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CHAPTER 4

Visual Imagination in Religious Persuasion: Mental Imagery in Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum* (VIII, 31)

*Marie Formarier*

Since classical Antiquity, the process of persuasion and the use of mental images by the orator were considered to be linked. One important example is Quintilian’s demonstration in the *Institutio oratoria*. Before he begins to speak, the orator must conjure up in his mind the situation, the persons involved and the facts, in order to be able to prepare himself psychologically and emotionally.1 During his speech, he should strive to ‘reveal’ these mental images2 through his words but also his attitude, his gestures, even an occasional *mise en scene*, for example when the crying children of the accused are shown to the audience. This antique conception of the *imago*, understood as an image at once concrete and produced by the mind, is appropriated by the Christian doctrine and becomes a fundamental part of the theory of belief, memory and imagination. Mary Carruthers’s works made a substantial contribution to our understanding of the anthropological meaning of the *imago*.3 I am convinced, however, that we still need to understand the relationship between the *imago*

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2 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, vi, 2, 32: “Insequetur ἐνάργεια, quae a Cicerone inlustratio et euidentia nominatur, quae non tam dicere uidetur quam ostendere, et adfectus non aliter quam si rebus ipsis intersimus sequentur.” (From such impressions arises that ἐνάργεια which Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.). The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, vol. 2, Loeb classical library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 435, 437.

and persuasion in medieval monastic rhetoric further, and in particular in the Cistercian exemplary stories. I began this investigation by showing in an earlier paper⁴ that the ancient concept of the sublime, understood as a “process of apparition”⁵ (euidentia),⁶ developed by the Latin rhetoric of the Imperial period, was borrowed, modified and adapted by the Cistercians in line with the idea of the sermo humilis inherited from Ambrosius and especially Augustine. If the ancient sublime, communicated through stylistic and rhetorical devices that can be grouped under the general heading of hyperbole, aims at “giving the reader the illusion of seeing objects and persons that are not there,”⁷ the Cistercian sublime is striving to achieve a representation (representatio) of the image of the divine. Distinctio VIII of Caesarius of Heisterbach’s DM is a case in point. In this paper, I shall continue my investigation by analysing one of the stories of this distinctio dedicated to visions in order to establish how the imago is used for the purposes of persuasion.

In the first chapter of the distinctio, Caesarius reminds us of the conceptual framework that is used to report exemplary stories and visions: the definition of the vision conforms exactly to the Augustinian precepts, that is to the


⁶ The translation of the Greek enargeia by euidentia is proposed in the passage quoted above (Quintilian, Institutio oratoria, vi, 2, 32). It is important to bear in mind the etymological connection between euidentia and uidere: enargeia (euidentia) results from phantasia (uisio). See Institutio oratoria, vi, 2, 29; Ps. Longin, Libellus de sublimitate, xv, 1; Webb, “Mémoire et imagination,” 233).

⁷ “donner au lecteur l’illusion de voir des objets ou des êtres absents.” Perrine Galand-Hallyn, Le reflet des fleurs. Description et métalangage poétique d’Homère à la Renaissance, (Genève: Droz, 1994), 38. Quintilian’s definition of visio (Institutio Oratoria, vi, 2, 29): “Quas φαντασίαις Graeci uocant (nos sane visiones appellamus), per quas imaginis rerum absentium ita repreäsentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac præsentes habere uidemur, has quisquis bene ceperit erit in affectibus potentissimus” (There are certain experiences which the Greeks call φαντασίαι, and the Romans visions, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian, 433 and 435.)
hierarchy of visions established in *De Genesi ad litteram* and *De Trinitate*, but also to the definition of memory presented in the *Confessiones*. I believe that it will therefore be useful to remind the reader of these conceptual frameworks and specify the aspects used by Caesarius in his literary and pedagogical work. I will continue by analysing *exemplum* 31 that gives a particularly striking illustration of *repraesentatio*, rooted at the same time in the literary, and more specifically hagiographical, tradition and in the social reality of the thirteenth century. This story centres around a leper, using a particularly ingenious narrative and rhetorical device.

**Augustinian Heritage**

Augustine's theory of vision is founded upon a tripartite hierarchy of types of vision: corporeal, imaginative and intellectual.

Quamquam itaque in eadem anima fiant visiones, siue quae sentiuntur per corpus, sicut hoc corporeum caelum et terra et quaecumque in eis nota esse possunt, quemadmodum possunt, siue quae spiritu uidentur similia corporum, de quibus multa iam diximus, siue cum mente intelleguntur, quae nec corpora sunt nec similitudines corporum, habent utique ordinem suum et est aliiu alio praecellentius. Praestantior est enim uisio spiritalis quam corporalis et rursus praestantior intellectuallis quam spiritalis. (Accordingly, it is indeed in one and the same soul that visions are brought about; ones perceived through the body, like this bodily heaven and earth and whatever in them can be known, to the extent that they can be; ones like bodies that are seen by the spirit, about which we have already said so much; and ones that are understood by the mind, which are neither bodies nor likenesses of bodies. But they have, of course, their proper order, and one kind ranks higher than another. Thus spiritual vision outclasses the bodily kind, and in turn the intellectual outclasses the spiritual.)

