

The Constructions of the Cistercian Lay Brother in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the construction of the Cistercian lay brother (*conversus*) as a social category. In particular it inquires into how choir monks dealt with the conceptual problem posed by lay brothers as monks who did not pray, and their relationship to the monks themselves. It demonstrates that the character and institutional role of the lay brother was not static, but continued to evolve over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries within Cistercian discourse and was subject to varying interpretations according to time and place. This project considers rhetorical and legislative strategies by which lay brothers could be integrated ideologically and practically into the Cistercian hierarchy.

The analysis centres around four key sources demonstrating how lay brothers were represented in a number of literary genres over time, including customaries, statutes, sermons, and miracle stories. The variation in the representation of lay brothers in these documents indicates not only that the status of lay brothers was subject to debate, but also that the creation of their role was an active process.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Apologia* Burchard of Bellevaux. “*Apologia de barbis.*” In *Apologia Duae*. Ed. R.B.C. Huygens. 151-224. Turnhout: Brepols, 1985.
- Dialogue* Caesarius of Heisterbach. *Dialogue on Miracles* 2 vols. Trans. H. von E. Scott and C.C. Swinton Bland. London: Routledge, 1929.
- EO* *The Ancient Usages of the Cistercian Order (Ecclesiastica officia)*. Trans. Martinus Cawley. Lafayette: Guadalupe Translations, 1998.
- PL* *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina*. Ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. Paris: 1841-1864.
- Rule* *Regula sancti Benedicti*. In *RB 1980*. Ed. Timothy Fry. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981.
- Statutes* “Annual *Statuta*” and “the *Instituta.*” In *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter*. Ed. Chrysogonus Waddell. Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses, 2002.
- UC* “*Usus conversorum*” in *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-Century Usages with Related Texts*. Ed. Chrysogonus Waddell. Brecht: Brepols, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

CONSTRUCTING LAY BROTHERS

Writing around the year 1220, Cistercian abbot Caesarius of Heisterbach recalls the story of an unfortunate lay brother who was deceived by the devil and so died in ignominy:

In Kloster-camp, a house of the Cistercian order, there was a certain lay brother who had learnt just enough to read from the monks with whom he associated. This good fortune was a great delight to him, but it became the means of his undoing; for he secretly caused books to be written for him, that he might possess them, and began to take pleasure in the vice of private ownership. Then when these studies were forbidden him, because he was too much absorbed in them, his love of learning brought him to apostasy; he made little progress because he was already too old.

One day [the devil] appeared to him in the form of an angel and said, 'Go on learning with all your might, because God has decreed that you shall be bishop of Halberstadt.' The poor fool did not discern the wiles of the devil, but hoped that ancient miracles were to be revived in him. A little later, the deceiver came to him with a smiling face and said very distinctly, 'Today the bishop of Halberstadt has died; hasten at once to the city where God has destined you to be bishop.' Without delay the wretched man left the monastery stealthily and was entertained that night in the house of a worthy priest near the town of Xanten. But that he might come to his see with suitable dignity, he rose up before dawn, saddled a fine horse belonging to his host, borrowed his cloak, mounted, and rode off. Discovering their loss in the morning, the servants of the house pursued the apostate and arrested him; he was taken before the tribunal and charged with theft, and being found guilty, ascended not the throne as a bishop, but the gallows as a convicted thief.¹

This story served to caution readers against the multitude of errors a lay brother might make in his quest for salvation. Caesarius portrays the brother as selfish, greedy, arrogant and foolish, yet he attributes the man's undoing to the moment he learned to read. Caesarius' identification of the

¹ Modified translation from Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, vol. 1, eds. and trans. G.G. Coulton and Eileen Power (London: Routledge, 1929), 336-7.

dangers of reading for this brother's spiritual and temporal life reveals that his primary concern was to caution against excessive arrogance and against the aspiration to rise above one's station.²

If the traditional historiographical picture is to be trusted, however, Caesarius' warning about the perils of ignoring one's office should have been unnecessary. From the seventeenth century, monastic historians have taken for granted that Cistercian monasteries were strictly divided into two groups of monks—choir monks and lay brothers. In theory choir monks were the spiritual professionals and ordained priests who occupied their time in prayer and meditation. Lay brothers formed an auxiliary workforce of simple illiterate farmers, husbandmen, and tradesmen, who were engaged with the management of the monasteries' practical affairs.³ In general, modern studies have framed lay brothers as illiterate peasants subservient to the elite educated choir monks.⁴ Caesarius' story and its clear warning against lay brothers rising above their humble illiteracy, however, implies his anxiety about the possibility of transgressing these boundaries and his need to protect against it.⁵

Caesarius' hierarchical separation of choir monks and lay brothers was not novel.

Cistercian authors had argued for this same division in the earliest documents discussing the lay

² In the twelfth century, the ability to read Latin was closely associated with the clerical offices. For instance, in England, it was a regular occurrence for individuals to prove that they were clerics, and so could be tried in clerical rather than secular courts, based solely on their ability to read. Generally if a man could read Psalm 51, he was considered a cleric according to common law. See Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 234.

³ This model has been established well in secondary literature. See for example Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977), 334-5.

⁴ For a description of these divisions see Jean Leclercq, "Comment vivaient les frères convers," *Analecta Cisterciensia*, 21, (1965), 243. The exception to this trend is Brian Noell who emphasized that lay brothers frequently occupied powerful positions in their monasteries. He does, however, point out that in theory lay brothers were to be subservient. Brian Noell, "Expectation and Unrest," *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 65-70.

⁵ It is likely that when Caesarius refers to the brother attempting to become a bishop, he merely uses that office to exaggerate the lay brother's position. The fact that the brother's principal fault was that he learned to read seems to indicate that his concern was with all clerical offices, not simply those of the secular clergy. The brother otherwise shows no indication of aspiring particularly to a bishop's role. For instance, he is not represented preaching.

brothers dating to the 1160s. Despite the fact that Caesarius wrote roughly a century after the first lay brothers were described by a Cistercian author, his story demonstrates a continued attempt to define their status and identity as subordinate to the choir monks. His attempt suggests, therefore, an awareness of the potential malleability of the office of lay brother, and its continued debate within Cistercian discourse as late as the mid-thirteenth century.⁶

This thesis seeks to explore the question of the constructed nature of the lay brothers' status, role, and identity. I argue that over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the office of the Cistercian lay brethren was undergoing a process of creation and development during which their status and role within the order and relation to choir monks was debated, demarcated, and redefined. A comparison of Cistercian legislative and pastoral literature from the first two centuries of the Cistercian order shows that a lay brother's role and hierarchical position differed according to individual opinion and temporal context. Debate centred on the key questions of whether lay brothers were monks, and if not, what separated them from monks—a debate which could lead to a questioning of the legitimacy of the monastic power structure and the authority of the monastic office. I seek to demonstrate that while the historiography assumes that the lay brothers were well-defined in the early thirteenth century from the very time of their appearance, lay brothers were, in fact, the product of a process of development in which monks such as Caesarius of Heisterbach engaged in a public campaign to reinforce and define specific models of behaviour for them.

Cistercian texts offer particular attitudes towards and descriptions of the office, but over the course of the century a continual concern for separating choir monks and lay brothers is

⁶ I discuss in the body of this thesis that multiple other Cistercian authors and legislators echo Caesarius's concern. i.e. the Cistercian customaries, statutes, the *Exordium parvum*, and the *Apologia de barbis*.

present. At first, Cistercian legislation was concerned with establishing the concept of a lay brother as distinct from a mere lay servant or helper. Novel for the time, Cistercians sought to represent the lay brother as a full member of the monastic community who fulfilled the monastic calling through physical labour and shared in all the posthumous benefits of being a monk.⁷ Later, legislation would be concerned with lessening this equal status, distinguishing the lay brothers as equal in reward, but not equal in authority. This concern conveys what becomes anxiety in Caesarius of Heisterbach's text—that lay brothers sought to rise above their lowly station. This anxiety led to action and Cistercian monks used their writings to demarcate and instantiate the lay brothers as lesser in influence and status.

While the Cistercians attempted to shape what a lay brother was over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is difficult to determine whether their efforts were effective. Not only does the Cistercian legislation repeat injunctions against lay brothers reading or writing (which suggest that such admonishments were necessary), but also helped ensure that the lay brothers' thoughts survive only in the writing of choir monks. It is unclear how much we can trust Caesarius of Heisterbach—a product of a cathedral school education and a master of novices—when he recounts conversations between monks and lay brothers in his *Dialogue*. At best, his text may reflect some essence of what a lay brother may have thought. At worst, they are entirely fictitious representations bearing no reference to reality.⁸ Without any surviving texts written by brothers themselves, it is impossible to say with any certainty whether the monastic discourses

⁷ The early Cistercian legislations emphasizes that lay brothers would ultimately reach salvation as if they had been a monk. Other sources indicate that all temporal distinctions between the two groups would be erased in God's eyes. See Burchard of Bellevaux, *Apologia de barbis*, in *Apologia Duae*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Tournai: Brepols, 1985), 222-24.

⁸ Medieval authors would sometimes incorporate the lay brothers rhetorically into their texts, often as characters in a larger dialogue. For instance Hildegard von Bingen who wrote to Bishop Meffridus of Eberbach describing the lay brothers as follows, “[they] perform their duties with the noise of temerity, saying thus of their prelates: “Who and what are they? And what were we?” Or, “What are we?” See *Responsum Hildegardis*, *PL* 197(Paris: Migne, 1855), cols. 263-4.

accurately represented the brothers' lived experience, or how they conceived of themselves. Given this evidential lacuna, this thesis cannot be about lay brother self-conception, but must focus on the elite monastic culture which described them. Consequently, I seek to explain the discursive strategies by which these monks constructed a space for lay brothers within the monastic hierarchy and asserted authority over them.

OVERVIEW OF THE LAY BROTHERHOOD

The Cistercian Order of monks developed in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries as part of a broader movement of monastic reform. Discontent with the perceived laxity and involvement in secular affairs which characterized Benedictine monasticism, new orders, such as the Cistercians, arose which promised to return to the simplicity of early medieval monasticism and to a literal interpretation of the Benedictine *Rule*, the central organizing text of Western monasticism.⁹

The Cistercian lay brother was a development of the Cistercian twelfth-century reformation of monastic life and in large part was a modification of past Benedictine practice.¹⁰ By the eleventh century, the increasing theological emphasis placed on demarcated sacred space meant that monks were expected, at least theoretically, to live strictly cloistered lives within a monastic precinct. By the twelfth-century, almost all Benedictine monks were ordained as priests and thus, unlike their monastic predecessors, not only recited the monastic offices, but also celebrated a

⁹ Lekai, 21-32.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the Cistercians were not responsible for the concept of a lay brother. They were also implemented notably among the Carthusians and many other reformed monasteries, such as Vallambrosa, Hirsau, and Camaldoli. Each Order, or religious house did not, however, implement these brothers the same way, thus the particular form of Cistercian lay brother was unique. Maurice Laporte, "Frères," in *Le Dictionnaire De Spiritualité*, book 5 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1964), 1194-1195.

growing number of liturgical observances and private masses.¹¹ Having taken on major orders, therefore, these priest-monks were very concerned about the possibility of bodily pollution and thus the need to contain themselves within a sacral precinct. A third contributing feature was the nominal Cistercian refusal to assume the typical privileges which Benedictine monasteries enjoyed –the income from churches, altars, burial dues, tithes, ovens and mills, or manors and serfs. This rejection meant a need for self-sufficiency.¹² They preferred to emphasize that they would establish their monasteries far from established settlements and work their lands themselves in order to better emulate the *Rule and Life* of St. Benedict.¹³ The desire to create concentric circles of increasing sacrality, combined with a need to be self-sufficient led to the adoption of the lay brother system.

