

BRYAN GILLINGHAM

The Social Context of 'Goliardic' Song: Highway, Court, and Monastery

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR SECULAR medieval Latin song, sometimes known as 'goliardic,' has never been convincingly established. For too long, fanciful theories about denizens of the highways and taverns have been allowed to prevail in connection with the repertory.¹ Our separation of society into *Vaganten*, clerks, royalty, monks, and ecclesiastical potentates, emerges from post-medieval thinking rather than from the Gothic period. The content of Latin secular song may be viewed as a reflection of medieval culture, but the context of its transmission is also an important evidentiary record, illustrating how closely woven were the various cultural elements and practices of the time. The separation of church and state which nowadays we take for granted did not exist in the Middle Ages—secular and sacred freely intermingled. Medieval society, it would seem, was far more tolerant of human weakness than our own; in fact, the lyric song repertory, in context and substance, supports that thesis.²

¹ Much of this was popularized by Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1927).

² For a detailed exploration of these matters, see Bryan Gillingham, *The Social Background of Secular Medieval Latin Song* (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1998).

The poem quoted and translated on the page opposite, from *Carmina Burana* and familiar from the Carl Orff setting,³ is a good illustration. Taken literally, it is the confession of an abbot who admits to a love of drinking and gambling, to the point where he is quite willing to take every stitch of clothing from a gullible neophyte. The satire is gentle and seductive—we are drawn into an easy identification with this abbot, particularly if we are poker players, and can perhaps empathize with or even enjoy his peccadillos. But can we infer that this poem was really written by an abbot, that all abbots would have behaved this way, or that the *Carmina Burana* was written by a group of questionable abbots? The fanciful nature of the poem is reinforced by the mention of Cucania, perhaps the imaginary country of delights, characterized by mountains of cheese, fountains of wine, houses of ham, etc., which appears from time to time in medieval literature and was later alluded to by Rabelais. But could the protagonist in this poem have been a real abbot, perhaps of Caen (Latin, Cucania) in Normandy? The poem may be considered a fantasy, a satire, or even an amusing indulgence, but not necessarily a historical record. Other poems, too, if they seem to provide insight into behavioural patterns (and many do not), must be assessed very carefully. Similar poems which deal with travel, drinking, taverns and gambling have been used to build the myth of a class of vagabonds, the Goliards. But it should be noted that the source manuscript for this poem was found in the monastery of Benediktbeuern; thus far, no one has proven that it is anything but the product of the monks themselves.

³ Carl Orff, *Carmina Burana* (1937), a secular oratorio with orchestra, soloists and choir with newly composed music, but based on medieval texts from the thirteenth-century source. For a facsimile of the medieval manuscript (viz., Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4660) see Bernhard Bischoff, ed., *Carmina Burana*, Publications of Mediaeval Music 9 (Brooklyn: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1967). For an edition of this and similar texts, see Alfons Hilka and Otto Schumann, *Carmina Burana* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1930, 1941). For musical examples of this repertoire, see Bryan Gillingham, *Secular Medieval Latin Song: An Anthology* (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1993).

Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis
(from *Carmina Burana*, f. 97^v)

Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis
et consilium meum est cum bibulis
et in secta decii voluntas mea est
et qui mane me quesierit in taberna
post vesperam nudus egredietur
et sic denudatus veste clamabit
wafna, wafna
quid fecisti sors turpissima
nostre vite gaudia abstulisti omnia.

[I am the abbot of Cucania.
Not only is my counsel with drinkers
but it is my wish [to be] in the sect of gamblers
Moreover, he who seeks me early in the morning in the
tavern
goes forth naked after dark.
And thus denuded of clothing he will shout:
wafna, wafna!
What a filthy deed you have committed.
You have taken away all the joys of my life!]

At the very least, such a song prompts questions about its performance venue during the thirteenth century—tavern, cloister, or perhaps secular courts?

