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The Limits of the Present: Hugh of Saint-Victor's *Pictura* of Noah's Ark and Augustine's *Distentio Animi*

Abstract

Imagining the universe from the perspective of providence, the size and complexity of Hugh of Saint-Victor's *pictura* of Noah's Ark, described in *De Pictura Arche* (*c.* 1125–31), has long confused scholars. Many have suggested the text describes a now-lost, real, physical painting; for others it reads as an exclusively verbal picture, an *ekphrasis*, in the tradition of monastic memory practice. Proponents of the former interpretation argue the density of description defies memory and imagination. But, this paper argues, the pressure the *pictura* exerts on memory and imagination, as an *ekphrasis*, might also be seen as central to its rhetorical-spiritual efficacy. In his longer works on the Ark, *De Arche Noe Morali* and *De Vanitate Mundi*, Hugh envisages ascent in Augustinian terms, as a stretching of the soul's (or memory's) attention to hold passing times 'as present,' that simulates God's 'eternal present.' Hugh intends, I propose, in keeping with Augustine's *distentio animi*, that we achieve the *pictura*'s eternal view in the distension of our awareness, our struggle to hold as pictorially 'present' what is described in the time of narrative. As a reworking of the classical, simultaneous 'view from above' along Augustinian lines – as an inner labour, and time-bound exercise – the *pictura* may also be situated in a new historical-intellectual context: not just as an astonishing example of monastic map-making or mnemotechnical practice, but as part of a later-medieval shift towards thinking about ascent as a coming to terms with time, and eternity as discoverable in the here and now, in the 'limits of the present.'[1]

Hugh of Saint-Victor's 'picture' of Noah's Ark, *De Pictura Arche*, has long been a subject of debate among medievalists. In two related treatises written sometime between 1125 and 1131, *De Archa Noe Morali*, and the shorter, more technical companion-work, *De Pictura Arche* (the more debated of the two), Hugh described the construction of the Ark given to Noah in *Genesis* (6.14–16).[2] This act of description is itself a feat of construction, entailing – according to the cumulative levels of exegesis – a vast encyclopaedic map for the complete

1. I would like to thank all participants of the *Narrating Time in the Twelfth-Century* project: especially the organisers Sarah Bowden, Lea Braun, and George Younge, and others who gave feedback on an earlier version of this paper – particularly Jonny Morton who acted as respondent. I am also grateful to the History of Art Research Committee at the University of Cambridge, to whom I presented a version of this paper in Spring 2021 and received invaluable suggestions and comments.

2. These two treatises have (confusingly) accrued a number of different titles over time, due to different usages in the manuscripts: what I refer to as *De Pictura Arche* was traditionally referred to as *De Archa Noe Mystica*; or *Libellus de formatione arche*. *De Archa Noe Morali* has been referred to simply as *De Archa Noe*. Here, I often abbreviate the titles: *De Pictura Arche* may be referred to simply as *De Pictura*; and *De Archa Noe Morali* as *De Archa Noe*.

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history of the terrestrial, cosmic, and human worlds from the beginning of time stretching towards the eschatological future. As Hugh summarises the Ark in *De Archa Noe Morali*:

> Ibi universa opera restaurationis nostrae a principio mundi usque ad finem plenissime continentur, et status universalis Ecclesiae figuratur. Ibi historia rerum gestarum texitur, ibi mysteria sacramentorum inveniuntur, ibi dispositi sunt gradus affectuum, cogitationum, meditationum, contemp. lationum, bonorum operum, virtutum et praemiorum […] Ibi quoddam universitatis corpus effingitur, et concordia singulorum explicatur. (*De Archa Noe Morali* 4.21; *PL* 176.680; *Spiritual Writings* 152)
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> (There all the works of restoration are contained in all their fullness, from the world's beginning to its end; therein is represented the condition of the universal Church. Into it is woven the story of events, in it are found the mysteries of the sacraments, and there are set out the stages of affections, thoughts, meditations, contemplations, good works, virtues, and rewards […]. There the sum of things is depicted, and the harmony of its elements explained.)[3]

Many readers, amongst them Danielle Lecoq and Patrice Sicard, took Hugh's artistic terminology and the sheer complexity of the figure outlined to mean that a real drawing of the Ark must have existed, and offered their own drawings in an effort to reconstruct putative lost originals (see Lecoq and Sicard). More recently, Conrad Rudolph has argued that *De Pictura* was not even written by Hugh himself, but constitutes a *reportatio* of his comments on a monumental painting of the Ark in the cloister at the Abbey of Saint Victor – "the most complex individual work of figural art of the entire Middle Ages" – which Rudolph has reconstructed in over a hundred digital illustrations (figures 1 and 2) (Rudolph xix).[4]

Others have attempted to recontextualise the Ark as an extraordinary example of crafted verbal, fictive *picturae* or *ekphrases*, a common practice in the schools designed to concentrate and order materials in the mind. Michael Evans suggested Hugh's composition was a deliberately playful "mixture of the plausible and impossible:" its "present-tense narration" and "highly personal mode of address" imply not the description of a pre-existent image or set of images, but

3. Hugh's *De Arca Noe Morali* and books one and two of *De Vanitate Mundi* (along with extracts from his commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, and a short text, *De Substantia Dilectionis*) have been translated by a Religious of C. S. M. V. in the volume *Hugh of Saint-Victor: Selected Spiritual Writings*, which I use throughout the essay. All references to book and chapter numbers in works included in this volume are those used in the translated text (and not those of the Latin *PL* edition which often differ).

4. Rudolph's illustrations are included in his book, *The Mystic Ark*, and on a dedicated website (accessed 5 Nov. 2022).

the conjuring of an image for the mind alone (Evans 74). Mary Carruthers developed this line of reasoning:

> The emphasis on continuing process is certainly that of Hugh of Saint-Victor's picture of Noah's ark, which comes into being as it is described and is clearly not a pre-existing object, even though some modern scholars, misled perhaps by their own assumptions, have attempted to draw parts of it […]. (Carruthers, "Moving Images" 293)

"[Taking] shape in the present time of narrative and meditation which is 'memory time'," the Ark is rather to be 'walked' through as a "summary and orientation, a 'way' to the treatise it accompanies, *De Archa Noe*" (Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* 246 and 249).[5] Carruthers reads the Ark as an instance of the medieval monastic absorption of the tradition of *ekphrasis* ("loosely understood to mean a description of just about any sort, including imaginary things, often buildings") into the *via* of inventive meditation, known to the monks as *memoria spiritalis* or *sancta memoria* – which derived its techniques in part from the Ciceronian tradition of locational memory (Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* 12).[6] For Carruthers, then, the Ark is essentially a striking – unprecedented (in size) – monument to monastic mnemotechnical method, an imagined building project for mentally arranging and recalling the soteriological 'content' of *De Archa Noe Morali*. "He used it as he advised others to, as a universal cognitive machine" (Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* 244).

Yet Carruthers' interest in the Ark remains within the bounds of the formal and rhetorical; she does not dwell on the lessons of *De Archa Noe* – even if she sees the *pictura* as a guide to its contents. This article proposes to fill that gap. Paying closer attention to the teachings of *De Archa Noe* – and a third treatise that discusses the Ark, *De Vanitate Mundi* – it suggests that we can better understand the ekphrastic (exclusively verbal) nature of Hugh's *De Pictura* if we acknowledge the extent to which its mnemotechnical character is bound up with Hugh's thinking on the problem of time.

The Ark is introduced in both *De Archa Noe* and *De Vanitate* as a means of overcoming what Hugh repeatedly laments as the 'great mutability' arising in the heart of man: the fallen heart (or soul) is continually dragged by its attachment to temporal things away from the Creator, in whom alone it can find rest.[7] Offering a remedy from the *mutabilitas rerum*, these works resemble earlier medieval works, most familiarly Macrobius' Commentary on Cicero's *Somnium*

5. The first quotation here is appropriated from Carruthers' reading of a work by Adam of Dryburgh (*c.* 1140–1212), apparently an imitation of Hugh's *pictura*: *De tripartito tabernaculo*, or "The Triple Tabernacle" of *c.* 1180. Adam, like Hugh, includes as part of this work what he calls a *pictura* for readers to "enlarge" on the text in memory and imagination. However, Adam's *pictura* does not seem to be informed by the same temporal concerns which (I argue) inform Hugh's composition.

6. Carruthers' definition of *ekphrasis* is taken from "Moving Images" 290.

7. *De Archa Noe Morali* opens: "cumque magno quidem desiderio exposcerent, demonstrari sibi quae causa in corde hominis tantas cogitationum fluctuationes ageret […]." ("And the brethren earnestly entreated that they might be shown the cause of these unstable movements in man's heart […].") (1.2; *PL* 176.617; *Spiritual Writings* 45).

Scipionis and Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*, organised around the idea of *kataskopos*, the endeavour to transcend the bounds of the temporal. Only in the treatises on the Ark, attaining a view of the world from the perspective of eternity, or providence, is not simply reported, as it is in these earlier texts, but formulated as an active *exercise* or discipline: "If then, we have begun to live persistently in our own heart through the practice of meditation, we have already in a manner ceased to belong to time; and, having become dead to the world, we are living inwardly with God" (*De Archa Noe* 2.1).[8] The Ark, in all three works, is intended as an interior refuge where we are not subject to transience: "those who dwell there, dwell there always, and always rejoice, grieving for nothing that is past, fearing nothing future, possessing what they love" (*De Archa Noe* 4.21).[9]

This article argues that the Ark drawing described in *De Pictura* is not just an 'illustration' or memory palace for information given in these longer works. It is precisely *the exercise* Hugh describes in these other works: it facilitates our escape from time – and it does so in and through its demand for concentrated inner picturing. Or, to put it the other way around, the *pictura*'s demand for concentrated picturing, its ekphrastic method, is (I suggest) central to the Ark's soteriological and 'transcendental' function, set out by Hugh in the longer works, as a remedy from time. In support of this reading, I consider the influence of Augustine's discussion of time in the *Confessions*, particularly in relation to the *distentio* or *extentio animi*, ('distension of the soul'). In book eleven of this work, read throughout the Middle Ages, and certainly by Hugh, Augustine comes to the conclusion that man is only able to comprehend time as a continuous entity because of the way he can hold past, present, and future as present in the mind's eye.[10] Without this power for continuous attention, man is continuously carried away on the fleeting present. The stretched-out present of imagination and memory – a distension that requires meditation and practice – is a simulacrum of God's eternity, that perceives all time as perfectly present. Augustine's suggestion that God's eternity might be discoverable analogously in this way, through our inward, memorial extension helps to make sense, I propose, of the form and logic of Hugh's image: a "long" (*spatiosa*) picture of the created order, that comes into being (that receives its historical, eternal shape) inwardly, in an ongoing 'present' of imagination and memorisation.[11] In *De Pictura*, Hugh transforms the notion of a view from an 'eternal present,' I want to suggest, into an exercise in 'making present,' on the model of Augustine: so that the reader achieves this

8. "Si ergo per studium meditationis assidue cor nostrum inhabitare coeperimus, iam quodammodo temporales esse desistimus, et quasi mortui mundo facti intus cum Deo vivimus" (*PL* 176.635; *Spiritual Writings* 73).

