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Maria van Hout and her Carthusian Editor

We owe most of the knowledge we have of the life of the beguine mystic Maria van Hout to the Cologne Carthusians,¹ either through their own writings about her or through their efforts to publish her works in the sixteenth century.² A careful study of the monastery's interest, specifically of the zealous activities of Gerhard Kalckbrenner as her editor, reveals the spiritual significance they found in the works and life of this obscure, yet remarkable woman. Peter Blomevenna, prior of the Cologne Carthusian monastery from 1507 to 1536 and an important spiritual associate of Maria van Hout, attests that she had led her early life "...in domo paterna extra omnem professionem monasticam" ("in her paternal home, without any monastic profession").³ She later lived in community with other beguines in a "Maagdenhuis," the Convent van Bethlehem, eventually located near the Catharinenberg convent for Franciscan tertiaries in Oisterwijk.⁴ This convent, founded in 1440 in Oisterwijk, was intended to house "zeven devote en deugdelijke maagden ter ere van de zeven gaven van de Heilige Geest" ("seven pious and virtuous maidens to honor the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit").⁵

Maria van Hout was head of this community of beguines in 1530 when she first met Gerhard Kalckbrenner, the young Limburg native who was then procurator of the Cologne Carthusian monastery. Kalckbrenner, in cooperation with Petrus Canisius (who later established the first Jesuit community in Germany), was a major participant in Cologne's efforts to strengthen Catholicism

¹ Carthusian records refer to her most frequently as Maria van Oisterwijk. However, she was also known as Maria van Hout, or, in the Latin version of van Hout, as Maria Lignana or de Ligno, most likely because she came from Udenhout, near Oisterwijk. See Albert Ampe, S. J., "Marie d'Oisterwijk" in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, edited by M. Viller, S. J., et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), 10:519-520.

² No exact birthdate is known, although Léonce Reypens lists her birth year (without citing a source) as "um 1470." He likely surmised this date based on information in letters from Maria herself and one from Petrus Canisius to fellow Jesuit Leonhard Kessel that points to her poor health and her extreme frailty by the time of her move to Cologne in 1545. He must have assumed that frailty stemmed from advanced age. There is, however, no conclusive proof of this. See Léonce Reypens, "Maria v. Oisterwijk," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, edited by Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder: 1962), 7:43.

³ Recorded in Léon Le Vasseur, *Ephemerides Ordinis Cartusiensis* (Mostrolii: Typis Cartusiae S. Mariae de Pratis, 1891), 3:448

⁴ See J. P. W. A. Smit, "Het Begijnhof van Oisterwijk," *Bosche Bijdragen* 3 (1919/20): 40-55, esp. 42. Both the option of remaining at home and that of living in small groups were characteristic of the women who came to be known as beguines. See Fiona Bowie, "Introduction," in *Beguine Spirituality: Mystical Writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg, Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewijch of Brabant* (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 13.

⁵ *Statuten van het Convent van Bethlehem*, Kapittel 1 (Oisterwijk, ca. 1440). Manuscript located at the Convent van Bethlehem, Duffel, Belgium.

and resist Lutheranism. It is possible, as J.M. Willeumier-Schalij has suggested, that the Cologne Carthusians learned of the Oisterwijk community through the petitions of Johan Justus Landsberg, a fellow Carthusian in Jülich, who requested assistance from Cologne for some of these beguines to help ameliorate their dire financial situation.⁶ Kalckbrenner may even have been there specifically to determine the financial needs of the women. He recounts that he was “ußwendig dieser stadt mit unsers Cloisters saichen beladen” (“out of town conducting the affairs of our monastery”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A2^r)⁷ when he met Maria. This would have been in 1530, in Oisterwijk. Apparently impressed and inspired by her piety during this visit, Kalckbrenner began corresponding with her. The letters they exchanged after this contact attest that they took a special interest in each other’s spiritual formation, praying often and fervently for one another. In one of her letters to him, for example, she reports that she and her entire convent had prayed for him, as promised, and that each of the sisters had heard a mass especially for the Cologne Carthusians. Still, she writes, “...dit hain ich al gedain mit durrem hertzen, sonder bewyrckung van gratien” (“I did all of this with a dry heart, without any effect of grace”; *Brieven*, 86). She explains that grace finally came, however, and with it God’s sanction of her relationship with Kalckbrenner.

Aver up Sent Peters dages des nachtz umb... tzwey urenn...byn ich so wunderlig begaefft van urent wegen, dat ich wail sagen mag wonder boven wonder, gratie boven gratie, want got hait myt <myr> uch gegeven vur ein kynt, und ich sal uch halden vur myn son, want ir sydt myr un <in> mynn hertz gedruckt...mit so groisser gratien dat myn hertz myr alsoo wee dede....

(But on St. Peter’s Day, at two o’clock in the night ...I was so wondrously blessed for your sake that I may well say, miracle upon miracle, grace upon grace, for God has given you to me as a child, and I shall regard you as my son, for you were pressed into my heart ...with such grace that my heart ached... *Brieven*, 86.)

Here Maria acknowledges as god-given her role as spiritual mother for Kalckbrenner. His fellow Carthusians and later the Jesuits with whom Maria had contact also referred to her in their correspondence as ‘moeder Maria’. This maternal role provides both justification for her friendship with Kalckbrenner, as well as the context of authority for the spiritual advice she offers in her letters to him and his brethren.

Of particular interest to Kalckbrenner were the writings in Maria’s own hand which she presented to him. Upon his return to Cologne he prepared these treatises for publication. They appeared already in print the next year,

⁶ See *De Brieven uit ‘Der rechte wech’ van de Oisterwijkse begijn en mystieke mystica Maria van Hout (†1547)*, edited by J.M. Willeumier-Schalij (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 86. All references to the letters from *Der rechte wech* are to this edition, hereafter cited as *Brieven*.

⁷ References to *Der rechte wech* (cited hereafter in notes as *Rechte wech*), with the exception of the letters, are to the first edition (Cologne, 1531).