As a result, Augustine recognizes memory's double function: its power to store images perceived by the senses and its ability to produce new ones, based on these corporeal images and yet independent of sensory reality:

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Ibi sunt omnia distincte generatimque servata, quae suo quaeque aditu ingesta sunt [...]. Haec omnia recipit recolenda cum opus est et retractanda grandis memoriae recessus et nescio qui secreti atque ineffabiles sinus eius: quae omnia suis quaeque foribus intrant ad eam et reponuntur in ea. Nec ipsa tamen intrant, sed rerum sensarum imagines illic praesto sunt cogitationi reminiscenti eas. (Memory preserves in distinct particulars and general categories all the perceptions which have penetrated, each by its own route of entry [...] memory’s huge cavern with its mysterious, secret and indescribable nooks and crannies receives all these perceptions to be recalled when needed and reconsidered. Every one of them enters into memory, each by its own gate, and is put on deposit there. The objects themselves do not enter, but the images of the perceived objects are available to the thought recalling them.)

Following the Classical tradition, Augustine conceives memory in geographical terms as an organised space with a direct access to the spirit. Thus memory is at the same time capable of stocking sensations resulting from images encountered in one’s experience and of creating new ones from fragments of these image-sensations. In other words, these new mental images can be compared to a patchwork of pre-existing images, perceived by the senses and accumulated in memory:

Et Carthaginem quidem cum eloqui volo, apud me ipsum quaero ut eloquar et apud me ipsum invenio phantasiam Carthaginis. Sed eam per corpus accepi, id est per corporis sensum, quoniam praesens in ea corpore fui et eam vidi atque sensi memoriaque retinui [...]. Sic et Alexandriam cum eloqui volo, quam numquam vidi, praesto est apud me phantasma eius. Cum enim a multis audissem et credidissem magnam esse illam urbem sicut mihi narrari potuit, finxi animo imaginem eius quam potui [...] Quam tamen imaginem si ex animo meo proferre possem ad oculos hominum qui Alexandriam noverunt, profecto aut omnes dicerent: “Non est ipsa,” aut si dicerent: “Ipsa est,” multum mirarer atque ipsam intuens in animo meo, id est imaginem quasi picturam eius, ipsam tamen esse nescirem, sed eis crederem qui visam tenerent. (In fact when I wish to speak of Carthage, I seek for what to say within myself, and find an image of Carthage within myself; but I received this through the body, that is, through the sense of the body, since I was present there in the body, and

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9 Augustine, *Confessiones*, x, 8, 13. The translation of the *Confessions* is quoted in this article from Henry Chadwick’s translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 186.
have seen and perceived it with my senses, and have retained it in my memory [...]. So too, when I wish to speak of Alexandria, which I have never seen, an image [imago] of it is also present within me. For I had heard from many people and believed that it is a great city; so in accordance with the description that could be given me, I formed an image of it in my mind as I was able; and this is its word within me, when I wish to express it, before my voice utters the five syllables that make the name almost everyone knows. And if I could bring this image from my mind before the eyes of the people who are familiar with Alexandria, all would doubtless say either, “That is not it,” or if they were to say, “That is it,” I would be much surprised; and while I gazed upon it in my mind, that is, upon the image as if it were a picture of it, yet I should not know if it were so, but I would believe those who had seen it and retained the image of what they had seen.\[^{10}\]

In this passage, Augustine is using two examples to illustrate the difference between a corporeal and a spiritual image. The image (phantasia) of Carthage that he has in his memory is the result of a real sensory experience; it represents a personal memory (“eam vidi atque sensi memoriaque retinui”). By contrast, the image of Alexandria relies on another person’s experience and words (“sicut mihi narrari potuit”). Based on this testimony, Augustine created in his mind a possible image of the city (“finxi animo imaginem eius”). Possible, because even if the characteristics of the made-up image (phantasma) correspond to the description of the city, most probably they do not reflect reality. Taking into account this core distinction between the corporeal and the spiritual image, based on the idea of the dual nature of memory defined by its ability to store and imagine, Augustine goes on to explain the role of these images in a story:

Quamquam saepissime credamus etiam vera narrantibus, quae ipsi sensibus perceperunt. Quae cum in ipso auditu quando narratur cogitamus, non videtur ad memoriam retorqueri acies, ut fiant visiones cogitantium; neque enim ea nobis recordantibus, sed alio narrante cogitamus. Atque illa trinitas non hic videtur expleri, quae fit cum species in memoria latens et visio recordantis tertia voluntate copulantur. Non enim quod latebat in memoria mea, sed quod audio, cogito, cum aliquid mihi narratur. [...]. Sed si diligentius consideremus, nec tunc exceditur memoriae modus.

