psalmody (No. 54)', in Pauline Matarasso (trans.), *The Cistercian World: Monastic Writings of the Twelfth Century*, London, Penguin Classics, 1993, p. 136

³⁹⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Letter 64: To Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln c. 1129', in Gillian R. Evans (trans.), *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works,* Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 282.

³⁹⁵ As Bernard of Clairvaux put it, "between Babylon and Jerusalem there is no peace, but continual war" [*Inter Babylonem et Ierusalem nulla est pax, sed guerra continua*], Bruun, *Parables*, p. 210.

³⁹⁶ Alfred Siewers, 'Pre-Modern Ecosemiotics: The Green World as Literary Ecology', in Tiina Peil (ed.), *The Space of Culture: the Place of Nature in Estonia and Beyond*, Tartu, Tartu University Press, 2011, p. 41

Positionis seu Situationis Monasterii Clarae-vallensis (Description of the Arrangement or Position of Clairvaux Monastery), an admiring twelfth-century description of the famous Cistercian abbey and its grounds.[397] In her preface to the source, Pauline Matarasso notes that "[t]he author could have been a frequent visitor to Clairvaux or a member of the community", and that "by the way he writes and from the fact that he feels no need to establish his bona fides, the latter seems the more likely".[398] In the *Descriptio*, aqueous features—rivers, ponds, springs and the technologies of their management—are described by the author in a manner that blurs the literal, the allegorical, and the anagogical to such an extent that a truly hybrid hydrology is formed. The goal of the chapter is to establish the framework for reinterpreting Cistercian thought in light of its deployment of nature-textuality, and to focus on the manner in which the waterscape feeds into such an analysis. Furthermore, it seeks, through the *Descriptio*, to describe and interpret an abstract hydrology shaped by and informing monastic thought structures.

Mental Image and Cistercian Landscape

Imagination of the abbey landscape collapses the spiritual and quotidian within the landscape, bringing the resonances of Eden into the world of the human, and the human into alignment with the Edenic tropes of landscape. The result is a constructed expression of what is defined as 'third nature' in the terminology of ecosemiotics, an "entirely theoretical or artistic, non-natural nature-like nature".[399] Distinct from 'zero nature' or nature as a thing-in-itself, this abstract hydrology is a cultural emanation of natural experience. Always tied to a phenomenal nature by experience, it is an unnatural nature mediated by the language of experiential nature. As the following section will propose, the ingredients of a hydrological third nature derive from a dense interconnection of biblical trope, salvation symbol, allegory, social expression and daily experience. Kull defines a third nature as an 'image from image' projection, using the example of reading about nature in a book or viewing it on a screen, and the narrated nature of Cistercian foundation literature conforms to this model.[400] It is an ecological imagining through the medium of a text that is itself derived from a more immediate image fashioned from natural engagement.

It is, to my mind, a productive exercise to read the monastery and its landscape setting as a negotiation between the ordering and regulation of material space, and the liberation of abstract

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[397] The *Descriptio Positionis seu Situationis Monasterii Claraevallensis* can be found in Patrologia Latina 185:569 (retrieved via *Patrologia Latina: The full text database*, Anne Arbor, ProQuest, 2012), and has been translated into English by Pauline Matarasso (*The Cistercian World*, pp. 287–292).

[398] Matarasso, *The Cistercian World*, p. 285.

[399] Kalevi Kull, 'Semiotic Ecology: Different Natures in the Semiosphere', *Signs Systems Studies*, vol. 26, 1998, p. 355.

[400] Kull, 'Semiotic Ecology', pp. 356–357.

space from the constraints of literal expression.[401] Scholars have commented upon a hidden force within the symbolic make-up of the monastery, a desire to place the stamp of its spirituality upon the pre-existing landscape.[402] A notable example of this position is presented by Antonio Sennis:

> A community's inclination to control and organize the surrounding landscape - which was reflected in the frequent reference to a monastery as the place (locus) par excellence - was, as well as having some direct administrative purposes, also justified by the fact that, in the monastic mentality, secular space had a meaning only insofar as it was purged by the presence of a monastery. In addition, a monastery was a sacred place, the point of intersection between the material and spiritual worlds, and as such, a place of power.[403]

For the Cistercian Order, we can take this claim further still by positing a more complex and reciprocal cycle: Cistercians read meaning in the landscape, but also modified the landscape to produce further meanings, and conceived of themselves in turn as spiritualised by the landscape. Although modern readers may see the monastery as a landscape, complete with all the traits that define it as such for us, we can learn a great deal by breaking the monastery down into a series of moralised *loci* that fit comfortably within monastic thought.[404] The *Descriptio* reveals a distinctly medieval space or collection of spaces within the monastery, a place in which meaning flowed between the spiritual and material realms, carrying with it the abstract impressions hidden within topographical imagination.

Chris Fitter describes four key drives or matrices present within landscape perception: the *ecological* (subsistence and security), the *cosmographic* (world-order, agency and structure), the *analogical* (similarity and symbolicity) and the *technoptic* (learned codes of experience and aesthetics).[405] Only when these four matrices have been merged do we gain a truly holistic perspective and understanding of the world that surrounds us. Previous studies of monastic landscape-consciousness have often focused more on the ecological nature of the monastery, its role as a grower of crops, maker of goods and economic power, or the cosmographic and purely abstract theological practices of its inhabitants. This is by no means an inaccurate picture of

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[401] Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2001., p. 1.

[402] See Gerd Althoff et al., *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; Arnold, 'Engineering Miracles'; Walter W. Horn, 'Water Power and the Plan of St. Gall', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1975; Antonio Sennis, 'Narrating places: Memory and Space in Medieval Monastaries', in Wendy Davies et al. (eds), *People and Space in the Middle Ages: 300–1300*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006.

[403] Sennis, 'Narrating places', p. 276

[404] In their introduction to *Anglo-Saxon Horizons*, Clare Lees and Gillian Overing observe that "the notion of "landscape" is post-medieval, but that of locus or place is thoroughly medieval - a familiar element of monastic habits of thought and knowledge". Clare Lees and Gillian R. Overing, 'Anglo Saxon Horizons: Places of the mind in the Northumbrian Landscape', in *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p. 2.

[405] Chris Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Toward a New Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 15

monastic life, yet it is strangely incomplete; there is also a two-fold and reciprocal interaction of the cosmographic and ecological that, through analogy, is imbued with a 'technoptic' meaning. Fitter proposes that "'landscape-consciousness' with all its apparent 'immediacies' of perception always in fact subsists within broader, historically local structures of 'nature-sensibility' that condition, direct and limit it".[406] The 'landscape-consciousness' of the monastic orders, in this schema, extended beyond the realm of agriculture and economy into contemplation of the link between humanity and their God. The monastery was an expressive 'ecosemiosphere', a meaningful, physical environment that functioned as a 'nature-text' intimately bonded to physical environment.[407]

In order for a vision of paradise to be realised once more within the soul, the cosmographical model of the lost Eden was replicated within the material world. Through the duplication of the garden within the landscape of medieval Europe, we may see the "otherworldly" becoming "less other".[408] Still a transcendent symbol, the essence of Eden was no longer locked in an inaccessible past, forever consigned to be something that humanity had possessed, strictly in the past tense.[409] It could break into the present tense, allowing for the gardens of the world to be experienced as a moment of paradise still extant within a world accessible to humanity, even if the form and inspiration remained hidden. The remediation of space within the monastery brought the monk, the community, and even the landscape out of the *regio dissimilitudinis* of temporality and into a closer relationship or similitude to the unity of God.[410] The past of Eden and the future of Jerusalem were brought into the present, collapsing the schism of temporality and shaping a space for the healing of the Fall.

To escape from the trap of dissimilitude from God within the temporal landscape, a spiritual egress was required through a seeking of self-knowledge. A self-reflective reading of landscape, especially landscape in the form of a could-be paradise, encouraged this process. The symbolism of paradise had been that of "a realm utterly heterogeneous, sublimely incommensurable", and a temporal landscape could become an anticipation of paradise.[411] As Fitter claims, the alteration of the landscape is a divine amelioration of dissimilitude through labour:

> Monastic penetration, clearance and planting of wilderness on this view may be not merely a propaedeutic to paradise regained, but itself the paradisal state anticipated. Thus, in some degree, it may be said that nature exists in potentia, and that man not

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[406] Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, p. 9.

[407] Siewers, 'Pre-modern Ecosemiotics', p. 41

[408] Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, p. 226.

[409] To further quote Fitter, "its reality, like that of Cathay [China], remains marvellous yet becomes more concretely predictable". *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, p. 226.

[410] For a discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux's parable of spiritual movement from the *regio dissimilitudinis*, the great gulf waiting to swallow the carnal, into the Castle of Wisdom, see Bruun, *Parables*, pp. 188–199.

[411] Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, p. 226.

only inhabits the universe, but as God's agent co-creates it.[412]

This is an example of what Howe and Wolfe described as a "specific cosmic resonance" of the medieval landscape.[413] No longer wilderness yet not a city, the monastery occupied a position somewhere between the two. By building and cultivating their monasteries, the monks of the Latin west were in a unique position: they were at liberty to shape their landscape for salvific purposes, and through this process to imagine their role within it.[414] As a result, participation in the shaping of landscape was, on another level of interpretation, a spiritual and moral shaping. The landscape, once so altered, spoke in turn of its implied meaning to new interpreters. It resonated, as Howe and Wolfe put it, with the human and the divine.