1531, along with some of her correspondence, in an anthology entitled *Der rechte wech zo der evangelischen volkommenheit*.⁸

With the publication of these treatises and letters the Carthusians suggested in a broad sense, but nonetheless unmistakably, that Maria's mysticism (published during her lifetime) had its place among the writings of other religious authors, whose works they had also published and continued to publish in subsequent years. These included, among others, Dionysius the Carthusian, Hendrik Herp, Gertrude the Great of Helfta, Catherine of Siena, Ruusbroec, Tauler and Suso.⁹ Specifically, her mysticism appears to have been attractive as a contribution to the emerging Catholic response to the Reformation. Her emphases on unquestioning obedience to church authority, devotion to the passion of Christ, the eucharist and the lives of the saints, and, most significantly, prayer and service for the salvation of one's fellow beings lent her message such timeliness, following Luther's challenge, that the Carthusians could not resist publication. Indeed, they were willing to *risk* publication, diverging as they did from their established pattern of publishing the writings of long-dead, even canonized mystics to print the works of this unknown, uncloistered, living woman.¹⁰

⁸ The title page of *Der rechte wech* states only that the book was printed "tzo Coellen up der Burchmuren." According to both Josef Benzing and Otto Zaretzky, the Cologne printer with this address was Johann von Kempen, active from 1525 to ca. 1546. His title pages apparently often included only this identification by location, not his name. The number of known prints from his press are few. See *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, edited by Josef Benzing (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 224. See also *Die Kölner Büchermarken bis Anfang des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Paul Heitz, with information on the printers by Otto Zaretzky (1898). Reprint; Naarden: Anton W. Van Bekhoven, 1970, esp. xxvii. J. B. Kettenmeyer attributed the print to the Cologne press of Melchior von Neuß. He cites no written source, but, curiously, claims to have received the information from Zaretzky, who in *Die Kölner Büchermarken* (above) lists *Der rechte wech* among the published works of Johann von Kempen. With no other information substantiating Melchior von Neuß as printer, Kettenmeyer's attribution must be viewed as an error. See Johann Baptist Kettenmeyer, "Maria van Oisterwijk (†1547) und die Kölner Kartause," *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 144 (1929): 1-33; this reference: 12, footnote 31. Both the *Niederdeutsche Bibliographie: Gesamtverzeichnis der niederdeutschen Drucke bis zum Jahre 1800*, edited by Conrad Borchling and Bruno Claussen (Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1976), 1: nr. 1095 and the *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1988), 13:57 also attribute the printing of *Der rechte wech* to Melchior von Neuß, and neither cites a source.

⁹ For a succinct discussion of the publication history of the Cologne charterhouse, see Gérald Chaix, "Les Traductions de la Chartreuse de Cologne," *Kartäusermystik und -mystiker: Dritter Internationaler Kongress über die Kartäusergeschichte und -spiritualität*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 55 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982), 67-78.

¹⁰ Significantly, the Carthusians followed the printing of Maria van Hout's vernacular text with the 1535 vernacular publication of the *Evangelische Peerle*, the work of an anonymous contemporary beguine. Although a contrastive analysis is beyond the scope of the present study, the *Peerle*, which was reprinted several times and translated into Latin over the course of the following decades, included, like *Der rechte wech*, an introduction with biographical information about the author. It thus provides further indication of the strength of Carthusian promotion of contemporary vernacular devotional literature by women. See general discussion and bibliography under "'Evangelische Peerle,'" in *Wörterbuch der Mystik*, edited by Peter Dinzelbacher (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1989), 154-155.

The editorial role of Gerhard Kalckbrenner is especially significant in this endeavor. To Maria's writings, originally directed to other women religious, he added a dedication, foreword, chapter headings, summaries, extended commentary and, importantly, a collection of writings by other known mystics. Albert Ampe, S. J., has examined in detail Kalckbrenner's editorial involvement in these additional texts that follow those of Maria in *Der rechte wech*, claiming that Kalckbrenner's "persoonlijk aandeel" ("personal contribution") to these texts is most likely "groter en vrijer" ("more substantial and freer) than in Maria's own texts. Ampe argues that Kalckbrenner provides "een getrouwe weergave" ("a faithful rendering") of her texts, offering his own commentary only in the introduction and headings between chapters.¹¹ Since Ampe's focus is on the texts Kalckbrenner published alongside Maria's in *Der rechte wech*, he does not further examine the significance of Kalckbrenner's introduction and connecting commentary in her works. Yet Kalckbrenner's editing of Maria's texts is multi-faceted and arguably no less crafted or conscious than his involvement in the texts that follow hers. I submit that his editorial contributions, combined with his "faithful rendering" of her texts, allowed her works to speak specifically within the early counter-reformational context of the 1530s.¹²

Among the many medieval examples of spiritual friendship between a woman religious and a cleric, the association of Kalckbrenner with Maria is distinctive for the importance of her authorial role.¹³ In the letter of dedication, Kalckbrenner declares that he has been "krefflich beruirt" ("powerfully touched"; *Rechte wech*, fol. A2^v)¹⁴ not just by this "erluchte frauwen persoin" ("enlightened female person"), but specifically through her "etzliche buch-

¹¹ Albert Ampe, S. J., "Kanttekeningen bij de 'Evangelische Peerle,'" *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 40 (1966): 241-305, esp. 246.

¹² I use the term "counter-reformation" in the broad sense of reaction to the Reformation, realizing that an official Catholic response was not attempted until the Council of Trent. Even then, of course, historians still differ on the reformational vs. counterreformational nature of the decrees of Trent.

¹³ The monk who translated the *vita* of Beatrice of Nazareth stressed that Beatrice, not he, was the actual author of the work. However, he seems to do this only "to bolster his [own] credibility" as biographer, by emphasizing the inspiration and simplicity of his source, and not, as in Kalckbrenner's case, to emphasize how her writings have helped him, and can, by extension, help others. See Roger De Ganck, *The Biographer of Beatrice of Nazareth*, Cistercian Studies 4, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 323. Anne Clark Bartlett discusses spiritual friendships between Carthusians and women religious in late medieval England that were "organized around devotional literature." But this literature consisted of prescriptive religious texts written by men for women, thus female authorship was not at issue. See "'A reasonable affection': Gender and Spiritual Friendship in Middle English Devotional Literature," in *Vox mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honor of Professor Valerie M. Lagorio*, edited by Anne Clark Bartlett (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 137.

