

*Le Temps long de Clairvaux. Nouvelles Recherches, nouvelles perspectives (XIIe–XXIe siècle).*

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*Les Pratiques de l'écrit. Dans les abbayes cisterciennes (XIIe–milieu du XVIe siècle). Produire, échanger, contrôler, conserver.* Edited by Arnaud Baudin and Laurent Morelle.

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Cîteaux was the progenitor and governor of the Cistercian order, but it was the abbey of Clairvaux that was its enduring inspiration. It was this northern powerhouse, not its Burgundian parent, that gave expression to the spiritual impulses which had driven the first pioneers in a rich literature of meditation, exegesis and precept which served as guide for their followers throughout the years of expansion. Clairvaux's singular and sustained productivity provided a blueprint for the religious and intellectual culture of a community of White Monks which was carried across their growing network, above and beyond the filial descent of its own daughters. The name, its reputation and the tangible traces of its claustral wisdom – letters, sermons – combined to create a gravitational force that acted upon the wider clerical establishment for much of the twelfth and into the thirteenth century, winning over even secular masters of the Parisian schools. It is this process, which might be termed the reception of Clairvaux in the Cistercian family, which is the first and foremost target of these two collections. In fact two-thirds of a projected trilogy, their publication was planned to celebrate the abbey's nine-hundredth anniversary, jointly coordinated by the *département* of the Aube, the abbey's custodian since its dissolution, and the Renaissance Association of Clairvaux. Presenting nearly forty essays by the French, British and North American scholars who participated in the sequence of colloquia which spanned the nonicentennial summer, together the volumes offer, if not a complete account of Clairvaux's imprint on the Cistercian world then at least a guide to the topics and sources which should engage the researcher.

The critical weight of the first volume is found in the first eight essays devoted to the chief historical question, of Clairvaux as the driving-force in the advance and the definition of Cistercianism. Andre Vauchez and Annie Noblesse Rocher reflect on the scholarly quest to characterise that force, which, of course, has identified St Bernard as its principal target. Guido Cariboni cuts through the critical literature to a guiding principle which challenges the *reditus ad fontes* paradigm generally settled on the order, that of a perpetual impulse for new creation. Five essays (Fernandes Marques, Jamroziak, Peters-Custot, Stöber, Turcus) follow with the practical effects of this distinctive dynamism, describing the reach of Clairvaux to the east (Poland and Hungary), south (Sicily, Iberia) and West (the British Isles).

A further five essays open up fresh lines of enquiry into Clairvaux's impact beyond its monastic network, in the society and economy of its own hinterland. François Blary and (co-authors) Benoît Chauvin and Gilles Villain break new ground in documenting the abbey's role in the development of urban environments in the region of the

Aube. Surprisingly given the high rhetoric of the volume's introductions, there are only three essays that treat Clairvaux's cultural significance. Gilbert Fournier provides a largely self-contained analysis of the abbey library catalogue of 1472 as evidence of academic learning. Sylvain Demarthe confronts the central question: do the structures and decorative styles of the network's buildings, books and other objects reveal a common fund of ideas? She demurs to answer definitively but Claude Andrault-Schmitt's essay offers the most pragmatic response, a regional case-study where filiation can be found in the forms of the churches of North Aquitaine, Chatellier, Boshaud and Valence. Despite the promise of the title, only two essays address the history of Clairvaux or its affiliates beyond the fifteenth century, and they go no great distance. Jean-Baptiste Vincent's study of hospitality purports to survey seven centuries (twelfth to eighteenth) but is really no more than a superficial reading of twelfth-century practice. Bertrand Marceau follows the creep of *commendam* across the Clairvallian network from 1454 but reaches only another century forward, to observe the change at Clairvaux from vocal critic of the abuse to its threatened victim in 1571. A penultimate contribution from Jean François Leroux passes over the three post-Reformation centuries to document recent developments in the management of the abbey's heritage and to note the challenge, for conservators, in respecting both its monastic and more recent (penitentiary) past.

The second volume shares the structural weaknesses of the first. The critical value is confined to the first nine essays: Benoît-Michel Tock begins with a useful reminder to look beyond Bernard's notorious assault on books and their learning to see clearly the place of the written word in the Cistercian world. He concludes with the suggestion that if there were a difference to their writing culture it was to be found in their pioneering approach to the transmission of capitular legislation and in their recording of their own foundation histories. Disappointingly, these themes are not pursued at length; the eight essays following instead investigate the organisation of writing practice in a variety of (largely) French and Iberian abbeys – male and female – in their high medieval heyday. They show no common pattern other than the press of local circumstances on the scope and style of their production, and, importantly, the autonomy of the Cistercian women, who while not themselves writing were not dependent on the parent house but employed their own clerks. A further four essays offer case studies in archival practice among the affiliates of Clairvaux, including the regular canon houses in the Champagne; a final four are loosely linked by the theme of manipulation, meaning in this context the reinvention of the archival record to address local imperatives at Morimond, Fountains and the chain of foundations found in the second half of the twelfth century, to the far south, in Calabria, and the far north, in Denmark. None of these clusters of essays breaks out beyond 1300; again the promise of the title is unfulfilled.

Even if the final volume had been published with these others, it is unlikely that this commemorative trilogy would be recognised as a critical milestone. They point only to the continuing vigour of research and to productive routes for further enquiry, by no means exhausted by what they themselves contain.