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DOUBLE BOOK REVIEW: Danielle Joyner, *Painting the Hortus deliciarum: Medieval Women, Wisdom, and Time* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016)

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Book Review: Danielle Joyner, *Painting the Hortus deliciarum: Medieval Women, Wisdom, and Time* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), xiv + 242 pages, 36 color and 60 b&w illustrations, \$89.95 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-0-271-07088-9.

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Though the *Hortus Deliciarum* (“Garden of Delights,” hereafter *HD*) has long been recognized as a masterpiece of twelfth-century manuscript art, its 1870 loss to war and “avuncular biases” (Joyner, p. 2) have often conspired to deny it the same level of scholarly attention received by comparable surviving works made by men.¹ In her landmark 2007 study, Fiona Griffiths established the fundamentally pedagogical function of the manuscript within the currents of monastic reform that shaped the Augustinian abbey atop Mt. Hohenbourg in the Alsace.² In this new book, Danielle Joyner compellingly shows how the exploration and manipulation of times in salvation history is one of the fundamental modes in which the manuscript teaches its readers to understand and live out their roles within that history. Indeed, despite the study’s title, the key concept that unlocks the *HD*’s pedagogical structure is not so much “time” as

¹ Joyner compares its combination of artistic mastery and intellectual complexity to Suger’s apse windows at St. Denis, the west portals of Chartres Cathedral, and the Klosterneuburg Antependium (pp. 150-1).

² Fiona Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

“times.” When Abbess Herrad undertook the making of a book as a primary tool in the education of the canonesses under her care, she gave it the broad shape of sacred history. But to connect the lives of those religious women into that history, Herrad cultivated for them the *discretio temporum*, the discernment of the various units of time—hours, days, weeks, months, and years—that bound their daily search for wisdom into its eternal source and goal.

Joyner’s crucial insight into this structuring principle makes better sense of the manuscript’s discursive character than any previous treatment. The sometimes apparently quixotic shift from narrative imagery to diagrams, often accompanied by seemingly intrusive and digressive pages of textual extracts, is the method by which Herrad layers different aspects of sacred and natural history, creation, fall, and redemption. It creates the extensive framework by which her nuns could learn to live out their spiritual vocation as temporal and fallen beings destined to return to an eternal homeland. This singular purpose — “the restoration of one’s soul to the image of God” (p. 46) — connects the various times of salvation history, thus straddling the cosmic and particular, the eternal and historical, the communal and individual. In this regard, it is regrettable that Joyner strives so hard at the beginning of her study to escape the genre of the “encyclopedia” (pp. 8-9). Though she does this in order to emphasize—rightly—that the book’s purpose is best described under the rubric of salvation history, I think that the term “encyclopedia” remains useful: that is, the *HD* tells salvation history in the encyclopedic mode.³ Moreover, by giving the “discernment of times” a root purpose in the manuscript, Joyner is effectively able to reorient problematic interpretations and

³ The recursive and spiraling movement implied by the etymological root of “encyclopedia” might be another way to imagine the ordering and reordering of times that Joyner identifies as the manuscript’s major interpretive mode. The manipulation of the spiral’s curve allows various points along its path to align in different, non-linear ways.

demonstrate that the digressive plurality of encyclopedic modes is unified by Herrad's typological approach.

In her first chapter, "*Feminae, Libri, et 'Hortus deliciarum,'*" Joyner situates the *HD* within our ever-expanding knowledge of the rich ways in which religious women of the twelfth century viewed, read, and wrote books. The famous community portrait that closes the manuscript, spread seamlessly across two facing folios (322v-323r, **fig. 1**), proves emblematic.⁴ On the one hand, it shares with other twelfth-century examples (the Guta-Sintram Codex and Hildegard of Bingen's Rupertsberg *Scivias*), and indeed much of medieval art, the attempt to situate the present in relation to eternity. On the other hand, standing at the right edge of the Hohenbourg's green groundline, Herrad is neither divinely-inspired scribe nor simply a supplicant witness to the book's saintly patron. Rather, she is an abbess—the leader, teacher, and guide of the present community of



Figure 1 Hohenbourg Past and Present, *Hortus deliciarum*, fols. 322v-323r (Joyner, figs. 6-7, pp. 15-16).

