

Chapter 3

Sound: Make a Joyful Noise: The Acoustical Environment

Silence and Sound in the Monastic Tradition

Later I went with the sisters to table for bread and water, which we usually have on that day. I understood the refectory reading completely. That I was not learned enough for this, I realized only after the reading was over.¹

So Margaret Ebner described her experience in the Dominican monastery of Maria Medingen on Good Friday 1336. What she heard, she understood. She attributed her understanding to the great sweet joy and grace she received earlier that day from her perception of the presence of God. For Margaret, her hearing and comprehension stemmed from a mystical root. For most Dominican women this daily listening experience did not involve mystical understanding; rather it was one of the numerous acoustic events that occurred during their daily activities and was a part of their sensual environment. They ate in silence so they could hear the readings during the meal. It was something they did everyday. The silence remained the same, but the readings changed. 1

The role of both sound and silence within the monastic environment was a significant one, encompassing all that was and was not heard from the refectory to the workroom, from the choir to the dormitory, and everywhere in-between. It is often the visual surroundings of the monastery that come to mind when we think of monastic sensual environment. However, the acoustic aspect of this environment—the aural and oral occurrences within the monastic house—is equally important to the reconstruction of the medieval monastic setting and essential to our understanding of the spirituality produced within it. Just as the spatial and visual environment was always before the eyes of the monastic inhabitants, the acoustic environment was constantly audible to their ears and issuing from their mouths. Because the acoustic environment also included the absence of sound, this was true even when there was silence. With the use of the term *acoustic environment*, I want to distinguish the various sounds and silences that permeated the lives of those who inhabited medieval monasteries. Whereas the spatial environment remained fairly static and the visual environment was not always accessible, the acoustic environment was constant and always changing. Some scholars have already begun to realize the significance that sound had for medieval spirituality. Caroline A. Bruzelius has shown how, through changes in the church structures that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian Clarisses used, the women's spirituality shifted from a focus that was visual to one that was acoustic. Hearing became the focus of the women's eucharistic piety when they could no longer see the elevation of the Host during Mass.² Also familiar are the acoustic or vocal manifestations of medieval mystics and 2

visionaries. The seemingly endless crying and wailing of Margery Kempe or the "Speakings" of Margaret Ebner are just two examples.³ This chapter will articulate the different components of the acoustic environment that filled the daily lives of Dominican women. These include silence, liturgical song, and other types of singing, prayers, preaching, talking and conversation, communal reading, crying, screams, and manufactured sounds such as those of bells.

The monastic acoustic environment has a long history in the records of traditional monasticism as well as in the records of Dominican women. Only through an understanding of the place of sound and silence within western medieval monasticism can we truly comprehend how Dominican women influenced and were influenced by their acoustic environment. The Dominican nuns' constitutions from 1259 tell us much about the regulation of the acoustic environment within the monasteries, while the Sister-Books show us the role that Dominican women expected the acoustic environment to play in their spiritual and everyday lives. It is important to note that these two sources are not always in agreement. In addition, manuscripts from these communities indicate the texts that the women sang, read, and heard. However, before I examine the acoustic environment, it is necessary to consider the connections between women and sound as understood in the Middle Ages. It these connections and the attitudes which sprang from them that influenced both Dominican women and the men who composed legislation affecting them. **3**

Medieval Christian thought described humans as divided into two groups based on gender: the more perfect male and the grossly imperfect female.⁴ This dichotomy created a diametrically opposed set of characteristics for each gender. "[M]ale and female were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect / body, active / passive, rational / irrational, reason / emotion, self-control / lust, judgment / mercy, and order / disorder."⁵ The Biblical tradition ordered women to be silent in both public and private, the implication being they were not normally or naturally so.⁶ In fact medieval Christian society considered women to be by nature loquacious, verbose, talkative, garrulous, gossipy chatters, scolds, talebearers, rumormongers, and busybodies. They prattled, babbled, jabbered, nagged, harangued, cackled, and in general expended a lot of hot air and very little reason. **4**

[M]edieval men associated women with the power of speech in part because they associated both women and oral persuasion with seduction and magic. Men found women seductive because they projected their own sexual urges onto the objects of their desires. They found speech seductive, in a way that we do not, because they lived in an oral universe that knew the immediacy of the sensuous power of words as sounds . . . ⁷

In addition, scientific thought held that women were more base, material creatures in comparison to men, and more often associated with the physical body and sensual pleasure. Moreover, they were thought to have less self-control and less rational capabilities, and hence were more fickle, easily deceived, and easily corrupted.⁸ Medieval theological thinking linked women explicitly to sin in a way that men were not.⁹ Science supported theology, and theology backed up science on this matter. Sometimes described as a polluting force, both through their menstrual cycles and their mouths, women were often depicted as perilous beings, bringers of disorder.¹⁰ Much of this misogyny sprang from the pens of men who were clerics or monastics and had little or nothing to do with women on a daily basis. But this does not diminish the fact that their generalizations and phobias were circulated in biblical commentaries, treatises, instructional literature, pastoral manuals, and sermons, all of which in some form eventually reached the ears (if not the illiterate eyes) of the general public. Women, and especially "bad" women, talked too much. So it is not surprising that the inverse was also considered true; for medieval Christians, "good" women were silent women.

The proscription against women talking found fertile ground in cloistered life because silence was one essential element of the monastic environment.¹¹ The absence of sound was an important monastic practice and the presence of silence accentuated the sounds that did exist. "The preservation of silence in which prayer and reflection could flourish was one of the primary aims of all strict monastic observance."¹² Silence was advised for both male and female monastics. Instruction on the virtue of silence can be found in many monastic Rules as can the condemnation of the vice of speech and the types and manner of speech allowed to monastics.¹³ Strictures against speech relied heavily on biblical authorities, citing the psalms, Proverbs, and other parts of the Old and New Testament, including the Pauline Epistles.¹⁴ Others turned to the examples of the Desert Fathers who often lived in silent solitude in the wilderness for decades on end, listening to God and speaking to no one.¹⁵

There were several purposes for monastic silence. The first of these was to avoid sin. The second was to practice virtue, specifically humility and obedience. The third was because silence allowed one to listen, which leads implicitly to the fourth reason: silence allowed one to pray and meditate, to listen to God. Finally, silence was also practiced for the sake of itself, not as a stepping-stone.¹⁶ All of these reasons for observing silence are linked together. And except for the last one, silence was not the ultimate goal of the practitioner. Rather silence was a means to achieve a desired end, such as humility or prayer. Silence was the journey or the preparation that the monastic made. Just as silence was regulated by monastic Rules, so too was sound. Sound in the form of singing was meant to praise God through the performance of

5

6

the Opus Dei. When not praising God, speech was to be limited. It was meant like silence to strive toward the virtues of humility and obedience. Restraint was the hallmark of monastic speech.

The Stopped-Up Oven: Silence

At the turn of the fourteenth century, the Dominican Inquisitor Bernard Gui visited the first house of female Dominicans in Prouille and recorded his observations in his *De Fundatione et Prioribus Conventuum Provinciae Tolosanae et Provinciae*. He stated that the nuns "keep strict silence and perpetual enclosure; they work with their hands to avoid laziness and idleness."¹⁷ Gui expressed the medieval male's constant fear and distrust of unsupervised women. His words sought to reassure his fellow Dominicans that the women who inhabited the Order's first community were safe from themselves, the outside world, and perhaps even the devil himself; their hands and tongues were constrained, the first made busy and the second made mute. 7

Dominican women followed the Rule of Saint Augustine, a text based on three documents composed at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century.¹⁸ The early Rule existed in separate versions for men and women.¹⁹ There were few differences between the male and female ways of life.²⁰ The Augustinian Rule had a flexibility that allowed it to adapt to contemporary monastic practice as it had evolved over the course of the Middle Ages. Although barely mentioned in the Rule, silence was held to be one of the necessary elements of monastic life, especially for women. The Augustinian Rule scarcely addresses silence in the monastic community, only mentioning it in two places. The first warns against imprudent speech: "Be cautious of harsh words. Should you utter them, then do not be afraid to speak the healing word with the same mouth that caused the wound."²¹ The injunction is similar to that found in the Benedictine Rule and other rules for religious women.²² The second mention of silence concerns conduct while in the refectory: "From the beginning of the meal to the end [you should] listen to the customary reading without noise or protest against the Scriptures, for you have not only to satisfy your physical hunger, 'but also to hunger for the word of God' (cf. Amos 8:11)."²³ Here silence prepares the way for spirituality. It allows the soul to feed on holy words and spiritual things. The silence in the Dominican nuns' refectory is similar to the requirements of other monastic rules, but the Rule focuses on the function that the room serves—a place to hear readings—giving a reason for the practice of silence often lacking in other Rules. Hence when Margaret Ebner experienced her miraculous understanding on Good Friday, 1336, this event took place in the implied silence of the refectory where her spiritual hunger was fed with knowledge of God according to the Rule. 8

Since the Rule did not give much practical advice on how to live a monastic life, the various orders that used it supplemented it with statutes, institutions, and constitutions that set forth details for the arrangement of daily life in a religious community. Dominican women in Germany had been following the constitutions of the nuns of St. Mark in Strasbourg since the middle of the 1220s. These were based on the constitutions of San Sixtus in Rome dated to 1221. The constitutions of St. Mark's were supplanted by an Order-wide women's constitution in 1259 issued by the General Master Humbert of Romans who wished to ensure that every female Dominican house was following the same practices.²⁴ **9**

Chapter eight of Humbert of Romans' constitutions describes where, when, and how silence was to be maintained within the Order's female houses. Heading the list are the oratory, the cloister arcade where the dead were buried, the dormitory, and the refectory. These were the places where most monastic rules called for silence. With permission, speaking was tolerated in other places provided it was in a low voice. The Rule stipulated that the women were to work in silence.²⁵ Total silence was the goal, but it was a lofty one and attaining it was difficult. Mezzi Sidwibrin of Töss appears to have broken silence often in the workroom, for the author of her vita says that she liked to sing non-liturgical songs while she spun. Of course, the author also takes pains to point out that Mezzi was a sweet and simple girl.²⁶ Infractions of silence were counted from one daily Chapter meeting to the next; up to three breaches with graduated punishments were permitted.²⁷ Thus it seems that at least occasional breaches of silence were expected as normal behavior by the constitutions. **10**

Novices were to be taught to pray in silence so that other members of the community were not disturbed by them. They were also to be instructed "not to speak at forbidden times or in forbidden places, nor elsewhere without permission."²⁸ These nuns-in-training were issued extra instructions concerning silence because the way of life was new to them and the observation of silence presumably harder for them. The constitutions also assumed that novices were young, and hence less disciplined, and thus required greater restrictions. While the constitutions tell us the where, when, and how of the practice of silence, they do not give much attention to the why. For that we can turn to the interpretations given in the women's own words. **11**

The Unterlinden Sister-Book's author devotes an entire chapter in the introduction to the "strict observance of silence." Silence was one of the integral practices of life at Unterlinden, along with the instruction of novices, the performance of the Divine Office, the nun's rigorous abstinence, their mutual love for one another, and their devotion to the Virgin Mary. It is moreover the first custom the author describes after describing the foundation of the monastery: **12**

Therefore, there was among them a great peace, concord, and "love, which is the chain of perfection," by which the talkative tongue is restrained. For just as the

heat of an oven is warmed with its opening obstructed, so with the observation of silence is the grace of the Holy Spirit retained in the heart. Knowing this, they placed a guard on their voice so that they might not sin in their tongue; for this reason their hearts grew hot within them and "in their meditation the fire burns" that is the Lord our God, consuming all the blight of sin.²⁹

For these nuns, there were strong benefits to be had from observing silence. Silence brought one closer to God and the Holy Spirit, and allowed God to set one's heart on fire. Silence let one meditate clearly without the distraction of speech. If speaking could lead to sin, not speaking could prevent it. Avoiding sin was one of the reasons for the practice of monastic silence. According to the text's author, silence in fact destroyed sin, burning up the evil lodged within the nuns.