¹⁴ Extended quote: "Ich byn myn leeftdage soe krefflich niet beruirt worden inwendich tzo got als durch yre tegenwordicheit: und darna uß yren buechlin und schriften: und durch yer gebet." ("In all the days of my life I have not been so powerfully touched—inwardly as well as outwardly to God—as I have through her presence, and thereafter by her little books and writings, and through her prayers.")

lynn und schriffthen” (“numerous little books and writings”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A2^r). He claims that she has had the same effect on many other souls, and that he desires approval and publication of her writings so that devout persons who want to reject “alle falsche neuwe lerungen...dit buechlin sunder sorge lesen moigen tzer eren Gotz” (“...all the new false doctrines...might read this little book without fear and to the honor of God”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A2^v). Like the authors of the *Schwesternbücher* of medieval German Dominican convents, as well as the similarly-named *zusterboeken* (Books of Sisters) by sisters of the Windesheim congregation, Maria wrote originally not for a broad, convent-external readership, but rather for the edification of her own sisters.¹⁵ Then when Kalckbrenner met her, he took these extant devotional writings with him to Cologne for publication the next year.¹⁶ There is much to be said for Ulrike Wiethaus’ assertion that Maria’s “*lifestyle*, that is, her practice and embodiment of spiritual values [rather than the content of her texts] was regarded [by her male supporters] as her central message.”¹⁷ Indeed, this is what seems to separate Maria from other authors whose works the Cologne Charterhouse published. Still, we must assume that Kalckbrenner could have chosen to spread this “central message” by simply writing and publishing an account of her life. But he did more. His eagerness to publish *Der rechte wech* and, more important, the ways he edited it indicate that the experience of her life is subsumed into the experience of her text. Thus, in his letter of dedication, the foreword, and in his commentary throughout *Der rechte wech*, Kalckbrenner underscores Maria’s constant claim that the grace in her life is most clearly manifest by the fact that God commanded her to write. “Ich en weisz niet,” she explains to a sister beguine, “wie ich eyn wort sold kunnen gespreken off geschryven, dae ich yet in meinde dan got” (“I do not know how I could speak or write a single word if I intended anything other than God”; *Brieven*, 78).

Kalckbrenner thus carried out his publication of her texts with confidence and singleness of purpose. Like Ruusbroec, who two centuries before wrote, according to Paul Mommaers, to “fortify [the faithful] against the delusions

¹⁵ See Wybren Scheepsma, “‘For hereby I hope to rouse some to piety’: Books of Sisters from Convents and Sister-Houses Associated with the *Devotio moderna* in the Low Countries,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda’s Conference*, edited by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 27-40, esp. 28.

¹⁶ Kalckbrenner issued no command to write, as did clerics in the well-known cases of Mechtild of Magdeburg or Margery Kemp. Kalckbrenner indicates that Maria presented him with her writings (except, of course, their correspondence) when he met her. He tells Arnold of Tongeren in the letter of dedication that he received various works from Maria during his travels “[die] sy ...selfs gemacht mit yr eygen hant geschreven hait” (“that she made herself and wrote with her own hand”; *Der rechte wech*, fol. A1^v-A2^r). See also Ursula Peters, “Die *mulier religiosa* und ihr Beichtvater: Der Prozeß der Entstehung frauenmystischer Texte,” in *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum: Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), 101-188, for a discussion of clerical involvement in medieval women’s mystical writings.

¹⁷ Ulrike Wiethaus, “‘For This I Ask You, Punish Me’: Norms of Spiritual Orthopraxis in the Work of Maria van Hout (d. 1547),” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 68 (1994): 253-270, esp. 258.

and practices of the ‘Free Spirit,’”¹⁸ Kalckbrenner published Maria’s writings to address a particular need,¹⁹ specifically as a subtle tool against the Reformation, which, from the perspective of Catholicism, was a far greater and more divisive heresy. All aspects of his editing combined to promote her as an inspired vessel of God’s word, even a living saint. In a letter from Maria that he published separately in Latin translation in 1532, Kalckbrenner emphasizes her sanctity and, thus, the legitimacy of her authorial role with his insistence that she led a holy life.²⁰

As editor of *Der rechte wech*, Kalckbrenner aimed above all to clarify. In the foreword he states that he provided the foreword itself, the letter of dedication, and the chapter headings “umb dat selve klerlichen tzo verstain” (“in order to understand clearly the same [her little book]”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A6^v). He was not referring strictly to the mystical content. Indeed, this aspect of Maria’s writing required little clarification, for she, unlike some earlier mystics, generally only alludes to her visions and other ecstasies, and offers instead familiar allegories, exercises and creative but straightforward interpretations of biblical texts, designed to assist readers in overcoming specific obstacles to spiritual progress. But when Kalckbrenner brought her writings with him to Cologne from Brabant, he removed them both from their geographic context, as well as from their original audience and purpose (the social and functional context). Therefore, his commentary explains the original context of Maria’s writings to the new lay and religious readership in Cologne. He does this, for example, by occasionally identifying in broad terms the original audiences, and, most significantly, by publishing her letters with her treatises. The letters offer details not found in the treatises about her economic circumstances, health problems, conflicts with her confessor, and her deep concern for the welfare of her sister beguines.

This association with spiritual authority – both by editorial promotion and by the inclusion of her works among publications of more mainstream mystical authors – is particularly significant in the light of Maria’s membership in the beguine movement, whose history to that point, as is well known, was fre-

¹⁸ Paul Mommaers, “Introduction,” in *Jan van Ruusbroec Opera Omnia: Boecksken der verclaringhe*, edited by P. Mommaers and G. de Baere, translated by P. L. Crowley and H. Rolfson (Tielt: Lannoo, 1980), 1:21. The heresy of the Free Spirit espoused independence from ecclesiastical authority. See “Brethren of the Free Spirit,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Third Edition, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). James A. Wiseman, O. S. B., “Introduction,” in *John Ruusbroec: The Spiritual Espousals and Others Works*, translated by James A. Wiseman, O. S. B. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), esp. 3-7, offers a concise outline of the history and main tenets of this heresy. The infamous French beguine Marguerite Porete was burned at the stake in 1310, in part for her alleged connection to this heresy.

¹⁹ See Chaix 1982, 72: “répondre aux besoins du moment.”

²⁰ See *Frater Gerardus ab Hamont procurator Carthusiensium in Colonia, pio lectori gratiam et pacem a domino nostro Iesu Christo* (Cologne: n. p., 1532.), fol. A1^v. This work is cited hereafter as *Frater*. The only known copy is in the Basel Universitätsbibliothek, D.A.VI 19, Nr. B13.

quently characterized by censure both from Rome and local authorities, including, importantly, the archbishop of Cologne in the fifteenth century.²¹ Maria's beguine status is thus not irrelevant, in spite of the fact that *Der rechte wech* was published anonymously and the fact that the word 'beguine' is never stated directly in Kalckbrenner's commentary. This silence points to the possible dilemma for the Carthusians of her unofficial, quasi-religious status. Yet Kalckbrenner also does not completely ignore her beguine background, beginning the foreword by alluding to her communal life:

Dit buechlin uß ingeven des heiligen geistz hait gemaicht eyn eynfeldige devote persoin des namen got bekant is die vur vil iaren mit etzligen anderen innigen hertzen got reynicheit geloift ind unseren heren Jesum Christum uiß gantzem hertzen gesocht ind gefunden hait.