⁴ Regrettably, the two images are separated on the front and back sides of a single page in Joyner's book (pp. 15-16), rather than in an open spread as in the manuscript.

canonesses beside her, their attention fixed on the journey to eternity. Her role in the community becomes analogous to the manuscript's function, especially when Joyner considers the nature of its text-image relationships in comparison with another famous twelfth-century book for a woman, the St. Alban's Psalter. Though no less complex and multi-layered than the Psalter and its elaborate visual narratives, the *HD*'s text-image conversation is carefully and clearly structured and didactic. Its educational function within the community sets it apart from Christina of Markyate's solitary devotional companion.

Comparisons with other twelfth-century didactic and moralizing manuscripts allow Joyner further to contextualize the *HD*'s treatment of the Virtues and Vices, chief among them virginity and pride. Herrad shares her century's impulse for the diagrammatic, but in contrast to the trees of Virtue and Vice in the *Speculum Virginum* or Lambert of St. Omer's *Liber Floridus*, the *HD* sets those diagrams within the vast narrative structures of salvation history, ranging from Lucifer's prideful fall near the beginning of the manuscript to the epic battle sequence between the Vices and Virtues on fols. 199v-204r. These "transform a standard moral lesson into a focused examination of the canonesses' innermost selves, where similar battles rage" (p. 33).

The rest of Joyner's study elaborates the variety of ways in which the *HD* navigates and teaches the spiritual life of Herrad's community as structured by an awareness of time and times. The second chapter, "*Stellae et Tempora*," focuses on the opening section of the manuscript, which tells of creation and cosmos. By using the interpretive framework of perceiving and understanding the movement and relationship of times, Joyner is able to give sense to otherwise strange juxtapositions and abrupt changes from creation narrative to cosmological diagrams. For example, the two registers of fol. 8r (**fig. 2**) have previously been read in disjuncture—the upper scene is a surprising iteration of Byzantine iconography of the Trinity, while the lower scene appears awkwardly to combine the second and third days of creation (the sky and the separation of earth and

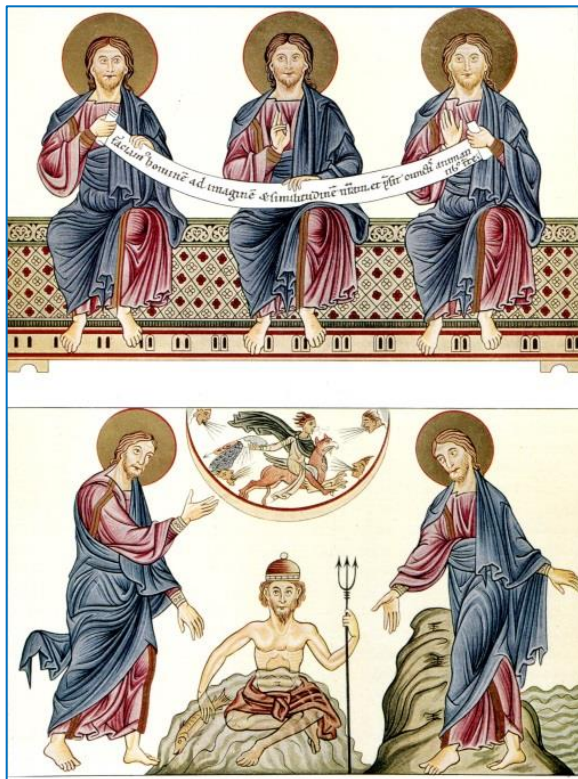


Figure 2 Trinity and Creation, *Hortus deliciarum*, fol. 8r (Joyner, fig. 31, p. 44).

sea, respectively). By digging into theological currents of twelfth-century Paris (Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard), Joyner demonstrates that the image responds to the previous illustrated folios, the creation and fall of Lucifer (fols. 3r-v). The upper register renews the Trinity's rightful place above the prideful tendencies of Lucifer, while transferring his lost glory to the humankind whose creation the Trinity's scroll announces, "in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). The bottom register then sets the full created stage upon which

humankind is to act and have dominion (pp. 46-47). It is through creation that humankind begins the journey back to God, glimpsing the Trinity in the natural world as well as within themselves. By interweaving cosmological diagrams with the creation narrative's figural imagery, Herrad merges "scientific and biblical accounts of Creation" to "form a giant deictic arrow" showing her canonesses where "to find visible remnants of the Trinity in the world" (pp. 51-2).

