

- Christel Meier-Staubach (Munster University, Germany)
- Dr. Victoria Sweet (University of California, San Francisco).
- Harry Chalmiers (President, McNally Smith College, Minnesota)
- Karan Schneider (Breyer State University, Alabama)

Other activities include performances by:

- An organ recital by Diane Luchese (Towson University)
- A concert by sopranos Joan Heller (SMU, Texas) and Patrice Pastore (Ithaca College, New York) and pianist Ellen Polansky (New England Conservatory),
- A concert by the Second Instrumental Unit, David Fulmer and Eliot Gategno, Directors (Juilliard School of Music, New York)
- A reading of Hildegard's poetry and her own by Ruth Lepson,

And special exhibits by:

- Lydia Ruyle, creator of Goddess Icons banners (University of Colorado, Greeley) – Dr. Margaret Rukstalis (Psychiatrist, University of Pennsylvania) will discuss these banners in Session II
- Ellen Wiener, painter of New York
- Prof. Karen Schneider, baker (Babs Bakery)
- Shields and Frances Flynn of North Carolina will display species of mineral specimens that Hildegard was known to have in her own collection.

Items from the above exhibitors will be available for purchase as well as a new book by Victoria Sweet and transcriptions of Hildegard's Chants by Pozzi Escot and Robert Cogan.

The detailed finalized program for our 25th anniversary will be mailed to participants and available at the event.

We look forward to meeting many old friends and making new ones at this event in which we all have a common, if not passionate, interest.

KALAMAZOO CONGRESS

The 43rd International Congress on Medieval Studies of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo will take place May 8 – 11, 2008. The Hildegard sessions at the Congress include four presentations.

We will also have a short business meeting and an evening program with a concert of Hildegard's chants performed by Profs. Kim Cunio and Heather Lee of the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

ABSTRACTS:

Dr. Victoria Sweet, University of California/San Francisco, "Hildegard, the Pigmentarius"

In the past few years it has become clear that what was once thought to be a uniquely Hildegardian concept – *viriditas*, or "greenness" – was actually used by many Latin writers just as Hildegard used it, as a metaphor for God, virtue, and power. But what is not yet clear is what exactly is behind the metaphor, what exactly is *viriditas* a metaphor of?

My paper will show that behind *viriditas* as metaphor was a physical substance, a green plant liquid essential to ancient plant physiology. Where Hildegard's use of *viriditas* was indeed original is that she found *viriditas* not only in plants but also in the human body, where it served both as a physical connection between the plant and the human worlds; and as a circulating bodily liquid with effects on growth, development, and sexual differentiation. Like so many of Hildegard's insights, though, her idea remained idiosyncratic, without influence on subsequent medical thought. Only much later would such a concept be (re)formulated – for different reasons and for different ends – as what we now call a "hormone".

**Prof. Peter Evans, Longy School of Music,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, “Vox
Multitudinis of *Ordo Virtutum*:**

Studies of *Ordo virtutum* that investigate dramatic narrative or melodic unity overlook the built-in multiplicity that is crucial to the piece’s composition. Here Hildegard realizes that the ‘*vox multitudinis*’ as described in the 13th century vision of her *Scivias*. The ‘voices of the multitudes’ emerge from both contrasting motivic incipits and the manipulation of modal colors within a multi-faceted long-range design. Fast-forward 800 years and motivic-modal interplay has emerged as one of the most vital means of creating improvisational music. In this context, *Ordo virtutum* stands as a working model from which further multiplicities of voices can be extrapolated.

**Prof. Patricia Moorhead, Columbia College,
Chicago, Illinois, “From the 12th to the 21st
Centuries – On Being a Composer”**

In order to develop as a good composer then and now requires intellectual and technical training by great teachers, a support system not only financial but also a supportive environment, the determination and willingness to make creativity a central part of one’s life, a practical sense of composing for the milieu in which one is situated and opportunities for performance by professionally trained musicians.

In my own case, like Hildegard von Bingen, I have had some of the same opportunities, but outside of the shelter of the convent. I will discuss what is and was necessary many centuries past for a composer to develop and leave, like Hildegard, a lasting legacy. I will contrast and compare the life of a nun in the 12th century and a composer in the 21st, like myself. Hildegard had the advantages of a first class education and a noble family background. I also have received a first class musical education, but I am myself a wife with children and grandchildren. Music, indeed, became my lifetime occupation after three years at the

university taking chemistry, physics, and mathematics. The convent was Hildegard’s support system and her music was composed and performed by the nuns of her monasteries. I also was able to start several musical organizations, which offered opportunities for my compositions to be heard.

My presentation will include a new work for my instrument, the oboe, and electronics, based on the antiphons of Hildegard and reinterpreted in a 21st century context. There is no question that Hildegard is today a great model for inspiration and a true Renaissance woman.