Other Sister-Books also saw silence as an integral part of monastic life, one that could for the spiritual benefit of the women be practiced more often than was stipulated in the constitutions. In her introduction to the Töss text, the author describes the silence observed by the early sisters of her house: "They were also so soft and quiet with words and with work that during the day it was as quiet in the cloister as if it were after compline."³⁰ This silence was communal in nature. 13

Within the individual vitae of the Sister-Books, silence, for all its prescribed importance, does not receive extensive attention. The Sister-Book of Adelhausen mentions silence in only three or four passages.³¹ In other Sister-Books, the nuns' lives make passing mention to silence as a noble monastic virtue; those living a good and holy life practice silence. Observing silence is associated with proper or excessive fasting, obedience to the prioress or other monastic officials, and diligent execution of the Divine Office.³² The practice is mentioned in passing in lives such as Ita of Tungen's who kept silence so well that few ever heard her voice.³³ It was common for many of the women to maintain silence on the day of communion. This is stressed in the life of the St. Katharinenthal nun Adelheit of Ossingen.³⁴ The silence on such days was meant to be reflective and contemplative. Both words and food were minimized to emphasize the importance of the ritual. In another case, Elsbeth Heinburgin is reported to have kept silent for weeks on end and was particularly diligent at Advent and on fast days.³⁵ At Kirchberg Elsbeth of Oettingen did the same during Advent.³⁶ Silence in these instances reaffirmed the sanctity of already holy days. Anna of Winegge at Unterlinden kept a silence that was so intense that it was "as if she had no mouth to speak and no ears to hear."³⁷ Willbrich of Offeningen at Kirchberg is said to have practiced many long silences.³⁸ At the monastery of Gotteszell, Leugart kept the silence so strictly that when a fire broke out at night and the other sisters were frantically calling out for the key to unlock the door that would lead them to safety, she said nothing, even though the key was in her possession.³⁹ Although this 14

story is one of the old chestnuts used to describe the virtues of religious women, the fact that it is included in the *Gotteszell Sister-Book*, shows what the women, and especially the text's author, thought about the place of silence in their lives.

Silence served other functions. Margaret Willin's silence was a part of her asceticism. "She had no attention for the parlor window, or for any one outside the monastery. She preferred to hold herself even from her own brother whom she had in our Order. She was always so silent that she never spoke a word."⁴⁰ Her practice of this stringent silence is paired with a description of the bodily mortifications that she inflicted upon herself. However, silence was not always considered the highest virtue by all nuns. Like Leutgart, Adelheit of Holderberg maintained silence at all the prescribed times. But unlike the prioress of Gotteszell, this St. Katharinenthal nun, when confronted with a distraught novice in need of consolation, asked God whether it was better to maintain her silence or to comfort the girl. God gave her to understand that she should speak to the novice. For her words and for breaking her silence, God rewarded Adelheit with a eucharistic vision.⁴¹ 15

In these cases, silence was not the focal point of the women's spiritual activities, but rather was part of a spiritual process. Their observance of silence was evidence that they led holy lives in two senses. First they followed the letter of the law, the Dominican constitution. Silence was required of them and so they were silent. Hence the life of Leugart of Gotteszell says, "[S]he never spoke in forbidden places or at forbidden times."⁴² Second, and more importantly, silence added meaning to their spiritual devotions. And as the Unterlinden author suggests, it set their hearts on fire for the love of God. 16

It is what is visible and audible, most often in the guise of verbal expression, that captures the attention of the *Sister-Books'* authors. The prayers the women say, their conversations with Christ, their bodily mortifications, and their visions (the last two often done in secret but eventually revealed to the community) fill the pages of the *Sister-Books*. For all the emphasis placed on silence within the monastic tradition and for medieval women in general, Dominican women did not practice silence for its own sake, and rarely do they turn to the biblical, theological, or physiological explanations that others pointed to in commanding women to be silent. Their gender had little to do with their silence; their silence had everything to do with their quest for the Divine and with obedience to the Rule and constitution under which they lived. Silence allowed one to meditate, to turn inward and burn for God privately, away from the eyes of others. By writing *vitae* the authors of the *Sister-Books* wished to provide templates for extraordinary Dominican spirituality, but they could only report the outward manifestations of such spirituality within them. One can observe that someone is silent, but one cannot see or hear what occurs inside that silence. It is only when someone describes her own experiences that we can see the inward manifestations of her 17

devotions. That is what the authors of the Sister-Books wanted to relate.⁴³ Words must be used to describe what happened within silence. And because of this, the impact of silence on these women's spirituality can only be heard when the silence is broken.

Sound Regulated by Ritual

Sound often intruded upon the silence practiced by Dominican women. The most important of these sounds was the bell rung in the Mass to signify the elevation of the Host.⁴⁴ When Adelheit of Ossingen, who seems to have been the guest mistress at St. Katharinenthal, was called to the kitchen during Mass to oversee the food for the monastery's guests, she cut through a snow-covered area (whether this was the inner cloister or somewhere in the outer precinct is unclear). On her way she heard the bell marking the raising of the Host. She knelt down where she was in the deep snow that suddenly became a cleared spot of green summer grass.⁴⁵ The bell was not the only sound that could mark this event. One Christmas Day at the monastery of Weiler, Lutgart of Husen was praying behind the altar when someone knocked on the wall to indicate the elevation of the Host. Lutgart stood up and was able to see the Host in the hands of the priest. It was as large as a bowl and inside was a small white baby who waved his hands and feet and wiggled his whole body.⁴⁶

18

Bells also served to call the women to meals, as well as to wake them in the middle of the night for Matins and early morning for Lauds. Such occurrences mark time in monastic life and find their way into the vitae. Hence it is recorded that a sister at St. Katharinenthal was awakened by the first bell-ringing Prime and a Kirchberg-nun was so devout that she hurried to Matins when the bell was rung.⁴⁷ At St. Katharinenthal the bell that summoned the nuns to the refectory for a meal after communion interrupted the vision that Adelheit of Spiegelberg had of the Christ Child. Obediently she left the choir and entered the dining area. But the Christ Child appeared in front of her at the table as a reward for her prompt obedience to the bell.⁴⁸ Bells summoned women to the other offices as well as to communal work.⁴⁹ The daily life of the nuns and lay-sisters was punctuated by the bells that summoned them from room to room, and activity to activity, ordering their lives through this sound.

19

Another sound that held meaning for Dominican women was the banging of the board. This event marked the death of a member of the community. A board (*tafel / tavel*) was hit with some type of stick to summon the congregation of nuns to the infirmary. It was a sound that was meant to be more solemn than the ringing of a bell. As Adelheit the Zirgerin lay dying in the St. Katharinenthal sickhouse, she spoke with the prioress about her last rites. She asked her superior when the best time would be to die. The prioress confided that the other nuns were scared that the board would be beaten in the night, so Adelheit decided that after Mass the next morning would be the ideal time for her death. And after communion that morning she died.⁵⁰ When Adelheit of Breisach lay near death, Anna of Munzingen says that this

20

meant that "she lay on the straw mattress and the boards were beaten."⁵¹ This sound signaled the end of a nun's life in the community, although she would live on in memory, prayers, and entries in necrology or Sister-Book. The sound also signaled to the community that the dying sister was also hopefully going to begin a new journey, one celebrated in the monasteries manuscripts with processions and offices. One processional from Strasbourg even depicts an angel gathering up the soul of a dead nun while a Dominican friar sprinkles holy water over her body. These sounds of bells and boards marked the lives of Dominican women, just as the words and songs of the liturgy that they performed filled their lives and sparked mystical experiences.

Like silence, much of monastic sound was formalized by ritual and regulation. The primary practice of ritualized sound was located in the nuns' choir in the monastery church. There the nuns performed the canonical offices eight times a day and participated in the Mass. These two liturgical practices were regulated by custom following prescribed patterns according to the time of day or night, the day of the week, the season, and the year. The liturgy of the Dominicans was marked in the years after the 1250s by uniformity; so as far as we can tell liturgical performance varied little from house to house.⁵² Even the manner of chanting the offices was prescribed by the constitutions:

21

All the canonical hours must be recited in the church, distinctly and without precipitation For this purpose a pause will be made in the middle of the verse, without prolonging the sound of the voice at this pause or at the end of the verse.⁵³

Such requirements prevented the women from hurrying through the text, and made them concentrate on the words they recited. The penalties for improper singing range from mild to moderate. Inattentive singing and bad singing that offended others were seen as mild faults, punished simply with a mandatory recitation of psalms. Moderate or medium faults occurred in the following ways:

[I]f anyone does not attend to the Divine Office, but shows levity of mind by looking around or acting in an unbecoming manner; if anyone does not at the appointed time prepare what she has to read, or if she presumes to read or sing anything other than that prescribed; if anyone laughs or causes others to laugh in choir.⁵⁴

Penance for such actions was usually recitation of a psalm, a *venia*, and other disciplinary actions to be imposed at the discretion of the Chapter.⁵⁵

Of course, the constitutions concerned themselves with proper behavior in the choir, behavior that demanded full attention be given to the words the women sang. The Sister-Books concur with this attitude toward the performance of the Office: 22

[Gertrude of Colmar, the chantress at Unterlinden] made sure that she was the first to come into the choir, and devoted a great deal of care to ensuring that all the sisters sang their psalms to God harmoniously, loudly and solemnly, in whatever way was fitting to each solemnity and season. She herself would never abandon the singing, never sparing her voice; she considered it no small stain on her conscience if ever she was prevented by any hoarseness or sickness from giving of her best to the solemn singing of the psalms.⁵⁶

Putting effort into singing in choir was seen as a sign of religiosity and holiness. And for those who did not give their all, punishment could be eternal. The same chantress was in the choir one day when she "heard with her bodily ears and saw" a vision.⁵⁷ It was of a recently deceased nun, who had been chantress in her own day. Gertrude saw the woman "being tormented by God's just judgment and beaten for a long time so fiercely and cruelly that she looked as if she was going to pass out and expire forthwith at every single blow."⁵⁸ The voice of God then informed the current chantress of her predecessor's sins. According to God, the former chantress had not always sung the Office, even though she had a pleasant voice. Further, she had taken pride in her voice, rather than just using it to praise God. Moreover, she was not always diligent and respectful in her conduct in the choir. The Augustinian Rule advised the nuns, "[w]hen you pray to God in psalms and songs, the words spoken by your lips should also be alive in your hearts."⁵⁹ The former chantress had not heeded this advice. It is clear from the Rule and the vitae in the Sister-Books that full participation in and enthusiasm for liturgical ritual were expected of the nuns. As Gertrude's predecessor had discovered, any dodging of this responsibility carried with it divine retribution.

