



# The Lives and Afterlives of Medieval Iconography

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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
UNIVERSITY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

## Iconography and the Loss of Representation

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ELINA GERTSMAN

Вы всего себя стерли для грима.  
Имя этому гриму—душа.

—БОРИС ПАСТЕРНАК, “МЕЙЕРХОЛЬДАМ”

In 1990 the Index of Christian Art at Princeton University sponsored a colloquium called “Iconography at the Crossroads.” By then, iconography had long asserted its hold on the field, but the field chafed against its confines. Iconography’s modern iteration—as it was practiced by Émile Mâle on the one hand and Aby Warburg on the other, as it was developed and transformed by Warburg’s disciple Erwin Panofsky, and as it finally split into a myriad of methodological pathways—indeed appeared to have arrived at a crossroads or, perhaps, was now at cross-purposes with the very images it claimed to explicate.<sup>1</sup> Just a few years before, James Marrow had published a sharp critique of the method, pointing out its fondness for “fishing expeditions in the volumes of *Patrologia Latina*” and the resultant tendency “to treat the artist as a mere conduit for generally extra-artistic information which he is deemed to have encoded.”<sup>2</sup> At the Princeton colloquium, Irving Lavin’s biting eulogy for iconography both lamented its ostensible demise and confirmed its endurance as a method: “I did not realize iconography is at a crossroads. . . . I thought iconography died when the study of history per se came to be conceived as an exercise in social irrelevance, and the humanistic ideal itself

passed away.” He continued, “Where there is a crossroads, however, I suppose there may yet be traffic.”<sup>3</sup>

At that same colloquium, Michael Camille’s dazzling paper, irreverently subtitled “Toward an Anti-iconography of Medieval Art,” suggested that we not merely move away from but rather invert the methodology and play not by its rules but against them.<sup>4</sup> He thought iconography’s logocentric approach—image mediated through text—to be in dire need of revision, at the very least of augmentation with the study of oral and performative cultural practices, mediated through the beholder’s direct experience. To pit one against the other, Camille threw into the mix a frontispiece to a late twelfth-century copy of Constantinus Africanus’s *Viaticus Peregrinantis*.<sup>5</sup> Featuring four venerable sages—two of them embodiments of medical theory, two of them avatars of medical practice—the image implies a (harmonious) contrast between applied and text-based learning, which Camille drolly dressed up as a *disputatio* between the Courtauld and the Warburg professoriate. Men holding blank scrolls, of course, were the Warburgian theoreticians, whose knowledge came through the written word.

More than a quarter century later, it is difficult to disagree with Camille: between the ascendancy of thing theory and the commonplace study of response, the field has been reshaped and reconfigured to take into account the very same practices that seemed to be elided still when “Iconography at the Crossroads” convened. The notion of iconography has changed too, becoming more pliable and accepting of those instances when written sources fail. But what happens when failure lies in the nature of representation itself? When creation and legibility of the image can be accomplished only through its ultimate effacement? In this essay, I will look at several instances of physical and imaginative erasure—a performative act that destroys existing iconographies and creates new ones—and explore it as an enterprise of purposeful image rejection and the embrace of the unrepresentable.<sup>6</sup>

### Visual Excisions: In Search of Context

By way of necessary digression, we might note that erasures are particularly troublesome in that they are notoriously difficult to date, although the reasons behind them are often easy to discern. Commonly, it was the unappetizing, the obscene, or the harmful that was scratched off the pages of books: devils and idols, displayed genitals and interlocked lips. The inscriptive power of images—both physical and cognitive—played a certain role in their erasure, but the vandalized image that provoked devotional or moral outrage was, perhaps, the most common victim of scopic erasure by means of haptic engagement. Pious censorship, for example, was inflicted upon the painstakingly effaced devil on folio 50r of the Bromholm Psalter (Bodleian Ms. Ashmole 1523) (fig. 7.1).<sup>7</sup> Illuminated in East Anglia in the early fourteenth century, the manuscript boasts several illuminations; no others suffered such a distinctive censorial touch. This



Figure 7.1  
Erased devil, the Bromholm  
Psalter, East Anglia, early  
fourteenth century. Oxford,  
Bodleian MS Ashmole 1523, fol.  
50r. Photo: author.

image, a historiated initial *D*, begins Psalm 38, “Dixi custodiam vias meas” (I said: I will take heed to my ways). The crowned psalmist turns upward to Christ, pointing with his left hand to his own face and with his right to the devil, as a visual gloss on the second verse, “posui ori meo custodiam cum consistere peccator adversum me” (I have set guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me). Christ looks down and raises his hands. The formidable devil stands before David with his clawed feet tightly grasping the ground. Or, rather, stood: his image has been wiped away, tail and all, with only a silhouette of a shadow remaining in his place. One can just make out the turn of his head, the movement of his arms and hips. The devil was fashioned into an empty space, the void, all the more terrifying for his liminal visual state. His ghostly presence—not quite here, not quite gone—emphasizes the threat located in the demonic body that visually mirrors David’s. It is not an accident that the king’s right hand, which points at the devil, was also erased, as if the sign of visual acknowledgment was deemed as offensive as the acknowledged figure itself.

pro plebs de  
 ditur tot pro di  
 nis pietate ja  
 cundus hodie  
 totu sic luera  
 duntaxat in  
 iustitiam dno  
 uentis natus  
 tempus et ter  
 re cura sit se  
 nota ecce eius  
 et lancea clauu  
 corona spinea  
 arma tunc gl  
 ne tibi commen  
 datur omnes  
 reus populi lau  
 dant suorum  
 scilicet per quem  
 amro gnae  
 signus glori  
 antur  
 inuis tenu  
 aduer te deus  
 salter tibi  
 et psalmum  
 dicat nomini  
 tuo  
 a  
 uesim  
 omnipo  
 tens deus ut  
 qui sacrosan  
 ma redemp  
 cionis nostre  
 in flagra tem  
 potaliter uen  
 itur per hoc  
 in digne ger  
 munt eum  
 ad glori conse  
 quuntur per  
 dominum no  
 strum ihesu  
 xpm filium  
 natum qui te  
 cum uiuit et  
 regnat in dnu  
 rate spiritus  
 sancti deus  
 per omnia se  
 cula seculoru  
 Amen



The king's gestures are telling. The psalm emphasizes the auditory potential for corruption: in addition to "posui ori meo custodiam," it contains the verses "non delinquam in lingua mea" (I will not offend with my tongue), "obmutui, et humiliatus sum, et silui a bonis" (I was silenced and humbled, and I was quiet before good things), and finally "locutus sum in lingua mea" (I spoke with my tongue). But David, employing his entire left hand—in contrast to the elegant index finger of his right hand extended to indicate the devil—points not just to his mouth but to his eyes as well. The danger lies not only in the oral and the aural, but also in the visual: the psalmist seems to warn the reader about the malleable nature of seeing, which admits the corrupting species of the corrupting image into the beholder's eye, memory, and soul—an operation akin to that of the evil eye or an ugly object that could stamp and contaminate an unborn fetus.<sup>8</sup> The site of the folio, then, becomes an index of a multisensory experience: David's (un)uttered words referenced by text, the assault on his gaze referenced by image, and the viewer's touch that obliterated this assault.

We do not know when the devil was erased from the Bromholm Psalter, or who erased it. It could have been the original medieval reader, or it could have been someone else entirely, who lived hundreds of years after the manuscript's creation, and whose sensibilities were offended by the claw-footed *peccator*.<sup>9</sup> What seems clear is that he was removed in a single campaign of determined obliteration, not slowly worn away by continued contact with the fingers or lips of the beholder: the precision of the erasures provides a clue that the image did not lose its pigment gradually but was altered all at once and purposefully. Not so in the case of the contemporaneous illumination from Gautier de Metz's *Image du Monde*, made around 1320 in Paris, perhaps for Guillaume Flotte (BN ms. fr. 574), then a councilor of Philippe the Fair.<sup>10</sup> This thirteenth-century poetic treatise, based on Honorius Inklus's *Imago mundi* and here rendered in prose, purports to be a global encyclopedia of sorts, describing cosmogony, geography, and astronomy. The book proper ends on folio 139v, where the poet beseeches the reader to pray on his behalf to Christ. Folio 140r is blank, but the verso of the page is dominated by a large tripartite image whose viewer must have taken Gautier's words to heart (fig. 7.2). At the top, in an arched opening, Christ elegantly expires on the cross between the fainting Mary held up by other women and Saint John backed by the pointing crowd. At the bottom, a monk and a bishop pray before the column of flagellation, surrounded by other instruments of the passion. In the middle is the mediating image of an almond-shaped wound surrounded by several other *arma Christi*. The wound is marked by a dark burgundy gash, fissuring itself into paler red flesh, and framed by the mandorla of the parted white skin. While other parts of the image sustained minor abrasions, the wound has been extensively, and deliberately, handled—likely kissed and rubbed.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the meticulous visual excision of the Bromholm manuscript, this kind of erasure clearly points to the patterns of use specific to medieval beholders. Lips and fingers were powerful tools deployed in pious erasure. Indeed, at times instructions

