SEEING AGAIN: GEOMETRY, CARTOGRAPHY AND VISIONS IN THE WORK OF OPICINUS DE CANISTRIS (1296-C.1354)

by

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Abstract

My thesis considers the work of Opicinus de Canistris (1296-c.1354), a fourteenth-century priest and visionary who created the Palatinus Latinus MS 1993 between the 1330s and the 1340s as a complex geometrical program. Set against erratic textual content, the images in the Palatinus are combinations of mathematical forms, collection of figures and zodiac symbols. Among 52 images, the *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis (image and likeness of God, universal church)* folio 24r, emerges as an example where the sequence of circles, lines, animals and faces reveals a synergy of cosmological and cartographic elements. This graphic system outlines a fourteenth century vision of the idealized Church. In my thesis, I argue that in order to bring out the relationships between the various elements and make them meaningful, Opicinus, through repetition, initiates a form of diagrammatic thinking that references the familiar to recreate a contemplative journey through which the drawn elements make evident the almost infinite flexibility of perception. In this fashion, the Palatinus and its visual content appear as a type of structured fiction in which the literal, physical world is mediated by mathematics. The image, converting invisible matter through visible means, draws attention to a peculiar kind of action. The *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis,* as well as most images in the Palatinus manuscript, force an eye, thus a viewer, to make discoveries instead of reconfirming what s/he knows, or rather recognizes. Through this process the schematic image becomes a tool that emanates authority through apprehensive perception, measured expectation and spiritual healing. What becomes clear by integrating aesthetic, scientific and theological modules is that observing and inventing creates a productive environment outside of the simple reflective mode. The work (the Palatinus) and how it might function comes into view as a result of the demands the images make on the viewer.

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1 Chapter: Introduction

> Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. - Romans 1.20

In his Palatinus Latinus MS 1993, Opicinus de Canistris (1296-c.1354), a fourteenth-century priest and visionary, draws *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis (image and likeness of God, universal church)* folio 24r[1] as a complex geometrical program. Set against erratic textual content are precisely outlined mathematical forms intermingled with a collection of figures and zodiac symbols. The similarity with the popular image of the 'zodiac man' is striking. However this familiar figure, found in medieval manuscripts relating to natural philosophy and medicine, is not what is represented here. Notwithstanding the precise visual relationship to the zodiac tradition, this image is not about facilitating medical intervention by drawing correspondences between signs of the zodiac and parts of the body. Rather, *ymago et similitudo Dei* unfolds in a dizzying sequence of circles, lines, animals and faces wherein a synergy of cosmological and cartographic elements outlines a fourteenth century vision of the idealized role the Church was intended to play.[2] Here, the emphasis on healing alludes not to the human body in accord with planetary positions, but to the corpus of a Christian community stricken by neglect and corruption. In order to bring out the relationships between the various elements and make them meaningful, Opicinus, through repetition, initiates a form of diagrammatic thinking that references the familiar to recreate a contemplative journey through which the drawn elements make evident the almost

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[1] Due to copyright restrictions, I direct my readers to seek images in Richard Salomon's catalogue that accompanies *Opicinus de Canistris.* Throughout the text I will be making references to the appropriate catalogue pages. Richard Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris: Weltbild und Bekenntnisse Eines Avignonesischen Klerikers des 14. Jahrhunderts* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1936), XXX.

[2] Victoria Morse, "A Complex Terrain: Church, Society, and the Individual in the Works of Opicino de Canistris (1296-ca. 1354)" (PhD diss., University of California, 1996), 233-73.

infinite flexibility of perception. The *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis,* as well as most images in the Palatinus manuscript, force an eye, thus a viewer, to make discoveries instead of reconfirming what s/he knows, or rather recognizes. Through this process the schematic, geometric image becomes a tool that emanates authority through apprehensive perception, measured expectation and spiritual healing.

Ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis is, perhaps, the most complex image in the Palatinus Latinus MS.1993 (from 1330s-1340s),[3] and as such is a compelling example of the manuscript's intricate nature and of the work of Opicinus de Canistris in general.[4] Like the rest of the manuscript image collection, fol. 24r is impossible to grasp in a single viewing. On the one hand, the overwhelmingly graphic system, whose elements are intertwined and layered over one another, confuses rather than explicates the arguments and points contained within the image. On the other hand, the explicit geometry organizes the viewer's eye to peruse the surface systematically. The entry point is irrelevant and is not predetermined in any way, although in *ymago et similitudo Dei* the system is perhaps more ordered since the inscription, *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis,* to which I refer here as an image title, is written in red ink and placed at the very top of the parchment.[5] This inscription and the one just above it, *speculum [fi]Dei nostre nunc invisiblis* (now a mirror of our invisible God) highlight the concept of the image as converting invisible matter through visible means. It is the image that is doing a peculiar kind of work. Below these notations, placed centrally

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[3] The precise dating for this manuscript is not determined. Morse, "Complex Terrain", 161-67 and Karl Peter Whittington, "The Body-Worlds of Opicinus de Canistris, Artist and Visionary (1296-ca.1354)" (PhD diss., University of California, 2010), 10.

[4] Karl Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris, Vatican Library Pal. Lat. folios 2v, 20r, 24r" in *Pen and Parchment: Drawings in the Middle Ages (Metropolitan Museum of Art)*, ed. Melanie Holcomb (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 154. Also see Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris,* 277-82 and Morse, "Complex Terrain," 233.

[5] Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 154. In this catalogue entry, Whittington calls it "Diagram with Zodiac Symbols, folio 24r."

on the parchment, is an oval form structured out of six sets of circles. The top circle has a face of the all-encompassing body that contains the elements of the drawing. Each consequent circle contains two smaller within and each centre of the circles is filled with human figures; one is a depiction of a couple and the other depicts the Virgin and Child. Two out of the three bottom circles are systems of intersecting lines under which are two crucifixes, albeit hardly visible. Rendered as a mirror reflection of each other, they are contained amidst another body labeled *filius hominis,* son of man.[6] The bottom circle is a repetition, another drawing in which Mary and the child fills the centre. On the circumference of the encompassing oval are two sets of zodiac symbols. One set is rendered as large figures, some of which are coloured and some only drawn as outlines on the outside of the oval. The second zodiac is on the inside and these are rendered as outlines only. Around the face of the large figure, whose hands intermingle with zodiac signs, Opicinus has rendered the bust of the four church fathers: Gregory, Augustine, Jerome and Ambrose. In contrast, around the bottom circle containing a small picture of Mary and child, labeled *infantia ecclesie sacramentalis* (infancy of the sacramental church),[7] are busts representing four monastic orders.[8] Along the sides of the central image are texts such as the calendar of feasts and saints, Marian genealogy, and writings of the evangelists among other notations. To see the particulars of the image against the whole, the viewer must constantly and continually forge the way in and out of the shapes with persistence and determination. Geometrically and diagrammatically ordered spaces with elements drawn to represent units towards the complete image, something that evokes an image of a map, renders the viewer as

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

a "free mover." The impression is one of stepping into a labyrinth where "zooming" out helps one perceive both the whole as well as the details. So the observer, floating from one form to another, trying to maintain the stream and continuity, experiences a holistic impression of the image.

But let me be precise right from the start. The Palatinus manuscript, or *ymago et similitudo Dei,* are not concerned with medicine or science or any other related discipline. Rather, what constitutes the medical in this zodiac man-like image, and most other images in the Palatinus manuscript, is the application of old (or rather familiar) forms to new eyes, meaning well-known visual means and a new way of thinking about them.[9] The Palatinus, its *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis* drawing, and every other image in the manuscript is a visual prescription that draws together lines, circles, text, Mediterranean topography, medieval mappaemundi, portolan charts, cosmological order and schematized bodies through a diagrammatic mode of inscription in an effort to heal the fourteenth-century Christian community. As a unique manifestation of pathways to healing, each image ties together a heterogeneity of forms and their intersections with a view to encouraging multiplicities of interpretation, never anchoring it to only one meaning, but opening up a multitude of possibilities.[10] Mobilizing domains like vision, sight, visibility, intellect, cognition and memory, each drawing explores relationships between the visible (external world) and the invisible (internal spiritual world).[11] In particular, diagrammatic and

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[9] Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Thinking with Eyes and Hands," in *Representation in Scientific Activity*, ed. Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 11 and 14.
[10] Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 4 and Morse, "Complex Terrain," 106.
[11] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 255 and Catherine Harding, "Madness, reason, vision and the cosmos: evaluating the drawings of Opicinus de Canistris (1296-c.1351)" in *Values in Renaissance Art*, ed. G. Naher and R. Shepherd (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 203. The visible/invisible is a familiar dichotomy in the Middle Ages. Also see Herbert L. Kessler, "Turning a Blind Eye: Medieval Art and the Dynamics of Contemplation," in *The*

geometric modes offer the possibility of organizing a seemingly fragmented content of text and figures so that the relationship between these elements is revealed to the eye, not at a single glance, but through meticulous participation. The shapes are not organized into resolute and finite structures;[12] quite the contrary, using familiar medieval mapping tools, the scope of representation is broadened in an effort to strengthen the relationship between the viewer and the object of perception.

To put it slightly differently, Opicinus' images encourage mobility and solicit active participation on the part of the viewer, with the goal of grasping what lies on the parchment and how it functions. Isolated, individual elements fit specific categories, such as rhumb lines that are directional markers featured on portalan charts.[13] Any number of different forms and their minor variations can be identified in the manuscript as well as in each drawing. On the one hand, repeated elements mirror one another reiterating similar meaning; on the other, they represent completely altered views of the same variant, while at the same time preserving their intended function. As a singular form, each element has a precise definition. But taken together, at each turn and at each new glance, they offer up different, though not necessarily altered, readings. For example, the rationalized space of the pictorial plane results in both a map and mapping as a mechanism. While the map organizes the spectator's manner of viewing, the latter, the mapping mechanism, abstracts it. Discovering how difficult it was to represent the ideal of the union of community and God in graphic terms, meant that the means for achieving that ideal grew increasingly important.

Mind's Eye: Medieval Art and the Dynamics of Contemplation, ed. Anne-Marie Bouche and Jeffrey F. Hamburger (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2006), 414.

[12] Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 154.

[13] Evelyn Edson, *The World Map, 1300-1492: The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 36-37 and Victoria Morse, "The Role of Maps in Later Medieval Society: Twelfth to Fourteenth Century," in *The History of Cartography, vol. 3, The European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 37.

The scientific motivation that underpinned cartographic development in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the visual tools that emerged during its course provided a specific type of visual grammar that Opicinus readily embraced and appropriated as a spiritual analogue. The constant references to sight, vision and visibility inform his corpus as the emphasis on navigational elements affirm. Everywhere there appears at least one reference to maps or mapping strategies (elements), which are translated (re-mobilized) to serve theology.

