

Roasting the Pig:

A Vision of Cluny, Cockaigne and the *Treatise of Garcia of Toledo*

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What about it, then? Let us satisfy our stomachs, let us indulge our appetites!

-Garcia of Toledo (12th century)

In 1087 Bernard d'Agen, Abbot of Sahagún, received a letter from Saint Hugh the Great, the pious and commanding abbot of the powerful Burgundian monastery of Cluny. For two years, he had been waiting for his former superior's consent before his final acceptance of the magnificent new office being offered to him: the archiepiscopal seat of the city of Toledo, recently reconquered from the Muslims. Hugh's letter was one of indulgent approval: "We trust that if by the mercy of God you are invested with this dignity, by your conduct the populace that walks in the darkness should see a great light and in those that live in the shadows of death will be born a brightness, that is, the very sun of justice."¹ Solicitously, he also offered a piece of advice: "... [You] ought to bring together companions of an upright disposition, clerics of course, and if it is possible, masters of our Order... who bear similar convictions and attitudes, and with which you yourself would try to lead a common life in the same manner as the apostles and the primitive Church."²

Neither man had any idea that one of these very canons whom Bernard would subsequently gather around him, known to posterity only as "Garcia of Toledo," would earn enduring fame as the author of the frolicsome treatise that bears his name, in which Bernard would be mercilessly lampooned and derided. Whatever outward disposition dulled the sharp edges of his satire, Garcia was decidedly unimpressed with the apostolic charge shouldered by his superior. What is exposed by his scrutiny is Bernard's endless snoring, his purported ability to put away a whole salmon at one sitting, and his capacity for draining a full bowl of wine in one gulp. Nor is Bernard the sole victim of Garcia's

satire. Bernard's visit, as Archbishop of Toledo, to Rome in May 1099 gave the jocular canon a choice target in the form of Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099) and his cardinals. Gone is the aura of virtue and solemnity encircling this austere advocate of the First Crusade and his curia. Garcia transforms them all into insatiable, bulbous gluttons capable of the most astounding feats of dissipation: "So, when this fattest of popes had tasted three or four draughts, as though by necessity, the cardinals emptied the bowl after him... Then once again Bacchus filled the golden bowl!"³

In the *Treatise of Garcia of Toledo* Bernard, thinly disguised as the churchman "Grimoard," travels to Rome to offer to Urban the relics of Saints Albinus and Rufinus in exchange for the legateship of Aquitaine. Albinus and Rufinus are of course not saints at all, but silver and gold, respectively –a medieval joke for bribery. Garcia elaborates on the joke by offering both a mock-homily and a mock-sermon on the virtues of these holiest of saints: "Come, come, simoniac archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, abbots, deacons and priors, offer the Roman pontiff the two martyrs through whom is granted entry into the Roman Church."⁴ Through the well-known persuasive powers of such relics, Grimoard thus obtains his legateship. His canon is equally active in the company of Urban and his cardinals, trading barbed exchanges liberally dosed with classical, liturgical and Biblical references, which are taken completely and humorously out of context. The treatise ends with one of the cardinals admitting his exhaustion at the animated conversation. He consequently drains his flagon with zest, to the acclaim and approval of his fellows: "All we cardinals and legates of the Roman Church have this in common from our lord pope; that we enjoy drinking."⁵

With its prodigal amounts of delicacies, garlands, scents, banquets, savories, skin care, purging ointments, and particularly wine, Garcia's treatise is an evocation of

Cockaigne itself. Still, his tract is no passing treatment of the timeless literary theme of this gastronomically copious never-never land. Nor can it simply be interpreted as anti-papal for its own sake. As Cluniacs, both Bernard and Urban hailed from a powerful religious center as deeply resented as it was widely admired and lavishly endowed. It was during an age of religious revival and protest against the worldliness of the Benedictine monasticism that Duke William III of Aquitaine had founded the monastery of Cluny on the Grosne River in 909. According to the appraisal of one of its monks, the valley in which it was situated "... breathed such a perfume of aloofness, repose, and peace, that it seemed like a heavenly solitude."⁶ Such solitude, which was secured by its removal from any major routes of trade or pilgrimage, guaranteed also that the cherished precepts of chastity, poverty and obedience drawn up by Saint Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century would be sustained in their integrity by his black-robed followers. Moreover, by placing themselves under the direct vassalage of the Pope, the infant monastery was allowed freedom from local interference, lay or ecclesiastical. The eleventh-century historian Radulphus Glaber could assert with all seriousness that "... God willed that [the Benedictine rule] should choose for [its] resting-place and for its throne of wisdom the monastery of Cluny, where the seed that it bore was soon to prove infinitely fruitful."⁷