Figure 7.2  
Gautier (or Gossouin) de Metz,  
*Image du Monde*, 1320–25.  
Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
MS fr. 574, fol. 140v. Photo: BnF/  
Gallica.

accompanying images explicitly direct the viewer to kiss the now-abraded pages. Here, in the *Image du Monde*, the annihilation of the image was likely inflicted gradually, out of devotional fervor rather than ethical disgust. It is not precise: when lips touch the page, so does the nose, and things smudge. This pious obliteration may have been guided by the texts that border the image on the left, although they do not mention the wound. The focus is instead on *arma Christi*: included are an excerpt from the liturgical text “De corona spinea,” the introit for the second Sunday after Epiphany, and the “Quesumus omnipotens deus” prayer. In the fourteenth century, the veneration of Christ’s wounds—which was to reach a fever pitch in the 1400s—was already gaining momentum. Perhaps it was Guillaume who engaged so passionately with the wound; perhaps it was Duke Jean de Berry, to whom the book eventually belonged, or his daughter, Duchess Marie de Berry, who inherited it after Jean’s death. The pattern of erasure follows roughly the center of the wound, rubbing vermilion from the saturated parchment, leaving the remnants of scarlet to look like a pattern of pale-red veins. From flesh represented, it became flesh revealed, flesh returned to its base nature. The wound was a metonymic reference for the entirety of Christ’s body; it offered protection, salvation, redemption. It may have been kissed during ardent pious exercises, or it may have been rubbed as an amulet—perhaps both.<sup>12</sup> It may have been osculated in imitation of the priestly kiss: the kind bestowed on the body of Christ in liturgical service books, at the opening of the canon of the Mass, *Te igitur*. The wound was a tool to be used, not an object to be admired; what it slowly lost in form, it gained in significance.<sup>13</sup>

Heavily used books have become the darlings of material culture historians of late. Traces of engagement with manuscript pages are studied again and again: curtains sewn and prints pasted over the illuminations; bookmarks glued in, sewn in, or cut out of the folios; indentations left by eucharistic wafers; wax drippings; dirty smudges haunting the margins of folios dedicated to particularly beloved saints; notes inscribed all over the margins.<sup>14</sup> Erasure figures in these studies prominently, but its devotional import—aside from the reader’s particular attachment to a particular holy figure, or distaste for a particular evil character—remains unnoticed. Here I want to focus specifically on the erased figure of Christ, worrying the implications of reducing the Son of God, and with him the Godhead, to nothing. How was the empty space in place of his body perceived? Were there any theological connotations attached to the gradual erasure of the divine image? Might the choice to kiss and rub away the body of God have been contingent on the beholder’s devotional needs?

By the fifteenth century, the gradual reduction of Christ’s body to nothing had become far from unusual. Scores of examples exist that feature the erasure of the incarnate God, from missals, to paxes, to books of hours.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, other particularly cherished saints suffered a similar fate on the pages of devotional books, and one can essentially quantify the intensity of the votary’s devotion to a holy figure by the amount of damage wrought on her or his image. Margaret, the patron saint of

childbirth; Christopher, the patron saint of travelers; Saint John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple; the Virgin Mary, the ultimate intercessor—all suffered erasure across late medieval codices. But it is Christ whose face and body have sustained the most consistent damage, being kissed, rubbed, and stroked away in countless forms from countless folios of countless books. The central appeal of such books lies not in their images but in their imagelessness, which stands as visual polemic for the ineffability, invisibility, and inaccessibility of God.

In the following pages, I will briefly sketch out several interrelated theological ideas about such invisibility that hinge on the notion of erasure, and suggest that we look at some effaced images in the context of such ideas. One is the concept of God's disappearance from the visible world: to wit, the loss of humanity's direct access to God, which threads both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures. Another is the model of pious contemplation that guides the devout to perform erasures of the corporeally visual in favor of the spiritual and the intellectual. The third is the notion of apophatic erasure, which aims to get at the unavailability and ineffability of God through the means of discursive and visual divesting. To explore these ideas within the context of late medieval art, I will focus on one fifteenth-century Netherlandish book of hours (BL Harley 2985), which offers a particularly salient—although certainly not unusual—example of devotional effacement.

### The Fading God

This manuscript, illuminated circa 1490 and made for the Use of Sarum, received a significant amount of performative erasure, wrought not by a careful hand but by a careless mouth.<sup>16</sup> The devotee's affinities are transparent. Saint George and Saint Catherine remain as crisp as ever; the image of Mary Magdalene earned some minimal reverential touch; John the Evangelist is obscured by dirt and pigment mixed with spittle.<sup>17</sup> The Evangelist has been the subject of adoration in the lamentation scene on folio 74v as well, where nonetheless the most marked effacement occurs on Christ's body, which has grown transparent, and his face, which has all but disappeared (fig. 7.3). But it is on folio 71v, in the deposition scene, where we see the full result of osculatory devotion. Here the faceless Christ seems to be dissolving on the cross, all the more ghostly for the stark contrast with the crisply painted Virgin (fig. 7.4). He has taken with him elements of the now dirtied landscape—a collateral damage. This is not to say that the owner of the manuscript paid equal attention to every christological image: the depictions of Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, kissed by Judas, and brought before Pilate (fols. 41v, 48v, and 61v) is left intact. The reader-viewer focused her or his pious exercises not just on Christ but on the dead Christ—not the one betrayed, not the one anguished, but the one who has suffered and died—the terrestrial, incarnated God as a corpse. The damage to the deposition image is especially notable, as



neither the recto of the page nor the facing folio is marred.<sup>18</sup> The fading Christ remains as a vestige, a collection of attributes that mark him: outlines of the body, streams of blood, hollows of the wound, the crown of thorns encircling the disappearing head.

God, of course, can be perceived only as a vestige: his unavailability to corporeal gaze stems from the trajectory of dissemblance, whereupon man, created in God's image (*ad imaginem*) and likeness (*similitudinem*), lost both this image and this likeness, and acquired instead spiritual blindness.<sup>19</sup> Divine invisibility *a priori* set up the enterprise of representation—physical and mental—for failure: “Quod invisibile est,” wrote Saint Ambrose in his commentary on the Pauline Epistle to the Colossians, “pingi non potest”—what is invisible cannot be painted.<sup>20</sup> The scriptures suggest that God could choose to be visually expressed in a variety of ways: as a burning bush (Exod. 3:1–5), as preternatural weather (Exod. 19:16–18), as a pillar of a cloud or a pillar of fire (Exod. 13:21). The prophet Daniel saw the divine manifested with chrysolite body, burning eyes, and glittering brass. John tells his audience that “God is a spirit” (John 4:24). But all of these are guises, placeholders for the real, no longer available to human gaze, supplanted by terrestrial simulacra: “Of all invisible things the greatest is God,” said Augustine.<sup>21</sup> As Adam and Eve hid from God's sight in the wake of the fall, so did God bar them from seeing him as part of the punishment. Thus, Paul's characterization of Christ as “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), as well as Christ's proclamation “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), have deep consequences for the ontological relationship of the image to the divine. Here was God's cleansing, salvatory incarnation, which again became unavailable to the gaze and the touch of the living after thirty-three years of terrestrial existence.<sup>22</sup> Divine absence eschewed representability, which is perhaps what the illuminator of the early twelfth-century Peterborough Annals tried to get at in his geometrically figured creation.<sup>23</sup> Here the sacred cosmology is structured as a series of circles inscribed with apostles' names, rectangles inscribed with names of the prophets, and, finally, the almond-shaped mandorla, whose borders bear quotes from Hebrews 1:8 and Psalms 9:5, and whose center bears nothing at all (fig. 7.5).<sup>24</sup> The mandorla's presumed inhabitant is both absent and unseen: absent from this world and unseen from its vantage point.

Divine invisibility as a temporal process rather than eternal condition is of utmost importance when we consider pious acts of erasure. God was visible to the first couple, and then he left their sight; Christ was visible to his followers, and then he ascended, leaving behind an odd bodily relic—a foreskin, a tear, a lock of hair. Divine presence was erased from view, leaving mere traces—the vestiges of former presence. In place of God, we do not have empty space, as the Peterborough diagram would have it: we have an *emptied* space. To put it another way: the divine is not so much absent as absented.<sup>25</sup> How does one grapple with representing such progressive emptying of the world if not by the act of erasure, physical and mental, until there is nothing left? Christ was the visible image of the triune Creator. To get to the invisible God—both at the unrepresentability of the divine essence and at the void left when humanity was

Figure 7.3  
Lamentation, book of hours, use  
of Sarum, southern Netherlands,  
1450–75. British Library, MS Harley  
2985, fol. 74v. By permission of the  
British Library.





Figure 7.4  
Deposition, book of hours, use of  
Sarum, southern Netherlands,  
1450–75. British Library, MS Harley  
2985, fol. 71v. By permission of the  
British Library.