**Daniel Sonpal, Delbarton School, Morristown,
New Jersey, “The Travels of Hildegard – The
Travels of Harry Partch 750 Years Later”.**

(We are unable to publish Prof. Sonpal’s abstract because it was not received in time for publication.)

AN ESSAY

***Hildegard von Bingen and Goethe’s Makarie:
Two cosmic Personalities*** Dedicated to Sister Mary Kyran Shea, B.V.M., by her 3rd grade pupil, Richard Detsch, University of Nebraska at Kearney

During a stay in Wiesbaden in 1814, Goethe viewed the illustrated Latin manuscript of Hildegard’s *Scivias*. He refers to it in the section entitled “Wiesbaden” of his publication *Art and Antiquity along the Rhine and Main*: “An old manuscript containing the visions of Saint Hildegard is remarkable.” In 1828, when Goethe was preparing the second edition of his novel *Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years*, he added the materials dealing with the Makarie figure, which Erich Trunz, the editor of the Hamburg edition of Goethe’s works, calls “Goethe’s highest glorification of intuition, of visionary powers, of mysticism.” Goethe invites readers to speculate just prior to the high point of the novel in the chapter dealing with Makarie’s visions “if something similar or approximate had not been noticed and recorded already somewhere.” Something similar to Makarie, as I hope to

demonstrate, is to be found in the life and works of Hildegard. The period intervening between his 1814 viewing of Hildegard's manuscript and the 1828 creation of the Makarie materials is not argument against the possibility that Hildegard served as his model. An even longer time elapsed between the 1770 pilgrimage that Goethe, although a Lutheran, made together with a large crowd of the faithful to the shrine of Saint Odilia near Strassburg and the 1808 creation of the Ottilie figure in *Elective Affinities*. Goethe himself claimed that this same Saint Odilia had served as his model for the heroine of this work, which, by the way, was originally planned as a kind of novella-like insert in his rambling novel.

Makarie's visionary power is of a distinctly unusual kind. She is literally revolving around the sun, although in a spiral rather than an elliptical orbit and is thus moving progressively farther from the sun. At the point when Wilhelm Meister encounters her she had made an astronomical discovery, that of the belt of asteroids between Mars and Jupiter, and its moving past Jupiter, which she views from the side as a moon in its waning phase. The symbolic significance of her spiral-like orbit is comparable to the progressively higher stages of Faust's transportation into heaven at the end of *Faust II*. Both scenes represent Goethe's concept of "Steigerung" (enhancement), the accession of the entelechy (soul) to ever-higher stages of existence.

Prior to actually meeting Makarie, Wilhelm Meister dreams of her as a star that seems to rise on wing-shaped clouds to take its place in the firmament. Later he will learn from the astronomer she has drawn to her side of her actual relationship to the solar system, the fact that she has, since her childhood, been in orbit around the sun. As wonderful as this capacity was, she experienced it as a "difficult task". Since her childhood, also, she felt filled with a luminous essence, brighter than the sun. From these details the following highlights emerge: 1) Makarie is free of earth's gravity in her visionary states; 2) her visions involve astronomy; 3) she

has experienced these difficult visions since childhood; 4) she feels illuminated by a mysterious light source.

Before I turn to similar phenomena manifested by Hildegard von Bingen I wish to draw attention to two articles: one dealing with another suggested prototype for the Makarie figure and the other dealing with a possible influence of Hildegard's *Scivias* on Goethe's rendering of the Burial Scene in the last act of *Faust II*. The former, an 1879 article in *Westermanns Monatshefte* by Wilhelm Foerster, attempts to link the Makarie figure to Goethe's contemporary, the duchess of Gotha. After the death of her husband, the duke, she became more and more involved in the astronomical studies of her court chamberlain. This comparison is not convincing. In the duchess of Gotha there is no indication of the unique visionary gift not of the qualities that justify Goethe's several references to Makarie as "die Heilige" (the saint). The name Makarie itself means "the blessed one" in Greek. To my knowledge, no other scholar has ventured to propose a prototype for Makarie and only George Radimersky in a 1957 article in the "Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly" has seen a possible connection between Hildegard and another work by Goethe. Radimersky enumerates certain similarities between the fourth vision in the first part of Hildegard's *Scivias* and the Burial Scene in *Faust II*.

To return now to the highlights noted above regarding Goethe's Makarie, there are some striking points of contact between these and the autobiographical preface of Hildegard's *Scivias*. Like Makarie, Hildegard's entire being is filled with luminous essence. "From the open heavens a fiery light came glittering exceedingly," she claims. "It filled my whole brain and illumined my whole heart and breast like a flame that does not burn but warms (*velut flamma nontamen ardens, sed calens*). Another important characteristic of Makarie, the fact that she experienced her visionary states since childhood, is reflected also in Hildegard's preface to her

Scivias. Hildegard is more specific, referring to when she was five (*cum quinquennis essem*).