Although much is known about the political interactions of various dynasties in the Middle Ages, little has been recorded as to the nature of entertainments which went on at court. The routine of courtly performance is not something that was necessarily public, nor did chroniclers write about specific regal amusements to any great extent. In any case, the nature of a 'court' in the twelfth century was equally elusive—as often as not, a 'court' was a mobile gypsy caravan rather than a pleasant gathering at a castle.⁴ Until the thirteenth century, kings and emperors in Germany, France

⁴ See Alfred Haverkamp, *Medieval Germany 1056–1273* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 94, and John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984) 53.

and imperial Italy travelled constantly. Yet there are records of important poet/musicians of the Latin lyric serving royal courts even though churches and monasteries assumed responsibility for the writing and storage of books and archival material. The lives of most kings and queens were hopelessly tangled up with the church. Conversely, bishops and abbots were almost invariably brothers of dukes and counts, viscounts and castellans, members of powerful families proud of their noble heritage.

Information from the twelfth century, if dealt with in an objective way, points to monasteries as the main *fora* for the cultivation of Latin secular song. The likely candidates are the old Benedictine establishments, particularly Cluny and its network. Cluniac monks were well bred; they employed women, servants, and lay *famuli* in their opulent cloisters, which were supported by abundant seigneurial wealth.⁵ If they enjoyed rampant drinking, gluttony, vanity, and licentiousness, then why not clever Latin songs on secular topics, particularly those of a relatively innocuous courtly nature? The transmission of Latin secular lyrics, many surviving in multiple copies, appears to have involved monastic refectories, scriptoria, and libraries such as those in the Cluniac *ecclesia*. In a milieu where Latin was fluent, its replication an industry, and morality less than stringent, secular themes in the language would seem, if not a triviality, then entirely appropriate.

As is well known, the Goliardic myth ascribes Latin lyrics containing ribald themes—that is, drinking, love, sexual fantasy, vagrancy, spring revels—to phantoms of the highway, to medieval ‘hippies’ known as ‘goliards.’ A frequently encountered silent axiom of goliardic scholarship seems to be that the medieval clergy could not have written songs unpalatable to the modern church. The myth is often implicit in early twentieth-century German scholarship on *Vagantenlieder* and explicit in such creative fantasies as those of Helen Waddell about wandering scholars. Primary sources, as they do indeed survive from diverse European centres, indicate

⁵ See Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989) *passim*, and Constance B. Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980–1198* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987) 247. For a sound history of the abbey, see Noreen Hunt, *Cluny Under Saint Hugh, 1049–1109* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).

active transmission, but poor wandering students were not the only potential couriers. The medieval aristocracy and churchmen are extensively documented as peripatetics. Some further problems with the goliardic myth are the following:

1. most of the lyric song is anonymous, facilitating manifold speculations and assumptions as to authorship and context;
2. most 'goliardic' songs are preserved in monastic manuscripts;
3. most of the primary manuscripts are predominantly sacred with secular interpolations;
4. scriptoria and libraries were needed to produce and store the manuscripts; these were simply not available on the open road, nor would wandering clerks have the financial resources to pay for supplies;
5. the few authors that we do know about were *not* wandering clerks, but 'respectable' members of society, including archdeacons, bishops, chancellors, etc.;⁶
6. although bishop Goliard can be linked to some poetry, the term 'goliard' cannot be connected directly with any lyric song. [Goliard was quite possibly a fictional character like Batman or Superman today.]

If brutal reason suggests that secular Latin lyrics were written and performed in sacred enclaves, the question arises, how could Holy Mother Church encourage and nurture artistic material which would not enhance Christian practice? In answering this question, we should perhaps admit that our sense of morality, hard-earned through innumerable church councils, reformations, counter-reformations, inquisitions, puritanisms, religious wars, and hegemonies of all sorts, is considerably more self-righteous than it was, say, in the twelfth century. Also, as a result of these phenomena, we misconstrue what religious life, and in particular one of its most successful manifestations—monasticism—was really like in the high Middle Ages. It is helpful, therefore, to review some general features of medieval cenobitic life during the most productive years of secular Latin song.

⁶ Such as Serlo of Wilton (who became an abbot), Philippe the Chancellor and Peter of Blois (deacon and archdeacon).