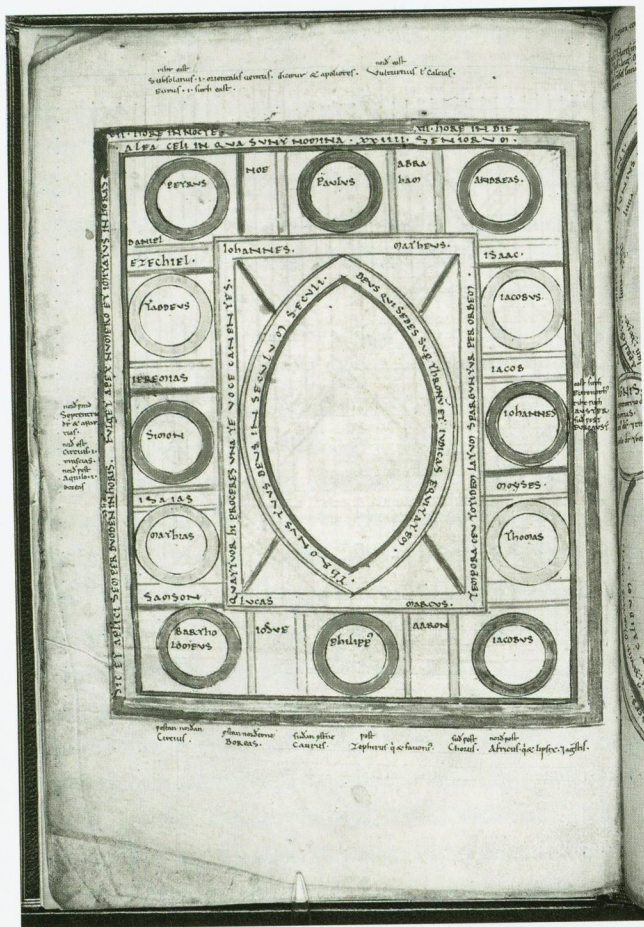


Figure 7.5  
Diagram of creation, portion  
of the annals of Peterborough  
Abbey, Peterborough, 1125–50.  
British Library, MS Harley 3667,  
fol. 7v. By permission of the British  
Library.

first banned from seeing God and then deprived of his incarnate body—such a Christ had to be wiped from the carnal eye, leaving nothing but a trace: the divine *vestigium*, oblique and insufficient. In this way, the erasure of Christ's image from the pages of the Harley manuscript alludes to the erasure of the absconding God—formerly, but no longer, available in the flesh—from the world: it enacts the process of sensory deincarnation, leaving behind but a vestige of God's image still available to the senses.<sup>26</sup>

### The Reality of the Unsee(i)n(g)

The possibility of visual error entered the world the very moment that God hid himself from view. The very presence of an image was a sign of humanity's failure, a material witness to its fall. The postlapsarian trajectory of dissimilitude primed the sensorium to be fallible, to provide little certitude, to rely on images and to be diverted by images, all to the detriment of the soul. The journey back to the likeness of God had

as its ultimate goal the ability to perceive him, an ability that hinged, paradoxically, on the suppression of vision. As a visual and devotional methodology, it was rooted in Saint Augustine's taxonomy of vision, set out in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, whose sensorial hierarchy—which subjugates the bodily to the spiritual, and the spiritual to the intellectual—informs various theological texts written throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> The substance of these texts, already much discussed by art historians, can be traced only briefly here. We might mention Saint Gregory, who wished for the mind's eye “to turn away from the phantasms of earthly and celestial images, and to reject and deny whatever it is that the corporeal senses . . . present themselves to the thought” in order for the soul to achieve the clarity of introspection.<sup>28</sup> Or we might bring up Saint Bernard, whom Jeffrey Hamburger once aptly called “the theoretician of imageless devotion” and who insisted that true contemplation occurs only when the soul “may strip herself . . . of the images of inferior and corporeal objects . . . to be able to contemplate truth without the help of material or sensible images.” Bernard enjoined the soul “to rise above the images of sensible objects.”<sup>29</sup> The same disdain for imagery is forcefully asserted in the work of the fourteenth-century Flemish mystic Jan van Ruusbroec, who associates images and worldly thoughts and puts them on par with vices. It is only when “a person is unassailed by images” that “he freely turns himself, without hindrance, to God, with inner devotedness.”<sup>30</sup> Filtered through the writing of countless other medieval authors, from Peter Lombard to Thomas Aquinas, the Augustinian original concept of imagelessness had transformed and migrated to the realm of the abstract by the late Middle Ages and had become distilled instead in homiletic literature, available to audiences outside monasteries and even universities. For instance, Bernard's idea of purging the mind's eye of images is reimagined in Meister Eckhart's “Quasi stella matutina” as “the intellect pull[ing] off the coat from God and perceiv[ing] him bare, as he is stripped of goodness and of being and of all names.”<sup>31</sup>

But in order to strip God of his coat, one must first imagine him clothed—that is, clothed in images. Sensorium required a visual anchor, which could then be gradually pulled away. It hardly needs arguing that the line between image-based and imageless devotion is permeable, if it can be drawn at all. After all, as Geert Grote grudgingly admitted, “fictive things” (physical and imagined) must be consented to “because our feeble imaginations are thereby helped,” although eventually they must be abandoned.<sup>32</sup> The reality of the unseen God was both corroborated and subverted by the use of simulacra, which were at once suspect and inevitable: resigning to their power as vehicles in the quest for the visually absent divinity, devotees were instructed to treat them with wariness, discarding them just as soon as feasible. Meditating on images was dangerous: they titillated the senses and fueled unfettered imagination. As a force dependent on the visual, imagination was undisciplined, a point that the author of the late fourteenth-century mystical treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing* makes clear in referring to “unordained images” that create “nought else but a bodily conceit of a ghostly thing, or else a ghostly conceit of a bodily thing . . . feigned and false, and next

unto error." The "diverse thoughts, fantasies, and images" are "printed in [the] mind by the light of the curiosity of Imagination," which the author links to the pain of the original sin.<sup>33</sup> At times unavoidable as the origin of pious contemplation, imagination had to be checked, constrained, anchored, and finally scraped away. Images helped in this endeavor as long as they, too, were the subject of expurgation; their true goal, to quote one fifteenth-century manuscript, was to help the beholders "learn from the visible to pass mentally to the invisible, from the corporeal to the spiritual."<sup>34</sup>

Centuries of injunctions—to repress the phantasms and to divest both the mind and the divine of corporeal representability—suggest both the necessary presence of images and the subsequent necessity to erase them from the eye of the body and, ultimately, the eye of the mind. But the figuration of this erasure is an impossible enterprise: how does one represent the aniconic? Imagelessness defies figuration because it ultimately transcends it.<sup>35</sup> Still, different visual strategies were used throughout the late Middle Ages to formulate this transcendence as a process—wrought with potential failure, pursued by the devotee as a difficult spiritual toil, conceived as a slow progress toward the divine—bound inescapably in the rhetoric of erasure. The well-known image from the *Somme le roi / Sainte abbaïe* manuscript (BL Yates Thompson 11), for example, which traces the spiritual progress of a votary in a handy diagram, employs this visual rhetoric, however obliquely, by indicating the limits of pious exercises along with the limits of representation (fig. 7.6). The miniature, which prefaces the treatise called *Tres etaz de bones ames*, figures the properly confessed and ostensibly absolved laywoman who, originally guided by a sculpted image of the coronation, attains first the spiritual vision of Christ and then that of the Trinity.<sup>36</sup> The woman's bodily gestures articulate distinctions among these three forms of God visible to the reader-viewer. She sees the sculpted image with her corporeal eyes, imitating the gesture of the Virgin in the coronation group. The bleeding Christ appears as she kneels and looks down and away from him, as of yet unable to fulfill his command, inscribed on the speech scroll: "Behold how much I bore for the life of the people." Finally, the throne of mercy, with its still-bleeding Christ, is perceived as an immediate visual experience, something she indeed directly beholds but that—unlike the sculpted coronation—transcends the physical space of the enclosure where the devotee is pictured.<sup>37</sup> This last vision nonetheless presents itself emphatically as an image and is figured as the only possible stage in imaginative devotions; the intellectual way, the perception of God without any visual aid—that is, Eckhart's disrobing of the divine into complete erasure—is beyond the abilities of the devotee and the painter of the miniature both. But the pattern of this erasure has been established: in the last two stages of the woman's contemplative ascent, the coronation image is no longer in sight, because it is no longer necessary. Visually erased from the altar, it is replaced by the eucharistic chalice poised to receive Christ's blood—an object of an altogether different kind. Image, external or internal, is not rejected but rather used and stripped away: in other words, transcended.