Through one strong thread of symbolism, the abbey represented that which was to come: the City of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the new Eden.[415] It is, in its abstract sense, a symbol of heaven on earth within the landscape of the surrounding monastery with all of its "attendant hierarchies" included.[416] For the purposes of this argument, I extend this symbolism outward to include the aqueous elements of interest to this thesis.

Monastic imagination gazed both backwards and forward in time, memorialising the lost blessings of a paradise now passed from human experience, while simultaneously anticipating the new paradise of the Heavenly Jerusalem (both examples of analogical and cosmographic imagination in equal measure). Paradise could be seen, in the words of William McClung, as "a garden at one end of time and a city at the other", remote from human memory yet constantly remembered.[417] Thus, any change to the landscape such as building, cultivation or hydraulic engineering may be imagined as a change towards the image of the garden-city. Bernard of Clairvaux exclaimed, "truly the cloister is a paradise, a realm protected by the rampart of a discipline that contains a rich abundance of priceless treasures".[418]

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[412] Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape*, p. 107.

[413] John Howe and Michael Wolfe (eds), *Inventing medieval landscapes: senses of place in Western Europe*, Gainesville, FL, University Press of Florida, 2002, p. 4.

[414] See Dennis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998; Rachael Z. DeLue, and James Elkins (eds), *Landscape Theory*, London, Routledge, 2008; John Howe, 'Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space', in Howe and Wolfe, *Inventing medieval landscapes*, pp. 208–217; Kyle Killian, *The Landscapes of Saint-Pierre d'Orbais: An Anthropology of Monastic Architecture*, unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2008; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, London, Harper Collins, 1995; Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind's Eye', in D. W. Meinig (ed.), *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, New York, Oxford Press, 1979, pp. 89–102.

[415] In *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, Megan Cassidy-Welch presents a convincing argument that within the monastery, the material space of the church existed as an architectural representation of the heavenly Jerusalem described within the vision of Saint John, in which it is described as a building. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, p. 93.

[416] Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, p. 92.

[417] McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise*, p. 1.

[418] Jean Delumeau and Matthew O'Connell, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, Urbana, IL, University of Illinois Press, 2000, p. 122.

Matthew of Rievaulx (then precentor of the abbey) described his monastery as an Eden within the landscape: "Paradise is among us here", he claimed, "in spiritual exercise, simple prayer and holy meditation".[419] Yet it was a paradise compromised, surviving in a fallen world between heaven and earth.[420] As a result, alteration of the landscape to bring it into greater correspondence with paradise was imagined as not only desirable, but as an allegory for and facilitator of essential spiritual growth. The symbolic topos of the garden enclosed is of particular interest in the study of monastic imagination. Miller argues that "[t]he memory of the prelapsarian garden, the terrestrial paradise and its central feature, the fountain reaching to the four corners of the earth, was perpetuated and transformed [into new forms] in the Middle Ages".[421] The landscape, in this fashion, became a vehicle of salvation symbolism, a road map for internal and abstract triumphs within the soul. Through the out-flowing of the fountain or spring and the flow of the river, the message of Eden could be carried into the world. Hildegard of Bingen claimed that, "[i]t is through the little brook springing from stones in the east that other bubbling waters are washed clean, for it flows more swiftly. Besides, it is more useful than the other waters because there is no dirt in it".[422] Impurities were purged in this paradise; contemplating it sharpened one's powers of imagination, and brought about its realisation in the next life.[423]

Within the monastery, we find the symbolic subset of the fountain. The walls of Eden protected the garden, the plants represented its bounty, yet it was the spring within the *locus amoenus* that generated and enabled. The four sides of the square cloister recalled the four rivers of Eden, the four Gospels and the four Cardinal Virtues. It was from this point that the essence of the spiritual life flowed, the locus at which the hidden essence of the cosmos entered the landscape. It became a welling up and out-flowing manifestation of life, and its symbolic purification and renewal through the auspices of Grace.[424]

The merging of spiritual realms revealed waters that, although hidden, could be brought forth into the confines of the cloister, watering the souls of the monks who resided there. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote that "the object of monks is to seek out not the earthly but the Heavenly Jerusalem, and this is not by proceeding with [their] feet but by progressing with [their] feelings".[425] It was a structured approach to the problem of human imperfection, a fortress of faith and industry with an internal and protected spiritual state 'growing' within its heart. In the

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[419] Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings,* p. 65.
[420] Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings,* p. 66.
[421] Miller, 'Paradise Regained', pp. 137.
[422] Matthew Fox (trans.), *Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works*, Santa Fe, NM, Bear and Co., 1987, p. 292.
[423] Willemien Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm: A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 25–26.
[424] Jeffrey B. Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 14.
[425] Bernard of Clairvaux, as cited in Daniel K. Connolly, 'Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 81, no. 4, 1999, p. 598.

words of Paul Piehler, the imposition of the city into the landscape fortified the mind, creating a city within to mirror the city without.

> As a result of his victories [over the wilderness], the fundamental distinction of human landscape into city and wilderness, known and unknown, undergoes a profound modification: the polarity, once identical in both internal and external consciousness, begins to separate into a physical and psychic dimension, as it becomes possible for man to bear into the wilderness a city within himself.[426]

Keith Lilley has argued that one of the possible 'mappings' of the medieval cityscape makes use of "textual and visual representations which show that the city was understood as a scaled-down world—a microcosm—linking city and cosmos in the medieval mind".[427] When applied to the 'ideal' and 'final' city form of the Heavenly Jerusalem, we see a contracted version of a world to come, the ultimate iteration of cosmos order. The city was ontologically significant, connecting the earthly (human) body with the heavenly (cosmic) body.[428] The human and cosmic principles were points on a progression of salvation narrative spanning the whole of creation. Only when time itself ended could this process come to its conclusion.

Transformed from the unelaborated natural image of the first Eden, the monastery was an "accommodation with the city", a garden city fortified against the ravages of the Fall. A garden enclosed by a mighty city, the crystalline and celestial perfection of the New Jerusalem formed its ultimate inspiration. The elaboration of the first paradisal spring, symbolically represented by the river and its trees within the eternal city, now completed its course.[429] Within the grounds of the monastery, the cloisters and the greenery were a garden enclosed, a paradisal *topocosm*. *Claustrum* implies a 'closed' space, barring the outside world. The fountain or well at the centre of this space, whether artificial or natural, mirrored the geography of Eden.[430] The space or spaces of the monastery, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, "were not places where one sought for pleasant views nor were they designed as a setting to flatter the human ego".[431] Both the cloister within and the fields and gardens without were an amelioration of landscape, a conscious effort to concentrate the reversal of human error and thus transform the world.

Abstract Hydrology and Nature-Textuality

Just as a river flows from a single source and peregrinates to diverse destinations, the rivers of

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[426] Paul Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971, p. 70.

[427] Lilley, 'Cities of God?', p. 296.

[428] Lilley, 'Cities of God?', p. 303.

[429] McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise*, p. 19.

[430] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 138.

[431] Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 138.

paradise spread across the space, time and history of the medieval world, and the Gospels were thought to spread from the teachings of Christ. In a similar manner the text tradition of the primitive Cistercian Order follows a riverine pattern, moving in a one-to-many branch.[432] In the following case study, I explore the anonymous *Descriptio* as a nature-text expressing the Cistercian overlay of abstract and material. I propose that within this nature-text, an abstract hydrology—complete with a full structural logic—is embedded. I approach this text as a significant piece of environmental literature in its own right. I analyse its hydrological registry for insights into Cistercian thought in particular, and High Medieval environmental consciousness in general.

Ellen Arnold has proposed that "medieval authors created continuity between practice and interpretation", and that those seeking to understand monastic environmental history must investigate the manner in which medieval ideas intersect with medieval environmental management.[433] Within the story of Cistercianism, we can discern the intermingling of management and ideology from the first instance. The order, as is the case in its subsequent history, began with a cascade of reforms. Within the *Exordium Magnum* of Conrad of Eberbac, the foundation of Cîteaux and the subsequent daughter houses is rendered in hydrological terms:

> Here begins the narrative of the beginning of the Cistercian Order, how our fathers left the monastery of Molesme in order to recover the purity of the Order according to the Rule of St Benedict and founded the fertile house of Cîteaux which is the mother of all our houses, since from her, as *if from the purest fountain, the rivers of all the churches of our Order flow.*[434]

Conrad, by imagining the story of Cistercian growth as the flow of a great river of piety and vivification, propagated one of the most significant and dearly held tropes of his order, a specifically Cistercian world of water. This particular world of water, both quotidian and metaphysical, merged the biblical, the spiritual and the rhetorical in equal measure.

In Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred*, the description of the valley chosen for the monastery of Rievaulx is a paradise. Cradled by hills, whose "wooded delights" afforded the monks "a kind of second Eden", the valley through which the river Rie flowed offered a vision of divine bounty.[435] Within this new Eden, we see the Cistercian interpretation of nature in human terms begin, as a place for humanity to re-enact better days:

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[432] It important to make the caveat that speaking of a 'Cistercian Order' is somewhat dubious at this point in the twelfth century. As Constance Hoffman Berman has demonstrated, it was not until the late twelfth or early thirteenth century that we can truly speak of any kind of discrete 'order'. See Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe*, Philadelphia, PA , University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

[433] Arnold, 'Engineering Miracles', p. 496.

[434] My Italics. Author's translation of B. Griesser (ed.), *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense sive Narratio de Initio Cisterciensis Ordinis*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 138, Turnhout, Brepols, 1994, in Janet Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2011, p. 21.