Neque enim vel intellegere possem narrantem, si ea quae dicit, et si contex
ta tunc primum audirem, non tamen generaliter singula meminissem. Qui enim mihi narrat, verbi gratia, aliquem montem Silva exutum, et oleis indutum, ei narrat qui meminerim *species* et montium et silvarum et olearum. Quas si oblitus esset, quid diciet omnino nescirem, et ideo narrationem illam cogitare non possem. Ita fit ut omnis qui corporalia cogitat, sive ipse aliquid confingat, sive audiat, aut legat vel praeterita narrantem, vel futura praenuntiantem, ad memoriam suam recurrat, et ibi reperiat modum atque mensuram omnium formarum quas cogitans intuetur. (Yet it happens very frequently that we also believe those who narrate some true experiences which they themselves have perceived through their senses. And since we conceive these things narrated to us as we actually hear them, it does not seem as if the mind’s eye turns back to the memory in order that *visions* may arise in our thoughts; for we do not conceive them by virtue of what we remember, but according to what another describes to us . . . [ . . .] Even then, if we consider the matter more carefully, we do not go beyond the limits of the memory. For the only reason why I could understand what the narrator was saying, even though I then heard his words put together for the first time in a connected discourse, was because I remembered generically the individual things that he described. For example, he who describes to me a mountain that is stripped of its forest and clothed with olive trees is speaking to one who remembers the forms [*species*] of the mountains, the forests, and the olive trees; had I forgotten them, I should not at all know what he was saying, and, therefore, I could not conceive that description. And so it comes about that everyone who conceives corporeal things, whether he hears or reads what someone relates about the past or foretells about the future, returns to his memory and finds there the mode and the measure of all the forms that he beholds in his thoughts.)

Here Augustine is discussing the process whereby belief is prompted by an eye-witness account, the process that, several centuries later, was to become the model for the production of Cistercian exemplary narratives. In the first instance, Augustine excludes memory from this process and the formation of the mental image (*uisio*) is presented as an activity of the spirit (*cogitare*). Then he revises his argument and proposes that when the images are not generated by the memories of past experience, they are the result of both of the

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story that has been heard and the listener’s own memories. Now we can better understand the stress put in the previous passage on the overlap of images created by the story and those that had already been present in memory. This overlap creates a common ground between the speaker and his audience, which is instrumental in the process of persuasion, because the new images will be constructed from material already familiar, assimilated by the listener.

As has been shown by Olivier Boulnois, Augustine’s theory is central to thinking about the image in the Middle Ages. Augustine’s ideas have a lasting influence and confer upon the *imago* an ethical and educational value, especially when it produces a story (*historia*) that requires an effort of interpretation, a hermeneutical endeavour. Nevertheless, attitudes to the notion of *imago* remained ambivalent, especially in Cistercian circles. It is well known that Bernard of Clairvaux condemned the use of material images in monasteries very severely. Furthermore, Cistercian regulatory documents often call for a restriction of the use of figurative objects. At the same time, Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167) develops a theory of meditation based on the use of the *imago*. First and foremost, one must fight ravings of the imagination and vain curiosity. Meditation, especially assisted by silent reading and liturgy, will replace these bad images by good images, inspired by the Scripture. In fact, reading (or listening to) a text triggers representation (*repraesentatio*) that allows the subject to become a witness of the *historia* that is being told. As Boulnois explains, “he who dedicates himself to it visualizes the scene, projects himself onto it, takes part in the drama; he is taken by the intrigue, the dialogue

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13 See Bernard de Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem*, XI, 29, PL 182, col. 916. See also *Capitula* (c. 1133), chap. XXVI in Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux, (ed.) Chrysogonus Waddell (Brecht: Cîteaux, 1999), 516 and *Instituta* (1147), chap. XX, in Narrative and Legislative Texts, 541.

14 See, for example, Aelred of Rievaulx, *De speculo caritatis*, II, XXIV, 72, (eds.) Anselm Hoste and Charles H. Talbot, *Corpus Christianorum*. Continuatio Mediaevalis 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 101: *uanitatum imagines* (images of the vanities) are produced in the spirit through reading of secular texts (Virgil, Horace, Cicero) and the deceitful beauty of love verse. The same idea is expressed in his *De institutione inclusarum*: Aelred of Rievaulx, *La vie de recluse*, (ed.) and trans. Charles Dumont. Sources Chrétiennes 76 (Paris: Cerf, 1961), 26: *Haec tibi incentivum praebant caritatis, non spectaculum vanitatis* (The images should therefore give rise to outbursts of love and not become a display of vanities).


and the emotion of the moment.” For example, in his treaty *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Aelred makes this visualisation into a rhetorical tool of his own argument, in particular when he mentions the Last Judgement. This is how he addresses the imaginative powers of his treaty’s addressee:

Iam nunc diei illius intuere terrorem […]. Cogita nunc, te ante Christi tribunal inter utramque hanc societatem assistere, et necdum in partem alteram separatam. Deflecte nunc oculos ad sinistram iudicis, et miseram illam multitudinem contempleare […]. Retorque nunc ad dexteram ocuslos et quibus te glorificando sit insertur adverte. (And now imagine the horror of this day […] Imagine that you are before Christ’s judgement. You are there between two groups. You have not yet been directed toward the one or the other party. Turn your head and look at this miserable crowd to the judge’s left. Turn to the right now and see where you will be placed when you will have been glorified.)