Nuns sang even after death. A nun at Weiler was at her prayers one day when she heard beautiful singing. She saw a nun before her who said, "Do you hear the singing? It is the singing of the sisters who have departed from this convent and who are in special worthiness and great honor before God."⁶⁰ At other times the angels themselves sang. An unnamed nun of Weiler heard the angels singing *Sanctus* with the nuns in the choir, while the entire community heard them singing in the choir in the pause before Mass on the day when the child Agnes of Felberg was received into the monastery.⁶¹ Angels were also heard singing at Kirchberg, Goteszell, and St. Katharinenthal.⁶² These examples stress the link between the nuns' choir and the sound produced within it, showing the importance of monastic song in female Dominican life. It was appropriate for the angels to sing within the most sacred place 23

of the community, the place where the nuns sang together as a community. To the nuns, the choir (as a choral group) in which they sang and the choir of angels were not too distant. Both praised God in song.

Some women, however, sang or read too much and were perhaps too enthusiastic in their performance of the office. At Engelthal, Alheit of Trochau once recited the verses for both sides of the choir, rather than the verses merely assigned to her side.⁶³ The prioress reprimanded her, telling her she was acting like a goose, and she should only sing with her part of the choir. Alheit then flapped her arms and insisted that she was indeed a goose. However, the prioress put her foot down and denied Alheit her zoomorphic fantasy. After that the nun sang only at the appropriate times.⁶⁴ Alheit's fault lay not in the singing itself, but rather in not observing the proper order and requirements of the singing; the nuns were meant to sing, even if their voices were not suited for the activity. At Töss, Ita of Wezzikon followed the prescribed order of monastic life as completely as any sister the monastery had ever known. She was usually the first to come to office, conducted herself there with great attention to proper kneeling and standing, and sang with all her might, although she did not sing well.⁶⁵ **24**

The choir played a pivotal role in many of the women's spiritual lives, understandably since they spent a large portion of their time there and it was the focus of much of their spirituality. The *vitae* often refer to the nuns attending Mass and offices, sitting in their choirstalls and singing the liturgy, or like Irmgart of Kirchberg, reciting the litany of saints.⁶⁶ The many mystical and visionary experiences that occurred within that monastic space were often marked by noting the psalm, antiphon, or sequence that the women were singing at the exact moment of experience or revelation. For example, the chantress Hailrat of Engelthal was at Matins on the fourth Sunday of Advent when she and the other nuns sang the fifth response *Virgo Israel*. However, when she came to the verse *In caritate perpetua*, she sang in German rather than Latin, but she sang it so beautifully that all swore that she sang with an angelic voice. The choir's enthusiasm was so great that they all collapsed senseless, as if they were dead. When they came to themselves, they continued Matins with even greater devotion.⁶⁷ The connection this incident makes between the individual nun, Hailrat, and the community of nuns in the choir can be found in many of the *vitae* in the Sister-Books. Mystical experiences during the Divine Office, especially Matins, often emphasized the communality of monastic life. One nun may have had a vision or experienced something wondrous, but many times her sisters shared in the rewards. This can be seen in another instance when the St. Katharinenthal sister Luggi of Stein sat in her choirstall and sang the Mass for Saint John the Evangelist and the choir began the sequence *Verbum dei*. She heard "a voice like a thunderbolt, that spoke, 'Why do you not pray my sequence to me?'"⁶⁸ Luggi went around to the back of the altar to pray and sing fervently to John the Evangelist.⁶⁹ As she did so, she saw heaven open above her, revealing an enthroned Christ. The Virgin Mary and Saint John **25**

approached the throne, knelt before it, and interceded for all those in the convent who sang this particular sequence.⁷⁰ Although it is unclear why Luggi had to go behind the altar to sing her heart out—if proper behavior in the choir called for just such conduct—her vision was linked to the words the women sang, words that were Saint John's words and which brought Saint John's assistance to those who repeated them.

The sequence also played a role in the life of Luggi's fellow nun Kathrin Brümsin, as related in the introduction to this study. As a novice she had trouble learning the liturgy. She prayed to Saint John for help which was granted in the form of a dream. In the dream John the Evangelist celebrated Mass for the monastery, beginning with the introit *In medio ecclesie*. He then taught Kathrin the twenty-four verses of his sequence *Verbum dei deo natum*, the same one that Luggi of Stein had sung in praise of the saint.⁷¹ Kathrin's dream shows just how crucial knowledge of the appropriate liturgy was for the nuns. They needed to know, often by heart, the Latin words that celebrated the different offices and the Mass. The nuns sometimes became strongly attached to the liturgy and resisted changes that were made to it. At one point, the Office for the Feast of the 11,000 Virgins was changed by officials of the Order. When the nuns of Töss began the new Office, the virgins were seen entering the choir, but they turned around and left. The community interpreted this to mean that the saints were unhappy with the change in the liturgy, and therefore the community sang the old Office.⁷² It may have been the virgins who lived in the monastery who were actually unhappy with the change.

The communality of monastic song, with the choir sharing in the ritualized performance of the liturgy, appears in different forms throughout the lives in the Sister-Books. At Töss, Adelheit of Lindau taught another lay-sister the antiphon *Ave stella matutina*, which had been taught to Adelheit by the Virgin Mary herself.⁷³ In other instances the nuns have a more passive engagement with each other, and only one woman received the knowledge of the community's state of grace. When the Weiler choir nuns sang the antiphon *Salve regina* one night at the end of compline, a nun saw the Virgin Mary enter the choir with the Christ Child on her arm.⁷⁴ At Adelhausen, the Virgin Mary was also seen in the choir during the singing of *Salve regina*.⁷⁵ And at Töss when the choir nuns sang the antiphon, Mezzi Sidwibrin would shout, "Sing, sing, God's Mother is here!"⁷⁶

The Chantress Gertrude of Colmar received a vision on the day of Pentecost. As the choir nuns sang the hymn *Veni creator spiritus*, she saw:

[A] divine fire coming down visibly, with a terrible noise, from heaven upon the holy community of sisters while they were praising God in their psalmody. It filled the whole choir where the sisters were gathered together to praise God, making them so radiant with divine light that they all appeared to be on fire. A

ray of heavenly light shone visibly round each of them, remaining visible until the whole of that divine hymn was finished.⁷⁷

The vision was reinforced by the biblical stories of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and certainly by manuscript illuminations of Pentecost, several of which survive from Gertrude's monastery. And as the vision lasted only for the duration of the hymn, the words served as the conduit for Gertrude's vision. Similarly during the choir reading for the Matins of the feast of the Epiphany, a nun of Weiler saw the Holy Ghost come in the form of a white dove and rest on the head of each sister in the choir.⁷⁸ The liturgy did more than inspire visions of religious history, it served as a conduit for contact with the dead. The Adelhausen nun Gute of Winzela had a vision of her deceased brother, a member of the Teutonic Knights, as the choir nuns sang the verse *Te martyrum candidatus* from the *Te Deum laudamus*.⁷⁹

In addition to visions prompted by the liturgy, women experienced other mystical phenomena that were linked to the Mass and the Divine Office. At Weiler, Mechtild of Hundersingen had been very sick and weak, but wished to participate in the Office on the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25). So the community carried her into the choir, arranging pillows in her choir stall so she could sit up. When the choir nuns reached the words *hodie Deus homo factus* of the antiphon *haec est dies, quam fecit dominus*, Mechtild was filled with such grace that she felt her strength return and she rose to sing with the other standing women.⁸⁰ 29

Sometimes the liturgy miraculously changed to suit the nuns. An anonymous nun of St. Katharinenthal awoke for Prime to a voice telling her to: 30

"Rise up and go to the choir, they will sing of St. John." She thought, "Today one does not sing of St. John." But she heard the words again, "Rise up and go to the choir because they will sing of St. John." Then she went to the choir and thought, "Let's hear what he is going to sing." Then the Mass for another saint began with *In medio* and the old chaplain Brother Burkhart of Wangen sang the Mass. And when he came to the collect, he then unknowingly read the collect *Ecclesiam* for St. John the Evangelist. And then everyone sang the entire Mass for St. John quite beautifully.⁸¹

What may have been a mix-up on the part of an absent-minded or perhaps even senile chaplain was seen as supernatural by the women. Foresight of the event was given to the nun to mark the miraculous nature of the event. Both John the Evangelist and John the Baptist were especially beloved by the nuns of St. Katharinenthal, so extra celebrations of these saints were warmly welcomed.