Nothing discussed heretofore promises an easy journey through Opicinus' drawings. My aim is to interrogate, if not reveal, some of, or at least one of, the numerous ways in which the known world has been utilized, fractured and re-fractured, imagined and re-presented as a space of redemption through mapping as a cognitive practice facilitated by diagram(ing). The fourteenth-century world was disintegrating under the weight of sin and corruption along with the political crisis between the papacy and monarchies of Europe.[14] For these reasons enlightenment was sorely needed as to what the Church and the Christian community as a whole should be. Infused with what he thought to be divine inspiration, Opicinus set about rendering spatial topographies wherein divinity and the divine nature of a universe created by a supreme being are mirrored in earthly things.

My principal aim is to explore how the drawings worked, how they appealed to viewers to interpret them. I structure my examination following Mary Carruthers' proposal that suggests considering images in terms of "What are they good for?"[15] In *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Carruthers aims not to

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[14] Edwin Mullins, *The Popes of Avignon: A Century in Exile* (New York: Bluebridge, 2007), 21-41 and Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 1-48.
[15] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118-20.

seek the explicit meaning of images, but the connections they forge in relation to their viewers. Medieval images, indeed visual representations in any form and regardless of the medium, often served as pathways to knowledge of both theological and philosophical matters thus constituting a pedagogical instrument, the purpose of which was to furnish 'cues' to understanding the matter under study.[16] As tools for contemplation, images are, as Herbert Kessler asserts, "material props" produced to mediate between human "sensual experience," and contemplation.[17] Nevertheless, the purpose is to facilitate theological learning, to open up deep channels where materiality and memory (knowledge) can merge.[18] The chief contribution of this thesis lies in its persistence on the fact that the Palatinus manuscript embraces the assimilation of complex and diverse visual modes and theories into a specific system of thought, one that acts on an encounter between viewer and the object viewed. An empirical understanding of the images does not erase their imaginative potential. On the contrary, it forges an intellectual relationship with the audience. The elements of the Palatinus, circles, lines, ovals, zodiac signs and figures, compel the imagination to ponder until the *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis* emerges as a plane in which the literal, physical world is mediated by mathematics. I ask, how is this integration to be understood? Imagination, which is a threatening mode of comprehension, especially for a sin-obsessed priest like Opicinus, is a necessary quandary situated within the picture plane and space of interactivity between the observer and the form(s) within the parchment.

To grasp what these images are all about comes from the image alone. They are not a portrait of the world, rather they offer up a compelling sense of how the world was perceived,

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[16] Ibid., 118.
[17] Kessler, "Turning a Blind Eye," 413-14.
[18] Catherine Harding, "Opening to God: The Cosmographical Diagrams of Opicinus de Canistris," *Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte* 61, no. 1 (1998): 18-39.

at least the world of Opicinus. I view the work presented here as contributing to the historical moment rather than being crafted out of it. This is where terms like *repetition*, *difference* and *becoming* are useful as indicators of the processes in operation. The work itself is activated by acts of viewing and participating, action that is initiated through and by the elements featured in the work. At the most basic level everything repeats; ordinary lines become rhumb lines; regular circles become boundaries of action (viewing action that is); familiar iconography is re-cast to perform dual or multi purpose roles. Therefore, links are constituted between what is in the drawings, among the drawings and among the sources from which they are derived.

In this paper, I will first delineate the historiography and context of Opicinus' opus. This involves less of a critique of existing scholarship than an effort to focus attention further on the work itself. I will then explore the various mapping traditions that influenced Opicinus and how he appropriated various familiar forms for his own purposes, mostly from medieval world maps, devotional imagery and medical manuscripts. Next, I will probe how the method of repetition shaped diagrammatic thinking as a continuous exercise in healing. I will argue throughout that diagrams and geometry constitute both the process of thinking and visual tools.[19] As Victoria Morse writes: "far from meaningless containers, the geometric and schematic forms that Opicinus chooses to utilize are essential to the full visual expression of his ideas."[20] The Palatinus is a manuscript that takes as its subject matter no less an institution than the Catholic Church.[21] His vision of the church, however, was comprised of

[19] Michael Evans, "The Geometry of the Mind," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 12 (1980): 34. After all, geometry was one of four units of study in medieval schools that binds together scientific thinking and pedagogy.
[20] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 34 and 251.
[21] Ibid., 255.

multiple layers of the real and the spiritual mapped upon the universal divine body.[22] The diagrammatic and geometric elements of maps inscribe celestial order onto terrestrial space and, as Denis Cosgrove asserts, "make divine work visible through an act of human imagination and intellection, each appealing to the logic and authority of the eye and the inscription of forms."[23]

Opicinus' use of familiar forms can be interpreted not as mere copies but repetitions, variations on a theme. Forms, on the other hand, hold meanings associated with their origins; thus in their new role their meanings and function grow and expand. This type of repetition is, as Maria Loh writes, "repetition that is driven by a process of recognition, misrecognition, cognition; of avowal and disavowal … The repetitive is the mode of give-and-take that is negotiated between the author, the work, and the reader in each moment of viewing."[24] Therefore, the diagram and diagrammatic thinking are, I argue, bound up tightly with viewing, optics and cognition.

Repetition and *difference,* as terminological formulae, are familiar from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. The notion of repetition, however, has a long history that can be traced to the Bible, the Pre-Socratics, and Plato and continues through Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, among others. Thinking through this history, Deleuze refashioned repetition and difference into specific concepts which are employed here. Deleuze distinguishes between two types of repetition: one is Plato's, where the concept of representation or mimetic copy is forged. The other, the Nietzschean mode of

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[22] Ibid., 34.
[23] Denis Cosgrove, *Geography & Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2008), 16.
[24] Maria H. Loh, *Titian Remade: Repetition and the Transformation of Early Modern Italian Art* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 55.

eternal return,[25] is situated in *difference* with something new arising out of each repetition.[26] This is an important point because it is at this precise juncture where anticipation of the impinging moment arises, and it is in between two repetitions that *difference* resolves itself. It resolves in another varied form; "repetition thus appears as a difference, but difference absolutely without concept. … Difference, is in-itself already *repetition."*[27] This Deleuzian process is one of continuous movement. As Slavoj Zizek asserts, "a proper Deleuzian paradox [is] that something truly New can only emerge through repetition."[28] Nothing is fixed in either time or space but is continually *becoming*.[29] And, *becoming* is imbedded within relations and networks of emerging processes.[30]

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[25] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 41-42.
[26] Ibid., 60-61 and 66-67.
[27] Ibid., 15 and 129.
[28] Slavoj Zizek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 12.
[29] Gilles Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 233-43.
[30] Zizek, *Organs without Bodies,* 16.

2 Chapter: Historiography

The Palatinus manuscript is a complex project, including 52 drawings on 27 parchments linked by repeating elements, each constructed in a different mode, thus justifying a multiple perspective study. Though scholars have long read Opicinus' images as a testament to his insanity, the main obstacle to analyzing the Palatinus remains the paucity of information regarding the work's commission and its intended audience.[31] This is true as evidence of its commission, hence the intended audience, does not exist. However, taking the images seriously, it is clear that Opicinus includes at least one praying figure on the rim of the circle(s)[32] gazing at the conglomerate of geometry and theological signifiers. In *ymago et similtudo Dei*, in fact Opicinus includes five praying figures thereby giving us spectators within.[33] Perhaps where the figures look is pointing to the 'outside' observer in order to say what is of importance here, namely the image itself, the parchment. Opicinus invested a great deal of time, effort and funds, seeing that he used full size sheets of parchment, some as big as 2'x3' or larger, in creating something both spectacular and confusing.

2.1 Previous Critics

Since earlier scholars were, for the most part, unable to ascertain the meanings and intentions behind the scattered annotations and unusual drawings, they focused their analysis on Opicinus himself, relinquishing the works themselves of any agency. Richard Salomon published the first study of the Palatinus manuscript in 1936. Salomon framed his understanding of both Opicinus and his work based on the information provided by

[31] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 166 and Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 20 and 23.
[32] Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XXX.
[33] Ibid.

Opicinus' autobiographical calendar within the Palatinus manuscript itself, fol.11r.[34] Carefully reading the biographical calendar, as well as the textual resources in multiple folios of the Palatinus, Salomon constructed a character who was deeply entrenched in self-pity and obsessed with sin. For Salomon, as Morse puts it, Opicinus was a "figure of pathos"[35] "mastered by egocentrism and an unreasoning fear of sin."[36] As this impression of the priest was far from positive, the manuscript became a testament to the instability of the mental state of the artist. Nevertheless, Salomon's extensive analysis of each drawing provided a plethora of information about the symbols and iconography of each image.[37]

Together with the Vaticanus Latinus MS.6435, Opicinus' second manuscript which took the form of a day book, the Palatinus is part of the Vatican collection and therefore rarely in plain view. In her extensive study on Opicinus' two manuscripts, Morse comments that, out of the two, the Palatinus is a more intricate and difficult manuscript to analyze, due to its complex schematic vision of the world, the Church and the individual, its faint drawing lines and extremely erratic annotations.[38] In the Palatinus, each image is rendered on full-sized uncut parchment sheets, with schematic drawings at the centre of each sheet and notes written around it in the margins. This visual framework is both consistent throughout and unusual enough to signal that these are part of a single collection.[39] Drawings often feature repetition of common visual elements such as evangelists encircling the outer edges of an oval shape; the zodiac or a calendar running along the first inner layer; and the T-O medieval map, with the world organized in such a way that it depicts Asia at the top, Europe on the

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[34] To view the image, refer to: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XIV.
[35] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 10.
[36] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 8 and 26. Harding, "Opening to God," 18.
[37] Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 12 and Morse, "Complex Terrain," 11, n33.
[38] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 233-34. The most invaluable source for my research on this drawing is Victoria Morse's Ph.D. thesis. Morse's study was conducted by examining microfilms.
[39] Ibid., 150, 161-62 and 164.

left, and Africa on the right, with Hell, Purgatory, or the place of damnation at the foot of the image.[40] The bottom, pit of dissolution, darkness and hell, is often mediated by the image of the mother and child in her lap referred to as the "fruit of penitence" (*fructus penitentie*), signaling atonement for sins, penitence, and the hope of reconciliation endorsed by the Virgin mother.[41] Even though Opicinus was torn by sin and damnation, especially in Salomon's view, he perpetuated the possibility of reconciliation.[42] Morse suggests that, considering this limited typology of basic motifs, Opicinus was working with a very specific thematic vocabulary.[43] Scholarly consensus is that the most likely models for the drawings were portolan charts, which have similarities not only in diagrammatical and geometrical execution, but also because portolan charts were likewise drawn on full sheets of parchment, often making use of the neck rather than being trimmed square.[44]

Morse writes that for Salomon, the Palatinus was a manuscript that not only "suggests the fragmentation of meaning and intention" but also stands as testament to an overall fractured intellectual enterprise in which the fragmentary approach "guarantees the fractured appearance of Opicinus' thought."[45] This characterization of Opicinus' work constructed an image of Opicinus as a mentally ill person.