Let us now look at how this theory of *repraesentatio* is used in Caesarius of Heisterbach’s works. It is true that we cannot establish with certainty Aelred’s influence on *Distinctio* VIII of the *DM*; Augustine’s hierarchy of visions, however, is alluded to in the Monk’s introduction to this section of the work. The Monk explains that corporeal vision affects the senses: “cum aliqua Dei dono corporaliter videntur, et per illa aliquid significatur, ut sicut legitur Heliseus vidit currus igneos in raptu Heliae, et Rex Balthazar articulos manus scribentis in pariete” (when things are seen corporeally, *by God’s gift*, and when something is *signified* by them, like when we read that Elijah saw Elisha taken up to Heaven by the chariots of fire (2 Kings 2:11) or when King Balthazar saw a hand that was writing on the wall (Daniel, 5:5): VIII, 1). The Monk elucidates the status and function of the divine vision as presented by Augustine: it is a manifestation of God’s generosity in a subject, and, at the same time, a sign that refers to a reality external and superior to this vision. Then the Monk defines imaginative vision as an *imago* that is not produced by the senses but by the spirit, either in ecstasy or in a dream: “Quae fit per imagines sine corporibus, ut fieri solet in extasi et in somnis” (spiritual vision uses *non-corporeal images*, as is often the case in ecstasy and in dreams: *DM* VIII, 1). Finally, intellectual vision is contemplation of God without the mediation of an *imago*:

17 “celui qui s’y livre visualise la scène, s’y projette, prend part au drame; il y est pris par l’intrigue, le dialogue ou l’émotion du moment”: Boulnois, *Au-delà de l’image*, 126.
18 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum*, 33.
19 All italics are mine.
“Visio intellectualis sive mentalis est, quando nec corpora, nec imagines rerum videntur, sed in incorporeis substantiis intuitus mentis mira Dei fit; ergo potestas” (the intellectual or mental vision occurs when we see neither bodies nor images, but when the admirable power of God is imprinted in non-corporeal substances under the gaze of the spirit: DM VIII, 1). If Caesarius takes the trouble to remind his readers of Augustine’s hierarchy of visions, it is not so much in order to announce the plan of the distinctio but to inscribe the stories that will follow in the spiritual and theological tradition whose authority is guaranteed by Augustine’s reputation. In fact, these stories will present spiritual visions that demonstrate, with the help of mental images, the foundations of Christian doctrine, in particular the consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity. The chapter ends with the Novice’s intervention that allows Caesarius to conclude with an allusion to Gregory the Great’s Dialogi: “Quali modo sive in qualibus formis coelestes spiritus, utrum sint angeli seu humani, mortalibus se viden- dos exhibeant, magis exemplis quam sententiis scire desidero. .” (In what way and in what form do the celestial spirits, whether angels or souls of people, show themselves to the mortals, I want to teach by examples rather than by principles: DM VIII, 1). Thus the Augustinian heritage is seen as a literary and pedagogical tool that, in the following text of the distinctio, will facilitate the presentation of Cistercian visions.

Taking into account this introduction, permeated by a double influence – Augustinian and Gregorian, – I would like to propose the following hypothesis: through a series of exemplary historiae that punctuate Distinctio VIII, Caesarius is inviting the reader/listener to create representations, in other words to imagine the scene and to connect in an intimate way to what is being said. From this moment on, the aim of the exemplary story of a vision is, it seems to me, to create representations that could at the same time appeal to pre-existing mental images in the collective imagination and to construct a Cistercian monastic identity by producing original images.

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20 *DM*, VIII, 4: “Somnium quandoque fit ex reliquis cogitationum et curis; quandoque ex crapula; quandoque ex inanitione ventris; quandoque ex illusione et fantastica imaginatone inimici sine praecedente cogitatione; quandoque ex praemissa cogitatione, illusione secuta; quandoque per revelationem Spiritus sancti, quae multis modis fit; et est hoc genus somnii dignissimum” (Dreams sometimes occur because of the remainder of our thoughts or concerns, sometimes because of overeating or hunger, sometimes because of an illusion or fantastic images sent by the Devil, which are not preceded by thought, sometimes because of a stray thought followed by an illusion, sometimes because of a revelation of the Holy Spirit, which can have multiple guises; this last one is the worthiest kind of dream.).

21 *Emphasis mine.*
A Case Study: Count Theobald and the Leper

The exemplum that I would like to analyse here features the count Theobald (Thibaut) II of Champagne (1093–1151) and a leper. In the Middle Ages, leprosy was not solely seen as a disease, it was also a social phenomenon. Moreover, it became the object of theological interpretations that explored ambivalent attitudes to the illness in the Bible. In the Old Testament, leprosy is linked to sin, for example in the Book of Job and in Chapter 13 of Leviticus which teaches how to diagnose leprosy and how to dispose of leprous garments. In the New Testament, on the other hand, the leper is assimilated to the poor who deserve to go to Paradise after death, especially in the Gospel of Luke with its story of the beggar named Lazarus. The leper is also a recurring figure in hagiography, for example in Sulpicius Severus’s Vita sancti Martini. The use of the figure