The *Vita* of Hildegard, also preserved at the Wiesbaden library in Goethe's time, provides a parallel for the other two characteristics of Makarie stressed above: her freedom from the influence of gravity and her flight through the solar system. It is known that Goethe was interested at the time in the religious festivals and customs of the Rhine region. His "Saint Rochus Festival in Bingen" is a descriptive essay dealing with an excursion to Bingen and the religious ceremonies surrounding the feast of Saint Rochus. In view of this interest specifically in the locality of Bingen it seems likely that Goethe would have known something of the life of another saint of this locality and could have been aware of the following detail from Hildegard's *Vita*: "My soul rises, God willing, in this vision into the heights of the firmament and through the different spheres and lingers with different peoples who are nevertheless in regions and places far removed from me. And since I see such things in my soul, I perceive them therefore changing like the clouds and other creatures."

Hildegard's view of the cosmos is, of course, geocentric like that of the then accepted Ptolemaic system, in contrast to Makarie's heliocentric view. Her lingering with distant peoples would therefore have been earthbound; but her rising into the firmament conjures space travel for the modern mind, as does Makarie's visionary flight through the solar system. The third vision of the first part of *Scivias* presents Hildegard's cosmic view. The illustration contains an oval or egg-shaped design, in the center of which is a circle representing the earth and enclosing the four elements. Surrounding the circle are the stars, the sun, the moon, and the five planets known to the ancients: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Thus both Hildegard and Makarie are revealed to us in their capacity for cosmic experience: that is, their mystical states involve a widening of sense

perception in such a way that it transcends the limits of earth bound sensory experience.

Another similarity between Hildegard and Makarie can be seen in the close association of each. There is, in both cases, a triad consisting of the visionary herself, one male and one female associate. Again in the preface to *Scivias*, Hildegard speaks of the two people who stood by her during her work on this manuscript. First she mentions the one whom she found to help in the task of setting her visions to writing. This was the monk Volmar, who acted as a kind of secretary-confidant to Hildegard, correcting, at times, her Latin style. Hildegard goes on to speak of her initial reluctance to write of her visions and the resulting infirmities that beset her. She then introduces the second of the two witnesses to her visionary revelations. This "girl of noble parentage and good bearing" Richardis von Stade, had become a nun in Hildegard's convent and enjoyed the favor of the abbess.

This triad (Hildegard, Volmar, and Richardis) corresponds to the triad of Makarie, the astronomer, and Angela in *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*. The astronomer and Angela are the two people who appear immediately prior to the first appearance of Makarie. They are closest associates (*ihre Nächsten*). They are the only ones who know of Makarie's space journeys prior to Wilhelm Meister's discovery of them. Angela is in charge of the school for young girls that had been formed at Makarie's residence. A parallel to Hildegard's cloister of nuns suggests itself, although here girls are prepared not for religious life but for secular life. Like Richardis for Hildegard, Angela functioned as a kind of amanuensis for Makarie. It was her duty to write down certain pithy thoughts voiced during conversation. The reader is informed that in this way an impressive archive was built up, a collection of aphorisms entitled "Makarie's Archive", and incorporated into the novel. A special locked compartment of this archive preserved the information regarding Makarie's relationship to the solar system.

Angela explains the role of the other close associate of Makarie to Wilhelm Meister, Makarie, like Hildegard, at first revealed the content of her visions to no one. She, too, suffered from her visionary states, which her family mistook to be a manifestation of illness. She was also to experience great relief in finding someone who would help her to understand herself and her visionary gift. This friend is never referred to by name; his is simply called "the astronomer". He puts Makarie's visions to the test of his science and finds them to be authentic. At first incredulous, he becomes so impressed with his findings that he remains with Makarie to share her discoveries. As a confidant to Makarie, his role is not unlike that of Volmar, the monk whom Hildegard mentions prominently, though not by name, in the preface of her *Scivias*.

Perhaps the most significant parallel between Hildegard and Makarie is the way in which both women embody the union of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*. The joining of *Denken* and *Tun* is one of the major recurring themes in Goethe's novel and is illustrated in several of the important characters, including Makarie. Makarie is not a recluse, shut off from the rest of the world, but an active participant in the affairs of her family and friends. Her advice on mundane matters is sought by many, and her concern for their problems is genuine and efficacious. Her astronomical visions do not prevent her from attending to their needs. She is not only a part of the solar system but also very much a woman of this world. This unique combination is described by Goethe as follows:

This gift deflected her interest from ordinary things, but her splendid parents applied everything to her education; all capabilities became alive in her, all activities effective in such a way that she knew how to respond to all external conditions; and while her heart, her mind was filled with celestial visions, her actions, nevertheless, remained always in accord with the noblest of behavioral standards. As she was growing up,

helpful everywhere, unstinting in great and small services, she strode like an angel of God on earth, while her entire spirit moved around the sun of this world and yet moved toward the otherworldly in ever increasing circles.