9. "[…] propter quod et ibi manent, et semper permanent, et semper gaudent, nihil dolentes praeteritum, nihil timentes futurum, habentes quod diligunt" (*PL* 176.680; *Spiritual Writings* 152).

10. For the influence of the *Confessions* in the Middle Ages, see Saak.

11. *Spatiosa* is used, for example, at *De Vanitate Mundi* 2.5; *PL* 176.720; *Spiritual Writings* 182 when Hugh warns of traversing (that is, mentally constructing) the Ark: "Spatiosa quidem, sed non fastidiosa erit ista deambulatio" ("this will be a long walk but not a tedious one").

providential or eternal view of the world (creation as the 'works of restoration') in the course of the readerly struggle to unify as present – as a simultaneous mental picture – what comes into being across the lived time of narrative.[12]

Thus, this article maintains that Hugh's composition is a verbal rather than physical composition, in the tradition of monastic mnemotechnical practice, *sancta memoria*. But it also offers a new angle on the image of the Ark, arguing Hugh's composition makes this other (Augustinian) appeal to memory, as mediator between temporality and eternity – deploying Augustine to reanimate, for his brethren at St Victor, the simultaneous 'Boethian' eternal view as a more grounded, experiential exercise in feeling out the limits of our present.[13] This is not to suggest that Boethius is somehow eclipsed by Augustine in Hugh's formulation; the two authors were not in competition in his mind, but complementary. Rather, I suggest we find the reassertion of an Augustinian perspective and strategy – characteristically personal, and interested in comprehension from within – to exist alongside and to tackle an old problem. This reassertion can be seen as part of a more pervasive impetus in the twelfth century (particularly evident at the elite new school of St Victor) to provide a growing range of religious communities, often combining the *vita contemplativa* with scholarship and teaching (elements of the *vita activa*), with sophisticated, rhetorically engaging exercises for the *reformatio* of the soul.[14] As Caroline Walker Bynum has put it, the twelfth century, if it did not "discover the individual," put new store by the "stance of the individual worshipper before God" (Bynum 4). It is in this (well-studied) context of renewed spiritual inventiveness to meet the demands of – and give shape to – the inner life and aspirations of a new set of religious trainees that I think we can understand Hugh's turn to Augustine's take on memory and time, and his 'modernisation' of the Boethian vision via Augustine's *distentio*. In the final part of this paper I show, in brief, how this move does not seem to have been an isolated one. Whether or not influenced by Hugh (or simply part of the same intellectual slipstream), later twelfth-century authors – and then mystics of the later Middle Ages – seem likewise to have seized on Augustine's understanding of time for audiences both within and (increasingly) beyond the cloister, making God's eternity felt from an ever-more worldly, finite perspective, or within the diminutive 'now.'

12. Hugh describes the content of the Ark as the *opera restaurationis* at *De Archa Noe Morali* 4.21, quoted above page 1. The works of restoration are our salvation history, the interventions of God in creation which reveal to us the possibility of our redemption. In *De Sacramentis*, for example, Hugh defines the *opera restaurationis* as "the Incarnation of the Word and all the Word's sacraments, accomplished over the six ages of salvation history" (as distinguished from the *opera conditionis*, "works of creation," which "pertain to the creation of the world and all its elements, accomplished in six days"). *De Sacramentis* 1, Prol. 2; *PL* 176.183; Deferrari 3. At other times, however, Hugh talks about the *work* of restoration which we undertake as individuals, healing and transforming fallen creation from the inside out, as it were (implicit, for example, in the prologue to *Sententiae de Divinitate* (lines 234–35) where "opus restaurationis est restituere quod perierat" ("the work of restoration is to restore what was lost"); Piazzoni 920, cited by Coolman 14). This dual meaning is reflected in the Ark as an image *of* the historical works of restoration, but one that is crafted by the soul and which remakes and perfects the soul in turn.

13. Boyd Taylor Coolman has more recently described the Ark as "not simply an elaborate memory-storage and retrieval device [...] rather, its very structure makes constructive, theological claims about reality" (*The Theology* 184). Coolman's more subtle, theological reading of the Ark as a "reforming practice" (4), through which we actually participate in the divine mind, is more in line with the kinds of claims I make for the Ark here, and offers a helpful precedent for my argument (while Coolman is less interested in how we 'read' the *pictura*, or any potential links with Augustine's meditations on memory, time, and eternity). Meanwhile Patricia Dailey has talked about "the Augustinian model [of time] inherited by many Christian mystics [...] one that aspires to the promise of eternal salvation of union by means of memory," though Dailey focusses more on references to man's 'prememory' of God in mysticism, than with the memorial exercise of *distentio*; and she does not discuss Hugh (Dailey 341).

14. For new forms of religious life in the twelfth century, see Constable. For the flourishing of literature about and for ascetic 'formation' in this period see, for example, the discussion of visionary training in Newman 14–25, or the many twelfth-century monastic texts discussed by Carruthers in *The Craft of Thought*.

1. The eternal present and the reintegration of the self in *De Vanitate Mundi* and *De Archa Noe Morali*

"The ruthlessness of time is […] a thought that returns too often in Hugh to be a mere convention. It recurs like an obsession" (Squire 29). But it is the "positive terror of time and the time-bound," as Aelred Squire describes it, that historians of art and literature interested in Hugh's Ark have left out of their analyses (Squire 28). Hugh's longer treatises on the Ark, *De Archa Noe Morali* and *De Vanitate Mundi*, tackle a problem lamented by numerous authors before him, ancient, biblical, and medieval: the mutability of things, and how to live a life turned away from changeableness and towards the unchanging One, or God. The Cynics were nicknamed *kataskopoi* ('spies,' or 'scouts,' but meaning literally 'view downward') for their aspiration to rise beyond time and space, to get a vantage on the divine administration of the world. Thus, the term *kataskopos* has been adopted by scholars such as Pierre Hadot to identify the contemplative-literary tradition of the 'view from above' with which Hugh's works on the Ark are profoundly engaged (Hadot 246–47).[15] The exercise became a commonplace in classical and medieval philosophical literature, the most famous medieval instances known to Hugh being Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, via its commentary by Macrobius of *c.* 400, and Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*, written in *c.* 524.[16] Cicero's *Somnium* told the story of a Roman general, Scipio, visited in a dream by his dead grandfather-by-adoption, who lifts him to a perch in the Milky Way. Against the magnitude of the heavens, Scipio discovers the minuteness of the world and the fleetingness of worldly fame.[17] Boethius' text, borrowing heavily from Cicero, reflects more concertedly on the relationship between time and eternity. The ascent of its narrator (the prisoner Boethius), guided by Lady Philosophy, involves a shift in perspective from a view of the temporal, governed by a wily and inconstant Fate, to an understanding of how Fate is patterned from on high by God's providence, which perceives and rationalises events from a perfectly unified perspective, embracing past and future as if in an 'eternal present:'[18]

> Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio, quod ex collatione temporalium clarius liquet. Nam quidquid vivit in tempore id praesens a praeteritis in futura procedit nihilque est in tempore constitutum quod totum vitae suae spatium pariter possit amplecti […]. Quod igitur intermi-

15. The use of *kataskopos* for moral scouting (particularly in the works of Epictetus) was identified in an article published in 1893 (and cited by Hadot) by Norden. A more recent discussion of the development of this metaphor can be found in Schofield 75–80.

16. This paper owes much to Brian FitzGerald's recent work on time in Hugh's thought. Though his interventions have not been concerned with the Ark *pictura*, FitzGerald does highlight (as I do here) Hugh's engagement with (and reinterpretation of) the relation between time and eternity in Boethius and Macrobius. See FitzGerald, "Time, History, and Mutability" 216; and *Inspiration and Authority* 29–30.

17. Scipio is shown by his dead forefather (in his sleep) how reputation, or gossip, is "confined to the narrow bounds of the small area at which you are gazing, and is never enduring; it is overwhelmed with the passing of men and is lost in the oblivion of posterity." (Cicero *Somnium* 7; Stahl 76).

18. "God by providence disposes what is to be done in a single and unchanging way, but by fate accomplishes those same things he has disposed in a manifold and temporal way" (Boethius *De consolatione* 4, pr. 6; Tester 358–61).

> nabilis vitae plenitudinem totam pariter comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque futuri quidquam absit nec praeteritio fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur, idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi semper adsistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem. (*De consolatione Philosophiae* 4, pr. 6; Tester 422–23)
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> (Eternity, then, is the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession [*perfecta possessio*] of boundless life, which becomes clearer by comparison with temporal things. For whatever lives in time proceeds in the present from the past to the future, and there is nothing established in time which can embrace the whole space of its life equally […]. Whatever therefore comprehends and possesses at once the whole fullness of boundless life, and is such that neither is anything future lacking from it, nor has anything past flowed away, that is rightly held to be eternal, and that must necessarily both always be present to itself, possessing itself in the present, and hold as present the infinity of moving time.)