A Gymnasium of Virtue

If the throne of wisdom did not always reside at Cluny, the monastery was blessed nonetheless by a series of capable and saintly abbots who laid the foundations of Cluny's eminence. One of the earliest of these was Saint Odo (r. 926-944), whose monks nicknamed him *fossorius* ("digger"), on account of his eyes being invariably cast

downwards in humility.⁸ The simple-minded Aymard of Angoulême (r. 942-965) succeeded Odo. Blind from 954, Aymard chose as abbot his assistant Saint Maiolus (r. 965-994), who proved that saintliness could be combined with the charm and elegance of a native of Provence. His coadjutor Odilo, who was to succeed Maiolus in 994, described him as having a “venerable gait, sublime voice, eloquent expression, cheerful demeanor, angelic countenance, serene aspect, demonstrating virtue in every movement, bearing, or gesture of his body.”⁹ Considered the golden age of Cluny, the abbacy of Saint Odilo (r. 994-1049) saw the development of the concept of a Cluniac Order. Local pressures had rendered the Benedictine idea of monastic autonomy prone to abuses. Greater vigilance was achieved by subjecting the daughter houses established across Europe to the customs and abbot of Cluny. Cluny’s abbot alone appointed not abbots but priors to head the thousand or so reform monasteries scattered across France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, present-day Belgium, and the Iberian Peninsula. By the twelfth century, the arrogant swishing of the black habit of the Cluniac could be heard as far as the Levantine foundation of Mount Tabor in Lower Galilee.

Odilo was succeeded by the monarchical Saint Hugh, who was not only a prolific letter writer but also the man held responsible for the beginning of the end of Cluniac fervor. For as the material fortunes of Cluny rose, the religious zeal that had been the initial reason for its success declined. Both figuratively and literally, Hugh was a builder, tightening control over the daughter houses (thereby earning their resentment), as well as commencing the construction of a magnificent new basilica at Cluny in 1088. Built on an impressive scale to accommodate the growing number of monks and visitors, the new basilica was intended to be a reproduction of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, an Eden of stone and light where the faithful could witness the scrupulous and majestic performance

of the liturgical ceremonies for which Cluny was widely honored.¹⁰ Such was the plan envisioned by an aged monk named Gunzo, who claimed that Saint Peter himself came to him in a vision demanding more spacious quarters for his monks.¹¹ Kings, lords, bishops, and peasants were counted among the benefactors who contributed to the erection of the nave of eleven bays, the double aisles, the richly sculptured capitals, the great transept surmounted by three bell-towers and the “crown” of radiating chapels.

The lion’s share of the building fund, however, came from two monarchs in particular. Alfonso VI of Castile (r. 1072-1109), flushed with victory over his recent capture of Toledo, offered Cluny ten thousand talents and an annual subsidy of two hundred ounces of gold. Not to be outdone, Henry I of England (r. 1100-1135) conferred upon Cluny a yearly quota of sixty marks on the revenues of London (and forty on those of Lincoln) in 1131.¹² So generous was he that Robert of Torigni, a monk of Bec who became abbot of Mont St. Michel in 1154, claims that “the greater part of the church was built at his cost.”¹³ Henry’s daughter the Empress Matilda not only furnished the basilica with its bells, which were cast in English metal, but also made Cluny the gift of an elaborate, seven-branched candlestick. Other gifts soon followed. Ever a devoted Cluniac, Pope Urban dedicated five altars in the apse of his mother abbey in 1095 on his way to Le Puy and Clermont-Ferrand, where he would momentarily sell the idea of a Crusade to throngs of knights and lords. Not surprisingly, the monastery of Cluny came to be regarded as one of the greatest structures in Europe, as indeed it was. Both the Italian reformer Saint Peter Damian (1007-1072) and one of Hugh’s biographers, Bishop Hildebert of Le Mans (r. 1097-1125), chose to utilize a curious classical comparison when describing the monastery. Cluny, writes Hildebert, “was a gymnasium of virtue, so to speak,” and indeed its intricate plan could well be compared with the complex series of

pools, thermal baths, libraries, and athletic fields that made up the wrestling schools, or *palaestrae*, of antiquity.¹⁴

Deformed Beauty and Beautiful Deformities

And yet no ancient gymnasium was as lavishly decorated as Cluny was under Saint Hugh's successor, the secular-minded and superficial Pontius of Melgueil (r. 1109-1122). Young when appointed abbot and related to some of the most powerful families in Europe, Pontius was arrogant and devoted to reminding other churchmen of the power that he and his monastery held. Although Abbot Hugh had laid the foundations for Cluny's moral decline, most of the burden of guilt can be placed on Pontius. By the time Garcia of Toledo was penning his satire, Pontius had begun to rebuild the cloister and decorate it with sculptured capitals so elaborate that one twelfth-century critic accused the Cluniacs of stimulating "...the devotion of a carnal people with material ornaments because they cannot do so with spiritual ones."¹⁵ Certainly, despite the didactic aims attached to adornment of this kind (the monks would have gazed at a series of capitals representing the musical tones while singing hymns in the apse, for example), its intent seems to have been purely to delight the senses –art for its own sake. Indeed, one historian compares Cluny's irrepressibly dexterous carvers to a school of dolphins.¹⁶ Such restless impulses gave Cluniac carvings a distinctive mark, and were typified by their deep indentations, swirling drapery, and interwoven figures.