Under this model, the Cistercian order divided its community into two spheres; one of choir monks, and the other of lay brothers. The *Exordium parvum*, which is among the earliest Cistercian documents, frames the introduction of lay brothers into the order as a practical response to the abandonment of traditional income and as a means to better fulfill the *Rule of Benedict* which stipulated that monks must live by the labour of their own hands.¹⁴ The *exordium*, written before 1150 as a nostalgic description of the earliest days of the order (1090-1115), recounts:

Having spurned this world's riches, behold! The new soldiers of Christ, poor with the poor Christ, began discussing by what planning, by what device, by what management

¹¹ Lekai, 20-32.

¹² “*Exordium Parvum*” in Chrysogonus Waddell ed., *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux* (Cîteaux: *Commentarii Cistercienses*, 1999), 435.

¹³ Waddell, 434. The degree to which this discourse was a reality is debatable. The public discourse, regardless of its basis in reality, did have a powerful effect on how Cistercians sought to arrange monastic life.,

¹⁴ *Rule*, ch. 48: “Idleness is the enemy of the soul; and therefore, the brethren ought to be employed in manual labor at certain times, at other in devout reading.[...] If, however, the needs of the place, or poverty should require that they do the work of gathering the harvest themselves, let them not be downcast, for then are they monks in truth, if they live by the work of their hands, as did also our forefathers and the Apostles.”

they would be able to support themselves in this life.[...] It was then that they enacted a definition to receive, with their bishop's permission, bearded lay converts, and to treat them as themselves in life and death—lacking only the monastic profession—and also to receive hired hands; for without the support of these men they did not understand how they could fully observe the precepts of the *Rule* day and night.¹⁵

The *Exordium* underscores two fundamental issues for the early Cistercians. It identifies that the lay brotherhood existed to fulfill two primary purposes, one economic and the other spiritual. On one hand, the *Exordium* portrays lay brothers as a necessary concession caused by the economic isolation the Cistercians imposed upon themselves. It envisions lay brothers as an instrument by which monks could live without secular rents and tithes. On the other hand, the *Exordium* also makes clear that the creation of the lay brotherhood was inspired by more than pragmatism. The text indicates that lay brothers did not exist merely to replace secular servants, since the Cistercians also employed “hired hands.” Rather, it portrays lay brothers as necessary for the proper fulfillment of the requirements of the Benedictine *Rule*.

From the beginning lay brothers posed an apparent solution to a conceptual problem for Cistercian thinkers and legislators, but also led to the institutionalized incorporation of a secular presence.¹⁶ Since these brothers were not merely hired servants, and were instead full members of their monasteries, it was necessary to integrate them into the monastic hierarchy.¹⁷ The *Exordium* portrays lay brothers as fulfilling the unspecified role of “support”

¹⁵ Waddell, 435-6: “Ecce huius saeculi divitiis spreto, coeperunt novi milites Christi, cum paupero Christo pauperes, inter se tractare quo ingenio, quove artificio, seu quo exercitio in hac vita se sustentarent. Tuncque deinierunt se converses laicos barbato licentia episcopi sui suscepturos, eosque in vita et morte, excepto monachu, ut semetipsos tractaturos, et homines etiam mercenario; quia sine adminiculo istorum non intelligebant se plenarie die sive nocte praecepta Regule posse servare.”

¹⁶ It is likely that lay brothers also served a symbolic function for the Cistercians in their public relations campaign against Cluny in attempts to justify the establishment of a new order. Jacques Dubois points out, for instance, that the quote from the *exordium* above implies that all previous forms of monasticism had been doomed to failure since they could not “fulfill the requirements of the rule by day and by night.” In this case, it would have been imperative to emphasize that lay brothers were not merely servants, but companions on the monks' journey to salvation. See Jacques Dubois, “Lay Brother in the Twelfth Century: a Form of Lay Monasticism,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 7 (1972): 166.

literally a “vine prop” (*adminiculo*). Cistercian sources portray lay brothers providing a variety of functions. They engaged in animal husbandry and agricultural work. They appear as cobblers, blacksmiths, masons, and woodworkers, and they frequently served as managers and even diplomats, though in the latter case this task was not sanctioned by the Order as a whole.¹⁸ This integration was not only conceptual, but also demographic. The lay brotherhood became a major part of Cistercian culture and economic structure. Most conservative estimates have conjectured that their numbers quickly matched that of the choir monks with whom they worked.¹⁹ At the higher end, other studies have suggested that their numbers may have exceeded those of choir monks at rates as high as three to one.²⁰

The number and influence of lay brothers reached its height in the thirteenth century, and thereafter began to decline. Thus, lay brothers formed a major part of Cistercian monasticism at the height of its religious and cultural influence, since from the very beginning they existed within the monastic power structure and were not simply auxiliary to it.

¹⁷ Although it is impossible to answer definitively why the monks felt that it was necessary to affirm the religious status of the lay brothers, the sources show that this definition was very important to them. I suspect it may have been connected with their critique of Benedictine monasticism, and the papal privileges that freed Cistercian monasteries from paying Episcopal tithes under the condition that they worked the lands by their own hands. If the Cistercians presented lay brothers as true monks, and not servants, then they could make the claim that they fulfilled the physical requirements of the Benedictine rule better than did the Benedictines. If, also, the lay brothers were true members of their monasteries, then all of the lands they worked would be exempt from Episcopal tithes. These are just possible pragmatic reasons for the special effort the early sources take to affirm that lay brothers were just like monks. For a discussion of Cistercian privileges see Lekai, 65-76.

¹⁸ Brian Noell describes several incidences recorded in the statutes of the general chapter which involve lay brothers acting as diplomats. In each case, the abbots who permitted this occurrence were sanctioned. Noell, 270.

¹⁹ Jacques Dubois suggests that numbers of lay brothers have been exaggerated without sufficient evidence. He estimates conservatively that choir monks and lay brothers were roughly equal. He conjectures that an average monastery would house roughly 30 monks, and the same number of lay brothers. Dubois, 187-90. Other scholars, such as James Donnelly, give two to one and three to one ratios. See James Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Lay Brotherhood* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1949), 70.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

A FALSE MODEL OF UNITY AND DISJOINTED LAY BROTHER IDENTITIES

Historians of the lay brotherhood have been remarkably divided in their treatments. Reflecting the major concern of their primary sources, modern scholars have largely focused on identifying the exact personal and institutional status of Cistercian lay brothers. For the sake of establishing models by which to analyze the brothers, however, they greatly simplified not only their identity, but also the relationship between lay brothers and choir monks.

Among the earliest of modern studies on the lay brothers was Robert Othon Doucerneau's discussion of the institution and customs of lay brothers in the Cistercian order. He attempted to lay out exactly what a lay brother was in the context of the Order by describing, virtually word for word, the content of the *Usus conversorum*—the earliest Cistercian customary written to govern lay brothers' behaviour.²¹ Other early institutional historians, such as Thomas Aquinas Brokhaus, attempted to flesh out the institutional status of lay brothers in a similar manner, establishing their specific status as defined by Cistercian juridical documents. These scholars sought to establish a model of what lay brothers were and what they did, coming to the conclusions that they were a monastic, but inferior and auxiliary workforce.²²

Other scholars, such as Kassius Hallinger and Ernst Werner, focussed on the contentious origin of the lay brother institution within the Cistercian order and came to radically different conclusions. Hallinger argued that lay brothers were an institution that grew gradually out of the convergence of lay and monastic states.²³ He indicated that

²¹ See Othon Doucernau "De l'institution et des us des convers dans l'Ordre de Citeaux," in *Bernard et son temps*, vol. II (Dijon: L'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres de Dijon, 1929), 139-201.

²² Thomas Aquinas Brockhaus, "Religious who were known as Conversi," *Catholic University of America Canon Law Studies* 225 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1946), 1-49.

monasteries had always employed lay people known as the *famuli* in their monasteries. These lay people worked closely with and often emulated the monks, eventually taking on an unofficial quasi-monastic status. He suggested that in the eleventh century this partnership came to its logical end as these individuals sought to take monastic vows. In Hallinger's interpretation, monasteries could do nothing but create a place for these simple, but well-meaning individuals.²⁴

Ernst Werner, Hallinger's main opponent, argued that lay brothers were not monks in any shape or form. Instead, he suggests that they were merely peasants whom monks assigned another name in an attempt to bring the feudal system into the monastic context.²⁵ He saw the distinct religious status which monasteries granted to lay brothers as a means to facilitate their oppression and enabling a false consciousness of their true economic purpose.²⁶ Werner's Marxist envisioning of lay brothers' status remains of lasting influence. In her recent discussion of clerical violence, for instance, Jane Sayers argues that the monastery formed a total institution for the oppression of lay brothers, which drove them to eventual violence because there was no other outlet to vent discontent.²⁷ Likewise, James Donnelly's investigation of the later medieval decline of the lay brotherhood similarly viewed the brothers through a materialist lens.²⁸ He contended that the lay brotherhood existed as part of

²³ Kassius Hallinger, "Woher kommen die Laienbrüder?" *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 12 (1956): 1-104, and Ernst Werner, "Bemerken zu einer neuen These über Herkunft der Laienbrüder," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 6 (1958): 357. Both scholars' arguments are helpfully summarized in English in Bruce Lescher, "Lay Brothers: Questions Then and Now," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 23 (1988): 63-85.

²⁴ Hallinger, 81-94.

²⁵ Werner's use of the term "feudal" refers to the Marxist definition by which a feudal landlord exploited peasants on his lands (the means of production) by demanding a portion of the goods or produce that they produced.

²⁶ Ernst Werner, "Bemerken zu einer neuen These über Herkunft der Laienbrüder," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 6 (1958): 357.

²⁷ Jane Sayers, "Violence in the Medieval Cloister," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 533-42.

the Cistercian economic program, and that it fell out of favour when the Cistercians rejected formally their previous aversion to traditional ecclesiastical incomes in the fourteenth century.