In the twelfth century, perhaps in response to perceived laxity or decadence, the religious zeal of the newly-formed Cistercian and other reformed orders began to threaten old established ones such as the Benedictines. The most prominent centre of Benedictine power, and an excellent case study for our purposes here, was the venerable monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. The high reputation and ultimate power of Cluny was earned over centuries, under the directorship of a series of capable abbots. Owing to generous support of various aristocrats, such as Duke William of Aquitaine (who granted the monastery a charter in 909), relative independence, and favourable relations with the papacy, Cluny was able to develop a network of dependencies. Estimates range from 200 to 2,000, but the most recent is about 1,500 houses radiating in all directions from Burgundy to as far east as Poland. It was a huge, well-administered bureaucracy whose tentacles spread throughout Europe.

By the twelfth century, admission to the monastery was to a large extent based on social status. Cluny was inhabited predominantly by French and Occitan knights, dukes, counts, viscounts, chatelaines, even at times royalty, that is, the same sort of people involved in making troubadour and trouvère music. Large monasteries such as Cluny, and others in Germany such as Benediktbeuern and Tegernsee, expected a gift upon entrance, usually in the form of land. This enabled the houses to function as medieval seigneuries, existing on revenues from land holding.⁷ Cluny had an elaborate system of administration, complete with an extensive roster of servants, which catered to needs both internal and external to the cloister. It functioned as a hotel, restaurant, wine repository, library, publishing house, civil service bureau, concert hall, shrine and church. Women moved easily in and out of the monastery, conversation was frequent, there was a high degree of freedom, loose governance, and all was supported by the collection of revenues from the workers and businesses under its control. It was a major centre for the propagation of music and poetry, certainly of a religious nature, but likely, too, for secular material. The novices were tested upon admission as to whether or not they could read and sing—if

⁷ See note 4 above and André Chagny, *Cluny et son Empire* (Paris: Librairie Emmanuel Vitte, 1938) 95 ff.

capable they were admitted as 'cantors,' if not they were designated *conversi* and had to content themselves with non-musical duties such as bearing incense or candles.⁸

The libraries at Cluny and its daughters, such as St. Martial, Fleury, St. Martins-Tours, and others, were not limited strictly to devotional material, but also kept diverse classical writings. Authors commonly represented were Ovid (including *Ars amatoria*), Suetonius, Vitruvius, Livy, Tertullian, Horace, Seneca, Lucan, Plato, Aristotle, Aesop, Virgil, Cicero, Sallust, Cato, Juvenal, Horace, Terence, and Porphyry. Cluny's library was one of the largest in the twelfth century (570 books). By comparison, St. Martial had about 450 later in 1225. The contents were similar, but the holdings more modest in the daughter house.

Cluny was also an abbey appointed in the greatest opulence—friezes, marble columns, pilasters decorated with elaborate flowers, birds, capricious figures and monstrous animals, intricate gold and ivory decorations, thousands of precious gems cased in gold, chests of jewels, and books illuminated in magnificent ways. Furthermore, it had the largest basilica in Europe until St. Peter's was built in sixteenth century. (Its dimensions were 187 x 77 metres, or about 1.8 times the size of a modern football field.) In fact, as Cluny's basilica was so impressive, architects in Rome were mindful that they had to make St. Peter's a little larger in order to solidify its pre-eminent position as the key site in Christendom.⁹

The indications are that Cluny, synchronous with its architectural and decorative opulence, maintained one of the most vigorous and central musical establishments in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, probably larger and more active than either St. Martial or Notre Dame. We know from the customaries that it had the same sort of operational structure as St. Martial. Clearly it was more important and central to European monasticism than its daughter houses. Bernard Itier (1163–1225), the chief musician (*precantor*) and librarian (*armarius*) at St. Martial, a dependency at the

⁸ Hunt, *Cluny Under Saint Hugh* 89, and the customary of Ulrich of Cluny, *Patrologia Latina* 149, xxviii, 714. See also Gillingham, "The Centrality of the Lost Cluniac Musical Tradition," *Chant and Its Peripheries: Essays in Honour of Terence Bailey* (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1998) 241–56.

