

There were in all 40 presenters and six Plenary Speakers, including Prof. Karan Schneider (Breyer State University), Prof. Robert Cogan (New England Conservatory), Dr. Victoria Sweet, MD, (University of California), Prof. Helen de Zubicaray (Australia), Harry Chalmiers (President, Mally Smith College), and Carmen Butcher (Shorter College). Our founder, Prof. Bruce Hozesky, offered the Keynote Address and Dr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, President of Chestnut Hill College, offered the Welcoming Address. An additional very special speaker, Dr. Irena Koprowski, moved the audience to a standing ovation after recounting her life as a medical doctor.

Here are a few of the e-mail messages we received after the celebration ended:

“It was truly a wonderful experience.” -- Lorenzo Buonanno, New York.

“The Conference exceeded all my expectations – beautifully presented, perfectly organized. I’m still on a high!” -- Helen de Zubicaray, Australia

“Wonderful 25th anniversary conference for the von Bingen Society.” – Harry Chalmiers, Minnesota

“Rarely am I blessed with the opportunity to learn from and converse with such superb scholars.” – Michael Gorostiza, New Jersey

“I want to thank the Hildegard Society for an excellent convention.” -- Joan Heller, Texas

It was a marvelous “Bridges to Infinity” and a tremendous joy to me to see what has grown from my original vision.” – Bruce Hozeski, (Founder of ISHBS), Indiana

“A warm and lively conference, singularly responsive group, and an uncompetitive one.” – Ruth Lepson, Massachusetts

“Exciting and stimulating conference.” – Diane Luchese, Maryland

“I am sending thanks and kudos to YOU for all your efforts and accomplishments at the conference.” – Kathy Luethje, Florida

“What a wonderful celebration.” – Pat Morehead, Illinois

“25th was a spectacular success.” -- Curt Veeneman, California

“The conference radiates still.” – Ellen Wiener, New York.

As we leave these few lines referring to the events, presentations, and thanks for this splendid 25th anniversary conference, we extend now our very deep gratitude to those who were not the presenters, the exhibitors, the performers, but nevertheless contributed profoundly to its success – thus, thanks from our hearts to Andrea Imperatore, and to members of the Chestnut Hill College who so graciously were there at all times to oversee, supervise, and contribute.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

One very meaningful development of our 25th Conference has been the creation and supervision of a Web site for our Society by Prof. K. Christian McGuire of Minnesota . This is a significant and much-needed additional communications tool for our Society and we are most grateful to Prof. McGuire for all the work he has put into it.

You may visit the Web site at www.hildegard-society.org and contact Prof. McGuire by email at kmcguire@bitstream.net

Members are encouraged to send him any comments or information, such as time-sensitive announcements of events that might be suitable for publication on the site. He will also provide links to members’ personal Web sites.

Current and back issues of Qualelibet are also available on the Web site.

KALAMAZOO CONGRESS

The 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo will take place May 7 – 10, 2009, (see our Calendar of Events for addresses and other contact information).

The ISHBS sessions at the Congress have been finalized and the four presenters will be: Prof. Xavier Hascher of the University of Strasbourg, France, Prof. Marie Formarier of the University of Lyon, France, Prof. Avis Clendenen of Saint Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois, and Mohammed Fairouz of New York.

The titles of their papers are as follows:

- Prof. Xavier Hascher: **“Where is the Fundamental Structure? Attempting a Reductive Analysis of Hildegard’s *O suavissima virga*.”**
- Prof. Avis Clendenen: **“Encounter with the Unconscious: Hildegard von Bingen in Jung.”**
- Prof. Marie Formarier: **“Verbal Dynamics and Rhythmic Segmentation in the Hildegard von Bingen Sequence *O ecclesia*.”**
- Mohammed Fairouz: **“Yaqub Al-kindī of the Arab Golden Age and Hildegard von Bingen.”**

The abstracts of these four presentations and other details about the Congress will be published in the Spring, 2009 edition of *Qualelibet*.

We will also conduct a short ISHBS business meeting during the Kalamazoo Congress.

TWO ESSAYS

The Travels of Hildegard – The Travels of Harry Partch 750 Years Later

Daniel Sonpal
Dunbarton School, Morristown New Jersey

We live in a world where the powers-that-be try to separate us all into convenient little categories so that they may label and contain us more easily, and this is precisely the problem that Hildegard von Bingen and the American composer Harry Partch struggled with in their own unique worlds. Their disdain for this schism between the art of the mind and the art of the body is in large part what cultivates an interest in their respective worlds. They are kindred spirits across miles and years, across space and time. Because often the body and spirit cannot exist in a useful way without one another, this might have seemed like a foregone conclusion; but what else is there that these two visionaries shared, one from the 12th century and the other from the 20th, which could have given them this insight? Well, it was indeed their travels that allowed them to view a unity in all of us and then to see the connections to the unity we each have in ourselves.

Hildegard, as we well have learned, was committed by her parents to be not just a nun in a convent, but to the extreme isolation of being an anchoress. While she received a good education and had an extensive library available to her to occupy her formidable mind and time in this quiet world, she also had to concentrate on the church bells and prayers.