An archetype of such artistic flashiness can be found in a tympanum depicting the scene of the Last Judgment, completed in 1115. Found over the doorway of the south porch of the Abbey of Moissac, which came under Cluniac jurisdiction in 1047, its executor seemed more concerned with displaying his mastery over stone than with

reminding entering parishioners of Christ's impending charge as arbiter of the Apocalypse. Indeed, when one considers that the stonework was once garishly painted with bright colors, it is fairly reasonable to assume that little religious feeling was induced by the scene depicting Christ surrounded by elongated apostles, six intertwined lions, and the goggle-eyed, mustachioed figures of the twenty-four elders of the Old Testament. With characteristic virtuosity, the same master carver intertwined fierce-looking birds with the figures of pathetic mortals, some of which are obviously terrified, others considerably less so, in the mullion of the church of Souillac. At the abbey church of Vézelay, one of the twelve abbeys placed under Cluny's sovereignty in 1100, the most striking figures are not humans at all. Master Gislebertus, who had been probably been employed at Cluny and unquestionably at the cathedral of Autun, as indicated by the fairly prominent inscription *Gislebertus hoc fecit* ("Gislebertus made this") in the main portal, executed a bizarre scene in the main doorway of Vézelay. Urging his apostles to preach the Gospel to all the peoples of the world, Christ benevolently extends his outstretched hands to pygmies, pig-snouted monstrosities, enormously eared Panotii, and dog-headed Cynocephali.

Such grotesqueries did little to accentuate the religiosity of Cluny and her dependent priories. Indeed, Abbot Pontius' decorative stonework aroused nothing but indignation in Cluny's greatest critic and the most prominent member of the rival Cistercian Order, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). There was nothing more disconcerting to Bernard than the fact that hippogriffs, basilisks, and other chimeras danced before the eyes of the monks while they attempted to peruse their texts: "...What is that ridiculous monstrosity doing, an amazing kind of deformed beauty and yet a beautiful deformity? What are the filthy apes doing there? The fierce lions? The

monstrous centaurs? The creatures, part man and part beast? ... You may see many bodies under one head, and conversely many heads on one body.... Good God! If one is not ashamed of the absurdity, why is one not at least troubled at the expense?"¹⁷

Such showpieces of stone appear wherever Cluny infiltrated: a dove flies out from a concentric series of circles on each side of a capital from the Sussex monastery of St. Pancras of Lewes, tangible evidence of Cluniac expansion across the Channel.¹⁸ The first Cluniac foundation in England, Lewes was founded in 1077 when the great landowner William de Warenne and his wife Gundrada were prevented from completing their pilgrimage to Rome. Reckless was the traveler who visited a city torn apart by the clash between Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII over the Investiture Controversy, the violent dispute concerning the role played by secular authorities in the ceremonies by which churchmen were invested in their offices. Consequently, the couple got no farther than Cluny, where they managed to persuade a hesitant Abbot Hugh to send four monks to take possession of a modest foundation: the wooden church below Lewes Castle dedicated to the fourth-century martyr Pancras of Rome.

Cluny soon showered its dubious benefits upon the unpretentious site. Lewes came to possess some of the largest and most elaborate monastic buildings in England. Excavations in the nineteenth century unearthed guesthouses, stables, a bakery, a brewery, an almonry, an infirmary, a *calefactorium* or bleeding-house, and an intricately planned *necessarium* or outhouse, which was linked to a great drain of stone and a 35-foot long bridge connecting it with the *dormitorium*. Saint Pancras' little church was itself completely rebuilt. Taking Cluny as their model, the monks added a massive tower, an extended nave, an eastern transept, and a great apse with a corona of chapels. A magnificent altar, that of the Holy Cross, graced the apse of the main church. There, in

the year 1250, on the feast day of Saints Processus and Martinian (July 2), a man who was crippled in an arm and both knees was miraculously cured of his maladies.¹⁹ Proud and prosperous the church stood, until it was completely and un sentimentally leveled in the sixteenth century through the ingenuity of John Portinari, an Italian engineer in the employment of Henry VIII, who was implementing his rigorous suppression of all English monasteries. By inserting wooden props into the walls and then having them set on fire, Portinari induced the undermined walls to fall in with a crash, “which must have been music to their sacrilegious minds,” sighed W. H. St. John Hope in 1884, with all the Victorian bathos he could muster.²⁰

