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Bennett Gilbert

Portland State University, bbg2@pdx.edu

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Citation Details

Gilbert, B., "Early Carthusian Script and Silence." *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Fall, 2014): 367–397.

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Early Carthusian Script and Silence¹

BENNETT GILBERT

I. THE EARLY CARTHUSIAN CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

AT ITS FOUNDING and during its first three decades, the Carthusian order developed a distinctive and forceful concept of communication among the members and between the members and the extramural world.² Saint Bruno's life, contemporary twelfth-century exegesis, and the physical situation of La Grande Chartreuse established the necessary context in which this concept evolved. A review of historical background, the relevant documentary texts, and early development demonstrate the shaping of two steps in this concept. Close reading of the principal testimonies of Carthusians Bruno, Guigo I, Guigo II, and some other witnesses, as well as of some passages in Saint Augustine, argues that Carthusian scribal work was more preliminary practice for spiritual development than it was the sacralization of codices and texts. The two-step structure, com-

1. This is a translation of an article that appeared in *Collectanea* 2013.2. It is the re-elaboration of a conference given at the Abbey of Cîteaux on April 25, 2013, in the form of a session organized by the *Association pour le rayonnement de la culture cistercienne* so as to commemorate the ninth centenary of Saint Bernard at Cîteaux.

2. I owe great thanks to Professor John S. Ott at Portland State University for his guidance and encouragement in my work on this essay, to other colleagues, to the diligent Resources Sharing staff of Millar Library at Portland State, to Edith Scholl, ocsso, and to the generous, gentle anonymous readers, whose suggestions have been most helpful.

posed of contrary movements of presentation and effacement, guarded what the Carthusians regarded as spiritual activity within a changing historical environment and became a fundamental part of Latin Christian mysticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The conception of the Carthusian synthesis was exceptionally rich intellectually and affectively, generating a long, influential history. Furthermore, this two-step concept expresses some ways of thought that are both difficult to access in themselves today and also obscured by our post-modern sense of how texts develop and how we think critically about them. This has impoverished both the characterization of medieval and early modern texts that scholarship has traditionally made and also the transmission of their approach to reading and writing and its legacy through subsequent centuries down to our own day.

The system that Bruno and his followers developed used language against itself, extending self-consciousness into some region inaccessible except through silence. The conceptual origin of early Carthusian communication was a conservative, Augustinian response to the replacement of oral and otherwise more personal ways of influencing people toward the theological and psychic principles of Christianity by the more rationalistic and otherwise less personal discourses of scholastic philosophy and theology. Carthusian historical documents register both conflicts and a unity conserved from generation to generation so that the two-step concept itself underwent change, not chiefly in a rigidification by institutionalization but in order to maintain the charismatic element in the ever more complex discursive culture of the scholastic period.³

Stephen Jaeger in *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200*⁴ aimed to change that notion automatically applied to the scholastic period as a period of “progress” over

3. New directions in research were also initiated by Giles Constable in his “Renewal and Reform in Religious Life: Concepts and Realities,” *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 40; and in textual studies by Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983). Nikolaus Häring, among others, centered his account on the exegetical depth of the reformers in the discourse of their own day. Constant Mews, in “Scholastic Theology in a Monastic Milieu in the Twelfth Century: the Case of Admont,” *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) 217–39, describes Leclercq’s and Häring’s positions in detail but briefly, with useful citations (222–24).

4. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. Jaeger’s journal articles are collected

the reform period, which had developed as part of the appreciation of the twelfth-century “renaissance.” Jaeger distinguishes between charismatic and intellectual cultures. The former is built on the mystery of human personality: the communication of spirituality by the magic of the bodily presence—voice, sight, touch, moral force—of personhood. Intellectual culture is the communication of spiritual and moral goods by instruction, formalized in different degrees but primarily built upon texts.⁵ He argues that the development from monasticism to scholasticism was a movement of European culture from charismatic force to logical force, from personal example to rational entailment, and from manners and civility to critical system.

The early Carthusian practice that I call a two-step concept of communication protected charisma in monastic life.⁶ Charisma is something beside the invention of new critical apparatus by which we often judge the progress of knowledge in the Middle Ages and something other than the rich collections of precision of transcription for which historians compliment them.⁷

At the start of the matter stands the Carthusian paradox of silence and verbal transmission as the exemplar of the two-step concept. In her remarkable paper “Edification et silence dans quelques prologues de traités de contemplation cartusiens,”⁸ Nathalie Nabert teases the play of

in *Scholars and Courtiers: Intellectuals and Society in the Medieval West* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2002).

5. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels* 4–15.

6. Gerhard Jaritz, “Kartäuser und ‘internationale’ Kommunikation (mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Österreich),” *Die Ausbreitung kartäusischen Lebens und Geistes im Mittelalter*, 2, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1991) 12 and 14–15.

7. For example, see Paola Sverzellati, “Manoscritti della Certosa di Val-Saint-Hugon nella Biblioteca Ambrosiana,” *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 31 (1988): 4–5. Barbara Halporn, “The Carthusian Library at Basel,” *The Library Quarterly*, 54.3 (1984): 225 describes the early advances Carthusians made in bibliographic access-points. On the overall development of indexing in this period see Malcolm Beckwith Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,” *Medieval Learning and Literature. Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 115–44. Paul Saenger’s well-known thesis about the invention of silent reading as a decisive change in Occidental thought introduced by monastic practice was first stated in his “Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society,” *Viator* 13.1 (1982): 367–414; and further developed in his *Space Between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997).

8. “Edification et silence dans quelques prologues de traités de contemplation cartusiens,” in *Bien Dire et Bien Apprendre*, 19 (2001): 167–80.

self-presentation and self-effacement out of the texts of Guigo II, Denis the Carthusian, and Ludolph of Saxony. She contends that the prefaces (and other paratexts) by these writers that she reads establish a relationship with the readers rooted in Carthusian anonymity and humility, as maintained by the habit of silence. In this way these authors represent the mentality that Carthusian monks build by means of these practices. Bruno and his followers, when seen closely, had a different view of reading and of transcription, reading's partner in early Carthusian life, than that which we now commonly associate with the sophisticated textuality of the twelfth century and scholastic thought. Her exposition prompted me to expand this idea to the whole contrary movements of silence and presence as I might find them to be in the primitive "purest" Carthusian practice.⁹

Saint Bruno (c. 1030–1101) started his community in 1084 at Chartreuse, and its fifth prior Guigo I (of Kastell, d. 1136) gave the monastery a rule he wrote between 1121 and 1127.¹⁰ These forty or so years comprise what one may call primitive Carthusian practice: conceived by Bruno, built by his companions, practiced through decades of crises, and recorded by the prior who, having brought stability and erected La Grande Chartreuse, best knew its original and early customs. Following this period, Innocent II created it as a monastic order in 1133. Guigo II (d. c. 1193), ninth prior from 1173 to 1180, wrote the greatest early Carthusian work on the contemplative life, a work both devout and documentary. Bruno's initiative toward what became Carthusian spirituality was under stress from the moment of his departure for Rome in 1090.¹¹ Guigo I endeavored to conserve it, and Guigo II developed it to a high point.

9. Within the modern study of the earliest Carthusians the signal paper is Bernard Bligny's "L'Érémisme et les Chartreux," Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milano), Settimana di Studio, *L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII. Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio, Mendola, 30 agosto–6 settembre 1962* (Milan, 1965) 248–70. Almost everything written since then refers to this article as a starting-point.

10. The history of the Carthusian *regula* will be found in the prefatory matter to Guigo I, ed. and trans. "Un Chartreux," *Coutumes de Chartreuse* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2001), hereafter referred to as *Consuetudines*. It received papal approval in 1140. The first of many printed editions was Basel, 1510.

11. The view of Gian Luca Potestà that Bruno left the Chartreuse community in perilous condition is the generally accepted view, although the whole story is not known or has not yet been told. See his "Eremiti e cenobi latini in Calabria: le nuove istituzioni dalla fine del secolo XI alla fine del XII," *Certosini e cistercensi in Italia (secoli XII–XV): Atti del Convegno Cuneo, Chiusa Pesio, Rocca de' Baldi,*

Under Bruno's design Carthusians were, and are, silent monks. Unlike the Cistercians, also silent, they refused sign language for the most part.¹² Silence was practical, helping to sharpen the memory and thereby protecting monks from forgetting; it helped monks think of non-quotidian matter and might also have been meditated upon as semiosis of the eschaton;¹³ and, perhaps most of all, it muffled that noisy world, in which monks had to communicate with abbots, bishops, archbishops, political authorities, tradesmen, and with one another. Silence brought awareness of simple presence, while speech escalated thought, talk, and work. On the other hand, the Order instructed the monks to be verbally active by transcribing Scripture and other authorized texts. This was one of their chief employments. Cells were equipped to be *solo scriptoria*. In particular, they were to transcribe using the greatest care so that errors should not break the transmission of truth. Every early witness describes the Carthusians' persistent scribalism. The houses quickly assembled good or great libraries by this means, and in time Carthusian manuscripts were famed for accuracy.¹⁴

Both avoiding speech and preaching by the written word were ascetic

giovedì 23–domenica 26 settembre 1999, ed. Rinaldo Comba and Grado G. Merlo (Cuneo: Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della provincia di Cuneo, 2000) 33–58.