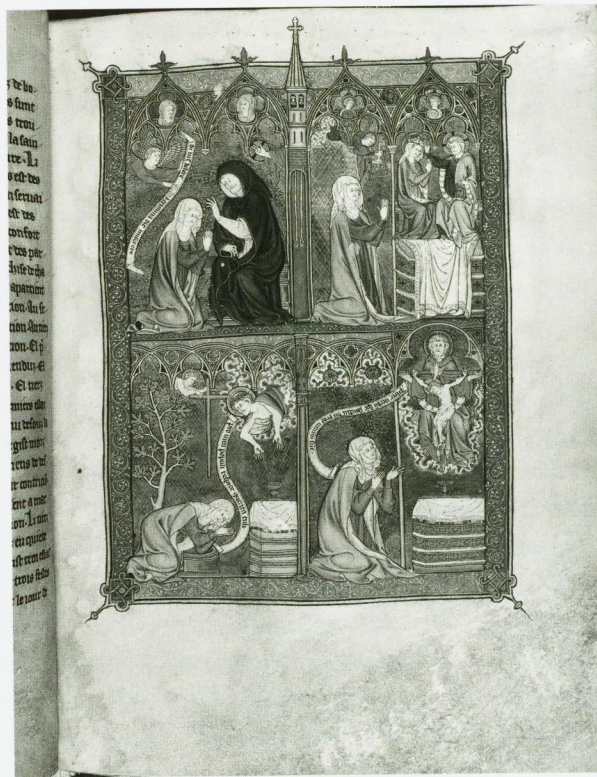
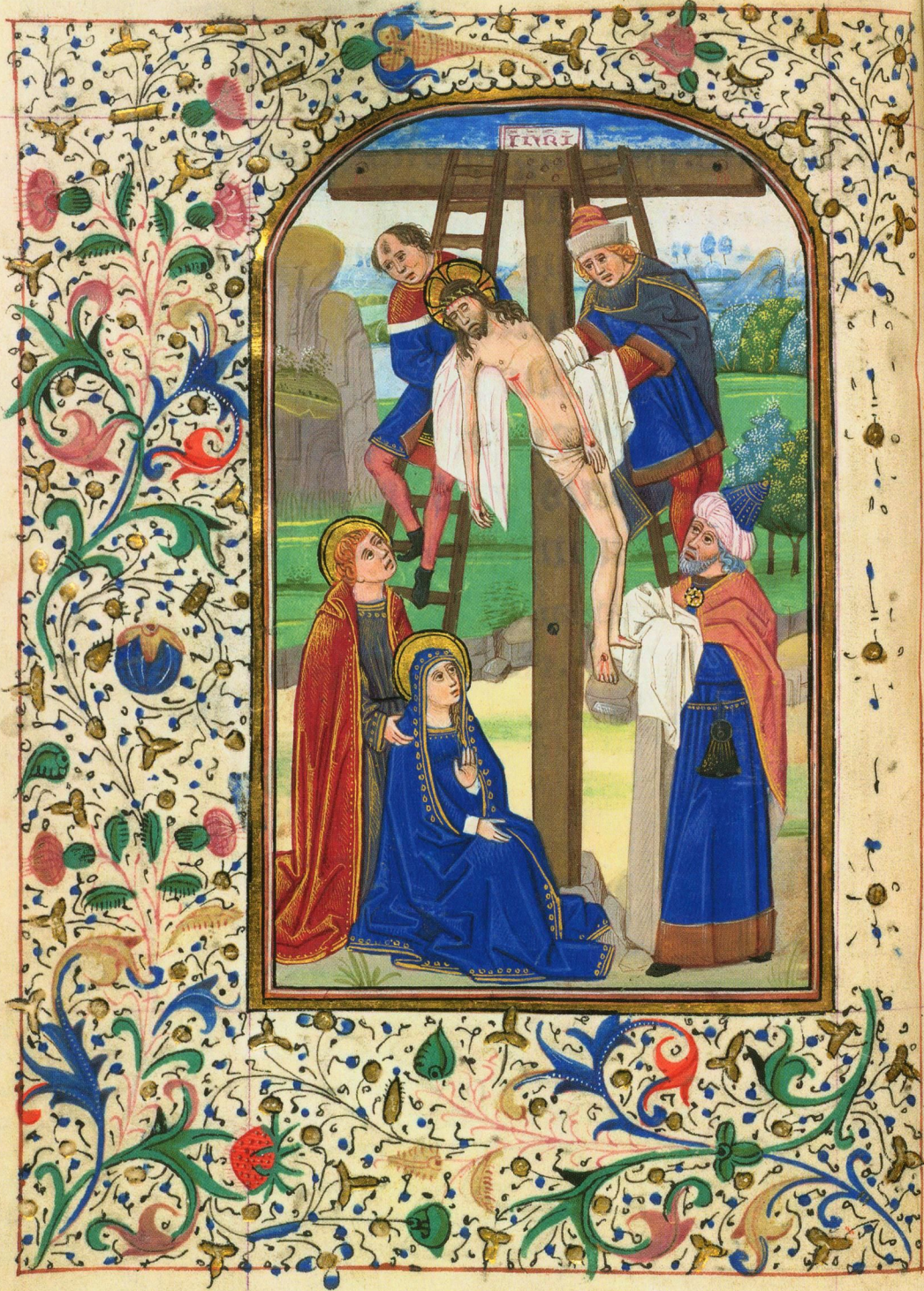


Figure 7.6  
Frontispiece to *Tres etaz de bones ames*, France, central (Paris or Maubuisson?) or northeast (Lorraine), ca. 1290. British Library, MS Yates Thompson 11, fol. 29. By permission of the British Library.

Figure 7.7 (opposite)  
Deposition, book of hours, use of the Collegiate Church of Sint Hermeskerk, Ronse, 1465. British Library, MS Harley 1211, fol. 16v. By permission of the British Library.

The erasures of Christ in the Harley manuscript reflect just such transcendence, achieved through physical means, visualizing the displacement of physical images by their fading trace. Removal of images stressed the process familiar from devotional texts: it is not so much the image but rather its disappearance that serves as a stepping-stone to contemplation of the divine. Here the mental expurgation of images is implicated in their physical expurgation, accomplished by the devotees fervently kissing the illuminated pages of their books of hours. When the book was first held in the reader-viewer's hands, the image of the deposition would have been as crisp as the one in the contemporaneous Netherlandish book of hours (fig. 7.7), with sacred figures sharply outlined against the landscape.<sup>38</sup> Every detail of Christ's body is here discernible: the shoulder-length wavy brown hair, emaciated arms with gravity-defying streamlets of blood, the large bisected belly button, and even pubic hair creeping indecorously upward from the loincloth toward his stomach. This is an anchor image par excellence, ripe for visual and haptic exploration, for imagining the indignities inflicted upon this emphatically real, carnal body. But it was also an artifact, conspicuously fictive in its careful detail, which both distracted the reader-viewer from the divine truth and forcefully announced itself as a distraction, to be overcome and finally abandoned through devotional effort.





The fading image makes this effort visible. After a while, Christ's body would disappear under the desirous lips of the votary and acquire that very ghostly presence that characterizes the Harley lamentation (see fig. 7.3). Here the unmistakable signs of disappearance have already set in: Christ's body is still perfectly discernible, but his face is starting to fade, and his torso grows transparent. The physical insufficiency of the image becomes its spiritual strength, and the illusory nature of simulacra is here confirmed by its unstable, impermanent nature. As the devotee kisses the image, s/he removes it from the page and displaces it into the realm of the cognitive: the body no longer needs to be present on the page, because, through countless devotional exercises, it has been internalized, mentally (and literally) digested. The partially erased figure, moreover, becomes simultaneously familiar and remarkably alien. On the one hand, it suggests close contact and intimate knowledge—in other words, a familiarity so complete as to cast off any necessity of recognizability. At the same time, the altered figure speaks of difference, otherworldliness, a kind of directed and intentional othering brought upon by the reader-viewers themselves. It recalls Victor Shklovsky's "technique of estrangement" (приём отстранения): a maneuver for making things "other"—unfamiliar, removed, strange—but also astonishing, difficult, belabored.<sup>39</sup> This combination of slow laboriousness implicit in the absencing of the image and the resulting visual difficulty renders the erased body uncannily foreign, positioned neither here nor there: caught in an embodied process of transformation.

By the time Christ's entire body migrates into the realm of near-complete erasure, the physical image is supplanted by the one conjured in one's imagination: as an anchor, it is no longer available and, ostensibly, no longer needed (fig. 7.8). It is still framed, of course: framed by the landscape and the onlookers, the limp arms and trickling blood, the dark hair and the golden halo. But the body is no longer a body: the erased image becomes a different kind of representation, a generative emptiness that makes meaning. The devotee's performative gesture wiped away the image along with the necessity to see it. All that remains is the base matter devoid of paint, the skin of the animal in place of the skin of God. The space of erasure witnesses and confirms the devotee's labor first to remove the image and then to reconstitute it in the *oculus mentis*, with the hope of erasing it once again, this time for good. A model for erasure of mental images as well, a gap on the page, a wiping of God, the empty space in place of Harley's Christ signals a path toward the imageless union with the divine. Whether or not such a union was seen as a true possibility for the lay viewer is beside the point: it was an ideal, a devotional ambition, a confirmation that the eventual invisibility of images was a path to envision the invisible God.<sup>40</sup> The rest—the proper encounter with God, not through dissimulation but *facie ad faciem*, promised by 1 Corinthians 13:12 ("We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face" [DV])—would have to wait until after the devotee's death.<sup>41</sup> We might read the promise of restoration of the divine image in Harley's later pages, which come after the effaced deposition and lamentation, where the Son and the Father are left intact, as on folio 128v, which



Figure 7.8  
Deposition, book of hours, use of  
Sarum, southern Netherlands,  
1450–75. British Library, MS  
Harley 2985, fol. 71v (detail). By  
permission of the British Library.

features two souls lifted up out of the ground by demure angels, en route to finally see the crisply luminous figure of God, perfectly available to the human gaze (fig. 7.9).