More recent work has moved away from attempting to elucidate the institutional and economic status of Cistercian lay brothers, to explore their everyday life. Jean Leclercq advocated a shift away from trying to determine the exact place of the lay brothers in Cistercian institutional history and toward a social history of lay brothers as they actually lived.²⁹ Despite Leclercq's emphasis on the "real life" of the lay brothers, the lack of sufficient evidence meant that this injunction could never be fulfilled.³⁰ While attempting to move away from institutional definition of a lay brother, Leclercq merely replaced these institutional models with social models which also simplified the historical situation. In particular, Leclercq demonstrated insufficient attention to the variation between his sources, instead attempting to compare documents to construct the 'essential character' of the lay brother. He analyzes thirteenth-century miracle stories alongside early twelfth-century legislation without acknowledging their differing focus, and largely accepts their representation of what a lay brother was, as reflecting reality.

Jacques Dubois examined similar sources and asked questions very similar to Leclercq's. Dubois divided his article into seven parts: first on the origin of lay brothers in

²⁸ James Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Lay Brotherhood* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1949).

²⁹ Leclercq, 239: "On peut encore essayer de saisir ce que fut la vie intérieure de l'ensemble d'entre eux, ce que fut la spiritualité, non idéale ou idéalisée, mais réelle et vécue, du commun, ce que furent la piété et la vertu moyennes."

³⁰ For instance, he attempts to prove what a lay brother was by comparing sources written a century apart and in totally different genres. The two pages of his discussion of lay brothers' lives as being a "life of humility" he cites Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue of Miracles* dating roughly to the early thirteenth century, the *Usus conversorum* dating roughly to 1140, and Conrad of Eberbach's *Exordium magnum* dating from roughly 1180. He makes no distinction between the goals of these authors or their particular context instead using each source's attitude toward the concept of "humility" as a building block to prove that this was an essential characteristic of the Cistercian lay brother. Leclercq, 242-3.

general, second on the Cistercian lay brothers, third on Carthusian lay brothers, fourth on lay brothers as administrators, fifth on the lay brothers' place in his community, sixth on lay brothers as an autonomous group, and seventh on lay brothers' place in monasticism.³¹ Dubois surveys virtually all of the major debates surrounding lay brothers, such as where, when, and why they originated, how many there were, how they fit into monasticism in general, and how they were or were not like monks. In the end, he concludes that lay brothers were indeed important members of the Cistercian community, yet they were not monks in behaviour.³² He suggests that the lay brotherhood democratized monastic life by offering uneducated peasants the means to attain "the monastic ideal" and that the lay brotherhood should be considered a positive rather than a repressive institution.³³ He asserts, "to be a lay man may be considered an inferior state by those who are drawn by vocation or ambition to be clerics, but not by those who see it as the state where their spiritual life can blossom."³⁴ He cautions against scholars (particularly monastic scholars) who project their own values onto the past in assuming that "secularity" meant inferiority.³⁵

Dubois examines a broad range of primary sources for his study, including cartularies from Molesme and Cîteaux, the *Usus conversorum*, the Statutes of the General Chapter, and the *Ecclesiastica Officia*. His work trusts the validity of extant descriptions as accurate portraits—not mere representations—and like all of the previous scholars, Dubois felt that

³¹ Jacques Dubois, "The Lay brothers' Life in the Twelfth Century: A Form of Lay Monasticism," *Cistercian Studies* 7 (1972): 161-213.

³² Dubois, 61-213.

³³ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

there was a “true” lay brother to be discovered, and so he thought that it was possible to reconstruct a model of what this lay brother was in definite terms.

Since Dubois, scholarship has taken a cultural turn when grappling with the concept of the lay brother. Megan Cassidy-Welch was one of the first scholars to explore the idea that the representations of lay brothers in medieval texts may have little to do with reality and more to do with the author’s intent or values. In focusing on the lay brother revolts of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, she explores past assumptions and explicitly critiques James Donnelly’s work, which had examined a number of reports of lay brother violence appearing in the records of the Cistercian General Chapter. Unlike his conclusion that because the number of disruptions recorded increased in the late twelfth century, it indicated increased lay brother unrest, Cassidy-Welch suggests instead that the disturbances recorded by the General Chapter reflect a change in record keeping.³⁶ Taking this point further, she argues that the recalcitrant lay brother “became the subject—and from there the product—of a number of discursive structures designed to mark out deviant behaviour.”³⁷ She suggests that in accounts of transgressive lay brothers in the statutes of the general chapters and thirteenth century miracle stories, lay brothers became a symbolic measure through which to demarcate the boundaries of monastic discipline.

Along with this thesis, Cassidy-Welch emphasizes that lay brothers were subordinated in their monasteries through subtle discursive marginalization evident in writings from the thirteenth century.³⁸ She connects these stories to reports of recalcitrant lay brothers in the

³⁶ Megan Cassidy, “Non Conversi Sed Perversi,” in *Deviance and Textual Control: New Perspectives in Medieval Studies*, eds. Megan Cassidy, Helen Hickey, Meagan Street (Parkville: University of Melbourne, 1997), 38-40, 46. She asserts largely the same argument in Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings* (Brecht: Brepols, 2001).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

reports of the Cistercian general chapter to suggest that these documents sought to mark out lay brothers as transgressors to show the boundaries of monastic discipline.³⁹

Brian Noell, who also focuses on the thirteenth century “lay brother revolts”, similarly concentrates on the constructed status of the lay brother. He disagrees with Cassidy-Welch’s assertion that the records of revolts do not show an increase in violence and argues instead that there was increased lay brother violence in the early thirteenth century caused by a disconnect between the humble image of a lay brother perpetuated by Cistercian authors and the elevated status of lay brothers as managers and diplomats.⁴⁰ He suggests that lay brothers resented the fact that choir monks continued to impose upon them an antiquated model of simplicity and humility which reflected a social structure of the early twelfth century, but not the thirteenth.⁴¹ He indicates that as the lay brothers’ actual function increased in power, they expected greater rewards and prestige, and answered with violence only when these rewards were not provided.⁴²

Both Cassidy-Welch and Noell fruitfully compare narrative sources, such as the *Dialogue of Miracles*, and legal sources in the form of the statutes from the general chapter and serve as a point of departure for this thesis since they highlight the necessity to differentiate between the representations of the lay brothers in Cistercian sources and the historical reality in which these men lived. Furthermore, they both suggest that these representations served political functions. Despite the fact that both of these scholars question the motives behind monastic authors framing lay brothers as transgressive, humble, or simple,

³⁸ Ibid., 43-5.

³⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁰ Noell, 270-4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 262-4.

⁴² Ibid., 274.

they continue to work with the assumption that representations of lay brothers were essentially unified in their portrayal. For instance, while Cassidy-Welch carefully analyzes how thirteenth century miracle stories and statute entries construct the lay brother as transgressive, she does not consider the earlier history. Instead, she indicates that a lay brother's ideal role was clear in the twelfth-century— a situation which then changed in the thirteenth.⁴³ Similarly, Noell suggests that Cistercian moralists created one “false” portrayal of the lay brothers which disconnected with the “real” lay brothers.

Although each generation of scholars sought to build upon the work of their predecessors and so have greatly improved our understanding of the lay brotherhood, in each case they have assumed the existence of one hegemonic discourse concerning the lay brothers' role and position within the Cistercian Order. In some cases, they present this discourse as reflecting reality, in others they suggest that it was used to cover up or misrepresent the reality of the historical situation, yet they uniformly agree that there was a single conception of a lay brother in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

MONASTIC IDENTITY, AUTHORITY, AND POWER

Building upon Cassidy-Welch and Brian Noell's observation that Cistercian documents reflect the social and political concerns of their authors, my study seeks to complement previous scholarship by suggesting that the twelfth and thirteenth-century representations of lay brother were more complicated than even these scholars have acknowledged. I will demonstrate, however, that it is misleading to see an unchanging and uniform attitude toward

⁴³ Cassidy-Welch does suggest that lay brothers changed in the twelfth century, but does not provide an analysis of these changes. Given that her analysis focused on the thirteenth century, she largely sets up the twelfth century as a base point, pointing out how thirteenth century sources deviate from that twelfth-century representation. Thus, she does not deny change in the lay brother's status over the twelfth century, but neither does she explain these changes.

lay brothers since neither their reality nor representations were fixed, but rather demonstrate a continuing evolution into the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ Although medieval Cistercians frequently emphasized the unity of their order, recent scholarship on Cistercian monasticism generally has argued that this uniformity of belief and practice was largely a rhetorical construct.⁴⁵ To lose sight of the historical specificity of the individual texts and to treat the accounts synthetically is to heap together possibly unconnected ideas. I take it as problematic to connect sources on lay brothers spanning large periods of time and geographical areas without acknowledging the differing goals of the author or the particular historical context for which the source was produced.⁴⁶

This study seeks to examine some of the strategies that twelfth and thirteenth-century authors used to define the lay brother through rhetoric, legislation, and even physical actions.⁴⁷ The brotherhood thus provides a medium through which to examine how monastic power and methods for constructing identity functioned. I do not suggest that lay brothers were unique in that their identity, status, and role varied according to individual opinion and context. It is certain that Cistercian monks were also redefining what they were over much of

⁴⁴ Cassidy-Welch does address the gradual marginalization of lay brothers over time, but confines her analysis exclusively to the period after 1200. Cassidy-Welch, 34-5.

⁴⁵ Constance Berman has argued convincingly that the General Chapter was largely ineffectual in its enforcement of centralized Cistercian rule. Rather, she demonstrates significant variation in Cistercian practices, and slow development of a common Cistercian culture. For example, she explains that there were Cistercian nuns well before the Order officially recognized them as such. See Constance Berman, "Myths of Cistercian Origins," in *The Cistercian Evolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 2-45, and especially 38-45 on Cistercian nuns.

⁴⁶ For example, Jean Leclercq's aforementioned citation of three sources on lay brothers and humility which differed significantly in temporal and geographical context.

⁴⁷ Though I focus mostly on how lay brothers appear in monastic writings, it must also be assumed that the lay brothers themselves participated in this construction of their identity through non-textual means. Though it is difficult to pinpoint, it would be very unlikely that lay brothers exerted no influence on Cistercian culture especially given their large numbers. I allude to the brothers demonstrating acceptance or rejection of particular models applied to them later in this thesis. See chapter four below, 111-117.

the Middle Ages, yet it was necessary for them to contend with historical models which had been in development for roughly a millennium.

The lay brotherhood, on the other hand, was according to Cistercian documents forged *ex nihilo*, and required continual and dramatic redefinition – since the effort to define them showed considerable variation in belief and practice not only across time, but also between individual authors. Therefore, the lay brotherhood becomes a microcosm in which to see functioning monastic strategies of power and construction of identity .