God's knowledge, surpassing all movement of time, considers past, present, and future gathered together "as though they were now going on" (4, pr. 6).[19] In *De consolatione,* our ascent involves this imaginative experiment: envisaging how just as we see things pass in our "temporal present," so God "perceives all things in his eternal one" (4, pr. 6).[20]

In both *De Archa Noe Morali* and *De Vanitate Mundi*, Hugh of Saint-Victor introduces his composition in terms that clearly place it in the tradition of *kataskopos* and strongly echo, in particular, Boethius' narrative. Borrowing, perhaps, from the Socratic, dialogic structure of *De consolatione*, his *De Vanitate Mundi* (which has been particularly ignored by readers of *De Pictura*, and only narrowly postdates it) takes the form of a conversation between personifications of Soul and Reason.[21] Reason, like Lady Philosophy, is the director of the action, who sets out to reveal to her student the mutability of worldly pleasures. The treatise opens with both personifications hovering above the world, Reason instructing Soul: "take your stand in spirit, then, as it were on a watch-tower, and turn your attention on the dwelling-place of the world in all directions, so that everything lies spread before your gaze" (*De Vanitate* 1.1).[22] In the first book, Reason presents Soul with a series of zoomed-in vignettes of seemingly happy, prosperous people: a boating party, travelling merchants, a family household, a wedding ceremony, and a schoolroom of pupils

19. "[…] scientia quoque eius omnem temporis supergressa motionem in suae manet simplicitate praesentiae infinitaque praeteriti ac futuri spatia complectens omnia quasi iam gerantur in sua simplici cognitione considerat" (Tester 426–27).

20. "uti vos vestro hoc temporario praesenti quaedam videtis, ita ille omnia suo cernit aeterno" (Tester 426–27).

21. Aelred Squire has pointed out that since each of the major works on the Ark refers to the others, it is possible to put them in a chronological order (in the years between 1125 and 1131): *De Archa Noe Morali, De Pictura Arche,* and *De Vanitate Mundi* (Squire 25).

22. "Constitue igitur te quasi in quadam mentis specula, et eius aciem in arcam huius mundi circumquaque lustrandam dirige, ut totus contemplanti coram positus sit mundus" (*PL* 176.704; *Spiritual Writings* 158).

hard at work. In each case, Soul, from her would-be providential perspective, initially takes pleasure in the scene. But Reason chastises her for her naivety, telling her to take a broader view, to dilate (*dilata*) her 'present' gaze, from on high, to include past and future.[23] Doing so, Soul sees how each group, absorbed in present delights, fails to see some approaching calamity, and comes to a grisly end: the boating party is swept away by oncoming storms, the travellers are killed by hiding ambushers, and so forth. Soul – with Reason's promptings – arrives at the repeated conclusion, in the words of *Ecclesiastes*, "Vanitas est, et vanitas vanitatum" (from which the treatise gets its name).[24]

Reason then explains the point of her demonstration:

> Longum est per singula vanitatem huius mundi demonstrare. Scias tamen quod ex istis omnibus quae vides nihil permanens est […]. Semper praesentia transeunt, semper futura succedunt, et quia continuus est successus, perpetuus status esse putatur. Sunt enim oculi mortalium depressi, et cursum universorum non respiciunt, atque in exiguis rerum particulis defixi, quid agatur in toto non attendunt. […] Mens vero tenebris suis obvoluta non multum valet aut futura prospicere, aut praeterita meminisse. Cumque solum iis, quae coram posita sint, occupata tenetur, innovatio praesentium aufert ei praeteritorum memoriam. (2.1; *PL* 176.711; *Spiritual Writings* 171–72)
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> (It is a lengthy business to show the vanity of this world by going through particular cases. You, do however, realise, that none of all the things you are looking at abides. […] The present is always passing on, the future always following; and since the continuity is unbroken there is a belief that this is the permanent condition of things. For the eyes of mortal men are cast down, and do not look to the course of things in general. […] His mind, enwrapped in darkness, is not capable of foreseeing much of the future, or of remembering much of what has gone before; and, when its attention is entirely held by what is before it, the continual renewal of the present robs it of the memory of the past.)

The various pleasure seekers who come to harm exemplify this hopeless enthralment to the ever-renewing present, man's failure to see the present in the context of time's passing and "course of things in general" (*cursum universorum*).

23. Hugh uses *dilato* at *De Vanitate* 4.1; *PL* 176.717. He uses the same term more extensively in *De Archa Noe*: see below, page 17.

24. This phrase becomes a refrain in the dialogue from *De Vanitate* 1.1 onwards (*e.g. PL* 176.706; *Spiritual Writings* 161). The phrase comes from the Vulgate translation of *Ecclesiastes* 1.2. *Ecclesiastes* was thought in the Middle Ages to be the work of Solomon, and its reflections on the cyclical nature of reality and the inexorability of death have long earned it status (along with Job and Proverbs) as the closest "the Near East came to Greek philosophy" (Atler xvi). Solomon's reflections 'from above' were apparently combined in Hugh's mind with the more pagan visionary ascents of Cicero and Boethius. Hugh's final work was a commentary on *Ecclesiastes* that returns to the same themes of time and eternity running through the Ark treatises. Discussion of the commentary is beyond the scope of this paper: for an eloquent discussion of Hugh's *Homiliae in Ecclesiasten* alongside *De Vanitate*, see FitzGerald, *Inspiration and Authority* 18–49.

Hugh then clarifies that the kataskopic vision enjoyed by Soul (and by Reason) illustrates not the work of the outer eye (which is thus constrained), but the inner eye (*oculus mentis* or *oculus cordis*), which can be trained to overcome outer deficiencies. When you hear yourself invited to 'see,' Reason says, it is the inner eye we are talking about: "much clearer than that [outer] one, an eye that looks to the past, present, and future all at once" (1.1).[25] This distinction between inner and outer sight signals Hugh's new practical, meditative take on the Boethian *kataskopos*: he wants to be clear about the meaning of his ascent 'narrative' for monks and students engaged in daily contemplative exercise (where Boethius addressed himself to a more diverse learned audience). Indeed, elsewhere Hugh clarifies the psychological connotations of other dramatic terms and images he has adopted from Boethius. He explains that when we speak about the 'highest,' this means the deepest within oneself: "to ascend [*ascendere*] to God means, therefore, to enter [*intrare*] into oneself, and not only to enter into oneself, but in some ineffable manner to penetrate even to one's depths" (2.3).[26] Or as he also puts it, "the more a man gathers himself together [*colligitur*] in spirit the more he is raised [*elevatur*] in thought and desire" (2.2).[27] Thus ascent to a more inclusive, 'eternal' present – a view of the world and time in the context of a universal, providential continuum – is to be understood by the monks, in their contemplative practice, as a retreat inwards. This lofty view is really a mental readjustment. It involves reintegrating the self from its tendency to become attached to things and moments outside of it, which is at the same time to expand or 'dilate' the attention, viewing particulars in their temporal context.

The same sort of distinctions are drawn in *De Archa Noe Morali* (probably written before *De Vanitate*). While it lacks the dramatic kataskopic opening of *De Vanitate*, its first book likewise describes the distance between man and divine eternity, recalling again Macrobius and Boethius. Here Hugh introduces a stronger postlapsarian emphasis. He explains how man has become scattered by the Fall, and needs to be lifted back up to God. 'Ascent' is (again) really an inner adjustment, a unification and dilation of awareness:

> Cor ergo hominis, quod prius divino amori affixum stabile praestitit, et unum amando unum permansit, postquam per desideria terrena difluere coepit; quasi in tot divisum est, quod ea sunt quae concupiscit […]. Hinc igitur nascitur motus sine stabilitate, labor sine requie, cursus sine perven-

25. "Nolo igitur ut cogites visionem huius oculi, quando audis te ad videndum invitari. Habes alium oculum intus multo clariorem isto, qui praeterita, praesentia et futura simul respicit" (*PL* 176.704; *Spiritual Writings* 158).

26. "In spiritualibus ergo, et invisibilibus cum aliquid supremum dicitur, non quasi localiter supra culmen aut verticem coeli constitutum, sed intimum omnium significatur. Ascendere ergo ad Deum hoc est intrare ad semetipsum, et non solum ad se intrare, sed ineffabili quodammodo in intimis etiam seipsum transire" (*PL* 176.714–15; *Spiritual Writings* 176).

27. "[...] ut dictum est, in unum colligitur, quanto magis sursum elevatur" (*PL* 176.714; *Spiritual Writings* 175).

> tione, ita ut semper sit inquietum cor nostrum, donec illi adhaerere coeperit; ubi et desiderio suo nihil deesse gaudeat, et ea quae diligit semper mansura confidat. (*De Archa Noe* 1.2; *PL* 176.619; *Spiritual Writings* 47)
>
> (The human heart, which had hitherto kept its stability in cleaving to divine love and remained one in the love of the One, was as it were divided into as many channels as there were objects it craved, once it had begun to flow in different directions through earthly longings […]. Therefore, from movement without stability is born toil without rest, travel without arrival; so that our heart is always restless till such time as it begins to cleave to Him, in whom it may both rejoice that its desire lacks nothing, and be assured that what it loves will last eternally.)