12. See Scott G. Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: the Cluniac Tradition c. 900–1200* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2007) 157–61, 167–68. See also his “The Tongue Is a Fire: The Discipline of Silence in Early Medieval Monasticism (300–1100),” *The Hands of the Tongue. Essays on Deviant Speech*, ed. Edwin D. Craun (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) 3–32.

13. Bruce, 159.

14. A most important document in this regard is the manual for the text corrector called *Opus Pacis* written by the early fifteenth-century Carthusian Oswaldus de Corda (or of England). A good brief discussion of its story in context will be found in Michael G. Sargent, “The Problem of Uniformity in Carthusian Book Production from the *Opus Pacis* to the *Tertia Compilatio Statutorum*,” *New Science Out of Old Books. Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Brookfield, VT: Scolar, 1995) 124–29. Oswald's work has been edited with complete commentary by Belinda Sneed Egan in her (unpublished) doctoral dissertation, “Late Medieval Carthusian Spirituality and the Written Word: The ‘Opus pacis’ of Oswald de Corda” (U.C.L.A., 1996), done under Richard and Mary Rouse; see also the Rouses’ “Correction and Emendation of Texts in the Fifteenth-Century and the Autograph of the ‘Opus pacis’ by Oswaldus Anglicus,” *Scire Litteras: Forschungen zum mittelalterlichen Geistesleben*, ed. S. Krämer and M. Bernard (Munich, 1988) 333–46. Anthony Grafton in *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (London: British Library, 2011) 37–43, describes the system of reader (*anagnostēs*) working with corrector (*diorthetēs*) in both ancient and monastic scriptoria and sees the creation and growth of editorial accuracy during the first centuries of printing as the descendant of the “text-centered” piety of the Middle Ages.

practices commanded by Bruno and Guigo I. What was the relation they understood to hold between the two? Silence and speech were different kinds of mental activity required in eremitic life. Though they were practiced together, the conception behind each practice endowed each with a different hermeneutic value. Careful reading of their texts and of the trend towards divergence between silence and verbalization in successive early generations of Carthusians shows a subtle, and later elided, evaluation of spiritual life in relation to reading and writing. One of the reasons it has been elided is the relationship we today have to books, after a half-millennium of printed storage and diffusion of verbal knowledge, which makes it a difficult task to think of these things as the early Carthusians did in respect of both what we share with them—all that they can teach us—and what we have lost.¹⁵ For Bruno and Guigo I writing and trust were indices of one another—but unsteady indices.¹⁶ Writing down what one reads was, and is, an established memory practice. In the realm of devotion it is a way of training the mind in thorough intellectual comprehension and the soul in identifying with wisdom, as well as contributing to the sense of discipleship. But entrusting truth to writing also betrays distrust, as well as trust, in writing, which must be trained and subdued, habitually practiced so as to improve skill and accuracy, becoming almost automatic, even while it was sacralized as an eremitical speech act. This theology of scrupulous scribalism is the overt part of a mistrust of language itself. Transcription, filling the monk's mind with truthful words, was just the first step in a monk's spiritual reflection. It preserved, by replication and then by diffusion, the truthful meaning of Scripture and of patristic books, but the Carthusian plan soon averted the monk away from transcription and toward interrogation of himself.

II. ST. BRUNO'S ORIGINAL FORMATION OF THE CONCEPT

BRUNO'S LIFE WAS extraordinarily suggestive and fascinating, but we

15. Ivan Illich's *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) is perhaps the founding exercise in approaching this.

16. On the concept of trust generally in medieval manuscript studies, see *Strategies of Writing. Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages. Papers from "Trust in Writing in the Middle Ages,"* ed. Petra Schulte, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

know all too little about it.¹⁷ If one seeks clues for understanding his thoughts and the Order he created, one sees some patterns. Bruno made very, very careful choices in the big events of his life. We shall never know if his daily moves and moods had a similar pattern, but we can see a pattern in his major activities. First, rather than being passively drawn to change his circumstances, as he would have been, say, by a direction from God, Bruno made conscientious choices. He very clearly stated his agency in his choice for Chartreuse.¹⁸ Second, he looked to stability for help in living a spiritual life. His monks were to be protected from heresiarchs of every description, from polemicists, and even from house guests.¹⁹ The rules eventually disallowed noise—talk or music on stated occasions but rarely, and travel to the same degree. Third, he accepted and required without resentment all that was strictly necessary to a spiritual life as he understood it but rejected everything superfluous with the same wary firmness. The first Carthusian generations lived an exiguous life, poor but self-sufficient and self-sufficient but poor. To this end he situated his followers and himself in a location that emphasized the stability that exigent simplicity provided.²⁰ Fourth, in pursuit of this end he deliberately mixed

17. The basics of Bruno's biography are to be found, among many other sources, in Yves Gourdel, "Chartreux," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, ed. Marcel Villier, et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1953 [1945]), vol. 2, fasc. 9:705–10; and, more lately, in André Ravier's *Saint Bruno, the Carthusian* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995). The few facts and the quickly assembled image of him are a standard building-block of any number of scholarly works. Many of the writers in the sources consulted for this paper recount it. In addition to these sources, Fr. André Wilmart in 1930 identified a manuscript chronicle called *Magister* as a life of Bruno authorized by La Grande Chartreuse and distributed to at least three of the earliest Charterhouses (Wilmart, "Magister Adam Carthusiensis," *Mélanges Mandonnet: Études d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du Moyen Âge*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet (Paris: Vrin, 1930) vol. 1. The most recent account is by André Louf, "Saint Bruno," translated by Demetrio S. Yocum, in *CSQ* 48.2 (2013): 213–24.

For particulars of the subsequent spread of Carthusian houses, see Sylvain Excoffon, "Aspects et limites de l'expansion temporelle cartusienne. La Grande-Chartreuse et les chartreuses dauphinoises au XII^{ème} et XIII^{ème} siècles," in Comba and Merlo, eds., 69; and Mick Aston, "The Development of the Carthusian Order in Europe and Britain: a Preliminary Survey," *In Search of Cult: Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1993) 143–48, figs 18.3–7.

18. In his letter from Calabria to Raoul Le Vert (Ralph Viridis) at Chartreuse.

19. While we do not know all the struggles of Chartreuse in its first three decades, its notion of *libertas* does seem to have escaped interference from the archepiscopal seat at Grenoble, and the house had a high degree of exemption from public responsibilities. Giles Constable describes the pros and the cons for monasteries of close ties with local bishops in the twelfth century in *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1996) 240–41.

20. See Alexandra Barratt, "The 'De institutione inclusarum' of Aelred of Rievaulx and the Carthusian Order," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 28 (n. s.), no. 2 (1977): 528–36.

eremital and cenobitical elements into his concept of monastic living, reflection, and expression. Finally, this way of conserving but changing tradition yokes forthright constructive presence within the monastery to self-effacing, silent refusal of the force of authority in communicating outside the monastery.

Historians often have correctly said that the primitive conception of Carthusian life was the most absolute and extreme monasticism of its age.²¹ It did have a logic so pure and shaped with such circumspection that it clarifies much of what surrounded it—the aggrandizing Church, the richer kings and lesser potentates, the more deeply cutting philosophy and science. Yet Bruno built this absolute, this extreme, out of mélange and compromise rather than out of one-way logic. His notion was comprehensive, seeming to compound an essence of eremitism with an essence of cenobitism in ceaseless motion amid stillness. The features of this seemingly exigent vastness help to explain the particular notion of speech, reading, writing, thought, and the communication of these that Bruno initiated.

During his three decades' service in Reims, Bruno was one of a group of exegetes in northern France linked by written communication of their studies of the Psalms. A. J. Kraebel has persuasively argued that a commentary on Psalms, now Bibliothèque municipale Grenoble ms. 341, is correctly attributed to Bruno.²² Kraebel has also worked to prove something more important than the attribution: “that Psalms commentaries circulated in the region's cathedral schools and . . . appear to be related to one another, sharing common sources and common exegetical techniques, and they constituted a rich field of biblical scholarship. . . . [a] field of interrelated texts. . . .”²³

In the years 1060–1077 Bruno and his colleagues created an

21. One finds both the totalizing and the combinatory sides well described in official as well as scholarly work: Gourdel, 722 gives a stately, theoretical account of the primitive Carthusian ideas, and the lovely self-description published by La Grande Chartreuse itself and the Musée dauphinois, *Les Chartreux: le désert et le monde, 1084–1984: neuvième centenaire de la fondation de la Grande Chartreuse* (Grenoble: Musée dauphinois, 1984) 21–26, provides a concrete, architectural description of the blend of eremite and cenobite.