However, it was not until Ernest Kris' study that Opicinus was labeled schizophrenic. Since Kris viewed the Palatinus as 'exhibit A of art by the mentally ill', he interpreted the

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[40] Ibid., 161-67. In this instance, Morse writes that this is an image of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. However, I think that this is an image of a mother and child insinuating a connection to the Virgin Mary and Christ. The woman is lacking a halo, which is generally depicted when the figure is the Virgin Mary. See page 48 of this thesis for more information.
[41] Ibid., 266. There is a long tradition of the Virgin Mary playing a role of intercessor for sinners during the medieval period. The populace prayed to her in the hopes that she would intervene with Christ the Judge for forgiveness of their sins. As the virgin represented the Church as well, to be forgiven by her would similarly imply reconciliation with the church.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 166.
[44] Ibid., 165-66.
[45] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 234 and Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 12-13.

strangest of Opicinus' images to be proof of this, contending that, as they have "no clear ideological tendency which could connect them," are thus "the typical symptomatology of schizophrenic production."[46]

Between the 1960s and 1990s, a number of shorter studies were written on Opicinus, most of them in tandem with Salomon and Kris's, as they focused on the biographical aspects of Opicinus' oeuvre without venturing too far from previous proclamations. It was the work of Madeline Caviness and Michael Evans, who, among a few other scholars, started addressing Opicinus' Palatinus images in a narrow fashion, yet significantly differently than Salomon and Kris, giving them a modest place within a specific hierarchy, those of geometry and order.

Michael Camille's essay (1994) sees Opicinus' work as a specific response to issues about the body in the late medieval period, he nevertheless still roots his work on Opicinus. In Camille's view, these drawings are embodiments of the fragmented and ultimately creative forces at work in the more subversive camps that stood in opposition to reason, order and control. For Camille, they are "all about the body and not the mind,"[47] yet not just any body; he is referring here specifically to the Deleuzian *Body without Organs* (BwO), a fragmented, disorganized but creative schizo-body, incoherent yet highly significant for medieval studies. This view thus emphasizes a hierarchical instability and permeability between a conceived universe and Opicinus' body. [48] Although I agree with Camille's view

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[46] Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), 125. Also see Morse, "Complex Terrain," 107.
[47] Michael Camille, "The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies" in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 94.
[48] Ibid., 88.

that Opicinus did not know boundaries, I suggest that in his drawings, cognitive boundaries are far less rigidly fixed and more permeable than those of the body.[49]

In fact, it was not until recently that scholarly studies, Catherine Harding and Morse in particular, started moving away from a focus on Opicinus, to examine the ways in which the drawings may have functioned within the context of the manuscript and public world at large.[50]

Morse and Harding look at Opicinus' oeuvre in total, arguing that the Palatinus cannot be understood without Opicinus' other manuscript, the Vaticanus. Although I agree that his manuscripts are mutually connected, I see them preform different tasks. Nevertheless, Morse views the Palatinus' drawings as systems of graphically articulated venues for spiritual revelation and reform, while Harding argues that all drawings, in the Palatinus and the Vaticanus, are cast as particular kinds of meditative practice.[51] Both suggest that these images have pedagogical potential. While I agree with Harding and Morse regarding the pedagogical potential of the Palatinus, I also insist that what links these drawings is much more complex than just belonging to a stylistically similar group or only working towards representation of the Church and Christian institution. Each drawing draws on another; each performs a task which merges empirical and processual with abstract and imaginative; "meaning-making" is shifted from the singular form in the image and placed in the space between, space of connectivity among forms and images.

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[49] Ibid., 94. Harding also disagrees with Camille's position about the mind-body dominance. Harding, "Opening to God," 22. See chapter 3 of this thesis for a more comprehensive discussion on this point.
[50] Harding, "Opening to God," 18 and Camille, "Image and the Self," 87-88 and 95.
[51] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 273-75 and Harding, "Opening to God," 20-38.

No ordinary manuscript, the Palatinus Latinus MS.1993 is, in fact, not a codex.[52] Its full sheets of parchment were bound together in the seventeenth century. Each side of each sheet, verso and recto, features a drawing or a diagram. The 27 sheets comprising the manuscript boast a total of 52 images. However, as Whittington suggests, there may have been even more images provided as some of the sheets have likely been lost.[53] It is difficult to claim anything about the Palatinus with absolute certainty, including the date of its production. Apart from the bibliographical sketch on fol.11r,[54] no other folio bears a date. According to the general consensus, the images were created during a ten-year period extending from 1330 to 1340, the majority between February 1335 and June 1336; a small number were added between 1340 and 1350.[55]

For Salomon, the Palatinus was an impossible manuscript to negotiate because the order of the pages, and hence of the images, follows no precise sequence or logic. Morse notes that for Salomon, "the manuscript remained a 'piling up' of ideas characterized by the 'unending variation' and repetition of the same themes."[56] Obviously for Salomon, and Morse for that matter, the insistence on continual revision and repetition of the forms and elements presented an unappealing subject. The Palatinus, especially in Salomon's view, offered "proof" of Opicinus' insanity and deeply rooted psychological terror.

Like the Palatinus, the Vaticanus Latinus 6435, contains images based largely on map and map-like visual vocabulary. Here, however, maps merge with human figures to form awkward anthropomorphic outlines of Mediterranean coastlines. Harding, Morse and Karl Whittington see this manuscript as a personal work, as a kind of modern day journal filled

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[52] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 5.
[53] Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 10.
[54] To view image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XIV.
[55] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 161-67 and Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 10.
[56] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 7.

with uncensored and idiosyncratic ideas.[57] Whereas the Palatinus aims at rendering a vision of the church in both theological and abstract terms, the Vaticanus dwells largely on the sinful nature of humankind, and the artist in particular.

Although the Vaticanus is not central to this study, it is important to note that there are overlaps between the two manuscripts, especially where anthropomorphic maps are concerned. I believe, however, these two works function in fundamentally different ways. In the Vaticanus, private thoughts, revelations and doubts find their way onto the page. The organic quality of the images is not constricted by rules of geometry. What ends up on the page is something between a confession and an absurdity. Camille, for example, points to a moment in the production of the text when Opicinus is at pains to conceal a "gynecological" drawing so as not to scandalize a fellow cleric.[58] This type of private reflection does not exist in the Palatinus. Rather, Opicinus offers a particular view of the church, especially as he understands it in relation to the visible, physical world. However, the state of the Church in the first half of fourteenth century was far from perfect, representable or stable.

2.2 Historical Context

What an immoral age! What a sad and wretched place of exile this is! - Petrarch[59]

Around 1329, Opicinus de Canistris arrived in Avignon to where the papal court had retired in the wake of the Guelf/Ghibelline struggles in Italy. It is here he created the Palatinus manuscript under conditions no less favorable than those prevailing in Italy at the time. Opicinus was appointed to the position of scribe in the papal penitentiary around 1330,

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[57] Harding, "Opening to God," 24 and Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 10.
[58] Camille, "Image and the Self," 90.
[59] Norman P. Zacour, *Petrarch's Book Without a Name: A Translation of the Liber Sine Nomine* (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), 74.

where presumably he remained until his death.[60] In 1334 he fell ill and suffered what scholars described as a stroke. [61] Under illness and duress he experienced hallucinations that took the form of a series of religious visions, or a religious conversion.[62] Until the time of his death, sometime between 1352 and 1355, Opicinus continued working at the papal court, where, as Whittington suggests, he "made his drawings in his spare time."[63]

Upon arriving in Avignon, Opicinus met Pope John XXII, whom he admired. The holy pontiff was notorious, even by papal standards, for his lavish life-style and wanton extravagance. Petrarch's commentary on the Avignon Papacy, excerpted from a letter to an unknown friend, describes albeit allegorically the gross materialism and flagrant disregard for all things spiritual that infected the papal court.

> … Now I am living in France, in the Babylon of the West. The sun in its travels sees nothing more hideous than this place on the shores of the wild Rhone, which suggests the hellish streams of Cocytus and Acheron. Here reign the successors of the poor fishermen of Galilee; they have strangely forgotten their origin. I am astounded, as I recall their predecessors, to see these men loaded with gold and clad in purple, boasting of the spoils of princes and nations; to see luxurious palaces and heights crowned with fortifications, instead of a boat turned downward for shelter.
>
> We no longer find the simple nets which were once used to gain a frugal sustenance from the lake of Galilee, and with which, having labored all night and caught nothing, they took, at daybreak, a multitude of fishes, in the name of Jesus. One is stupefied nowadays to hear the lying tongues, and to see worthless parchments turned by a leaden seal into nets, which are used, in Christ's name, but by the arts of Belial, to catch hordes of unwary Christians. These fish, too, are dressed and laid on the burning coals of anxiety before they fill the insatiable maw of their captors….
>
> Instead of holy solitude we find a criminal host and crowds of the most infamous satellites; instead of soberness, licentious banquets; instead of pious pilgrimages, preternatural and foul sloth; instead of the bare feet of the apostles, the snowy coursers of brigands fly past us, the horses decked in gold and fed on gold, soon to be shod with gold, if the Lord does not check this slavish luxury. In short, we seem to be among the kings of the Persians or Parthians, before whom we must fall down and worship, and who cannot be approached except presents be offered. O ye unkempt and emaciated old

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[60] Richard G. Salomon, "A Newly Discovered Manuscript of Opicinus de Canistris: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16, no. 1/2 (1953): 46
[61] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 32-33, 104-69 and 274.
[62] Ibid., 32-33, 104-69 and 274.
[63] Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 9.