This sacred investigation of the rhythms of creation also integrates another element in the manuscript that has previously received little attention: the *computus* tables and calendars at its end (**fig. 3**). These complex data sets and intricate formulas assist in calculating the shifting date of Easter from year to year—defined as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox—and setting its pendulum against the fixed liturgical calendar of Advent and Christmas. At first glance, most readers will find the material arcane and obtuse, and Joyner's introduction of the *computus* concept in chapter

three (“*Artes et Computus*”) could have included a clearer initial explanation. Nevertheless, she expertly demonstrates how Herrad’s manuscript makes this counting of times an integral element in training its monastic readers in their search for divine wisdom. The logic of the *computus* is also the logic of the abbess’s educational program in salvation history: “In learning how to manipulate the building blocks of times, the canonesses gained (...) the ability, the

wherewithal even, to dissolve the structure of the historical narrative as they sought its hidden, divine truths” (p. 97). Joyner persuasively shows that for Herrad, many modern accounts of typological exegesis—i.e. the paired reading of disparate events in salvation history and Scripture—are insufficient. Rather than seeing “time and history as a unified linear phenomenon” that typology bends or tears, the *HD* “redefines” time “as a plurality” of units that can be arranged and rearranged like Tetris blocks to unlock the divine mysteries that connect them (pp. 96-97). By exploring the lush liturgical commentaries of Rupert of Deutz and Honorius Augustodunensis that Herrad frequently excerpted, Joyner demonstrates in chapter four (“*Horae, Elementa, et Sapientia*”) that such digressive manipulation of times binds history, exegesis, and liturgy in the life of the Hohenbourg’s canonesses. The *computus* calculations were a fundamental exercise in

Decennovenalis ciclus.

Epactae	e	o	n	e	r	r	e	n	t	e	s	Anni
Nullae	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.	I.				I
XI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					II
XXII	E.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				III
III	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					IV
XIII	P.	C.	I.	H.	G.	F.	E.					V
XXIV	E.	D.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					VI
VI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					VII
XVII	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				VIII
XXVIII	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					IX
IX	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				X
XX	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XI
XI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					XII
XXI	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XIII
III	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XIV
XV	P.	C.	I.	H.	G.	F.	E.					XV
XXVI	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XVI
VII	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					XVII
XVIII	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				XVIII

Paschalis ciclus.

Ebd. VI. Dies III.	XI K. April.	XXVIII
C.	VI — III	XXVIII
D.	VI — V	XXVIII
E.	VI — VI	XXVIII
F.	VII — I	XXVII
G.	VII — II	XXVII
H.	VII — III	XXVII
I.	VII — III	XXVII
K.	VII — III	XXVII
L.	VII — V	XXVII
M.	VII — VI	XXVII
N.	VIII — I	XXVI
O.	VIII — II	XXVI
P.	VIII — III	XXVI
Q.	VIII — III	XXVI
R.	VIII — III	XXVI
S.	VIII — V	XXVI
T.	VIII — VI	XXVI
V.	VIII — VI	XXVI
A.	VIII — VI	XXVI
B.	VIII — VI	XXVI
C.	VIII — VI	XXVI
D.	VIII — VI	XXVI
E.	VIII — VI	XXVI
F.	VIII — VI	XXVI
G.	VIII — VI	XXVI
H.	VIII — VI	XXVI
I.	VIII — VI	XXVI
K.	VIII — VI	XXVI
L.	VIII — VI	XXVI
M.	VIII — VI	XXVI
N.	VIII — VI	XXVI
O.	VIII — VI	XXVI
P.	VIII — VI	XXVI
Q.	VIII — VI	XXVI

Computus grid (1140):

Epactae	e	o	n	e	r	r	e	n	t	e	s	Anni
Nullae	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.	I.				I
XI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					II
XXII	E.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				III
III	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					IV
XIII	P.	C.	I.	H.	G.	F.	E.					V
XXIV	E.	D.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					VI
VI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					VII
XVII	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				VIII
XXVIII	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					IX
IX	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				X
XX	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XI
XI	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					XII
XXI	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XIII
III	S.	R.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XIV
XV	P.	C.	I.	H.	G.	F.	E.					XV
XXVI	E.	P.	C.	B.	A.	V.	T.					XVI
VII	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.					XVII
XVIII	M.	L.	K.	I.	H.	G.	F.	M.				XVIII

Figure 3 *Computus* tables and grids, *Hortus deliciarum*, fols. 319r-v (Joyner, figs. 51-52, pp. 81-82).

perceiving and understanding the divinely planned connections between cosmos, time, wisdom, and the soul's salvation.