In 1089, William de Warenne also founded for the Cluniacs the Priory of Castle Acre in Norfolk, which was placed under the jurisdiction of Lewes. Approached through a Tudor gatehouse emblazoned with escutcheons, one of which is de Warenne’s, the present grounds are only a specter of their former glory. At its height, Castle Acre could boast of its tall arcade of five richly ornamented arches; raised tiles with figures of dragons, lions and other beasts paving the floor of the chapter house; and the two fireplaces and two ovens in the apartment of the sacristan, whose job it was to provide for the material needs of the liturgy, such as the sacred wafers and wine.²¹ Even so remote a church as St. Cuthbert of Fishlake in Yorkshire, also a dependency of Lewes, proudly displayed its association with Cluny. Local carvers skillfully chiseled the keys of Cluny’s patron Saint Peter, along with a *sagittarius*, or mounted archer; a demon and an angel engaged in combat over a soul; a boat piloted by two hooded figures; and two knights in the act of collision.²²

It is not surprising that when Henry I of England chose to honor Cluny, he did so by laying the cornerstone of a rich monastery dedicated in her name (although not placed

under her control). In 1121, he invited seven Cluniac monks to organize a community at Reading in Berkshire under Hugh of Boves, who had been the second prior of Lewes.²³ Although he did not enjoy the reputation of being a great builder of castles and churches, Henry lavished attention upon his new foundation. “Of laudable piety to God, he built monasteries in England and Normandy,” remarks the chronicler William of Malmesbury (ca. 1095-1143), “but as he has not yet completed them, I, in the meantime, should suspend my judgment, did not my affection for the brotherhood at Reading forbid my silence.”²⁴ True to his word, William formed an excellent opinion of the monastery, and considered the bounteous hospitality it offered its most attractive feature: “Here may be seen what is peculiar to this place: for guests arriving every hour, consume more than the inmates themselves.”²⁵ Henry had in fact deliberately situated his foundation to receive guests, located as it was between the busy waterways of the Thames and the Kennet, a fitting hospice for those traveling to and from London, which was some fifty miles away, and other populous cities.

As indicated by his largess to the mother abbey of the Cluniacs, Henry was no penny-pincher. His numerous callers beheld foliage and veined leaves of stone, some of them blossoming into fruit, twisting with deceptive ease; a man forever battling a pebbly dragon; and beaked heads grimacing with mysterious revulsion.²⁶ Reading’s monks could make use of a well-stocked library crammed with the works of classical authors such as Seneca, Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal, which adjoined Christian ones such as those of the Venerable Bede, Origen, and Saints Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome.²⁷

In 1125, Henry provided a further incentive to travelers when his daughter Matilda brought from Germany the hand of Saint James the Greater. As indicated by the dispersal of his body all over Europe, James was an extremely popular saint. His relics,

which were invoked against rheumatism and other ailments, were a major attraction wherever they alighted. Sicily, Pavia, Liège, Cologne, and the island of Capri possessed his bones, arms, and hands. Conflicting claims among religious foundations and confusion with saints of the same name had created a bizarre situation: James' body lies in its famous shrine at Compostela, but also at St. Sernin near Toulouse and at Zibili near Milan. The apostle's head can be found at Valencia, Amalfi, and St. Vaast in Artois. There are two in Venice and a part of one at Pistoia, while the Church of the Apostles in Rome owns a piece of his skull and some of his blood.²⁸ This was not a phenomenon unique to this patron of pilgrims and Moor-slayers; only half-humorously was it said during the Reformation that there were enough pieces of the Holy Cross to assemble a great ship.²⁹

Their religious significance notwithstanding, relics provided any wily abbot, bishop or prior with the opportunity to lure pilgrims and prestige from afar. Since relics were thought to benefit a community as a whole, both spiritually and financially, it was not unknown for "sacred thefts" to take place, in which intrepid monks ransacked derelict churches, rival monasteries, and the Roman catacombs in search of saints' bodies.³⁰ One could even make a living out of this frenzy. A professional relic-monger named Felix is known to have conducted a brisk business in the Frankish Empire of the 830's. His curious trade took him far and wide: at Mainz, Felix sold to Archbishop Otgarius the alleged remains of the fourth-century bishop of Ravenna, Saint Severus, which he claimed had been smuggled from the monastery of Saint Apollinaris in Ravenna. At Freising, Bishop Erchambert purchased the body of Saint Bartholomew from the cunning Felix in 838, who had also been hawking the remains of Saints Cornelius, Callistus,