⁹ J.-Henri Pignot, *Histoire de l'ordre de Cluny* (Paris: Durand, 1868), and Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *Cluny Abbey* (Paris: Éditions Ouest-France, 1996) 8–10.

time, visited Cluny (1206–1207) and described music being performed there. He, as did others, referred to the mother house as the “deambulatorium angelorum” [“gallery of the angels”]. He tells us nothing of ribald song at Cluny, but it is worth noting that in several musical sources which Bernard himself compiled, there are secular Latin songs mixed with sacred ones which are surprising in their earthy sentiment.¹⁰

The tragedy is that virtually none of Cluny’s music and poetry survives. In 1562, marauding Huguenots pillaged a number of monasteries south of the Loire river, including Fleury, which was a Cluniac dependency. They tortured and killed monks and burnt most of the library at Cluny. The greatest devastation was exacted upon the liturgical books (which would include the music). Any remaining buildings at Cluny were later destroyed in the French Revolution.¹¹ We can tell from a handful of inventories made between the ninth and fourteenth centuries that there was a substantial loss to the library. Aside from the few fragments which were saved from the devastation, we do not have much primary material from which to reconstruct the musical practice.

Though we may lack specific information on the musical tradition, there are abundant indicators that the context for music making at Cluny was increasingly less than devout from about 1080 to 1130. Various records of this troubled time at Cluny have survived and enable us to reconstruct a picture of the life carried on at the monastery in the early twelfth century. Under the abbacy of Pons (Pontius) of Melgueil (1109–1122), and in the early years of Peter the Venerable, Cluny was clearly experiencing the very difficulties which led to satires by St. Bernard. There were abuses of various sorts, including excesses in food, drink, and general manner of life which Peter the Venerable later instructed Matthew, prior of Saint-Martin-des-Champs to rectify after 1122.¹² There is a

¹⁰ See for example the explicit confessions of a pederast in *Ex ungue primo teneram* in Paris, BN lat. 3719, f. 23. For a text and translation, see Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 2: 378–79.

¹¹ Hunt, *Cluny Under Saint Hugh* 4 and 17. See also M. le baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Les Huguenots et les Gueux* (Bruges: Beyaert-Storie, 1883) 1: 78–80.

¹² For an excellent investigation of the activities of Pons, see H.E.J. Cowdrey, “Abbot Pontius of Cluny,” *Studi Gregoriani* 9 (1957): 179–277; for a discussion of the abuses during his reign, see 182–83, 186 and 189.

report that Pons once "obtained from his aunt Judith, countess of Auvergne, the sum of a hundred gold shillings for the purchase of superior wine" to replace the common vintage served in Mass.¹³ Pons also travelled extensively during his abbacy: from 1109 to 1126, he visited approximately 40 different cities in Europe and the Holy Land, including various cities in Germany and Spain, as well as Paris, Rome, Limoges, Ventadour, Toulouse, Strassburg, Rheims, Speyer and Metz, to name just a few.¹⁴ Pons, after being forced out in disgrace as abbot, in retaliation led insurrectionist monks and lay people to seize, loot and sack his own monastery. One implication of these events is that the large number of adult converts attracted to Cluny did not really have the aptitude required for the sincere monastic life.¹⁵ During the abbacy of Pons it became a widespread practice to profess monks without the approval of the abbot, sometimes within a month of their entry.¹⁶ This in turn led to a crisis of government in the whole Cluniac network.¹⁷ These and other problems prompted eminent figures such as Hugh of Fouilloi, Alexander Neckham and Peter the Chanter to write critiques which echoed Bernard's ideas.¹⁸ However, the strongest message critical of Cluniac practice, and the one which sparked other criticism and reform, seems to have been delivered by Bernard of Clairvaux himself.

The *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem*, written in 1125 when Bernard was abbot of Clairvaux,¹⁹ is probably the most important document yielding insight into the problems of monastic life in the

¹³ Cowdrey, "Abbot Pontius of Cluny" 189–90. Cowdrey also describes (198–99) how Pons was very constructive in mediating between the Holy Roman Emperor and Papacy. He also proved himself as a skilled diplomat in Spanish affairs (see 203).

¹⁴ See the table, which lists only the certain visits of Pontius, in Cowdrey, "Abbot Pontius of Cluny" 273–77.

¹⁵ C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* (London: Longman, 1984) 95.