The process of drawing “parallels between examples of vastly different scales and domains” (p. 104) again helps to explain images and parts of the manuscript that might otherwise be seen as intrusive or digressive from the linear narrative of biblical history. The image of Man as Microcosm on fol. 16v (**fig. 4**), for example, interrupts the creation and cosmology folios from those telling the story of Adam and Eve, to construct the same analytical pathways for perceiving the inherent interconnectedness of disparate realms as the *computus* and the exegetical methods of Rupert and Honorius (pp. 97-104). Meanwhile, the famous image of Lady Philosophy surrounded by the Seven Liberal Arts on fol. 32r (**fig. 5**) is placed after the nadir of the Flood and before Abraham’s exemplary obedience, to initiate the human investigation of Wisdom’s path back to God and make education itself an essential part of salvation (pp. 69-76). Her circular schema links to the

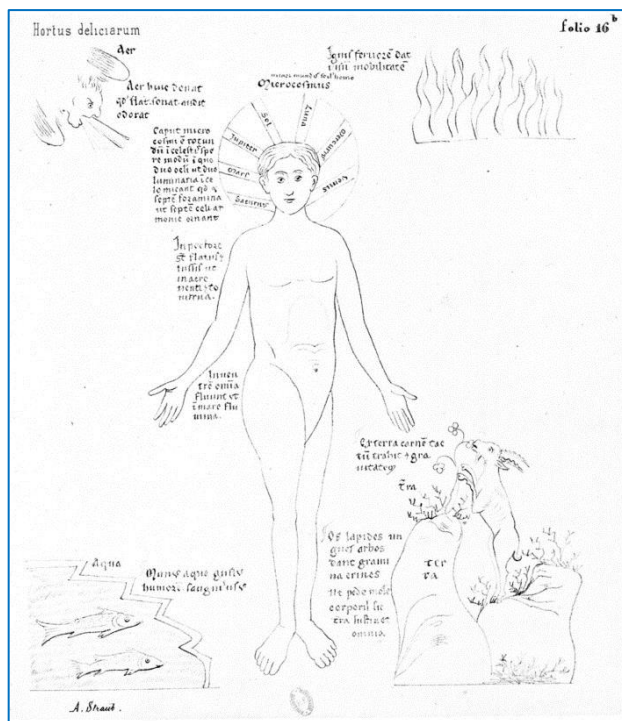


Figure 4 Man as Microcosm, *Hortus deliciarum*, fol. 16v (Joyner, fig. 60, p. 99).

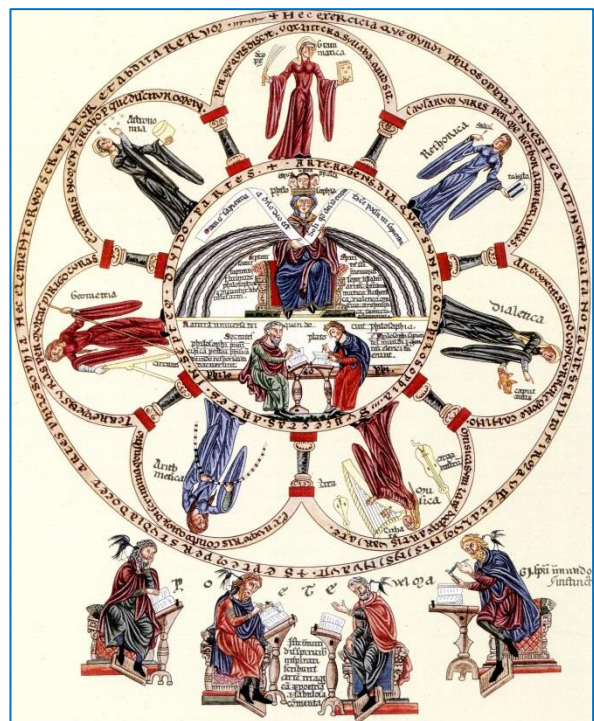


Figure 5 Lady Philosophy and the Seven Liberal Arts, *Hortus deliciarum*, fol. 32r (Joyner, fig. 46, p. 70).

typological diagrams on fols. 67r-v, which illustrate God's complete self-revelation in the Incarnation, in fulfillment of the prefigured, latent promises of the covenant with Israel. Those typological diagrams, meanwhile, form one strand in the manuscript's most complex web of imagery, of Ecclesia, the Church (pp. 126-8).