Agapitus, Georgius, Vincentius, Maximus, Cecilia, Eugenia, Digna, Emerita, and Columbana at the Franconian monastery of Fulda in the same year.³¹

Garcia, it should be recalled, offers his own humorous take on the practice. Pope Urban, who is known to have participated in the deposition of the relics of Saint Nicholas at Bari in 1089, for example, looks greedily upon the precious limbs of Saints Albinus (Silver) and Rufinus (Gold): “Go, I say, go in peace, and if there is any remnant of the innards of Silver or the guts of Gold, be it stomach, bowels, buttocks, nails, shoulders, heart, ribs, neck, collar-bones, arms, backbone (what more?), or any limb of the two martyrs, duly present it to us....”³² Quite obligingly, Archbishop Bernard of Toledo offers the rapacious pontiff the innards of Saint Albinus and the ribs, heart, arms, and left shoulder of Saint Rufinus. With intense devotion and the “sweet savour of good will,” Urban eagerly inters the relics himself, after bearing them to the shrine of Saint Cupidity (*gazophilacium Sanctae Cupiditatis*), which lies next to the chapel of her sister Saint Greedyguts (*propitiatorium beatae Auidissimae*) and not far from the basilica of their mother Saint Avarice (*basilica Auariciae*).

Garcia’s coupling of the ravenous search for relics with the Cluniacs Bernard and Urban is hardly accidental. Cluny seems to have been just as eager to acquire relics for its altars as it did stony grotesqueries for the heads of its pillars. When Richard, the eleventh-century abbot of the monastery of St. Vanne in Lorraine, decided to model his monastery after Cluny, he not only commenced an extensive building program but set out to acquire the arm of Saint Pantaleon, the fourth-century healer and martyr of Nicomedia. Since St. Vanne had originally served as the cathedral of Verdun, Abbot Richard proceeded to restore and adorn the tombs of saintly Madelveus, Berengerius, Hildinus, Hatto, Dado, Vitonus, Firmin, Puleronius, and five others –the town’s early bishops. He

also acquired, by dubious means, the remains of Saint Sanctinus, who was said to be an early proselytizer of Verdun and Meaux and a disciple of the first bishop of Paris, Saint Dennis or Dionysius (d. ca. 250 AD).³³

It can hardly be surprising, then, that Abbot Pontius acquired for Cluny its three most precious relics: a fragment of the Holy Cross, the ashes of Saints Peter and Paul, and a finger of Saint Stephen. The latter had been the cherished possession of Archbishop Hugh of Edessa. Although he felt that he was endangering his soul by keeping the relic in a see threatened by Muslim forces, Hugh could not bear the thought of sending it to Cluny, which had once provided him with generous hospitality and with which he maintained close relations. He also knew very well that Cluny would prove to be an appropriate lodging for the relic, since it had been consecrated in honor of Saints Peter, Paul, and Stephen. Still he remained stubborn, even when the menacing figures of the three saints visited the archbishop in his bedchamber, telling him that the relic would be held in greater reverence at Cluny. Taking this for a dream, Hugh slept, only to see the vision a second time. It was only during a third vision, when the three saints promised to cure the ailing ecclesiastic of his gout if he gave up the relic (and divine punishment if he did not) that Hugh acquiesced. In 1120, he promptly turned the relic over to Gilduin du Puiset, abbot-elect of Josaphat and former prior of the Cluniac foundation of Lupercy, fearfully throwing in a tooth of Saint John the Baptist for good measure. The relics were speedily conveyed by the monk Frotmund to Cluny, where the holy finger was lovingly encased in a crystal casket.³⁴

As a lover of fine things, Pontius also encouraged the writing of new works, namely three *Lives* of his predecessor Abbot Hugh (three because he was dissatisfied by the two biographies written by the churchmen Gilo and Hezelo), as well as the

transcription of old ones. Pontius ordered, for example, three monks named Albert, Opizon, and Durannus to copy accurate texts of the Fathers of the Church. He only wanted the best to do so: Durannus' skill in copying liturgical books had persuaded Abbot Hugh to honor the monk with a special anniversary observance.³⁵ Also esteemed was the monk Albert, who had also been at Cluny since Hugh's abbacy. At Pontius's behest, he transcribed a magnificent copy of the Bible. Assisted by Opizon and another copyist named Peter Armarius, Albert twice corrected and revised his copy before adorning the book with letters and precious stones.³⁶ The title born by his assistant – *armarius* (“librarian”)- indicates that Peter was responsible for the books of the monastery, which included the task of pursuing chronic book-hoarders, a thankless one, as every modern librarian knows. Although the monk Durannus received Hugh's acclaim for his adeptness in the *scriptorium*, Peter Armarius himself was decidedly unimpressed with his merits, as indicated by the comment scribbled at the end of a Cluniac manuscript: “This book, missing for a long time, was recovered from Durannus by Frater Peter, *armarius* of Cluny.”³⁷