> men, is it for this you labored? Is it for this that you have sown the field of the Lord and watered it with your holy blood? But let us leave the subject. I have been so depressed and overcome that the heaviness of my soul has passed into bodily affliction, so that I am really ill and can only give voice to sighs and groans.[64]

Physically removed from Rome with its associations with core Christian values, the Holy See now fell within the orbit of the French monarchy to whom it became a mere dependency.[65] Indeed, from the turn of the fourteenth century onwards, the papal throne would be occupied by a succession of six French popes, for whom the acquisition of wealth, power, pomp and prestige would eclipse any concern for the health and well being of the Christian community.[66]

During this period a Christian doctrine predicated upon a renunciation of the material world would lose its luster. It was a time when money could buy anything, and copious amounts of gold coinage were flooding Provence, then a fief of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, through the agency of Italian bankers. Even sin could be redeemed provided the confessor possessed the monetary means. As Petrarch observed: "There is only one hope for salvation here, gold. Gold placates the savage king and overcomes the frightful monster; the guiding cord is woven of gold; gold reveals the forbidding doorway, shatters the bars and stones, bribes the stern doorkeeper, and opens the gates of haven. What else? Christ is sold for gold."[67] If the church continued to perceive itself as the protector and spiritual healer of the poor and meek, many would have thought this delusional. Abuse of spiritual power and calculated manipulation of privileges lost clerical leaders the respect of the people.[68] It is little wonder then that the Palatinus takes up as its principal subject the sorry state to which

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[64] "Medieval Sourcebook: Petrarch: Letter Criticizing the Avignon Papacy," Fordham University, accessed September 5, 2012, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/14Cpetrarch-pope.asp.
[65] Tuchman, *Distant Mirror,* 26-27.
[66] Mullins, *Popes of Avignon,* 21-41.
[67] Zacour, *Petrarch's Book Without a Name*, 73.
[68] Tuchman, *Distance Mirror,* 27.

the church had fallen. Here, in the Palatinus, Opicinus presents a view of an ideal Church and an ordered Christian universe, one that is suitable for consumption by the Christian community.[69] He goes about this task by appropriating the language of the medieval mapping tradition, the mappaemundi and the portolan charts.

[69] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 233-42.

3 Chapter: Mapping

> Don't go abroad. Return within yourself. In the inward man dwells the truth.
> - St. Augustine[70]

The elements of various mapping traditions are most visible in the Palatinus images. Opicinus likely acquired knowledge of maps and map-making while in Genoa.[71] Maps provide a specific way of seeing the world. They also compel the reader, or rather viewer, to continuously re-examine his/her position against the visual proposition made by object. The maps, nevertheless, hold forth the possibility of an open interpretation. Michel de Certeau writes that "the map joins, in effect, what is to what could be. The art of observing is combined with the art of inventing."[72] What becomes clear in this instance is that acts of observing and inventing create a productive environment that allows the audience to transcend a simple reflective mode.[73] Reconceptualizing the map or concept of mapping as a locus where the two participants, map and viewer, encounter one another initiates a state of contemplation derived from the elements of the map.[74] It is then that geometry, geography and diagramming surge out between the real, in other words the physical contours of the Mediterranean, and the imaginary.

Unfolding as a non-perspectival image is a depiction of the universal church, the *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis (image and likeness of God)*[75] as Opicinus calls this totalizing, panoramic view of the map-like and map-derived elements configured around and

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[70] Robert McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, & Dante* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 9.
[71] Camille, "Image and the Self," 90.
[72] Stephen Hartnett, "Michel De Certeau's Critical Historiography and the Rhetoric of Maps," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 31, no. 4 (1998): 289 and Michel De Certeau, "Pay Attention: To Make Art," in *The Lagoon Cycle Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 1985), 289.
[73] Hartnett, "Michel De Certeau," 289.
[74] Harding, "Opening to God," 26 and 39
[75] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XXX.

within the large figure representing the divine body. Consistent with most of the Palatinus page formatting, *ymago et similitudo Dei* is organized around a strong vertical hierarchy. The upper section denotes the East (*Oriens)*,[76] where three sets of concentric circles occupy the top half of the image. Apart from the divine "sun face,"[77] which occupies the first circle, in the upper constellation is the figure of Mary and Christ as a *sponsal* couple denoting the marriage of Christ and Church, and Mary with Christ child labeled *ecclesia sacrementalis,* the church of seven sacraments, baptism, confirmation, Eucharist (the most important of all), penance, anointing of sick, holy orders and matrimony. The East, inhabiting the upper section of not only this drawing but most of the others as well, is the seat of an abstract order, where the relationship between seeing, thinking and imagination is central. Ordinarily, one section of images is associated with the "heavenly Church."[78] In this most clear, most austere section of the image, what appears in the meticulous repetition of forms and figures are concepts associated with a higher realm and contemplative practice. Though the eye does not need to labour much in order to identify shapes, the prospect of assembling concepts together is challenging. This visual construct recalls the Augustinian legacy that insists that the physical eye sees, but intellectual understanding and the processing of information is beyond power of the ordinary eye. He writes in his *Confessions:* "And so, in an instant of awe, my mind attained to the sight of the God who IS. Then, at last, *I caught sight of your invisible nature, as it is known through your creature.* But I had not strength to fix my gaze upon them."[79] These sightings, even though temporal, crucially depended on one's ability to transcend physical sight and perceive God and divine existence by the mind, a higher sense

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[76] Edson, *World Map*, 20.
[77] Camille, "Image and the Self," 90 and Fritz Saxl, *Lectures* (London: Warburg Institute, 1957), 61.
[78] Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 154.
[79] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 7-17 and 151-52.

of apprehension.[80]

In contrast to *Oriens* and abstract order, at the bottom half stands the "world," a tangible field locus of "earthly" events. Rhumb lines, the intersecting system of lines used for navigation in portolan charts,[81] are indicators of this physical domain. Portolan charts, the purpose of which was to locate harbors,[82] were developed in the thirteenth century and progressively improved in the fourteenth century.[83] In marked contrast to world maps or mappaemundi where the world was oriented according to Pliny's narrative rather than with any reality, these charts featured only relatively minor topographic errors, for example, the breadth of the Italian boot tended to be somewhat exaggerated.[84] The earliest example of the portolan chart was the *Carta Pisana* (Pisa Chart), which appeared in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. New mapping instruments and techniques, along with the conceptual models that developed alongside them, provided a visual model for the Palatinus manuscript; indeed, the latter would follow the example set by the portolan charts of using full-size parchment sheets.[85] However, far from rejecting other approaches to mapping known in the Middle Ages, Opicinus freely mixes up, or as Whittington argues, "experiments"[86] with forms, shapes and even meanings associated with earlier maps.

Curiously though, the *Carta Pisana*, like the *ymago et similitudo Dei,* features two

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[80] Ibid., 7-10 and 146-47. Augustine explains further this complex procedure of eye-soul-mind translation: "These books served to remind me to return to my own self. Under the guidance I entered into the depths of my soul, and this I was able to do because your aid befriended me. I entered, and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw the Light that never changes casting rays over the same eye of my soul, over my mind."
[81] Edson, *World Map*, 40-41 and 48-49. Also see Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., "Florentine Interest in Ptolemaic Cartography as Background for Renaissance Painting, Architecture, and the Discovery of America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 4 (Dec., 1974): 281.
[82] Edgerton Jr., "Florentine Interest," 281.
[83] Edson, *World Map*, 34.
[84] Ibid., 35.
[85] Morse, "Complex Terrain," 165-66. Not only does the size and shape of parchment contribute to Palatinus being crafted as a portolan chart, Opicinus also spent an amount of time in Genoa, an important port city at the time as well as a hub of portolan production.
[86] Whittington, "Body-Worlds," 1, 10 and 18. Also see Morse, "Complex Terrain," 275.

rhumb line circles. As artificial fields of representation, the rhumb lines trace identifiable locations in the Mediterranean Sea. Evelyn Edson writes that these radiating lines were used to plot ships' courses at sea as well as construct the chart.[87] Sailors used them to navigate. The figuration of space and distance slid across the assembly of lines; however, duration, as in the length of the course, remains a mystery.[88] The relation of this to the Palatinus and *ymago et similitudo Dei* is palpable yet far from clear.

Even assuming knowledge of medieval map iconography on the part of viewers for Opicinus' drawings, what is laid out here initially obscures understanding before leading anywhere significant. While two rhumb line circles in the *Carta* 'cover up' the outline of Mediterranean coastline and as such produce indicators of the specific movement between the points (ports, islands etc.), the rhumb line circles in *ymago et similtudo Dei* cover up a set of images, two crucifixes to be exact.[89] Still, with configured symmetrical relations, each geometric element has its own narrative. The meticulous proliferation of map-derived figures is nothing more than volatile signification. It is, as de Certeau asserts "… a labour of Sisyphus, curiosity trapped in the cryptogram-rebus. This [painting] plays on our need to decipher."[90] Here de Certeau identifies a need on the part of the spectator. I would add that for the viewer, this process of deciphering represents a somewhat daunting prospect in terms of the time required and the challenges posed. This is especially so because, while *reading* through each set of iconographic elements and the stories they tell which offer up one meaning in isolation, when taken together, they present a multiplicity of meanings—a veritable polysemy. For example, besides being the mother of Christ, Mary is also a symbol

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[87] Edson, *World Map,* 36-40.
[88] Ibid.
[89] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XXX.
[90] Michel De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,* trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 50.

of the Holy Church. Mary is depicted as both a human figure and a saint. Whittington asserts that this drawing, *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis* is a particular kind of Marian figuration; its focus is on "Mary as the link between cosmic and human spheres."[91] Mary is understood and venerated as an intercessor between the sacred, divine world and the secular world in which sin runs rampant. At the external parameter of the folio, Opicinus writes almost like an ode to Mary: *Pulchera et pulchrior et pulcherrima virgo beata. Pingitur. Hic vixit, nunc regnat glorificata. Sic fit, sic furat, sic est! Nos ergo precemur. Nunc vultum statuamque Dei matris veneremur*. Mary is seen here in both roles, depicted separately and also conflated. But it matters little which of the two comes first, because the significance of the content rests upon the dichotomy it produces: Mary as mother of Christ and Mary as mother of all believers—or at least all those who merit salvation. After all, inscribed along the outside edge of the large oval, between the zodiac figures and the internal geometry, is the common prayer to Mary: *Ave gratia plena dominus tecum benedicta …* [92] The link between Marian intercession and topographical/cosmological representation is made clear both in textual and visual terms.

Already in this work the fragments tell a story based on references they come from. The repeating motifs at the point of viewing draw together pictorial fragments (elements of maps, of the zodiac, etc.) in a way that allows for the lateral development of meaning. But, the entry into an image is not defined. The image offers a "multiplicity of possible itineraries."[93] The means by which the image constitutes itself is the deliberate *difference* between the familiar elements, and the interpretation to which it gives rise.

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[91] Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 154.
[92] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XXX.
[93] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 51 and Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988), 116 and 120.

The medieval maps lead the viewer to suppose that s/he is given to understand something from what s/he sees. This is what is obvious in the *ymago et similitudo Dei* since, in an effort to differentiate the sacramental and spiritual churches, Opicinus employs cartographic aids. Thus, in the lower register which ordinarily represents the church of the material world, he places the rhumb line circles to indicate the Mediterranean. Moreover, to clarify Christ's dual nature, that is his humanity and divinity, Opicinus draws mirrored crucifixes: that of the triumphant Christ at the bottom and the dead Christ at the top, both superimposed upon the chest of an all-encompassing figure *filius hominis*. The latter is the image of Christ *mortus* recognizable by his limp outstretched body and, by way of contrast, its mirror opposite: a drawing of the erect and upright body of Christ *triumphans*. In the mirror metaphor and the pulsating domain of geometry lies the savior sent to redeem humankind from sin. Whittington suggests that this complex visual set up and amalgamation of birth, death and triumph of Christ hits at core concepts of the earthly Church and her sacraments.[94] This, indeed, is the ultimate representation of bringing into the healing process, belief in the savior's redemption and power of sacraments.