(A simple and pious person, whose name is known to God, and who for many years vowed chastity and sought and found our Lord Jesus Christ with all her heart with several other devout hearts, made this little book through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; *Rechte wech*, fol. A5^r.)

Later in the foreword he also mentions her "mitsusteren" (*Rechte wech*, fol. A6^r), and his introductions to her exercise on the *Five Wounds of Christ* and to her treatise on the *Poverty of the Spirit*, as well as the first four of the letters he published in *Der rechte wech* indicate that these writings were addressed to other women religious.²² Her communal religious life is therefore not only revealed freely, but also understandably, appears to be a significant aspect of Kalckbrenner's presentation of her as the author of these religious texts.

In the foreword, Kalckbrenner alludes more specifically to her beguine background by citing her vow of chastity and the fact that "sy sich...tzo einer eynfeldiger oitmoediger gehoirsamheit... gegeben... hait" ("she gave herself over to simple, humble obedience"; *Rechte wech*, fol. A5^r), but he includes no reference to a vow of poverty. This would likely have implied a beguine background to the contemporary religious readership, since it was well-known that all members of traditional orders took a tripartite vow that included poverty, while beguines maintained personal property. Tertiaries of the established orders did not make lifetime vows, but did make solemn promises in the same three areas as their cloistered counterparts.

²¹ Well over a century after the Council of Vienne officially banned the beguine lifestyle, beguine convents, housing between ten and fifty beguines each, were still thriving in Cologne. Concerned about the potential for heresy, in 1421 Archbishop Dietrich, under the direction of the pope, ordered the investigation of all religious communities that were not affiliated with established orders, and the dissolution of those deemed harmful to the church. Suppression of beguines continued in 1452 with the ordinance from the Council of Cologne banning any communities that would not accept official church rule. See Joseph Greving, "Protokoll über die Revision der Konvente der Beginen und Begarden zu Köln im Jahre 1452," *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 37 (1902): 25-77, esp. 27-31.

²² For ease of reference, I have assigned uniform English titles, based on the title page and also to the more specific headings within the body of the text, to the various treatises found in *Der rechte wech*.

It is possible that the fact that Maria's beguine community was in the Low Countries could have diminished apprehensions the Cologne Carthusians might have had about her unofficial status. After all, both Kalckbrenner and his prior, Peter Blomevenna, along with a host of other Cologne Carthusians, were Low Country natives. Although Kalckbrenner and Blomevenna studied and made their profession in Cologne, their ties to their homeland remained strong.²³ Beguines in the Low Countries, particularly in contrast to those in German-speaking Europe, had managed to survive into the sixteenth century (and beyond) with generally positive local reputations and, especially in the smaller communities, more or less true to the independent and religious ideals of the earliest beguines. One might therefore entertain the possibility that Kalckbrenner and Blomevenna could have been less concerned by Maria's beguine status than monks from other parts of Europe might have been.²⁴ Her unofficial status notwithstanding, and certainly *because of* her communal religious background, the Cologne Carthusians found her works meaningful for their own spiritual lives and for the lives of others, and this gave them justification to publish her writings in the company of those of more illustrious figures.

Kalckbrenner's editing often assumes an apologetic role. This is most immediately evident in his decision to dedicate *Der rechte wech* to the prominent Cologne theologian Arnold of Tongeren, and also to print Tongeren's letter of acceptance of the work. Tongeren had served as dean of the University of Cologne's powerful theological faculty and was, at the time *Der rechte wech* was published, a canon at Cologne's church of St. Mariengraden. Tongeren was influential enough, in fact, to have been caricatured in 1515 in the *Letters of Obscure Men*, the biting satire of the scholastics on Cologne's theological faculty who opposed Johannes Reuchlin's defense of Jewish writings. Kalckbrenner surely chose his dedicatee with care. Approval from a member of the Cologne theological faculty would have been a most conspicuous anti-protestant – and thus orthodox – stamp, since the faculty had come out in open condemnation of Luther's writings and anti-papal position as early as 1519, a full six years before the archdiocese itself offered any official reaction to the Lutheran movement.²⁵

Besides obtaining clerical approval, Kalckbrenner's apologetic stance as editor of *Der rechte wech* is also visible in several lengthy additions in the

²³ See Marion Grams-Thieme, "Die Kölner Kartause und ihre Beziehungen zu den Niederlanden," in *Die Kölner Kartause um 1500*, edited by Werner Schäfke (Cologne: Kölnisches Stadtmuseum, 1991), esp. 359-364. See also Adam Wienand, "Bedeutende Prioren in der Kölner Kartause," in *Die Kartäuser: der Orden der schweigenden Mönche*, edited by Marijan Zadnikar and Adam Wienand (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 1983), 243-287, esp. entries regarding the priors Landsberg, Blomevenna, and Kalckbrenner.

²⁴ Bowie 1990, 20, argues that sympathetic patrons allowed beguinages in the Low Countries to remain "strongholds of the beguine way of life," even many decades after the papal censure that issued from the Council of Vienne in 1311 had caused a critical weakening of beguine life in the rest of Europe.

²⁵ See Wilhelm Janssen, *Das Erzbistum Köln: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zum kölnischen Krieg* (Kehl am Rhein: Echo-Buchverlag, 1995), 2:36.

work aimed at directly confirming the validity of particular portions of Maria's text. This aspect of *Der rechte wech* deserves special attention, as these explicit interventions are unique in the history of women's mysticism. Certainly there are examples of men validating the lives or writings of women mystics, as in the celebrated case of Cardinal Jacques of Vitry, who sought and obtained papal approval for the beguine lifestyle on behalf of Marie d'Oignies. However, no other example so intricately weaves clerical authorization into the woman's own text as does *Der rechte wech*. Maria van Hout intimates that her zealous pastoral efforts were not without complications, even among her sister beguines and others who knew her personally,²⁶ so she relied on her divine source to substantiate the validity of her texts. She only wrote because she was "sunderlinge in den geist da tzo vermaent" ("especially commanded in the spirit to do so"; *Brieven*, 88). With his publication to a far broader audience Kalckbrenner added a more crafted – though no more insistent – defense, geared to remove all doubt that Maria might be located anywhere besides firmly in Catholic orthodoxy. This is particularly the case in her exercise on the *Five Wounds of Christ*, the last of her treatises in *Der rechte wech*. In the middle of it Kalckbrenner suddenly 'appears' and gives an account of a rapturous experience Maria had in his presence when she first told him about the exercise. He identifies himself clearly, if only indirectly, by quoting her reference to him as her "spiritual son."²⁷

As die vurß persoan...saeye dat ich [ir geistlicher son disse oeffunge] mit groisser begerten ußschreyff und an nam, doe wart sy...in Got up ertzoegen in myner tegenwordicheit. Und doe sy weder tzo yren ußwendigen synnen quam, do sacht sy myr also, Do ich mirckte...dat yr so gutwillich wairt tzo disser oeffungen doe sturtzte Got ßoe overfloedige gratie in myn hertz van uretwegen dat ich es nit gedragen kunde....