22. A. B. Kraebel, “Grammatica and the Authenticity of the Psalms-Commentary attributed to Bruno the Carthusian,” *Mediaeval Studies* 71 (2009): 63–97. The extant manuscript of the text is of a later date.

23. Kraebel 63–64, 95–96.

intellectual culture that drew from Lanfranc and Berengar as its predecessors and continued with the work of such twelfth-century commentators as Roscellinus of Compiègne, Honorius Augustodunensis, and finally Gilbertus Universalis and the school of Laon. They practiced a grammatical hermeneutic, which interpreted a text, regarded as a fixed material object, through its figures of speech (schemes and tropes). Analysis of rhetoric followed that of grammar, but the goal to which these studies were put was allegoresis of the document. Each word and concept in it, including its physical state, was regarded as allegory of the spiritual world, an order fully and legibly signified by everything in this world.²⁴ The hermeneutic that later grew with Scholastic philosophy involved a differentiation between the text and the book, between words and things, between meaning and appearance, and between logic and intuition.²⁵ Kraebel demonstrates that Bruno's hermeneutic was grammatical, rather than semiotic, and that despite his original ideas it was on the whole traditional.²⁶

Reims' sphere of influence, within Champagne and in all directions around it, helped to shape Bruno, and it was natural that his influence should return there in the twelfth century; yet it must also have been a part of what Bruno rejected when he built La Grande Chartreuse. From

24. Friedrich Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word in the Middle Ages," *Sensus Spiritualis. Studies in Medieval Significs and the Philology of Culture*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott, ed. Samuel P. Jaffe (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2005) 1–30. Thomas O'Laughlin discusses the relations of text and commentary in a similar vein in "Early Medieval Introductions to the Holy Book: Adjuncts or Hermeneutic," *The Church and the Book: Papers Read at the 2000 Summer Meeting and the 2001 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R. N. Swanson (U. K.: The Ecclesiastical History Society, 2004) 22–31.

25. Among many papers on this subject, see Stephen F. Brown, "The Medieval Background to the Abstractive vs. Intuitive Cognition Discussion," *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000) 79–90; and Thomas Head, "'Monastic' and 'Scholastic' Theology: A Change of Paradigm," *Paradigms in Medieval Thought Applications in Medieval Disciplines. A Symposium*, ed. Nancy van Deusen and Alvin E. Ford (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990) 127–42.

26. Kraebel emphasizes something characteristic of the Augustinian element in Carthusian communication, as I describe below: "Bruno's notion of allegory would therefore also appear to have much in common with the grammarian's sense of the word, i.e., extended metaphor. In sum, rather than representing a deviation from his preferred exegetical practice, the carefully articulated place of allegory in Bruno's commentary on the text of the Psalms reinforces and is of a piece with his grammatical or poetic hermeneutic: the Psalmist was a prophetic poet who worked carefully to insinuate into his verse his knowledge of future salvation history" (A. B. Kraebel, "The Place of Allegory in the Psalter-commentary of Bruno the Carthusian," *Mediaeval Studies* 73 (2011): 216).

the sub-alpine establishments fortifying the heart of the new order, another field of thinkers linked by script washed back to the north of the mountainous Auvergnat and into the Flemish lowlands. Three centuries later, cultivated by Valois wealth, the Carthusian concepts of verbal spiritual communication had long-lasting influence on the *devotio moderna*,²⁷ on the Netherlandish mystics, and finally on literary humanism.²⁸ By establishing a regime of verbal communication at La Grande Chartreuse, Bruno and his companions laid a memory of the Reims network onto new land, producing a second topographic circle that soon influenced the older circle. From 1084 on into the twelfth century the Carthusian concept of communication as a spiritual practice and the hermeneutic used by the early reformers slowly passed together, along with much else, into important forms of late medieval and early modern Christian thought.

To the sphere of grammatical hermeneutic, additional ideas arrived by oral and scribal communication with other eremitical networks, such as those in Bretagne and Normandy in the 1190s; with other orders, especially those psychically close to the Carthusians, such as the Praemonstratensians and the Cistercians;²⁹ with the moral type of the bishop exemplified by Archbishop Bruno of Köln;³⁰ and also with Parisian university philosophers and the rest of what Constable calls the omnipresent “science of doubt” in the twelfth century (though Bruno did not share in this sentiment), and even, quite other than such a “science,” the rule of Saint Basil, the guiding light of Orthodox monasticism, which Hugh of Cluny had made some effort to promote.³¹ The life Bruno ordained

27. Richard B. Marks, *The Medieval Manuscript Library of the Charterhouse of St. Barbara in Cologne* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1974) 148.

28. See Árpád Peter Orbán, “De invloed van het ascetische ideaal der katuizers op hun oraal en schriftelijk gebruik van Latijn,” *Oraliteit en schriftcultuur*, ed. R. E. V. Stuip and C. Vellekoop (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993) 103–18. Karl Suso Frank describes the way Carthusians partnered with German humanists and remained generally flexible to intellectual developments in “Die Anfänge der Freiburger Kartause,” *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv*, 99 (1979): 79–93. Very recently, new work placing fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Carthusians in the humanist and reformation movements was presented at the Forty-Eighth International Conference of Medieval Studies (May 9–12, 2013), including *i.a.* Mathilde van Dijk, “Carthusians and New Devouts as Propagandists of Vernacular Reading” (see *Program of . . .*, 103, online at <http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/files/schedule-2013.pdf>).

29. Some transcribers of Carthusian texts and many illuminators were Cistercians.

30. Jaeger, 47ff.

31. Constable, 307–8.

absorbed these influences, channeling them, if they were to enter at all, through two overriding experiential systems: that of silence and that of intramural transcription—a system designed to realize the capacities of monastic life.

In addition, Bruno probably had mixed feelings about a eremitic tradition he must have known well. Following Martin of Tours, in the sixth century, a hermit named Leobard took up residence inside a crag near Tours, where he made parchment, wrote, read, prayed, and sang psalms.³² This set of activities was followed by the Carthusians in every particular except the last. By the tenth and eleventh centuries many hermits followed the Touraine eremitic practice, formalized by the *Regula Grimlaici*. They lived in the *massifs* apart from one another. Today we know very little about them, and even in Bruno's day they must have been only remotely acknowledged by the urban bishops and canons. They built some structures, of which tiny shreds survive, though they could hardly be said to have been part of the proprietary church. To an active mind such as Bruno's they might have failed to give what people should offer to one another out of love.³³ Something like a critique of the Touraine-style hermits probably formed part of his plan for himself and his companions, rejecting some parts but retaining others.

Bruno also wanted to get away from ecclesiastical business. The lives of Bruno's contemporary itinerant hermits, who were more visible if not more numerous, suggested richer possibilities to this end than did the life of the cave-dwellers.³⁴ The group he had lived with for a year in the

32. Jean Hubert gives a superb account in his ground-breaking paper "L'Érémisme et l'archéologie," Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milano), *L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII. Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio, Mendola, 30 agosto–6 settembre 1962* (Milan, 1965) 467ff.

33. H. E. John Cowdrey emphasizes "the outward-looking and active pastoral and political role that the Carthusian tradition promoted" in "The Carthusians and Their Contemporary World: The Evidence of Twelfth-century Bishops' Vitae," *The Crusades and Latin Monasticism, 11th–12th Centuries*, ed. H. E. John Cowdrey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) no. XVI, 35–36.

34. Constable, 263, says that "the growing desire for a personal relationship to God" to some extent replaced interest in collective liturgy as a motive for entering monastic life in the twelfth century. Giovanni Leoncini argues that safeguarding the autonomy of separate and individual monastic lives was the "donnée de base . . . d'une maison basse . . . le pivot autour duquel tourne la première idée" of Bruno in "Le monastère cartusien selon saint Bruno," *Saint Bruno et sa postérité spirituelle: Actes du colloque international des 8 et 9 octobre 2001 à l'Institut catholique de Paris*, ed. James M. Hogg, et al. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2003) 103–10. That "there was a tendency in the twelfth century to interiorize and spiritualize all aspects of mo-

early 1080s (led by Robert of Molesme) became an order, the Cistercians. Bruno's pupil Odo, as Pope Urban II, gave license to Robert Arbrissel at Clermont in 1096 and to the Grandmontines. Vital de Mortain, Raoul de Fustaye, and Bernard de Tiron were among many hermits, known for their poverty and piety, circulating in the pre-Cistercian milieu.³⁵ A hermit living in his own hut was good, but the wandering holy man could be a threat.³⁶ These examples might have showed Bruno that some order was good, and so he gave Chartreuse a centralized authority. The Carthusians were not to preach only with their mouths but also with their scribal hands; they also were not to preach with their feet. This was the narrowed path that led to the Carthusian way of influencing others.