#### Erasure into the Invisible: The Absconding God and Apophasis

The sustained process of unseeing, embodied in the unmaking of God's image by touch and kiss, finally finds resonances in the language of unseeing—in the enterprise of apophatic theology, the project of absolute discursive dissimulation. Apophasis, or negative theology, predates Christianity and is found in Hellenistic Judaism, Gnosticism, and Middle Platonism.<sup>42</sup> Philo referred to the “nothingness [*oudeneia*] of creation” when discussing the way to see through physical reality.<sup>43</sup> Gnostics, too, spoke of God as, according to one Hermetic prayer, “ineffable, inexpressible, nameable by silence.”<sup>44</sup> The foremost Christian theorist of apophatic tradition was Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. ca. 500), a Syrian mystic for whom God is an inaccessible nonbeing who can be referenced only by verbal dismantling: “God is . . . neither understood nor spoken nor



Figure 7.9  
Souls ascending to see God, book  
of hours, use of Sarum, southern  
Netherlands, 1450–75. British  
Library, MS Harley 2985, fol.  
128v. By permission of the British  
Library.

named; he is not any of the beings nor in any of the beings is he known; he is all in all and nothing in anything; he is known to all from all, and to no one from anything.<sup>45</sup> Apophatic mysticism was again embraced and rethought in the later Middle Ages, when *Mystical Theology* was regularly taught at the universities.<sup>46</sup> Its influence, for instance, is clearly felt in the work of Thomas Aquinas. In a heady intertwinement of positive and negative theologies, Aquinas affirms God's immateriality and transcendence but refuses him objective qualities, agrees that all perfection comes from God but rejects that manifest perfection is the same as inheres in the divine, and suggests that God should be spoken about but denies the usual discourse human beings use to understand and discuss all other things.<sup>47</sup>

Aquinas's negative affirmations confirm the generative quality of apophatic theology: by the process of unsaying, it tackles the ontology of all of creation. Its echoes can be discerned in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, whose author, suspicious of the visual, stresses instead the haptic, in preferring to "be so nowhere bodily, wrestling with that blind nought [nothing]," which "may better be felt than seen."<sup>48</sup> Nothingness becomes everything, but to achieve this everything, all that is namable, imaginable, and familiar has to be scraped away by negation—an exploit beautifully modeled in the fourteenth-century German poem *Granum sinapis*.<sup>49</sup> The author is unable to grasp the image or the location of the divine object of his quest:

It is, and yet no one knows what.  
It is here, there,  
far, near,  
deep, high,  
so that  
it is neither the one nor the other.

He actively dissimulates the one he seeks:

Light, clear,  
completely dark,  
nameless,  
unknown

in order to "sink . . . into God's nothingness."<sup>50</sup> The image of God has been completely scraped away, and only traces—light, dark—remain at the mystic's disposal.

The concept of the Godhead as absolute nothingness is strikingly evident in Meister Eckhart's sermons, which are among the most radical examples of late medieval apophasis. Eckhart (d. 1328) considered God to be "empty and free in himself" (got ledic und vri ist in im selber), free of form, impossible to name, and so indescribable by the very language that has to be used in characterizing him.<sup>51</sup> In his sermon 83,

“Renovamini spiritu,” the Dominican works around what God is not, in the process equating God with nothingness (*nitheit*): “God is nameless, because no one can say anything or understand anything about him. . . . So if I say, ‘God is good,’ that is not true. I am good, but God is not good. . . . since God is not good, he cannot become better. And since he cannot become better, he cannot be best of all. . . . If I say ‘God is a being,’ it is not true; he is a being transcending being and [he is] a transcending nothingness “(*ein vber swebende wesen vnd end vber wesende nitheit*). Transcendence requires an object to move beyond, and the quest for God becomes a quest of visual erasure: “When all images have departed from the soul . . . then the pure being of the soul . . . encounters the pure formless being of the Divine Unity, which is being beyond all being.” Only then can it reach that “something which is above the created being of the soul and which is untouched by any createdness, which is to say nothingness.”<sup>52</sup>

Eckhart’s negative theology came under fire, but its influence lingered, felt clearly in a wide range of sources, from *The Cloud of Unknowing* to the *Theologica Germanica*, and it became a guiding force in the work of Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), who studied and annotated Eckhart’s Latin works.<sup>53</sup> Nicholas, invoking Pseudo-Dionysius, equated God with nothingness undiscernible to the intellect: “Denis the Great says that an understanding of God is not so much an approach toward something as toward nothing.”<sup>54</sup> In the thirteenth chapter of *De visione Dei* (On the Vision of God), Nicholas again accepts that God “cannot be approached, comprehended, named, multiplied, or seen,” and repudiates imagery that only distracts from the truth: “Should anyone express any likeness and say that you ought to be conceived according to it, I know in the same way that this is not a likeness of you.”<sup>55</sup> This is also the directive found in the *Granum sinapis* that tells the soul to leave time and space and “eschew also all representation” (*lâ stat, lâ zît, / ouch bilde mît!*). Images have to be erased, to become invisible in order to reach the invisible. The premise of apophasis, then, is painstakingly achieved emptiness: bodies and images obstruct and distract from the truth that cannot be pictured or described, but can be talked about only in terms of dissimulation.<sup>56</sup>

And yet dissimulation as a tool of contemplation makes utter nothingness into something—into everything, really—just as Eckhart’s “den êwigen abgrunt” turns ignorance on its head, its dissimulation an invitation to finally, truly, see. In the end apophaticism is paradoxical: in its apparent impulse to reject both the intellect and the imagination, it embraces both. The urge to dematerialize the encounter with the object of desire ultimately posits erasure as the site of this encounter; in eschewing the literalizing drift of the imagination, theorists of *via negativa* were forced to embrace it in the guise of potentiality, which was pregnant with the expectation of mystical union. Apophasis was rooted in the trope of experiential unavailability and its generative outcome: the lacuna to be filled, the absence to be materialized, the desire—devotional, cognitive, philosophical—to be satiated and gratified. This gratification, however, was subtractive rather than additive: its predicate was not so much imaginative devotion as devotional erasure.

Apophatic mysticism may seem as esoteric as scholastic literature seems rarefied, and yet we have sizable evidence that suggests the broad circulation of theological, scientific, and scholarly thought in visual, literary, and pastoral contexts.<sup>57</sup> Ideas were disseminated by various means, often through sermons, which knitted together larger scholarly and other lay communities. Such oral/aural transmission secured the circulation and recirculation of seemingly abstruse philosophies in different circles, sometimes for centuries, assuring their endurance and transformation.<sup>58</sup> Eckhart's conceptions about the bareness of the disrobed God and divine emptiness are elaborated precisely in his vernacular sermons. In England, too—where the Harley manuscript was imported for lay use—the preachers, to quote G. R. Owst, “gave public utterance to the reflections of the mystics.”<sup>59</sup>

### A Sense of Loss / A Loss of Senses

We have come to understand that late medieval visual culture was dominated by the power of image, where the presence of a readily pictured God was conjured from sacred texts, devotional guides, visionary literature, and forged artifacts like the Lentulus letter. But the erasures of Christological images from parchment might prod us to look at pious practices and their theological predicates in a different way. The dissolving of Christ's body on countless manuscript pages might gesture to the disappearance of God from this world, suggesting itself as a visual equivalent to the apophatic stripping of failing verbal epithets, and modeling spiritual and cognitive erasures by way of corporeal ones. Performative, gradual, knowing effacements become devotional acts, the kind that returned God to invisibility and unrepresentability. Erasure thus both conceals and reveals: it veils God in emptiness, but it also uncovers the emptiness with divine vestiges therein.

In this way, the destruction of the image does not simply bear witness to the performative engagement of the viewer with the page; the trace of this destruction becomes a devotional image in its own right. The gradual erasure of Christ's image inverts the process of devotional practice, as outlined by the lay Franciscan brother Ugo Panziera da Prato (d. ca. 1330), who suggested in his *Trattati* that it is impossible to attain the ideal of imagelessness by thinking of nothing, for “the soul may not remain idle for any interval of time.”<sup>60</sup> Instead, he proposed, the steady intensification of devotional meditation is akin to an image first outlined and then steadily elaborated into a fully accomplished painting.<sup>61</sup> And yet, the Harley manuscript suggests just the opposite: here, the slow transformation from *deus manifestus* to *deus absconditus*—the hidden God, unknowable, invisible—is effected by the beholder's own lips, materializing the concept of apophasis through continual use. It is a spiritual move—brought about through somatic means—from the visible to the invisible, a move toward God who cannot be understood or portrayed: toward God as nothing. The slow erasure of Christ as image

brings about an utter imagelessness that gets to the heart of both devotional longing and theological argument: the more one looked at and kissed Christ, the less one needed his outward form. Its slow disappearance did not dampen piety but rather reaffirmed it.