¹⁶ Idung of Prüfening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977) 51.

¹⁷ H.E.J. Cowdrey, *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 254.

¹⁸ John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter & His Circle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1970) 67–69.

¹⁹ Adriaan Bredero, *Cluny et Cîteaux au douzième siècle* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland UP) 35.

twelfth century, and by extension, earlier and later.²⁰ Originally written in the form of a letter to abbot William of St. Thierry, the *Apologia* soon became a widely disseminated polemic. It has been suggested that Bernard was exaggerating. However, the measured, sincere, modest nature of the man that emerges from the *Apologia* and his other writings indicates that the converse may be true—the treatise could just as well be an understatement of the real nature of abuses in the Cluniac observance. There is little which explicitly touches upon the practice of music making in the treatise. Yet, if it can be established that a secularized moral climate was characteristic of the Cluniac observance, then it will readily be seen that worldly Latin song would not be out of place, and indeed, a rather minor blemish when compared to other frivolities.

Bernard, in one of the versions of the *Apologia* which he later altered, admits (perhaps at the risk of being an ungrateful guest) to having been an eyewitness to questionable practices at Cluny: "It is embarrassing to speak of such things that, had I not seen them with my own eyes, I would scarcely have credited."²¹ Bernard's account falls into two broad sections. The first is very modest, deprecating himself and his own order for daring to breach humility, while the second moves boldly into satire of the Cluniac order.²² The first portion, amply warning of the odiousness of judgemental behaviour, is a plea for tolerance. Bernard admits that "there are many paths that can be taken, for the dwelling places to which we journey are many."²³ However, the second indulges in the very type of critical writing condemned in the first. As such, the second portion is by far the more revealing component. In his satire, Bernard highlights Cluniac observances, dietary preferences (including drinking habits), haberdashery, decorative excesses, and general vanity.

²⁰ Jean Leclercq cites eleven tracts which were produced in the period of a century concerning the controversy between Cluniacs and Cistercians, of which Bernard's is the most important. See *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux: Treatises I* (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1970) 4, and A. Wilmart, "Une riposte de l'ancien monachisme au manifeste de S. Bernard," *Revue Benedictine* 46 (1934): 296–305.

²¹ *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux: Treatises I* 24.

²² The rhetorical method used by Bernard is referred to as the technique of "veiled illusion" in the *Dialogus duorum monachorum* by Idung of Prüfening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 33–34.

²³ *Treatises I* 44.

All of these are subjects which, from time to time, may be found in the secular Latin song of the period.

In the second portion of the *Apologia*, Bernard discusses Cluniac eating and drinking habits. He criticizes mealtime behaviour for its ribald chatter, jokes and laughter.²⁴ He is vehement and even sarcastically humorous concerning the gluttony which he thinks characteristic of the Cluniac order. His discussion of egg cookery was notorious in its own day:

who could describe all the ways in which eggs are tampered with and tortured, or the care that goes into turning them one way and then turning them back? They might be cooked soft, hard, or scrambled. They might be fried or roasted, and occasionally they are stuffed. Sometimes they are served with other foods and sometimes on their own A good deal of care is given to the appearance of a dish, so that the sense of sight is as much delighted by it as the palate The eyes delight in colors, the palate in tastes, but the poor stomach can't see colours, and isn't tickled by tastes.²⁵

In confirming Bernard's criticism, the Cluniac abbot Peter the Venerable moves even further in his condemnation of the gustatory habits of his own flock (an admission of guilt):

They are sick of beans and cheese and eggs and even fish, all they want are the flesh-pots of Egypt. The table of holy monks is covered with pork, roasted or boiled, fat heifers, rabbits, hares and the best goose of the gaggle, chicken and every conceivable farmyard bird or beast The estates of Cluny are not enough to provide for our lavish banquets, so that it looks as though we shall have to sell off some of the land and its appurtenances to satisfy the monks' appetites. They spend their whole time idling and feasting and preparing themselves for never-ending torments.²⁶

²⁴ *Treatises I* 55.

²⁵ *Treatises I* 56.

²⁶ *Treatises I* 18. See also G. Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967) 389. Peter was abbot from 1122–1156.