One essential part of the liturgy was very important to Dominican women, and this was the recitation of the Psalms that formed the basis of the Office.⁸² The Psalms of the Office were ritualized prayers that the women recited daily as a community. "One time on silent Friday 31

when she read the Psalter with the convent," Gertrud of Winterthur had a vision of Christ who stood before the reciting nuns and said, "With this prayer my wounds are healed." But he did not stand in front of the nuns who were not reciting the Psalms.⁸³ Those who did not give their attention to the Office received no reward. Outside of the Office, nuns incorporated the Psalter and the Psalms into their extraliturgical practices. Belli of Winterthur recited the entire Psalter every night after Matins.⁸⁴ Her life says that every year she recited a Psalter in honor of David that she might come to a sweet end.⁸⁵ Also at Töss, Anna Wansaseller quoted verses from the Psalter, often combining them with words about God.⁸⁶ The Psalms were also read over dying nuns. The Adelhausen nuns read Psalm 24 while Adelheit of Breisach died. After her death, one nun told the others, "Surely I saw her soul depart from her mouth as a rose on the verse, 'Lift up your heads, your gates' (Ps. 24:9)."⁸⁷

The Psalms were such a part of the nuns' daily environment that they could even be used as a unit of measurement. Mechthilt die Huserin prayed so much day and night that she estimated that in a day she said as many prayers as four Psalters.⁸⁸ The Psalms and the Psalter were omnipresent in the women's lives. It was the one text that each nun had most likely memorized, giving them a basic set of scriptural passages from which they could quote freely. 32

The Words of God: Praying, Talking, and Preaching

One constant in the spiritual life of Dominican women was oral prayer. While the nuns performed the Psalms together as a group, there were other prayers that the nuns or lay-sisters favored as individuals. At Töss, Adelheit of Lindau's favorite was, "Oh dear Lord, you are my father and my mother/ and my sister and my brother;/ oh Lord, you are all that I want, and your mother is my companion."⁸⁹ Anna Wansaseller often prayed *Salve summe deitatis* before an image of Christ near the Töss chapterhouse. This prayer, which contained the verse *Te saluto miles* and which the vita's author implies was scripturally based, is unidentifiable.⁹⁰ One time the image spoke to Anna, instructing her: 33

You should beseech me that I forgive your sins for you, as I recognize them in you, and that I give to you my martyrdom as a sign of honor, as I suffered it, and that I commend you to my mother and Saint John, as I commended them to each other, and that I myself come to your death.⁹¹

This was what Anna was to think about as she prayed. One day Kathrin Brümsin was in the St. Katharinenthal choir and wondered what she should pray. A voice told her to go to the prioress Adelheit die Huterin and ask her what she prayed, for "she is united all day with me in her prayers, nothing comes between me and her."⁹² If Kathrin prayed as Adelheit prayed, she too would presumably be united with God.

Adelheid of Gotteszell's vita describes the role of prayer in her life:

34

[T]here was also a most worthy sister in the same monastery, whose life was so holy that she was never silent, she never ceased to have God's praises on her lips unless sleep kept her from it. And she brought forth innumerable prayers.⁹³

However, we do not know what she prayed. Maybe she created her own prayers or recited those she had heard from others or read in book. Several text collections associated with Dominican women that contain prayers survive, the most famous of which is Henry Suso's *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*. Although the book is not composed of prayers, the third and final part consists of one hundred meditations meant to be used as prayers. In the section "[t]he Hundred Meditations and Petitions [or Prayers] Briefly Stated As One Should Recite Them Devoutly Every Day," Suso instructs his reader:

[W]hoever wants to learn briefly, genuinely and ardently to meditate with the aid of the loving sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our complete salvation, and whoever wants to show gratitude for his manifold suffering, should learn the hundred meditations that follow by heart, at least according to their briefly delineated senses. Such a person should go over them every day with devotion accompanied by a hundred *venia*, or however it works out best for him. With each *venia* he should recite an Our Father, or when the meditation has to do with our Lady, a Hail Holy Queen or Hail Mary.⁹⁴

Adelheid could not have used Suso's instructions, as she predates its 1328-30 composition, but other Dominican women probably did. Two early copies of the work, one containing the entire *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*, and the other just the hundred meditations, belonged to female Dominican houses.⁹⁵

Other prayers can be found inscribed at the end of manuscripts, like an early-fourteenth-century Office book now in Stuttgart, or on pieces of ephemera.⁹⁶ One such artifact is associated with the Freiburg house of Maria Magdalena. It is a small (10.5 x 8 cm) woodcut of Saint Anthony the Hermit, on the reverse of which someone has written in German the *Pater Noster* (*Vater Unser*) and *Ave Maria*.⁹⁷ Ita of Wezzikon supposedly said a thousand Ave Marias every day, even when she was sick, while Adelheit of Frauenburg always prayed fifty Our Fathers before a meal.⁹⁸

35

Prayers were seen as powerful; they saved souls. Mechthilt die Huserin, who prayed as many prayers in a day as it took to recite the Psalter four times, spent her days saying vigils for all believing souls (*allen globigen selen*). She even did this when she was bedridden with illness. One time she was observed praying thus and her bed was seen to be full of little people and others floated above her. When she said, "*Requiescant in pace*," all of the figures disappeared. After another nun told her what had happened, Mechthilt vowed to repeat that vigil often,

36

since it seemed to have the greatest benefit.⁹⁹ Gertrut of Herblingen had a similar experience when she read a vigil.¹⁰⁰ One time the brother of Luggi Löscherin asked another religious woman, "the most perfect of people that one could find in all the land," to pray for him.¹⁰¹ She replied:

Why do you ask me, you have a sister in Adelhausen, go to her and ask her to pray to God for you, because you should know that in truth she may win for you before God everything that I can.¹⁰²

Certain places in the monastery, choir, and church had specific functions assigned to them and the use of sound and words within these spaces was regulated accordingly. One example is the chapterhouse. The constitutions describe in detail how the chapter meetings were to be run. A designated reader read from the Martyrology, the constitutions, or the Gospels, depending on the day and season.¹⁰³ Blessings were given, communal prayers offered for the benefactors and others who had asked for the community's prayers. Psalms, versicles, and collects were then sung. Finally the presider spoke. Apart from these regulated verbal activities, the women could speak only to accuse themselves of faults against the constitutions or to proclaim the faults of others.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, silence was to be maintained in the refectory, thus accentuating the readings that took place there. In spaces such as the choir, chapterhouse, or refectory, the constitutions' aim was to control and guide the experience of sound in that environment. Just as the constitutions regulated when the women should not speak, so too was speech a cause for concern. Emphasizing the negative aspects of words and speaking, the constitutions considered the following to be grave faults punishable in Chapter:

37

[I]f in proclamation she uses improper language to the one by whom she is proclaimed, or if she even so much as uses abusive language or an inordinate word, or maliciously attacks another in an irreligious manner. It is a similar fault if anyone sows discord among the sisters, or detracts them or is found to be a whisperer; if anyone speaks evil of the Sisters or the house, or maliciously defends her fault or that of another; if anyone knowingly tells a falsehood; if anyone habitually breaks silence.¹⁰⁵

The constitutions were concerned about improper speech even in areas where speaking was allowed. The women did not always embrace the formal structure or regulation of acoustic uses in specific spaces in the monastery. In the literature written by Dominican women a more flexible interpretation of permissible speech comes to light.

For Dominican women, words were seen as proof of a woman's religiosity. In the daily life of the nun Anna of Klingnau, words and speaking formed a bond between her, her sisters, and God. Her vita reports that she seldom spoke unnecessary words:

38

[B]ut God gave her the grace that she practically flowed with sweet words, and it was so good to hear from her that their hearts were moved, for her words flowed out from a full heart, as is written: 'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks' (Matt. 12:34; Luke 6:45).¹⁰⁶

The power or authority to speak came through God's grace, a motif common among medieval women writers such as Hildegard of Bingen. But Anna was not a writer justifying her act of writing. Her words stemmed from an abundant heart, a heart that was supposed to catch fire with desire for God through the observation of silence; instead, it ran over with words, breaking the silence. In the same monastery the lay-sister Mezzi Sidwibrin was praised because "her mouth overflowed with sweet words."¹⁰⁷ Words, speaking, and sound could be positive elements of the female Dominican life, even when they caused discomfort. Anna of Klingnau's vita further tells us that "she was in her youth so fired up with godly love that she was so desirous to speak about God that she sometimes went into the orchard in winter and sat there so long and spoke with the sisters there [about God] that, when she attempted to stand up her habit was frozen to the ground."¹⁰⁸ This was a small price to pay in the eyes of her fellow nuns. Anna's eloquence about God allowed her to endure—in fact to become oblivious to—the suffering of her body. When Beli of Sure spoke about God, her face burned like a rose.¹⁰⁹ Willi of Constance also liked to speak about God and to listen to others speak about him.¹¹⁰ Else of Nuenstatt spoke very loving words about God when she was in a state of grace:

God is in me and I in him, he is mine and I am his, he is for me and I am for him; my soul it is pretty and proud and joyous, because God has opened to me his grace and I am loved by him. This he has announced to me in his magnificence.¹¹¹

These examples stand in sharp contrast to the constitutions where speaking and sound are not associated with spirituality or leading a good religious life. This also shows that while Dominican women did not preach outside their cloisters as the friars did, they certainly preached to one another within the community.

Sounds and silence were not merely contained within the walls of the religious institution. The acoustic environment of the monastery extended through its walls at certain designated places. These places—windows, grilles, and turns—allowed non-members of the community to listen to or speak in the religious environment and allowed the monastic inhabitants similar acoustic access to the outside world. The constitutions specified and regulated these points of access for speech. First was a parlor window (*redfenster*) or speaking window in German, indicating the purpose of the window where nuns could speak with outsiders, provided they were accompanied by one or more other nuns. The speech here was to be loud enough so that the accompanying nun or nuns could easily overhear. There were also to be two confessional

39

windows. Thirdly there was to be a turn through which things were passed to and from the monastery. Only those sisters who had access to the turn through their duties and offices could speak there, and then only speech pertaining to those duties and offices. Lastly there was to be a sermon window in the nuns' choir through which the women could hear the sermons preached in the outer choir. The constitutions demanded:

[A]ll these windows, large or small, are to have a double grating, or else one grating having sharp nails, so that there can be no possible contact with those outside or in.¹¹²

The only contact allowed was through speech. The outside world could not be seen or touched, but it could be heard, just as the monastic woman remained unseen and untouched, but definitely heard.

One day Sophia of Klingnau was passing near the parlor window when she overheard a conversation between a nun and a secular person. Sophia's eavesdropping confirmed a mystical experience that she had experienced but of which she was unsure.¹¹³ The Unterlinden nun Agnes of Ochsenstein often spoke at the parlor window. The Unterlinden author justifies the woman's actions by emphasizing the religiosity and good intentions behind them. **40**

Her heart was fired with an incredible yearning to win all men for Christ, so she never rested from holy and persistent exhortations, speaking most warmly about God to her sisters and also to outsiders at the window, for she held for many years the job of attending to the window, and she did it in such a spirit of holiness and religion that all who came there, religious and secular alike, went away greatly edified.¹¹⁴

While the constitutions frowned upon frequent visits to the parlor window, this does not seem to have restricted women such as Agnes from speaking to all who came within range of her voice.

