

how it was used in any given period. These are all important points that will hopefully be explored by scholars in the future. With its wealth of information, references, and ideas, Carmelenghi's book will be the necessary point of reference for all of them.

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Le silence dans l'art: Liturgie et théologie du silence dans les images médiévales. By Vincent Debiais. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2019. 312 pp. €25.00 paper.

Vincent Debiais's new book is a gem. If Simon and Garfunkel sought to explore the enigma of the sound of silence in their classic 1964 song, Debiais's study reveals that the visual representation of silence is even more multifaceted. Debiais deftly straddles multiple disciplines, aligning medieval art history with philosophy, theology, liturgy, music, contemporary art, and especially with "sound studies."

The book opens with a discussion of Philip Gröning's 2005 film, *Le Grand Silence*, about a monastic community in the French Alps. Debiais astutely observes that the silence of the monastery is never absolute: the viewer can hear bells, footsteps, doors, gardening, and even a passing airplane. He contrasts this to the silence that could be found within a monk's heart. Debiais acknowledges that this absolute silence is a "fictional space" (16).

Chapter 1 provides the background of silence in antiquity, in the Bible, and in early Christianity, particularly with Saint Augustine. Importantly, Debiais reminds us that the name of God is not supposed to be pronounced. Chapter 2 is one of the most abstract, focusing on transparency and the place of silence on earth and in heaven. This chapter concentrates heavily on Beatus of Liebaná's treatise on the Apocalypse and its numerous illustrations, particularly of Apocalypse 8:1: the half hour of silence that accompanies the opening of the seventh and last seal. Debiais's background in epigraphy shines through in this chapter. Several manuscripts feature the word *silentium* and repeated letter Z's and/or S's either outside or within a simple rectangle. Debiais interprets the repeated Z's in the Beatus of Valladolid as representing the "sound of silence" (73).

Monasteries are natural places to study silence, and they form the basis of chapter 3. Monastic rules strictly regulate when monks are allowed to speak, attempting to eliminate unwanted types of noise. Architecturally, monasteries also define silence, particularly the cloister, but Debiais emphasizes that it is impossible even for cloisters to be places of absolute silence. Rather, they could create images of divine perfection in the monks' hearts. Debiais considers Saint-Pierre de Moissac's sculptural program to be among the most "talkative" (*bavard*) in Romanesque art, yet it still emphasizes the silence of the cloister (119–120). For example, the cloister contains two abstract pillars: one is a monolithic marble column, and the other is decorated with abstract waves.

Chapter 4 focuses on liturgical silence, including the consecration and elevation of the Host, often powerfully represented *sub silentio* (186). A big emphasis in this chapter is on the iconography of the Angel Gabriel's annunciation to Zachary of the birth of John the Baptist, and Zachary's subsequent inability to speak (Luke 1:11–22). Here narrative art and gesture enter the picture, as the muteness is often signified by Zachary's placement of his finger over his closed lips.

Finally, chapter 5 addresses the role of angels, light, and darkness. With a theophany, like the one we see on the famous tympanum at Moissac, it is unclear whether the multitude of angels and musicians actually produce sounds; the image itself certainly does not. Therefore, we have a tension between the sound of ultimate praise and the silence of contemplation. Angels mediate between earth and heaven: they can have the attributes of a voice when communicating with men, and yet silence when encountering God.

The conclusion links us to contemporary art and culture by focusing on the idea of radicality. Already in chapter 3 Debais had evoked John Cage's composition 4'33," the *White Paintings* of Robert Rauschenberg, and Yves Klein's installation *The Void*. Debais ends with a discussion of Martin Scorsese's 2016 film *Silence*, which presents a radical idea of silence as words withheld and imperceptible. One of the final images alluded to in the book, and the last color plate, is Barnett Newman's 1950 painting *The Voice*: it becomes "pure color and pure form, a pictorially radical act" (261). Although the link between monochrome and silence permeates critiques of contemporary art, in medieval Christian images, the visualization of silence ultimately manifests its "capacity . . . to render the presence of the invisible" (261).

One important feature of the book that should be commended is its transatlantic quality. Scholars from Europe and America are cited on equal footing. And this book will certainly bring manuscripts from American collections into greater international recognition: although it is unsurprising to see manuscripts from Madrid, Brussels, and Munich featured throughout, it is refreshing that the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles figure so prominently, and that manuscripts from smaller collections such as in Philadelphia are also mentioned. It is rare for European scholars to be so well versed with American scholarship as well as with manuscripts in American collections.

I sincerely hope that this book will be translated into different languages. If it does go through subsequent editions, a few points about the scholarly apparatus should be addressed and improved upon. Namely, there is no index, no list of illustrations, and the black and white images are not numbered. There are only numbers for and callouts to the twenty-four color plates. The labels for both the color plates and the black-and-white images are also too terse. For illuminated manuscripts, the captions provide just the city, library, shelf-mark, and folio number. It would be extremely helpful to also have the iconography, the full title of the text, the localization, and the date. These suggestions would make the book more navigable. This production issue aside, this is a brilliant book that sheds new light on a complex philosophical subject. It should be required reading for all medievalists, and far beyond.

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