23 Nicole Bériou and François-Olivier Touati, Voluntate Dei leprosus: les lépreux entre conversion et exclusion aux XIe et XIIe siècles (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medievo, 1991).
25 Luke, 16, 19–22: “Homo quidam erat dives et induebatur purpura et bysso et epulabatur cotidie splendide et erat quidam mendicus nomine Lazarus qui iacebat ad ianuam eius ulceribus plenus, cupiens saturari de micis quae cadebant de mensa divitis sed et canes veniebant et lingebant ulceras eius. Factum est autem ut moreretur mendicus et portaretur ab angelis in sinum Abrahae; mortuus est autem et dives et sepolitus est in inferno.” (There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.)
26 Sulpicius Severus, Vita sancti Martini, 18: “Apud Parisios uero, dum portam ciuitatis illius magnis secum turbis euntibus introiret, leprous miserabilis facie horrendibus cunctis osculatus est atque benedixit, statimque omni malo emundatus. Postero die ad ecclesiam ueniens nitenti cute gratis pro sanitate, quam recuperat, agebat.” (At Paris, again, when Martin was entering the gate of the city, with large crowds attending him, he gave a kiss to a leper, of miserable appearance, while all shuddered at seeing him do so; and Martin blessed him, with the result that he was instantly cleansed from all his misery. On the following day, the man appearing in the church with a healthy skin, gave thanks for the
of the leper makes it possible to showcase the Saint’s miraculous powers that imitate Christ’s example. However, it seems to me that, apart from the Bible, Caesarius’s main inspiration is to be found in Gregory the Great’s *Homeliae in Evangelia*: the protagonist is the monk named Martyrius who meets a leper on his journey. Martyrius carries the leper all the way to the monastery on his shoulders. In the epilogue we learn that the leper is in fact Christ himself.\(^\text{27}\) This quick overview reminds us that the figure of the leper could have multiple meanings in medieval writing: a social outcast, a sinner, a heretic, a poor virtuous man and even Christ himself. In other words, mental imagery associated with the leper is manifold and complex and provides ample material for use in exemplary stories like the one that will be studied below. Here is how Caesarius tells it:

De Theobaldo Comite qui in figura leprosi, Christi pedes lavit.


\(^{27}\) About this text, see François-Olivier Touati, *Maladie et société au Moyen Âge. La lèpre, les lépreux et les léproseries dans la province ecclésiastique de Sens jusqu’au milieu du XIV\(^{\text{e}}\) siècle* (Paris, Brussels: De Boeck, 1998), 206–7. The text can be found in the Appendices.
Dominus Jesus tantam humilitatem tanti principis etiam in praesenti remuneraret, et ut verba sua ostenderet quae dixerat: “Quicquid uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis,” se illi exhibere dignatus est. (On the subject of Count Theobald who washed the feet of Christ who appeared as a leper. A most noble prince, Theobald of Champagne (one reads admirable things of his charitable deeds in the Life of St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux) was so humble that he personally visited the huts where the lepers lived. There are still people who saw this with their own eyes still alive today. Thus, there was a leper who lived in front of his castle; every time that the count passed by the hut, he would get off his horse, enter the dwelling and go straight to the leper; after having washed his feet, he would leave his alms and be on his way. Shortly after, the leper died and was buried without the count’s knowing. One day the count was following this same road and when he saw the familiar hut he got off his horse and said: “I have to visit my father.” When he got in, he did not see the leper but our Lord who had taken the guise and appearance of the leper. When he accomplished his usual charitable works, with even more devotion because he was even more inspired by the one he was visiting, he left the hut very happy. When he told his people: “I am so happy to have seen my leper,” some answered him: “My lord, you should know that he died recently and that he was buried in such and such place.” When the very pious prince heard this news, he rejoiced in his spirit: he had been granted an opportunity to see and serve in person Him who he had long been venerating in his members and who had heretofore stayed invisible. In order to reward him, also in this world, for such a great humility of such a great prince and to illustrate His words: “when you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me,” Lord Jesus deigned showing Himself to him. DM VIII, 31).

Count Theobald of Champagne appears in Bernard of Clairvaux’s Vita prima that Caesarius cites explicitly in his exemplum: “de cuius operibus misericordiae in Vita sancti Bernardi Abbatis Claraevallis mira leguntur” (one reads admirable things of his charitable deeds in the Life of St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux). Presented in the Vita as a “nobilissimus princeps” (a most noble prince) gifted with two essential virtues – mercy and humility, Theobald appears in this work first of all as a benefactor of the Cistercians lending financial and material support to the community in Clairvaux but also as a close friend of Bernard himself. It is not, therefore, surprising that the count becomes the protagonist of a

28 These texts can be found in the Appendices.
Cistercian mirum. Caesarius’s eulogy is even more elaborate: he uses existing terminology (“nobilissimus princeps”) and praises the count’s humility in a superlative formula (“tantam humilitatem tanti principis” – such great humility of such a great prince) and thus integrates the familiar exemplary material but complicates it with a very skillful narrative and rhetorical construction.