Another component of the acoustic environment of Dominican women was the preaching they listened to. Heard in the church, usually through the sermon window, sermons were a communal acoustic experience, unlike the conversations that took place at the parlor window. Herman of Minden, the German Dominican Provincial from 1286 to 1290, recommended that the pastoral care of the German Dominican nuns, which included preaching, should be administered by educated friars, preferably *fratres docti*. But surprisingly the Sister-Books rarely mention the many preachers otherwise documented as having been in contact with these monasteries.¹¹⁵ The women seem to focus more on the informal preaching that they practiced upon each other, as described above. Nevertheless, preaching friars do find their way into the vitae. Meister Eckhart, one of best-known German Dominican preachers, is known to **41**

have visited several Dominican female monasteries, where he preached, heard confession, and served as spiritual advisor. He was the official Visitor for the Order at the monastery of Unterlinden in 1322, but his visit occurred several years after the monastery's Sister-Book was composed. He does, however, appear in the Sister-Books of Oetenbach and St. Katharinenthal, in the latter giving Anne of Ramschwag assistance in interpreting her spiritual exercises.¹¹⁶ Other friars served as confessors. Conversations between religious women and preachers at the various windows, as well as sermons that they delivered, are mentioned in the Sister-Books of Töss, Adelhausen, Oetenbach, Weiler, and Engelthal.¹¹⁷

That the women appreciated the sermons that are mentioned comes across clearly in the Sister-Books. The vitae of some women record their reactions to the preaching they heard. Mezzi Sidwibrin of Töss is said to have loved to listen to sermons, and she would loudly exclaim how wonderful they were, often while they were still being preached, much to the dismay of her sisters who were still trying to listen.¹¹⁸ One Christmas, Mezzi saw the Christ Child sitting in the lap of the preacher, who apparently was delivering his sermon sitting down. Another time during Advent, the Provincial Prior preached a sermon based on the word *Ecce* to the Töss women. Mezzi was so moved by this that she repeated the word at least a thousand times.¹¹⁹ Once at Gottszell, the nuns were in the upper choir listening to a sermon; however, they did not like it, so Christ came and preached to them instead.¹²⁰ From the Sister-Books we know the topics of a few of the sermons preached to the women. For example, while listening to a sermon on the Blood of Christ, Mechtild of Hunderingen worried about her worthiness to receive it.¹²¹ 42

Sermons that Dominican women heard survive as more than passing references in the Sister-Books. At the end of the Adelhausen Sister-Book, after the last of the vitae and the author's *explicit*, three sermons that were preached to the monastery by three different preachers are summarized. They must have been recorded because the women—or at least the author—found their content spiritually instructive. Although they survive as written notes, they were originally delivered orally and were part of the acoustic environment of Adelhausen. They could be so again whenever the text was read aloud. This writing down or copying of sermons was common, for "the Dominicans in charge of the *cura monialium* produced an enormous number of sermons which were often copied in the nunneries where they were preached and were used in their written form as spiritual edification in the absence of the confessor."¹²² This written form was therefore part of the more permanent textual environment as well as the fleeting acoustic environment. However, reading from such sermons at table, in chapter, or at other times, brought these sermons to a wider audience, allowing any illiterate or not fully literate member of the community access to the page-bound text. 43

The first of the three sermons recorded in the Adelhausen text was delivered by Brother Conrad of Esslingen.¹²³ It was based on three Biblical passages—Matt. 20:22, Mark 10:38, and Ps. 115:13—and drew on a text by a bishop Albrecht concerning Christ's body and the five benefits one received from it. The second sermon summary was one that the Provincial Brother Wolfart had preached on Saint Mathias day.¹²⁴ It was based on Ps. 138:17. The last sermon is an allegory on the Golden Mountain by Nicholas of Strasbourg, a *lesemeister* or lector from Cologne.¹²⁵ He is recorded as having preached in German at three of the four female Dominican institutions in the Freiburg area: Adelhausen, the Penitents of Mary Magdalena, and, on at least three separate occasions, St. Agnes.¹²⁶ Also there survives from Adelhausen a collection of the sermons of Johannes Tauler, copied down in the monastery sometime between 1350 and 1360.¹²⁷ The well-worn text contains twenty-five sermons, some barely legible today. The majority of the sermons seem to be for specific days such as Corpus Christi [101r] or the third Sunday after the octave of Easter [80v]. A few are slightly more general, such as a sermon for the week of Pentecost [18r], or more general still, as the one addressed for the feast day of Saint Lawrence or any other martyr [25v]. The well-worn condition of the manuscript indicates that the nuns used it. 44

Another manuscript of sermons and mystical writings now in Zurich is associated with Adelhausen, but not necessarily during the period under consideration. Two notices, one on the front flyleaf, the other on the last page, link the manuscript to the monastery but both notices are post-fourteenth century.¹²⁸ The manuscript may have entered Adelhausen with an Observant nun in the fifteenth century or it may have been a gift from the monastery's fifteenth-century confessor, the author and Order historian Johannes Meyer.¹²⁹ Since the manuscript is in actuality three manuscripts bound together, there is another possibility. The majority of the codex, 165 folios of a 194-folio volume, consists of fifty-four sermons from a fourteenth-century collection known as the St. Georgen sermons. The second section, twenty-two folios in length, contains prayers and other devotional readings from the fourteenth century. The final portion is seven folios long and consists of fifteenth-century prayers. There is no indication where or when the three parts were bound together into a single codex. Thus it is possible that the St. Georgen sermons existed in Adelhausen's library as a separate manuscript prior to being bound with the two other manuscripts, especially in light of the house's passion for sermons. 45

The Sounds of Spirituality

Beside the regulated and organized vocal aspects of the monastic environment, spontaneity also had its place. Unintended vocalization was seen as evidence of a special divine grace. While many of us are aware of this manifestation in the life of a woman like Margery Kempe, Dominican women also exhibited similar behavior, which often took the form of tears, shouting, or breaking into song. **46**

For example, when one Engelthal sister sought solace before a crucifix, she cried so hard that the feet of the crucified Christ became wet. For her gift of tears, Christ reached out his hand from the cross and spoke to her.¹³⁰ In the same community, Mehthilt of Neitstein cried daily while at prayer.¹³¹ None of this weeping seems to have been done silently, but rather it was accompanied by sobs and wailings. Such behavior was common, for almost all of the nuns of Adelhausen are said to have wept in the choir and the dormitory after compline, loudly enough to be heard at quite a distance.¹³² Anna Turner was not among them. She was unable to weep, but when she saw the immeasurable crying of her fellow nuns, she had a great desire to cry too. Once as she prayed, a single tear came to her eye. And then it seemed to her as if two angels came from heaven and captured the tear in a golden vessel, and brought it up to God as an offering.¹³³ **47**

When the author of the Adelhausen Sister-Book describes the community, she writes: **48**

When they were at their devotions, it was then throughout the cloister silent and serious, as if it were silent Friday, and always after compline the crying was so great in the choir, and also in the dormitory when they were before their beds, that one could hear it from afar. And sometimes several of them were in ecstasy and several fainted, and several shouted with loud voices from the overflowing grace that God gave them.¹³⁴

Silence is linked to the serious devotions that the women perform. The implication is that the silent devotions were above and beyond the mere silence required on communion Fridays. But the emphasis in the passage is on what transpired after compline. Then the monastery is infused with the sounds of the women's spirituality. The crying and weeping that took place in the choir and the dormitory extended throughout the entire community and probably beyond the monastery walls. This acoustic expression of the women's religiosity, along with the loud shouting that overcame some of them, was seen by the author as evidence of the women's holiness. Silence was important, but sound was the medium of showing their love for God.

Other women shouted or cried out without weeping, responding to visual, acoustic, or interior / divine stimuli. Margaret Ebner, the mystic from Maria Medingen, was afflicted with alternating periods of silence and what she called "Speakings." She would repeat the words *Jesus Christus* over and over again.¹³⁵ She also found that there were certain words that she **49**

could not bear to hear, and her fellow sisters often had to change the readings if they wanted Margaret to be able to remain in the choir for the Divine Office.¹³⁶ Margaret's "Speakings" were stimulated by a wide range of incidents. Sometimes it was the hearing of a specific liturgical text, other times it was the day or event of the liturgical year.

Much like Margaret Ebner, Metzi of Walthershoven constantly repeated a devotional phrase praising the Christ Child: **50**

Many years before her death she had come by virtue of grace to the point that she began to cry at all times, day and night, and said, "little Son, little Son, loving little Son, beloved little Son, happy little Son, magnificent little Son." And she did this so constantly and with such a loud voice, that none had peace from her. And her face was then so enflamed and her eyes so happy that one could see that God had shown her something wondrous. And her joy was sometime so immeasurably great and likewise the whimpering words and lamentation that she had for this child was also so great that it can barely be written, and sometimes it happened that she threw her body more than half an arm's length up from her bed.¹³⁷

At Kirchberg, Werendraut of Düren spoke in tongues.¹³⁸ Other women recited words in a more subdued manner. Leugart of Gotteszell recited a thousand Ave Marias and the entire Psalter everyday over her work.¹³⁹ Mystical experiences and the reception of God's grace illicit words, while conversely words could cause mystical experiences. Whenever the Weiler-nun Elizabeth of Esslingen heard words being spoken about God, she was stunned into a mystical trance.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, whenever the Adelhausen lay-sister Metzi heard a sermon or any words spoken about God's love, she entered a trance that made it appear as if she was dead.¹⁴¹

While women like Margaret, Metzi, or Leugart focused their spiritual energy on constantly repeated words that had liturgical or devotional significance to them, other nuns articulated wordless noises in response to their visionary experience. The Engelthal-nun Christin of Kornburg's life reports that upon receiving a visionary visitation by John the Baptist on All Saints' Eve, she cried out with a loud voice, not wanting to lose the joy she felt. Whether or not she succeeded is unclear, but she did manage to wake everyone else who had been asleep in the infirmary.¹⁴² The Weiler-nun Guta Jungin also cried out when she recovered from a trance, but a voice reassured her that all would be well.¹⁴³ At Kirchberg, Elsbeth of Oettingen often cried out. After having a vision of Christ, she cried out so loudly that the entire convent came running. Another time, Elsbeth saw Mary under the Cross, an image that she contemplated for a while until she was overcome with compassion and had to cry out.¹⁴⁴ In a slightly different context, when the Adelhausen-nun Richi of Stocken lay dying in the infirmary, Saint Dominic appeared to her and comforted her, saying that it was his job to lead **51**

the sisters from this world. With her dying breath, Richi laughed so loud that she could be heard outside the infirmary.¹⁴⁵ Occasionally these cries and screams were not inspired by the Divine, but rather were diabolical. When Adelheid of Gotteszell wrestled with the devil during her prayers in the dormitory, she was tortured and thrown from side-to-side, her outbursts were heard by the entire monastery from the dormitory to the refectory.¹⁴⁶

In addition to tears and outcries, the women were occasionally so overcome with emotion and piety that they started singing. When Alheit of Trochau went in search of another nun in the Engelthal choir, her gaze fell upon the Pyx containing the Eucharist. She felt such an overwhelming joy at the sight that she jumped and sang.¹⁴⁷ In the same community, Gedraut of Hapsburg woke the entire dormitory one night when she sang loudly in her sleep. Her singing was in joyous response to the knowledge that her death was imminent.¹⁴⁸ Others sang constantly. Bercht of Oberriet was said to have never stopped saying the most beautiful collations.¹⁴⁹ **52**

