

The Art of Cistercian Persuasion in the Middle Ages and Beyond: Caesarius of Heisterbach's "Dialogue on Miracles" and Its Reception. Victoria Smirnova, Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, and Jacques Berlioz, eds.

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The essays in this volume derive from a 2013 conference on Cistercian persuasion held at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art in Paris, which sought to reflect on Cistercian exempla from the perspective of late twentieth-century studies in rhetoric and argumentation, utterance and logic, theories of communication, literary theory, and cognitive psychology. The resulting publication is a thorough and interdisciplinary volume that is primarily interested in the ways that Cistercian modes of storytelling served to stir emotions and to induce behavior and belief. The majority of the essays explore, in particular, methods of "faire croire," the social act of believing or convincing someone to believe. Together, they cast light on Cistercian tools of persuasion, putting forth a collective argument for the Cistercians as progenitors of a unique brand of persuasion through their perfection of the narrative form of the exemplum.

At the center of the volume's investigations, as the subtitle indicates, is Caesarius of Heisterbach and the particularities of his rhetorical efficacy. Although Caesarius is one of the most well-known Cistercian authors, little is understood about his life or his major work, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, as a whole. One aim of this volume is thus to outline an approach to rhetoric in the *Dialogue*, its manuscript tradition, and the reasons for its immense success. The contributors demonstrate that Caesarius's cultivation of a "narrativity of the self," the clarity of his message, and the visual and verbal representations he included in his exempla collection served to convey an image of authority that promoted certain Christian beliefs and behaviors from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries across three continents.

The volume opens with Brian Patrick McGuire's exploration of his own decades-long investigations into Caesarius. He discusses the various approaches that historians have taken to the *Dialogue on Miracles*, and the tensions scholars face as they weigh Caesarius's rich descriptions of local culture against a positivist impulse to question such moralizing tales. The essays that follow explore Caesarius's contributions to a Cistercian rhetoric, narrative theology, and the significance of translations of the *Dialogue*. Highlights of the volume include Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk's investigation into twelfth-century inventories of Cistercian book collections, which shows that Cistercian methods of persuasion were distinguished by the adoption of rhetorical means for regulating communication between the abbot of Clairvaux and his correspondents. She demonstrates an invested Cistercian interest in the *ars dictandi* that emerged from the pontifical chancellery, and includes as an appendix an impressive set of inventories of Cistercian book collections from before the thirteenth century. Victoria Smirnova's essay on narrative theology is another standout of the volume. Smirnova produces several

side-by-side passages of theological treatises and excerpts from the *Dialogue on Miracles* in order to demonstrate Caesarius's method of narrative theology. Caesarius clearly injected doctrine into his dialogic explorations, providing for his readers an intimate and personal understanding of Christian theology. Smirnova argues that Caesarius's borrowings from Scholastic authors such as Peter Lombard and Peter of Poitiers served ultimately to promote the values of affective community.

Other important contributions explore the dissemination of the *Dialogue on Miracles* outside of the order, outside of Europe, beyond the Middle Ages, and in adaptations and translations. Stefano Mula, for example, shows how the *Dialogue on Miracles* was often classified in booklists as a source of historical information alongside such works as Bede's *De gestis Anglorum* and Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. Elisa Brili and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu examine later adaptations and abbreviations of Caesarius's exempla, revealing the Cistercian author's status as an authority, sometimes one equal to the desert fathers. Jasmin Margarete Hlatky, Elena Koroleva, and Danièle Dehouve pursue translations of Caesarius's exempla into Middle Dutch, German, and Nahuatl. And Nathalie Luca provides a brief but thoughtful commentary on how Caesarius's methods of narration help to understand South Korean techniques of narrative conversion.

The Art of Cistercian Persuasion in the Middle Ages and Beyond provides a necessary first step in considering the genesis, influence, and power of "faire croire" within Cistercian exempla. The essays demonstrate convincingly that the rhetoric of the exemplum aims to produce mental images that facilitate comprehension and indoctrination, and that encourage meditation and strengthen alliances within the community. The editors' conclusions about the Cistercian exemplum as a distinct means of mental image making would benefit from further integration with the work of Mary Carruthers, Michelle Karnes, and Sarah Lipton, who have so richly explored meditational images; but the volume is just a beginning, an outline of important interdisciplinary directions from which we can all look forward to reading continuing fruits.

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