[435] Walter Daniel, *The Life of Aelred*, in Pauline Matarasso, *The Cistercian World*, p. 154.

> Spring waters come tumbling down from the highest rocks to the valley below, and, threading their way down narrow clefts and gullies, they widen out to rivulets and rills, uniting the murmur of their softly purling voices in a sweet concert of harmonious sound. And when the branches of the lovely trees clash and part with a rhythmical soughing as the leaves flutter gently to the ground, the blissful listener enjoys a wealth of jubilant harmony and his receptive ears are charmed by so sweet a blending of tumultuous sound, where each of the myriad different notes is yet musically equal to the rest.[436]

The clamour of the temporal works subsided and the melodies of a more perfect and earlier world could be heard, ameliorating the spiritual harshness of human life with a partial image of paradise. In their more rigorous practice of the Rule of Saint Benedict and the increasing focus on prayer over labour, the Cistercian brothers turned their eyes to the heavens, and sought to cultivate a place on earth conducive to heavenly thoughts.

The flow of monks and ideas into the landscape of twelfth century Europe found a space in which the waters flowed in turn throughout the landscape. Spreading from a single motherhouse into every corner of Europe, the growth of monastic sites followed a repeating pattern of multiple transformations. Within their self-narrative, the Cistercians sought out spaces within the landscape untouched by Christian intervention, *loci horribiles* of wilderness and horror within which to do battle, but also *loci amoeni* to transform with Christian resonance. This was an imagining heavy with rhetoric, and tells us more about the desired self-imagination of Cistercianism than the actuality of landscape use. The reality of the situation was far from idyllic, and yet the moral imagining of landscape purity had great power. The imagining of landscape, no matter how fanciful, had a profound effect on monastic life.

The sanctification of labour for the early Brothers and *conversi* transformed toil against the wilderness into a strongly symbolic act. Conrad of Eberbach recounted the dream of a lay brother in which he was plowing a field. In this dream, the brother was not alone, for Christ walked at his side behind the plow, assisting him in his labours.[437] The cultivation of the landscape, like the cultivation of the soul, is undertaken with the assistance of Christ, the 'interior teacher'. By making internal and external striving analogous through metaphorical likeness, the onerous nature of labour as a punishment for the Fall (the sweat of the brow) is absent. This is a motif echoed within the *Description of Clairvaux* of William of Saint Thierry:

> I see them in the garden with hoes, in the meadows with forks or rakes, in the fields with scythes, in the forest with axes. To judge from their outward appearance, their tools, their bad and disordered clothes, they appear a race of fools, without speech or sense. But a true thought in my mind tells me that their life in Christ is hidden in

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[436] Walter Daniel, *The Life of Aelred*, pp. 154–155.
[437] Clifford H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, London & New York, Longman, 1989, p. 181.

the heavens.[438]

The monks labour within the landscape to cultivate their garden-city, yet the true garden grows within each cloistered soul.[439] This is the most strongly defined thread of symbolism within monastic daily life: the cultivation of the spirit into a garden of salvation. Once established, the landscape of the monastery was shaped into a stable form. The fallen influence was exorcised from the site of the abbey, and the establishment of a constantly inhabited and sacred space was reinforced through the daily activities of its inhabitants. The strict division of the Cistercian community between *conversi* and choir monks is also tellingly revealing for the literature of monasticism—exclusive domain of the choir monk—appropriates physical labour as a spiritual metaphor. The abstraction of physical landscape was also a discourse of exclusion, for the conversion of materiality into intellectual materiality gave the virtue of toil to thought, making the illiterate lay brothers a form of proxy exertion, an enactor of the physical acts that gave shape to intellectual space.

Once established, the symbolic meaning of the monastery landscape exhibited symbolism redolent of the self-conscious didacticism that framed its formation, impressing its message upon its future visitors and inhabitants. This meaning, although created through human narration and human landscape consciousness, continued to influence subsequent visitors. This meaning was both remembered by subsequent inhabitants, and modified by the re-performance of the memory. Remensnyder proposes that within the legendary tradition of monastic establishment "[consecrations] could be recalled and their meaning thus made continuously present" after the initial miraculous event.[440] Using the example of Lagrasse Abbey, Remensnyder describes a vision of Pope Leo III in which Christ consecrates the monastery, surrounded by a host of angels. As a consequence of this holy act, a quantity of holy water remains which cures three blind men as proof of its divine provenance. This water is then enclosed in an *ampulla* and placed on the altar, "so that the water might always be kept in memory (*in memoria*)".[441] The same might be said of whole waterscapes, once imbued with some miraculous force and then memorialised as sacred entity by the monks of the monastery. The legacy of sacredness remains—both in memory and in

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[438] Frederick Austin Ogg and Jerome S. Arkenberg (trans.) 'William of Saint Thierry: A Description of Clairvaux c. 1143', in *A Source Book of Mediaeval History: Documents Illustrative of European Life and Institutions from the German Invasions to the Renaissance*, New York, 1907, pp. 258–260. *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, < http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1143clairvaux.asp>, 1998 (accessed 28 August 2012). n.p.

[439] Lawrence describes a story by Caesarius of Heisterbach in which the Virgin Mary, St Anne and St Mary Magdalen "had descended in a great flood of light to visit the monks of Clairvaux while they were toiling at the harvest…and had wiped the sweat from [their brows] and fanned them with their sleeves". *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 180.

[440] Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 81.

[441] Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 81.

the form of miraculous potential—despite the holy event having passed.[442]

Through the monastic lifestyle, believed Saint Bernard, contemplative devotion would lead the soul beyond the outward appearances of worldly life into the lofty realm of divine things. The monastic landscape served to amplify this devotion, so that its inhabitants might transcend the senses and knowledge (*scientia*) of divinity to reach wisdom (*sapientia*) and full participation in the essence of God.[443] The text contains all the ideas outlined thus far, deliberately arranged to display the superlative qualities of every stone, river, patch of soil and blade of grass. It offers an object for contemplation of spiritual life in which each part is related to every other, and to the whole. A journey through the dense interconnectivity of monastic life at Clairvaux reflects implicit interconnections within the inner life of the reader and author.

Reading the Aube in the *Description of Clairvaux*

Even more so than the Benedictine order, the Cistercian order embraced the goal of topographical and hydrographical transformation, presenting their monasteries as human and sacred in equal measure: ordered, managed and intrinsically productive. It is particularly important to note that from the beginning, the *Descriptio Positionis seu Dispositionis Monasterii Clarae-vallensis* frames its narrative not as an allegory, nor as a story, but as something reflecting the true nature of the monastery.[444] "Should you wish to picture Clairvaux", the *Descriptio* begins, "the following has been written to serve you as a mirror (*pro speculo*)".[445] The device of the mirror or *speculum* is a significant one, for it frames the entire narrative not only as a hydrology, but also as a mirror for true interpretation in the tradition of the reflective summary. The use of the term implies an attempt to capture something that is universally true, hidden and comprehensive within its subject matter. The discerning use of speculation as a framing mode for the 'reflective' and holistic nature of the text combines with the reflective and fluid interconnection of its riverscape. Water was, after all, one of the clearest forms of visual self-reflection available before the advent of the modern mirror.

The date of the text is unknown, and yet Matarasso draws an inference from the naming of the place as a 'latter Clairvaux', noting that the description of the monastery places it after 1135 when the elaborate hydraulic network was established in order to open up the acres on the

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[442] This raises the intriguing although tangential notion that monastic rivers become a form of persistent and self-renewing relic within nature.

[443] David E. Linge, 'Mysticism, Poverty and Reason in the Thought of Meister Eckhart', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1978, p. 467.

[444] Title as listed in *Patrologia Latina*.

[445] [Si situm Clarae-Vallis nosse desideras, haec tibi scripta sint pro speculo], *Descriptio*, PL 567A. All English translations are those of Pauline Matarasso. The Latin is presented as an aid to reading and interpretation.

opposite side of the river Aube.[446] The full title of the text is telling: the description of the position (*positio*) or arrangement (*dispositio*) of the abbey. I take this to mean that, in the quest to conjure a true image of Clairvaux within the mind of the reader, the anonymous author focuses not only on the natural site and physical location implied by *positio*, but also on the structural arrangement implied by *dispositio*.

Although the identity of our author is unknown, the intended audience of this text can be inferred from its narrative, as Pauline Matarasso has proposed. It is very much an evocation of a Cistercian landscape, and we can infer that this is likely to be *by* a Cistercian (quite possibly a brother of Clairvaux) and *for* Cistercians. Jean Leclercq claimed that monastic literature favoured "actual happenings and experiences", and was "addressed to a specific audience, to a public chosen by and known to the author".[447] This is significant for three reasons. First, this narrative of an experiential encounter with a landscape is not a work of pure speculation, but a practically grounded exposition with an implied abstract dimension. Second, it is an argument for the metaphysical purpose of Cistercian life, despite its idealised nature. Third, the inference of a Cistercian audience allows us to see the manner by which abstract entities can be embedded within medieval narrative based upon an interpretation of personal experience, and shaping personal experience through the text. The result is a well-crafted device for exposition, as Matarasso eloquently describes:

> Everything is fixed at the moment of perfection as in an illuminated manuscript. This is a landscape with figures, each one rich with meanings and allusions, a medieval canvas stretched on a classical frame, with Ovid peeping like a faun round a tree-trunk.[448]

The *Descriptio* begins with a now-familiar evocation of Clairvaux's paradisal qualities mingled with an Ovidian air of Arcadian serenity.[449] It still possesses all of the tropes of Eden: bounty, amenity and spiritual care, and yet has additional and temporal qualities: utility, productivity, industry:

> The Abbey covers the half of one hillside and the whole of the other. With one rich in vineyards, the other with crops, they do double duty, gladdening the heart and serving our necessities, one shelving flank providing food, the other drink.[450]

The resulting truth of Clairvaux is therefore an evocation of place and landscape, and an

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[446] As described by Arnald of Bonneval. Matarasso, *The Cistercian World*, pp. 285–286.