When the Adelhausen nun Adelheid of Breisach was denounced for not attending Friday masses and accused of being a heretic by the local friars, she responded by leaving the chapterhouse merrily singing a psalm and dancing, inciting the children of the monastery to join her.¹⁵⁰ The author of the Sister-Book does not take the accusation seriously, for the woman had always spent Thursday nights in vigil, and usually made herself so sick in doing so that she could not attend the Mass the next day. That Adelheid sang and danced proves to the author that she was innocent of any wrong-doing, as does her choice of song. The fact that she sang the psalms, the songs of praise that the nuns knew so intimately and which often expressed joy, does not escape the author. Adelheid sang holy words. **53**

Other nuns sang while they worked. While she spun in the Töss workroom, Mezzi Sidwibrin often sang. One of her songs is recorded in her vita, the text of which is in German, "Wise heart, flee worldly love that with pain must end, and let yourself find the best love, that one which will remain eternally with joy. May God make false love despicable to you. Renounce it if you know it now."¹⁵¹ Elsewhere her vita states, "her mouth overflowed with sweet words."¹⁵² Her fellow nun Sophia of Klingnau also sang in the workroom. "When she sat in the workhouse with the convent, she sang such sweet little words of our Lord and the sisters passionately liked to listen to her."¹⁵³ Song seems to have been very important at Töss, whether it was liturgical or not. **54**

In these preceding examples, there is one recurring element: volume. Louder seems to have been better in the lives of these holy women. Whether singing or crying, the sounds resounded throughout the monastery rooms, perhaps beyond the cloister walls, and directly to the ear of God. This is how the *Unterlinden Sister-Book* describes the communal sound of the monastery. It is elemental to the women's expression of their love for God. 55

At Advent and all through the time of Lent, all the sisters together after Matins turned aside into the Chapterhouse or to another opportune place, and lacerated themselves most cruelly to the point of bleeding with different sorts of whips and threw themselves to the ground, so that the sound of lashings resounded everywhere through the whole monastery, ascending sweeter than any melody to the ears of the Lord, to whom such works of humility and devotion are very pleasing . . . ¹⁵⁴

This description of the sounds produced by a communal flagellation, sounds which the nuns believed were even more sanctified than the liturgy because they showed the women's excessive devotion to God, makes clear just how integrated sound was into the spirituality of female Dominicans.

Despite the prescriptions of the Dominican constitutions, Dominican women were vocal and often loud. They incorporated sound and silence into their spiritual activities with enthusiasm. They created a rich and varied acoustic environment around themselves, one that was found in all parts of the monastery, and, through the existence of the windows, one that could extend beyond the confines of the community. The constitutions of the Dominican order tried to regulate sound within the religious houses, emphasizing the need for silence and the negative impact that words could have, especially words that might be exchanged with the outside world. But the women themselves saw words and sounds—whether they were sounds produced or sounds received or sounds restricted—as essential to the expression of their spirituality. 56

Sound filled the lives of Dominican women. They sang antiphons and recited the psalms in the choir, and for their diligence they received visions and mystical experiences that reaffirmed their membership in the monastic community. Their individual prayers gave them an active role in their own spirituality, as did their conversations on spiritual matters with their sisters or even outsiders who visited at the community's window. They sang, talked, laughed, and cried because they could not contain their perceptions and contemplations of supernatural joy and suffering. And just as silence served a purpose, so did sound. For Dominican women, sound served God. Their hearts and souls flowed over with sound and they poured out these acoustic offerings as gifts to God. 57

Notes

Note 1: Margaret Ebner, *Margaret Ebner: Major Works*, ed. and trans. Leonard P. Hindsley (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 109.

Note 2: Caroline A. Bruzelius, "Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca. 1213–1340," *Gesta* 31:2 (1992): 83–91. Hearing the bell that marked the elevation of the Host was also important for Dominican nuns, even in houses where the nuns' choir had a view of the altar.

Note 3: On Margery Kempe, see Sanford Brown Meech, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, EETS 212 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940). For Margaret Ebner, see n. 1.

Note 4: From the medieval medical standpoint there was in actuality only one sex: the male. The female was a defective, imperfect, incomplete, or inside-out male. Scientifically this idea persisted until the eighteenth century. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: The Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Aristotle was the first to record such a theory. See Vern Bullough "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," *Viator* 4 (1973), 486–87. Thomas Aquinas gave it a theological spin: "It is appropriate to the dignity of the first man to be the totality of the species, as God is principle to the totality of the universe." Eleanor McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology," in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 217.

Note 5: Caroline Walker Bynum, "' . . . And Women His Humanity': Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 151. The italics are in the text.

Note 6: Two passages in the Pauline Epistles are at the core of the Biblical statement about women and speech as perceived in the Middle Ages. "A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived, it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin" (1 Tim. 2:11–14). "As in all congregations of God's people, women should not address the meeting. They have no license to speak, but should keep their place as the law directs. If there is something they want to know, they can ask their own husbands at home. It is a shocking thing that a woman should address the congregation" (1 Cor. 14:34–35).

Note 7: Sharon A. Farmer, "Softening the Hearts of Men: Women, Embodiment, and Persuasion in the Thirteenth Century," in *Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values*, ed. Paula M. Cooley, Sharon A. Farmer, and Mary Ellen Ross (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 116.

Note 8: These scientific / medical views of women are based on the ancient works of Aristotle and Galen, as adopted by medieval scholars. See Vern Bullough "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," *Viator* 4 (1973), 486–87; and Vern Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994), 31–46.

Note 9: Rosemary Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. by Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 156ff. One example of this linkage can be found in Tertullian and his allusion to Eve and sin. "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine Law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die." Ruether, 157.

Note 10: On the dangers of menstrual blood, McLaughlin, 229–30.

Note 11: In the twelfth century the Parisian scholar Peter Abelard composed a rambling Rule for the nuns of the Paraclete, which incorporated both theological and physiological reasoning for the necessary silence of religious women. "The tongue, as James says, is an intractable evil, and being smaller and more sensitive than all the other parts of the body it is the more mobile, so that whereas the others are wearied by movement, it does not tire when moving and finds inactivity a burden. The more sensitive it is in you, and the more flexible from the softness of your body, the more mobile and given to words it is, and can be seen to be the seedbed of all evil. The Apostle marks this vice especially in you when he absolutely forbids women to speak in church, and even on matters which concern God he permits them only to question their husbands at home. In learning such things, or whatever things are to be done, he particularly subjects them to silence. . . . If he has made these provisions for silence in the case of lay and married women, what ought you to do? Again, in showing Timothy why he has ordered this, he explains that women are gossips and speak when they should not. So to provide a remedy for so great a plague, let us subdue the tongue by perpetual silence, at least in these places or times: at prayer, in the cloister, the dormitory, refectory, and during all eating and cooking, and from Compline onwards let this be specially observed by all. If necessary in these places or times let us use signs instead of words. . . . Any excess of words or signs must be firmly corrected, words especially, in which lies the greater danger. . . ." Betty Radice, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, (New York: Penguin, 1974), 188–89. Across the Channel in England, at roughly the same time, Aelred, the Cistercian abbot of Rievaulx, composed a Rule for recluses intended for his sister and the small group of companions who had joined her in the anchoritic life. Words were seen as even more dangerous for women in this text; the mere act of listening could irreparably damage the body and soul of a religious woman. "How seldom nowadays will you find a recluse alone. At her window will be seated some garrulous old gossip pouring idle tales into her ears, feeding her with scandal and gossip; describing in detail the face appearance and mannerisms of now this priest, now that monk or clerk; describing too the frivolous behavior of a young girl; the free and easy ways of a widow who thinks what she likes is right; the cunning ways of a wife who cuckolds her husband while she gratifies her passions. The recluse all the while is dissolved in laughter, loud peals of laughter, and the poison she drinks with such delight spreads throughout her body. When the hour grows later and they must part both are heavily burdened, the old woman with provisions, the recluse with sensual pleasures.

Quiet returns, but the poor wretch turns over and over in her heart the fantasies born of her idle listening; her reflections only fan more fiercely the flame enkindled by her chatter. Like a drunkard she staggers through the psalms, gropes through her reading, wavers while at prayer. When darkness falls she welcomes women of even less repute; they add fresh fuel to the flames and only desist when they have exposed her, now wholly ensnared by her own sensuality, to the mockery of demons. Now they speak without reserve, their purpose no longer being to arouse desire but to gratify it; together they discuss place and time, and the man who will acquiesce in her designs. The opening of the cell must somehow be enlarged to allow her to pass through or her paramour to enter; what was a cell has now become a brothel." Aelred of Rievaulx, "Rule of Life for a Recluse," in *Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises and Pastoral Prayer*, trans. Mary Paul Macpherson (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 46–47. Neither Rule, however, seems to have circulated in German Dominican circles, so their portrayals of women and the dangers of talking were probably not familiar to either Dominican nuns or their male superiors.

Note 12: C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1989), 118.

Note 13: See Peter Abelard's instructions for the nuns of the Paraclete above as well as the "instruments of good works" found in the Benedictine Rule which advises, "To speak the truth with heart and lips Not to murmur. Not to slander. . . . Not to speak evil or wicked speech. Not to

speak much. Not to speak idly nor so as to cause mirth. Not to love boisterous laughter." Anthony C. Meisel and M.L. del Mastro, trans., *The Rule of St. Benedict*, (New York: Doubleday Image, 1975), 52–53.

Note 14: See for example the passage cited above from Peter Abelard's Rule.

Note 15: The texts of major monastic rules can be found in, "La Règle de Saint Benoît," ed. Jean Neufville, 3 vols., *Series des Textes Monastiques d'Occident 34* (Paris: du Cerf, 1972); *La Règle de Saint Augustin*, ed. Luc Verheijen, 2 vols. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1967); and, Maria Caritas McCarthy, ed. and trans., *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with a Critical Introduction*, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1960). Many of the other monastic rules and statutes can be found in Lucas Holstenius, ed., *Codex Regularum Monasticarum et Canonicarum*, vols. 1–3 (Augsburg, 1759; rpt. Graz: Akademischedruck und Verlagsanstalt, 1957).

Note 16: Ambrose Wathen, *Silence: The Meaning of Silence in the Rule of St. Benedict* (Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 161 ff. Wathen divides the above reasons for silence into three instead of five, pairing the first with the second and the third with the fourth. His point is that one purpose is often the flip side of the other, i.e. one avoids sin by practicing virtue. But since all five reasons are so closely related, I have broken them down to their individual elements. It should be noted that Wathen shows that few Rules concerned themselves with the final reason for silence, silence for the sake of silence. Wathen, 169.