THESIS STRUCTURE

With the goal of making the aforementioned creative process explicit, by which lay brothers' status and identity was negotiated and defined, this thesis lays out strategies which Cistercian monks used to establish and demarcate a social and political position for lay brothers in the period between 1130 and 1230.⁴⁸ The first chapter emphasizes the novelty of the lay brotherhood at the time of its creation in Cistercian juridical discourse in the 1130s. I demonstrate that lacking conceptual and behavioural precedents, the early Cistercians attempted to create a lay brother identity which co-opted elements from previous monastic models while constructing an entirely new monastic position.

The second chapter focuses on legislative developments that occurred within the Cistercian order following the initial attempts to create the lay brothers' position. I consider the changes apparent in the statutes of the Cistercian General Chapter to suggest a gradual discursive shift from rhetoric of inclusiveness between lay brothers and choir monks, to increasing

⁴⁸ My beginning date corresponds to the approximate dating of the *usus conversorum*, one of the first texts to treat lay brothers in any significant way. My end date corresponds with the approximate date of composition for the *Dialogue of Miracles* and thirteenth-century legislation from the Cistercian General Chapter.

exclusiveness. I draw out how shifts in regulation attempted to further demarcate lay brothers as separate from the spiritual sphere of choir monks, while associating them with a temporal sphere.

The third chapter, and core chapter of this thesis, focuses on one particular text, the *Apologia de barbīs* of Burchard of Bellevaux. This text is unique amongst the corpus of Cistercian literature for its explicit negotiation of lay brother status and hierarchy.⁴⁹ I contend that the *Apologia* has been misinterpreted in the past and elucidate how it was written explicitly in order to argue for a natural separation between choir monks and lay brothers. I assert that this text was likely intended to work as a rhetorical complement to the legislation of the Cistercian statutes and customaries to convince other members of the Order to accept the validity of this hierarchical division which the legislation advocates.

In the final chapter, I focus on the continued negotiation of the lay brothers' role in the thirteenth century. I argue that by examining reports of conflict in the Cistercian statutes and lay brother *topoi* thirteenth century *exempla* literature, it becomes clear that the lay brother's role continued to be a contested social category. In particular I demonstrate that the *exempla* should be viewed as part of a program intended to reinforce a hegemonic conception of the lay brothers' role, while reports of conflict in the statutes demonstrate through action instead of text that power relations within the Cistercian Order continued to be adjusted well into the thirteenth century.

My thesis argues, in sum, that by means of coercive legislation and discursive persuasion, choir monks and abbots actively shaped and redefined lay brothers' role, status,

⁴⁹ This text not only addresses lay brother explicitly, but also attempts to persuade his readers instead of command them. That an abbot, who should have been their social and political superior, attempted to persuade lay brothers to his way of thinking implies that he was either unwilling or unable to command them to accept his will. See Burchard of Bellevaux, *Apologia de barbīs, Apologiae duae*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Tournai: Brepols, 1985).

and identity throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and so reflect the rhetorical basis of monastic ideological power.

CHAPTER ONE

CUSTOMARIES AND THE CREATION OF THE CISTERCIAN LAY BROTHER

In a treatise dating from the mid-twelfth century, Idung of Prüfening—a Cluniac turned Cistercian monk—presented a fictitious debate between a Cluniac and a Cistercian monk, each of whom sought to convince the other of the relative superiority of his own customs. When discussing the clerical status of monks the Cistercian distinguished between “tonsured” and “non-tonsured” monks, stating, “all tonsured monks are clerics.”¹ After explaining further that the Cistercians “now have two monasteries within the precincts of the monastery, one of lay brothers and another of clerics,” the Cluniac ignorantly exclaims the abnormality of this arrangement by confessing that he “[had] not heard these things before.”² Idung seeks to show both the backwardness of the Cluniac monk and the superior attempts of the Cistercians to maintain order within the monastery. But even he cannot hide the novelty of this organization. After affirming briefly that there were indeed monks who were not clerics in ancient times and that this organization was not novel, the Cistercian abandons the topic in favour of discussing the differing habits of Cluniac and Cistercian monks.³

This exchange, while brief, reveals much about the Cistercian approach to their lay brethren and its reception among the broader monastic community of the twelfth century. As noted, scholarship has portrayed lay brother identity as static. Whether they investigate the origin or the decline of the lay brotherhood, scholars portray the lay brother as belonging to a

¹ Idung of Prüfening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: A Dialogue between Two Monks*, trans. Jeremiah Sullivan (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 133.

² *Ibid.*, 133.

³ Idung’s discussion also highlights how accepted a practice it was that monks should have taken clerical orders in that he presents monks who were not clerics as unusual.

relatively homogenous group which sprang fully formed from the mind of Stephen Harding and changed imperceptibly over the centuries.⁴ I argue instead that without any pre-existing framework to formulate a role for lay brothers in the early twelfth century, the Cistercians were compelled to engage in a sustained ideological program—evident in Idung’s 1155 work—intended to construct and legitimize the idea and reality of the lay brothers. This project continued over the course of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth.

My argument begins with the *Usus conversorum* (*UC*), the earliest Cistercian customary dealing with the lay brothers. The *UC* is well established among historians as the earliest descriptive source for Cistercian lay brothers’ lives and conduct.⁵ When understood within the history of monastic customaries, however, the *UC* should be better understood as a normative, not descriptive, endeavour. The *UC* demonstrates an attempt to shape a lay brother role out of the diversity of possibilities which characterized this figure in early twelfth century monasticism more generally. I will outline, in particular, the eleventh-century and twelfth-century context from which the Cistercians developed their own particular interpretation of lay brothers’ roles.

⁴ Stephen Harding, the second abbot of Cîteaux, is considered in Cistercian mythology to be the founder of the Order in its twelfth-century form. See Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977), 17-20.

⁵ These scholars use the *Usus conversorum* as a benchmark for Cistercian practice, not acknowledging that it did not reflect current practice, but sought to shape it and so provides only a limited perspective of what a lay brother was at this time. Virtually all of the modern studies on Cistercian lay brothers cite the *UC* unreservedly, several prominent examples are, Jean Leclercq, “Comment vivaient les frères convers,” *Analecta Cisterciensia* 21 (1965); 243; James Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Lay Brotherhood* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1949), 18; and Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 169-70.

PRE-CISTERCIAN LAY BROTHERS

Although I suggest that the *UC* was a text without precedent, the Cistercians certainly did not originate the concept of a lay brother. Cistercian tradition indicates that the Cistercians introduced lay brothers into their monasteries no earlier than 1119. By this time, lay brothers had already existed at La Grande Chartreuse (since at least 1086) and at Camaldoli, Fonte Avellana, Vallambrosa, and Hirsau (possibly as early as 1045).⁶ Other major monastic networks, such as the Cluniac monasteries, do not seem to have incorporated lay brothers until the thirteenth-century.⁷ Twentieth-century scholarship, beginning with Kassius Hallinger, has argued for the existence of these earlier precursors to the twelfth-century lay brothers based on scattered and brief descriptions. For instance, the *Vita* of Saint John Gualbert (c. 1083) describes the introduction of faithful lay men, who emulated the lives of monks, into the monastery of Vallambrosa:

From the time when monks first began to come there, God, who is the observer of a pure heart, and whose Son strove to bind the monks out of love for Him with the strictness of the *Rule*, sent to them faithful laymen of diverse origins, showing such a pure conversion in every way from the exhortation of the blessed Father, that they differed almost not at all from the monks. It was not permitted for them to have private property, nor to eat meat, nor to speak at the table, nor to accept anything from their parents or friends. And in no way did they differ from the monks, except that they

⁶ For a helpful résumé of some of the debates and assertions concerning the origin of lay brothers, including hypotheses over dating their development, see Conrad Greenia, "The Laybrother Vocation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Cistercian Studies* 16 (1981): 38-45. Greenia heavily bases his analysis on Maurice Laporte, "Frères," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, book V (Paris: Beauchesne, 1964), 1193-1207, and Kassius Hallinger, "Woher kommen die Laienbrüder?" *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 12 (1956): 1-104.

⁷ See Giles Constable's discussion of lay brothers at Cluny; Giles Constable, "Famuli' and 'Conversi' at Cluny: A Note on Statute 24 of Peter the Venerable," *Revue Bénédictine* 83 (1973): 326-50. He outlines a historiographical debate which suggested that Peter the Venerable may have introduced lay brothers at Cluny in the early twelfth century. Constable affirms that this argument is based on a misunderstanding of the Latin term "*conversus*" meaning "converted man". This Benedictine term for a convert was adopted by the Cistercians and Carthusians to refer to lay brothers. Constable underscores that the "*conversi*" at Cluny actually referred to men who had entered monastic life as adults. He contrasts these men with oblates, who had lived their entire lives in monasteries. Thus, when Peter the Venerable used the term "*conversus*" in his statute 24, he was actually referring to converted men in the older sense of the word. Constable emphasizes that there is no evidence of there being lay brothers at Cluny until long after the Cistercian institution had been established.

were not permitted to wear linen clothing during the excessive heat of the summer, and except maintaining silence which they could not observe when occupied by exterior work.⁸

This *vita* makes clear that the “faithful laymen” at Vallambrosa were living as monks, yet remaining lay men without taking the monastic profession to its fullest. Likely this kind of arrangement influenced the early Cistercian legislators who wrote the *Usus conversorum*. This superficial similarity does not give enough information to suggest that lay brothers at Cîteaux were influenced significantly by these early “lay brothers”, nor does the *vita* link the institution at Vallambrosa with either of the earlier accounts of similar “lay brothers” at Camaldoli and Fonte Avellana. Thus, given the textual evidence, it is possible that the early Cistercians derived the concept of a “lay brother” (defined as non-clerical worker who nevertheless lived as a monk) from these eleventh-century precedents. It is highly unlikely, however, that early Cistercian customs derived from an established tradition. These early “lay brothers” seem to bear no significant resemblance to the form of lay brothers at Cîteaux. Early non-Cistercian sources do not identify a separate institutional monastic status for these “lay brothers” nor do they use typical twelfth-century labels for them, such as *conversi*, or *fratres laici*. As such, it is difficult to say with certainty that they were connected in any meaningful way to twelfth-century lay brothers at Cîteaux.