In a devotional manuscript in particular—where what is visually reduced is perforce theologically highlighted—such effacement of the sacred has great semiotic consequence. A visual sign of change always calls attention to the destruction, and it foregrounds rather than erases the wiped image.<sup>62</sup> Absence—or absencing, in this case—makes meaning, and the act of unrepresentation becomes an act of creation. Unlike the scrolls held in the hands of the so-called theoreticians in Constantinus's manuscript, erased images are not empty: they are emptied. The blank banderoles, for all their epistemological pretensions, are devoid of any *logos*. They act as liminal, inchoate loci that presume an additive act of inscriptive utterance.<sup>63</sup> Conversely, the performance inherent in erasure hinges on subtraction; its semiotic instability is predicated not only on the absence of an image (or a word) but on the process of its loss. It is here—in the place where images fail, but the responses to these images triumph—that iconography slips its chains and escapes into an empty space.

## Notes

My deepest thanks to the two anonymous readers of this essay: to one for the enthusiastic encouragement of my engagement with this fraught and difficult topic, and to another for the extremely helpful suggestions that nuanced and bettered this piece immeasurably. I am grateful also to Pamela Patton for inviting me to speak at Princeton and urging me to think through and organize my ideas on erasure, and to the audience members for their astute questions and suggestions.

1. See first and foremost Émile Mâle's *L'art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en France: Étude sur l'iconographie du moyen âge et sur ses sources d'inspiration* (Paris: Leroux, 1898); Aby Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Literatur* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1932), recently translated as *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999); Aby Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998–2018); Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 26–54; see also the work of Fritz Saxl, Rudolph Wittkower, Ernst Gombrich, Richard Krautheimer, Jan Bialostocki, all the way to Michael Ann Holly, Hans Belting, and beyond.

2. James Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," *Simiolus* 16 (1986): 150.

3. Irving Lavin, "Iconography as a Humanistic Discipline," in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, 1993), 35.

4. Michael Camille, "Mouths and Meanings: Towards an Anti-Iconography of Medieval Art," in Cassidy, *Iconography at the Crossroads*, 43–58.

5. Francis Newton, "Constantine the African and Monte Cassino: New Elements and the Text of the *Isagoge*," in *Constantine the African and 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Magusi: The "Pantegni" and Related Texts*, ed. Charles Burnett and Danielle Jacquart (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 16–47; and esp. Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The "Viaticum" and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

6. For the argument about unrepresentability in terms of empty (rather than emptied) spaces, see Elina Gertsman, "Phantoms of Emptiness," *Art History* 41, no. 5 (2018): 800–37, and *The Absent Image: Lacunae in Medieval Books* (University Park: Penn State University Press, forthcoming).

7. Sydney Carlyle Cockerell and Montague Rhodes James, *Two East Anglian Psalters at the Bodleian Library, Oxford: The Ormesby Psalter, Ms. Douce 366* [descr. by Sydney Carlyle Cockerell]; *The Bromholm Psalter, Ms. Ashmole 1523* [descr. by Montague Rhodes

James] (Oxford: Printed for the Roxburghe Club by J. Johnson, at the University Press, 1926); also briefly discussed by Michael Camille, "Obscenity Under Erasure: Censorship in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts," in *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Boston: Brill, 1998), 144–45.

8. Among the most thoughtful studies on medieval optics and modes of seeing are David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages: A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's "Perspectiva" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); as well as Katherine Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics, 1250–1345* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); and Dallas D. Denery, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Late Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7. For the art-historical take on these studies, see, e.g., Michael Camille, "Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 197–223; and Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality" in the same volume, 169–96; as well as Hahn's "Vision," in *Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 71–93, with excellent bibliography. I treat this briefly in "Multiple Impressions: Christ in the Winepress and the Semiotics of the Printed Image," *Art History* 36, no. 2 (2013): 310–37. A foundational and much too underappreciated study is Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). See also Herbert Kessler, "Real Absence," in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 104–48; and Barbara Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash Between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1–43. For the discussion of the historical notion of species and the many perspectives on the concept of vision, see Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, vol. 1, *Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

9. This is not to fall into the trap of "prudish Victorians." See Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2009); already Michel Foucault mounted an important challenge to this approach in *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

10. See the inscription on the verso of flyleaf B: "Ce livre fu a messire Guillaume Flote, seigneur de

Revel et chancelier de France." The manuscript was in the possession of Jean de Berry before 1401; see Arnoul Belin's inventory: "Item un livre en françois de l'Ymage du monde, que fist maistre Gossenin, ystorié en pluseurs lieux; couvert de cuir vermeil emprint, a deux tixuz de soie noire, et deux fremouers d'argent aus armes de Revel" (BN Français 11496, n° 1064). The duke's signature is found on folio 141, and his ex libris is placed on the recto of flyleaf A and on fol. 139v ("Ce livre est au duc de Berry.—JEHAN"). This copy was one of the earliest manuscripts belonging to a lay reader to feature Christ's wound.

11. The manuscript is edited by O. H. Prior as "L'Image du monde de maitre Gossouin" (PhD diss., Université de Lausanne, 1913). Brief discussions appear in David Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 240 and passim, fig. 102; and in Flora May Lewis, "Devotional Images and Their Dissemination in English Manuscripts, ca. 1350–1470" (PhD diss., University of London, 1989), 108–10, and "The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (London: British Library, 1997), 206, pl. 8.

12. On the amuletic use of the wound of Christ, see Areford, *Viewer and the Printed Image*, 245; and Don C. Skemmer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2006), 247–50.

13. David S. Areford, "The Passion Measured: A Late-Medieval Diagram of the Body of Christ," in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. Alasdair A. MacDonald, Bernhard Ridderbos, and Rita M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 211–38; and Marlene Villalobos Hennessy, "The Social Life of a Manuscript Metaphor: Christ's Blood as Ink," in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 17–52. Literature on the parallels between ink and Christ's blood as well as parchment and his skin is extensive. See, for example, Kathryn A. Smith, "The Neville of Hornby Hours and the Design of Literate Devotion," *Art Bulletin* 81 (1999): 81. Sarah Kay complicates this relationship in "Legible Skins: Animal Skins and the Ethics of Medieval Reading," *postmedieval* 2, no. 1 (2011): 13–32.

14. Kathryn M. Rudy, "Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts Through the Physical Rituals They Reveal," *Electronic British Library Journal* (2011): 1–56; Kathryn M. Rudy, "Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a



Densitometer," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2, nos. 1–2 (2010): <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2010.2.1.1>.

15. See, among numerous examples, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, HM 26061, fol. 178v; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. BPH 134, fol. 69v and Ms. 133 D 14, fol. 19v; Le Mans, Médiathèque Louis-Aragon, Ms. 129, fol. 63r.

16. Full bibliography at "Detailed Record for Harley 2985," British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7966>.

17. The text on the facing page, John's suffrage, has also been heavily used and stained, but there are no erasures, and the suffrage remains perfectly legible. The manuscript was also subject to several excisions, such as initials cut out on folios 56r and 89v.

18. The text on 72r, which begins with the prayer "Deus in adiutorium meum intende" and ends with the hymn Ave Maris Stella, is unharmed. The last line reads: "Atque semper virgo, felix coeli porta," followed by "Su" of "Sumens," the rest of which is found on the obverse of the folio ("[Su]mens illud ave"). The devotee may have lavished personal attention on the manuscript, but the book was purchased ready-made: the illuminator left space for the coat of arms on folio 42, which was never filled in. Stylistic analysis suggests that the manuscript was illuminated in the southern Netherlands sometime between 1450 and 1475, and was obviously destined for the English market. After the calendar, which includes several English saints, there follow the fifteen prayers incorrectly attributed to Saint Birgitta of Sweden, also called the fifteen O's (fols. 13r–18v), suffrages for the saints (fols. 19v–40v), and the Hours of the Virgin with more suffrages (fols. 41v–78v). Then come the prayers to the Virgin: "Salve virgo virginum" (fols. 79r–82v), "O intemerata" (fols. 82v–84v), and "Obscero te" (fols. 84v–86v). Then follow devotions to the Seven Joys of Mary (fols. 86v–89v), the prayer to the wounds of Christ and the Holy Cross, "Triumphale lignum crucis" (fols. 90r–92v); Bede's prayer "Domine iesu christe qui septem verba" (fols. 93r–95r); prayer to Christ "Ave domine iesu christen verbum patris" fols. 95r–96r), and finally the prayer to Christ's body, complete with indulgences (fols. 96r–96av). The last third of the book is devoted to the Seven Penitential Psalms with Litany (fols. 96br–108v), the Office of the Dead (fols. 109r–127v), the Commendation of the Souls (fols. 128v–139v), the Psalter of the Passion, accompanied by the "Suscipere digneris" prayer (fols. 140v–145v), and, finally, the Psalter of Saint Jerome (fols. 146v–156v). The manuscript is richly illuminated and includes twelve miniatures that accompany the calendar; nineteen full-page miniatures (seven are missing); twenty-seven decorated initials, all but one

accompanied by foliate borders; fifteen historiated initials (three have been cut out); and small initials and line fillers throughout.