In choosing *le désert* for his home, Bruno of course drew upon the honored memory of the Desert Fathers. In their tradition the desert was not so much for isolation as it was provision for inward struggle and growth within a small, stable world of necessity.³⁷ The Latinate word had a local French cognate in the word *essart*, which meant a land cleared of trees.³⁸ Clear land allowed pasturage, which helped to provision the monks' needs in winter.³⁹ The remote was thereby made more convenient, sustainable, and fruitful in both material and spiritual matters. The spiritual provision started with observing their situation, looking around the valley and up the escarpments that removed the monks into that world

nastic life and morality" (Constable, 266) might have contributed to the Carthusian appreciation of meditation over reading that I describe below.

35. Bligny, 259. Gérard G. Meerseman, "Eremitismo e predicazione itinerante in Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Settimana di Studio, dei secoli XI e XII, (*L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII*, [Milan, 1965] 164–81) discusses the philosophical concepts the itinerants used.

36. This is one of Certeau's principal life-long themes, starting with his extended study of the vagabond mystic Jean-Joseph Surin (1660–65) in his first book, *La fable mystique, XVIe-XVIIe siècle*, in 1982. For a study of the many sides to the itinerant hermit in Bruno's day, see Phyllis G. Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Twelfth Century* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997).

37. Constable, 242–43 says that the "safe area" around a monastery was called a *salvatio*. The Chartreuse *désert* seems to have been a *salvatio*, among other things. It does not appear that any residents or dwellings were cleared away to make room for Bruno and his companions, as did happen elsewhere.

38. "<Anglo-Norman *assart*, Old French *essart* < late Latin *exartum* = **exsartum*, past participle (sc. *arvum* land) of **exsar(r)i-re*, < *ex* out + *sar(r)i-re* to hoe, weed: see *assart* v. The n. might also have been formed in French directly on the verb (compare *regarder*, regard), whence probably sense 2 arose. . . ." (*Oxford English Dictionary*); see also the entries for *désert* and *essart* in *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* at <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>.

39. Excoffon, 70.

in which little beyond their own reservations separated their will from God's. The first spot Bruno chose being too far up the canyon, La Grande Chartreuse was settled a little lower, with sharper views and a little more safety. The monks built and still keep a hermitage called Nôtre Dame de Casalibus farther up the crevasse.

By providing land suited to silence, the first Carthusians enacted a pastoralism closely connected with suspicion of language. Language, diffusing untruth as well as truth, makes us vulnerable to its tricks and deceptions. Bruno's move to the sustaining silence of the Alps—and, later, to the similar conditions at a lower altitude in Calabria, which like the Tournaine had long been full of hermits—gave the Order control of language. Silence ruled over talk. It governed the purposes to which monks put words. Ideas from the outside entered La Grande Chartreuse through a “reseau pastoral cartusien.”⁴⁰ In 1100 the book of the world could be opened better in silence than in “dialogue and dialectic.”⁴¹

On the other hand, the monastery was not an idyll. To say either that Bruno was indifferent to material nature or that he “loved nature” is arguably an anachronism.⁴² His vision for his chosen life combined things we today find difficult to reconcile. It was a built environment—first of wood by Bruno's companions, then of stone on a grand plan after an avalanche destroyed the old buildings in 1132. Its gates were locked against the wild. The design had all sharp angles and uniform volumes, from the segments of cells to the cell's garden to the whole cloister.⁴³ They built a walled world of necessity, in which close arrangement of things helped the monks find inward freedom.⁴⁴

Stability and silence are sustained by endurance. The monks of La Grande Chartreuse, not moving with the world, remembered the way their predecessors, Bruno above all, used to live, re-enacting it; they re-

40. Excoffon, 71.

41. Giles Constable, 130.

42. The question whether Bruno or other eremites of his day “loved nature” or in what sense they did so is taken up by respondents to Hubert, 488–90.

43. This is very effectively illustrated in Grande Chartreuse and Musée dauphinois, *Les Chartreux*, 25, figs. 15–16. Also, one will clearly see it in the monks' movements in their cells at Chartreuse today in the film by Philip Gröning, *Die große Stille* (Germany, 2005).

44. For a discussion of the cell as a spiritual space that included writing and reading, see Nikolaus Staubach, “Vita solitaria und vita communis. Der Innenraum als Symbol religiöser Lebensgestaltung im Spätmittelalter,” *Außen und Innen. Räume und ihre Symbolik im Mittelalter*, ed. Nikolaus Staubach and Vera Johanterwage (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007) 279–98.

membered the history of the world, the Imperium, their faith, reconsidering it; and they remembered most of all the life of Jesus by reliving it each in his own way as guided by the community. They guarded memory against forgetting, against not sincerely and fully continuing to mean the law of love to which their savior summoned them. Also, they believed that faith could help them to be stable and silent despite the company of their rapid recursive brains. Richard of Saint Victor told his readers that faith was in need of good study habits, the kind of unremitting ratiocination that Duns Scotus and other scholastics used in trying to free abstract thought from faith.⁴⁵ Augustine made a greater demand on memory than that which abstract thought could fulfill.⁴⁶ The tradition that endured for Bruno was not one in which theology was at base a rational science. To make sense of the link between silence and script in Bruno's mind and in the writings of his chief successors, one has to start in a different direction: backwards from before Bruno, not forward into a later history of ideas.

The tradition Bruno bade his followers remember was more like that of Saint Augustine than that of the Victorines. Recounting his own history in the light of universal truth in the *Confessions*, Augustine endeavored to match the solitary individual and the community of all persons. One's memory is not altogether particular to one's self. Its contents meaningfully endure because they include things one does not remember from one's own experience but, rather, knows through God. These are excellent divine things, including happiness. No matter that one has not felt this nor can fully know it. By sowing it into our consciousness, which is full of memory, God has provided hope of it to us. One's memories supply the deepest intuitions of that from which persons come and whither they go. Meditation upon these intuitions makes the past and the future *quasi praesentia* ('like present things'). For Augustine this is thinking and this is knowledge, into the space or edifice (he calls them halls [*aula*])

45. Brown, 87.

46. In this exposition I am largely following the reading made by Hannah Arendt in her doctoral dissertation (for Karl Jaspers) published as *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996). Both her words and the texts she quotes from Saint Augustine were translated by E. B. Ashton. In Book 10 of the *Confessions*, Augustine, having reviewed his life in the nine first books, argues for identifying the self with one's memory, from which divine as well as quotidian wisdom comes (esp. 10.17 and 24–26).

of which abstract operations do not enter. Temporal tenses collapse together in this experience. Augustine says of this memory meditation that “I talk to myself . . .” [*dico apud me*].⁴⁷ Talking to oneself puts one both deeply into one’s own subjectivity and also far outside of it, somewhere closer to the eternal perspective. The fruit of meditation is not solipsism, in contrast to which it is unlimited because it is the response of love to craving, the reply of *amor* to *cupiditas*. Augustine rejects one-way vicious solitude in favor of what Hannah Arendt calls “a twofold conjunction.” In Augustine’s view

man is seen in the first sense as isolated and coming by contingency into the world seen as desert. In [the] second sense, man is seen as belonging to mankind and to this world by generation. . . . It is only in the individual’s isolation in God’s presence that he becomes our neighbor.⁴⁸

Elsewhere Augustine commends the monks’ desert.⁴⁹ This monastic meditation is a communication of the two kinds: that of the monk with his historic self and that of the monk with humankind’s atemporal nature.

Bruno makes a similar link and then sets it in opposition to the written word in the letter *Ad filios suos Cartusienses* (“To his Carthusian sons”) of about 1099–1100.⁵⁰ This letter, one of just three documents we have from his hand, contains the only extant words he addressed to the Carthusian community as its leader. His letter to Raoul Le Vert gives the thoughts of one friend to another; the *Confessio*, addressed to God, tells us his theology; and the *Ad suos filios* presents some part of his views on monastic life. It tells us what he judged most urgent to communicate and thereby what is the chief purpose of speech acts. Bruno first exults [*exsulto*] and commends rejoicing [*gaudete*] and then declares, “*De vobis,*

47. O’Donnell, at <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/conf/text10.html>, observes that the history of speaking to one’s self as a trope in texts has yet to be written.