Despite evidence of precursors nearly a century before the composition of the *Usus conversorum* (c. 1134), no clear textual precedent had been established for use by the author(s) of the *UC* to structure the Cistercian incorporation of lay brothers into the Cistercian

⁸ Atto Pistorensis, *S Joannis Gualberti Vita*, PL 146 (Alexandria: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997), col. 776D, A: “diebus, quibus monachi coeperant ad eum venire, Deus qui est inspector puri cordis, et cujus dilectione ejus filius curabat monachos constringere sub districtione Regulae, misit ei fideles laicos diversi ordinis, tam puram conversionem ostendentes in omnibus modis exhortatione pii Patris, ut pene nihil differrent a monachis. Quibus nec proprium habere, nec carnem comedere, nec ad mensam loqui, nec a parentibus, vel amicis quidquam sumere licebat. Et nihil omnino a monachis distabant, praeter quod permittebantur uti lineis vestibus in nimio fervore aetatis, et praeter silentium, quod in exterioribus occupati observare nequibant.”

hierarchy. Unlike the numerous monastic customaries written and disseminated in the eleventh-century which provided core texts for the codification of Cistercian monastic practices, there was no clear textual model against which to structure lay brothers' lives, or their own attitudes toward the lay brothers' vocation.⁹

It is likely that many early Cistercian abbots would have defaulted to familiar social arrangements typical of the Benedictine context from which the Cistercians initially emerged. In particular, it seems that early Cistercian policy regarding lay brothers developed in reaction to Cluniac models against which the Cistercians explicitly defined their own discipline.¹⁰ Before the *UC*, it appears as if there had been no need for monks to establish a model for lay brother life since Benedictine houses had a long tradition of either using monks to fulfill the tasks that would become the purvey of the lay brethren or they would use lay servants.

Cluny provides a useful picture of how this system worked and suggests the degree of its influence on Cîteaux. In the eleventh century, the monasteries of Cluny (the *ecclesia cluniacensis*) formed one of the most powerful spiritual and religious networks in Christendom. As the Cistercians sought to distinguish themselves within the sea of twelfth-century monastic observances, Cluny became a polemic foil against which to define their own practice. Despite their rhetoric, Cistercian life was nonetheless heavily indebted to Cluniac practices. Cluniac customaries were at the core of Cistercian ones and the Cluniac sign-

⁹ For example, Carthusian lay brothers were distinguished far less from choir monks as an independent group than those at Cîteaux, and other early "lay brothers" seem to bear only a surface resemblance to those at Cîteaux. See Jacques Dubois's discussion of Cistercian and Carthusian lay brothers in "L'institution des convers au XIIe siècle, forme de vie monastique propre aux laïcs," in *I laici "societas christiana" dei seculi XI e XII* (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore: Milan, 1968), 183-261.

¹⁰ The numerous polemical texts which the Cistercians directed toward Cluny demonstrate an active attempt to distinguish their practices specifically from those of the Cluniacs. See for example, Idung of Prüfening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: the Case for Cîteaux*, Jeremiah O'Sullivan trans (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977) and *Cistercians and Cluniacs: St. Bernard's apologia to Abbot William*, trans. Michael Casey (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1970).

language lexicon (allowing silent monks to communicate) was the foundation for Cistercian sign language.¹¹ In this context, it is unsurprising that Cluniac behavioural models influenced how early Cistercian abbots and monks (and possibly lay brothers themselves) conceived of the lay brother's role and office.

Certain Cluniac monks were called *conversi* since they had 'converted' to monastic life as adults. Historians have sometimes conflated these individuals with the Cistercian *conversi* (lay brothers).¹² Although a formal role for lay brothers as monks did not exist at Cluny in the early twelfth century, the monasteries of the *ecclesia cluniacensis* did integrate illiterate adult converts—the individuals who would later constitute the bulk of volunteers for the Cistercian lay brotherhood.¹³ Whereas Cistercian customs forbade illiterate individuals from becoming monks, Cluniac customs had no such stipulations.¹⁴ Cluny largely recruited through practices of oblation and thus had well-developed structures for educating and

¹¹ Scott Bruce, "The Origins of Cistercian Sign Language," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, vol. 52, no. 3-4 (2001): 193-20. For a reproduction of the Cluniac lexicon see Robert Barakat, *Cistercian Sign Language: A Study in Non-Verbal Communication* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 109.

¹² This conflation is explored in further depth in Giles Constable, "Famuli and Conversi at Cluny," *Revue bénédictine* 83 (1973): 326-50. On the institutionalized separation between choir monks and lay brothers, see Chapter XXII *Summa carta caritatis* in Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Realities*, 450. The *carta* states, "Once he has taken his vows, a lay-brother shall not become a monk even if he greatly desires it; but he shall remain in the vocation of his calling. If, under the influence of the devil, he shall have taken the habit of a monk or a canon regular from any bishop or abbot, he shall after that never again be admitted to any of our monasteries."

¹³ Constance Berman has demonstrated convincingly that despite Cistercian rhetoric which emphasized the low status and illiteracy of lay brothers, before the 1180s there were at least several well-publicized cases of aristocrats choosing to become lay brothers rather than monks as an act of humility. See Constance Berman, "Distinguishing Between the Humble Peasant Lay Brother and Sister, and the Converted Knight in Medieval Southern France," in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe 1000-1400*, eds. Emilia Jamrozak and Janet Burton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 264-83.

¹⁴ See Franz Neiske, "Conversus," in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 367; Neiske, "The Conversus at Cluny. Was he a Lay Brother?" *Benedictus, Studies in honours of St. Benedict of Nursia* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 99-107; and W. Teske, "Laien, Laienmonche und Laienbruder in der Abtei Cluny. Ein Beitrag zum 'Konversernproblem,'" *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1976): 248-322.

training monks in literacy within the cloister.¹⁵ Adult illiterate converts to Cluny would be expected to be trained in reading and writing, before which they were unable to participate fully in the recitation of the divine office and private reading. Until they learned to read, it was accepted that they would engage in largely physical labour and other tasks not requiring literacy for their monasteries.¹⁶ Giles Constable has referred to this situation as a temporary stepping stone for these “lay monks.”¹⁷ Unlike Cistercian lay brothers, these individuals were in practice and essence true monks without any kind of institutional distinction between them and the greater monastic community. The distinction was transitory, not the permanent distinction enjoined within Cistercian rules.

Another entry to the Cluniac cloister without taking vows was to become a lay servant (*famulus*). The *famuli*, according to Giles Constable, were lay people attached to monasteries who engaged in physical work for the monastery in exchange for spiritual and physical benefits yet who remained autonomous without any particular legal or spiritual status within the monastic power structure.¹⁸ Their work thus closely resembled that of Cistercian lay brothers, who engaged principally in physical labour, yet their status was entirely different. Unlike lay brothers, the *famuli* did not live according to a monastic rule, nor did they receive monastic rites after death as did the lay brothers.¹⁹

¹⁵ Although she focuses primarily on physical discipline as a technique of teaching, Isabelle Cochelin also provides a discussion of the Cluniac educational systems. Isabelle Cochelin, “Besides the book: using the body to mould the mind—Cluny in the tenth and eleventh centuries,” *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 21-34.

¹⁶ See Constable, 326-50 and Lutz Kaelber, *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and organization in medieval religious* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 70-73 for a description of Cluniac hierarchies and divisions of labour. Both scholars largely base their arguments on Ulrich of Cluny’s *consuetudines*.

¹⁷ Constable, 42.

¹⁸ Kaelber, 72.

¹⁹ Kaelber, 72, and Constable, 45-50.

The situation at Cluny is typical of a situation common in eleventh-century monasticism. Monks were not as clearly distinguished by status and occupation as they would come to be in the Cistercian monasteries. But, given this traditional Benedictine model, as I demonstrate in the following section, it appears that some of the early Cistercian abbots also found the subtle institutional distinction between monks, lay workers, and lay brothers, which the *UC* would present, to be utterly confusing.

ORATORES WHO WORK: CREATING LAY BROTHERS AS MONASTIC LABOURERS

Scholars generally agree that lay brothers became part of Cistercian monasteries sometime between 1119 and 1130, and that the *UC*, the first guide to lay brother life, did not appear until 1134, at the earliest.²⁰ Despite the exact dating of the text, its prologue suggests that the text was a *post facto* treatment of an existing problem:

Since it is clear that we have received from bishops the care of souls of lay brothers equally as of monks, I am amazed that certain of our abbots devote indeed all due diligence of discipline to the monks, but none or very little to the lay brothers. Some, holding them in contempt because of their innate simplicity, think that material food and clothing are to be provided for them more sparingly than for monks, but that they are nevertheless imperiously made to do forced labour. Others, on the contrary, giving in to their murmuring more than is expedient for souls, indulge bodies the better to get more work if they treat them with greater laxity as regards clothing.²¹

²⁰ This dating for the composition of the *UC* is supported by the vast majority of the Cistercian scholarly community. Its veracity has been questioned primarily by Constance Berman in her book *The Cistercian Evolution* (Philadelphia: Princeton University Press, 2000). Berman suggests that the *UC* was actually written as late as the 1180s based on the dating of manuscripts containing the document. Several major scholars, such as Chrysogonus Waddell, Martha Newman, and Patrick Maguire have attacked Berman's assertions by indicating that while early Cistercian manuscripts might date from the 1180s, the texts contained therein existed previously to the manuscript. See especially Chrysogonus Waddell, for the most thorough critique of Berman's argument, "The Myth of Cistercian Origins: C.H. Berman and the Manuscript Sources," *Cîteaux* 51 (2000): 299-386.

²¹ Chrysogonus Waddell, *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-Century Usages with Related Texts*, (Brecht: Brepols, 2000), 164-5: "Cum constet supere animas fratrum laicorum eque ut monachorum curam nos suscepisse ab episcopis, miror quosdam abbates nostros monachis quidem discipline debitam impendere diligentiam, conversis vero aut nullam aut minimam. Alii illos, pro ingenita eorum simplicitate contemptui habentes, ipsum etiam corporalem victum vel vestimentum restrictius ipsis quam monachis administrandum putant, et ad opera nichilominus eos imperiose satis angariant. Alii per contrarium eorum murmurationi cedentes, ultra quam expediat

Whether simply a rhetorical tool or describing real behaviour, the author(s) frames his composition of the *UC* as a response to an existing problem. He claims that abbots were not recognizing the official spiritual status of lay brothers, and were instead simply using them for labour just as they would use hired hands (or as the Cluniacs may have used the *famuli*). Although the author chastises these abbots for their failings, his rhetorical amazement (*miror*) at their behaviour may not have been justified.

The *UC* itself indicates that there had not previously been explicit and uniform rules for lay brothers since it notes, “I have written this guide for lay brothers so that diversity may not be found in their way of life either.”²² Unlike the *Ecclesiastica officia* (an earlier customary for choir monks written to impose a uniformity of practice and ideology on the choir monks) this statement indicates that before the *UC* no such text, or even an expectation of uniformity would be held to among the lay brothers. Despite the amazement expressed by the author, the many abbots of the early Cistercian order would understandably have been uncertain about what exactly was a lay brother’s status. They lacked a formal customary, *Rule* or narrative texts describing the lay brother role. Since so many Cistercian houses converted from the Benedictine tradition, abbots likely would have defaulted to former Benedictine uses framing these brothers either as true monks or lay servants.