(When the aforementioned person...saw that I [her spiritual son] wrote [this exercise] down and accepted it with great eagerness, she...was taken up in God in my presence. And when she came again to her outer senses, she said to me, 'When I noticed...that you were so open to this exercise, God poured such overflowing grace into my heart because of you that I could not bear it...; *Rechte wech*, fol. N1^r.)

Willeumier-Schalij has noted that this account is remarkable for its "eyewitness" quality (*Brieven*, 31). Even more important, however, is the recognition that Kalckbrenner is not the only "witness." Indeed, by interrupting Maria's text with his own, Kalckbrenner re-creates the sense of the original experience and inscribes the reader's "view" to Maria's ecstasy. Moreover, this particular commentary is not only a validation of Maria's ecstatic gifts,

²⁶ See esp. the letters directed to her confessor (*Brieven*, 96-108), in which she admits to having "geergert" ("aggravated"; 98) other people, and that throughout her life she has grown used to being not in the good graces of her superiors: ("...ich bins wail gewoen niet vyll suesser ansichten of worden van mynen ouersten tzo haven alle myn leefddage"; 102).

²⁷ See esp. letters 6 and 7 (from Maria to Kalckbrenner, *Brieven*, 84-94) for her description of her spiritual mother-son relationship with him.

but also, fundamentally, of Kalckbrenner's interest, and by extension that of the Cologne Charterhouse, in her writings. She was "taken up in God in his presence," as he was in the act of receiving her exercise. Kalckbrenner could hardly have asked for a more overt indication of divine approval for his editorial and publishing efforts. Such validation would no doubt have been important to him, due to her obscurity, as previously discussed, compared to the other mystical authors published by the Cologne Carthusians, and specifically in light of the troubled ecclesiastical history of the beguines.

In another example, Kalckbrenner directly links Maria's spirituality to that of saints and even Christ, as one might expect. In the letter to Kalckbrenner that he published in Latin in 1532, Maria outlines with characteristic boldness her desire to aid in saving his soul and as many others as she can. She unabashedly claims that God, "Propter nimiam enim suam misericordiam...me miseram et despicabilem elegit creaturam... ad patiendum et orandum substituit hic in terris, propter animas ad deum trahendas" ("because of his immense mercy...has chosen me, a miserable and despicable creature...and placed me in His stead here on earth, to suffer and to pray, so that...souls might be led to God"; *Frater*, fol. A3^v). She continues: "Pro his enim aliisque omnibus qui id a me flagitant, tam intusquam foris parata sum crucifigi a domino: quem illis uniuersoque mundo, ne quisquam pereat, reconciliare sumopere conor" ("For those indeed and all the others who ask it of me, I am prepared inwardly as well as outwardly to be crucified by the Lord, whom I endeavor to reconcile with them and all the world, so that no one should perish"; *Frater*, fol. A4^r). In the turbulent religious world in the wake of the Reformation, Kalckbrenner obviously found Maria's apostolic zeal to be of great value. In the commentary that accompanies this letter, he writes: "Itaque hos dedit veluti columnas, quorum orationibus fulciatur renoueturque ecclesia" ("So <Christ> has given them [i.e., friends like Maria] as pillars, through whose prayers the church is upheld and renewed"; *Frater*, fol. A1^r). Nevertheless, he apparently could not transmit her *imitatio Christi* without annotation that connected her to the known, the sainted, and thus godly approval. He insists: "...vita eius sancta in calumniam et amaritudinem ducebat. Haec autem amantissimus eius sponsus illam tantisper pati voluit, dum a creaturis omnibus exutam, sibi in omnibus conformaret" ("She has lived a holy life, in opposition to calumny and bitterness. Moreover, her most beloved Bridegroom desired that she should suffer these things...until, separated from all beings, he conforms her to himself in all things"; *Frater*, fol. A1^v). He continues: "Quomodo corde manibus pedibusque (velut altera Catherina Senensis) Christi stigmatibus, id est doloribus igneis crucifigatur, quantum denique in capite veluti spineo sermo aperto acutissimis doloribus continue compungatur, nemo possit explicare" ("For no one is able to explicate how she in her heart, in both her hands and her feet was crucified with the stigmata of Christ (as if she were a second Catherine of Siena),²⁸

²⁸ This is a bold comparison. Catherine was widely venerated specifically for her receipt of 'invisible' stigmata, and was already canonized in 1461.

i.e., with burning pains, and finally, how much she is continually pierced on her head with the sharpest pains, as if by a hidden crown of thorns"; *Frater*, fol. A1^v).²⁹ He extends the identification of Maria to Christ to such a degree that one nearly forgets that she first made the claims. This is obviously intended as approval of her Christ imagery, and, as Willeumier-Schalijs has argued, is likely protectionary to a degree, directed as a response to potential critics (in the clergy) who might have condemned Maria.³⁰ Ultimately, though, the purpose of his association of Maria with Christ seems pastoral, intended as a comfort to those souls both Kalckbrenner and Maria wanted to save. By so doing, he assures readers that these writings, unlike others circulating in the day, were orthodox and would thus bring them closer to, not farther from, union with God.