"Let us then see," Hugh says, "what we can do to attain the love of God, for he will integrate [*colliget*] and stabilize [*stabilitet*] our hearts" (1.3).[28] In both *De Archa Noe Morali* and *De Vanitate*, the structure of the Ark is now introduced as the means of our earthly reintegration:

> Ingredere ergo nunc si secretum cordis tui, et fac habitaculum Deo, fac templum, fac domum, fac tabernaculum, […] fac arcam diluvia […]. In diluvio imploret naufragus gubernatorem. (*De Archa Noe* 1.5; *PL* 176.621–22; *Spiritual Writings* 51)
>
> Now, therefore, enter your inmost heart, and make a dwelling-place for God. Make Him a temple, make Him a house, make Him a pavilion, […] make Him an Ark of the flood […]. In the flood, let him that is shipwrecked beseech Him who guides the helm.[29]

The Ark is then presented as Hugh's practical, contemplative – laborious – answer to Boethius' kataskopic view from the 'eternal present.' It is our means of drawing together our scattered attentions, of detaching ourselves from the renewing present to see the present in the context of the remembered past and 'foreseen' future ("those who dwell there […] always rejoice, grieving for nothing that is past, fearing nothing future").[30]

In both *De Archa Noe Morali* and *De Vanitate* Hugh describes the actual structure to be built in different levels of detail, and in different modes. In *De Archa Noe Morali*, the earlier of the two, dimen-

28. "Quaeramus ergo quo ad amorem Dei pertingere possimus, quia ipse colliget, et stabilitet corda nostra …" (*PL* 176.620; *Spiritual Writings* 48).

29. As Coolman says, Hugh chooses the first 'salvific structure' recorded in Scripture, but "in one breath Hugh includes it with various other biblical edifices suggests that, while he has chosen to symbolize this 'skill or practice' with Noah's vessel, the soul-constructing activity itself is far more significant than its symbolization" (Coolman 181).

30. *De Archa Noe* 4.21 (Latin and full reference above, note 9).

sions and structural elements of the Ark are given lengthy, often tangential allegorisations; this treatise is too discursive and exegetical to be considered a practical 'exercise.' And in the later *De Vanitate*, the Ark is more of a prop in our fictional journey inwards (and away from the flood), dramatised through the dialogue between Soul and Reason, than something we can build from start to finish. It is in *De Pictura* that Hugh seems to realise his ambition for the Ark – outlined in both the longer works – as a self-contained practical exercise capable (by virtue of its *ekphrasis*) of providing the mind with a refuge from temporal distraction. Indeed, *De Pictura* is most often positioned as a kind of 'appendix' to *De Archa Noe Morali* in the manuscripts – as though it represents the place where we 'put into action' the teachings of the longer work – with the following paragraph joining the two texts:

> And now, then, as we promised, we must put before you the pattern of our ark. Thus you may learn from an external form, which we have visibly depicted, what you ought to do interiorly, and when you have impressed the form of this pattern on your heart, you may rejoice that the house of God has been built in you. (*Spiritual Writings* 153)[31]

31. This paragraph, which often joins *De Archa Noe* and *De Pictura* in the manuscripts, is positioned differently in different translations: it is given at the end of *De Archa Noe Morali* in *Spiritual Writings* (153), while Jessica Weiss includes it at the beginning of *De Pictura* in her translation (45). The translation cited here is that used in *Spiritual Writings*. The passage does not appear in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. The passage essentially repeats a paragraph in *De Archa Noe* 1.7; *PL* 176.622: "Huius vero spiritualis aedificii exemplar tibi dabo arcam Noe, quam foris videbit oculus tuus, ut ad eius similitudinem intus fabricetur animus tuus." Thus it may be that Hugh himself repeated the same passage between the two works in the earliest 'drafts;' or the passage may have been extracted and isolated later by scribes, who saw it as the proper introduction to *De Pictura*.

2. *Ekphrasis* and being through becoming in *De Pictura Arche*

As we have already seen, although the two works are so closely related in manuscripts, scholarship on the figure of the Ark in *De Pictura* has tended to take the figure in isolation from the significance and function of the Ark in *De Archa Noe Morali* (and *De Vanitate*) as a remedy from time, in the tradition of the Boethian *kataskopos*. On the other hand, those historians of theology, such as Aelred Squire and Brian FitzGerald, who have explored Hugh's concepts of time and eternity in the longer treatises have not reflected so much on the 'appendixed' *pictura* and how we should read it (whether as the description of a pre-existing painting or artefact; or an *ekphrasis*, demanding mental picturing). In this next section, I want to triangulate two strands of scholarship to show how Hugh's meditations on time and the *mutabilitas rerum* – explored in the first section of the paper – help clarify the visual-verbal status of *De Pictura*. Hugh's ekphrastic mode, which Carruthers contextualises in medieval mne-

motechnical practice, can also be seen, I suggest, as the efficacious part of the Ark's remedy from time. As a verbal picture of the world under God's providential sway (the works of creation reordered as the *opera restaurationis*), Hugh's composition in *De Pictura* demands (as prerequisite for a view 'out of time') a regathering of the soul's naturally scattered attentions, an expansion of the temporal 'present' in the picturing mind – the kind of reintegrative take on kataskopic 'ascent' Hugh establishes in *De Vanitate* and *De Archa Noe*.

To return to the question of the *pictura*'s aesthetic status, then: the most strikingly ekphrastic feature, for Carruthers and Evans, and one of the most persuasive arguments against the idea of *De Pictura* as the record of a pre-existing physical depiction, is Hugh's present-tense narration: the emphasis – as Carruthers put it (and as cited above) – on 'continuing process.' For example, the opening to *De Pictura* reads:

> Primum ad mysticam arcae Noe descriptionem, in planitie ubi arcam depingere volo, medium centrum quaero, et ibi fixo puncto parvam quadraturam aequilateram ad similitudinem illius cubiti, in quo consummata est arca, ei circumduco. Itemque illi quadraturae aliam paulo maiorem circumscribo. Ita ut id spatium, quod est inter exteriorem et interiorem quadraturam, quasi limbus cubiti esse videatur. Hoc facto in interiori quadratura crucem pingo, ita ut cornua eius singula latera quadraturae attingant, eamque auro superduco. Deinde spatia illa, quae in superficie quadraturae inter quatuor angulos crucis et quadraturae remanent, colore vestio, duo superiora flammeo, et duo inferiora sapphirino. (*De Pictura* 1.2; *PL* 176.681; Weiss 45)

> (First I find [*quaero*] the center of the plane on which I intend to draw [*volo depingere*] the Ark, and there I fix [*fixo*] a point. Around this point I make [*circumduco*] a small square, which is like one cubit, [the measure] with which the Ark was constructed. And around this square I also make another [*circumscribo*], a bit bigger than the first, so that the space between the two squares looks like a band around the [central] cubit. Next, I draw [*pingo*] a cross in the innermost square in such a way that the four limbs of the cross meet each of its sides, and I go over [*superducuro*] the cross with gold. Then, I colour [*vestio*] in the spaces between the four angles of the cross and those of the square: the two above with red, the two lower ones with blue.)

I have highlighted the verbs in this first paragraph to give a sense of the personal, present-tense style narration Carruthers and Evans identify, and which Hugh sustains throughout the text. To give a brief (or comparatively brief) overview of what ensues from this point on (and a sense of the sheer imaginative difficulty): this central square or cubit with which we begin represents Christ; and it becomes – as Hugh says in the passage above – the basic unit on which the rest of the Ark is constructed. Around the square which surrounds that cubit, Hugh proceeds to measure out two further rectangular-shaped boxes. The three resulting quadrilaterals are then viewed side on, in three dimensions, rising up as three storeys (with the central cubit also becoming a vertical pillar that holds the floors together, "as the Church leans on Christ," 2.6). This basic structure constitutes the Ark according to the literal sense: the Ark of Noah. Next, Hugh elaborates the Ark's dimensions according to the 'allegorical' sense, as the Ark of the Church (supported by Christ). According to this sense, the structure becomes an historical timeline, its length charting the history of our restoration from the beginning to the end of time, and its width the Church's membership:

> Si enim arca Ecclesiam significat, restat ut longitudo arcae longitudinem figuret Ecclesiae. Longitudo autem Ecclesiae consideratur in diuturnitate temporum, sicut latitudo in multitudine populorum […]. Longitudo autem eius in prolixitate temporum consistit, qua de praeteritis per praesentia ad futura se extendit. Tempus autem longitudinis eius est ab initio mundi usque ad finem, quia sancta Ecclesia in fidelibus suis ab initio coepit, et usque in finem saeculi durabit. (*De Pictura* 3.7; *PL* 176.685; Weiss 49)
>
> (Now, if the Ark means the Church, then the length of the Ark means the length of the Church. The length of the Church is its temporal duration, just as the width of the Church is its number of affiliated peoples […]. The length of the Church is its extension in time: going from the past, through the present into the future. Its extent in time is from the beginning of the world until the end, because the Holy Church began from the beginning of the world in its faithful and will remain until the end of time.)

The Ark's length, marking the Church's elongation (*prolixitate*) through time, extending (*extendit*) from past to present to future, is

then further divided into three sections representing the periods of natural law, written law, and grace. More details follow: we can also see the Ark's length as divided into two parts – the periods before and after the incarnation. Hugh also inscribes along the Ark's length the names of the Church patriarchs and popes, stretching from Adam to the present day. According to a complex colour-coding system, we are to picture how men of all sorts (men of natural law, written law, and grace) have been alive in the different periods (for example, there were some men of grace even before the Incarnation). Lastly, the width of the Ark is made to correspond to the membership of the Church: Jews and gentiles, men and women.

In the final place, the Ark becomes one great ladder for spiritual ascent (exegetically, its 'moral' significance). The three storeys are now steps away from the world: the first representing those who use the world, the second, those who flee it; and the third and highest, "those who have forgotten the world" and have become maximally reintegrated in God (7.15). This is elaborated "for those ascending from the individual corners," with more specific ladders of the virtues placed in each.[32] More specifics follow (the allegorisation of the window of contemplation; the identification of the Ark's 'rooms' as the stations of the Israelites in exile).