Given the explicit statement of the lay brother problem raised in the prologue, we can accept that the text sought to remediate the heterogeneity of behaviour which existed among the monasteries of the Cistercian order. Historians such as Jean Leclercq, James Donnelly and

animabus indulgent corporibus quo taliter opera magis eliciant, si eos remissius in cibo et [in] vestimento dissolucius tractent.”

²² Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 164.

Megan Cassidy-Welch, have ignored this explicit acknowledgement of heterogeneity of practice in early Cistercian monasticism.²³ I suggest, however, that the *UC* represents the first codification of a single uniform role for lay brothers. There is no evidence of earlier attempts to codify rules for this group of monks nor does the *UC* ever claim that it is writing to revise past practice.²⁴

In imposing new standards for the lay brothers, the *UC* affirmed a monastic status for lay brothers (therefore distinguishing them from lay people) and simultaneously established a series of barriers to separate them from choir monks as physical labourers. According to the tripartite division of society (*oratores*, who prayed, *bellatores*, who fought, and *labores*, who worked) by which medievals understood human order, the *UC* constructed lay brothers as *oratores* who worked and did not pray thus proposing a confusing melding of functions. The *UC* criticizes that Cistercian abbots were closely approximating a Cluniac approach to the *famuli* in that they were unconcerned for the spiritual well-being of the brothers—as they would be for choir monks—and instead were treating them as a group of auxiliary workers. In this way, the abbots did not demonstrate sufficient awareness of the Cistercian assertion that lay brothers’ souls were to be “cared for equally as of monks” and required equal “discipline.”²⁵ So if Cistercian abbots were comfortable with the traditional division of labour, why did the author of the *UC* seek to reform it? The explanation lies in the nature and purpose of the *UC*, a topic to which I now turn.

²³ For several diverse examples of this very widespread trend, See Jean Leclercq, 243; James Donnelly, 18; and Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 169-70, all of whom treat the *UC* as a description of the lay brothers’ role, and not shaping it.

²⁴ For a discussion of the origin of lay brothers and the early textual evidence, see Maurice Laporte, “Freres,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, book V (Paris: Beauchesne, 1964), 1193-1207.

²⁵ Waddell, *Usus conversorum*, 160.

USUS CONVERSORUM AS A NEW STYLE CUSTOMARY

In structure, the *Usus conversorum* resembles earlier customaries such as Ulrich of Zell's Cluniac *Consuetudines* and the Cistercian *Ecclesiastica officia*. The *UC* begins, like the *Ecclesiastica officia*, with a discussion of lay brother liturgy and times for mass, followed by times for silence, learning, mealtimes, behaviour in the monastic chapter, discipline, and reception of novices. As I show below, the structure of the *UC* almost directly parallels previous and contemporary monastic customaries. In substance and nature, however, the text makes clear that lay brothers' and monks' roles were fundamentally different. A brief excursus on the nature of monastic customaries is necessary to explain this last issue.

Monastic customaries played an important role in shaping and developing Cistercian values and practices, and their uses of the customary is one of the distinguishing features of their brand of monasticism. Of the three types of customaries identified by Anselm Davril — directive, descriptive, and prescriptive— Cistercians focused on using customaries in the last sense.²⁶ Cistercian monks employed a “new style” customary which was normative in nature.²⁷ Davril emphasized that all three forms, while similar in content, served very different purposes.

Directive customaries sought to fix the practices of their monastery at a particular period in their existence. Thus, Bernard of Cluny wrote an official account of Cluniac customs in order to codify and fix in memory the current practices in his time, likely with an

²⁶ Anselme Davril, “Coutumiers directifs et coutumiers descriptifs d’Ulrich à Bernard de Cluny,” in *From Dead of Night to End of Day*, eds. Susan Boynton and Isabelle Cochelin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 23.

²⁷ As contrasted with directive or descriptive customaries of the eleventh century. See Davril, 23.

eye to providing a guide to novices.²⁸ Descriptive customaries, on the other hand, were not intended for internal use. Rather, these would have been written at one monastery to explain its way of life to monks at another house—such as the customary written by Ulrich of Cluny, which was composed for the eleventh-century abbot of Hirsau so that the monks there might emulate Cluniac Customs. Finally, there were normative customaries which sought to shape behaviour. Davril notes that this kind of customary is best typified by those composed by the Cistercian or Carthusian monks in the twelfth century to create unified practice among all the houses of their orders.²⁹

The normative customaries operated entirely differently from their directive or descriptive predecessors in that they took on the force of law. Unlike the Benedictine and Cluniac precedent by which abbots had an inalienable right to modulate practice based on tradition and charity in their own houses, Cistercian houses did not have the option to choose to follow only certain aspects of their customaries. Rather, the authority of the customary was absolute. To give authority to the text, the order developed mechanisms such as annual visitation and mandatory attendance at the general chapter.³⁰ In this way, the Cistercian use of customaries to construct practices, rather than reflect them, was novel. In the case of the *Usus conversorum*, however, they adapted the constitutive function of these normative customaries to construct an entirely new position for lay brothers within their monasteries. In the following section, I consider some of the primary differences between the *Ecclesiastica officia*, the early Cistercian customary prescribing behaviour for choir monks, and the *Usus Conversorum* to demonstrate this process.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977), 21-32.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *EO* AND *UC*

The *Ecclesiastica officia* (*EO*) is principally concerned with the role of a monk-cleric. The first 52 of 121 chapters describe the liturgical year, while the remaining chapters discuss issues of separating monks from lay people, and spiritual development through the regulation of exterior and interior *mores*. Although the *UC* shows a similar concern with regulation, its focus was quite unlike the *EO*. Instead of being about a life focused on prayer, meditation, and reading, the *UC* describes a life focused primarily on labour. It does present, however, a life that is entirely monastic in its spiritual and regulated nature. The *UC* describes lay brothers as engaged in mundane tasks such as agriculture and animal husbandry, cobbling, and blacksmithing, but notes that their ultimate spiritual reward was markedly monastic. For example, the prologue grants lay brothers and choir monks a certain equality, “If they [lay brothers] too have been bought with the same great price [as monks] why should they be cared for any differently—those who it is clear, are equals in the grace of redemption.”³¹

The equality of the two groups is underscored by how the *UC* intentionally parallels that of the *Ecclesiastica officia*. It begins with a focus on lay brother participation in the liturgy, followed by times to keep silent, mealtimes, monastic chapters and the reception of novices, and finally physical requirements such as boots, bedding, and punishment.³² The *EO*,

³¹ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 56: “Denique si empti sunt et ipsi precio magno, cur discernuntur in cura regiminis quos pares constat esse in gratia redemptionis.”

³² A list of chapters is reproduced here for the sake of clarity: I the brethren at the granges, II the time for rising for Vigils, III Solemnities when they do not work, IV days when they have Mass. V About Communion. VI places to keep silence. VII that no women may enter the grange enclosure. VIII about mealtime prayers. IX What they have to learn. X About the discipline. XI About chapter. XII How brethren are received. XIII About profession. XIV about brethren sent on a journey. XV about meals XVI about clothing XVII about bedding. XVIII about the punishment for disobedience by lay brothers. XIX about boots. XX about bells. Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 163.

in parallel, is dominated by descriptions of the proper conduct for the liturgy. Of 121 chapters, 67 of them describe the liturgical year. The chapters then describe daily schedules for Vigils, lauds, the chapter, reading, meals, and work, and conclude with regulations for receiving guests, journeying, medicine, rituals for death, and the reception of novices, and conclude with a description of the tasks of monastic officials, such as the cellarer, and infirmarer. That the *UC* parallels the structure of the *EO* (itself was based on older customaries) indicates it was intended to frame lay brothers' as typically monastic. They were not simply lay servants, but rather monastic individuals in their own right.

The explicit content of the text supports this reading. In the discussion of lay brother liturgy, for example, the *UC* emphasises that lay brothers are to recite their prayers just like monks. "At Vigils as well as at the Day of Hours," it says, "they say their prayers just like [*sicut*] the monks."³³ Although it goes on to identify that the lay brothers' prayers were vastly simplified, consisting of repetition of the *pater noster* for as many times as the monks recited psalms, the customary makes the similitude clear; lay brother involvement in the Vigils followed an entirely monastic structure which was not required of lay people of the same era. In comportment, they are likewise to act the same. The *UC* states, "in church, however, when standing upright and bowing and in their observances they should act the same way [*sicut*] as the monks."³⁴ And in speech monks and lay brothers were to mirror each other. The *UC* enjoins, "In whichever workshops the monks keep silence, so do they [lay brothers]; nor may they enter any of them without permission. Moreover, in their own dormitory and refectory especially are they to observe silence; and, besides these, in all other places, unless they speak

³³ *Ibid.*, 166: "Tam vigiliis quam ad horas diei faciant orationes suas sicut monachi."

³⁴ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 177-8: "In ecclesia vero in erectionibus et inclinationibus et ceteris observanciis habeant se sicut monachi."

about necessities at the bidding of abbot or prior.”³⁵ These explicit identifications of the two groups as being “the same” highlights a formal recognition of a shared monastic status in the *UC*.

Despite this recognition that lay brothers were “just like” monks, the *UC* makes clear that they were not monks. Both the *Rule of Benedict* and the *Ecclesiastica officia* emphasize the importance of reading and meditation for monks.³⁶ The *UC*, on the other hand, forbids lay brothers from participating in these activities. Rather, the text emphasizes the fundamental “exteriority” of the lay brother.

The *UC* refers to reading twice. First, it indicates that “no one is to have a book or learn anything except the *Pater noster*, *Credo in deum*, and *Miserere mei, deus*, and these not from a written text, but only by heart.”³⁷ The *EO* on the other hand is littered with references to reading and intellectual development.³⁸ Not only does it make special reference to personal *lectio* (reading) in addition to the *Rule of Benedict*, but it also stipulates that monks’ lives should be largely centred on the reading of texts. When they were not reading themselves, they listened to texts being read while eating, and while celebrating the divine office daily. Lay brothers instead neither participated in reading during the divine office, nor did they

³⁵ Ibid., 165: “In quibusque officinis tenent monachi silentium et ipsi nec aliquam earum ingrediantur sine licentia. Insuper in suo dormitorio et refectorio omnino silentium teneant, et preter hec in omnibus locis aliis, nisi forte iussu abbatis vel prioris de necessariis loquantur.”

³⁶ See for instance the discussion of *lectio* in the *Rule*, ch. 48.1, 4,5,10,13,14,22;49.4.

³⁷ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 68: “Nullus habeat librum nec discat aliquid nisi tantum *pater noster* et *credo in deum, miserere mei deus*, et hoc non littera sed cordetenus.”