[447] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 153.

[448] Matarasso, *The Cistercian World*, p. 286.

[449] Although I reiterate, as I did in the introduction, that this seemingly static idyll 'painted' by the author begins to move and to develop once resuscitated within the mind of the reader as a mnemotechnical device.

[450] [Duo montes non longe ab abbatia habent initium, qui primo angustae vallis interjectione distincti, quo magis ad abbatiam appropiant, majore hiatu fauces dilatant: quorum alter alterum abbatiae latus dimidium, alter totum occupat. Alter fecundus vinearum, alter frugum fertilis, jucundum visui, et usui commodum ministerium praebet: dum per devexa latera in altero crescit quod comedatur; quod bibatur, in altero]. PL 569A, Matarasso, p. 269.

evocation of structural utility, and a narrative of amenability to cultivation in equal measure. It is pleasant (*iucundus*) and yet also convenient (*commodus*). The landscape is both a place of joy due to its verdant and fecund soils and greenery, and a place of industry and productivity echoing the internal industry of monastic prayer. It matters not in the world of rhetoric if, as was often the case, the landscape was tended by an ancillary army of *conversi* or lay brothers; the industry echoed the spiritual strivings of the Cistercian order. Although true paradise is impossible on earth, the corresponding enrichment of the soul through trial was clearly a path to heaven for those lacking the education, class or inclination to be a choir monk. The monks (presumably *conversi*) in the *Descriptio* working the slopes of the valley surrounding the monastery were not simply collecting dead brushwood and burning brambles, but performing a spiritual purgation. The weeds have become the "bastard slips (*spuria vitulamina*), which throttle the growing branches and loosen the roots". These weeds must be removed, "lest the stout oak be hindered from saluting the height of heaven".[451] The monks are performing a day-to-day purgation of their paradise, lest the weeds of sin throttle the tender saplings of their spiritual life.

Hermits, monastic pioneers and ascetics—at least within popular imagination— imagined the *locus horribilis* or place of horror and solitude as a space in which to test their holiness. Within this space, the *locus certaminis* or place of trial could be discovered, a recreation of Christ's battle with the wilderness of Judea on a personal or collective level. The goal was a landscape that both remained—at least rhetorically—a desert and yet signified paradise. Through spiritual trial, the *locus amoenus* was born, a recreation of paradise on earth, a landscape fit for the growth and nutrition of the human soul. It is interesting to note that even weeds participate in this landscape's hydrology, for they are identical to cultivated plant life in all but one respect— they are not useful, and in some cases exactly the opposite. Rather than being nourished by good works and springing forth in a manner fitting to human use, they are instead nourished by wildness without intent, performing the role of all post-lapsarian vegetation: to impede human progress. All draw on the waters of the monastery, and yet it is the *telos* of plant life and not its origin that shape the moral narrative.

Once facilitated by an act of sacrifice or a miracle, the edification or redemption of the landscape led to a corresponding spiritual edification, enabled by the outflowing of divine essence into the barren and fallow world left to humanity as a consequence of the Fall. Furthermore, by making the desert green, one could follow the example of the Lord when speaking to Isaiah, who said "[I] will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water".[452] The unremitting moral allegory

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[451] PL 569B, Matarasso, p. 287.
[452] Isaiah 41:18.

of this source is telling, for another of its salient traits is a preoccupation with water within the daily life of Clairvaux. The claim to offer a true mirror of Clairvaux is apparently a promise to present not only a reflection of what is true *visibly* within the monastery, but a sense of its moral, allegorical and anagogical resonances in equal measure. To provide a mirror of Cistercian life that is truly representative of and to a medieval understanding of monasticism, it is necessary to narrate on multiple, simultaneous levels. On each level, the river of the monastery provides the crucial interrelationship of monastery and surrounds, nature and culture, labour and spirituality, time and space. The narrative journey follows the path of its riverscape, a form of physical and metaphysical positioning within the landscape.[453]

The river of the monastery plays a crucial role in the description of the abbey, existing at its heart and gifted with a lengthy description by the anonymous author. Tamed by the monks of the Abbey and "divided up by a network of streamlets" again, as the rivers of paradise divide into streams to water the whole world, the river becomes a typological equivalent of Christ watering the spiritual fruits of the abbey in abundance.[454] The water is at work, for although it seems asleep (*[n]am licet aqua dormitans appareat*), it is in fact always gently slipping away (*pigro tamen decurrit elapso*).[455] Beneath a seemingly indolent surface, the river is filled with vitality ready to infuse and energise the monastery like life-blood.

Consequently, the hydrological dimension of the Clairvaux ecology presented in this text fills both the literal landscape and the spiritual landscape with a fluvial vitality. The energy of the water—their nutrition of the crops, their figurative valence and their ability to do hydraulic work—moves into the self-contained *oikos* of the monastery by pouring forth from the earth and running past the pleasant hills. If we return briefly to the salvific power of manual labour within Cistercian thought, the industry of the water is even more telling. The pushing and striving of the river on its way through the abbey created industry from indolence in the manner of monks pushing and striving through life. An uncultivated wilderness of the soul lacks the directed energy and to strive spiritually, and the natural world responds to ordered control. Not only that but, as the *Descriptio* is at pains to emphasise, the natural world *wants* to work once redeemed from uselessness by the presence of a monastery. It is an abstracted and non-human practitioner of Cistercian life: ordered, industrious, moral and chastened. As an agent in the role of the diligent Cistercian worker, the Aube brings forth produce from the land and cleans away its waste, performing functions with spiritual ramifications; it is human hydraulic alteration that gives it

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[453] David Macauley describes this as 'loco-motion' and 'local motion', circumscribing a territory by means of a journey through it. 'Walking the Elemental Earth: Phenomenological and Literary "foot-notes"', in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (ed.), *Patterns of the Earth in Human Existence, Creativity, and Literature*, Annalecta Husserliana LXXI, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2001, p. 17.

[454] […potius divisus rivulis intercurrentibus] *Descriptio,* PL 570A, Matarasso, p. 288.

[455] *Descriptio,* PL 570A. Matarasso, p. 288.

this ability, and yet it acts independently. Furthermore, the river acts in a prelapsarian capacity, aiding and supporting human industry rather than thwarting it. The river elides human work on the landscape in favour of presenting the landscape element itself as a live purposive agency, fulfilling the will and purposes of God.

We are told that "[t]his water, which serves the dual purpose of feeding the fish and irrigating the vegetables, is supplied by the tireless course of the river Aube, of famous name, which flows through the many workshops of the Abbey".[456] "Wherever it passes", the *Descriptio* continues, "it evokes a blessing in its wake, proportionate to its good offices; for it does not slip through unscathed or at its leisure". The river "sends half its waters into the monastery, as though to greet the monks and apologize for not having come in its entirety, for want of a bed wide enough to carry its full flow".[457] While the monks make use of the river for the production of wealth, we may also imagine the hydraulic systems at work within Clairvaux and other abbeys of its kind as a study in metaphysical imagination. Ellen Arnold identifies similar terminology in accounts of the monastery of Saint-Hubert; the canals of which were described as "fit to serve monastic purposes or uses" (*ad diversos monasterii usus influit*).[458] Continuing, the author thanks God for the river:

> O Lord, how great are the consolations that you in your goodness provide for your poor servants, lest a greater wretchedness engulf them! How generously you palliate the hardships of your penitents, lest perchance they be crushed at times by the harshness of their toil![459]

As a hybrid entity, the river and its surrounds is defined by rhetorically paradisal, useful, and wild qualities equal measure—it redeems and soothes, it offers trial and challenge, and it exhibits an inherent *usefulness*, either *in potentia* or in practice. This appears as a characteristically Cistercian trope in the later *exordia* of the Order. In the thirteenth-century *Exordium Magnum*, for example, a new monastic landscape is turned to the building of mills, to fishing, and to the rearing of livestock, uses which "man finds useful for diverse necessities".[460] The *Descriptio* author ensures that the reader does not miss this point:

> [The river] is most truly shared with us, and expects no other reward wheresoever it toils under the sun than that, its work done, it be allowed to run freely away. So it is that, after driving so many noisy and swiftly spinning wheels, it flows out foaming,

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[456] [Aqua haec piscibus alendis, et rigandis oleribus duplici ministerio servit: cui Alba, famosi nominis fluvius, indefesso meatu fomenta ministrat]. PL 570A. Matarasso, p. 288.

[457] [quasi ad salutandum fratres, et se, quod totus non venerit, excusandum, quippe qui totius capax canale non invenit], *Descriptio*, PL 570B, Matarasso, p. 288.

[458] Arnold, 'Engineering Miracles', p. 495.

[459] Matarasso, p. 289.