In the *Apologia*, Bernard describes the practice of perfectly healthy monks checking into the infirmary in order to avail themselves of meat dishes served there to strengthen patients, yet not officially sanctioned in the main refectory.

The apparent gluttony described above, of the sort that is perhaps associated with the very name 'goliard,' is matched by that other goliardic excess, drinking:

The fact is that three or four times during a meal, you might see a cup brought in, half-full, so that the different wines can be sampled, more by aroma than by taste. It is not swallowed, but only caressed, since a seasoned palate can quickly distinguish one wine from another, and select the stronger. It is even alleged to be the custom in some monasteries to give the community honeyed or spiced wine on the major feasts As far as I can see all this is so designed to make drink as plentiful and pleasurable as possible.²⁷

In other writings, Bernard deplors the expensive and extravagant clothing purportedly worn by the Cluniacs and rails against the elaborate fastidious shopping trips undertaken to find the best cloth available.²⁸ He suggests that Cluniac monks were seeking out fine silks, satins and furs.²⁹ Finery and excess manifested themselves in other sorts of indulgent behaviour, such as travel and the decorative arts. Elaborate cavalcades were set up for the former,³⁰ while the decorations for Cluniac churches featured precious stones, metals and elaborate non-religious stone work.³¹ In a letter to his nephew Robert, Bernard reinforces many of the same criticisms that he refined in the *Apologia*.³² Given the truth of such indulgence in sensual and aesthetic pleasures, Latin secular song provided for entertainment would seem entirely appropriate.

²⁷ *Treatises I* 56–57.

²⁸ *Treatises I* 61.

²⁹ *Treatises I* 59–61.

³⁰ *Treatises I* 62–63.

³¹ *Treatises I* 66.

³² For a quotation from this letter, see Idung, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 119–27. The original Latin may be found in *Patrologia Latina* 182, cols. 73 and 77.

Peter the Venerable clearly inherited a monastic empire which had departed from the integrity and zeal for which the Cluniacs were originally noted. In a sense, he may be considered an exponent of a 'counter-reformation' within the Cluniac order, though his initiatives included such tolerant pursuits as the study of Islam and the translation of the Koran.³³ When he took over at Cluny Peter observed that "Yokels, children, old men and idiots have been taken in such numbers that they are now near to forming a majority." But these applicants, nevertheless, were expected to make a gift of land or money upon admission. His efforts at reform were documented in letters and numerous statutes which add to our knowledge of Cluniac difficulties. He seemed willing to accept the truth of Bernard's criticisms of departure from the Rule at Cluny, but continued to maintain many of the established traditions "in clothing, singing, and periods of fasting."³⁴ The very necessity of statutes on reform suggests that the social fabric of monastic life needed a corrective, but Peter's attempts at reform were not always accepted, and, at times resisted vigorously by his own flock.³⁵

Another tract documenting Cluniac life is the *Dialogue between a Cluniac and Cistercian* [*Dialogus duorum monachorum*]³⁶ which dates from about 1155 when the controversy was beginning to cool somewhat.³⁷ Its author, Idung of Prüfening, was apparently (though originally Cluniac) a monk from a Cistercian order in Germany. In attempting to justify his departure from his former Cluniac house, he reveals some of the same problems that Bernard exposed with regard to the older order, particularly matters that depended on custom rather than principles. A few of the satirical comments, particularly those of the Cistercian in the dialogue, again

³³ James Kritzeck, "Peter the Venerable and the Toledan Collection," *Petrus Venerabilis 1156-1956* (Rome: Herder, 1956) 177.

³⁴ A.H. Bredero, "The Controversy Between Peter the Venerable and St. Bernard," *Petrus Venerabilis* 69.

³⁵ Constable, "Statuta Petri Venerabilis," *Cluniac Studies* 4: 23. Also see statutes xi, xxiv, xxvii, xlvii, and lxii.

³⁶ For a translation, see Idung of Prüfening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs*. The original text may be found in R.B.C. Huygens, "Le moine Idung et ses deux ouvrages," *Studi Medievali* 3rd series 13.1 (1972): 375-470 and/or *Patrologia Latina* 182, 73 ff.