³⁸ For example, the *EO* dictates in chapter 16.4, that “the Book of Jeremiah should be read at vigils and in the refectory during passiontide.” In 68.48, that “the reader steps out and goes about his reading as follows,” in 70.19 “as for the reading of the rule and any announcements that follow,” and in 71.5 “[during lectio] those seated in the cloister should deport themselves religiously each reading from a separate book.” See *The Ancient Usages of the Cistercian Order (Ecclesiastica officia)*, trans. Martinus Cawley (Lafayette: Guadalupe Translations, 1998).

listen to reading while eating, effectively removing them from any engagement with texts.³⁹ It is significant that the *Usus* officially bars lay brothers from engaging in a fundamental aspect of monastic life.⁴⁰ As discussed in later chapters, Cistercian narrative sources frequently portrayed lay brothers as inherently illiterate [*sine litteris*] and simple [*ingenita simplicitate*], and therefore, unable to learn to read.⁴¹ These descriptions, however, need to be understood in light of the prohibitions against reading – which were meant to ensure that lay brothers remained illiterate. Unlike later texts, the *UC* accepts the possibility that lay brothers could be taught to read; but it forbids it in order to affirm a physical monastic role that was demarcated from that of a choir monk.

This same focus on separating a lay brother's role from a choir monk's is also apparent in the differing approaches to confession and punishment outlined in the *EO* and *UC*. The *EO* follows a heavily formulaic approach to confession and absolution which highlights a monk's internal personal struggle with sin. During the daily monastic chapter, abbots would request a voluntary public confession of faults, after which a monk who "knows himself to be blameworthy" prostrated himself and asked for absolution. Also, if he is accused by another, he must also immediately prostrate himself and ask forgiveness. The individual at fault would then be punished. The *EO* further describes that if a monk should be whipped as punishment, he must have "no words on his lips except for the constant repetition of 'the blame is mine. I

³⁹ See Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 66-7.

⁴⁰ *Lectio divina* is mentioned seven times in the *Rule*. This seems to indicate a strong emphasis on its importance. See *Rule*, 48 :1, 3-5, 10, 13, 14-16, 17-18, 22-23, 73 : 2-6.

⁴¹ For example, Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 56: "...pro ingenita eorum simplicitate contemptui habentes...qui simpliciores et sine litteris esse noscuntur."

shall correct my ways' (*Mea culpa. Ego me emendabo*)."⁴² This ritual depends on voluntary acceptance of sin and offering satisfaction. The monk is assumed to have internalized the monastic life and thus willingly accede to its strictures. Lay brothers, on the contrary, were not held to this standard.

The *UC* describes two forms of punishment for lay brothers: regular discipline, and punishment for disobedience. The text stipulates that lay brothers should "accept discipline" every Friday.⁴³ Furthermore, lay brothers did not participate in the ritual of confession described above. They were not required to admit fault, nor display any kind of inward or outward contrition. The *UC* stipulates immediate physical punishments for disobedience, enjoining, for example, "A lay brother who is disobedient to any master assigned him, will take his meals for three days seated on the floor before the brothers in the refectory as penance. He also receives discipline in the chapter."⁴⁴ This lack of concern over willed contrition or interior acceptance of fault breaks markedly not only with the *EC*, but also with the *Rule of Benedict* which emphasized the importance of interior contrition and spiritual development.⁴⁵ Instead, its approach to the punishment of lay brothers suggests they were

⁴² This ritual is described in *Les Ecclesiastica Officia Cisterciens du XIIeme siecle*, eds. Danielle Choisselet and Placide Vernet (Reiningue: La Documentation Cistercienne, 1989), 204-206.

⁴³ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Usages*, 69 : Ab octavis pentecostes usque ad nativitatem domini, et ab octavis theophanie usque ad pascha, omni sexta feria accipiant disciplinas, nisi aliqua fuerit festivitas.

Although "disciplina" can mean many things, it is apparent from comparing the construction "disciplinas accipere" with its use in Bernard of Clairvaux's letters that it means corporal punishment in this context. Cf. Jean Leclercq ed., *Sancti Bernardi opera VII* (Roma : *Editiones Cistercienses*, 1974), 169-170: "Ut tamen faciamus satis inquietiori conscientiae tuae, et ne forte malum hoc mali cuiuspiam gravioris latentis adhuc in monasterio fuerit commonitio, pro paenitentia tibi iniungimus septem psalmos paenitentiales quotidie usque ad Pascha, septies prosternendo te, decantare, septem disciplinas accipere In hunc modum satisficiat et ille qui tibi ad illam missam ministravit."

⁴⁴ Waddell, *Twelfth Century Usages*, 75: "Conversus qui cuilibet magistro sibi deputato inobediens fuerit pro satisfactione tribus diebus humi residens comedat coram fratribus in refectorio sine mantelli; disciplinam quoque in capitulo accipiat."

⁴⁵ For example, *Rule*, ch. 23.

viewed as children unable to accept adult ways of thinking and acting. Isabelle Cochelin has argued that the prevailing discourse of childhood in the middle ages was that children were devoid of rational intelligence and they needed be trained through the body rather than through the mind.⁴⁶ By simply using the body as a medium for correction the *UC* treats the lay brothers as if they were child monks. In this way, the *UC* strongly underscores two important points. On one hand, lay brothers were separated from lay people through their regulated, monastic lives, yet on the other hand, the *UC* wished to emphasize that lay brothers were quite unlike Cluniac “lay monks” in that their interior development was actively discouraged. An attempt, it seems, that was meant to ensure that the lay brotherhood remained distinct from the choir monk population.

CONCLUSION

The early Cistercian custom makers, while perhaps deriving loose inspiration from earlier examples of lay men who lived with monks yet did not take monastic vows, forged an institutional and cultural identity for the lay brethren without clear precedent. Thus, the ‘lay brother’ as an institutional and cultural category was an active and deliberate social construction. Due to the conflicted goals and ideals of the Cistercian custom makers, the *UC* presented a model for the lay brothers’ life which was somewhat contradictory—at times affirming that lay brothers were just like monks, while at others clearly demarcating the two groups as separate. Building upon the initial early attempts to forge a role for lay brothers, in the following chapter, I explore how the following generation of Cistercian legislators

⁴⁶ I. Cochelin, “Besides the Book: Using the Body to mould the Mind—Cluny in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. G. Ferzoco and C. Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 25.

responded to, and attempted to resolve this potentially disruptive separation of Cistercian monasteries into two equal communities by redefining the lay brother through statutory legislation.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF THE LAY BROTHER'S POSITION IN TWELFTH-CENTURY STATUTES OF THE CISTERCIAN GENERAL CHAPTER

In a series of letters exchanged between Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, Bernard criticized the Cluniacs' involvement in the 'world':

But what will you have to say about secular possessions which you hold in manner of secular persons, since in this respect you seem not to differ from them in any way? For towns, villas, serfs, servants, and maids, and, what is worse, the gain arising from toll duties, and practically all of this gain you accept without distinction, retain illegally, and guard in every way against those who would strive against your practice.¹

Bernard's criticisms of Cluniac secular practices reflect the principal ideal and purpose behind the Cistercian lay brotherhood. By no longer relying on secular servants working within the monastery, in Bernard's view the Cistercians held themselves to a much more rigorous standard than the Cluniacs. Through the lay brotherhood, Cistercians fully followed St. Benedict of Nursia's injunction that monks support themselves "by the labour of their own hands" instead of relying on outside labourers and externally generated revenues.²

Key to Bernard's argument was the understanding that lay brothers were, at their core, monastic—not secular—servants. Accordingly, in seeking to define the position of lay brothers within the Order, Cistercian legislators initially attempted to affirm the brothers' fundamental similarity to the monks. The legislators took great pains to emphasize that lay brothers were not merely secular servants, but rather were truly monastic individuals whose labour contributed to the perfection of life at Cîteaux. In this way, they considered themselves

¹ Roy C. Cave & Herbert H. Coulson, *A Source Book for Medieval Economic History* (New York: Biblio & Tannen, 1965), 299-301.

² Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 249-51.

justified in criticizing the Cluniacs and other Benedictine monks for their extensive involvement in the ‘world’ since the Cistercians ostensibly adhered to a much higher eremitical ideal in which some monks prayed, while other ‘monks’ cared for the physical needs of the community allowing them to engage very little with the outside world. By the end of the twelfth century the Cistercians’ attitude to their lay brethren had shifted. No longer did Cistercian sources present monks and lay brethren as spiritual and temporal equals. Rather, the lay brothers became subject to increasingly strict legislation which marked them not only as separate from the monks but also inferior to them.³

The purpose of this chapter is to examine this shift in the status of lay brothers as they are represented in the evolution of Cistercian customs over the course of the twelfth century. I argue that changes in the written laws of the Order (statutes and customaries) concerning lay brothers largely consisted of practical, yet symbolic gestures which were actively designed to separate choir monks from lay brethren. In this way the legislation sought to construct boundaries between these two groups, and gradually refute the initial argument for equality between choir monks and lay brethren which the *Usus conversorum* (*UC*) advocated.

My contention is that the legislation concerning lay brothers was not primarily directed at legally coercing lay brothers or at creating the juridical means to highlight deviancy, as several scholars have affirmed.⁴ Rather, the legislation was fundamentally concerned with ideologically demarcating and reinforcing boundaries between the choir monks and the brothers. The lay

³ One prime example is a statute of 1188 which forbid nobles from becoming lay brothers in the Cistercian order indicating that powerful men outside of Cistercian monasticism would also rule inside, and that lay brothers would exclusively be drawn from a servile class. See Brian Noell, “Expectation and Unrest Among the Cistercian Lay Brothers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 253-74.

⁴ See Jane Sayers, “Violence in the Medieval Cloister,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41, no. 4 (1990): 33-42; and Megan Cassidy-Welch, “Non Conversi Sed Perversi: The Use and Marginalisation of the Cistercian Lay Brother,” in *Deviance and Textual Control* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1997), 37.

brothers, whom the Cistercian legislators marked as insiders at the beginning of the twelfth century, were later designated as outsiders as legislation sought to articulate in detail the qualities which defined choir monks and lay brothers.⁵ This chapter focuses on three periods of legislation, the first, corresponding to the writing of the *UC*, represents the early period of the Cistercian Order, pre-1147.⁶ The second focuses on a group of statutes from the Cistercian general chapter dating from 1157-9, and the third likewise focuses on these statutes from 1180-1190.⁷ In comparing these three periods, changes demonstrate attempts by the General Chapter to demarcate lay brothers from choir monks by emphasizing their work, clothing, spaces, and their involvement in the monastic political structure. I divide these periods based on statutes which are grouped both temporally and thematically as there were no statutes produced concerning lay brothers exclusively between 1148 and 56, and in the period between 1159 and 1179.

EVOLVING CUSTOMS

Monastic customs were designed to dynamically respond to the needs of their creators.