At this point Hugh pauses, for the first time, to acknowledge the enormous imaginative effort being demanded, saying, "that is enough, for those who cannot or do not want to do any more."[33] But then this reads almost as a tease – as we are forced to do more, Hugh encircling the whole with a cosmic map:

> Hoc modo arca perfecta, circumducitur et circulus oblongus, qui ad singula cornua eam contingat, et spatium quod circumferentia eius includit, est orbis terrae. In hoc spatio mappa mundi depingitur ita ut caput arcae ad orientem convertatur, et finis eius occidentem contingat […]. Post haec supradicto circulo alter paulo laxior circumducitur, ut quasi zonam videatur efficere, et hoc spatium aer est. (14.28; *PL* 176.700; Weiss 67)

> (When the Ark is complete, an oval is drawn around it [*circumducitur*], which touches it at its corners, and the space enclosed by the circle is the orb of the earth. In this space is drawn [*depingitur*] the map of the world in such a way that the bow of the Ark is turned towards the east, and the stern

32. *De Pictura* 7.15; Weiss 57. Each corner of the Ark is labelled with a specific vice (ignorance, pride, lust, fervor of the spirit), with three ladders supplied for each, denoting the relevant recuperative virtues. Biblical books are then arranged in detail on each ladder, along with specific quotations and allegorical icons – so that ascent is also the work of scriptural contemplation, *sacra pagina.*

33. "Haec ad constructionem arcae, his qui plura facere aut non valent, aut nolunt sufficere possunt." 14.27; (*PL* 176.700; Weiss 67).

> of the Ark is turned to the west […]. Next, another oval, a little bit wider is drawn [*circumducitur*] around the first one, so that it seems like a belt, and this space is the heavens.)[34]

Finally, Christ in Majesty is depicted surrounding the cosmos – so that the whole "series of creation follows [*subsequatur*], and the whole expanse of the Ark reaches from the beginning of the world up to the end of time."[35] In this way the Ark evolves from the salvific structure given in Genesis – at the literal level of reading – into a kind of *kataskopos*, at once zoomed-in and zoomed-out, an impossibly intricate historical timeline and map of the world and heavens under God's providential sway. My concern here is not with the finer details of the composition and their exegetical origins – which have been impressively catalogued and traced to earlier sources, most recently by Conrad Rudolph. Rather, I have given this summary of Hugh's *pictura* to suggest how it 'stretches' our pictorial imagination: even at this final point in the text Hugh is addressing us in the present (active or passive forms): we are (supposedly) still building on and holding 'as present,' the structure begun nine-thousand words previously with the central cubit (Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* 246).

Scholars interested in *ekphrasis*, in diverse literary and cultural contexts, have often drawn attention to the way in which this rhetorical mode emplaces the reader in just such an extended or suspended present.[36] Describing an image or artefact, something that in real life we view 'simultaneously,' that appears all at once and in the present, the method of 'word painting' has been taken to offer a departure from time in traditional narratives, supplying the reader with a temporarily synoptic perspective. Hugh is likely to have known, for example, Virgil's famous *ekphrases* in the *Aeneid*: the vivid portrayals of Troy's fall on the walls of Dido's temple in book one, which allow Aeneas and the reader to take stock of the events preceding the poem itself (beginning *in media res*); or the description of Aeneas' shield in book eight, engraved with the past and glorious future of Rome, which gives the reader a prophetic, god-like perspective on the poem's narrative as a whole.[37]

Hugh's use of the present tense is arguably designed to achieve just this kind of abstraction from or suspension of time. Indeed, in *De Archa Noe Morali*, in terms which heavily echo Reason's instructions to Soul to dilate her gaze in *De Vanitate Mundi*, Hugh explains how the Ark realises the capacity of human thought and reflection to overcome 'temporal differentiation' and imitate the eternal perspective:

34. I have altered Weiss' translation to be true to the passive form of the verbs.

35. "… et omnis ordo creaturarum subsequatur, et ipsius arcae protensio pertingat a principio mundi usque ad finem saeculi" (15.30; *PL* 167.702; Weiss 69).

36. Murray Kreiger emphasises how "the poem takes on the still elements of plastic form," in his *Ekphrasis* 266. For the 'stilling' power of *ekphrasis* in a medieval context see Akbari's article on Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, which argues that the historical murals adorning the walls of the Castle of Fortune offer a relief from temporality: "the overview of history […] serves to suspend the sequence of chronology, providing the reader with a synoptic glance that represents historical change in non-linear form" (Akbari 202); "*Ekphrasis* provides a way to give order to time, precisely by providing a way to stand outside of it, if only for a moment" (Akbari 205). See also Morton in this issue.

37. Hugh would also have known more recent medieval *ekphrases*, inspired by Virgil and Ovid's examples. Michael Evans cites several 'fictive paintings' roughly contemporaneous to Hugh's in his argument for the ekphrastic nature of *De Pictura*: for example Pseudo-Turpin's account of fictive murals of Charlemagne's campaigns in the palace at Aachen (*c.* 1140), and Baudri of Bourgueil's most ambitious poem of *c.* 1100 that records the imagined cosmic-historical decorative programme of Countess Adela of Normandy's bedchamber (Evans 73–78).

> Habent enim quoddam esse suum res in mente hominis, ubi illa etiam, quae in seipsis vel iam praeterierunt, vel adhuc futura sunt, simul subsistere possunt. Et in hoc quodammodo rationalis anima similitudinem sui Creatoris habet, quia sicut in mente divina omnium rerum causae aeternaliter sine mutabilitate, et distinctione temporali substiterunt, ita etiam in mente nostra praeterita, praesentia, et futura per cogitationem simul subsistunt. (*De Arca Noe* 2.1; *PL* 176.635; *Spiritual Writings* 73)
>
> (For things have their own kind of being in the mind of man, where even those which, in themselves, are past can coexist with those yet to come. And in this respect the soul bears a certain resemblance to its Maker. For as in the mind of God the causes of all things exist eternally without change or temporal differentiation, so also in our minds things past, present, and future exist together by the means of thought.)[38]

He describes the Ark in similar terms when closing *De Archa Noe*: "there another world is found, over and against this passing, transitory one; because the things which go through different times in this world exist in that one simultaneously, as in a condition of eternity" (4.21).[39] Also in that work he repeats the use of the term *dilato*: "[God] wants to dwell in your own heart – extend [*amplifica*] and enlarge [*dilata*] that! Enlarge [*dilata*] it I say" (4.1).[40] Such statements in both *De Archa Noe*, and *De Vanitate*, so far read in isolation from the actual *pictura*, help us to reflect more thoroughly (I think) on Hugh's ekphrastic method. His 'present' picturing might be understood not simply as indicative of his engagement with mnemotechnical tradition, but as a genuine contemplative strategy for making us reflect on and overcome time – asking us to 'make present' what comes into being 'narratively,' in imitation of the 'eternal present.'

But while the stasis and 'presence' of the image or object in an *ekphrasis* arrests the 'becoming' of the text, it is equally true that the visual is subjected to the text's mode of 'becoming,' that is, reading. Continuity of exposition is disrupted by simultaneity; simultaneity is continually forestalled by temporality. This double-motion of *ekphrasis* – setting the visual in motion at the same time as the visual 'stills' text (Aeneas' shield, after all, has to be read) – has been less commonly pointed out by literary scholars. An exception is Claire Barbetti, who has argued in a recent study of *ekphrasis* in the medieval dream vision that,

38. This is how Hugh introduces the *arca sapientiae*, 'Ark of Wisdom' in *De Archa Noe Morali*. The Ark of Wisdom is roughly equivalent with the Ark's moral significance in *De Pictura* (according to which it becomes a ladder of spiritual ascent, above page 14). The Ark of Wisdom essentially refers to the interior reality of the Ark, the building practice we carry out daily in our souls. See the commentary by Coolman 182–85.

39. "Ibi alter quidam mundus huic praetereunti et transitorio contrarius invenitur, quia ea quae in hoc mundo per diversa tempora transeunt, in illo mundo quasi in quodam aeternitatis statu simul consistunt" (*PL* 176.680; *Spiritual Writings* 152).

40. *PL* 176.663; *Spiritual Writings* 122.

> Instead of constructing a rigid body, the objective of the ekphrastic principle is […] to create relationships, connections. The ekphrastic body expands; its contemplative functioning is a mode of becoming rather than attempting to fix. It re-sees, re-perceives compositions; it assimilates, restructures, and makes something new […] stretch[ing] them into new shapes and dimensions. (Barbetti 49).

This 'stretching' of compositions might be said to be especially pronounced in isolated *ekphrases* (that is, ones not interrupting or providing 'relief' from a larger conventional narrative) – like Hugh's Ark. Indeed, while Hugh's *pictura*, coming into being in the present, excites our expectation for synoptic, simultaneous viewing, that 'view' is also continually frustrated. To bring Hugh's picture into a 'present' of imagination and memory is a *mental effort* and challenge in regathering and re-synthesising what is inevitably 'stretched' over the course of the text. Recall his remark to those who "cannot or do not want to do any more" (which reads almost as a jocular backtrack on his statement in *De Archa Noe Morali* about our ability to bring together times through thought). And indeed elsewhere in *De Archa Noe* he admits how we sit between stability and instability:

> Tria enim sunt, id est per infinita distrahi, in eodem semper persistere, moderate vagari, quorum primum habere non debemus, secundum hic habere non possumus, et idcirco solum hoc tertium superest, ut quia adhuc vere corde stabiles esse non possumus, interim saltem ab immoderata distractione corda nostra colligamus, ut dum semper nitimur minus instabiles fieri semper magis ac magis incipiamus veram stabilitatem imitari. (4.4; *PL* 176.666; *Spiritual Writings* 126)
>
> (There are three possibilities: we can divide our attention between a number of things, we can concentrate on one thing only, or we can change within limits. Of these possibilities, there is one that we cannot achieve, and one to which we ought not to submit. So that leaves only one, namely that, since we cannot at present be really constant in heart, we should for the time being at least recollect our hearts from their unrestrained distractions. And in this way, while we are always striving to be less unstable, we may be getting ever nearer to some semblance of true stability.)