Having said this, the map's primary function was not to orient the viewer in relation to the world, but to structure a narrative, a journey that one undertakes in order to achieve ultimate salvation, explicitly, a union with God. Mappaemundi makes this concept explicit, while Opicinus but insinuates. In the fol.10r, Opicinus replicates world maps more truthfully, thus the crucifix is in the centre of the map as it is often seen in mappaemundi tradition, Asia at the top signifying the East, Europe on the right and Africa on the left.

This is important because portolan maps provide the way or route, a set of directions and

[94] Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 154.

distances (albeit conceptual) and also insinuate a physical journey; but it is the mappaemundi (the world map) that connects the world and journey.

The Hereford World map[95] in particular, functioned not so much as an indication of any real formulated space, but more as symbolic documentation of the imaginative perception of the world. Here, the Face of God is depicted in the form of Christ in Judgment who presides over the complex elements of Biblical narratives and geographical fiction. For Christians, this is the ultimate goal to keep in mind. In the end, this is where it will all end, no matter how diverse the journey, how diverse the world and its history. David Woodward maintains that the "primary purpose of the mappaemundi was to instruct the faithful about the significant events in Christian history rather than to record their precise location."[96] By way of contrast, this same author notes that in "early Judaism the importance of the location of events was emphasized, … early Christianity showed little interest in such things, with certain important exceptions such as the journeys of Saint Paul. The teachings of Christ emphasize the spiritual journey and not the physical world."[97] During the Middle Ages, relatively few could afford to venture on a pilgrimage. Daniel Connolly writes that for monks of the Benedictine order, for example, the meditative practice of a pilgrimage of the heart, not of the feet, was commonplace.[98] This type of sojourn was possible only through

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[95] Image removed due to copyright. To view the image and gather an in depth discussion of the Hereford Map, see: Naomi Reed Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought* (Boydell Press, 2001).
[96] David Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi," in *The History of Cartography, vol. 1, Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 286.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Daniel K. Connolly, "Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris," *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 4 (Dec., 1999): 598. Even Saint Bernard of Clairvaux argued, Connolly notes, "For the object of monks is to seek out not the earthly but Heavenly Jerusalem, and this is not by proceeding with [their] feet but by progressing with their feelings."

imagination and spiritual meditation, a tradition Opicinus appropriated.[99]

3.1 Transformation of/through Geometry

By juxtaposing the symbolic and diagrammatic images of the inner vision with the schematics of real space, maps provide a way not only to organize space but to re-image it and thus make possible a series of different systems of thought that extend beyond the concerns of geography. The ecclesiastical diagrams that coordinated the earthly, divine, and human spheres provide examples of just this kind of operation, the most noteworthy being the *Diagram of the Physical and Physiological Fours*, which drew the attention of Bede and other medieval scholars. Madeline Caviness calls these "Images of Divine Order," the purpose of which was to illustrate the hierarchy and order of geometric forms and figures that would continue to contribute to the "expression of a harmonious union between heaven and earth."[100] Opicinus' primary appeal rests in making visible the order, harmony and contents of creation—a crucial project given that uneducated viewers had, as Morse argues, no capacity to 'see' spiritual truth.[101] But with the aid of images of actual 'realities', the layperson could grasp truths or possibilities of truths without falling into idolatry.[102] Thus, the utility of map symbolism lies in making clear the relationship between the earthly and the divine. It is the image of Christ, moreover, that reflects the presence of the divine on earth. Thus the 'zodiac man' maps out the relation and the benefits to humanity. After all, it is the case that both the triumph and death of Christ occupy the bottom section of the image where

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[99] Harding, "Opening to God," 24-39. Harding stresses that Opicinus's drawings are about meditation as a spiritual practice.
[100] Madeline H. Caviness, "Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing," *Gesta* 22, no.2 (1983): 110. Even though, in some ways, Opicinus' drawings **r**epresent the end of the line for this kind of diagrammatic form. Also see Whittington, "Opicinus de Canistris," 148.
[101] Victoria Morse, "Seeing and Believing: The Problem of Idolatry in the Thought of Opicino de Canistris," in *Orthodoxy, Christianity, History*, ed. Susanna Elm et al. (Paris: Ecole Francaise de Rome, 2000), 169.
[102] Ibid.

Opicinus situates earthly affairs; indeed, both events occurred in the Mediterranean region—Jerusalem, to be precise. The image transforms the role of the location**:** it becomes the form of a theory, an imaginary spatial world that makes the viewer believe the structures of spirituality and obedience emerge as part of the journey—a visual journey at that. The map, or at least certain of its elements, specifies that it is not so much a history of mobility and transition that is of concern here as an inquiry into transformation, or rather the conditions of transformation, which rely on the discursive knowledge and practices associated with the act of viewing. In this context the viewer becomes a seeker intent on discovering the basis upon which knowledge is possible as well as spiritual reward.

3.2 Repetition

Since mobility of thought and of perception are dynamic and potentially infinite, it is necessary to reference the images' components in the most recognizable element. With remarkable lucidity Opicinus distinguishes the circle as the ultimate referent. Referentiality is linked to recognition as predetermined by the concrete outline of the concept or form. Therefore, at the point of *repetition*, the referenced elements rephrase into a new perceptual assembly. In Opicinus' images, however, the transparency of referentiality is blurred once it is *repeated* elsewhere. There is no pure beginning in the image but only pure becoming. Put simply, the line becomes the direction (not the distance); the direction becomes a path; the path becomes a journey; the journey becomes time; time turns into the zodiac and as it revolves, it binds parts together until they unfold only as far as the next field.[103] The inclination towards clarity is temporal. As the portolan charts' rhumb lines do not indicate distances between inhabited places in the conventional manner but direction, marks and lines

[103] Loh, *Titian Remade,* 9.

then mobilize mutable events. In their internal structure, vis-à-vis their purpose, the rhumb lines expand into virtual paths leading potentially to salvation from sin. This is a path whose lineaments—belief in God and the performance of good works—are prescribed by the Church. Yet how long the journey may take depends upon the ability and dedication of the individual.[104] Plurality of these instances then is like a mathematical object, the forms of which proliferate in translucent-like facets of the world. The fictions of heaven, cosmological and astrological parts dissipate in favour of pure geometry. From this perspective, the image in fol. 24r is vertically or horizontally divided, depending on one's point of entry into the drawing, precisely at the rhumb line section. Although it appears somewhat precise, the hierarchy of elements is not definite. At any point the parchment can be rotated around,[105] but the composites of geometry do not break apart.

Such standardized organization of the parchment is abandoned on the folio 17v.[106] The break from dividing in half the divine and the earthly portions of the page is here obvious. While for other images (the *image et similitudo Dei* example I use here), the traditional formula justified the duality; here that duality, though present, has been substituted for the duality of Christ's life. This is the *difference* in repetition. Capriciously concealed beneath the mesh of lines are two mirrored crucifixes. Even if 'blown' up to full parchment size, this feature is none the more visible. Quite the contrary, the lines over the crucifixes, as well as the group of four church fathers within the *rota*, Mary and the Christ child, zodiac signs and other elements that repeat here shatter the prospect of an easy read. Once the eye works through the endless points, lines and motions, it begins to recognize the crucifix of Christ

[104] Edgerton Jr., "Florentine Interest," 282.
[105] Harding, "Madness", 203.
[106] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, XXI.

mortus and Christ *vivus.* Among other scattered notations Opicinus writes: "*preparatio sacramentorum; divine perfectio caritatis; victoria mortis; consumatio fidei; progressio spei."*[107] If to consume faith and reach hope is part of a goal, as Opicinus writes here, the order and code of geometry, regularity and proper maintenance enforces it. Consistency and uniformity of practice are indispensible to the process if salvation and reformation is to be attained. The insistence on the proper line and proper connection between points of contact is meticulously crafted. Numerous incised marks and scraped erasures cluster around a number of rendered rhumb lines. And, although this is visible only when the parchment is examined very closely, it nevertheless reverberates uncompromising need for perfection as the diagram, map and geometry already live in crevices of the skin.

3.3 Diagram

> The diagram is indeed chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a germ of order or rhythm. … Somewhat like a map that is large as the country, the diagram merges with the totality of the painting; the entire painting is diagrammatic. Optical geometry disappears in favor of the manual line, exclusively manual. The eye has difficulty following it. …It is a northern stain, the "Gothic line": the line does not go from one point to another, but passes *between* points, continually changing direction and attains a power greater than 1, becoming adequate to the entire surface. … In the unity of the catastrophe and the diagram, man discovers rhythm as matter and material. … The diagram is a possibility of the fact – it is not fact itself. … It is out of chaos that the "stubborn geometry" or "geological lines" first emerge. …- Gilles Deleuze[108]

As a papal scribe in Avignon, Opicinus would have been exposed to numerous medieval traditions of diagramming. I have already mentioned the ecclesiastical diagrams that coordinated earthly, divine, and human spheres, such as *Diagram of the Physical and Physiological Fours*; he would also have consulted books in order to calculate the times for

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[107] Ibid., 248.
[108] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation,* trans. Daniel W. Smith. (London: Continuum, 1981), 102.

important Christian feasts, Easter as the most notable one, in which information would have been presented in a diagrammatic manner. Can Opicinus' geometrical and diagrammatic manner of representing the concepts of salvation and spiritual restoration be viewed as a kind of tribute to the visual system of the Carolingian renaissance?[109] If Carolingians where concerned with the end of time, Opicinus was living in what Petrarch called Babylonian captivity, which seemed nearly equal to the end of time.

Diagrams in the Middle Ages represented a fusion of scientific, religious and philosophical components.[110] Diagramming emerges as a method that permits, constructs and orders knowledge in such a way that parts cohere (or orchestrate) into an image in which the different components are as important as the whole, and the making of the whole is in constant flux. While the diagram insists on the appearance of clear ideas or arriving at ideas in clearer ways, the making of a diagram as a *repetition* stresses the changes and transformations of ideas and concepts brought about by the perception. Thus, diagrammatic thinking is less about forms and more about the synchrony between them; how the knowledge integral in the form transverses, connects – disconnects – and/or reconnects,[111] all the while stressing the *process* more than the outcome. Thus, what comes as a result, is not an identical set each time, but a visual representation of the elaborate dynamics of the thought process. The diagram or diagrammatic visual language is a means of connecting the invisible and hypothetical to the senses and imagination. Morse argues that, for Opicinus, imagination is necessary in order to "move beyond visible world to the invisible spiritual

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[109] Bianca Kuhnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Germany: Schnell Steiner, 2003), 16-23.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Alexander Gerner, "Diagrammatic Thinking," Atlas of Transformation, accessed August 9, 2012, http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/d/diagrammatic-thinking/diagrammatic-thinking-alexander-gerner.html.

realm."[112] The diagram and diagrammatic method present a model that gives tools to coordinate information in a way that resolves potential ambiguities through a system of relations.[113] The geometric abstraction becomes an exercise where theological material is assembled rather than given out in representational frame.