I would like to propose that in the moral and literary perspective Caesarius effects a doubling of the figure of Christ through the use of two different pre-existing mental images. The first is taken from the Gospel of John (13, 1–v16): Christ washes his disciples’ feet; the second from the story of Martyrius: the leper is in fact Christ. The point of contact between these two images is, for me, the adverb praeessentialiter (in the presence) that refers at the same time to the presence of the count among the lepers and the presence of Christ in the person of the leper. Through this doubling, the presence of Christ is progressively revealed thanks to the double rhetorical and narrative movement (comparison/identification) with a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew (25, 40) as its high point: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” It is important to remember that this quotation was already present in Gregory’s tale. The use of this technique in the exemplum is the result of Caesarius’s reflection on rhetoric and didactics as is suggested by the comparison between the story as it appears in the DM and its earlier version; it is Caesarius’s own homily for the epiphany of Christ.29

If we take this as a working hypothesis, it will appear that the first part of the story is aiming at comparing Theobald to Christ:

<table>
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<th>Text of the Homily X</th>
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<td>Erat enim comes Campanie, vir mire atque stupende misericordie (He was in fact the count of Champagne; it was a man gifted with marvelous and suprising mercy)</td>
<td>De Theobaldo Comite qui in figura leprosi, Christi pedes lavit (On the subject of Count Theobald who washed the feet of Christ in the guise of a leper.)</td>
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Nobilissimus princeps Theobaldus Comes Campaniae, de cuius operibus misericordiae in Vita sancti Bernardi Abbatis Claraevallis mira leguntur, tante humilitatis erat, ut etiam praesentialiter tuguria leprosorum visitaret. Adhuc vivunt qui illum in carne viderunt (A most noble prince, Theobald of Champagne (one reads admirable things of his charitable deeds in the Life of St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux) was so humble that he personally visited the huts where the lepers lived. There are still people who saw this with their own eyes still alive today.)

Habebat hic leprosum quendam, ante quoddam castrum suum commanentem (There was a leper who lived in front of a castle that belonged to him.)

Habebat autem ante quoddam suum castrum leprosum quendam manentem, (Thus, there was a leper who lived in front of his castle;)

Cuius tugurium quociens preterivit, tociens de equo descendit, intravit, pedes lavit deosculatisque manibus eleemosinam porrexit (Every time that he passed by the hut, he would get off his horse, enter, wash the leper’s feet, kiss his hands and give him alms.)

Cuius tugurium quociens preterivit, tociens de equo descendit, intravit, pedes lavit deosculatisque manibus eleemosinam porrexit (Every time that he passed by the hut, he would get off his horse, enter, wash the leper’s feet, kiss his hands and give him alms.)

Ante cius domunculam quotiens eum contigit transire, de equo descendit, et ad illum intrans, postquam pedes eius lavit, eleemosynam dedit, et abiit (every time that the count passed by the hut, he would get off his horse, enter the dwelling and go straight to the leper; after having washed his feet, he would leave his alms and be on his way.)

Tandem mortuus est leprosus comite ignorante (In the end the leper died without the count knowing about it.)

Post breve tempus idem leprosus Comite ignorante defunctus est et sepultus (Shortly after, the leper died and was buried without the count knowing.)
If mercy is a virtue that was attributed to the count in the first version of the story already, in the DM Caesarius insists on Theobald’s humility using the expression of consequence “tantus . . . ut . . .” that makes it possible to integrate in the same statement the adverb “praesentialiter.” Moreover, this laudatory preamble ends with a cursus trispondaicus: “leprosórum visitáret.” As has already been pointed out, Caesarius authenticates the tale through an explicit mention of a written source (Vita prima) supported by an eye-witness account – a common technique of the exemplum (“adhuc . . . viderunt”). The introduction of the figure of the leper is more or less identical in both versions; however, Caesarius no longer alludes to the kissing of the hands in the DM, however, he retains the washing of the feet: the only image Caesarius is using here is that of Christ washing his disciples’ feet in a gesture of humility. I have noted elsewhere that the syntactic structure is made more complex in the second version: the correlative construction “quotiens . . . totiens” is replaced here by a more extended utterance: /quotiens . . . main clause . . . et / + /past participle . . . postquam . . . main clause/. It is possible that, for pedagogical reasons, Caesarius is trying to clarify the chronology of the story. The most striking difference between the two versions can be observed in the ending of the first part (the death of the leper): the formula “mortuus est” is replaced by a biblical reference “defunctus est et sepultus.” The reader/listener would easily recognize this solemn phrase which concludes the first part of the story. It is the first stage of the process of revelation of the figure of Christ.

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Text of the Homily X

Alio itidem tempore cum comes eiusdem leprosi intrasset domunculam secundum consuetudinem (On another day when, in a similar way, the count entered the leper’s small house, as was his habit,)

Text of the DM

Die quadam Comes iterum via illa transiens, mox ut ante tugurium sibi notum venit, descendit dicens: “Oportet me visitare patrem meum.” (One day the count was following this same road and when he saw the familiar hut he got off his horse and said: “I have to visit my father”.

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30 Acts of the Apostles, 2, 29: “Viri fratres, liceat audenter dicere ad vos de patriarcha David, quoniam defunctus est, et sepultus” (Peter’s first sermon: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried.”).
Text of the Homily X

invenit iam non leprosum, sed Jhesum in effigie sepedicti leprosi in loco sibi noto sedentem. (he found himself in front not of the leper but of Jesus in the guise of the leper described above, seated in the usual place.)

Text of the DM

intransque non leprosum, sed in leprosi forma et habitu contemplatus est Dominum. (When he got in, he did not see the leper but our Lord who had taken the guise and appearance of the leper.)