48. Arendt, 112.

49. O’Donnell’s annotations for *Confessions* 10.43.70 lists the other passages in which Augustine uses *desertum*.

50. St. Bruno and Guigo I, ed. and trans. “Un Chartreux,” *Lettres des Premiers Chartreux*, I (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988) 83–89. The editor discusses the dating of the text on 35ff. See also H. E. John Cowdrey, “The Gregorian Papacy and Eremitical Monasticism,” in his *Popes and Church Reform in the 11th Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) no. V, 33–54; and Giles Constable, “Saint Bruno of Cologne and Solitude,” *Truth as Gift: Studies in Medieval Cistercian History in Honor of John R. Sommerfeldt*, eds. Marsha L. Dutton, et al. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004) 27–41.

dilectissimis fratribus meis laicis, dico: Magnificat anima mea Dominum . . .
 . [I say to you, my dearest brothers, may my soul Glorify God . . .].

This is the unitary purpose of speech, fundamental to it, whatever other cognition we have or communication we make: “Let us rejoice even when you are thirsty [*sitis*] for systematic thought [*scientiae*] and writing [*litterarum*], for God the powerful with his finger incised in your hearts not only love itself but also awareness [*notitiam*] of his holy law.”⁵¹

Bruno calls upon the oldest and, save perhaps the notion of the incarnation of God in His Son, most powerful metaphor for communication in the Western tradition: the hand of God writes, as it once wrote the law onto tablets atop Mount Sinai, all that is inmost in us. This idea identifies verbal communication with glorifying God. Then Bruno lays out its two sides, carefully putting one atop the other. The first is love itself, or perhaps the law of love. In Augustine’s terms, this is the commonality of all humankind due to creation by God—the life given in beating hearts. The second is awareness of this commonality in one’s own consciousness, which Augustine calls memory, and to the full cultivation of which monastic life, for Augustine and also for Bruno’s particular hope for it, is devoted. Bruno’s own plan of eremitical life may be viewed as a practical plan by which to reach the Augustinian goal. His aim was to direct all sides of life at Chartreuse, single and communal, manual and intellectual, toward this goal, having systematically considered what was necessary, unnecessary, and contrary to this kind of life.

He was not yet finished: “Therefore, my brothers, avoid like a plague the rotten crowd of empty-headed lay religious who hand out their little manifestos and carp hatefully at anyone who stands up to them by words or by deeds.”⁵² The anonymous Carthusian editor of the *Sources Chrétiennes* volume tells us that these people, whom Bruno calls *gyrovagi* in the next sentence, are vagabond monks who squat below the walls of Chartreuse. Fearing corrupt texts as well as stupid ones, Bruno contrasts writing things out for others to read unfavorably with saying and doing the *Magnificat* meditation. He walks, as it were, to center stage, opens his mouth, and immediately recalls the word that is to perform the play. In the actual case he does this from off stage, trapped far away in submission

51. Saint Bruno, *Lettres* 84. My translation.

52. Saint Bruno, *Lettres* 84, 87. My translation.

to spiritual authority. These words and circumstances set the agency of the monk apart from simple passivity and from simple activity.

This point complicates the usual claim that the early Carthusians held devotion to scribal work in the esteem highest among their practices.⁵³ This may indeed be true of the work in many houses, but it is not true of Bruno's meaning in this letter. He holds that words are not to be cheaply and easily produced, that they are not to be vocalized, and that they must be written by monks within the guarded rule of "preaching with the hands." Above all, texts such as those that Bruno asks Raoul le Vert to bring him, must be subject to meditation, since they all at heart concern nothing other than that love that is the substance of the created universe. Bruno reserved the monastic life as a way in which to pursue understanding of these two things, the one being individual and the other universal. Although he was far from Chartreuse and probably knew he would never return there, having stationed himself in Calabria, and thinking of his dying brother Landuin in the Alpine cold, his written words describe divine inscription, reach out in compassion to Landuin, and make a harsh critique of writing.

53. Early Carthusians worked closely with nearby Cluniac houses in the making of manuscripts. This practice at La Grande Chartreuse is described so far as we can know it in Mielle de Becdelièvre, *Prêcher en silence: Enquête codicologique sur les manuscrits du XIIe siècle provenant de la Grande Chartreuse* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'université Jean Monnet, Centre Européen de Recherches sur les Congrégations et Ordres Religieux, 2004), the authoritative work on the Chartreuse manuscripts, although as a codicologist she does not intensively treat issues concerning the intellectual history of the texts. See also her earlier papers: "Un enquête sur les fonds cartusien du XIIe siècle de la bibliothèque municipale de Grenoble" (in Comba and Merlo, eds., 81–93), in which she opens her investigation of the manuscripts, the first in a century; "La tradition de la lecture et la première bibliothèque cartusienne" (in Hogg, Girard, and Le Blévec, eds., 219–30), in which she updates the established list of manuscripts from La Grande Chartreuse; and "D'une bible à l'autre . . . La réalisation des deux premières bibles de la Grande Chartreuse au XIIe," *Révue Mabillon* 74.13 (2002): 161–88. The earlier study was the pioneering work of Edmond Maignien and Auguste Fourier for the national manuscripts catalogue, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France. Départements. Tome 7. Grenoble* (Paris: Plon, 1889), which includes, besides the catalogue itself, a very helpful study of the history of the manuscripts by Fournier in the "Introduction" i–xxxvi. The next study after Maignien and Fourier but before Mielle de Becdelièvre was Raymond Étaix, "Les manuscrits de la Grande-Chartreuse et de la chartreuse de Portes. Étude préliminaire," *Scriptorium* 42 (1988): 49–75.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT BY GUIGO I AND GUIGO II

THE FIRST EVIDENCE for the peculiar Carthusian high valuation of writing is the fifth prior of La Grande Chartreuse, Guigo I (1083–1136). Guigo is a great witness, a primary source. We have, beside some of his letters, a highly personal work, his *Meditationes*,⁵⁴ which he took twelve years to write (1109–1120), and a highly objective work, the *Consuetudines Cartusiae* (1127), the first *regulae* for the Carthusian Order.⁵⁵ We know as well that he was a frequent correspondent of Bernard of Clairvaux, although their letters do not survive.⁵⁶ He greatly enlarged the Chartreuse library and even gives us particulars of how he did this in a letter of about 1135 to the Charterhouse at Durbon (founded 1116). He and his associates, in

54. Guigo I, *Les Meditations* (Paris: Cerf, 1983) 286, 471, 476. Rieder gives his argument for Guigo's mysticism in "Mystik und Christologie bei Guigo."

55. The history of the Carthusian *regula* will be found in the prefatory matter to Guigo I, *Consuetudines*. It received papal approval in 1140. The first of many printed editions was Basel, 1510. Florent Cygler, "Vom 'Wort' Brunos zum gesetzten Recht der Statuten über die Consuetudines Guigonis: Propositum und Institutionalisierung im Spiegel der kartäusischen Ordensschriflichkeit (11.–14. Jahrhundert)," *Schriftlichkeit und Lebenspraxis im Mittelalter: Erfassen, Bewahren, Verändern*, ed. Hagen Keller, et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999) 95–109, applied Max Weber's idea of *ratio* to Guigo I and the *Consuetudines*. The existence of the *Consuetudines* and the notion of the "praepositum" as the primitive root of Carthusian practice poses a question: is not the later written document a critique of the earlier spiritual notion? Were there internal reasons for which the community required a written code—that is, reasons aside from the needs of newer foundations to which they wanted to explain their principles? Bligny, 262–63 seems to have been the first scholar to ask this; his paper is followed by a vigorous discussion of the issue by Bligny, Hubert, Leclercq, and Meerseman (264–70). Matthew Innes discusses what happened to medieval memory during institutionalization in a wider context, in his "On the Material Culture of Legal Documents: Charters and their Preservation in the Cluny Archive, Ninth to Eleventh Centuries," *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Warren C. Brown, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) 283–320.