19. See Robert Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle: De saint Anselme à Alain de Lille*, 2 vols. (Paris: Letouzey, 1967); and Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Imago: De l'image à l'imaginaire," in *L'image: Fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Jerome Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Cahiers du Léopard d'Or, 1996), 29–37, esp. 31–33.

20. "Invisibilis Dei imago visibilis esse non potest, alioquin nec imago est; quod enim invisibile est, pingi non potest; nec enim visibilis potest invisibilem videre." Ambrose, "In Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses," in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 17:446c.

21. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate dei* 11.4, ed. Bernart Dombart and Alfons Kalb (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 2:323.

22. For a wonderful set of essays that treat the notion of invisibility in early medieval thought, see Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert, eds., *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); therein essays by Giselle de Nie, Thomas F. X. Noble, Erik Thuno, Herbert Kessler, Bianca Kühnel, and Paul Edward Dutton are particularly useful.

23. On geometry and the divine, see Herbert Kessler, "Medietas / Mediator and the Geometry of Incarnation," in *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image*, ed. Walter Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 17–75.

24. See Didier Méhu, "L'évidement de l'image ou la figuration de l'invisible corps du Christ (IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Images revues* 11 (2013): 27–28, <http://images.revues.org/3384>, who convincingly and spiritedly argues that the copyist may have had a model in front of him that bore the image of Christ in the mandorla, but that he was hardly stupid in choosing to replace an image with "the invisibility of the logos who presides over Creation." Further on the manuscript, see Peter S. Baker, "More Diagrams by Byrhtferth of Ramsey," in *Latin Learning and English Love: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Kathleen O'Brien O'Keefe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 2:53–73, esp. 58–59.

25. See on this subject Georges Didi-Huberman's brief musing in *L'homme qui marchait dans la couleur* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2001), 19–20: "Comment donner à la croyance le support visuel du désir de voir l'Absent? C'est ce que les clercs et les artistes religieux du Moyen Âge ont bien dû, à quelque moment, se demander. Et ils en vinrent quelquefois à cette solution radicale, simple autant que risquée: inventer un lieu, non pas creux tout

bonnement, mais déserté. Suggérer au regard un lieu où 'Il' serait passé, où 'Il' aurait habité—mais d'où, à présent, 'Il' se serait de toute évidence absenté. Un lieu vide, mais dont le vide aurait été converti en marque d'une présence."

26. This is, perhaps, one reason why osculatory images in liturgical books—placed there with a specific aim of sparing the larger images kissed away by priests—were frequently ignored by the celebrants, who bypassed these targets and continued placing kisses on Christ's body in the main miniature, eventually reducing it to a shadow. Osculatories usually took form of a simple cross or a smaller version of the crucifixion. Jeffrey Hamburger points to a set of Veronica images that were used as osculatories in late medieval German missals in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 330–31, figs. 7.12–7.14. Osculatories were also inserted into books of civic oaths and subsequently erased through kissing. For a salient example, see Kathryn Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment: The Social Lives of Medieval Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 288.

27. Augustine of Hippo, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J. H. Taylor (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 2:185–95 (12.6–12). Augustine addressed different kinds of seeing in other writings as well, not all consistent. See, for example, Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De trinitate* and *Confessions*," *Journal of Religion* 63 (1983): 125–42. Sixten Ringbom discusses *De genesi* and Augustine's taxonomy in "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: The Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 73 (1969): 159–70. In the ninth century, Alcuin will repeat Augustine's words nearly verbatim: "There are three ways of seeing things: One is corporal, another symbolic, and the third is mental. Corporal vision means to see with the eyes of the body. Symbolic vision means that, the body's eyes having nothing to do with it, we perceive in spirit alone through some act of imagination. . . . Mental sight means that we consider with the liveliness of the mind alone." Alcuin of York, *Epistola 135*, in *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, ed. Ernst Dümmler et al. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 2:204; translated in Thomas Noble, "Vocabulary of Vision and Worship," in Nie, Morrison, and Mostert, *Seeing the Invisible*, 217.

28. "Sed se ad se nullatenus colligit, nisi prius didicerit terrenarum atque caelestium imaginum phantasmata ab oculo mentis compescere, quicquid de uisu, quicquid de auditu, quicquid de odoratu, quicquid de tactu et gustu corporeo cogitationi eius occurrerit, respuere atque calcare, quatenus talem se quaerat intus, qualis sine istis est." Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, ed. Marcus Adriaen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), book 2,

homily 5, part 9, p. 282; in briefly discussing this passage, Margaret Aston comments that for Gregory "the *via negativa* of mystical theology accepted God's divinity as so transcending the whole of creation that he could only be reached by emptying the mind of all vestiges of images and sense perceptions." "Imageless Devotion: What Kind of an Ideal?," in *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideas and Communities, 1200–1630*, ed. Rosemary Horrox and Sarah Reed Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 189.

29. "Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam (si dici potest) angelorum, ut praesentium memoria excedens, rerum se inferiorum corporearumque non modo cupiditatibus, sed et similitudinibus exuat, sitque ei pura cum illis conversatio, cum quibus est puritatis similitudo. . . . Rerum etenim cupiditatibus vivendo non teneri, humane visruttis est: corporum vero similitudinibus speculando non involvi, angelicae puritatis est." Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones Super Cantica Cantorum*, LII.5, in *Opera Omnia* 2:93, as translated in St. Bernard's *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1920), 2:95–96, 97. For the Hamburger quote, see "The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions," *Viator* 20 (1989): 175.

30. Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, ed. J. Alaerts (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 3:496–97. Translated and discussed in Bret L. Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70.

31. Meister Eckhart, sermon 9, "Quasi stella matutina," in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. and trans. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 258. See Merold Westphal, "Faith as the Overcoming of Ontological Xenophobia," in *The Otherness of God*, ed. Orrin F. Summerell (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 157–72, esp. 156–59. On the theoretical construct of Augustinian taxonomy, see Hamburger, "Visual and the Visionary," 169.

32. John H. Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 99–100.

33. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Evelyn Underhill (1912; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), chapter 65, page 112. See the analysis of and bibliography on the *Cloud* at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/gallacher-cloud-of-unknowing-introduction>. The author of the *Cloud* nonetheless allows that the imagination must stand at the beginning of the soul's ascent: on this, see Alastair Minnis, "Affection and Imagination in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*," *Traditio* 39 (1983): 323–66, esp. 350–51; and *The Book of Privy Counselling*, in *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1944), 158, lines 17–25.

34. "Et discamus ab hiis visibilibus mente transire ad invisibilia, a corporalibus ad spiritualia. Ille namque est finis ymaginum" (fol. 4r). The text was brought to scholarly attention first and foremost by Ringbom in "Devotional Images"; subsequently discussed in Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Writing on the Wall: Inscriptions and Descriptions of Carthusian Crucifixions in a Fifteenth-Century Passion Miscellany," in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance*, ed. Hamburger and Anne Korteweg (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2006), 231–52 at 236 and 237n26, as well as appendix 2b, p. 252 (where the final word of the second quote is transcribed as "ymagine"). Usually attributed to Jean Gerson; for the argument that such an attribution is erroneous, see Sherry Lindquist's introduction to *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 15–16n65.

35. Discussed vis-à-vis Netherlandish painting in Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality*, chap. 2.

36. The bibliography on this manuscript is voluminous, listed at "Detailed Record for Yates Thompson 1," British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=18452>. The most sustained attention to the manuscript and to the *Livres de l'estat* portion was recently paid by Aden Kumler in *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 227–35, 267n163 (the note, which contains a key bibliography, makes a convincing argument for the identity of the female protagonist as a laywoman). However, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 412–14, where the woman is identified as a nun.

37. Hamburger, "Visual and the Visionary," 134, on the Trinity belonging to a "different . . . ontological order." Kumler reads in this image "the sacrament's exceptional conjunction of the material and the transcendent" (Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 234).

38. *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols. (London, 1808–12), vol. 1, no. 1211; Walter de Gray Birch and Henry Jenner, *Early Drawings and Illuminations: An Introduction to the Study of Illustrated Manuscripts* (London: Bagster and Sons, 1879), 16; Scot McKendrick, *Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts 1400–1550* (London: British Library, 2003), fig. 11; Janet Backhouse, *Illuminations from Books of Hours* (London: British Library, 2004), no. 10.

39. В. Б. Шкловский (V. B. Shklovsky), "Искусство как приём" (Art as device), in *О теории прозы* [On the theory of prose] (Moscow: Krug, 1925), 7–20.

40. On the argument that "the very opposition of abstraction and visible signs necessarily entails the interdependence between the two" and that imageless devotion was "an ideal to which patrons . . . at the very least claimed to aspire," see Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality*, chap. 2, esp. 57.