All aspects of Kalckbrenner's promotion of Maria base the value of her writings on her ecstatic nature, not on her intellectual capacity: she was "suß ungelert" ("so very unlearned"; *Rechte wech*, fol. A2^r), he points out, and thus acting not of her own volition, but rather in obedience to God's command through the Holy Spirit to write. This is, of course, a time-honored trope in mystical literature, especially that written by or about women, who, since they were rarely scholastically educated and held no ecclesiastical office, relied solely on claims of divine inspiration for legitimation. Whenever Maria herself makes these claims in *Der rechte wech*, it is nearly always as a buffer to some daring (in the sense of potentially offensive or even heretical) spiritual advice. For example, in a letter to a sister beguine, in which she sends words of chastisement to a third sister, she writes: "...nempt doch disze worden war... ich en schreiff uch dit niett, umb eyn gulden werelt, en seege ich niet dat idt Got alsus beliefft" ("...do take these words to heart...I would not write this to you for all the wealth in the world [lit. for a golden world] if I did not see that it pleased God so"; *Brieven*, 78). In a letter to Kalckbrenner, she confidently recommends to him and to the prior, Blomevenna, that they should take as special examples for their lives – "patrons," in her words – Jesus Christ and God the Father, respectively, and that she will then learn especially from the life of the Virgin Mary.³¹ Apparently fearing that the monks might perceive her unusual suggestions for *imitatio* as too direct, or perhaps merely as inappropriate from a laywoman, she concludes the letter as follows: "...en wilt

²⁹ It is clear from Kalckbrenner's description that Maria's burning pains represented, like St. Catherine's, invisible or virtual, rather than literal, stigmata.

³⁰ *Brieven*, 28-29, holds that the purpose of Kalckbrenner's commentary was to illuminate the person of Maria in order to shield her from criticism.

³¹ I agree with Willeumier-Schalijs's translation of Kalckbrenner's "patroen" with "voorbeeld." She rejects Wilhelm Oehl's German translation of "Schutzpatron" (see "Maria van Osterwyk," in *Deutsche Mystikerbriefe des Mittelalters: 1100-1550*, edited by Wilhelm Oehl (1931). Reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972, 699), arguing that "...Maria [heeft] hier duideljk de drie voorbeelden van God de Vader voor de prior, Christus voor Kalckbrenner en Maria voor zichzelf als voorbeeld bedoeld" ("Maria clearly intended the three examples of God the Father for the prior, Christ for Kalckbrenner and Mary for herself as models"); *Brieven*, 88, note 8.

doch he in niet entsteht syn, dat ich uch so aventuerlich schriuen. Ich hain uch schlecht und recht geschreuen, wie id mir unwerdich durchlauffen is... want ir wist wail dat ich ghein wysheit en hain” (“...do not be offended that I write so boldly. I have written you sincerely and simply, as it has flowed through me, [the] unworthy one. ...for you well know that I have no wisdom”; *Brieuen*, 88). In a further letter, this one to her confessor, who apparently often opposed her, she even moves, in the tradition of great mystics before her, beyond a claim of mere unlearnedness to a complete negation of herself: “Unde wiewail ich tzom zyden kloechen worde spreche,” she admits, “dat en kan ich niet gebesseren...want ich byn minsselven gantz entsatzt unde in got vereinicht recht of ich geyn mynsche en were, unde ich niet mee en lefde dan der here in mich...” (“And though I sometimes speak bold words, I cannot improve that. ...For I am completely removed from myself and united in God, as if I were not a human being, as if I no longer lived, but rather the Lord [lived] in me...”; *Brieuen*, 116).

Kalckbrenner’s promotional agenda for Maria’s writings includes the exploitation of the familiar medieval genre of the saint’s life. He writes a subtle ‘life’ of Maria in the foreword to *Der rechte wech*. His purpose is not to offer historical accuracy (following tradition, he offers no dates or places, or even her name); his sketchy biography is rather an attempt to describe her process of achieving grace, as a validation of her authorship. The central focus of his account is the spiritual and physical suffering that followed her initial commitment to follow Christ and be obedient to her superiors. This torment allowed her to become like her Bridegroom both “ußwendig und inwendig” (“externally and internally”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A5^v). Readers would expect such a refiner’s fire for any saint destined to be an instrument of God’s will. Indeed, Kalckbrenner recounts that Maria’s prayers and works, her worldly ignorance notwithstanding, have helped many, whose own righteous lives offer further testimony to her piety. Finally, Kalckbrenner advocates her life as a gift within the historical context of their day – “boesen tziden” (“evil times”), he calls them – in which readers owe thanks to God “dat he... sulche heymelige frunde erweckt, die...unse kalde hertzen vermanen...” (“that he ... awakens such secret friends who exhort our cold hearts”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A6^r).

Similar *gnadenviten* abound in the spiritual literature of the Middle Ages, but this *vita* is unusual. It is not about acts of grace that have followed the life and death of a pious woman, with the goal of canonization of the individual: Maria is alive. Kalckbrenner is aware of this divergence from the norm and addresses it immediately:³² “Niemant en sal sich dair an stoissen dat ich van luden schryue die noch in dissez leven synt und noch nyet gantz versichert. Ich tzwivel niet <dat> got der myt sinen frunde soe wunderlich angefangen hait sal sy ouch wail beschirmen und volbringen...” (“No one should be bothered that I write of people who are still in this life, and not yet completely assured. I do not doubt <that> God, who has so wondrously begun with His friends, shall

³² See Wiethaus 1994, 264.

also protect and perfect them...”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A6^r). To a rather startling degree, then, Kalckbrenner co-opts the *vita* genre in order to present Maria as something akin to a ‘living saint,’ a phenomenon that the Church, previous to the Reformation, always opposed vehemently. But he resolves the power of the living saint into the power of her devotional writings. In fact, he claims that *Der rechte wech* contains the same truths as “die hilge schrift” and the works of the “altvaders in Egipto ind Augustini Hieronimi” (“ancient fathers in Egypt, Augustine and Jerome”; *Rechte wech*, fol. A6^r-A6^v)³³ and that all who have read their texts will recognize this. It is likely no accident that Kalckbrenner chose as his examples men connected to the interpretation and writing, not merely the preaching, of the word of God.

Before Kalckbrenner published Maria’s texts upon his return to Cologne, he apparently altered the language slightly by transposing what was no doubt the original Brabant dialect into Ripuarian (Cologne dialect).³⁴ Unfortunately, Maria’s original texts are no longer extant, making a comparison of them to Kalckbrenner’s recension impossible. However, a broad study carried out by Kurt Ruh that surveyed numerous Low German translations of Middle Dutch texts offers some insight. He found that “Syntax und Wortschatz bleiben bei der Übernahme dieser Texte fast gänzlich unberührt.”³⁵ Ruh in fact claims that “der niederländische Literaturraum... ganz Niederdeutschland und den Kölner und Trierer Raum einschliesst. Bestimmt gilt dies für die geistliche Prosaliteratur.”³⁶ If this holds true for *Der rechte wech*, then it would appear that Kalckbrenner (himself a native of Limburg but a long-time resident of Cologne) would merely have conformed Maria’s spelling and morphology to the Cologne dialect. Should that be the case, then the published version of *Der rechte wech* likely does not diverge much from Maria’s original. The quite obvious shifts for the reader whenever Kalckbrenner’s editorial voice sounds in the text seem to attest that he stayed true, as Ampe claims, to Maria’s own style, in spite of the minimal linguistic re-working that would have been necessary.³⁷

One additional issue uniquely testifies to the scope of Kalckbrenner’s advancement of Maria’s works, namely, his distribution of her writings

³³ Extended quote: “Eyns dings synt wir sicher dat der rechte...wech tzo der volkomenheit hie yn klerlich gescreuen steit uß dem rechten geist. Dat sullen wail bekennen alle die...die hilge schrift ind der altvaders in Egipto ind Augustini Hieronimi...durch lesen hauen.” (“Of one thing we are sure: that the right...way to perfection is written clearly herein by the proper spirit. All those who have read the holy scriptures and the writings of the ancient fathers in Egypt, Augustine and Jerome, will recognize this.”)