Pontius amassed ecclesiastical dignities in the same manner as he accumulated manuscripts. He insisted on being referred to as the “abbot of abbots” (*abbas abbatum*) until he was angrily reminded by the papal chancellor John of Gaeta (later Pope Gelasius II), a former monk of Monte Cassino, that this title had been rightfully bestowed upon the abbots of this Italian foundation, which had been founded by Saint Benedict himself in 529.³⁸ Pontius also aspired to the more tangible tokens of power. He successfully claimed the right to assume the regalia of a bishop on major feasts, although Pope Urban II had granted this right to Abbot Hugh as a sign of personal regard. It was with great reluctance that Pope Paschal II (r. 1099-1118) granted Pontius

the right to wear the pallium, the circular, richly embroidered band of white wool worn around a bishop's neck.³⁹

Despite Pontius' accumulation of these pious trappings, it was quite apparent to all that he was decidedly unsuited for the abbacy. It was even claimed by his enemies that the reason he had been sent to Cluny in the first place was to cure his ambition for a bishopric!⁴⁰ Pontius himself impulsively resigned in the presence of Pope Callistus II (r. 1119-1124) after a few of his monks protested against his extravagance, harshness, and uncontrollable passions, and went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Mount Tabor. Although he earned a reputation for piety and probity in the Holy Land, Pontius presently returned to Cluny to wage war upon his successor, Peter the Venerable (ca. 1092-1156), whom he regarded, quite irrationally, as an interloper.

With a band of fugitive monks, mercenaries, outlaws, and vagabonds, Pontius stormed the great abbey, forcing its monks to swear homage to him by threat and torture. In order to purchase armaments, hire local soldiers, and goad the peasants (both men and women) into fighting for him, he melted down the holy ornaments and chalices, the golden crosses, tablets, candelabra, incense-bearers, and vases. Even the reliquaries and shrines of silver and gold did not escape his desperate bid for power. With all the ferocity of a feudal lord, Pontius attacked the surrounding villages, farms, and religious houses for nearly a year, casting all monastic scruples to the wind as he burned, slaughtered, and plundered without restraint. "Thus in that holy and famous house, by the secret but just judgment of God," wrote his beleaguered successor, "Satan was set free, and raged around. But an end came to the evil."⁴¹ As it came to pass, Pope Honorius II (r. 1124-1130), summoning both Pontius and Peter to Rome in 1126,

would excommunicate the former and restore Cluny to the latter. Although a few of Pontius's followers rendered penance before the pope by submissively entering the papal palace with naked feet, Pontius himself remained unrepentant to the end and was thrown into prison, where a deadly fever shattered any chance of a disastrous return.

The damage, however, was done. Pontius's successor Peter the Venerable, although a capable and pious administrator, could do little to repair Cluny's reputation. "I travel around, I am exceedingly devoted," Peter groaned, "I am harassed: perplexing vexation hither and thither."⁴² There was in fact much to vex him. It had become quite apparent that the mettle of the new recruits was not what it once was, and Peter complained that "[y]okels, children, old men and idiots have been taken in such numbers that they are now near to forming a majority."⁴³ Childlike indeed was the behavior of one young monk who barricaded himself in a bell-tower in protest against the petty penance that had been imposed on him. The monk threatened to hurl stones at all who approached him, declaring that he would not vacate his improvised citadel until he was promised a pardon and new clothes. Another monk who had also been rebuked took a more aggressive –and more senseless– approach by setting fire to a storehouse in the village of Lihons-en-Santerre, near Amiens.⁴⁴ More distressing events ensued during Peter's abbacy. During a trip to Rome in November 1145, William of Roanne, the pious prior of Charlieu, who had died a few months previously under mysterious circumstances, visited Peter in a dream. Peter had strongly suspected that William's own monks had poisoned their master, who had imposed upon them a more austere discipline than the one they had submitted to thus far. The dead man confirmed Peter's suspicions ("It is true...it is true"), and when the same dream occurred again, it only

transform his misgivings into conviction. With tears still stinging his eyes and cheeks, Peter dragged the monk responsible before the chapter of the monks at Cluny and condemned him to perpetual exile.⁴⁵