The diagram and diagramming as a process explain the relations among figures, but geometry gives figuration its definition. Roger Bacon, a thirteenth century scholastic, explains:

> … And so I deem nothing more worthy to be set before the eyes of one who studies divine wisdom than such geometrical figures. May the Lord order that these be made! There are [only] three or four men who would be sufficiently able [to do so], but they are the most expert of the Latins…Let us recall to our memories that *nothing can be known about the things in this world without the power of geometry,* as has already been proved…[and that] nothing is completely intelligible to us unless it is displayed in figures before our eyes.[114] (my emphasis)

The Palatinus maps, patterns of intersecting lines, circles, geometrically drawn figures, open and closed spaces with imagined significations, then, neatly fold into this definition. The fact that the outlined images have minimal colour helps us focus on the tension between the material and scriptural notations. The tradition of knowledge here is subverted to the authority of the eye. Through the mechanism of sight, the diagram shows a structure of thought that is movement. As a dynamic navigation tool of complex relations in the organization of knowledge, diagrammatic thinking and experimentation constitute then, what

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[112] Morse, "Seeing and Believing," 170.
[113] Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition," 4. "Diagrams, lists, formulae, archives, engineering drawings, files, equations, dictionaries, collections, and so on, depending on the way they are put into focus, may explain almost everything or almost nothing." The use of a diagram offers a new and different way of relating to the unknown.
[114] Katherine H. Tachau, "Seeing as Action and Passion in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.F. Hamburger and A.M. Bouche (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 354. Tachau explains: "… Roger Bacon, at least, actively urged the application of geometrical precision to the figural arts for the benefit of the faith. In the *Opus Maius* he explained how carefully constructed images could assist one to visualize biblical passages."

Carruthers calls an "action image."[115] The visual space reveals that the argument in the image is principally topological. Therefore, the diagram represents the principles of mobility and mutability of thought. The architecture of these transitions is lines and forms of geometry. Unfolding lines instruct the eye to think and inspire the mind to the creation of thought while observing.

In *Timaeus*, Plato speaks of the world as an orderly creation whose "hidden form" may only be rendered visible by mathematics, or geometry to be exact.[116] Geometry for Plato is the "knowledge of eternally existent."[117] Plato describes the world as a mirror reflection of divine creation, albeit imperfect. The image of perfection is a poor copy of divine harmony thus the intelligence needs to look upwards not earthwards for examples.[118] Aristotle similarly seeks (and sees) perfection manifest in geometry, although for Aristotle geometry is an empirical claim; mathematics and geometry are merely the means to getting the concepts across, not how the world really is. As Denis Cosgrove explains: "Aristotelian physics dictated that the geometrical perfection of the incorruptible celestial spheres, while inscribed theoretically on the terrestrial globe, for example in the bands of the *klimata*, could never be perfectly reproduced in the mutable spaces of the elemental world. The precise extent of variation from perfect symmetry and harmony remained a matter for empirical

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[115] Mary Carruthers, "Moving Images in the Mind's Eye," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.F. Hamburger and A.M. Bouche (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 295. Didi-Huberman writes about Warburg: "To create a knowledge-montage was therefore to reject the matrices of intelligibility, to break through the age-old guardrails. This movement, with its new "allure" of knowledge, created possibilities of vertigo. …The image is not a closed field of knowledge; it is whiling, centrifugal field." Somehow both image and the study (the intellectual work of the art historian) are processes predicated of movement, through field and image.
[116] Cosgrove, *Geography & Vision*, 16.
[117] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 244.
[118] Plato, *The Republic*, 244. For more on Plato and how it relates to medieval conception of the universe, see Kuhnel, *End of Time,* 84-86

description."[119] Certainly the described world in the Middle Ages was far from perfect; for example, representations of waters and continents showed no traces of balance among elements, we have mappaemundi that reflects the empirical confusion of the time. In the Palatinus, Opicinus showed little interest in a mappaemundi type of representation of the world. I discussed earlier that the physical world is represented as harmonious and orderly through geometry. Opicinus' repeated references of the circle, at the centre of which sit varying figures of the Virgin and Child recall Aristotle's contemplation of the spheres and the order of elements that constitute the universe.[120]

The pithiest of his drawings' meanings are associated with the circle, *rota or rotae*, perhaps the most meaningful geometric form in history. From its association with divinity and infinity, to Ezekiel 82:13-21's apocalyptic visions, the circle has remained the most pertinent Christian signifier. Adapted from antiquity, the wheel (rotae)[121] or circle has long figured as a powerful symbol. Through antiquity to Christianity, this perfect geometric shape was associated with courage, heavenly bodies, perfection, and the infinity of the Church with its sacraments, or the expansion of the Church through the world.[122] For Augustine, Helen Dow notes, the circle was reminiscent of virtue because its conformity and concordance

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[119] Cosgrove, *Geography & Vision*, 38.
[120] In the *Vaticanus* manuscript fol.69r. Opicinus points out their direct relationship. Image and image description is available to view in Laharie, *Le Journal Singulier,* catalogue entry Fig.25. Dessin V13. Vat.Lat.6435, fol.69r.
[121] The word wheel, rota, and circle seem to be interchangeable not only in writings about medieval times but potentially during medieval times itself. To clarify my position, *rota*, wheel and circle being the same, I draw from Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 330. A study of memory in Medieval Culture, in which Carruthers explains the etymology of the word *rota*. "The figure of rhetorical Rota Virgili (Virgil's Wheel…a mnemonic diagram used for pedagogical purposes, …may provide the connection between the Latin word *rota*, wheel and the English phrase "by rote." Rote is "of obscure origin" according to the OED, although it appears as though it should be derived either from the Latin *rota* or the French *rote*, or "way, route." As the OED states, however, there has been "no evidence to confirm these suggestions." While my review of the evidence failed to confirm a derivation either, it may help to strengthen the suggestion in favour of the Latin over the French origin. … Rote also has the generalized meaning of 'habit' or 'custom', that which memory produces …" 330.
[122] Helen J. Dow, "The Rose-Window," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20, no. 3/4 (Jul.-Dec. 1957): 268.

stand above all other geometric forms. [123] The circle expands earth to the heavens, as per Lady Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.[124] The image of God as a wheel boasts a long-standing tradition in Christianity, both verbal and visual. Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth century German nun and visionary, says as much: "God is paternity. Just as paternity is the circle of a wheel, Deity is the fullness of the wheel. In it and from it are all things. Beyond it, there is no creator. … God remained entire, like a wheel."[125] For Hildegard in her *Liber Divinorum Operum* (LDO), the circle, sphere or wheel is as much a central and crucial visual trope as it is the means of creation in the image of God, as well as the habitat of the human being. While in *Scivias*, Hildegard's universe was "in the shape of the egg, small at the top, large in the middle and narrowed at the bottom," in *Liber Divinorum Operum* the shape of the universe radically changes.[126] The voice of the divine in *Liber Divinorum Operum* insists that this image, this shape of the world:

> exists everlasting in the knowledge of the true Love which is God: constantly circling, wonderful for human nature, and such that it is not consumed by age and cannot be increased by anything new. It rather remains just as God has created it, everlasting until the end of time. In its foreknowledge and in its workings the Godhead is like a wheel, a whole. In no way is it to be divided because the Godhead has neither beginning nor end. No one can grasp it, for it is timeless. And just as a wheel encloses within itself what lies hidden within it, so also does the Holy Godhead enclose everything within itself without limitation, and it exceeds everything. For no one could disperse its might or overpower it or complete it.[127]

Interestingly, it is through *rota*, circularity, and repeated sequences, that learning is also acquired.[128] Similarities and contrasts, unfoldings and analogies, the plurals which inflect the

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[123] Ibid.
[124] McMahon, *Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 233.
[125] Priscilla Throop, *Causes and Cures of Hildegard of Bingen* (Charlotte: MedievalMS, 2008): 2.
[126] Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 93.
[127] Hildegard Bingensis, "Liber Divinorum Operum" in *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (CCCM 92)*, ed. A. Derolez and Peter Dronke (Belgium: Brepolis Publishers, 1996), 26.
[128] Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 82.

multiple spaces, journeys, and movements no less than twice at each turn, like the rhumb line mash of fol.17v, are repeated (over again).

Beyond the formation and the associations drawn from the significance of the circle (*rotae*), the bi-centric assembly brings together a number of the Palatinus drawings into a coherent group.[129] Yet, what is significant is the deep sense of inception, beginning, flux and mutability this constellation has. In the Vaticanus Latinus 6435 fol.85v[130] while small variants appear in relation to creation, the creation emphasizes *difference.* In an act of free translation, Opicinus draws a female figure, Virgo-Europa, as *geographer,* instead of the usual God as geographer. In her left hand, Virgo holds a compass from which, in perfect ratios, spills out the double rhumb line form that covers the Mediterranean coast. Mirroring and inversion, therefore, present themselves as visual and methodological strategies whose purpose is to highlight the relationship between viewing and interpretation.[131]

3.4 Reflection/Sight/Knowledge

> I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the prosecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, " Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches …" – Revelation 1:9

To see and to interpret are two actions Opicinus uses to adjust and adapt the content, form and style of his images, especially in the Vaticanus manuscript. Like John, who, while in prophetic ecstasy hears the Lord instruct him to record what he sees, Opicinus crafts the Vaticanus*'* folios as images from his mind's eye. Opicinus says:

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[129] To view these images, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris,* XXXV.
[130] Image and image description is available to view in Laharie, *Le Journal Singulier,* 895-901, catalogue entry Fig.44. Dessin V31. Vat.Lat.6435, fol.85v.
[131] Harding, "Madness", 202. Harding argues that to see the 'truth', the divine truth that is, the believer will comprehend the invisible from the visible matter. For Harding, mirroring, or to see through images as mirrors, is a way of making do with things of the visible world.

> *[Didici hanc artem descriptoriam non ab homine neque per hominem, sed per Spiritum Ihesus Christi. Omnia iudicia facta domui mei uel mihi et personis mihi coniunctis iuxta considerationem speculi de necessitate fuerunt; que nullomodo euitari potuerant, secundum certa signa preterita que post factum declarata sunt mihi. De futuris autem omne iudicium Deo relinquatur, sicut de presentibus uoluntatibus humanis occultis.]*
> I learned the art of drawing, not from a man or grace of a man, but because Jesus Christ revealed it to me. All judgments made against me and against my family or against my relatives, were necessary *if we consider the mirror* (the image); they could not have been avoided; according to certain signs of the past which later became clear to me. But [as] regards t[he] future, any decision should be left to God, [and]the same for hidden human intentions.[132]

Words and images on the page merge as intermediaries of meaning. Also like John, Opicinus was in exile when his visions and events occurred. It seems as though prophetic seeing and recording arises from instructions straight out of the Bible.