Again, such comments make better sense of the *pictura*'s presenta-

tion: it is precisely in the struggle to unify what is described in time, Hugh seems to intend, that we imitate eternity and 'achieve' the providential perspective. Hugh's Ark is introduced as a means for reaching a compromise between change and constancy, for limiting our distraction in changeableness. And his *pictura* calls for our active recollection of what is constantly changing, or rather to view and experience change in a more focussed, limited way, within bounds. And it is in this respect – the way the Ark does not just *give us* an eternal view, but asks us, ekphrastically, to concentrate 'becoming' into simultaneous 'being' – that I want to suggest it might be better understood as a reworking of the *kataskopos* according to the Augustinian understanding of time in the *Confessions*: where ascent to eternity is imagined precisely as an inner, grounded exercise in perceiving the passage of time through the 'stretched-out' present of imagination and memory, known as the *distentio* or *extentio animi*.

3. Augustine's *distentio animi* and the limits of the present

Augustine's influence on Hugh of Saint-Victor – himself an Augustinian canon – has been well studied.[41] But the influence of his *Confessions* is an exception, as are his famous reflections on time, memory, and eternity therein. We know that the *Confessions* were widely read throughout the Middle Ages, and its personal narrative of progress towards God that is also a movement inwards seems to have appealed especially to readers in the twelfth century.[42] Sometime after 1150 the Cistercian Walter Daniel described in the biography of his mentor Aelred of Rievaulx how the saint "generally had in his hands the *Confessions* of Augustine, for it was these which had been his guide when he was converted from the world" (Webber); and writing in around 1115 Guibert of Nogent explicitly modelled his *Monodiae*, or memoirs, on the *Confessions* (Benton 265). Finally, Gilbert Ouy and André Wilmart both identified two copies of the work at Saint Victor, one a twelfth-century manuscript that could conceivably have belonged to Hugh (Ouy 210 and Wilmart 264).[43] In this final part of the paper, I want to suggest that, like Aelred and Guibert, Hugh found something in Augustine's *Confessions* – in his case, Augustine's reflections on time as an inner *distentio* – that invigorated his own spiritual project.[44] While Boethius himself was working along Augustinian lines in his formulation of time's relation to eter-

41. Studies of Hugh's theology (rightly) take for granted the influence of Augustine: see, for example, the number of allusions to Augustine's works in the overview of Hugh's thought by Rorem. Douglas Gray has spoken of the "diffused Augustinian Tradition," whereby Augustine was simply in the air in the Middle Ages (Gray 20).

42. Eric Leland Saak notes that hundreds of manuscripts of the *Confessions* survive from the medieval period, production peaking in the ninth, twelfth, and fifteenth centuries (263). Its appeal in the twelfth century can be seen as a symptom of changes in spirituality more widely and the need for a literature that would reflect the growing emphasis on salvation as self-examination, as discussed briefly above.

43. The manuscript is Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 478. Wilmart also lists a second manuscript of the *Confessions*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 14293 as having a St. Victor provenance, although this dates from the thirteenth century and so is too late to be Hugh's.

44. And see above, note 13, for Patricia Dailey's general observation that medieval mystics inherited an Augustinian model of time and memory, interpreted and deployed in various ways.

nity in *De consolatione*, he did not seize (at least so visibly) on this element. Thus, I argue it is Hugh's recourse to Augustine's psychology of time that is the fundamental difference between the Boethian vision and the Hugonian *ekphrasis* – and the key to the latter's inventiveness (and obscurity for modern readers).[45]

45. For the influence of Augustine's meditations on time on Boethius' *De consolatione*, see O'Neill.

It is in book eleven of the *Confessions*, as a climax to the narrative of his life and conversion, that Augustine tackled the same conundrum that would appear to Hugh and Boethius as a kataskopic imperative: of how, as humans in temporal creation, we can imagine or become reunited with an eternal God. In terms that recall those used by Hugh, particularly in *De Vanitate Mundi*, Augustine opened his reflections lamenting how we try to know God while still enthralled to transience, blinded by attachment to fleeting moments which we fail to set in the context of time's passing:

> Qui […] conantur aeterna sapere, sed adhuc in praeteritis et futuris rerum motibus cor eorum volitat [...] quis tenebit illud et figet illud, ut paululum stet, et paululum rapiat splendorem semper stantis aeternitatis, et comparet cum temporibus numquam stantibus, et videat esse incomparabilem: et videat longum tempus nisi ex multis praetereuntibus motibus, qui simul extendi non possunt, longum non fieri; non autem praeterire quicquam in aeterno, sed totum esse praesens. (Augustine, *Confessiones* 1.11.13; Watts 230–32; Chadwick 228).
>
> (They attempt to taste eternity when their heart is still flitting about in the realm where things change […] Who can lay hold of the heart and give it fixity, so that for some little moment it may be stable, and for a fraction of time may grasp the splendour of a constant eternity? Then it may compare eternity with temporal successiveness which never has any constancy, and will see there is no comparison possible. It will see that a long time is long only because constituted of many successive movements which cannot be simultaneously extended. In the eternal, nothing is transient, but the whole is present.)

A first step is then to recognise the inconstancy of time and 'temporal successiveness.' Augustine's words here are likely Hugh's source for the notion of the present that is always renewing itself, *innovatio praesentium*, in *De Vanitate*. Augustine elaborates on this idea that time is made up of the tiniest particles that 'cannot be extended':

> Si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est, quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum: praesens autem nullum habet spatium. (*Confessiones* 11.15.20; Watts 242–45; Chadwick 232)
>
> (If we can think of some bit of time which cannot be divided into even the smallest instantaneous moments, that alone is what we can call 'present.' And this time flies so quickly from future into past that it is an interval with no duration. If it has duration, it is divisible into past and future. But the present occupies no space.)

So, Augustine asks, what of the future and past? People sing prophecies, and others narrate history – just as, he admits, he has related his own personal history in the *Confessions*.[46] Future and past most certainly exist; but where? "If I have not the strength to discover the answer, at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present" (11.18.23).[47] And this 'present' that contains past and future ("the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things to come") is the mind (11.20.26): "My confession to you is surely truthful when my soul declares that times are measured by me;" "I have come to think that time is simply a distension [*distensionem*] […] of the mind [*animi*] itself" (*Confessiones* 11.25.32–11.26.33).[48] Thus, Augustine determines (as Hugh echoes in his passage about the coexistence of times 'by means of thought') it is the mind that gives space to the otherwise fleeting present that has 'no space' – that makes the present contain past things and anticipate future things that we then call (rather imprecisely, in Augustine's view) 'past' and 'present.' This idea becomes more familiar when we consider that for Augustine, mind is synonymous with memory. Throughout the *Confessions*, memory is described not as a 'faculty' distinct from other mental faculties, such as reason, and imagination – as we might think of it. Memory gives us our very sense of identity and continuity: it is what contains our past actions, their circumstances, and feelings, and therefore also motivates our future actions and feelings.[49] We both 'remember' and anticipate with memory; we look backwards and forwards with it.

Therefore, it is in the mind, or memory, that we overcome the reality of the fleeting present to perceive time as a durational whole. Time

46. Augustine takes note of the work of prophets and historians at 11.17.22. He opens book eleven asking himself why he has set out his life in chronological order (for an eternal God) at all: "Your vision of occurrences in time is not temporally conditioned. Why then do I set before you an ordered account of so many things?" (11.1.1; Watts 208–209; Chadwick 221). Rowan Williams eloquently describes how the narrative of the *Confessions* treats God as the primary reader, its partly fragmented quality seemingly "acknowledging the existence of a perspective that remains intrinsically inaccessible" (Williams 18).

47. "quod si nondum valeo, scio tamen, ubicumque sunt, non ibi ea futura esse aut praeterita, sed praesentia" (Watts 246; Chadwick 233).

48. "inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem: sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi" (Watts 240–41; Chadwick 239–40).

49. In memory, Augustine says, "I also meet myself" (10.8.14). One of many helpful commentaries on Augustine's broad definition of memory is the essay by Karfíková 176.

is the stretching out of the present moment through remembering and expectation, and this is called by Augustine the *distentio animi*.[50] He proceeds to demonstrate this 'distension' by making us reflect on the psychological processes involved in reciting a well-known psalm. When we do this, he observes, we watch what is future (what we anticipate saying or singing) become past (turn into something 'said' or 'sung'), through the prism of a stretched-out attention in the present:

> Dicturus sum canticum, quod novi […], atque distenditur vita huius actionis meae, in memoriam propter quod dixi, et in expectationem propter quod dicturus sum: praesens tamen adest attentio mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum, ut fiat praeteritum. (*Confessiones* 10.28.38; Watts 276–77; Chadwick 243)
>
> (Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know […]. The life of this act of mine is stretched [*distenditur*] in two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said, and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention is on what is present: by that the future is transferred to become the past.)

He continues, "no one can deny that present time lacks any extension because it passes in a flash [*in puncto*]. Yet attention is continuous, and it is through this that what will be present progresses towards being absent" (11.28.37).[51] The psalm then exemplifies how it is in (or from) the present, distended by memory and attention, that time (past, present, and future) originates and spreads.[52]

On the one hand, in the wider context of book eleven, this *distentio animi* – the stretching of our attention across past, present, and future – becomes a metaphor for our sinful distraction in created mutability, and distance from eternity (such as Hugh sets out to cure in *De Vanitate Mundi*).[53] "See how my life is a distension in several directions," Augustine laments in the middle of his discussion: "I live in a multiplicity of distraction by many things" (11.29.39).[54] Yet as he moves towards his conclusion, *distentio* also takes on a redemptive aspect. Recognising our distension, the way our entire sense of continuity and identity really consists in looking backwards and forwards from and in the present (realised in the recitation of a psalm) reveals to us the ultimate unity or 'unifiability' of time and transience. Distension also becomes for Augustine a route towards eternity, since in it we sense or 'taste' the (more per-

50. Plotinus had described time as the "spreading out [*diastasis*] of […] the life of the soul," which may have inspired Augustine's term *distentio,* at *Enneads* 3.7.11.41. This is footnoted in Chadwick in his translation (240). Karfíková discusses Plotinus' inspiration at 181.

51. "et quis negat praesens tempus carere spatio, quia in puncto praeterit? Sed tamen perdurat attentio, per quam pergat abesse quod aderit" (Watts 276–77; Chadwick 243).