In this isolation, it is no wonder that, being such a vibrant thinker, she had her visions during that time. Eventually, however, she was given permission by Abbott Kuno of Disibodenberg to dictate her visions for a permanent written record. In her very first book, *Scivias*, she writes in the preface, “Although I heard and saw these things, with doubt and low opinion of myself I refused for a long time the call to write, but not out of stubbornness but out of doubt and

humility until weighed down by the scourge of God, I fell onto a bed of sickness”. As she began to transcribe her visions, her illness ceased and she wrote, “Rising from my sickness with renewed strength I was just able to bring the work to a conclusions in the space of ten years.” The sheer brilliance and impact of her writings on the wider world gave her the opportunity to begin her travels.

At the age of 52, Hildegard informed her nuns that because of a command from God, they would be moving to Rupertsberg, 19 miles away. They were all to walk that distance and this, Hildegard’s first journey away from her home monastery, was a turning point.

Some time after the move to Rupertsberg, when Hildegard was 61, she made her first venture out to spread her wisdom. At this point, her reputation and the knowledge of her singular intellect had spread, but she writes of this initial pilgrimage with typical humility. “I took the opportunity to make a trip to other monasteries and expounded there the words that God commanded.”

Eleven years later, at 72 years old, Hildegard was still traveling around in the role of what we would consider to be a mediator: “I was directed in true vision, to visit certain religious communities to reveal openly to them the words that God had shown me, and following God’s instruction, I settled their internal quarrels well.” Her travels took to Austria, Belgium, France and other parts of Germany, away from the confinement of her anchorage, spreading the word of God through her own wisdom. Thus, she learns about people suffering the same experiences in life, touching the mind and body. She thought of herself as simply a vessel for the word of God. She was a prophet, confined, but as such also commanded to disperse wisdom through a constant adherence to opening the mind that God had bestowed on her. Thus, too she enjoyed different experiences, different studies. Her essays, books, music, poems, drama, and sermons are all indicative of the

experience that she gained through her travels away from her silent and restricted domain.

The American composer Harry Partch was an unusual man. He considered himself a playwright, composer, philosopher, theorist, and musical instrument maker. He studied and wrote drama in the ancient Greek sense – theater that tackled the issues of human experiences, not the “household issues” that he considered the subject of most modern plays. This sensibility was also used in his musical compositions and even in his instruments, for he built instruments of his own design, with his own understanding of the physics of sound and his philosophy of life. His instruments were designed to be put into action, often for a specific composition.

Partch expressed knowledge of a wider world and his travel experiences in his writing and music. He was born in 1901 during the dying gasps of America’s Wild West, where cowboys with six-shooters in their holsters still tethered their horses to hitching posts outside saloons. However, Partch’s parents were Christian missionaries in China and he was proud always to say that he was conceived on their six-week voyage back from China to California.

When he started to travel he began as a hobo roaming from one train to another all across America, making friends with other hobos. He wrote about these friendships and incorporated hobo songs into his own musical compositions. He was deeply influenced both by his travel experiences and the Chinese cultural environment that his parents provided during his childhood.

Why did Partch take on these constant journeys around the United States? It is obvious that he enjoyed contact and sharing experiences with others but he was also learning about the many cultures in his homeland. In the documentary film about Partch, “The Dreamer That Remains”, he says over the end credits with Hildegard-like humility, “These songs I would choose to be anonymous, for who cares who wrote them.”

And, also like Hildegard, he teaches while he learns.

At the age of 62, Partch wrote an essay complaining about the state of the arts in American universities, also referring to the way in which different departments in the academic campus are separate and sealed off from one another. He writes that: “The student needs the response of a widely read and intelligent community and the facilities that the university plant offers.”

Just as Hildegard was invited by other monasteries to deliver her teachings, Partch was invited to lecture and traveled widely to teach and express his opinions. Although Partch was not religious in the same way as Hildegard, he delivered intellectual sermons defining how his travels and experiences changed his life. Hildegard saw herself as a vessel of God’s word, Partch did not seek glory or recognition for his work but preferred that it be considered as anonymous as the graffiti he observed on his travels as a hobo hopping the rails or hitchhiking, some of which he set into songs.

Although both Hildegard and Harry Partch wished to be forgotten, leaving only their works behind, we are all far better off from what we have learned and gained from their unintentional originality.

Hildegard the Mineralogist

Frances Flynn
Editor, *Qualelibet*

A lesser-known aspect of Hildegard’s prodigious interests is what we now call mineralogy. It isn’t surprising that, knowing her interest in many aspects of nature, minerals, the most enduring of natural objects, would capture her curiosity. Throughout history minerals, whether in their crystal form or after being rounded and polished by water in streams and rivers, have been prized for their visual and tactile properties, and

Hildegard was not alone in ascribing magical or healing qualities to these lovely objects.

Among the scientific community, Hildegard has considerable standing and is regarded as a serious mineral collector who is credited with raising awareness of minerals and their properties. The German geologist M. Kölbl-Ebert, describing her in his paper “On the origin of women geologists by means of social selection: German and British comparison” says:

“Early ideas about the genesis of rocks and the functioning of geological phenomena stemmed from a mythical approach to natural phenomena. This approach was the usual one throughout the European Middle-Ages, and is wonderfully illustrated by the writings of Hildegard von Bingen about the origin and purpose of rocks and minerals.”