Ecclesia is the central figure of the allegorical section of the manuscript (fols. 199v-241r), which recursively bridges the chronological arc of biblical history before it and the eschatological section after. Embodied and "edified" by the full-page miniature on fol. 225v (**fig. 6**), the Church is the matrix that connects each individual canoness in Herrad's abbey with the universal salvation history in which they act. As Joyner explains in her final chapter, "*Ecclesia et Historia*," each

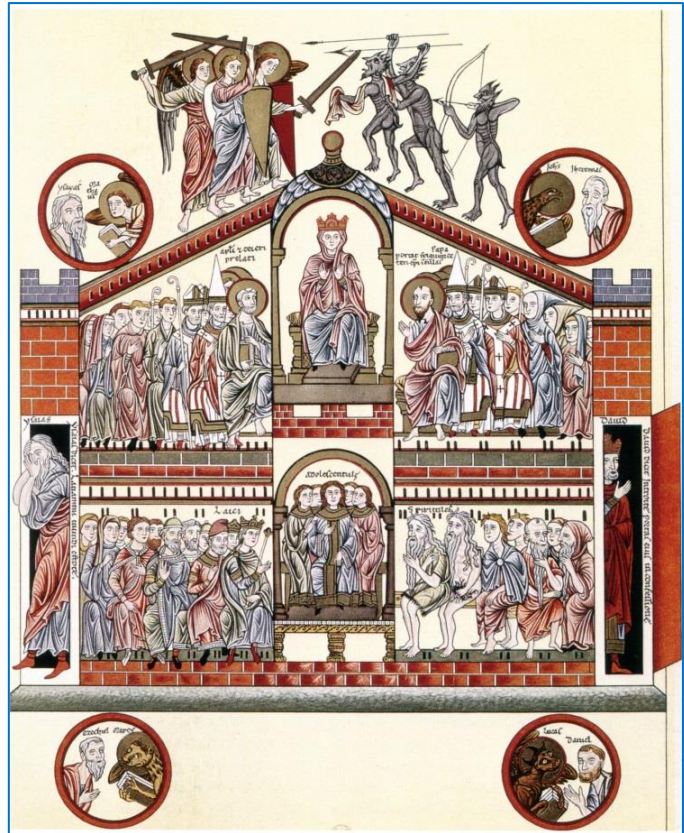


Figure 6 Ecclesia Edified, *Hortus deliciarum*, fol. 225v (Joyner, fig. 66, p. 115).

aspect of the image connects to others throughout the manuscript, to bind Ecclesia's sacramental presence across all times and into eternity: the architecture and appearance of Isaiah and David at the portals link to portrayals of the Tabernacle and typological *rotae* that "lift the veil," while the congregation of faithful souls—clergy, religious women and men, and laity—reappear in several places to constitute the communal journey of faith across millennia. Meanwhile, the personified figure of Ecclesia appears in history at the Crucifixion on fol. 150r and then receiving her crown from Christ on fol. 199r, but also in the allegorical section in vignettes illustrating passages from the Song of Songs on fol.

225r, to personalize the path along which religious women follow her as the Bride of Christ. Finally, she sets the seal upon that journey as the apocalyptic Woman Clothed with the Sun on fol. 261v, shining “as Ecclesia immaculate and untouched, Ecclesia triumphant and eternal” (p. 147). This constant movement across historical blocks of time and different soteriological levels (personal and communal) puts the analytical strategies inculcated by the manuscript’s pedagogy into practice in the spiritual lives of its female monastic readers.

Though Joyner is an art historian and her study is primarily of the *HD*’s images, one of its real strengths is her fresh appreciation for and approach to the texts whose ideas shaped the manuscript’s sensibilities. Rather than relying simply on modern studies of twelfth-century thought, she reads the original texts in some of the same ways that Abbess Herrad must have, following medieval cues in order to situate the manuscript within the Hohenbourg’s wider intellectual life. As she notes in her “Conclusion,” many of those intellectual traditions—and especially the technical ones of the *computus*—are rarely thought to have been available to religious women, let alone actively cultivated by them (p. 151). Her study effectively shatters that view. Despite the occasional minor error—the *Liber divinorum operum* was Hildegard of Bingen’s third, not second visionary volume (p. 100); and Honorius Augustodunensis mapped the seven days of the week onto the seven canonical hours, not the seven ages of the world (p. 106)—Joyner’s readings of the vibrant landscape of ideas from which Herrad drew her garden give root to the painted flowers which, though faded, are still to be found pressed in the pages of her book. 🌸