52. For Augustine's use of the psalm as a way of understanding time, see Johnston.

53. Drever 78–79.

54. "ecce distentio est vita mea" (Watts 278; Chadwick 244).

fect) continuity and reconciliation of times in God's 'eternal present,' far above us:

> certe si est tam grandi scientia et praescientia pollens animus, cui cuncta praeterita et futura ita nota sint, sicut mihi unum canticum notissimum, nimium mirabilis est animus iste atque ad horrorem stupendus, quippe quem ita non lateat quidquid peractum et quidquid relicum saeculorum est, quemadmodum me non lateat cantantem illud canticum, quid et quantum eius abierit ab exordio, quid et quantum restet ad finem. sed absit, ut tu, conditor universitatis […] ut ita noveris omnia futura et praeterita. longe tu, longe mirabilius longeque secretius. neque enim sicut nota cantantis notumve canticum audientis expectatione vocum futurarum et memoria praeteritarum variatur affectus sensusque distenditur, ita tibi aliquid accidit inconmutabiliter aeterno, hoc est vere aeterno creatori mentium. (*Confessiones* 11.31.40; Watts 282–84; Chadwick 245)

> (Certainly if there were a mind endowed with such great knowledge and prescience that all things past and future could be known in the way I know a very familiar psalm, this mind would be utterly miraculous and amazing to the point of inducing awe. From such a mind nothing would be hidden, nor anything of what remaining ages has in store, just as I have full knowledge of that psalm I sing. I know by heart what and how much of it has passed since the beginning, and what and how much remains until the end. But far be it for you, Creator of the universe […] to know all future and past events in this kind of sense. You know them in a much more wonderful and much more mysterious way. A person singing or listening to a song he knows well suffers a distension or stretching in feeling and in sense perception from the expectation of future sounds and the memory of past sound. With you it is otherwise. You are unchangeably eternal, that is the truly eternal Creator of minds.)

Therefore, singing the psalm – seeing how past and future flow through the present of our attention – becomes an exercise in imitating the Creator. More specifically, it is in feeling out the limits of the present, how difficult it is to see things 'all at once' in imagination and memory (for the psalm still evades total, simultaneous

imagining) that we fathom how the Creator knows time (as Augustine says, we humans *suffer* a stretching: "with you it is otherwise").

With this realisation of our finitude, what was our distension sublimes into something fruitful – our *extentio*: a kind of rooted and concentrated 'stretching forth' of the soul towards eternity, from within the confines of the present. As the book draws to an end, Augustine hopes he "might be gathered to follow the One," moving towards the things which are before him, "not stretched out but extended in reach," (*non distentus, sed extentus* 11.29.39).[55] And a few lines later, quoting Philippians 3:13 (his source for the idea of *extentio*), he expresses the same hope for those who have not yet found the faith: "Let them also be 'extended' towards 'those things which are before,' and understand that before all times you are eternal Creator of all time" (11.30.40).[56] For Augustine this *extentio* of the self towards eternity is the closest we come to divine 'union' (just as Hugh clarified that notions of 'vertical' uplift were really inner, more 'horizontal' movements – *ascendere* meaning 'to enter,' *intrare*; and *elevator* meaning 'to be gathered together,' *colligitur*). In book eleven Augustine influentially formulates 'knowing' God not as a matter of transcending worldly limits, then, but becoming aware of those limits, comparing our entrapment in the present with God's eternal present that so mysteriously encircles us, both coming 'before' and constituting our 'end goal.' For Augustine it is precisely by accepting how our minds and memories are bound to and cannot fully extend the temporal, ever-renewing present that we are – somewhat paradoxically – gathered and extended to eternity itself.

To return to Hugh's Ark, then, I would propose that this discussion in the *Confessions*, thus far never considered in conjunction with Hugh's treatises, helps us to make better sense of what exactly Hugh intends by his *pictura*. What has puzzled scholars for so long is how the Ark in *De Pictura* evades total imagining in its size and detail. This led Lecoq, Sicard, and most recently Conrad Rudolph to argue Hugh's description must have referred to a 'real' picture after all. But what we find in Augustine – one of Hugh's foundational theological authorities – is a strategy of 'ascent' that involves exactly the mind or soul's horizontal distension, and the sense that we discover the divine order in testing our memorial and mental limitations.

It seems plausible to me that Hugh's *ekphrasis* of the Ark – narrated for the mind, in an ongoing, or 'stretched-out' present – reflects, then, not only an absorption and interpretation of monastic mnemotechnical tradition, but a feeling for the Augustinian *disten-*

55. "a veteribus diebus colligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt non distentus, sed extentus" (Watts 278; Chadwick 244).

56. "extendantur etiam in ea, quae ante sunt, et intellegant te ante omnia tempora aeternum creatorem omnium temporum" (Watts 280; Chadwick 244).

tio animi, which Hugh adopts to forge a new kind of eternal view, or *kataskopos*, as a 'terrestrial,' memorial practice and discipline (like the psalm) in confronting the limits of the present. In looking to the *Confessions*, consciously or subconsciously, Hugh returns to what was probably one of Boethius' chief sources. But instead of emphasising the 'perfect possession' of boundless life in eternity (as Boethius' poem does), Hugh – in answering the practical needs of his brethren for a spiritual discipline – prioritises Augustine's formulation of the eternal present as a *human* analogy, something we grasp by trying to stretch the present moment. In the Ark *pictura*, we perceive and remake creation as seen under the aspect of eternity in the pressure the *ekphrasis* puts on our present attention. The works of restoration are the realisation of our inward, 'restorative' movement (in the course of reading) from sinful *distentio* to hopeful *extentio*. Hugh's eternal view, his *kataskopos*, in the form of a baffling present-tense *ekphrasis*, ingeniously both inspires and charts our genuine transformation from scatteredness in successive presents, to reintegration within the present – holding us in the present moment just long enough that we feel it as a mirror image (and particle) of God's eternal one.

Conclusion: the *kataskopos* and ever-presence

At the end of *De Archa Noe Morali*, Hugh cites Paul's words in 1 *Corinthians* 7.13, "the fashion of this world passeth" – announcing how the Ark opens out, within this passing, 'lesser' world, a new, far greater, unchanging world:

> qui est alter mundus, cuius figura non praeterit, cuius forma non transit, cuius species non marcescit, cuius pulchritudo non deficit. Ille mundus in isto mundo est, et iste mundus illo mundo minor est, quia ille capit quem capere iste non potest. Istum mundum vident oculi carnis, illum mundum intrinsecus contemplantur oculi cordis. (*De Archa Noe* 4.21; *PL* 176.680; *Spiritual Writings* 152)
>
> (For there is another world [besides this earthly one], whose 'fashion' does not pass, nor does its form change, nor its appearance wither, nor its beauty fail. That world is in this world, and this world is less than that world, for that world contains Him whom this world cannot contain. Eyes of the

flesh see this world, the eyes of the heart behold that world after an inward manner.)

This puts neatly (as well as paradoxically) the idea and distinction we have been tracing: that the Ark, instead of lifting us to eternity, offers a way of discovering eternity in worldly limits and worldly time, the infinite in and through the limits of our present – a contemplative dynamic with foundations in Augustine (his meditations on time, and his theology more broadly).[57] By way of conclusion, I want to put this re-reading of Hugh's *pictura* as a kataskopic exercise into some wider historical context. The Ark has been discussed before in the context of medieval diagrams, *ekphrases*, and mnemotechnical devices. But it can also be seen, I think, as part of a longer-term imaginative trend in (what could be called) northern-European 'contemplative aesthetics,' from the twelfth century onwards, to reframe or undercut the classical view from outside time and space as more of an earthbound project in embracing the limitations of the *hic et nunc*. In the short space available here, I want to single out just several authors from the 1170s onwards who (consciously or unconsciously) replicate Hugh's turn to Augustine's *distentio* in their own spiritual projects. On the one hand this helps set Hugh's innovation in historical perspective, as one experiment amongst (and possibly inspiring) others. At the same time, putting these later meditations into conversation with Hugh's *Ark* brings their literary inheritance up to date, offering a new twelfth-century precedent for (and so bringing into sharper focus) their attempts to enfold human temporality and divine eternity in their own rhetorically engaging ways.

57. This aspect of Augustine's theology is especially emphasised by Williams, who writes that for Augustine "holy life always begins with a Christlike acceptance of humanity's finitude, of an incomplete, sinful, and frustrated present moment" (33).

First of all, while the question of Hugh's 'influence' on later authors is not my primary one, it is worth noting the extraordinary success and circulation of the *Ark* treatises. Eighty-eight copies of *De Pictura* survive (almost all of them paired with *De Archa Noe Morali*, of which 143 copies survive, along with thirty-three fragments of either *De Pictura* or *De Archa Noe*). Approximately thirty-nine of the manuscripts of *De Pictura* date from the twelfth century. Thus, we can be sure the exercise found immediate (as well as sustained) popularity (Rudolph 361–62). And we can be certain that it inspired at least one of the authors I want to mention: Richard of Saint-Victor, a successor at the school who wrote his own work on the Ark of the Covenant. His *De Arca Mystica* (or *Benjamin Major*, *c.* 1153–62) differs in aim and structure to *De Pictura* (being closer to a scientific analysis of the varieties of contemplative experience than a composition exercise *per se*). But it describes spiritual ascent in the

same Augustinian way that Hugh encourages in *De Pictura*. For Richard, as for Hugh, this begins with *dilatio,* "when the sharp point of the soul is expanded more widely" (*De Arca Mystica* 5.2).[58] And this dilation seems also to be understood by Richard, as it was by Hugh, as a dilation of the soul's present – for he describes the next stage of reflection, contemplation, as ceasing our wandering from one moment to the next, to a kind of lingering in a fixed space "for a long time," that is (paradoxically) always and repeatedly "now" (*De Arca Mystica* 1.5), just as birds (paradoxically) fix themselves motionless (*immobiliter*) in the sky by means of agitated motion (*mobili*).[59] Time passes and it does not. In this state of concentration we experience movement and stillness at once, and as one. The influence of Augustine, now filtered via Hugh, is then again felt in Richard several decades later – where these and many other passages imply that God's eternity is somehow accessible to sustained mental attentiveness, and the possibility of making the present the bearer of the whole.[60]