The tarnished image of Cluny provided the satiric pen with ample fodder. With all its hypocrisies, extravagances and transgressions committed by its monks, the Order was truly a satirist's dream. Garcia's vision of the Cluniac Urban's curia is one of "frequent bathing-parties, silken couches, ambling palfreys, a golden chariot, with scents, ornaments, pomp, pride, ceremony, triumphs, necklaces, an overfull belly, with display, with glory."⁴⁶ Garcia perceived in Cluniacs such as Archbishop Bernard and Pope Urban a complete indifference to the spiritual needs of the masses. The prominence he gives to their bellies arises from a similar conclusion reached by his contemporaries. In the popular mind, the Cluniacs were too content with the physical manifestations of spirituality –the ornate churches, manuscripts, vestments, relics, and other religious gewgaws- to inspire any sentiment other than derision. Striving for the delights of the hereafter had become unnecessary when the cloister itself had become a paradise of sensual pleasures, a Cockaigne bathed by the soft glow of the stained glass window and the bejeweled chalice. Indeed, the first and only mention of this imaginary land of plenty and idleness in Medieval Latin –as the adjective *Cucaniensis*- occurs under damning circumstances for Cluny. As Elfriede Marie Ackermann has suggested, the term is too similar to the term *Cluniacensis* to overlook its associations with the religious order.⁴⁷ Our suspicions increase when its context is considered. "I am the Abbot of Cockaigne (*Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis*)," cries the antihero in the first line of a twelfth-century poem, as he proclaims his dubious virtues: his church council is

composed of drunkards and all those who seek him find him in the local tavern, cheating all challengers of their clothes in ruinous games of dice.⁴⁸

Flea-bitten Irishmen and Gluttonous Frenchmen: Medieval Ethnic Tensions

Although such riotous behavior was hardly characteristic of Garcia's victims, it clearly did not help matters that both Archbishop Bernard and Urban II (born Odo of Lagery) were Frenchmen. National stereotypes are nothing new. Frenchmen were generally typecast as avaricious gluttons in the pseudo-scientific catalogues of national virtues and vices that occasionally materialized during the Middle Ages. Spaniards were branded violent drunkards, Englishmen obdurate fools, and Germans blockheads with voices that sounded, according to one amateur linguist, like "farm carts clumsily creaking up a rutted hill."⁴⁹ Tensions seem to have been almost unavoidable, considering that Cluny had germinated on French soil, its cultivators hailing from places such as Mercœur (Odilo), Semur-en-Brionnais (Hugh) and Montboissier (Peter the Venerable). Small wonder that *Franci* came to be equated with *Chuniaci*, and the inevitable result was that the stereotypes associated with the former came to be affixed to the latter. When Saint Ulrich of Zell (1029-1093), a German Cluniac whose opinion of Frenchmen was jaundiced by his difficulties with the language, learned that alms were being liberally distributed at one Cluniac monastery, he was astonished. After all, Frenchmen were "so restless, such robbers, and so destitute of the luster of virtues" that such practices seemed anomalous.⁵⁰ Not to be undone by Teutonic prejudices, the Italian monks of the great Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino are known to have

sniffed with emphatic distaste at the decidedly unmonastic vestments and tonsures of their Transalpine brethren.⁵¹

If all Cluniacs were as condescending as one of their commissaries or *visitatores*, then such antipathies seem to have been understandable, if not justifiable. Sent in 1279 to Montacute priory in Somerset, one of the English houses under the direct jurisdiction of Cluny, the commissary noted that its prior “was a good, wise, humble and discreet man, despite being an Englishman (*licet Anglicus*).” Continuing his visitations, the official stopped at the Cluniac priory of Much Wenlock in Shropshire. There he found some of the accounts so garbled that he remarked, “It is almost impossible to learn the truth from English monks!”⁵² In Spain, the tension between national groups played a more sinister role. When French Cluniacs infiltrated the Iberian Peninsula in the late eleventh century, they worked towards the suppression of the time-honored Visigothic liturgy in favor of the Roman-Gallican rite. They were nothing if not thorough; even the Visigothic script was displaced in favor of the Frankish Caroline minuscule. The result of the great reform movement spearheaded by Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085), which aspired to uniformity among the churches of different nations, was that such an intolerant program proved incompatible with the nuances of Iberian politics.⁵³ Bernard himself would impetuously burst one night into the main mosque of Toledo, which the politic Alfonso VI had promised the Muslims to leave unmolested, suspending bells in the minarets and setting up altars with feverish intolerance. Such arrogance could only have galled the Spaniards, Christian or no, and the intensity with which Garcia denigrates his superior suggests that his national sensibilities had also been irked.