56. On their relationship see David N. Bell, "The Carthusian Connection: Guigo I of La Chartreuse and the Origins of Cistercian Spirituality," *CSQ* 27:1 (1992): 51–62; and Rinaldo Comba, "Cistercensi, certosini, eremiti: intrecci e istituzionalizzazioni di esperienze monastiche nel XII secolo," Comba and Merlo, eds., 9–32. Bell says that no work of importance on Guigo had been done since the 1930's. In the decade following this statement, Cygler's "Vom 'Wort' Bruno's" appeared and then Bruno Reider's book on Guigo, *Deus locum dabit. Studien zur Theologie des Kartäuserpriors Guigo I. (1083–1136)* (Paderborn, Munich: Schöningh, 1997), plus his two important papers "Mystik und Christologie bei Guigo I," *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians*, 3, James M. Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1995) 1–14; and "Nec quicquam gestat, unde quod sit prior appareat: Stellung und Selbstverständnis des Vorstehers im frühen Kartäuserorden," *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige* 110 (1999): 125–46.

a group effort, sorted texts by editorial criteria, using incipits and assembling coherent collections into codices.⁵⁷

We have another outstanding source: Guigo's own comment on the Carthusian use of books.⁵⁸ It serves to balance our view of Guigo's "bibliophilia," and it serves as well to put into context the well-traveled articles of the *Consuetudines* on scribal practice. In this letter he describes a life truly poor in material things and truly rich in spirit. One part of this life is a godly attitude toward books: "It [the poor life] is devoted to reading, but mostly in the Scripture canon and in holy books where it is more intent upon the inner marrow of meaning than on the froth of words."⁵⁹

Because the spirit is more important than the letter, those who seek God by study ought not only to choose their texts carefully but do something with their reading that surpasses reading itself as a relation of monks to texts. Silence accompanies reading throughout the week. The trope of feeding upon Scripture is a familiar one. In using it, Guigo questions it by making the metaphor limit itself. Words themselves are metaphors and are adiphora. "Marrow" clearly is no more adequate to spiritual truth than is "froth" (*spuma*). He adds one metaphor to the other, splitting a familiar trope into a complicated, urgent critique. It limits reading as an abstractive activity, although by doubling the metaphor it also says that rhetorical or grammatical reflection upon reading does not transgress reading's proper limits and is safe to one's soul. Under his normative notion of poverty, this also means that reading is not privileged above silence. The rule commits monks to both, but every verbal expression of the truth—even as the marrow of text—is something less valuable than silent apprehension of wisdom.

In the *Consuetudines*, writing and reading are chief intramural ac-

57. Saint Bruno and Guigo I, *Lettres* 216–19. The Carthusian recension of the letters of Saint Jerome survives in just one fourteenth-century manuscript. See Gordon Mursell, *The Theology of the Carthusian Life in the Writings of St. Bruno and Guigo I* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1988) 75–77.

58. This is the remarkable letter discovered by André Wilmart in 1933 in a twelfth-century manuscript produced at Chartreuse, now in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble. The ms. is Mieille no. 120, BM Grenoble no. 241 (formerly no. 460). André Wilmart, "L'Appel à la vie Cartusienne suivant Guiges l'ancien," *RAM* 14 (1933): 337–49, announced his addition of this "text oublié" to the "debris" of Guigo's correspondence. See Becdelièvre, 423–24. See also Mursell, 59–62.

59. The translation is by Thomas Merton, online along with his introduction, at <http://transfiguration.chartreux.org/Guigo-Letter-Solitude.htm>. Merton published his work on this letter in a booklet called *The Solitary Life* (Lexington, KY: Stamperia del Santuccio, 1960).

tivities, but they are always joined to others such as prayer and meditation.⁶⁰ Copying texts preserves them not only for other monks but also for the copyist, who thereby inscribes the words in his memory as well as on paper. The relative values of reading and writing with respect to meditation are a subset of the values of silence and speech. Silence, a principal rule, is an engine of the entire Carthusian eremitical endeavor. Speaking is auxiliary to silence, as when the novice reads aloud in order to make his profession.⁶¹ Speech is necessary for some practical affairs,⁶² but when monks talk over spiritual matters with each other, Guigo says “we talk with God helping us” [*Domino iuvante dicamus*].⁶³ Binding books and writing or correcting texts are more like practical affairs than spiritual ones, as this one brief article devoted to the matter says: “When some monks are busy editing or binding books or doing other such jobs, they may talk to others in the workroom but never to other monks passing by unless the prior is in the room or has given them permission to do so.”⁶⁴ Making books is important enough to talk about, but it is also not important enough to be worth talking about. In any case, one needs to focus to do a job well but must not pass the time in talk.

This constraint on bookmaking and reading is the context in which to understand Guigo I’s two well-known provisions for writing.⁶⁵ The first of these is part of his instructions for Sundays: above all, silence all week until Sunday morning confessions⁶⁶ and then, after various maneuvers and rites, back in the cloister “we shall request and receive ink, vellum sheets, pens, chalk, books, whether for reading or for copying, from the sacristan; and from the cook, vegetables, salt, and other food.”⁶⁷ Reading and writing are once again linked with eating, this time as present material objects rather than as metaphors. The fact that the Carthusian *Consuetudines* also contain specific rubrics for fasting amplifies the attitude the monk is to have toward the work of reading and writing.

60. *Consuetudines* 16.2.

61. *Consuetudines* 73.3.

62. *Consuetudines* 42.3–4.

63. *Consuetudines* 42.1.

64. *Consuetudines* 42. My translation.

65. Other scattered references to working with texts are utilitarian, for example *Consuetudines* 41.4.

66. *Consuetudines* 7.2.

67. *Consuetudines* 7.9. My translation.

Guigo's second instruction fills almost all of *Consuetudines* 28. The chapter lists the objects that each monk's cell must contain. Paragraph one covers everything but tools for eating and the materials of study; the rest of the chapter mixes books and food. Paragraphs two through six describe the material and spiritual objects in the cell for study within it. Paragraph two is as good a description of the set-up for a medieval scribe as we have, providing also for those skilled in book arts other than writing, though they rarely come *apud nos* ('among us'); this is generally taken as referring to illuminators, who were indeed uncommon at La Grande Chartreuse but busy in the cells at Des Portes and elsewhere. In paragraph three Guigo orders that monks handle the books with great care because they are "permanent dining for our souls" (*sempiternum animarum nostrarum cibum*). Yet again the thought of food instantly takes us to the great narrative: Carthusians must treasure texts "in order for us to preach the Word of God with [our] hands, because we cannot do this with our mouth[s]."⁶⁸ This spiritual food, which is in need of physical circumspection, fuels study of the Word of God. Paragraph four moves on to editorial care. Books are the "heralds" [*praecones*] of truth. They have to be kept as truth, consequently, that is, monks have a duty, rewarded by God, to transmit correct texts. *Errores* (scribal mistakes) can lead to *peccata* (sins). The fifth paragraph returns to the dining table. The sixth paragraph introduces the following seven chapters as elaborations of these ideas.⁶⁹

The two phrases quoted above regarding preaching are commonly quoted as a literal statement by Guigo of why Carthusians copied out books. The statement does factually report his attitude, but his thinking here is different from what we today mean by these words. The entire chapter treats eating, reading, and writing as one, or functionally one, topic for discussion. This passage contains fact, metaphor, and metonym; the tone is at least hortatory and probably prescriptive. The subjunctive is in the second phrase, so the entire passage depends on the protasis. It is a fact that monks eat through their mouths, but Guigo speaks about two kinds of ingestion, literally as eating and metaphorically as learning. The literal mouth, though valuably ingestive, is constrained from mak-

68. My translation.

69. *Consuetudines* 30, 31, 32 (on speech), 33 and 34 (on food).

ing speech acts. The monk's mouth may ingest, but it must not express. The mouth is a model for the monk's intellectual or spiritual ingestion because codices are spiritual and intellectual food, though this same mouth—literally, singularly, and precisely—must not be the model of verbal expression. Having moved from nutrition to intelligence, Guigo then does state as fact and as command that, as a result of guarding books and restraining talk, the monks have an improved capacity to communicate verbally by writing, signified by the metonym “hand.” Of course monks “can” [*possimus*] write at any time, so why does Guigo cleave off writing from speech, especially amidst his efforts to evaluate them both as parts of expression in and only in the context of solitary life in the cell? And why are they here specially enjoined to write, and how and why does this recommended writing [*libros scribimus. . . ab errore*]⁷⁰ become an exploration of the spiritual value of repetition?

Guigo's purpose is to guard, as well as to constrain, verbal communication. He supported its work as part of prayer and meditation by urging monks to refrain from polemic and instead attentively to copy and think about the texts they come to know well by copying them. They can present what they write, but they must also efface their presence in favor of deepening meditation. The documentary culture of the Western mentality was being created in the early twelfth century. Identification of self with public speech acts induces elaborate thought rising from the psyche rather than in close correspondence to external objects of perception and cognition, and furthermore it induces taxonomic efforts to ensure authenticity and stability amid the great expansion of materials that it produces. Guigo, like Bruno, recommends withholding the self from identification with its speech acts. Just as when Bruno used *dico* to make *Magnificat*, so Guigo was interested in effacing authorship immediately upon presenting it. As memorial culture began to weaken, men like Guigo sought to conceive of non-documentary and non-discursive practices that would nourish private meditation. In this passage he says that if there must be writing, let speech not infect it and let the writing serve meditation.