³⁷ It dates certainly from between 1153 and 1174. See Idung, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 11.

reveal elements which point to Cluniacs as maintainers of a surprisingly secular milieu in which lyric poetry and song would have thrived.³⁸ The dialogue confirms that the moral climate for creating secular lyrics existed in the Cluniac regime. Poetry was important enough to be considered a replacement for the manual labour decreed in the Benedictine Rule. At Cluny, the reading of secular books was considered a worthwhile activity in order to better grasp the scriptures. The Cluniac admits that his order is a “contemplative” rather than an “active” one. The Cistercian confirms that the Cluniacs create beautiful paintings, carvings, bas-reliefs, gold embossing, elegant cloaks, golden orphreys, multi-coloured tapestries, stained glass, chalices of gold and precious stones, and books illuminated with gold leaf.³⁹ In our own time, the arts are not supported in as sumptuous a manner as described in the *Dialogue*.

In this passage, striking and rare comment on Cluniac musical practices is offered:

CISTERCIAN: Necessity and utility do not, but itching ears do, require many large bells of different tones and of such ponderous weight that two monks can barely ring one. Some monks—as they themselves have told me—have worked so strenuously at pulling the ropes that the great weight caused them injury. This is the use to which is put the great expense and the great effort of manufacturing bells.

Those high-pitched and gelded voices to which you have given the name ‘graciles’ [gracefully thin] and which are usually sharpened by a drink made from liquorice and choice electuaries—what are they but delights to the ear forbidden by the precepts of the Rule?

CLUNIAC: Where does the Rule forbid them?

CISTERCIAN: Where it orders that we read and chant “with humility and dignity.” St. Ambrose in his book *De officiis ministrorum* [PL 16:58–59] also forbids them in

³⁸ Idung, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 27–28.

³⁹ Idung, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 43. For a further list of finery, eschewed by the Cistercians but apparently accepted by the Cluniacs, see 52–54 of the *Dialogue*. Idung also quotes Bernard frequently in the treatise, repeating a number of his criticisms.

the following words: "Let the voice be full with manliness and not pitched like a woman's." Contrary to the respected canonical decrees, you make use of such voices in new and frolicsome songs on your new and unauthorized feast days.⁴⁰

This would seem to suggest the use of *castrati* considerably before the time (i.e., the sixteenth century) when the practice of gelding singers is presumed to have begun. It offers aesthetic guidance as to how we could now approach the singing of songs from the period, that is, with high clear voices. The "frolicsome songs" referred to may well be those with less than sacred content.

Today we perhaps view a monastery as a closed community of professed Christians called by God to a rigorous spiritual life encompassing the very best sentiments of the philosophy of St. Benedict. We are less than tolerant of any brother who, even in a modest way, would abuse such a calling. The worldly vision which emerges from twelfth-century Cluniac monasticism contrasts to these high expectations. We discover an open community, relating daily with visiting secular servants, women, courtiers, and power-wielding aristocrats of varying kinds. The Cluniacs had a tendency, like the aristocracy of which its members were a part, to eschew peasant customs and finely rationalize their secular penchants. A command from the abbot could release monks from the strictures of the Rule, allowing them to please themselves as to their daily activities, which often seemed to incline towards literary pursuits. These, of course, are just the features that one might expect to find in a social context favourable to the lyric art, especially since, as confirmed by the source manuscripts themselves, sacred and secular elements easily commingled.

Given the apparent luxurious nature of monastic life in the older observance, the production of elegant Latin songs seems a triviality. If rampant drinking, gluttony, vanity and even sexual licence were tolerated, then why not clever lyrics on secular topics, especially if they were in the Latin of the Church? There is little need to ascribe the song tradition to wandering scholars, clerks, or even minstrels, though they too might have been involved in the

⁴⁰ Idung, *Cistercians and Cluniacs* 44.

tradition. Cluny was a central cultural repository with widespread influence, mechanisms for communication and a less than completely devout lifestyle in the twelfth century. It was also thoroughly integrated with the culture of the French aristocracy. Unlike the goliardic myth, which cannot be readily substantiated, the synchronous conditions in the Cluniac empire can be linked directly to the secular Latin song tradition.