In 1229, only a few years after Caesarius of Heisterbach wrote his *Dialogus Miraculorum* (*DM* henceforth), Cistercian monks at Clairvaux were already at work copying and abridging it. The earliest extant catalogues of the monastery library mention only two manuscripts of the *DM*, both from the fifteenth century, but two earlier, partial copies made at Clairvaux still survive,¹ both preserved in the Laurenziana Library in Florence.² The two collections of excerpts offer a glimpse into the early reception of Caesarius’s work and provide insights into how the *exempla* were read and understood inside the Cistercian Order. In this article, I will show that the *DM* could have been read by contemporaries not only as an effective didactic tool, but also as a source of historical data.

The compilers of the two collections seem to have worked independently, and we know the name of one them, Alberic of Trois-Fontaines.³ Alberic is the

¹ *La bibliothèque de l’abbaye de Clairvaux du XIe au XVIIe siècle*, vol. 1, *Catalogues et répertoires* (ed.) André Vernet with the collaboration of Jean-François Genest (Paris: CNRS, 1979). Virey’s 1472 catalogue has P 30 (3313 of Vernet’s catalogue, now Troyes, *BM* 592), which was copied under the direction of Virey himself: “Quem scribi fecit domnus Petrus de Vireyo abbas Clarevallis” (which was written on the instruction of Peter of Virey, abbot of Clairvaux, p. 231). Some fifty years later, around 1521, Mathurin de Cangey has an entry on “Cesarii monachi Dialogus de pluribus miraculis et precipue de factis in exordio Cisterciensis ordinis” (Caesarius the monk’s *Dialogue* on numerous miracles and especially those that took place at the beginning of the history of the Cistercian Order), which, Vernet suggests, should be identified either with P 30 or with ms. Troyes, *BM* 641. Two copies of the *DM* are listed in the 1664 catalogue, n° 421 and 465. The surviving copies in mss. Troyes, *BM* 592 and *BM* 641 both date to the fifteenth century.

² The two works are included in the composite manuscript, originally from Clairvaux and now in Florence, Laurenziana, Fondo Ashburnham, 1906. See below for the description of the relevant sections.

³ For information on Alberic, Paul Scheffer-Boichorst’s Introduction to the 1874 edition of the *Chronica* remains useful to this day: “Chronica Alberici monachi Trium Fontium a monacho Novi Monasterii Hoiensis interpolata,” in *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, Series Scriptorum 23 (Hannover: Hahn, 1874), 631–73. See also Mireille Schmidt-Chazan, *“Aubri de Trois...*
author of a vast universal chronicle (Chronica), for which he consulted a wide range of sources including charters and epic poems. Scholars also pointed out many references to literary works, which Alberic considered an integral part of his historical narrative and used to buttress and support his chronology. For Alberic, who incorporated exempla and other literary texts in his Chronica, they were reliable historical sources.

Before moving to Trois-Fontaines (the exact date of his move is unknown), Alberic was at Clairvaux, where he composed what is commonly referred to as the Chronicon Clarevallense, which is preserved in a unique manuscript, probably an autograph. The Chronicon contains not only a chronological list of events related to the history of the abbey of Clairvaux, it also provides a wealth of information on the contents of the abbey library and the life and deeds of contemporary religious figures. It is, moreover, a work in progress, as the entry under the year 1188 clearly indicates: “Hic potest inseri relatio fratris Cesarii de sermone quem habuit laicus monachus ad hunc cardinalem” (Here can be inserted brother Caesarius’s report of the speech given by the lay monk to this cardinal).

This passage is absent from the seventeenth-century edition, now in the Patrologia Latina. The Jesuit François Chifflet did not include most of the passages containing exempla and visions in his edition, probably dismissing them as fiction. Alberic, however, had no such qualms, and did consider visions, miracles and exemplary stories worthy of appearing in his historical work. In fact, he followed up on his note in the later Chronica. In the entry for the same year 1188, albeit in a slightly shortened form compared to Strange’s


Chronicon Clarevallense, 39; DM IV, 79. Chifflet copied the line on his preparatory notes (Paris, BNF, Baluze 143, f. 198r, see René Paupardin, Catalogue des manuscrits de la collection Baluze (Paris: Leroux, 1921), 152) but then crossed it out to indicate his choice not to include it in his edition.