The cell according to Guigo is paradise or Jerusalem, or sometimes a womb, supporting physical and spiritual life. The alimentary and

70. *Consuetudines* 28.4.

scribal activities for which it is equipped are indispensable parts of the monk's meditative life in its solitary aspect. Guigo requires that monks take in only truthful mental food, which corresponds to the true things God has implanted within them. His view, like Bruno's, was Augustinian: that prayer and meditation helps us to remember the divine within ourselves.⁷¹ False texts, like bad food, have no use in this regard. Repetitive writing builds accurate memory of truth. A monk must naturally be wholly accurate when re-inscribing the truth, because if he transcribes in error then he is not remembering truth. The "hand" requires a positive structure in which to write, just as monks require a firm structure in which to move when praying and meditating in the absence of all that follows from individual expression. All this is prophylactic against anything, such as polemic, that is not prayer or helpful to prayer. Scribally rehearsing the truth, within a life of meditation, helps to expand the monk's personal *notitia* of universal *amor*. Presentation and rapid effacement of self are the parts constituting two-step communication, by which monks become aware of but not attached to themselves and through which they understand God's love for themselves and for all persons.

Guigo II (d. c. 1193), the ninth prior of La Grande Chartreuse, developed a complete schema for feeding contemplative life on spiritual memory in a documentary and discursive world. This is his *quattuor graduum*, or four stages of spiritual life, collectively called *Scala Claustralium* ('the ladder of monks') and written as part of his *Epistola de vita contemplativa*.⁷² Reading is the first step—but only the first step. As for Bruno and Guigo I, reading is useful because it nourishes the next steps: meditation,⁷³ prayer, and contemplation. The group of four activities is called *lectio divina*, a phrase used by Saint Benedict and Pope Saint Gregory I, but the four-part construction came from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and is associated with Guigo II as its inventor in the form of the ladder met-

71. Mursell, 27, 82, 91; also 103, 199ff. on Carthusian scribal practice.

72. Guigo II, *Lettre sur la vie contemplative. Douze Méditations*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Paris: Cerf, 2001).

73. Brian Stock, 408 says that "*meditatio*, as an exercise in memorization, was inseparable from *lectio*" for Bernard of Clairvaux. But for the early Carthusians, transcription included a lot of memorization, and meditation embraced far more than memorization. On the basis of the Carthusian texts examined here, it is not plausible to describe meditation as a function or branch of memorization. I do not think that memorization stood apart for the early Carthusians as a mechanical function. Their focus was on memory in the Augustinian sense.

aphor. Whatever thoughts and uses for bookmaking and reading later developed, in Guigo II's text one sees the patterns Bruno and Guigo I set: texts are raw material, writing being merely a highly functional form, to be regulated in a way suitable to the two paths of self-awareness [*notitia*] and universal awareness [*amor*] by involving and directly effacing the individual monk.

The ladder was, in other words, a plan for keeping the *divina* in the *lectio*.

I hear the words read: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."⁷⁴ This is a short text of Scripture, but it is of great sweetness, like a grape that is put into the mouth filled with many senses to feed the soul. When the soul has carefully examined it, it says to itself, There may be something good here. I shall return to my heart and try to understand and find this purity, for this is indeed a precious and desirable thing. Those who have it are called blessed. It has for its reward the vision of God which is eternal life, and it is praised in many places in sacred Scripture. So, wishing to have a fuller understanding of this, the soul begins to bite and chew upon this grape, as though putting it in a wine press, while it stirs up its powers of reasoning to ask what this precious purity may be and how it may be had.⁷⁵

Grapes and raisins suggest wine, the sun, and the soil. By tasting, chewing, and digesting them the monk lives amidst the cycles of organic nature. *Lectio divina* is also a practice congruent with spiritual nature, truly set, as the metaphor shows, inside the Carthusian pastoral topography. When a monk copies a text in the Carthusian context, he is reading as well as writing, and his writing is an instrument of his reading. Guigo treats reading and writing as sensuous, pleasurable manual labor that takes the scribe into the sweetness of sanctified life [*beatae vitae dulcedinem lectio inquirat*].⁷⁶ This *inquirat* is the action the monk performs on the first step of the ladder. Each step requires the other three and is *nul* without them, and each builds upon the preceding steps.⁷⁷ *Inquirat* signifies entry into a process, as when one puts his foot upon the lowest step of a ladder. Guigo

74. Matthew 5:8.

75. Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks A Letter on Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Welsh (Garden City, NY: Image, 1978) 83.

76. Guigo II, *Lettre* 2.41–42.

77. *Lettre* 13.305 and 14.309–10.

observes a careful balance, since the fourth, contemplation, is the richest, and the first is therefore the simplest, and yet all four are requisite. In the first step the monk's eyes and hands take him into material objects, while the other three steps take him away from these and alter his relation to the created world. *Notitia*, starting with writing and reading, grows within the monk's memory into *amor*. The four-step plan is actually more a one-plus-three plan.

In his re-iterative development of the triplex ladder later in the work, Guigo II's wording more fully restricts reading. He says that reading is essential and beneficial, but his thoughts show conflict, out of which writing must be yet further deflated, because reading is there to be surpassed. *Lectio is fundamentum . . . et data materia* (foundation . . . subject-matter), an *exterius exercitium* (outward practice), for beginners [*incipientium*].⁷⁸ One must guard against all kind of ways in which reading might send the meditator off in wrong directions.⁷⁹ In itself, as a single step and without meditation, it is sterile [*arida*].⁸⁰ Reading, like writing, is merely kindling [*facibus*] to spark the *tyro*, the beginner, into next three steps, which are the actual work of inward spirituality.⁸¹

Meditation is the first inward step and causes our minds to be cleansed.⁸² In prayer the monk, begging and longing, turns truly to God by recognizing the limits of his unaided efforts.⁸³ Contemplation is non-cognitive, breaking through the senses, in order to leaves us wholly spiritual [*totius spiritualis*].⁸⁴ This begins to look like an apophatic mystical path, moving from the shedding of what we know through switching out of intellection to union with the divine. Guigo lacked any mystic vision of God, but his scheme marks a high development of unitive experience in the monastic life.

Repetition leaves scribal work nothing material to grow into and thus free to be processed into meditation and subsequent states of mind. Thus restrained, writing and reading are passive with respect to the text. By

78. *Lettre* 12.287–88, 296, 299

79. *Lettre* 13.

80. *Lettre* 14.350

81. *Lettre* 6.99–100.

82. *Lettre* 5.69ff.

83. *Lettre* 12.289, and elsewhere.

84. *Lettre* 7.174.

writing a book the monk does not fall in love with the book, though the early Carthusians produced magnificent books that surely were labors of love in some sense of this phrase. The book remains a highly esteemed material object, the text of which the Carthusian has not freed from the codex into an object for his own further expression. He does not interact with the text in the way scholastic philosophers and centuries of scholars were to do. As written textuality began to replace oral textuality, Guigo designed the least writing-like form of writing and reading he could think of. Nothing impedes the truth given the monk by good books on its sovereign way to the monk's understanding. There is no "text." Rather, there is truth rehearsed until held in memory. Memory continues to be profoundly important, but the memory of the textual culture underway in the twelfth century was less and less like Augustinian memory. It more and more became an active theater of operations for self-expression in written communication with others. The genius of the Carthusian method was to try to stand athwart this while resisting nothing, never denigrating the material world, and holding onto a very long, slow, quiet system of personal and community spiritual growth against the difficulties made by systematic rationalization.

Neither Guigo I nor Guigo II was a systematizer in the scholastic manner. They were, as in his concept, responding to the difficulties of inhabiting the profundities established by a charismatic founder. They failed, in the sense in which the Roman institution also failed in its power and discipline throughout the High Middle Ages and after. But they also communicated a kind of thinking that rationalism both generates and confronts by means of something other than only codifying the *praepositum*.

Guigo I placed the materials of communication into the monk's cell. Guigo II, responding after a half-century of philosophical development, placed the utility of writing and reading wholly at the service of inward spiritual operations. When Guibert de Nogent (c. 1055–1124), a Benedictine, describes the "very rich library" at La Grande Chartreuse,⁸⁵ it is necessary to think of this book collection not in terms of the later develop-

85. Guibert of Nogent, trans. Paul J. Archambault, *A Monk's Confession. The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996) 32. "Cum in omnia paupertate se deprimant ditissimam tamen bibliothecam coaggerunt: quo enim minus hujus copia materialis exuberant, tanto magis illo, qui non perit, sed in aeternum permanet, cibo operose insudant." The Latin text is

ments that constitute the book and the library for us, including scholastic textuality, Renaissance or Baroque encyclopedism, and the bibliophilia born around 1800 that continues today—but to think of what it meant for the Carthusians. Guibert stresses their poverty and vulnerability, saying that Bruno valued spiritual growth more greatly than fears and worldly attachments,⁸⁶ recalling the metaphor of nutrition: “The less they abound in bread of the material sort, the more they work.”⁸⁷

He uses the Latin homonym *copia* to bring to mind both the material abundance the Carthusians reject and also that which they do value, the truth copied by hand and in memory. The monks work hard for this *copia*, which their labor frees from its worldly bounds. Another observer, William of Saint-Thierry (1085–1148), a Cistercian who lived at the Chartreuse de Mont-Dieu in 1131–1132, says in his instruction to these Carthusians on life in the monk’s cell that the cell sacralizes everything within because it is an enactment of the sacrament (*sacramenti similitudine*),⁸⁸ a temple, a holy land in which everything ascends to heaven.⁸⁹ Of *lectio divina* he says that “reading serves intention.”⁹⁰ The monk daily reads something that “must be dispatched to the stomach of memory,”⁹¹ not detaining the spirit if the monk truly seeks God.

