2. DANGEROUS PASSAGES AND SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION IN THE *HORTUS DELICIARUM*

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The magisterial *Hortus deliciarum*,\(^1\) an illuminated manuscript produced in Alsace c. 1167–1196, was a book meant to be performed as much as read. A hybrid of esteemed patristic texts, contemporary theological treatises, Biblical history, canon law, musical notation, poetry, calendrical tables, diagrams, and full-page illuminations, the work insisted that viewers move back and forth between times, sources, and, ultimately, levels of literacy. Texts appear in a variety of forms throughout the book: in extensive Latin passages and German glosses, and, in the illuminations, within banderoles as well as *tituli*, as backgrounds and even fragments of dialogue. Far from being a hodgepodge, the result of capriciousness or whimsy, this eclecticism was premeditated on the part of the *Hortus*’ ambitious author and cultural context.

The abbess Herrad (d. c. 1196) created this monumental work for the edification of the canonesses at the Augustinian convent of Mount Sainte-Odile (known as the Hohenbourg), hoping it would assist in their pursuit of divine knowledge. Her famous prose introduction, “composed for the sake of their encouragement,” highlights her role as author of the book and clearly states her hope that it will be instrumental in her sisters’ (as well as her own) union with God:

Herrad, by the grace of God, abbess, although unworthy, of the church of Hohenbourg, to the sweetest virgins of Christ faithfully working at Hohenbourg as though in the vineyard of the Lord Christ, be grace and glory, that the Lord will give. I make it known to your holiness, that, like a little bee inspired by God, I collected from the various flowers of sacred Scripture and philosophic writings this book, which is called the *Hortus deliciarum*, and I brought it together to the praise and honor of Christ and the church and for the sake of your love as if into a single sweet honeycomb. Therefore, in this very book, you ought diligently to seek pleasing food and to refresh your exhausted soul with its honeyed dewdrops, so that, always possessed by the charms of the Bridegroom and fattened on spiritual delights, you may safely hurry over ephemeral things to possess the things that last forever in happiness and pleasure. And now as I pass dangerously through the pathways of the sea, I ask that you may redeem me with your fruitful prayers from earthly passions and draw me upwards, together with you, into the affection of your beloved. Amen.²

In using the apian metaphor, Herrad was invoking a multivalent image of purity, wisdom, skill, and diligent industriousness,³ and it is impos-

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