Furthermore, scattered among other unrelated notes, Opicinus describes his drawing as a mirror, a reflection or a visual inscription of his personal troubles. Although the precise meaning of these words is not entirely clear, Opicinus reveals two important notions: 1) the ability to draw and conceive visual forms is a providence of God and his son; and 2) all images are mirrors, revelations or instances of truths arising out of the past, present, or future, including the artistic ability to construct links between real and imaginary through visual means. What this means is that image has an almost exclusive ability to construct knowledge.[133]

Belief in images—the notion that they can explicate the truth or, at least, provide a pathway to understanding the world (rather than merely facilitating perceiving it)—would

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[132] Laharie, *Le Journal Singulier,* 900. All Latin translations are mine, unless noted.
[133] Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 200-01 says of images in the Middle Ages: "Isidore of Seville defines a picture (*pictura* can also describe a schematized landscape in the form of a world map, or a figure like Lady Philosophy … Carruthers writes just ahead of this quote) as an 'image expressing the semblance of some thing' … And also, like words, pictures are cognitive in nature; their degree of mimetic realism is emphatically not a quality of importance to Isidore. Pictures are constructions, fictions, like all ideas and thoughts. And in the same way as words, pictures are made for the work of memory: learning and meditation. *Pictura* is a cognitive instrument, serving invention in the same manner as words do."

transform the Middle Ages. Gregory the Great's dictum holding the image to be useful to the illiterate—those lacking knowledge of the Word—and Bernard of Clairvaux's outright damnation of what imagery (including sculpture) could do, illustrate the great gulf in medieval attitudes regarding this form of expression.[134] As two of the best-known authorities on this matter, they are frequently cited in studies of medieval art and history. Bede also, for instance, describes images as aids to understanding *the Word*. For Bede, Celia Chazelle asserts, images play a positive role: they are "valuable insofar as they ornament churches, encourage meditation on the persons and events they depict and stir emotional responses such as contrition, love or anxiety about the Last Judgment."[135] Contemplating religious imagery can lead to salvation provided the viewer is capable of discerning the meaning(s) lying therein, that is, see the invisible in visible figures. In other words, contemplation or meditation works only if the carnal eye is able to transcend the objective reality of the image and grasp its theological intent. "Medieval pictures," as Herbert Kessler argues, "instigated dynamic progressions" and "generated theological knowledge."[136] Yet, the act of grasping such knowledge is in itself a process requiring the assistance of one who is qualified to undertake such a task. But as Opicinus recognizes, even such an authority may not be able to control *how* images unfold in the viewer's mind.[137] At the same time, however, he places faith in the power of the ordinary person to discover spiritual truth: "Let each person explain his life spiritually according to his memory of things he has done… In a similar way let him

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[134] Herbert L. Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 152.
[135] Celia Martin Chazelle, "Christ and the Vision of God: the biblical diagrams of the Codex Amiatinus," in *The Mind's Eye: Medieval Art and the Dynamics of Contemplation*, ed. Anne-Marie Bouche and Jeffrey F. Hamburger (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2006), 97.
[136] Kessler, "Turning a Blind Eye," 414.
[137] Morse, "Seeing and Believing," 190: "He worried that the gap between the preacher's words and the images that formed in the audience's mind (images which would then have the power of motivating actions) was too great and too uncontrollable."

explain all of his dreams that he can call to mind, and let him compare them all with his consciousness… Then after he has considered everything, if he finds from this type of comparison the truth of either his life or his faith, he will receive by the grace of God the gift of judgment off his own person not another."[138] Nevertheless, physical sight constitutes a point of entry, art its threshold, the mundane world a path to transformation and the attainment of "elevated things".[139] Seeing *in* images is finding a path to the love of Christ or, as Susannah Biernoff puts it, vision has a "parasitic relationship to knowledge and love."[140]

While Bede believes images can assist in comprehending spiritual truth, even for him, divine invisibility is not representable. Perhaps even the diagram that aims at organizing concepts, ideas and images might have been an approach resulting in not perfectly clear messages.[141] It seems that images of any complexity are subject to different interpretations.[142] Nonetheless, between the eighth century (Bede's time) and the fourteenth century, discourse on vision and optics influenced how things were seen and crafted with a view to conforming to contemporary theories.[143] Moreover, sight was held to be the most important of all the senses and authorities like St. Augustine ensured its primacy of place among the senses. Intellectual capacity has long been thought to be analogous to vision: even today *to see* means *to know*. The rhetoric of sight and knowledge is intertwined and equivalent.

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[138] Ibid.,173.
[139] Kessler, "Turning a Blind Eye," 415.
[140] Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 11. In Kessler, "Turning a Blind Eye," 415, Kessler quotes Bruno of Segni, who speculated why images were allowed into churches in the first place: "gentiles and unbelievers used to take greatest delight in seeing ornament and were drawn to a love of Christ through it."
[141] Chazelle, "Christ and the Vision of God," 97.
[142] Ibid., 98.
[143] Dallas G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 170. Harding, "Madness," 205. Harding argues that Opicinus could have alluded to Augustine sporadically in the Vaticanus manuscript, but he has not explicitly addressed Augustine's notions on sight and vision.

According to Aristotle, "sight … most of all senses make us know."[144] Dallas Denery II suggests Duns Scotus found a connection between "sensory vision," physical performance of the eye and "intellectual vision." It would appear, then, that a close relationship exists between intelligence or knowledge and vision. "Knowing something is somehow analogous to seeing something."[145] The analogy of sight and knowledge, in Denery's view, "fostered a Western intellectual predilection for the eternal over the temporal, being over becoming, and a peculiar distinction between knower and known."[146] The production of knowing is somehow erased—production Opicinus locates in memory and even dreams, as mentioned in the quotation above. What this means, simply, is that the teleological classification of the image(s) is unstable. The projection of *sight and seeing* hardly defines the space; rather, it breaks it up into fractions, leaving the viewer, or should I say the viewer's eyes, responsible for reassembling it.

Bacon, as noted above, claimed geometry to be the chief explicator of seeing. Line, circle and oval in Opicinus' images represent the physical world. Specifically, as pointed out earlier, the bottom of the fol.24r, the rhumb line wind rose, denotes the geography and topography of the Mediterranean made explicit in fol.5r of the Palatinus. The virgin cast as a geographer in the Vaticanus fol.85v is another example. The act of recollecting becomes an act of connection or clarification brought about within a carefully constructed vocabulary of either the learned or seen discourses of the time. Changing the status of geometry (through *difference*) to something beyond its phenomenal singularity transforms each sign, circle, line, figure of Mary, just to name a few, into an expression of knowledge.

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[144] Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment,* 63.
[145] Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen,* 5.
[146] Ibid., 8.

Il trionfo di Tommaso d'Aquino (1340), a painting by Lippo Memmi, [147] is a more explicit example of how geometry aids learning and intelligence. Shafts of light, depicted as lines, are overt indicators of the objective acquisition of knowledge. The assembly of the light/lines radiates from God's mouth toward the saint in the middle of the picture plane. The lines, which convey the Word and thus God's truth, flood through his mind infusing it with knowledge. In the same fashion, knowledge contained in the works of a number of evangelists and prophets is communicated to Aquinas directly from their books. From the works of Aquinas, too, shafts of light/lines radiate in a full circle illuminating a group of theologians, clergy and lay gathered at the bottom of the painting.[148] From their open books Plato and Aristotle feed St. Thomas classical knowledge, for these two greatest of ancient philosophers offered different, if not contrary, understandings of natural philosophy, the physical world and divine ordinance. Platonic thought largely disseminated through Augustine (for whom physical sight is the greatest of the senses, albeit only a mere metaphor for the far more important sight that is of the mind's eye), holds knowledge to be the privilege of the few. For Plato, the light casting the image in the cave is but a simulacrum of the real (knowledge that is); it is the *unfiltered* light that one must seek.[149] In *Timeaus* Plato writes on the stream of light as a vision/sight/image forming mechanism: "Because the stream and daylight are similar, the whole so formed is homogeneous, and the motions caused by the stream coming into contact with an object or an object coming into contact with the stream penetrate right through the body and produce in the soul the sensation which

[147] Because of the copyright restrictions, to view the image see: Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996), 24-25.
[148] Tachau, "Seeing as Action," 344.
[149] Plato, *Republic*, 227-35.

we call sight."[150] As Plato illustrates here, the understanding of the object at hand is not obtained through corporeal senses, but though the 'soul' being the intellect. The light that emanates from the holy sources, the most sublime light, as depicted in this image, is the light Katherine Tachau describes thus: "Radiating outward, it travels rectilinearly along rays diffusing themselves spherically in just the way that perspective diagrams depict the multiplication of *species* from many spots on a circular surface to suggest their rectilinear multiplication from every point… the implicit geometry of illumination requires that it reach outward…" The light here is a metaphor, a spiritual referent.[151]

The similarity that parallels Opicinus' Palatinus oeuvre and *Il trionfo* spans beyond just radiating lines. Although in the case of St. Aquinas in the latter work the transmission of knowledge through sight is rendered explicitly, I argue that both artists, Opicinus and Memmi, make a point of using geometry to show links between perception and knowledge. But how one is to arrive at that knowledge in these examples is another matter. Memmi makes the line, the ray of light, a primary cursor between the teachings and the receptors—theologians, lay and clergy gathered at the bottom of the image. In contrast, Opicinus' image makes the viewer work for it—work at acquiring knowledge. If the viewer can discern his/her 'mirror' figure in the image, the small praying figures which appear to be marked out by the rhumb lines of the bottom register, then the commitment of the image becomes clear. Or as Camille states explicitly, "the image has become dogma, and light the sign of learning."[152] The intelligibility of sight and light is represented through the line then, and I do not mean any line, any arbitrary set of coordinates, but the radiating line extending from God,

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[150] Plato, *Timeaus and Critias.* Trans. D. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1971), 62 (13:45). As quoted in Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment,* 50.
[151] Tachau, "Seeing as Action," 344.
[152] Camille, *Gothic Art,* 25.

or the God image on Earth: His son, Jesus Christ. Even though the divine is unrepresentable, if the attempt is to be made, the image needs to challenge the sight in order to achieve an intimate relation. Mobilizing geometry, the science of vision, is, as Denery argues (drawing on Bacon), "quite simply, the key to interpreting and understanding scripture."[153] Yet it is the scripture that turns the sight into an enemy, and knowledge into temperance.

[153] Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen,* 6.