41. Theologians debated the precise moment of the revelation of God's face, whether it took place after the Last Judgment or immediately after one's death. See Lucy Freeman Sandler, "Face to Face with God: A Pictorial Image of the Beatific Vision," in *Studies in Manuscript Illumination, 1200–1400* (London: Pindar, 2008), 197–215; Bernard McGinn, "Visio Dei: Seeing God in Medieval Theology," in *Envisaging Heaven in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig and Ad Putter (New York: Routledge, 2007), 15–33; Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei," 169–96; Christian Trottman, *La vision beatifique: Des disputes scolastiques a sa definition par Benoit XII* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1995). The controversy was settled in the 1336 Benedictus Deus, which affirmed that the purified souls "have seen and see the divine essence by intuitive vision and even face to face, with no mediating creature" directly after death and long before the Last Judgment and the resurrection of their bodies. See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitio-num et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1932), 198.

42. For a classic study of apophasis, see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For the discussion of the resurgence of apophatic mysticism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries within the context of discussions on the zero and the void, see Gertsman, *The Absent Image*.

43. Philo of Alexandria, "De Somniis," in *On Flight and Finding; On the Change of Names; On Dreams*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 327, book 1:60.

44. "The Gospel of Truth," reproduced in Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 287–88. The concept of divine nothingness and negation was well known in Jewish thought as well. Its discussion lying outside the scope of this article, I refer the reader to Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 1:58–59, 138; Shem Tov ibn Gaon, "Treatise on the Ten Sefirot," ed. Gershom Scholem, *Qiryat Sefer* 8 (1931–32): 400–401; Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, ed. Isaiah Tishby (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1982), 40, 116. Among all the Kabbalistic texts, the *Zohar* by Moses ben Shem Tov de Leon (1250–1305), Guadalajara, Spain, was by far the most influential. The *Zohar* discusses the concept of *ayin*, or the ultimate nothingness, is a key idea in the Kabbalistic thought. See Daniel Matt,

“Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Robert K. Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121–62; and Joseph Dan, “Paradox of Nothingness in the Kabbalah,” in *Argumentum e Silentio*, ed. Amy Diana Colin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 359–63. See also Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, introduction to *Commentary on “Sefer Yetsirah”* (Grodno, 1806), 3A; discussed in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1941), 217.

45. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, trans. John D. Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980); Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). For the quote, see *Divine Names* 7.3. For the original, see Pseudo-Dionysius, “De Divinis Nominibus,” in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66), 3:872a. In the ninth century, these ideas were taken up by John Scotus Eriugena, who characterized “nothing” as the “incomprehensible and inaccessible brilliance of the divine goodness.” Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae)*, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams, vol. 3, *Liber Tertius* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1981), 166, section 680CD; discussed in Deirdre Carabine, *John Scotus Eriugena* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46–50.

46. See introduction and essays in Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, eds., *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On the difference between apophysis and aphaereisis, see Raoul Mortley, “The Fundamentals of the Via Negativa,” *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982): 436–38; and further on distinctions between negative theology and *via negativa*, see papers edited by Mortley and David Dockrill, *The Via Negativa* (Auckland: Prudentia, 1981). The distinctions are also articulated in Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 3–4. The entire first chapter is an excellent introduction to negative theology. For the purposes of this study, these distinctions are not instrumental and therefore not discussed. Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, often elides aphaeresis and apophysis. See J. P. Williams, *Denying Divinity: Apophysis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jessica A. Boon, *The Mystical Science of the Soul: Medieval Cognition in Bernardino de Laredo’s Recollection Method* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 8–9.

47. In addition to Rocca, see Brian Davies, “Aquinas on What God Is Not,” *Revue internationale de philosophie* 52 (1998): 207–25.

48. *Cloud of Unknowing*, 117.

49. Text edited in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 3, Gert van der Schüren—Hildegard von Bingen, ed. Wolfgang Stammer et al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981), cols. 220–24; and Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 47–49, which still attributes the text to Eckhart, an attribution that has since been rejected. For an English translation, see Karen J. Campbell, ed. and trans., *German Mystical Writings* (New York: Continuum, 1991), 141–44. Studies of the poem include Kurt Ruh, “Textkritik zum Mystikerlied ‘Granum sinapis,’” in *Festschrift Josef Quint, anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstages*, ed. Hugo Moser, Rudolf Schützeichel, and Karl Stackmann (Bonn: Semmel, 1964), 169–85; Walter Haug, “Meister Eckhart und das ‘Granum sinapis,’” in *Forschungen zur deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters: Festschrift für Johannes Janota*, ed. Horst Brunner and Werner Williams-Krapp (Tübingen: Niemeyer 2003), 73–92; Alois Maria Haas, *Sermo mysticus: Studien zur Theologie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 301–29. On the famous Latin commentary to the poem, see Maria Bindschedler, *Der lateinische Kommentar zur “Granum sinapis”* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1949). On the German commentary, see Ernst Hellgardt, “Ein andechtige betrachtung: Der deutsche Kommentar zum ‘Granum sinapis,’” in *Impulse und Resonanzen: Tübinger mediävistische Beiträge zum 80. Geburtstag Geburtstag von Walter Haug*, ed. Gisela Vollmann-Profe et al. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007), 301–22. My thanks to Jeffrey Hamburger for pointing me to this text and the literature on it.

50. “Us ist und weis doch nimant was. / us hî, us dâ, / us verre, us nâ, / us tîf, us hō, / us ist alsō, / daz us ist weder diz noch daz”; “Us licht, us clâr, / us vinster gâr, / us unbenant, / us unbekant”; “sink al mîn icht / in gotis nicht.”

51. Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, 11 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936–), vol. 1, 39:1–41:7, translated in Bruce Milem, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart’s German Sermons* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 73. On Eckhart apophatic theology, in addition to Milem, see Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), esp. 61–66.

52. Meister Eckhart, *Die Deutschen and Lateinischen Werke*, 3:437–38 and 2:66, cited and translated in Oliver Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 51, and discussed in Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 141.

53. For the history of these condemnations, see Josef Koch, “Kritische Studien zum Leben,” in *Kleine Schriften* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1973);

Gabriel Théry, "Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart, contenues dans le manuscrit 33 b de la bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 1 (1926): 129–268; Franz Pelster, "Ein Gutachten aus dem Echehart-Prozess in Avignon," in *Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters; Studien und Texte Martin Grabmann zur vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres von Freunden und Schülern gewidmet*, ed. Albert Lang, Joseph Lechner, and Michael Schmaus (Münster: Aschendorff, 1935), 1099–1124; M. -H. Laurent, "Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart: Les documents des Archives Vaticanes," *Divus Thomas* 39, no. 1 (1936): 331–48, 430–47; Edmund Colledge in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 9–15. Colledge reproduces Nicholas's reply to John Wenck of Herrenberg, who wrote a pamphlet that condemned Eckhart's writings; the reply "praise[s] [Eckhart's] gifts and his zeal, but he would have preferred his books to be removed from public places, because people are not able to understand these matters, with which he often dealt differently from other teachers, even though intelligent men will find in them many subtle and profitable things" (20).

54. Nicholas of Cusa, *Of Learned Ignorance*, trans. Germaine Heron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 17; discussed in Rosalie L. Colie's brilliant book *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1976), 26–27.

55. Nicholas of Cusa, "On the Vision of God," in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 258.

56. On the notion of corporeality in apophatic mysticism, see Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller, eds., *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), especially Keller's essay therein, "The Cloud of the Impossible: Embodiment and Apophasis," 25–44.

57. See, most recently, essays in Sven Dupré, ed., *Laboratories of Art: Alchemy and Art Technology from Antiquity to the 18th Century* (New York: Springer, 2014); and in Renate Dürr, Annette Gerok-Reiter, Andreas Holzem, and Steffen Patzold, eds., *Religiöses Wissen im vormodernen Europa: Schöpfung—Mutterschaft—Passion* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019); see also Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Essays in Spencer E. Young, ed., *Crossing Boundaries at Medieval Universities, Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2011) explore the fluidity of university faculties.

58. See, for example, Peter Brown's most recent book on the ransom of the soul, dealing with the

seventh-century reception of second- and third-century thought and its transformation and transfer to entirely different contexts and the resultant misunderstandings. Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). For a later instance on the power of oral tradition in demotic interpretation, see Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

59. In the context of the discussion of Passion and Christmas sermons in particular. G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 507.

60. Translated in David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 313.

61. Discussed in Elizabeth Bailey, "Raising the Mind to God: The Sensual Journey of Giovanni Morelli (1371–1444) via Devotional Images," *Speculum* 84, no. 4 (2009): 996; and Rosario Assunto, "Images and Iconoclasm," in *Encyclopedia of World Art* 7 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 819.

62. To quote Camille, "Once you rub something away, you tend to draw attention to what was there before the obfuscation." Camille, "Obscenity Under Erasure," 145–46.

63. On speech scrolls in manuscript illumination in particular, see Alison R. Flett, "The Significance of Text Scrolls: Towards a Descriptive Terminology," in *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 43–56; Susanne Wittekind, "Vom Schriftband zum Spruchband: Zum Funktionswandel von Spruchbändern in Illustrationen biblischer Stoffe," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996): 343–67; Michael Camille, "Seeing and Reading," : Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Art History* 8, no. 1 (1985): 29 and *passim*; and Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260–1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203–14 (for a general discussion of speech scrolls), esp. 211 (for empty scrolls "as an imperative: to supply the voice, to ventriloquize the scene"). On orality, see Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

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