The chapter on stones in Hildegard’s *Liber simplicis medicinae* is described by Kölbl-Ebert as “. . .the best known example of medieval lapidary. Lapidaries were popular short treatises on the genesis of rocks and minerals and their supposed medical and magic qualities.”

The American mineralogist George Frederick Kunz (1856-1932) mentions Hildegard several times in his well-known book “The Curious Lore of Precious Stones” and, in celebration of her 900th birthday in 1998, her likeness was literally put on a pedestal in a special exhibition of minerals attributed to Hildegard at the Munich Mineral Exposition (the largest annual mineral show in Europe). Similar collections are on display in at least two mineral museums in Germany: the Idar-Oberstein Museum and the Kristallmuseum Riedenburg. Sadly, Hildegard’s personal mineral collection has not been preserved.

Where Hildegard found her minerals is the subject of much speculation, but several sources would have been available to her locally. One

would be in the area around what is now the town of Idar-Oberstein in the Rhineland-Palatinate, where mineral collecting goes back probably to Roman times and gem cutting has been flourishing for more than 500 years. Commonly found in that area are jasper, quartz, amethyst, and highly prized agate. The agate was said to have magical properties because it often contained a core resembling an eye and the mining and exporting of it brought considerable prosperity to the area in the late middle ages.

Various examples of beryl (particularly aquamarine) chrysoberyl, topaz and garnet would also have been available within a relatively short distance. More precious stones, such as diamonds, and pearls, were obviously not available locally but may well have been presented to her as gifts from well-traveled friends and admirers.

In addition to the writings of Hildegard herself, much has been written about the supposed healing properties attributed to minerals and, on that topic, I will simply say that seeing or holding objects of natural beauty, such as plants or minerals, is at the very least a pleasurable experience. Here are three ways Hildegard suggested using minerals, as quoted from the above-mentioned work by Kunz:

Quoting Hildegard on her use Jacinth (zircon):
"If any one is bewitched by phantoms or by magical spells, so that he has lost his wits, take a hot loaf of pure wheaten bread and cut the upper crust in the form of a cross, -- not, however, cutting it quite through -- then pass the stone along the cutting, reciting these words: "May God, who cast away all precious stones from the devil . . . cast away from thee all phantoms and all magic spells, and free thee from the pain of madness."

On the diamond:
"It had the greatest virtue because it resisted the devil's power by day and by night".

On using topaz to cure blindness:
"To attain the desired end the stone was to be placed in wine and left there for three days and three nights. When retiring to sleep, the patient should rub his eyes with the moistened topaz, so that this moisture lightly touched the eyeball. After the stone had been removed, the wine could be used for five days."

Minerals Attributed to Hildegard's Collection

There are several lists of minerals attributed to Hildegard's collection, some giving the specific ailments for which they could be used. The following one seems to have some authority.

(From "Hildegard von Bingen: Das buch von den Steinen", published by the Kristallmuseum, Riedenburg, Germany, 1995.)

The English translation and descriptions are my own.

1. Smarragd: chromian beryl (emerald)
2. Hyazinth or hyacinth: a group name for the numerous semi-precious stones, primarily garnet (grossular, almandine, zircon, hessonite) but also includes quartz, vesuvianite, corundum (sapphire) and spinel.
3. Onyx: calcite, most commonly describes "marble calcite" used for carving
4. Beryl: a group name for emerald (green), aquamarine (blue), and heliodor (yellow)
5. Sardonyx: quartz, specifically agate or chalcedony
6. Saphir: sapphire (blue) corundum
7. Sarder: quartz
8. Topas: topaz
9. Chrysolith: forsterite (peridot)

10. Jaspis: jasper, red quartz
11. Prasem: chalcedony quartz
12. Chalcedon: chalcedony quartz
13. Chrysopras: chrysoprase (or chrysophrase), green gemstone variety of chalcedony quartz
14. Rubin: ruby (red) corundum)
15. Amethyst: purple gemstone quartz
16. Achat: agate quartz
17. Diamant: diamond
18. Magnetit: magnetite
19. Bernstein: amber
20. Bergkristall: quartz crystal
21. Perlen: pearl
22. Perlen: probably perlmutter (mother-of-pearl shell)
23. Carneol: chalcedony quartz
24. Kalk: calcite

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Four books of the chants of Hildegard Bingen, transcribed by American composers Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot are now available from:

Cynthia Crawford, Manager
 Publication Contact International
 24 Avon Hill
 Cambridge, MA 02140

Rooted in the Earth, Rooted in the Sky, a detailed study of the medicine of Hildegard of Bingen by Victoria Sweet, is now available from Routledge.

For more information visit Routledge at www.routledge-ny.com

REMINDERS

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

The next edition of Qualelibet will be published in April, 2009. We encourage and appreciate the contributions of our members. The deadline for the next edition is

March 15, 2009

Please mail news items, calendar entries, or letters to the editor to:

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MAY 1, 2009

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