[460] [ad facienda molendina, ad proprios tantum usus, et ad piscationem, equos etiam pecora que diuersa necessitatibus hominum utilia] *Exordium Magnum*, distinctio : 1, cap. : 20 (lacuna), linea : 103. *Brepols Library of Latin Texts A (LLT-A)*.

as though it too has been ground and softened [like grain] in the process.[461]

The industry of the monastery, powered by the commodious hydrology of the river, provides the goods that pure backbreaking labour cannot achieve, and in turn 'refines' nature, milling the waters into an entity of superior quality. Within the imagining of the *Descriptio,* the grinding of water-powered mills seeks to rhetorically purify wildness into a 'better' form of nature fit for human interaction.[462] This narrative process allegorises the function of the mill, creating an evocation akin to that of the 'mystic mill' found on a capital within the abbey church at Vézelay. In this depiction, the 'grain of Moses', representing the Jewish law, is ground by Saint Paul into the flour of Christian spiritual insight, shedding the husks of transitory things.[463] In depicting the mill of Clairvaux as a processor of unrefined ideas, the narrative ties in to wider trope of Christian doctrine as the processing of raw material turned to new and fit purposes.

Within the text, the irrigation of the Aube creates a garden of fruit trees and burgeoning wildlife at the rear of the Abbey, "much of which lies inside the great sweep of the Abbey wall".[464] Protected by the enfolding arms of the monastery-as-city, the garden may thrive safe from the depredations of the outside world. Within the *Descriptio,* these fruitful gardens, ideally situated near the infirmary, are a fitting balm for the sick. In a style of description fitting for a classical image of the *locus amoenus,* the gardens of Clairvaux are a shield against the harsh sun of life, creating a salvific shade for the healing of the soul.

> The sick man sits on the green turf, and, when the merciless heat of the dog days bakes the fields and dries up the streams, he in his sanctuary, shaded from the day's heat, filters the heavenly fire through a screen of leaves, his discomfort further eased by the drifting scent of the grasses. While he feeds his gaze on the pleasing green of grass and trees, fruits, to further his delight, hang swelling before his eyes, so that he can not inaptly say 'I sat in the shadow of his tree, which I had desired, and its fruit was sweet to my taste.'[465]

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[461] Ecclesiastes I:3, Matarasso, p. 289.

[462] Although the technology of monastic hydraulics is not within the ambit of this argument, see 'Water Management', in J. Patrick Greene, *Medieval Monasteries,* London, Continuum, 2005, pp. 109–132. For literature with descriptions of medieval water management practices, see Duncan Sayer, 'Medieval Waterways and Hydraulic Economics: Monasteries, Towns and the East Anglian Fen', *World Archaeology,* vol. 41, 2009, pp. 134–150; William H. TeBrake, 'Taming the Waterwolf: Hydraulic Engineering and Water Management in the Netherlands During the Middle Ages', *Technology and Culture,* vol. 43, 2002, pp. 475–499.

[463] Kirk Ambrose, 'The "Mystic Mill" Capital at Vézelay', in Walton, *Wind and Water in the Middle Ages*, pp, 236–241.

[464] […cujus partem non modicam murus occupat, qui abbatiam diffuso cingit ambitu], *Descriptio,* PL 569B, Matarasso, p. 287.

[465] [Intra hujus septa multae et variae arbores variis fecundae fructibus instar nemoris pomarium faciunt: quod infirmorum cellae contiguum, infirmitates fratrum non mediocri levat solatio, dum spatiosum spatiantibus praebet deambulatorium, aestuantibus quoque suave reclinatorium. Sedet aegrotus cespite in viridi, et cum inclementia canicularis immiti sidere terras excoquit, et siccat flumina, ipse in securitatem et absconsionem et umbraculum diei ab aestu, fronde sub arborea ferventia temperat astra: et ad doloris sui solatium, naribus suis gramineae redolent species. Pascit oculos herbarum et arborum amoena viriditas, et pendentes ante se, atque crescentes immensae ejus deliciae, ut non immerito dicat: Sub umbra arboris illius, quam desideraveram, sedi, et fructus ejus dulcis gutturi meo (Cantic. II, 3)], *Descriptio,* PL 569B–C, Matarasso, pp. 287–288.

Quoting the *Song of Songs*, the creator of the *Descriptio* has evoked all of the classic elements of the paradisal garden. The monastic landscape, fed by the nurturing Aube, creates a redeemed space shaped from the imagining of its inhabitants. The curative properties of monastic life appear again in William of Saint Thierry's account, in which William claims that "[at Clairvaux] the insane recover their reason, and although their outward man is worn away, inwardly they are born again".[466] Once formed, the space exerts its imbued agency on new visitors including, it seems, the *Descriptio* author. The river, together with the greenery it engenders, creates a cool, pleasant space in which the harshness of the sun, and of life, is lessened, the soul healed. The greenery forms part of the hydrology, for just as Aelred's spiritual garden was watered by virtue, so too was this space nourished by the Aube.

The above passage provides the clearest example of a phenomenon that is inherent within the merged structure of thought and water, the correlation of aesthetic pleasure with enlightenment. When a landscape is visually experienced and enjoyed, it soaks into the mind in the exact same manner in which revelatory knowledge permeates and enriches the soul: through affect. Through the enjoyment of the burbling river and the pleasant landscape it engenders, the sick man is nourished both physically and spiritually. This can be seen to denote more than the most obvious interpretation, namely that bodily rest and relaxation leads to spiritual wellbeing. We can instead extend the notion, through allegory, to understand that the pleasure and healing of landscape enjoyment is a phenomenal representation of the *internal pleasure and healing* of spiritual nourishment by an invisible source.

The river meanders placidly through the meadows of the monastery, "saturating the soil that it may germinate". This nutritive force then leads to a blessed bounty, "when, with the coming of the mild spring weather, the pregnant earth (*terra praegnans*) gives birth".[467] The river nurtures this new life, acting to "keep it watered [...] lest the springing grasses should wither for lack of moisture".[468] The spiritual and agricultural life of the monastery exist in harmony within this description, for the bounty afforded to the monastery by the Aube echoes a spiritual bounty associated with Christian salvation. The transfer of energy from Divine to human through the cycle of nature passes from point to point within a complex hydrology, its medium the ever-moving water. Its vivifying effect, allegorically understood, is the the infusion of Cistercian life with salvific power.

The effect of this blessed water-fed fecundity is evident within the meadows, described as "a spot that has much to delight the eye, to revive the weak spirit, to soothe the aching heart and

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[466] 'William of Saint Thierry: A Description of Clairvaux', n. pag.
[467] [...cum verna temperie terra praegnans in partum solvitur, renascentia gramina humoris inopia marcescant], *Descriptio,* PL 571C, Matarasso, p. 289.
[468] [...renascentia gramina humoris inopia marcescant...] *Descriptio,* PL 571D, Matarasso, pp. 289–290.

to arouse to devotion all who seek the Lord".[469] The landscape is possessed of a heavenly sweetness (*supernae dulcedinis*), and "the smiling face of the earth with its many hues feasts the eyes and breathes sweet scents into the nostrils".[470] The beauty of the meadows, "while agreeably employed in the open", contains an equally pleasant "mystery beneath the surface", the meaning behind the majesty of nature.[471] The beauty of the landscape, "refreshed by the floodwaters of the Aube", comes from its *viriditas*, the greenness, of nature. It emerges as a narrative effect of the constant motion of water throughout the landscape, overlaid with the constant movement of divine energies.[472] Just as the grass can stand the summer heat "thanks to the moisture at its roots", so too is the community sustained by its fecund spirituality.[473] Water connects the landscape to the greater life cycle of Clairvaux and its environs, and spiritual rectitude from divine source nourishes the souls of the brothers within.

A lake captures the interest of the author, located "in the part of the meadow nearest the wall". He appears particularly entranced by its creation out of nothing, a powerful act of monastic hydrological endeavour. "Where in former times the sweating labourer moved the hay with a sharp scythe", marvels the writer, "today the brother in charge of the fish-ponds, seated on a wooden horse, is born over the smooth surface of the liquid field".[474] Within this passage, we see something of the special regard for hydraulics within monastic landscape-consciousness; a miracle of aqueous bounty has transformed the field into water. Not only has the Aube been flattened and turned to utility, but it also forms a microcosmic space of spiritual striving, a little collection of moral *figurae,* a hydrology within a hydrology. The fisherman engages in an act of moralised wrangling on the surface of the pond; nets "destined to entangle the fish" are spread and "primed with a hidden hook to catch the unwary".[475] The pond, through allegory, becomes a moral *exemplum* warning of the snares of Satan. This little *exemplum* amid the river course demonstrates to power of small moral topoi embedded into a wider hydrology, with the river linking idea to idea.

The author is fascinated by the spring of Clairvaux, contrasting its state as it "glides to

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[469] [Multum habet locus ille amoenitatis, multum quod mentes fessas allevet, luctusque solvat anxios, multum quod quaerentes Dominum ad devotionem accendat] *Descriptio,* PL 572A, Matarasso, p. 290.

[470] [...dum ridens terrae facies multiplici colore, vernanti pictura oculos pascit, et suaveolentem naribus spirat odorem] *Descriptio,* PL 571D-572A, Matarasso, p. 290.

[471] [...dum foris fruor ministerio, non parum latenti delector mysterio] *Descriptio,* PL 572A, Matarasso, p. 290.

[472] The passage implies that only the literate may read 'beneath the surface' of the *Descriptio.* This ties very closely to Hugh of Saint-Victor's discussion of literacy in *De tribus diebus*, in which Hugh claims that only the illiterate remark upon the colour and form of nature rather than seeking the mystery beneath. See Zinn, 'Minding Matter', p. 61.