4 Chapter: End in beginning *In principio*

> …but serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your *eyes will be opened,* and you will *see like God*, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate. Then *the eyes of both were opened*, and *they knew* that they were naked; and they sewed figs lives together and made loincloths for themselves. – Genesis 3.4-3.8

It is from the very beginning that the eye appears as an access point to both salvation and sin. Analogously, the eye with which to see is a destabilizing phenomenon because it is able both to distinguish between good and evil and to learn and to practice actions that compromise the contract with God. There is no way of undoing this predicament. Working only through the physical senses, or as St. Augustine puts it, "the eyes of the flesh dwelling upon the food which they provide for my mind,"[154] cannot access the truth or the sight of the divine. It is the mind, or the Platonic soul, that highest of all perceptual complexes that must be actively involved. The mind must contemplate and meditate upon a continuous stream of concepts and ideas—a kind of a virtual digestion of contents abstracted and presented in a specific configuration—and then makes possibilities out of fractions, trajectories and mathematics. Here the undoing of any sin in general frees up the imagination, which, in turn, opens up all the various dimensions of seeing. But here is where Opicinus had to reconcile *maior scientia* and *scientia naturalis*:[155] higher truth versus knowledge of facts.

Opicinus claims, according to Salomon's translation, that he never witnessed the actual production of the maps he copied, even though maps are the closest representation of *scientia naturalis*. Confides Opicinus: "I never saw the maps being drawn, nor was I interested in that

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[154] Augustine, *Confessions*, 62.
[155] Salomon, "Newly Discovered Manuscript," 49.

because my ignorance did not allow me to know such things. God alone gave me the understanding so that I become able to copy a map without anybody showing me how to do it. I did not know however what mystery was hidden in them until 1335 after I had recovered from my terrible disease."[156] Yet, careful evaluation of the geometric elements featured in his images, reveals that more than anything else, Opicinus was concerned with describing accurately scientific theories, especially those concerning the production of navigational charts. These productions emphasize moral lessons in terms of either abstract concepts, sight and cognition, or what is more obvious: sin and redemption.

On the fol.2r, [157] however, Opicinus replaces the concentric transparencies of the spheres and the notion of cosmic continuity with something more explicit. This folio is not the only representation in the Palatinus that features an accurate outline of the Mediterranean coast; nonetheless, I view it as a careful and intelligent contrast to the diagrammatic microcosm-macrocosm integration ubiquitous throughout the text. I have argued thus far that diagrammatic and geometric visual means played an important role as spiritual healing manifest though a process of perceptual participation. This practice is specifically illustrated in the *ymago et similitudo Dei* fol.24r, which draws on the zodiac man tradition—a tradition wherein characteristics of the human body are viewed as elements of the microcosm set against the universe/macrocosm. The mathematical inscription of repeated elements suggests a metaphorical correspondence between overlaid bodies and nautical units. These are not simply points of comparison or models of order and proportion; rather, they support the notion of a cosmic *rota* (wheel) in which all of creation, the physical and the spiritual, is integrated and bound together in a state of harmony. Various aspects of reality upon which

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[156] Salomon, "Newly Discovered Manuscript," 52.
[157] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, III.

Medieval theories of health were predicated, theory of humors, are for the most part abandoned in the Palatinus. On the other hand, the relationship between the human body and the world is represented as an intimate one.[158] Charles Clark notes that early Christian authors, drawing on the Stoics and Plato, used the term *mundus breuis* (small world) to refer to man, adding that this was "because he is composed of the same elements as the universe and because of the innate sympathy which exists between the heavens and the earth."[159] Plato, however, specifically used the term small universe on the grounds that man was made of the same four elements as the universe.

As these references to pagan and heretical traditions often clashed with the official Church view of the zodiac man, a reasonable compromise was essential. I propose that Opicinus' fol. 2r[160] reflects this compromise. The image has assumed the role of instructing the viewer in how to live in a world corrupted by sin and death. The geographical alternative to the zodiac man is found in Adam, the first man (*primus homo*). Man's carnal nature is linked metaphorically to earth: blood to water, muscles to soil, bones to rock.[161] Adam, Opicinus' *primus homo*, is positioned at the centre of a familiar geography that, on the one hand, constitutes him (in accordance with the early medieval teachings of such authorities as Isidore and Bede) and, on the other, problematizes the relationship between two factions: good and evil, sin and temptation, corruptibility and faith. The topography of the Mediterranean and the geography of the region are in this folio shaped like two human figures engaged in conversation. Europe is shaped in the guise of an old man and Africa as a woman. Situated between these two anthropomorphic forms of Europe and Africa, is a

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[158] Charles Clark, "The Zodiac Man in Medieval Medical Astrology," *Journal of Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 3 (1982): 22.
[159] Ibid., 21.
[160] To view the image, see: Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris*, III.
[161] Clark, "Zodiac Man," 22.

Mediterranean sea as representation of a wild bearded demon, *mare diabolicum.*[162] This is clear only if the image is rotated some degrees around and viewed more than once. Or, if conditions permit (of course, it is a matter of speculation as to how these images would have been viewed), the viewer might meditate on more than one image at a time, thus assembling the pieces of the puzzle into a comprehensive whole. Beneath the map, are the figures of a woman and a man—another Adam and Eve banished from Eden because they saw. Beneath their feet Opicinus writes: *causa peccati*, cause of sin. At the centre of the image, Seth and Able face forward at the viewer; with his back to the viewer, Cain aims his bow toward the image described above toward the map. The bottom half of the image is the mirror opposite of the top half, except that the divine body has been replaced by an enlarged map of the Mediterranean Sea, half of whose watery expanse is coloured green, the other half red. Here, in fol.2r links between sin and topography are explicit**.** Emanating from Africa, sin, corruption and dissonance overwhelm Europe. Outlined in the bottom half of fol.2r asserts Opicinus: *Eva; virgo carne; fide corrupta; a paradiso prolapse*; *superbia virginis; efficitur; prostibulum Sathane*; *omnis immunditia Europe; revertetur in Affricam; reprobation; huiusmodi virginis.*[163] The familiar image of the Virgin and Child is rendered here as a longhaired woman and a child.[164] The two figures occupy the bottom roundel, below which is a caption that reads: *fructus penitentie,* fruit of penitence. Around the head of the woman, however, are inscribed the words *locus penitentie*, place of penitence, thereby linking Eve's sin, the cause of which is recognition and sight, to a specific locality. It is to the eye and mind that one should look for reconciliation. Similarly, a *sponsal* couple which is rendered at the

[162] Salomon, "Newly Discovered Manuscript," 48 and Harding, "Opening to God," 24.
[163] Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris,* 156.
[164] The female figure is lacking the halo, which would distinguish her as the Virgin Mary, who was a saint after all. In this case, here the women are depicted with wild and long hair.

heart of bottom figure, labeled *amor naturalis* suggests the possibility of redemption, that is, the realization of the promise that sin can be washed away provided one is willing to take into one's heart Christ and his Church.

This kind of precision and instruction is lacking elsewhere, particularly in fol.24r, *ymago et similitudo Dei*. The authority of geometry is used here, in the fol.24r, as an antidote against visual sacrilege while maintaining links between the invisible and visible, making conception possible only after it transcends dynamic circularity. From this perspective, it is not surprising then that Opicinus based his drawings on geometric polygons, a strategy that compels the viewer to look and see in a way that precludes succumbing to the same temptation that proved Eve's undoing. The explicit source of sin in fol.2r links the story of creation to the modes of perception and is drawn clearly utilizing images that reference recognizable geography, human figure and biblical narrative. In fol. 24r, on the other hand, with the aid of order, line, mathematics, mapping and geometry, the image forges a process that relates fact and thought. Umberto Eco writes that John Scotus Eriugena (9th century) spoke of the Beauty of Creation in terms of music "generated by the simultaneous playing of the *Same* and the *Different* to produce harmony in which the voices, listened to in isolation, say nothing, but once merged into a single concert produce a natural sweetness."[165] Eriugena seeks clarity and splendor and proportion (of elements) in *repetition* and, not unlike Opicinus, holds the drama of any event, whether the realization of a theological quest or recitation of a segment of the Bible, to be the responsibility of the contingent action of observing. While making sense of the world and life in general is the responsibility of each individual, ultimately, it is the divine that measures the degree of one's success in this

[165] Umberto Eco, *On Beauty*, trans. Alastair McEwen (London: Maclehose Press, 2004), 83.

endeavor.

With a view to managing a complex mode of visual rendering and the pedagogical frame of the drawing, Opicinus constructs an abstract route, a diagram, which, according to Francis Bacon, the twentieth-century artist, is already inherent in the material, in the parchment.[166] Something is already beginning to emerge, a suspended form, which, in the end gathers together a fractured and complex content. The diagram is already a map, one that leads to no physical destination but rather structures paths leading to realization and knowledge. Opicinus' Palatinus manuscript is a collection of maps as much as a collection of prescriptions upon which the individual must dwell with an open mind. It is a map upon which an inscribed order manipulates the visual into a means of knowing. It is as Deleuze explains: a "… map [that] finds itself modified in the following map, rather than finding its origin in the preceding one: from one map to the next, it is not a matter of searching for an original, but of evaluating displacements." [167] In every map, in every drawing, the impasses and breakthroughs are random at best, yet as reversals and mirroring they constitute *difference* in course of action as well as course of reaction; in other words, they are images and imagination. Because each map is a *pictura*, a term Isidore of Seville defines as "an image expressing the semblance of some thing,"[168] it is a repository of information that demands to be configured anew. It brings to mind fractions for the purpose of becoming a whole. Carruthers asserts that pictures (images) are cognitive in nature and at the same time constructions and fictions.[169] Given that this concept of construction is one of Opicinus'

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[166] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 99-100. On pedagogical in Opicinus' drawings see Harding "Opening to God," 24. Also see Harding, "Madness," 203 where Harding argues that some Vaticanus images have a didactic purpose.
[167] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), 63.
[168] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 200.
[169] Ibid., 201.

primary concerns with regard to seeing images, he insists on 'censuring' that which is to be publicly viewed.

Hence the Palatinus becomes a careful calculation of circles, lines, ovals, zodiac signs and figures, leaving the imagination a great deal over which to ponder. It is thus that *ymago et similitudo Dei, ecclesia universalis* emerges as type of a structured fiction in which the literal, physical world is mediated by mathematics. What becomes clear by integrating aesthetic, scientific and theological modules is that observing and inventing create a productive environment outside of the simple reflective mode.[170] The work (the Palatinus) and how it might function come into view as a result of the demands the former makes on the viewer. Thus, Opicinus' folios gather viewers around them at each progression, setting up a milieu in which the active participation of the viewer/reader reduces the domination of one authority over another and reassigns the map or concept of mapping to the space of the encounter between two participants.

[170] Hartnett, "Michel De Certeau," 289.

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