Such fanaticism was typically Cluniac. It is significant that the abbot of Cluny would soon add on his armorial bearings the scallop-shell of Saint James the Moor-slayer (*Santiago Matamoros*), the reassuringly violent reincarnation of the apostle whose tomb was discovered at Compostela towards the end of the eighth century. Although modern scholars doubt that James the Greater ever preached in Spain, Spaniards of the Middle Ages were adamant in their belief that his remains were magically transported to Galicia after the apostle's beheading in Jerusalem in 44 AD. Armed with a mighty sword and mounted on a great horse, James was believed to battle the Muslim with as much ferocity as his adherents, and accompanied the Spaniards at the taking of Granada in 1492 and across the sea against the heathen of the New World. When Urban preached the First Crusade in 1095, he urged knights of all nations to align themselves against the Saracens. Spanish knights, however, were to devote themselves to annihilating the Muslims who lived amongst them, not those of the Orient, and when Archbishop Bernard proposed plans for a Spanish crusade against the Muslims of the East, Popes Urban and Paschal II rejected them for this reason. Foreign knights, however, could not have been more eager to find opened another scene of action against the Muslims. Many who had already been to the Holy Land streamed across the Pyrenees, "like swarms of locusts or ants," writes the historian Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maqqarī (d. 1631).⁵⁴ At the siege of Zaragoza, which was elevated to the status of a crusade by a council held at Toulouse in 1118, a French nobleman named Gaston de Béarn, the organizer of the siege machines at Jerusalem, prepared the wooden towers and catapults for the attack on the city. Weakened by starvation, the town fell the same year, and Alfonso I granted Gaston the lordship of Zaragoza.⁵⁵

Despite the existence of a common enemy, Christians on crusade conserved the national hatreds they held for each other. At the commencement of the First Crusade, crusading fervor had temporarily united the motley mass of humanity advancing towards the Holy Land. Somewhat mordantly, William of Malmesbury writes that the “Welshman abandoned his forest-hunting, the Irishman his familiarity with fleas, the Dane his constant drinking, and the Norwegian his raw fish.”⁵⁶ Such singularity of purpose quickly evaporated as the crusaders slowly marched through the difficult and dangerous terrain of Asia Minor. During the First Crusade, the historian Guibert of Nogent (1055-1125) relates how the Italian, Lombard, and German recruits, when they finally reached Nicomedia, “became impatient of the pride of the Franks, and separated themselves from them.”⁵⁷ At the siege of Lisbon in 1147, the detachments of English and Norman volunteers quibbled with the Fleming and German forces. At the momentous battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), which resulted in the shattering of the power of the Muslim Almohads in Spain, a large proportion of the 70,000 French, Provençal, and Italian knights, finding the great heat, lack of water, and disease insufferable, turned back *en masse*. More disturbing than the heat or scarcity of water, however, was the Spanish policy of observing the terms of capitulation when Muslim forces consented to the surrender of their towns and fortresses.⁵⁸ Why could they not loot all the possessions of the infidel and put all heathens to the sword, much as they had done in Jerusalem? There, they had burned alive Jews who had taken shelter in the synagogue and, according to the chronicler Fulcher of Chartres (ca. 1058-ca. 1127), “... split open the bellies of those [Muslims] they had just slain in order to extract from the intestines the gold coins which the Saracens had gulped down their loathsome throats while alive.”⁵⁹

Who was Garcia of Toledo?

Who was this satirist, then, who so zestfully poked fun at two advocates of such tramontane intolerance? What little is known about him is gleaned from the satire itself. The manuscripts themselves vary according to the skill and diligence of their copyists. Of the four manuscripts currently unearthed, he is called “Garcia” (*Garsia*) in only two, and he is described as a canon of Toledo (*Toletanae Ecclesiae canonicus*) in one: a thirteenth-century manuscript of French provenance.⁶⁰ It is safe to assume that “Garcia” was a nom de plume. One who would have kept company so closely with his superior would have found an alias desirable, if not necessary, and its triteness was a suitable cloak indeed. Whether Garcia was indeed attached to the cathedral of Toledo is nearly impossible to determine. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that Garcia was what he claims to be in his satire, a Spaniard who by chance had come along with the Toledan archbishop (*uir Hispanus... qui cum Toletano forte aduenerat*). As Rodney M. Thomson points out, no one but a Spaniard would have considered Bernard’s visit to Rome sufficiently noteworthy to form the narrative basis of his parody.⁶¹ Moreover, the fact that Garcia accurately reports curial customs and the names of actual cardinals suggests that Garcia was indeed at Rome in 1099.⁶² Finally, the fact that Garcia rather inadequately masks Bernard as Grimoard suggests that he wrote the satire during the archbishop’s lifetime and in close proximity to him.⁶³ Otherwise, its punch and its relevance would be lost.

Such proximity could only be attained by those working most closely with the bishop, namely, his affiliated clergy or canons (*canonici*), who were called as such