[473] [Hoc ergo pratum intercurrentis fluvii fovetur irriguo, et ad humorem ejus mittit radices suas: ideo non timebit cum venerit aestus] PL 572A, Matarasso, p. 290.

[474] [...ibi frater aquarius sedens mobili per lubricam liquentis campi planitiem equo vectus ligneo] *Descriptio,* PL 572C, Matarasso, p. 291.

[475] [Explicatur rete sub undis quo implicetur pisciculus, et parantur ei escae quibus libenter vescitur, sed latet hamus in illis quo capitur incautus] *Descriptio,* PL 572C, Matarasso, p. 291.

and fro unheard down subterranean channel", and as it bursts forth from the ground within the monastery. "Like all good springs", we are told, "it sallies out over against the rising sun, so that midsummer finds it greeting the roseate splendour of dawn full in the face".[476] It appears to be no coincidence—given the level of moralised allegory in this text—that the bounty of the spring rises from the earth to greet the rising sun. For within Christian symbolism, the Eastern sun represents Christ: the Orient, the Sun of Justice and the new dawn of humanity:[477]

> It wells out of the hillside only to be swallowed by the valley, and in the very place of its birth it seems to die, nay, even to be buried. But do not look for the sign of Jonah the prophet, expecting it to lie hidden away for three days and three night: at once a thousand feet away, it rises again in the abbey cloister, as it might be from the bowels of the earth, and, as it were restored to life, offers itself to the sight and use of the brethren, lest its future lot should be with any but the holy.[478]

Not content to remain hidden and in silence, the spring bursts forth from a protective tabernacle within a "small but pretty hut", which "encloses it and protects it from any dirt".[479] The revealed spring is contained and makes itself fit for the purposes of the monastic community. In a motif of dying and rising explicitly revealed by the author, the spring sacrifices itself so that the monastery may re-imagine the lost paradise.

Through allegory, the spring becomes Christ the Saviour, sacrificing itself so that the monastery might live. Extending into the realms of moral doctrine and anagogy, the spring becomes the very fountainhead of the monastic life, the representation within the landscape that the abbey is a God-gifted community. Within his treatise *On Conscience*, Peter of Celle explicitly compared the outflowing waters within the cloister with those of eternal life gifted from Christ for the purification of souls, "to your eyes that they may flow with tears, and to your ears that they may hear the voice of God's praise, and to your hands that that they be clean of the blood of cruelty and lust, to your feet that the dust of earthly desires may be shaken off".[480]

> Finally, flowing down from the heights to what is lower, this stream goes around the workshops of our cloister. It decorates the chapel with pools—both for washing the animals offered up for sin and for cleansing the very sanctuary of our soul—in such

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[476] [Hic ergo fons (quod boni fontis esse fertur indicium) ex opposito solis orientis oritur, ita ut aestivo solstitio roseam rutilantis aurorae faciem ex adverso salutet] *Descriptio,* PL 574A, Matarasso, pp. 291–292.

[477] In his *Etymologiae,* Isidore of Seville defines Christ as the Orient (*Oriens*) "because he is the source of light and the brightener of things, and because he makes us rise (*oriri*) to eternal life". VII:ii:27, in Stephen A. Barney et al. (eds), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 156.

[478] [Ubi eum mons evomit, vallis deglutit: et in loco quo oritur, eodem quasi moritur, quin et sepelitur. Sed ne exspectes signum Jonae prophetae, ut tribus diebus et tribus noctibus delitescat absconditus: statim ad mille passus [0574B] intra claustrum monasterii, quasi de corde terrae resuscitatus progreditur, et quodammodo redivivus apparet, visui tantum et usui fratrum se offerens, ne cum aliis quam cum sanctis sors illius amodo sit futura] *Descriptio,* PL 574A–B, Matarasso, p. 292.

[479] [Tugurio, vel, ut majori reverentia dicam, tabernaculo parvo et pulchro cooperitur et clauditur, ne undecunque sordes admittat] *Descriptio,* PL 574A, Matarasso, p. 292.

[480] 'On Conscience', in Feiss, *Peter of Celle,* p. 184

a way that it has a channel next to the altar at the priest's foot [...][481]

At the very end of the journey, the spring appears at the very secret heart of the monastery, within the cloister itself, cleansing the hidden paradise of the monastic life. The *Descriptio*, by providing an origin for its most sacred waters, linked the monastery to a wider hydrology as imagined by monastic thought. The underground rivers of the world, through a deep and meandering path, were thought to originate in that first of fonts, the origin of the rivers of Paradise. In this fashion, a little piece of paradise, through the universal history of water, was present within the abbey physically as well as spiritually and figuratively.

The landscape in which the daily lives of medieval Europe's monks took place was read as an illustrative example; it was a landscape intimately tied to the beliefs of its observers, who had both the knowledge and the motivation to transform it to fit their purposes. The monastic topocosm was not a static installation on a passive site, but a stage on which the spiritual narrative of monasticism played out, constantly unfolding from its humble origins to a fully developed and harmonious imaginative construct. Although intractably enmeshed in the medieval salvation narrative, the landscape told its own distinct story. Its symbolism made use of the moral and material valence of water to introduce a principle of nutritive spirituality into the 'idea' of an Abbey and its grounds. To refer back to the notion of the 'ecosemiosphere', I argue that the notion of a 'sphere' of interaction is a useful one in this case. The monastery, like a scientific ecology, was linked to a wider network of interactions. The *Descriptio*, however, sets this space in sharp distinction to the outside world, making it in some senses self-contained, in other senses part of a larger cosmic ecology. This ecology, part of the larger divine economy, must be simultaneously divorced from the postlapsarian world, but fully incorporated into the City of God, which has a cosmic and eternal reach.

What can be learned from studying this landscape that may illustrate something of the medieval imagination as a whole? Within this chapter, I have proposed that the answer to this question lies within a series of tropes by means of which water narrates the monastery. In a layer of meaning beyond (but not excluding) the day-to-day function of the monastery, the water within its grounds told a spiritual story.[482] In the *Descriptio*, we apprehend this process spreading far enough and enduring long enough for the reality to alter the ideal, creating a reciprocal symbolic dialogue between subject and object, between *macroscosmos* and *microcosmos*.

Furthermore, the narrative sequence of the text forms a hydrological path for the speculation of the reader, unfolding as a series of *figurae* that trace the manifold coursings of the

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[481] 'On Conscience', in Feiss, *Peter of Celle*, p. 184.

[482] Keith Lilley has introduced the notion of a recursive symbol, infinitely propagated from ideal to reality and from reality to reality via imitation or emulation. Lilley, 'Cities of God?', p. 308.

Aube and the wider hydroscape in which it participates. The *Descriptio* traces a sequence of incrementally revealed and edificatory images embedded into the path of the river. Just as the millers grind, the brewers pump and the tanners dispose of their waste, so too does the entire monastic waterscape take up something of the river as its very lifeblood, and deposit something of itself back into its waters. Together, monastery and river form a harmonious industry like that of the original Creation reformed, and it is the purpose of the narrative *speculum* to reflect the justness and rectitude of this process.

From the fountain at the secret heart of the cloister to the well-irrigated meadows of the monastic estate, water was everywhere in the Cistercian world. It was the interpretation of this water as an interconnected representation not only of nature in action, but also of the moral topography, that fed the narrative of the *Descriptio*. From a reading of the text, itself a narrative of another (nature) text, the structural conceits of water as a wholly intellectual construct emerge, revealing much of Cistercian practices of thought. As Mette Bruun has demonstrated, Cistercians such as Bernard of Clairvaux dealt in complex spiritual topographies inspired by events from scripture, history, and experience: within these topographies lay a self-sustaining hydrological imagining that tellingly reveals an image of monastic thought pattern and arrangement for the modern reader. It is all the more telling for the fact that the text was written to make visible the invisible and abstracted life of the Cistercian spirit at Clairvaux.

Thus, the *Descriptio* is a double and simultaneous hydrological narrative. In the first of these sequences, the monastic landscape is reworked in the image of paradise, its appearance, use and behaviour cast in the superlatives of prelapsarian life. Cistercian life is imagined as a persistently symbolic experience, the landscape always signifying something hidden and powerful, an ecological signification of a greater transactional system of forces and energies. In the second narrative sequence, the hydrological mode of the *Descriptio* textually reworks the experiential landscape, providing a true mirror of its qualities. The river is a helpful servant, the garden soothes the soul, water is sweet and the running of the river a melodious and euphonic experience. Here, as in paradise, there is no toil unless for symbolic purposes, the earth gives freely. Here, as in paradise, the springing forth of waters imbues the world with vital energy.

Conclusion: The Value of a Cistercian Hydrological Abstraction

At the conclusion of the narrative description of Clairvaux, something remains that is no longer landscape, no longer exegesis, no longer spirituality. Through evocation and description, the *Descriptio* has adumbrated a moving, flowing, densely interconnected network of monastic meaning joined by the bonding medium of water, an intellectual entity expressed through quotidian experience. Linking sky to soil to human to divine, the mediating connections of

hydrological imagery provide a cohesive structural narrative for Cistercian life expressed explicitly and implicitly. The textual object of Clairvaux-as-hydrology both precedes the *Descriptio* in Cistercian landscape-consciousness, and succeeds the text as a powerful logic of interconnectivity at the heart of what it is to be a Cistercian within the landscape. The abstraction is mapped upon the landscape by the text, but the landscape reciprocates, branding the logic of the spiritualised Aube onto the consciousness of the reader.