Likewise, Hildegard was known for her very active interest in the affairs of her contemporaries. Her correspondence with the important personages of her time gives testimony to this interest. The recipients of her letters include such notables as the Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa, Bernard of Clairvaux, four successive popes, and numerous other spiritual and temporal authorities. She does not shrink from venting her religious zeal even on the person of the emperor when she feels he has acted contrary to the divine plan. Her *Vita* is most explicit in maintaining that her ecstatic states do not prevent her from engaging in an active life:

The holy virgin was endowed with a really wonderful and extremely rare kind of visionary gift. Similar to the holy living beings that Ezekiel saw she strode forward like a determined winged being and did not turn back; but then again she strode forward and turned back. For she didn't turn to something inferior from the active life that she had taken up; and she did turn to the active life from the contemplative which she, because of the resistance of the flesh, was not able to keep up uninterruptedly ... In this way the blessed virgin, having been placed here in the flesh, both labored in the active life and reached in the contemplative life toward the divine light itself with her whole desire.

This joining of the active and the contemplative lives in one person is the characteristic that distinguishes Hildegard most clearly from other German women mystics. In her writings there is little sign of the emotionally charged *Jesus-Minne* manifested by Elizabeth von Schönau and Mechthild von Magdenburg. Hildegard does not

allow herself to expatiate upon such saccharine analogies as the bride languishing over her divine mate. Her ecstatic states do not derive from a spiritually conceived, personal union with the divine, but rather from a much more concrete and encompassing perception of a divine plan for the universe,

Two other, more peripheral, points of contact between Hildegard and Makarie deserve mention. One has to do with the beneficial effects both women are said to have had on mental and physical infirmities. Most of the third part of Hildegard's *Vita* is devoted to the description of miraculous cures worked by the visionary: a common adjunct to any prospective saint's life story. Makarie, too gives evidence of curative powers on one occasion when she restores peace of mind to a troubled young woman by means of a simple pat on the shoulder and a kiss on the forehead. The young woman is astonished by her suddenly changed condition.

Another interesting parallel, resulting from an influence of Hildegard on Goethe, is the flame image. The first illustration of the *Scivias* manuscript seen by Goethe at Wiesbaden shows the saint sitting in her cloistered cell with manuscript in hand and a five-tongued flame touching her head. Also in the illustration, incidentally, is the monk who aided Hildegard in the preparation of her manuscript. The flame is undoubtedly a concrete representation of the luminous source of inspiration that Hildegard in her preface calls the "flame that does not burn but warms". It is possible that sentence from the variants of the *Journeyman Years* shows a relationship to Hildegard's flame. It occurs in a letter from Wilhelm Meister that Goethe had originally intended for the first two chapters dealing with Makarie, as follows: "I can only think of her as a flame whose apex constantly strives upward but which, by sinking down in loving community, has an illuminating and vitalizing effect.

With this flame analogy, Goethe again stresses the synthesis of the contemplative and active

lives that Makarie, like Hildegard, represents. In summary, then the points of contact between Hildegard and Makarie are:

1. Both are capable of rising above the earth in their visions
2. Both have visions involving astronomy
3. Both feel filled with a luminous essence
4. Both have experienced visions since childhood
5. Both had, for a long time, not revealed their visions, thus seeming to be afflicted with physical ailments
6. Both are later attended by two close associates, male and female, who share their secrets and help in expressing them
7. Both synthesize the contemplative and the active in their lives
8. Both have healing powers
9. A flame image is associated with both.

Aside from the possibility that Hildegard served as a model for Goethe's Makarie, there is strong evidence for the similarity in the two figures. Both figures, the one historical and the other fictional, belonging to two totally different ages, are alike in a mystical perception that is truly cosmic and that, at the same time, does not interfere with their beneficial activities in this world. Both Hildegard and Makarie symbolize in their lives the union of the spiritual and the material: a concept that occupied Goethe throughout his life and formed the basis of his entire *Faust* drama. And to an age in which the dreams of space exploration are becoming a reality, the visionary space flights of these two cosmic personalities might seem rather appropriately prophetic.

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 October, 2008. We encourage and appreciate the contributions of our members. The deadline for the next edition is

SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

Mail news items, calendar entries, or letters to the editor to:

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