At around the same time as Richard was writing, though less obviously descended from the Hugonian project, Hildegard of Bingen adopted a strikingly Augustinian view of temporality that helped furnish her numerous visions of the cosmos or salvation history from within time.[61] Georgina Rabasso has argued that in certain visions in her *Liber Divinorum Operum* (*c.* 1163–73), and their accompanying visual representations, Hildegard gestures towards a conception of eternity as present to man's present, encoded in the images in the geometrical relationship between circle, line, and point (*e.g.* figure 3).[62] In three of the book's famous illuminations, Rabasso suggests, on the basis of the written visions, that the circle (or wheel) figures eternity, its horizontal diameter imagines time, and the centre of the diameter, superimposed with a standing figure of man the microcosm (or at 3.5, a personification of *Caritas*), may be conceived as a kind of 'now-axis,' on which God's eternal will becomes discoverable to our souls, as participating in created time (Rabasso 93).[63]

In the thirteenth century, the reintroduction of Aristotelian natural philosophy, with its emphasis on the Prime Mover, continually 'present' and acting in the physical universe, seems to have had the effect of underscoring or at least not contradicting Augustine's sense of God's immanence in time. Aquinas may well have had Augustine in mind, as well as the problem of God's continued action in an Aristotelian universe, when he wrote in his *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard (*c.* 1252) that "the unchanged now of eternity is

58. "Mentis dilatatio est quando animi acies latius expanditur et vehementius acuitur, modum tamen humanae industriae nullatenus supergreditur" (*PL* 169.170; Zinn 310). See also Atturo, who sees the inspiration for Dante's "extended moment[s] of *admiratio*" in Richard's theology (Atturo 108).

59. "Vides certe quod et superius locuti sumus, quomodo contemplationis nostrae negotium semper iuxta aliquid suspenditur atque protrahitur, dum contemplantis animus iucunditatis suae spectaculo libenter immoratur, dum semper studet, vel in ipsum saepe redire, vel in eodem diutius immobiliter permanere" (*PL* 196.69; Zinn 160). Richard uses *nunc* repeatedly to describe the actions of the contemplating mind, as though the temporal instant is itself extended. The comparison to birds comes a few lines earlier: "Videre licet alia quomodo tremulis alis saepeque reverberatis se in uno eodemque loco diutius suspendunt, et mobili se agitatione quasi immobiliter figunt" (*ibid.*; Zinn 159).

60. At 2.20 Richard asks us to imagine time as a circle around (and collapsible to) a central *punctus* (Zinn 207). At another stage he describes the contemplative moving with ease "from the part to the whole; at another time from the whole to the part" (2.5, Zinn 159) – as though this Hugonian mental *habitus* has become natural to him.

61. It is possible she read Hugh, but the records of the Rupertsberg Library holdings are not preserved, and Hildegard does not cite her sources. Her visions are often prefaced by explicit references to time and place that ground them resolutely in historical reality, a rhetorical move which may be linked to her broadly Augustinian 'theology' of time suggested in the visions discussed by Rabasso. For the convention of temporal markers in visions see Dailey 343.

62. The three images Rabasso concentrates on accompany the visions in the *Liber Divinorum Operum* at 1.2, 1.3, and 3.5 in the only surviving illuminated manuscript of the work in the Biblioteca Statale di Lucca (Lucca, Biblioteca Statale 1942; at fols 9r, 28v, and 143r).

63. It is in the second vision of part one (1.2), that man is described as a "crossroads," or as finding himself at a "fork in the road" ("homo quasi in biuio est"): although he exists within creation, he can, with an open heart (*dilatato corde*), seek and receive God's love and salvation. Also in this vision Hildegard says, "per veram et puram poenitentiam quam ad Deum habeo, in aeternitate vivam" (*PL* 197.772; "I shall live in eternity through the true and pure penitence that I offer to God").

present to all the parts of time."[64] It is in the context of fourteenth-century mysticism, however, that we find more radical examples of eternity being 'scaled' to the present (and vice versa) in ways we might connect back to (at the same time as they go far beyond) the rhetoric of Hugh's Ark. Why now, in the fourteenth century, might provisionally be answered with reference again to developments in the spheres of science and logic, and specifically to discussions from Aquinas onwards about the absolute power of God to put worlds within worlds, and to fold dimensions into one another.[65] The thought experiments of scholars like Albert of Saxony, who famously argued God could place a body as large as a world inside a millet seed, conceivably ignited the imaginations of Middle English mystics of the fourteenth century, already well-versed in Augustine, who become particularly fascinated by the affective potential of the minute to open up infinite spaces in the mind.[66] These 'miniaturising' visions mostly touch on the temporal, using spatial metaphor to puzzle out the relation of instant to eternity. The author of the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing*, for example, clearly deploys Augustine (but might also be thinking of contemporary thought experiments) in their strategy of what Eleanor Johnson has called 'atomic prayer,' whereby union with God is achieved by meditatively isolating particles of time (Johnson 32–48). We are instructed to repeat monosyllabic words – 'God,' 'love,' 'sin' – which together create, by their joined-up minuteness, lacking a past and future of enunciation, a "particulate stream of time" that imitates "the seamless wholeness of eternal presence" (Johnson 35; *The Cloud of Unknowing* 37; Gallacher 65–68). Another better-known image from the same period, clearly kataskopic and Boethian in origin, but also perhaps informed by scholars like Albert of Saxony – as well as Augustine – is Julian of Norwich's vision of the world "the quantite of a haselle nutte, lygande in the palme of my hande" (Julian of Norwich 4; Watson and Jenkins 69). Again, eternity and timelessness (concepts Julian returns to again and again) reveal themselves in the particular, the homely even: the greater world unfolds in the lesser – or specifically, in a raised awareness of this world as lesser, passing, transitory, and particulate.

The hazelnut, like the monosyllable, might then be identified as consummate expressions of a trend towards 'earthing,' or 'now-ing' eternity, which, I would argue, begins to take shape in spiritual practices authored in the twelfth century – exemplified here (though not limited to) Hugh's Ark. The intricacies (and indeed the validity) of such a longer-term intellectual-aesthetic genealogy require a sepa-

64. "quia nunc aeternitatis invariatum adest omnibus partibus temporis:" Thomas Aquinas, *Scripta super libros septentiarum* I. 37.2. 1 ad 4, cited and analysed by Fox 323–24.

65. I am indebted to explanations of these developments by Grabowski and Woods, who have both tied them to spatial experiments in literature, and specifically Chaucer's poetry.

66. For the millet seed, see Albert of Saxony *De Celo,* bk. 1, qu. 9, 93v, col. 2; see also the discussion of the millet seed in Woods 61.

rate and much larger study. Here my concern has not been with this genealogy or with claiming Hugh's Ark directly inspired or paved the way for later developments, but rather with reattending to the theology and rhetoric of Hugh's treatises themselves. Reading these for the first time in the light of what Squire called Hugh's "obsession" with temporality, and his Boethian and Augustinian inheritance, I have tried to restore to the *pictura* a sense of its genuinely transformative, transcendent function.[67] As well as – or more than – an astonishing painting, or mnemotechnical device, the Ark had the actual potential in Hugh's mind of reorganising, and in so doing, elevating the soul. The challenge it posed to the space of human imagination was not incidental, but *its means* of elevating. Like devotional exercises that came after it, in Hugh's Ark the discovery of God's administration of the world becomes a process in feeling out the *limits* of the self and memory; and grasping eternity a paradoxically frustrated effort in extending the inextensive, diminutive 'now.'

67. Squire 29, cited above, p. 6.

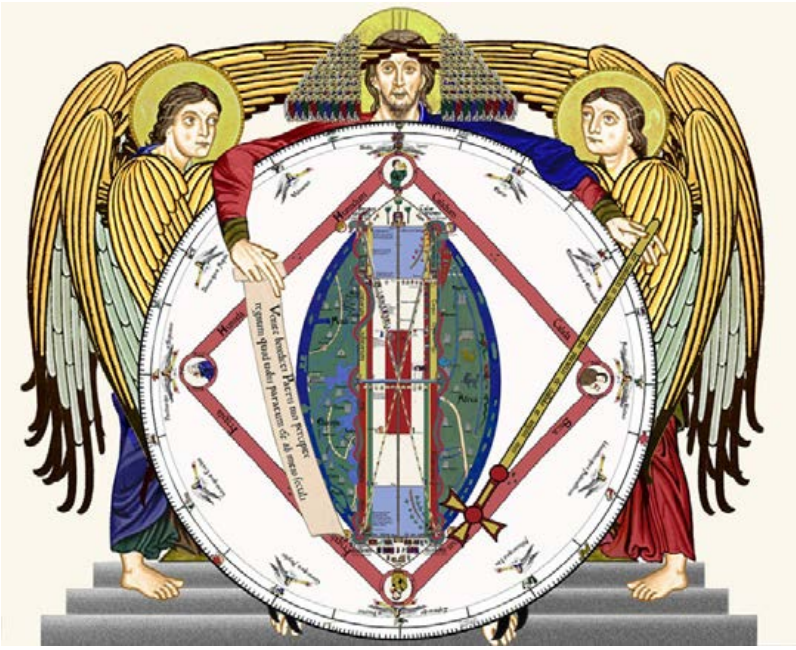

Figure 1. The Ark digitally reconstructed by Rudolph in his *Mystic Ark* (Rudolph colour fig. 1).

Figure 2. 'Hugh conducting the Ark lectures': the Ark as Rudolph imagines it may have been depicted and expounded at the Abbey of St Victor (Rudolph fig. 37).

Figure 3. *Liber Divinorum Operum* 1.3: Macrocosm of Winds, Microcosm of Humors, Lucca, Biblioteca Statale, 1942, f. 28v (early thirteenth century).

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