The deeply allegorical, seemingly perfect, balanced world depicted by the *Descriptio* was of course a construct of rhetoric, an abstraction created to represent the Order in the manner it chose to see itself. To my mind, it is unlikely that the text was written for non-Cistercians. Although the author is anonymous, it is logical by the language of the text to conclude that they were a Cistercian writing for other Cistercians. This makes the text a particularly exciting candidate for a hydrological reading, for it is a practical product of Cistercian self-imagination and abstract perception. It gives us a more nuanced understanding of the mechanism by which landscape and text become more than their content, exhibiting a powerful representation of the manner in which principles, things and spaces were thought to relate to each other and act upon each other as a system. Just as the Clairvaux presented in the *Descriptio* is fixed in perfection as a network of *figurae*, so too is the water system it presents fixed as a densely interrelated ecology of nutrition feeding the meaning of the text.

On one level, the monastery is a landscape in which symbols are cultivated, replicated and proliferated on a daily basis through agriculture, building and ritual. In a very real sense, the monks composed a landscape by laying their beliefs upon it and physically re-working space, only for the space to re-work them in equal measure. They read their environment as a text, and the ideas contained therein shaped and moulded their thoughts, permeated their world-view and influenced their actions. The result was an connected network of intellectual entities seamlessly overlaid upon an act of monastic industry, an endless cycle of reciprocal narrative. When Cistercians produced a literary text describing their landscape text, the image was distilled into an even more stylised abstract model. I see the four matrices of landscape perception described by Fitter and the recursive symbolism of Lilley as complementary companions: the former explains the many layers of imagination at play within any perception of landscape, the latter explains the investment of these matrices into a landscape, and the reciprocal investment of meaning back into the mind of the beholder.

By dividing the landscape perception and alteration drives within monastic thought into several streams of theory and analysis, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that landscape-consciousness within the monastery was profoundly tied to water. The garden and city *topoi*—with their respective images of divine essence in aqueous form—merge within the monastery to

create a composite, with elements of Eden lost and Jerusalem yet to come. The spiritual drive behind this imagining of monastic purpose was given form by the symbolism of Christ, and his attendant typologies. A perfected form of all salvific engineering, the Saviour was reflected in the bounteous flow of water from hidden springs, and its fruitful proliferation in every corner of the abbey grounds.

As the landscape of the monastery was shaped and altered by the power of Christ's teachings and example, so too were the springs and rivers altered by the enactment of the monastic life. The aqueous narration of monasticism through the symbolism of landscape reveals the linkages between thought and environment. Furthermore, we may perceive a cyclical and reciprocal relationship, in which human ideas shape the imagination and symbolic formation of the landscape, and yet the landscape influences the observer and inhabitant in equal measure. As a locus of fecundity—both spiritual and natural—the symbolic life imagined by the monks of medieval Christendom was replete with water, and yet this water was symbolically located so that the contrast between it and its surroundings was emphasised.

The hydrological model put forth by the *Descriptio* and other narratives of Cistercian purpose and belief forms many hydrologies, each layered like the senses of scripture. On one level it evokes an experiential space through which a very real river flows. On another it forms an overlay of sacred flows and transfers and the material. On another it is a landscape within the soul within which spiritual flows match the external environment. On a final level, it is a discrete, self-contained, autopoetic textual object that resides at the heart of its text, cannot be reduced to constituent parts, and endures as an amalgam of organisational principles from every corner of the monastic thought-world. In conclusion, I argue that holding *this* overlaid inner and outer waterscape in mind gives us moderns, if only imperfectly, a glimpse of the forces structuring monastic thought, its principles of interrelation and its mechanisms of abstraction.

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CONCLUSION

There are two major points that I wish the reader to take away from this thesis. The first relates to medieval thought, the second to water. Each point shares a quality in common, a reminder that patterns, be they environmental or intellectual, are part of the deep-time history of human sense-making and the specificities of history in equal measure. Both medieval thought and its shaping of water into an intellectual entity are processes of knowledge visualisation drawn from powerful cultural resonances peculiar to the world studied by this thesis, and processes that demonstrate the supreme power of environment to shape, influence, and determine human thought. If the reader is reminded of anything by this thesis, then perhaps it will be the paramount significance of pattern and its repetition. This repetition occurs not through duplication, but through universal adherence, a template which all other patterns causatively resembled. Form is pattern, and pattern is a philosophical matter.

The first point, pertaining to medieval thought, has relevance to those seeking to make sense of our environmental relationships in the present. Guiding metaphors gather together so many connotations that they become not content, but form. As we have seen in the case studies—the M. 982 diagram, the *Fons Philosophiae*, the letters of Peter of Celle, and the *Descriptio*—they are the space within which thought takes place, and determine the setting, the possible moves, the actors, and the relationships. They bundle experiences, received facts, and newly-minted novelties into an entity so formative that it patterns human cognitive structures. For medieval—and particularly high medieval—thought, the Judeo-Christian imagining of the hydrological cycle was so inextricably condensed with the imagining of human life that no water metaphor was simply a trope, a piece of content. This is important, for one could just as easily point to other fundamentals of medieval life, and establish their role as a foundational metaphor. As we have seen with the shaping both of real landscapes and the discourses about them (especially in the case of chapter six), intellectual entities, when combined, engendered action. We must think ecologically when attempting to understand the formative frameworks of this action, but we must think ecologically in a medieval fashion.

The second point, pertaining to water in particular, returns to the notion introduced in chapter one regarding the careful balance between historical specificity and universalism to which those studying water are beholden. Water is social, water is ontological, and water is spiritual. Because their fluidity is coupled with distinct structural features, oceanic and riverine systems easily form metaphors and frameworks for the multiple, changing connections and interactions between human beings. But the manner in which these things are thought to connect is entirely historical. For medieval water, ecology worked differently. It was not all-to-all, the rhizome of Deleuze of Guattari, but one to all, the uncreated spring, the manifold divisions, the ontological

categories of life built upon and of these flows. It is the product of a cosmos created by and presided over by an all-generative God, and the foundational metaphors derived from this perceived reality are part of a self-contained episteme that existed on its own terms, and survives today as an artefact of intellectual history within the diverse textual traces that evoke it. The water discussed in this thesis is like all other metaphorical entities in that it shapes human life at a pre-hermeneutic level. It is unlike all other such entities in that is does so in a manner that is so distinct as to be unthinkable with modern sensibilities. With water, however, we are gifted with a metaphorical commonality that allows us insight into the unthinkable specificities of medieval sense-making and thought structure.

The vital manifestations of complex water metaphor are diverse in form and function, but each shares the power of ecumenical mediation and facilitation. Each case study chapter reveals a unique context that feeds back into a more general understanding. Despite the distinctiveness of each chapter, all have something in common. Each case study addresses a problem of expression in need of a solution. They must impart a message that is not only complex enough to frame thought through a memorable image of its structure, but they must also do so in a manner that is lively enough and provides sufficient evidence to impress the vitality of thought upon the recipient.

The diagrammatic representation in chapter three demonstrates that something compressed and non-verbal can embed within itself a structural logic suggestive of a reality more complex than its seemingly simple message. The structure of liberal arts learning—spreading from a unitary source, mediated by a series of connected channels, and presented to humanity in diverse manifestations—is cryptic without guidance. The fluvial imagery of Pierpont Morgan M. 982 serves to make the spatial patterns of this system more amenable to memory and cognition and yet does so in a manner that brings to mind the movement of life force, a reminder of the outpouring energy of God. It works because the image of water bundles structures together through their likenesses, be it emanating Creation, the *divisiones* of philosophy, or the fractal distributions that characterise riparian patterns. The fluid essence of thought is a river because it is mobile and bridges the levels of cosmic hierarchy, but also because it represents the quintessential mystery of knowledge: what are we to know?

By providing not only the structure but the motivation for an epistemic framework, the diagram expresses its meaning by shaping a complex intellectual entity powered by the medium of water. The image teaches us that mnemotechnical diagrams are not always self-evidently presented as such. Not every visual aid to the memory is labelled and explained as such, and images often work on an assumed set of knowledge. This is especially so in a monastic context; there was a great deal of shared educational background that could be assumed when monk

communicated with monk. M. 982 is evidence of this, for it plays upon a vast number of symbols that the reader was required to understand in order to make meaning.

The *Fons Philosophiae* of chapter four is a natural expansion of such symbolic imagery, moving from a complex arrangement suggesting content to a hybrid poetic form that contains both form *and* content. Godfrey of Saint-Victor succeeds in teaching the content of the poem—derived from the tradition of Liberal Arts learning within his order exemplified by the *Didascalicon*—by presenting a structure through which to remember it. Once again, the discussion of the important *topoi* of Victorine learning requires prior knowledge: Godfrey's discussion of the *artes*, of scripture, of intellectual giants such as Socrates or Aristotle would make no sense if one were not already thoroughly acquainted with them. The true gift of the poem, a trait it shares with M. 982, is to clearly reveal the relationship between already assimilated ideas, the shaping of a sense of order, hierarchy, valence, and division to apply to the diverse goods waiting within the darkened storehouse of the memory.