³⁴ Oehl 1931, 688, assesses Kalckbrenner’s linguistic involvement as follows: “Marias sehr kunstlose, vlämisch verfaßte Briefe sind in Auswahl und in kölnische Mundart übertragen von Kalckbrenner... veröffentlicht worden.”

³⁵ Kurt Ruh, “Altniederländische Mystik in deutschsprachiger Überlieferung,” in *Dr. L. Reypens-Album: Opstellen aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. L. Reypens s.j. ter gelegenheid van zijn tachtigste verjaardag op 26 februari 1964*, *Studien en Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf* 16, edited by Albert Ampe, S. J. (Antwerp: Ruusbroecgenootschap, 1964), 359.

³⁶ Ruh 1964, 362.

³⁷ I agree with both Ampe 1966, 246 and *Brieven*, 28-29, who do not consider it likely that Kalckbrenner would have modified the content.

beyond the 1531 vernacular publication of *Der rechte wech*. Johannes Kettenmeyer's claim that Kalckbrenner translated several of Maria's works into Latin is supported on two counts, first by a Latin translation of a portion of *Der rechte wech*, Maria's exercise on the *Five Wounds of Christ*.³⁸ This is included in a manuscript of uncertain authorship (though definitely of Cologne Carthusian origin).³⁹ In addition, a portion of the same *Five Wounds of Christ* exercise, and a letter written by Maria to Kalckbrenner, both translated into Latin, were printed in Cologne in 1532. We do not know the intended audience, but Kalckbrenner justifies his translation as follows: "Postremo vt haec evidentius palam fiant, non abs re videbitur, si dictae virginis ad nos epistolam, in suo vernaculo datam, hic vero in latinam linguam translata, subiitiamus" ("Finally, so that these things might be made clear, it will seem not inappropriate if here indeed we should translate into Latin and append the letter of the said maiden, given to us in her vernacular"; *Frater*, fol. A2^v). Finally, one other sixteenth-century reference discusses Kalckbrenner's role as translator of her texts. In a letter written in Latin in 1548 by the Jesuit Peter Schorichius to his fellow Jesuit Leonhard Kessel in Cologne, he requests a copy of Maria's work *Novem simplicitatis gradus (Nine Steps of Simplicity)*, which, he says, "translatos a reverendo patre priore Carthusiano" ("was translated by our worthy father, prior of the Carthusians").⁴⁰ This prior was Kalckbrenner.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Schorichius does not say whether Kalckbrenner translated it into German or Latin, although we would assume Latin, if its circulation was primarily among the Carthusians, Jesuits and other clergy, as the letter seems to suggest. There is unfortunately no known copy of this work. Still, these references point to a distribution among key participants in Cologne's counter-reformation efforts of at least some of Maria's writings in Latin translation.

The literary activity *per se* of the Cologne Carthusians was not remarkable; instead it was the intensity of their work in the sixteenth century and their choice of texts, including that of Maria van Hout, that is distinctive. The copying of books was a main endeavor of members of the contemplative Carthusian order from its beginnings in the eleventh century.⁴² The Cologne Charterhouse had long specialized in writing and publishing mystical texts. The majority of these publications were in Latin. Of the seventy-three volumes published in the years 1528-1541, the period that includes *Der rechte wech*, sixty were in Latin.⁴³ These books were also printed in a variety of formats: some in quarto, but over half of the Latin works, and all but two of the vernacular works from this period, including *Der rechte wech*, in octavo. This smaller format, which

³⁸ Kettenmeyer 1929, 9.

³⁹ Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Hs 1204. Original Carthusian catalog number 000126. See Kettenmeyer 1929, 18.

⁴⁰ *Rheinische Akten zur Geschichte des Jesuitenordens 1542-1582*, edited by Joseph Hansen (Bonn: Hermann Behrendt, 1896), 133.

⁴¹ The letter was written in 1548. Kalckbrenner became prior in Cologne in 1536 at the death of Peter Blomevenna and served in this capacity until his own death in 1566.

⁴² See *Wörterbuch der Mystik*, 298.

⁴³ Chaix 1982, 69.

reduced cost significantly, and the use of the vernacular suggest that *Der rechte wech* was aimed at a broad readership.

Beyond the purposeful editorial work of Kalckbrenner and the special status of *Der rechte wech* within the Carthusian publishing tradition, Maria's presence in Cologne is arguably the most convincing sign that Kalckbrenner and his brothers considered Maria van Hout – and her writings – to be divinely inspired. The Charterhouse chronicle records a resolution of 1532 to provide for Maria and two other women by bringing them to Cologne to live. “Prior totusque conventus sub sigillo omniumque subscriptione consensuerunt in alimentatione trium virginum de Osterwijk in vita contemplativa virtutumque perfectione probe institutarum si Coloniae domicilium figerent” (“The prior and the entire convent agreed – with a seal and a signature from everyone – to provide food, if they settle in Cologne, for the three virgins of Oisterwijk, who stand firm in the contemplative life and in the perfection of virtues”).⁴⁴ Although the resolution was upheld by the Carthusian general chapter, it was not realized until 1545, when Maria arrived in Cologne with two sister religious from her community in Oisterwijk, named that year in the chronicle as Ida Jordanis and Eva. There is no direct information regarding the reason for the thirteen-year delay in bringing the women to Cologne. Nevertheless, the postponement can no doubt be attributed, at least in part, to the unusual nature of the undertaking. Carthusians are a strictly contemplative, sequestered order with no sanctioned interaction with women. Arrangements for the beguines to live adjacent to the monastery had no precedent, nor indeed has there ever been a similar case in the subsequent history of the order. Also, if financial concern for the beguines was the main purpose of the resolution, the relocation of the women might have been deemed less crucial in the wake of the prolonged efforts of Nicholas van Esch, then a young priest and spiritual associate of the Cologne Carthusians, himself a native of Oisterwijk and a pastor to beguines in Diest, to build the Oisterwijk beguines a new house. He finally accomplished this in 1539. Esch's biography describes Maria as “...seer verlicht van geest, ende hoog geoeffent in het aenschouwende leven, tot verscheyde vrienden Godts eenige brieven heeft geschreven vol van wonderlijcke hemelsche wysheyt, de welcke sonder haere name tot Colen gedrukt syn” (“enlightened in spirit and highly experienced in the contemplative life, who wrote several letters full of wondrous, heavenly wisdom to different friends of God, which were published, without her name,