Cui cum opera misericordie more solito exhibuisset (When he performed the usual charitable works)

cui cum consueta opera misericordiae impendisset, et tanto devotius, quanto inspirabatur a visitato fortius, (When he accomplished his usual charitable works, with even more devotion because he was even more inspired by the one he was visiting,

et egressus, a suis eundem leprosum defunctum atque sepultum veraciter cognovisset, gavisus est valde (and left, he learned from his subjects that in fact this same leper had died and had been buried; and he rejoiced)

hilaris exivit. Cumque suis dixisset: “Gaudeo me vidisse leprosum meum,” responserunt ei quidam: “Domine sciatis pro certo eum dudum esse defunctum, et in tali loco sepultum.” (he left the hut very happy. When he told his people: “I am so happy to have seen my leper,” some answered him: “My lord, you should know that he died recently and that he was buried in such and such place.”)

se tunc vidisse eum presencialiter, quem hactenus in suis membris veneratus est invisibiliter. (to have seen, present in His person, Him he had venerated in his members and who had stayed invisible.)

Quod ubi comperit princeps piissimus, exultavit in spiritu, eo quod videre eique ministerare meruerit praeessentialiter, quem multo tempore in suis membris veneratus est invisibiliter. (When the very pious prince heard this news, he rejoiced in his spirit: he had been granted an opportunity to see and serve in person Him who he had long been venerating in his members and who had heretofore stayed invisible.)
Ut autem Dominus Jesus tantam humilitatem tanti principis etiam in praesenti remuneraret, et ut verba sua ostenderet quae dixerat: “Quicquid uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis,” se illi exhibere dignatus est. (In order to reward him, also in this world, for the so great humility of such a great prince and to illustrate His words: “when you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me,” Lord Jesus deigned showing Himself to him.)

Whereas the earlier version provides a simple narrative framework, in the *DM* Caesarius uses a great number of rhetorical devices to make the scene ‘visible’ to the reader/listener. The most important change is the addition of direct speech. The count’s first speech (“oportet me visitare patrem meum”), associated with a reference to time (“die quadam”), makes this visit stand out from all the others, whereas the earlier version focuses more on the everyday character of the action (“secundum consuetudinem”) instead. If it attracts our attention to the privileged affectionate connection between the count and the leper that transcends social hierarchy, it is impossible not to see in the expression “patrem meum” a first announcement of the final revelation. The count’s second speech (“Gaudeo me vidisse leprosum meum”) deploys an emotional reaction only suggested in the earlier version (“gavisus est valde”). This joy accompanies acts of charity that are certainly habitual but performed with more devotion and vigour on that day because of the disguised identity of the leper (“tanto devotius, quanto inspirabatur a visitato fortius”). The subjects’ reply triggers the revelation by providing information which will allow the count to interpret the vision hermeneutically. This process of understanding that has more to do with emotion (“gaudeo,” “hilaris,” “exultavit”) than intellectual reasoning, allows Caesarius to make the ethical characterisation of the count more complex, because his text has hagiographical undertones, as is suggested by the biblical reminiscence “exultavit in spiritu.”

The exegetic value of the *exemplum* relies on the two adverbs already present in the earlier version: *praesentialiter* and *invisibiliter*. It is really a vision of the divinity, because the presence of the

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31 “In ipsa hora exsultavit Spiritu Sancto” (At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit: Luke, 10, 21).
invisible Christ is manifested through the appearance of the leper. Using these two adverbs, Caesarius expresses Augustine’s doctrine of theophany: what appears to man is not God in His essence, invisible and immutable, but “in a manifestation, the way he wanted to appear.” As Boulnois argues, “theophanies remain metaphors of the invisible in the visible.”

This paradox of Christ at once invisible and manifested remains the main focus of the story, and the addition in the later version of the notion of merit (“meruerit,” “remuneraret”) and of the final biblical quotation which brings to mind Gregory the Great’s hagiographical story, gives the count’s vision a double function: it is at once a contemporary illustration of Scripture and a real paraenesis, because it represents an ethical model to follow and the reward that will be given for virtuous behaviour.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this exemplum Caesarius follows the plot of the earlier version and introduces new more complex elocutionary techniques. In his stories, a representation (repraesentatio) that allows the reader/listener to visualise the scene and to feel him/herself intimately involved in this visionary experience is elaborated. Even though Theobald II of Champagne was not a monk, he was no less of a monastic model due his compassion and his humility.

In order to emphasize this exemplary ethical behaviour and confer to it an almost hagiographical dimension, Caesarius resorts to two mental images established in the collective imagination and related to the figure of the leper. These images are revealed gradually: the count, a virtuous man par excellence, benefactor of the Cistercians, friend of Bernard of Clairvaux, is striving to follow in Christ’s footsteps; the leper, in the end, becomes a carnal envelope of a real theophany. In order to operate this repraesentatio, Caesarius uses rhetorical devices from the classical oratorial tradition (a very careful approach to word order, a marked syntactical rhythm, stress-rhythm, but also the use of direct speech and biblical quotations). This multiplication of voices lends a more pronounced dramatic value to the story; the exegesis thus presented


expresses itself through illustration by example. In this, Caesarius follows a principle so dear to Gregory the Great which is recalled by the Novice at the beginning of Distinctio VIII: to teach by examples and through touching characters rather than by an abstract and impersonal account. Moreover, this parenetic usage of the mental imago allows Caesarius to get around Cistercian precepts that restrict the use of images while at the same time enhancing the prestige of repraesentatio. To do so, the author of the DM employs a reasoning reminiscent of Aelred of Rievalx’s: thanks to the knowledge acquired in a vision, the visionary achieves, through intimate faith, invisible transcendence.
Appendix


