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The Spirituality of the Desert

Models of Appropriation by Henri Nouwen, Anselm Grün, and Kathleen Norris

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In this article, three relatively recent works of popular spirituality are discussed with a focus on the appropriation of the sayings of the desert fathers (and mothers). It is shown that such appropriation implies a complex dynamic of critical, “breaching”, voice of the desert is called upon to bridge the gap between antiquity and modernity. The process involves the selection of specific texts and a favourable reading of the same. It is also informed by the formal training as well as the respective authors: Henri Nouwen, Anselm Grün, and Kathleen Norris. As the oscillation between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* to bear on the congenial transplanting of ancient wisdom to the (post-)modern world, it becomes apparent that in

more problematic aspects of the desert are hardly ever breached themselves.

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