⁴⁴ “7 September 1532,” *Chronologia Carthusiae Coloniensis*. This chronicle was compiled by Johannes Lotley (1620-1686), who served both as procurator and prior of the Charterhouse of St. Barbara. It is currently housed in the Carthusian Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Farneta (Lucca). See also Kettenmeyer 1929, 2, note 1 and *Brieven*, 6, note 12. Johann Jacob Merlo published the *Chronologia* in his article on the artwork of St. Barbara. See “Kunst und Kunsthandwerk im Karthäuserkloster zu Köln,” *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 45 (1886): 1-52, esp. 27-52. Joachim Deeters et al. reprint the *Chronologia* in “Quellen zur Geschichte der Kölner Kartause, *Die Kölner Kartause um 1500* (Cologne: Kölnisches Stadtmuseum, 1991), 26-67. See 24-25 for a description of Merlo's edition.

in Cologne”).⁴⁵ Like Esch, the Carthusians’ interest in Maria was spiritual as well as philanthropic, for they still persevered to bring her and her sisters to Cologne even after the new convent in Oisterwijk was completed. They thus demonstrated that they saw in Maria a remarkable faith and that they desired to secure her spiritual influence for the monastery and the city. She lived only two years after her arrival in Cologne. Her name is entered in the Carthusian death register on 30 September 1547, an honor apparently otherwise reserved for members of the order and major benefactors.⁴⁶ She was buried in the monastery’s Chapel of St. Mary, with an epitaph later added by the prior Johannes Rechtschenkel that read: “Virginibus virgo praeifulgens illa Maria | Cuius erat genitrix Osterwick, hac cubat urna” (“Maria, a shining virgin among virgins, whose mother(town) was Oisterwijk, lies in this sepulcher”).⁴⁷ Upon receiving news of her death, St. Petrus Canisius lamented with his brethren in Cologne in a letter dated 2 January 1548: “Orbavit vos dominus matre de Oesterwick, sed orat opinor et illa pro nobis orphanis in coelis” (“The Lord has robbed you of the mother of Oisterwijk, but I imagine that she pleads for us orphans in heaven”).⁴⁸

For Kalckbrenner and the Carthusians, and for other prominent religious of her day, the physical presence of this “shining virgin” probably functioned, like her writings, as an indication that God’s grace continued to reside within the Catholic church and as a support for growing efforts by the church to foster popular devotions. Her unofficial, uncloistered status as a beguine perhaps provided a message of unique importance for other Catholics who also strove to live in, but not of, the world of increasing religious turmoil. Indeed, Kalckbrenner affirms the value of her example and her words with particular candor in the foreword to his Latin translation of her letter from 1532. If one day even just two such friends of God [like Maria] should remain, he declares, “mundi potius exitium vniuersale quam reformatio foret expectandum” (“one should sooner expect the complete end of the world than the reformation”; *Frater*, fol. A1’).

SAMENVATTING

De devote werken van de mystieke begijn Maria van Hout in *Der rechte wech zo der evangelischer volkomenheit* van 1531 werden uitgegeven dankzij het Keulse kartuizerklooster. De Limburger Gerhard Kalckbrenner, op het tijdstip van publicatie de procurator

⁴⁵ Arnold Jans, *Het leven van den eerweerdighen Vaeder Mynheer Nicolaus van Esch oft Eschius*, translated by Gilbert Ghybels (Louvain: n.p., 1713), 60. Ghybels’ version is a Dutch translation and edition of Jans’ original Latin manuscript, “Venerabilis Nicolai Eschii vita et opuscula ascetica,” located in the Royal Library of Brussels, ms. 653. It was first edited and published by P. F. X. de Ram (Louvain: Vanlinthout et Socii, Universitatis Typographi, 1858). For a discussion of the biography see Kettenmeyer 1929, 6-7, note 15; also Albert Ampe, S. J., “Eschius” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, edited by M. Viller, S. J., et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 4/1:1060-1066.

⁴⁶ *Karthäuser Nekrolog* (Cologne, 1780), 143^v. Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln call number GA 132.

⁴⁷ See Erhardus a Winheim, *Sacrarium Agrippinae* (Cologne: n.p., 1607), 210-11. See discussion of Rechtschenkel’s particular interest in Maria in Kettenmeyer 1929, 1; 12-13.

⁴⁸ Petrus Canisius, *Beati Petri Canisii Epistulae et Acta, 1541-1556*, edited by Otto Braunsberger (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1896), 1:258.

van het klooster, trad op als uitgever van dit boek. Een studie van de wijze waarop hij als uitgever optrad, vormt het onderwerp van dit artikel. Deze studie laat zien dat Kalckbrenner verschillende manieren gebruikte om Maria en haar werken te presenteren als middelen tot steun aan de kerk in een veelbewogen tijd. Zijn editoriale bemoeienis met *Der rechte wech* omvat een opdrachtbrief aan Arnold van Tongeren, samenvattingen van hoofdstukken en commentaren. Kalckbrenner paste ook met kleine taalkundige wijzigingen het Brabantse dialect aan het Ripuarisch aan en hij voegde verscheidene traktaten van andere mystieke auteurs toe (onder meer van Dionysius de Kartuizer). Al deze ingrepen dienden echter slechts één doel: Maria's auteurschap voor te stellen als geïnspireerd door God. De Keulse kartuizers kenden een lange traditie van het kopiëren en uitgeven van mystieke teksten, maar de uitgave van de werken van een onbekende begijn nog tijdens haar leven, doorbrak hun traditionele beperking tot de uitgave van de werken van gevestigde auteurs, van wie er sommige zelfs zalig verklaard waren. Dit feit onderstreept de betekenis die de kartuizers hechtten aan de persoon en het werk van Maria, voor henzelf en voor de andere lezers in de schaduw van Luthers uitdaging aan het katholicisme.

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