Sed quia ad amorem Dei et proximi plerumque corda audientium plus exempla quam verba excitant, charitati vestrae indicare studeo quod is qui praesto est filius meus Epiphanius diaconus, Isauria provincia exortus, in vicina factum terra Lycaoniae solet narrare miraculum. Ait enim quod in ea quidam, Martyrius nomine, vitae valde venerabilis monachus fuit, qui ex suo monasterio visitationis gratia ad aliud monas- terium tendebat, cui spiritualis pater praeerat. Pergens itaque, leprosum quemdam, quem densis vulneribus elephantinus morbus per membra foedaverat, invenit in via, volentem ad suum hospitium redire, sed prae lassitudine non valentem. In ipso vero itinere se habere perhibebat hospitium quo idem Martyrius monachus ire festinabat. Vir autem Dei eiusdem leprosi lassitudinem misertus, pallium quo vestiebatur in ter- ram protinus proiecit et expandit, ac desuper leprosum posuit, eumque suo pallio undique constrictum super humerum levavit, secumque revertens detulit. Cumque iam monasterii foribus propiaret, spiritualis pater eiusdem monasterii magnis voci- bus clamare coepit: Currite, ianuas monasterii citius aperite, quia frater Martyrius venit Dominum portans. Statim vero ut Martyrius ad monasterii aditum pervenit, is qui leprosus esse putabat, de collo eius exsiliens, et in ea specie apparens qua recognosci ab hominibus solet Redemptor humani generis, Deus et homo Christus Iesus, ad coelum Martyrio aspiciente rediit, eique ascendens dixit: Martyri, tu me non eru- buisti super terram, ego te non erubescam super coelos. Qui sanctus vir mox ut est monasterium ingressus, ei pater monasterii dixit: Frater Martyri, ubi est quem por- tabas? Cui ille respondit, dicens: Ego si scivisset quis esset, pedes illius tenuisset. Tunc idem Martyrius narrabat quia cum eum portasset, pondus eius minime sensisset. Nec mirum quomodo enim pondus sentire poterat, qui portantem portabat? […] Quid enim in humana carne sublimius carne Christi, quae est super angelos exaltata?
Et quid in humana carne abiectius carne leprosi, quae tumescetibus vulneribus scin- ditur, et exhalantibus fetoris impetetur? Sed ecce in specie leprosi apparuit; et is qui est reverendus super omnia, videri despectus infra omnia designatus non est. Cur hoc, nisi ut sensu nos tardoires admoneret, quatenus quisquis ei qui in coelo est festinat assistere, humiliari in terra et compati etiam abiectis et despicabilibus fratribus non recuset?
(Since examples often rouse the hearts of one’s hearers to love of God and neighbor better than words, I want to report you a miracle. My child the deacon Epiphanius, who is present with us, and who comes from the province of Isauria, tells us of its having occurred in the neighboring territory of Lycaonia. He says that there was a certain monk there of very holy life named Martyrius. He was making his way from his own monastery to another, of which a spiritual father was in charge, in order to visit him. As he was going along the road he came upon a leper, whose limbs were covered with sores caused by elephantiasis. The leper said that he wanted to return to the place he was staying, but was too exhausted to do so. He indicated that this place was on the road along which the monk Martyrius was hurrying. The man of God pitied the leper’s exhaustion, and immediately put the cloak he was wearing on the ground, spread it out, laid the leper upon it, wrapped him in the cloak, raised him upon his shoulders, and carried him along with him.

When he was approaching the monastery gates, the spiritual father of the monastery began to call out in loud voice: “Hurry, open the monastery gates quickly! Brother Martyrius is coming, carrying the Lord!” As soon as Martyrius reached the gates, the one he thought was a leper leapt down from his shoulders. The God-man, Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the human race, revealed himself in such a way as to be recognized by humans. As Martyrius looked on, he returned to heaven, and said as he was ascending: “Martyrius, you were not ashamed of me upon earth. I will not be ashamed of you in heaven.” As soon as the holy man entered the monastery, the abbot said to him, “Martyrius, where is the one you were carrying?” Martyrius answered him, “If I had known who he was, I would have held on to his feet.” Then he said that when he was carrying him he had not felt his weight at all. This is not to be wondered at. How could he feel the weight of one who was carrying his carrier?

[…] What body is more sublime than Christ’s, which was raised above the angels? What human body is more repulsive than a leper’s, with open and swollen wounds which give off a stench? But Christ appeared in the likeness of a leper; he who is to be revered above all did not disdain to be looked down on as below all. Why was this, unless it was to counsel us who are dull in apprehension that anyone hastening to be with him who is in heaven should not refuse to become humble on earth, should not refuse to be compassionate even toward repulsive and contemptible brothers and sisters.)


Audivit hoc sanctae memoriae nobilissimus princeps Theobaldus, et multa in suumtus dedit, et ampliora spopondit subsidia. (The most noble prince Theobald, whose memory we revere, learned this [that the Cistercians would themselves build their monastery]; he donated a lot of money and promised to provide even more resources.)