Note 17: Simon Tugwell, ed. and trans., *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 389. Hereafter cited in text as Tugwell.

Note 18: These texts are the *Ordo Monasterii* (c.395), the *Praeceptum* (397-400), and the *Obiurgatio* (423). Wathen, 137. The authorship of the *Ordo* is uncertain.

Note 19: The male version combined the *Ordo Monasterii* and the *Praeceptum*, whereas the female version combined the *Obiurgatio*, which Augustine had originally addressed to his sister's monastery, and the feminine version of the *Praeceptum*. Wathen, 137–38. However, the form used by all monastics since the High Middle Ages has been the male version. Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 283.

Note 20: Zumkeller, 296.

Note 21: Augustinian Rule, 6.2.

Note 22: See n. 15.

Note 23: Augustinian Rule, 3.2.

Note 24: See the Introduction for a detailed discussion of these sources.

Note 25: Const., 33.

Note 26: TSB, 28–29.

Note 27: Const., 18.

Note 28: Const., 21. "nec loquantur locis et temporibus interdictus, nec alias sine licencia." Lat. Const., 343.

Note 29: "Fuit igitur inter eas pax magna, concordia et 'caritas, que est uinculum perfectionis (Ad Colossenses, III, 14.), qua refrenabatur lingua loquax. Nam sicut obstructo ore clibani calor intus fouetur, sic seruato silencio gracia Sancti Spiritus in corde retinetur. Hoc cognoscentes, ponebant custodiam ori suo, ut non delinquerent in lingua sua; ideoque concaluit cor earum intra eas, et 'in meditatione earum exarsit ignis (Ps. XXXVIII, 4) ille Dominus Deus noster, consumens omnem rubiginem uiciorum." USB, 338–39.

Note 30: "Sy warend och als gar senft und still an worten und an werken das in dem tag als still in dem kloster was als ob es nach complet wer gewessen." TSB, 14.

Note 31: ASB, 157, 186.

Note 32: ASB, 187.

Note 33: TSB, 35.

Note 34: "Die hatt die gewonheit, das si allweg des tages, so si vnsern herren empfang, niemer wort gesprach, als noch vil swestran ein gewonheit hand ze swigenn des tages, so si vnsern herren empfangend." KSB, 99.

Note 35: "Si was dick lang zit und vil wochen, das si niemer wort gesprach, und sunderlich den aduent und die vasten, die sweig si allweg." KSB, 125.

Note 36: SSB, 111.

Note 37: "Siquidem quamuis beata illa soror in silentii observacione sollicita fuerit nimis, nunquam transgrediens et infringend legem silentii in vita sua, tamen cum gratiam illuminantem se minus solito se habere conspexit, strictissimum sibi ipsi silentium indixit, tanquam os ad loquendum ey aures ad audiendum non haberet; . . ." USB, 427–28.

Note 38: SSB, 113.

Note 39: GSB, 137–38. Leugart was for thirty years either the subprioress or the prioress.

Note 40: "Des redvensters und aller ussrer menschen hat sy kain acht, und joch gen iren aigen brüder, den sy in unsrem orden hat, gen dem hielt sy sich usserlich. Sy schwaig vil nach alwegen, das sy nimer wort geret." TSB, 26.

Note 41: KSB, 104–5.

Note 42: "nymer wort gesprach sie an verpoten steten und zeiten." GSB, 137.

Note 43: For instance the life of Mehtilt of Buglin says, "One could write miraculous things about her, however, she kept them hidden within herself" ("Man möht wunder von ir schreyben, sie hilt ez aber gar verporgen in ir selber"). WSB, 77. At Adelhausen, Adelheit Geishörnl wished to remain silent as to the reason behind her whirling around the altar in the church, but was forced to speak by her conscience. ASB, 167.

Note 44: See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. 49–82.

Note 45: KSB, 99.

Note 46: WSB, 81.

Note 47: KSB, 110; and SSB, 107. Matins also was rung in TSB, 30.

Note 48: KSB, 97–98.

Note 49: Vespers was rung in ASB, 165; an unspecified office in TSB, 26 and 27. The bell calling the women to work is mentioned in TSB, 26 and 34.

Note 50: KSB, 115.

Note 51: "si sich legen vff die matten vnd die tafelen schlachen." ASB, 155.

Note 52: On Dominican liturgy in general, see William R. Bonniwell, *A History of the Dominican Liturgy* (New York: Joseph Wagner, 1944). The 1256 General Chapter called for the creation of a manuscript prototype for the Order's liturgical texts and the General Chapters of 1258 and 1265 ordered that this text be the one copied for all Dominican usage and also be used to correct already existing texts. Papal approval of the text was given in 1267. John Stinson, "The Dominican Liturgy of

the Assumption: Texts and Music for the Divine Office," in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 171.

Note 53: Const., 7. "Hore canonicè omnes in ecclesia tractim et distincte taliter dicantur Quod ita dicimus esse faciendum ut in medio uersus metrum cum pausa seruetur: non protrahendo uocem in pausa uel fine uersus." Lat. Const., 339.

Note 54: Const., 25. "si qua in choro non inuenta diuino officio: uagis oculis et motu irreligioso leuitatem mentis ostenderit. Si qua leccionem tempore statuto non preuiderit: uel aliud legere, uel cantare presumpserit quam quod ordinatum est. Si qua in choro riserit, uel alais ridere fecerit." Lat. Const., 344.

Note 55: Const., 26; and Lat. Const., 344.

Note 56: Tugwell, 422. "Omnes quidem ad chorum preuenire satagens, summaque diligencia intendens, ut sorores omnes concorditer alte ac sollempniter Deo psallerent, sicut unicuique sollempnitati et tempori congruebat. Unde et ipsa uocibus minime parcens assidue cantabat, nec leuem consciencie sue iacturam reputabat, si quando raucitatis uel alicuius infirmitatis incommodo interueniente, sollempnem psalmodie cantum minus alacriter persoluisset." USB, 360.

Note 57: Tugwell, 423. "Hanc siquidem audiuit corporeis auribus. . . ." USB, 361.

Note 58: Tugwell, 423. "iusto quidem Dei iudicio dirissime torqueri ac diutissime uerberari tam grauiter tamque crudeliter, quod ex singulis flagellorum plagis deficere uidebatur ac pariter interire." USB, 361.

Note 59: Augustinian Rule, 2.3.

Note 60: "hörestu daz gesanck? az sing wir den swestern, die von disem convent gescheyden sein, und sein in sunderlicher wirdikait und großer er vor got." WSB, 78.

Note 61: WSB, 82, 79.

Note 62: SSB, 111; GSB, 139; and KSB, 101, 104.

Note 63: Choral performances of the psalms alternated verses between a divided choir, one side called *decani* and the other *cantoris*. Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 30–31.

Note 64: While this incident is chiefly about obedience to the prioress, Alheit's actions may have reflected some of the women's attitude toward singing; a case of more is better.

Note 65: "Sy hielt iren orden an allen dingen als volkumenlich als wir ie dekain schwester sachent tün; sy was vil die erst in dem kor und hielt sich da mit grossem fliss an naigen, an ston, und das sy gar endlich sang alles das sy kund, wie sy doch nit wol sang." TSB, 17–18.

Note 66: SSB, 106. Irmgart was probably reciting the litany of saints found in the Psalters of her monastery. See Chapter 4 on textual environment about these litanies. For other examples of choir activity, see KSB, 101, 105–6, 110, 125.

Note 67: ESB, 6–7.

Note 68: "ein stimm als ein donrslag, dú sprach: >Warumb bettest du mir nit min sequenci?< " KSB, 125. On this sequence, see below.

Note 69: This may indicate the altar in the nuns' choir. The priest may have been in the outer choir. The text is unclear and the priest is never mentioned. See Chapter 1 on space for the altars at St. Katharinenthal.

Note 70: KSB, 125.

Note 71: KSB, 124. See Introduction for text of Kathrin's dream. This vision may be connected with the graduals from St. Katharinenthal now in the Swiss National Museum in Zurich and the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. Both contain illuminations of St. John dressed as a bishop celebrating Mass. See Chapter 4 on textual environment for a discussion of the significance of this image for Dominican women. A second description of Kathrin's vision occurs later in the Sister-Book, providing the text of the 24 verses of the sequences and a German translation of them. See Appendix.

Note 72: TSB, 21. How they were able to do this without special permission from the Order is unclear.

Note 73: TSB, 86.

Note 74: WSB, 84. *Salve regina* is one of the four important medieval Marian antiphons. The other three are *Alma redemptoris mater*, *Regina celi*, and *Ave regina*. Hughes, 33.

Note 75: ASB, 177.

Note 76: "Singent, singent: Gottes mütter ist hiel!" TSB, 28.

Note 77: Tugwell, 422. "Udidit enim repente uisibiliter ignem diuinum de celo magno cum sonitu aduenientem super sanctum conuentum sororum Deo psallencium. Et repleuit totum chorum ubi erant sorores in Dei laudibus congregate, illuminans eas adeo diuinis splendoribus, quod omnes pariter ignee apparebant. Radius insuper celestis luminis singulas earum uisibiliter circumfulsit, tamdiu quousque ille diuinus ymnus totus finiretur." USB, 360. *Veni creator spiritus* was usually sung at the Office of Terce during the first half of Pentecost week. Hughes, 75.

Note 78: WSB, 84.

Note 79: ASB, 171.

Note 80: WSB, 71. The antiphon is for the *Magnificat* of Vespers on the Feast of the Annunciation.

Note 81: ">Stand vff vnd gang in den kor, man wil von sant Johannes singen.< Do gedacht sy: >Man singet hütt nit von sant Johannes.< Do hort sy aber das sprechen: >Stand vff vnd gang in den kor, won man wil von sand Johannes singen.< Do gieng si in den kor vnd gedáht: >Nv lose, was man singen welle.< Do vieng man die mess an von einem andern heiligen: >In medio<. Vnd sang der alt caplan brüder Burkart von Wangen mess. Vnd do er an die collecte kam, do las er vnwissent die collecte >Ecclesiam< von sant Johannes ewangelist. Also sang man die mess gar schon vs von sant Johannes." KSB, 110.

Note 82: On Psalters and their role in Dominican female spirituality, see Chapter 4.

Note 83: "sunderlich ze ainem mal an dem stillen fritag do las sy den salter mit dem cofent, . . . 'Mit disem gebet werdent mir min wunden gehailt.'" TSB, 49.

Note 84: TSB, 40.

Note 85: TSB, 41.

Note 86: TSB, 46. Her favorite verses seem to have been Ps. 85:5 and Ps. 89:4.

Note 87: "'Gewerlich ich sach ir sele von irem munde scheiden als einen rosen vnder dem verse *Attolite portas principes vestras*.'" ASB, 156.

Note 88: KSB, 135–36.