IV. THE LATER PERIOD: GUIGO DE BALMA HUGO DA PONTE, AND AFTER

LATER CARTHUSIANS, SUCH as Denis van Leeuwen (or de Ryckel) (1402–1471) and Ludolph of Saxony (1300–1378) produced many of the most widely diffused mystical and devotional texts in Europe just before and during the Renaissance. Members of Charterhouses in Flanders were intellectually and spiritually connected to the *devotio moderna*, and those in the Lower Rhineland can be associated with the tremendous period

in Guibert Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy, *Opera omnia juxta editionem domini Lucae d'Achery ad prelum revocata et cura qua par erat emendata*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 156:854–55.

86. Guibert, 33–34.

87. Guibert, 34.

88. William of Saint-Thierry, *Lettre aux frères du Mont-Dieu: lettre dor* (Paris: Cerf, 1975) 1.1.32.

89. William of Saint-Thierry, *Lettre* 1.1.32–40.

90. William of Saint-Thierry, *Lettre* 3.2.124: *Intentioni enim servit lectio*.

91. William of Saint-Thierry, *Lettre* 3.2.122: *in ventrum memoriae demittendum est*.

of Christian mysticism that includes Tauler, Suso, Eckhart, and Ruysbroeck. Charterhouses had long been practicing the core idea of *imitatio*, in both correct transcription and in contemplation of Jesus, which became the central trope of the most read devotional work in Europe, *Imitatio Christi*, by a non-Carthusian, Thomas à Kempis. This is a good reason to consider the connection of these developments to Carthusian ideas about writing and reading to be plausible.

At least two important later Carthusian thinkers developed a three-part road for spiritual growth: Guigo da Ponte (d. 1297) and Hugo de Balma (d. 1439).⁹² The three parts are the *via purgativa*, the *via illuminativa*, and the *via unitiva*.⁹³ The influence of apophatic theology is evident in this idea, though nothing of it is to be found in anything we know about the twelfth-century Carthusian founders and leaders.⁹⁴ The more important source, however, at least for Guigo da Ponte and before the more cosmopolitan influences of the fifteenth century, is Guigo II's *scala divina* for the *vita contemplativa*.⁹⁵ In da Ponte's hands, the study of words, by both writing and reading them, though honored, sits at the bottom rung. In Guigo da Ponte⁹⁶ and most of all in Hugh of Balma, the study of words drops away altogether. The three steps of meditation, prayer, and contemplation are all that are left. These three concepts describe the processing of the verbal into the ineffable, extracting the valid from invalid as we extract nutrients when we metabolize food, then seeking to transform this into truth, and finally issuing in contemplation, which in mystical theology unites man with God. The regime of control over words by silencing the mouth, engaging the hand, and stabilizing the feet was a re-

92. Hugo de Balma and Guigo de Ponte, *Carthusian Spirituality: the Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte*, ed. and trans. Dennis D. Martin (New York: Paulist, 1997).

93. Balma and Ponte, 12–13. Martin says that the concept of the three *viae* has been incorrectly attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux but that it was Hugo's invention. He further discusses the concept on 18–19, connecting its diffusion with the pastoral visit of Nicolaus of Cusa to Germany in 1450–1452.

94. Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991) 112–19, describes three-stage plans of spiritual life in pre-Augustianian Christianity in the context of neo-Platonic Christian thought and practices such as the idea of the heavenly *eros* and also in the context of viewing study of texts as a paradigm for spiritual education.

95. Balma and Ponte, 59, also extending Guigo's reach to Ignatius of Loyola.

96. See also Philippe Dupont, "L'Ascension Mystique chez Guigues du Pont," *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker: dritter Internationaler Kongress über die Kartäusergeschichte und -Spiritualität*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981) 5:47–80.

source, derived from Bruno's conservative stance, that quietly, indirectly, by attraction rather than by promotion, helped to build the mystical tradition throughout the changes in abstract thought and material textual culture through a half-millennium. One must balance Guigo da Ponte's endorsements and reservations about reading, but his reservations have been ignored out of the modern love for hand made books.

The vast complication of textual logic in the thirteenth and following centuries put pressure on the subtle Carthusian concept of communication by transcription for silence and for meditation. Books steadily ceased to constrain texts into one version bound in a box. Carthusians struggled to maintain the two-step concept of communication by thoroughly inoculating spiritual work from book-work in order to maintain both in their proper relations and spheres. Adam of Dryburgh (d. 1212) describes proper form for the scribe based on his own life in the Charterhouse at Witham in Essex. The scribe must do only what he is told to do, diligently maintaining the material book as a kind of bodily necessity—ultimately sanctified but very much confined by rules rather than expressing the monk's interests and passions.⁹⁷ As a result, the Carthusian librarian had to become more rigidly devoted to organizing the book, becoming more its servant the more he tried to be its master. The provisions in the manual of library rules for the Carthusian monastery of Saint Margarethental in Basel, "the finest library in the Upper Rhine," grapple with the many problems created by books when they number more than a couple of hundred. They must be organized and kept in place; and because by 1500 books were becoming texts that generated responses and other wide-ranging relations of diffusion and polemic, every care had to be taken in the use of them.⁹⁸ By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the contradiction within the earlier view of scribal practice grew sharper in response to scholastic intellectualism.⁹⁹

97. This text formerly was attributed to Guigo II. The correct attribution is first mentioned by Marks, *The Medieval Manuscript Library*, 38f. The Latin text is in St. Bruno, *et al.*, *Opera omnia . . .*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 153:881.

98. Halporn, 223–44. The manual was written around 1480–1501.

99. On the early book production see Becdelièvre, 184–87 (summarizing her preceding analysis). For some general observations on Carthusian book production and interesting examples of late medieval text illustration by Carthusians, see Julian M. Luxford, "Precept and Practice: The Decoration of English Carthusian Books," *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julian M. Luxford (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008) 225–68.

Testimony from the codices is not decisive on account of the happenstance of survival, although even the dimmest evocation of the book from these distant centuries draws our intense interest. Our bibliophilia, which is a creation first of the counter-revolutions against the French and Industrial revolutions, then later and more happily of our expanding skill at understanding ourselves and our history, has misdirected us to endow Carthusian leaders and scribes with a kind of esteem for the book that is ours, not theirs, nor was it possible for them to have it, despite their devoted use of texts. The manuscript production of codices by Carthusians and others in the Middle Ages in general cannot be understood in just the way we understand bibliophilia. In some way, perhaps, the early Carthusians rejected the kinds of knowledge that non-transcriptive writing and non-memorial reading nourished. Is the evidence of surviving libraries, however, any more mediated than that of the texts themselves? Texts once seemed a pure fountain, though their survival, dependent on that of codices, is chance, and, furthermore, now we know that reading, even the most scholarly reading, is communication and like all communication is polysemous. Fear or anxiety about this attaches one to the book as a home safe from these troubling feelings. For the Carthusians this “home” might have served to fight off the future; but it also directed the monk into spiritual things inhering in material things and then allowed him to pass through to the spiritual things themselves, in himself, in creation, and in God.

The original ideas and practices of the first Carthusians viewed writing and reading as instruments used for the ideal of spiritual life. The core idea was to organize text-based knowledge into two steps. The first was presentation of the text by writing, copying, or reading it. The second was effacement of one’s self as author, scribe, or reader in favor of inward reflection on the wisdom found in the text. This drove the book and the monk apart. However, as the links between the material storage of knowledge—the codex—and cognizers—humans—became increasingly complex and tight, Carthusian theory increasingly centered this ideal on inward rather than outward sources of knowledge. To preach to others with their hands, the scribes at Chartreuse communicated through barriers showing the original members’ anxiety to control speech—their cell walls, the monastery walls, and the rocky mountains—and their con-

flicted determination to communicate by means of these obstacles. Their hands and their tools were instruments for probing the paradox of spirit speaking through matter. The value of writing and of reading thus adjusted, these practices, tamed, served ultimately spiritual purposes. They helped govern thinking so as to push it into self-awareness [*notitia*] all the way to the divine loving constitution of things [*amor*]. They forced their words to form a channel for spiritual growth conceived out of the means they used for reaching God. It was the attempt of Bruno and his followers to use language against itself, extending self-consciousness into some region inaccessible except through silence.

1026 N.W. 20th Avenue, #3
Portland, OR 97209
bennettbg@yahoo.com

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