The gift of water, in the *Fons Philosophiae* and M. 982, is the creation of a patterned space within the mind in which the thinker might wander through a catalogue for the vast collection of ideas necessary for compositional thought within the monastic intellectual world. M. 982 presents a single simplified table of contents for this collection, and the *Fons Philosophiae* functions more as an introduction, or a versified résumé, of a knowledge corpus. It was not possible to recall all of the ideas needed for monastic life without an effective system of mental cataloguing. The affordances of water facilitate a transaction between knower and that which is to be known, just as a chair is both a function of the sitter knowing its identity and the design of the chair for sitting. Water is for connecting, for carrying purity, for washing away sin, for spreading across the surface of Earth, and these affordances come to the forefront of their use by virtue of their aptitude for the patterns of ideas and of spiritual transfers within medieval thought.

In the case of chapter five, these patterns are even more implicit components of a shared network of ideas. Peter of Celle and his monastic correspondents know their material, but they are in search of creative arrangements of ideas to express this material in new and efficacious forms. The collections of letters sent back and forth between monastic sites in Europe were more than interpersonal communication; they were collections of spiritual elucidations, exegeses, and moral *exempla*. They required a framework that both structured their moral lessons, and linked them to other sites within the landscape of learning inhabited by the letter writers.

The most important contribution of chapter five to our understanding of twelfth-century knowledge visualisation derives from the extension of a knowledge structure into a medium of dissemination. Put simply, the letter correspondence between Peter of Celle and his

contemporaries takes a shared visualisation of knowledge-space, its goals and its divisions, and spreads insights into this work and its lessons. Although the *Fons Philosophiae* is expressly a didactic work, we can only guess the reaction of the reader. We can guess the intuitive reading of such a text by readers based on prior learning, for the imagined reader would be a regular canon by background, and thus have been educated in a particular fashion. In the case of letter corpora, we have much more insight into the intended response of the reader, and the counter response of the writer reacting to a prior communication. Through Peter's deft but dense use of ideas and images with shared monastic currency, we can see not only what conceits of structure and content were assumed, but also what constructions demonstrated novel forms. The content is shared, and yet the complex bundling of preconceived imagery and ideas created a novel structure that could be committed to memory, used as a tool for thought, and shared with others.

Finally, in chapter six, we see the merging of complex metaphorical spaces within the abstract realms of medieval thought with the daily experience of the environment. If one had the primary source evidence, one could speculate that looking at the M. 982 diagram or reading the *Fons Philosophiae* would have a distinct effect on the manner in which a twelfth-century monastic interacted with the world through their use of guiding metaphor. In the case of Peter of Celle, we have ample evidence that monastic letter writers considered letters to be an ideal source of instruction and spiritual guidance, not just for the recipient, but for a wider audience. In the case of the *Descriptio*, we have both sides of the process available to us for interpretation, a seemingly descriptive account of a monastery and its grounds, and an overlaid abstract works interfused with daily experience. It is here that we see the truth of the matter: although complex metaphorical spaces exist apart from daily experience, they derive from and recursively return to daily life. For a monk this daily life required a necessary balance between daily spiritual life and the quotidian observance of a regular monastic life.

This thesis has also highlighted an area of promising future research beyond its own scope, but of increasing interest. There is much potential for further formal analysis of medieval thought through methodologies such as systems theory, diagrammatology, and information technology-driven discourses such as those surrounding knowledge visualisation. Although these are currently heavily grounded in modern scientific and theoretical conceits, there is much to be said about these approaches through a medieval frame. By 'a medieval frame' I do not mean that these methodologies have not been applied to the Middle Ages, but that systems, diagrams, networks, and visualisations are all tied up in the context of their invention, and that there is a uniquely medieval context. Just as there is a 'medieval water', there are equally rich possibilities for studies of systematic thought grounded in the philosophies, knowledge practices, ethics, and metaphysics of medieval minds. Systematic notions such as semiology, ecology, landscape, space,

and memory continue to be profitably interrogated in a medieval context. It is equally important to understand what a system, a network, or a diagram might mean in a medieval thought-world. There is promising research expanding our understanding of medieval graphicacy—the interpretation of information through graphic means—beyond its strongest current trends in memory, literacy and landscape studies, but this thesis suggests that any such advance in research should reassess and reinterpret the *formal graphicacy*, the systematic visualisation capabilities, of medieval thinkers.[483] Furthermore, there are forms of formal graphical interpretation that are abstract, seen within the mind's eye rather than the outer eye. Twenty-first century information technology has led to unprecedented changes in our knowledge visualisation practices (many of them abstract), making a clear and historicised understanding of pre-modern systematic visualisation all the more important. Understanding the specifics of medieval thought graphically sheds new light on the novelty of our own times, and places formal practices of knowledge organisation in a historical context.

I have mentioned that the study of formal graphicacy has already made great progress, especially through the discipline of art history and the field of memory studies. Mary Carruthers and other researchers of medieval memory theory have expanded the repertoire of sources that can be considered from a systematic perspective, and yet there may be many more possible forms of evidence that can be considered. Moreover, there may also be different focuses to be found, different disciplines to incorporate. Brigitte Bedos-Rezak broke through disciplinary and methodological boundaries when she studied medieval sigilography as a complex system of identity signs. Conrad Rudolph performed a similar task when he reconstructed the *Mystic Ark* diagram as a complex socio-intellectual artefact.[484] For Bedos-Rezak the key was to apply semiotics and anthropology to the study of charters, and for Rudolph the key was the almost archaeological reconstruction of an absent diagram, and the exposition of its form, content, and history. In each case, a creative selection of source and methodology led to a new insight, and this is a frontier of research that can be profitably expanded. In each case, an unexpected combination has been the key. This thesis has done for visualisations and imaginings of water systems what Bedos-Rezak has done for sigilography, and Rudolph has done for the Mystic Ark.

This thesis reminds us that we must make our own way, compose our own foundational metaphors, and that we can study past thought-worlds as a source of inspiration. There can be no romantic and atavistic embrace of patterns past, for these patterns are intrinsically tied up in the beliefs and practices that engendered them. Nor can we claim that our approach is better, since

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[483] See the *Graphicacy and Authority in Early Europe: Graphic Signs of Power and Faith in the Early Middle Ages (c. 300–1000)* project funded from 2012–2017 at the University of Oslo: <http://www.hf.uio.no/iakh/english/research/projects/graphicacy/>, (accessed 12 November 2013).

[484] See Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego was Imago*, and Rudolph, "*First, I find the Center Point*".

comparative terms like 'better' or 'worse' mean nothing when attempting to understand ourselves on our own terms, and the past on its own terms. Intellectual history can inspire us, but each intellectual culture must shape its own path, its own metaphorical patterns for memory and cognition. We may, however, learn a great deal from the conscious composition practices of past intellectual cultures, to use the history of ideas as a fuel for the future. The frames proposed by Manuel Lima in *Visual Complexity* demonstrate such a process, the composition of new patterns for sense-making appropriate for the present. I argue that we must not see historical patterns as a foil to this process, but as a source of context, critique, and comparison. We are no more advanced today in our compositional practices than our pre-modern predecessors, and yet we have different needs. The affordances of environment that we desire to utilise are predicated upon a unique thought-world of our own, and within it diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical differences. Just as medieval monastic thought taxed medieval graphicacy through the need for extremely complex mnemonic frameworks of content, so too are we taxed by the vast vicissitudes of simulation, networking, and virtualisation that the information age has necessitated.

One thing is certain: water will remain an intellectual entity of complex power. This ends the thesis on an ethical point. We must protect and nurture our waters, for they are a reservoir of inspiration for the composition that allows us to think in an orderly and flexible fashion. A degraded environmental entity leads to a degraded intellectual entity, and poverty without leads to poverty within. This is an eminently sensible medieval ethos from which to draw inspiration, and one that will enrich our inner life if heeded. Within this frame, water becomes all the more potent. It is not only essential for human life and inextricably enmeshed in our societies, cultures, and religions, but also part of our most fundamental graphical pattern recognition. When we see a river, we see a pattern that is both simple enough to intuit superficially, and complex enough to study deeply. This pattern is not only a discrete entity, but a connector of entities. Pattern is what allows thought, connection is what drives it. For medieval thinkers, the painting of a picture within the mind drew together the elements of Creation to compose something to feed new thought and drive action. For twelfth-century western monasticism, water was a guiding force in the shaping of intellectual life, for medievalists it is a key to an episode in a long history of intellectual engagement with water and a case study in abstract sense-making. For modern thinkers, neurochemistry, neurobiology and psychology offer secrets to our compositional practices, but it is still patterns that we seek. In all cases, water provides the fluid conduits by which thought moves, divides, flows, *lives.*

Waters flow to open places, secret places, distant places, and surprising places. They interfuse the world with life, bridging the gap between hidden source and arid destination,

carrying life in their wake. Their structure, although often enigmatic and convoluted, is the pattern by which life emerges, the shape of causation. The myriad wonders of the living earth and all that is in it can all be attributed to one principle, the ability of rivers to flow, rain to fall, heat to evaporate, the atmosphere to churn and roil across the surface of the planet. Any living thing that is spatially distinct from any other living thing moves with the vigour invested in it by water. Life is fluvial, with the pulsing veins of Earth and the arid and dusty tracks of Mars drawing the snaking line between green, blue and white, and a dull and baleful red. The deployment of these qualities for the purposes of organised thought is a fruitful topic for research because through thought, we see a sense of arrangement that is both endlessly variable across time and culture, and yet a common experience of humanity, a grand pattern in the self-narrative of intellection and imagination.

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