Note 89: "Ach lieber her, du bist min vatter und min mütter/ und min schwester und min bruder;/ ach her, du bist mir alles das ich wil, und din mütter ist min gespil." TSB, 86.

Note 90: See TSB, 46, notes for lines 27–28.

Note 91: "Du solt mich bitten das ich dir din sünd vergeb, als ich sy an dir erkenn, und das ich dir min marter geb ze eren, als ich sy erlitten han, und das ich dich miner mütter befelch und sant Johannesen, als ich sy ain andren befalch, und das ich selb zü dinem end kum." TSB, 47. On the Virgin Mary and John, see Chapter 2.

Note 92: "die vereinbert sich all tag mit mir in ir gebett, das zwüschent mir vnd ir nüt ist." KSB, 135.

Note 93: "Es was auch aber gar ein selige swester in dem selben closter, die was so heiliges lebens, das sie allzeit nymmer gestillet, es wer gotes lob in irem munde, es beneme ir denn der slaf. Auch brachte sie unmessige gebete fur." GSB, 132.

Note 94: Henry Suso, *The Exemplar with Two German Sermons* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 294.

Note 95: UBF, Hs. 476 is a fourteenth-century Book of Hours that belonged to a Dominican monastery in the diocese of Constance. It contains additional Passion prayers and Suso's hundred meditations [436v-457v]. ZBZ, C 172, is a complete fourteenth-century copy of *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* which belonged to the Zurich Dominican monastery of Oetenbach.

Note 96: WLB Cod. brev. 152. The text contains the Office of the Virgin Mary and the Office of the Dead. The last folio [f. 25] is only half the size of the other folios. The recto side contains a German prayer for poor souls.

Note 97: AMF, Inv. Nr. 11736. The image and text are fourteenth-century, but were kept in a fifteenth-century Book of Hours.

Note 98: TSB, 18, 50.

Note 99: KSB, 135.

Note 100: KSB, 115–16.

Note 101: "dem allervollkommensten menschen, das man konte vinden in allem lande." ASB, 169.

Note 102: "'Wes bittestu mich, du hest ouch eine swester ze Adelnhusen, zü der gang vnd bitte si, das si Gott für dich bitte, wann du solt wissen, das si in der warheit dir mag erwerben vor Gotte, alles das ich mag.'" ASB, 169.

Note 103: See Chapter 4 for these texts.

Note 104: Const., 37; and Lat. Const., 348.

Note 105: Const., 26.

Note 106: "gab ir aber Got die gnad das sy recht hin flos von übersüssen wortten, und was das als gütt von ir zehörend das die hertzen da von recht in ain bewegung komend; won ire wort flussent uss ainem follen hertzen, als geschriben stat: Von uberflussikait des hertzen redet der mund." TSB, 37.

Note 107: "ir mund überflos von süssen Worten." TSB, 29.

Note 108: "Sy was och in ir jungen tagen als entzünd mit der götlichen lieby das ir als begirlich was von Got zeredent, das sy etwenn in dem winter in dem bomgarten gieng, und sass da als lang und rett mit etlicher schwester, so sy uff woltend ston, das in das gewand gefroren was." TSB, 37.

Note 109: "bran under irem anlut recht als ain ross." TSB, 42.

Note 110: TSB, 48.

Note 111: "Gott ist in mir vnd ich in ime, er ist min vnd ich bin sin, er ist mir vnd bin ich ime, min sele die ist hübsche vnd stoltz vnd hochgemüt, wann Gott hett mir vffgetan sin gnade vnd bin geminnet von ime. Das hett er mir kunt getan in sinre herrlicheit." ASB, 180. This passage, like others in the Sister-Books, shows the influence of courtly love (*fineamours*) on mysticism in this

period. See Barbara Newman, "La mystique courtoise: Thirteenth-Century Beguines and the Art of Love," in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 137–67.

Note 112: Const., 34. "Porro omnes supradicte fenestre uel fenestrelle ferrate sic disponi debent, uel per duplicacionem ferrature, uel per acutos clauos: quod inter exteriores et interiores nullus possit interuenire contactus." Lat. Const., 347. For more on windows, see Chapter 1.

Note 113: TSB, 59.

Note 114: Tugwell, 417. "Equidem desiderabat estu cordis incredibili omnes homines Christo lucrifacere, idcirco a sanctis sedulisque ammonicionibus non cessauit, affectuosissime de Deo loquens cum sororibus, pariterque cum extraneis ad fenestram. Tenuit enim multis annis officium audiendi ad fenestram tam sancte tamque religiose, ut omnes illuc uenientes religiosi pariterque seculares inde discederent non modicum edificati." USB, 355. Agnes' exhortations are very similar to the contemporary anchoresses and recluses in England who "preached" from the windows of their anchorholds, despite instructional literature which discouraged such practices. See Patricia J. F. Rosof, "The anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women*, ed. Lillian Shank and John Nichols (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 123–44.

Note 115: Lewis, 187.

Note 116: OSB, 262; and KSB, 131.

Note 117: In the Sister-Book of Töss a Provincial Hugo who serves as a confessor is mentioned twice in the vita of Jützi Schulthasin. This is most likely Hugo von Staufen, the lesemeister of Constance who was also a Provincial Prior. TSB 71, 75. Also mentioned is Brother Wolfran, the Swabian Provincial Prior, also a confessor of Töss, and two unnamed preachers. TSB, 36, 67, 77. At Weiler, Elizabeth of Esslingen's vita notes that she discussed her beliefs with a lesemeister. WSB, 70. Nuns' confessions to friars are mentioned in ASB, 154 and 162. A Brother Eberhart, the lesemeister of Freiburg, is named in the text from Kirchberg. SSB, 107. In the Engelthal Sister-Book mention is made of a bishop and the friars of Regensburg. ESB, 8, 7. St. Katharinenthal had in its service the old chaplain Brother Burkart of Wangen who had trouble keeping his Masses straight (see above). KSB, 110.

Note 118: TSB, 28.

Note 119: TSB, 28.

Note 120: GSB, 126.

Note 121: WSB, 71.

Note 122: Regina D. Schiewer, "Sermons for Nuns of the Dominican Observance Movement," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Boston: Brill, 1998), 75. Although this article focuses mainly on the fifteenth-century Observance Movement, Schiewer also discusses the situation in the fourteenth century when many sermons, especially those by Eckhart and Tauler were first written down. "The sermons were given in German and also written in German so that the sisters could use them for reading at table and private reading. This was very important considering the small number of men's religious houses, which had the spiritual responsibility for so many convents. To a certain extent, the nun's ability to read sermons was more important than her listening to them because the confessor could not come to the convent as frequently as would have been necessary to satisfy the nuns' hunger for the word of God. In contrast to the nuns, most lay-people were not educated enough to read sermons to teach themselves in the absence of the *pater confessarius*. That is why the vast number of Dominican sermons for lay-people are written in Latin. In this form they could be used as sample sermons with the male order. This observation leads to an interesting

conclusion with respect to monastic preaching: the "monastic" sermons of the Dominicans, that is sermons which were meant for cloistered nuns, were given and written in German, whereas sermons for lay-people were given in German but written in Latin." Schiewer, 76–77.

Note 123: ASB, 189–91.

Note 124: ASB, 191–92.

Note 125: ASB, 192–93.

Note 126: St. Gall, ms. 1066. Referred to in Franz Pfeiffer, *Hermann von Fritslar, Nicolaus von Strassburg, David von Augsburg* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1845), xxiv.

Note 127: UBF, Hs. 41.

Note 128: ZBZ, C 76.

Note 129: In regards to Observant nuns bringing books with them upon entry into the religious life, see Marie-Luise Ehrenschtner, "A Library Collected by and for the Use of Nuns: St. Catherine's Convent, Nuremberg," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). The speculation that Johannes Meyer may have given the manuscript to Adelhausen can be found in *Katalog der Züricher Zentralbibliothek*, 358.

Note 130: ESB, 12.

Note 131: ESB, 25.

Note 132: ASB, 186.

Note 133: ASB, 186–87.

Note 134: "Wann si waren in der andacht, das es alle zite in dem closter was in der stille vnd in dem ernste, als an dem stillen fritage, vnd alwegen nach complete so was dz weinen also groß in dem core vnd vff dem tormenter, so si warent vor iren betten, das mans ettwie verre horte. Vnd vnder wilent warent ettliche verzucket vnd ettliche geswat, vnd ettliche schrei mit luter styme von der übrigen gnade, die in God tett." ASB, 186.

Note 135: There are frequent mentions of this phenomenon in her Revelations. See for example Ebner, 100.

Note 136: Ebner, 120.

Note 137: "was von gnaden darzü komen vil jare vor irem tode, das si alle zite schrei tag vnd nacht, vnd sprach: 'Sünli, sünli, liebes sünli, truttet sünli, fröliches sünli, wunekliches sünli.' Vnd tet das als embklich vnd mit als luter styme, das nieman kein rüwe vor ihr moht han. Vnd wart denne ir antlit also entzündet, vnd ire ougen also frölich, das man wol sach, das ir Gott was wunders erzeiget hatte. Vnd ir fröide was vnderwilent als vnmessekklich groß, vnd ouch das weffere vnd das jamern, das si nach disem kinde hatte, wz ouch so groß, das es kume ze schriben were, vnd vnderwilet wart gesechen, das sich ir lip vfferhüp von dem bette me denne eines halben klafters hoche." ASB, 176.

Note 138: SSB, 105.

Note 139: GSB, 138.

Note 140: WSB, 69.

Note 141: ASB, 165.

Note 142: ESB, 31.

Note 143: WSB, 75.

Note 144: SSB, 110.

Note 145: ASB, 158.

Note 146: GSB, 136.

Note 147: ESB, 13.

Note 148: ESB, 21.

Note 149: ASB, 159.

Note 150: ASB, 154.

Note 151: "Wises hertz, flúch die minne/ die mit laid müs zergan,/ und las dich in dem besten finden,/ das mit fröden mag bestan./ ob du falscher min bist: der/ tü dich ab; Got laide sy dir." TSB, 29.

Note 152: "ir mund uberflos von süssen Worten." TSB, 29.

Note 153: "So sy in dem werkhuss sass by dem cofent, so sang sy dik gar süssi wörtli von unserm heren, und das hortent die schwestren denn gar begirlich und gern." TSB, 59–60.

Note 154: "In aduentu et per omne tempus quadragessime universe sorores post matutinas in capitulum diuertentes, siue ad loca alia oportuna diuersis flagellorum generibus corpus suum usque ad sanguinis effusionem lacerantes crudelissime et hostiliter ceciderunt, ita quod sonitus uerberancium se ubique per omne monasterium resonaret, ascendens in aures Domini Sabaoth suauior omni melodia, cui talia humilitatis et deuocionis opera multum placent. . ." USB, 340.