Unlike the codified Benedictine *Rule*, which had acquired a near canonical status by the

⁵ I do not suggest that lay brothers no longer worked within a monastic sphere of reference. Instead, I propose that by the 1150 and 1160s, the lay brotherhood was no longer novel, nor was it necessary for the Cistercians to affirm the legitimacy of lay brothers as truly monastic individuals since they, and other reformed Orders, had established this concept well. As such, legislators could, for the first time, shift their focus from legitimizing lay brothers as broadly monastic, to focusing on what divided lay brothers from monks within the Order.

⁶ The early statutes and the *Usus conversorum* are both undated. Chrysogonus Waddell indicates, however, that they likely date to before 1147. For questions of dating these manuscripts See Chrysogonus Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Lay Brothers: Usages and Related Texts* (Brecht: Cîteaux, 2000), 18-19, and for dating of the early statutes, referred to as the *Instituta*, see Chrysogonus Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux* (Brecht: Cîteaux, 1999), 300.

⁷ The General Chapter was an annual congregation of the abbots of the Cistercian Order, collected to determine policy and enforce unity of practice and belief within the Order. The General Chapter disseminated its decisions through written Statutes which were taken to every monastery of the Order. See Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977), 26-32.

twelfth century and so could not be changed, customs were created, adjusted, and even discarded over time.⁸ In the Cistercian Order, these customs were less a result of slow changes in lived experience and more the product of rational modification as decided by the gathering of abbots at the General Chapter, an annual meeting of the Order. Changes were described and disseminated through written collections of statutes. Many were incorporated into customaries, such as the *UC*.

The Cistercian customary texts (in the form of the *UC* and the statutes), did not comprise one single original text, but texts which changed over time with gradual accretions and deletions. Thus, these juridical texts provide an exceptionally useful tool through which to perceive changes in the status of lay brothers in the Cistercian Order over time. The juridical texts of the Order are particularly important within the Cistercian context as they represent the most influential discourse on lay brothers of the period. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, normative Cistercian customaries (and statutes) took on the force of law, not recommendation. In order to assure the unanimity of practices within the Order, the Cistercian General Chapter ensured that all abbots received the legislation, and the Chapter even developed a system of visitations to ensure that the injunctions were followed.⁹ Thus, while I discuss in chapter four that the General Chapter's portrayal of lay brothers was not

⁸ For example, the *Usus conversorum* had initially prohibited lay brothers from serving as witnesses. In 1183 this probation was revoked since it “created too many questions” (*generat multas questiones*). See Waddell, *Twelfth Century Statutes*, 106.

⁹ The system of visitations followed a pyramidal structure of filiations requiring each abbot to visit his ‘daughter house(s)’, monasteries assigned to him in the filiation, or having been founded by his abbey in the past. In the Cistercian model, each abbot was responsible to inspect his daughter houses to ensure that practices corresponded to the legislation of the General Chapter. Rogue abbots were reported at the next General Chapter meeting and usually assigned some kind of punishment, such as to live on bread and water for three days, or in more severe cases, excommunication from the Order. For a description of this system of visitations see Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 470. As I discuss in the following chapter, however, despite the rhetoric of the Order, the General Chapter had very limited access to coercive forms of punishment, and so their power to enforce legislation was limited.

undisputed, the Cistercian juridical sources presented highly influential discourses concerning the lay brothers' role and essential character. By virtue of their extensive readership and their claim to authority based on the origin of customs as having been developed by all of the abbots of the Order, the statutes and customaries represent the official attitude of the Cistercian Order as a whole, against which all variation would be measured. I demonstrate below, however, that even the juridical texts, which could be considered a hegemonic discourse, demonstrate heterogeneity and shifting priorities.

What is intriguing about the *UC* and Cistercian statutes on the lay brothers is that, unlike the vast body of Cistercian legislation, they regulate a group which had no say in their creation. Cistercian customs for choir monks arose out debate between representatives of the choir monks; the customs for lay brothers were likewise established by these same choir monks without direct input from the lay brethren themselves.¹⁰ As such, these documents demonstrate clearly how one group (choir monks, or abbots representing choir monks) sought to define acceptable and unacceptable conduct for another (lay brothers) and through this, to define a particular understanding of lay brothers' role. The regulation of lay brothers' behaviour, therefore, reflects first and foremost the concerns of the monks or abbots who created the regulations and so appears not to have developed organically from the brethren

¹⁰ The Cistercian sources do identify that all Cistercian abbots were to convene to discuss customs during the General Chapter, and in theory, abbots were elected by the monks of their monasteries and could be removed from the abbacy if they were found to be inappropriate. In practice, no doubt there were variations, but the nominal responsibility of an abbot to the community of choir monks is quite different from the situation for lay brothers in that their experience was completely dictated by others. Lay brothers did not even choose who could enter the community of brothers. This was also chosen by the chapter of choir monks. See Waddell, *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, 185-87. For lay brothers' alienation from the monastic power structure see Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 92.

themselves.¹¹ As such, the legislation must not be read as reflecting current practices or lay brother self-conception, but rather as texts newly redefining lay brothers' roles.

FIRST PERIOD: RHETORIC OF EQUALITY

As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the first period of Cistercian legislation focused primarily on creating a position for lay brothers within the monastic hierarchy in order to clarify to those both within the Order and outside it, that lay brothers were truly monastic and not merely secular servants. As previously discussed, this arrangement allowed the Cistercians to conceive of their lives as exceptionally cloistered, since their communities comprised monks who prayed, while other “monks” provided for them, bypassing the usual encumbrances that Bernard of Clairvaux condemned.¹²

In response to this need, the early Cistercian monks and abbots took great care to affirm that lay brothers were just the same as they were both spiritually and practically. The *UC* constantly affirms that lay brothers should follow a monastic way of life, removed from women, observing silence, divesting themselves of personal property, and recognizing the monastic hours.

¹¹ Given the lack of pertinent sources, it is impossible to know how closely anyone followed these regulations, or whether lay brothers internalized the messages they contained. For the purpose of this thesis, I have for the most part chosen to consider the bearing these regulations have on the intentions of the regulators over their reception.

¹² On a theoretical level, the lay brotherhood did allow for increased separation from the secular economic structure, since if lay brothers are considered true monks, the Cistercians did serve themselves to a large extent. The historical record shows, however, that the Cistercians remained very much involved in “the world.” For instance, there were many Cistercian bishops and several popes, they continued to trade with secular people, and they otherwise involved themselves in the secular political and social issues. For an excellent discussion of the Cistercians' involvement in “the world”, see Martha Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform 1098-1180* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Newman particularly focuses on how the Cistercians sought to reshape the secular world according to a Cistercian ideological model based on the concept of *caritas* (charity).

In the statutes during the early period, this emphasis on similarity is also found. Of all of the early statutes, dating from before 1147, only one treats lay brothers separately from monks.¹³ The eleven other statutes which mention lay brothers explicitly, identify them as acting as monks. Extant statutes most often employ the set phrase, “monks or lay brothers” (*monachi vel conversi*), such as “let monks or lay brothers of our Order sent on business from their own abbeys never ask for anything in other abbeys.”¹⁴ This and similar statutes highlight points of shared behaviour between the two groups, noting little distinction between them in practices and discipline.¹⁵ Other statutes make no distinction at all between the two groups, instead broadly referring to “the brothers” (*fratres*), referring to all of the brothers—both choir monks and lay brothers—as the subject of the legislation. For example, one statute states that all younger brothers were to take breakfast (*mixtum*) before *terce*.¹⁶ Of course, many more statutes are directed only to monks (which implicitly highlights the distinction of the two groups) but even these limited statutes suggest that lay brothers existed as part of the monastic sphere.

While physical labour tends to be taken to be the defining characteristic of the lay brother, working in the fields was not exclusively their domain. One statute (undated, but from before 1147) emphasizes that even though a monk’s proper place is the cloister, a choir

¹³ This statute appears both in the early statutes and as a chapter of the *Exordium parvum* and merely explained what lay brothers were. See Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 460: “Work at the granges is to be done by lay brothers and by hired hands. In any case, with the permission of the bishops, we receive these laybrothers, as our family members, and helpers under our care, just as we receive monks. We hold them as brothers and, equally with the monks, sharers in our goods, spiritual as well as temporal.”

¹⁴ Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Sources*, 475: “Monachi et conversi nostri Ordinis a propriis abbatibus ad aliquod negotium directi in alia nostril Ordinis abbatia sine mandato abbatis sui nihil quaerant praeter victum et calciamentorum reparationem et equorum ferrationem, nisi eis aliquod infortunium in via contigerit.”

¹⁵ Within the early period of legislation (pre-1147) lay brothers are treated identically alongside monks for the following issues: Bleedings, diet, discipline for fugitives, travelling, joining the abbot at the General Chapter meetings, being assigned to altars for communion, taking of mixt, frequenting fairs, selling wine, participating in legal proceedings, acting as bishops’ helpers, punishment for serious and not serious faults, living in town houses, coming to the granges as visitors, behaviour at the General Chapter, and punishment for speaking at the table. See Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 466, 475, 476, 478, 480, 481, 482, 485, 486, 489, 490, 494.

¹⁶ Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 478.

monk nonetheless could be expected to go to the granges “as often as [he is] sent.”¹⁷ Although the legislation indicates that monks were not to remain at the granges for very long (*diutius*), the duration of their stay was not specified, suggesting that its length was determined at the discretion of the abbot. Likewise, while lay brothers were forbidden to say mass, they did attend them, and were expected to view the offices on all of the major feasts.¹⁸ Thus, while the early legislation did acknowledge that there were divisions between lay brothers and choir monks, in numerous ways, it affirmed their similarities. In this way, the legislation divided lay brothers from the outside world, and place them firmly within the Cistercian sphere of reference as part of a campaign to articulate, in broad and sweeping ways, what characterized Cistercian monasticism, and more importantly, how it improved upon the forms of monasticism which had preceded it.¹⁹

SECOND PERIOD: REGULATING PHYSICAL WORK AND DRESS

¹⁷ Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 459 describes that monks were expected to work at granges, “Monacho cui ex Regula claustrum propria debet esse habitation licet quidem ad grangias quotiens mittitur ire.” Granges, by definition were primarily agricultural centres run by lay brothers and under the control of the grange-master (*grangarius*) who was also normally a lay brother. In practice the granges varied in character considerably according to the size and wealth of their abbeys. According to David Williams, they could range anywhere from large manor houses consisting of a number of buildings, including a chapel, to mere “sheep runs.” See David Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians* (Leonminster: Gracewing, 2001), 192.

¹⁸ Waddell, 459.

¹⁹ It is clear from contemporary sources, that the Cistercians’ critics were not convinced of the spiritual equality of lay brothers which the Cistercians proposed. For instance, Hildegard of Bingen criticized the brothers stating that, “You, the masters, admonish and correct these men, the *conversi* in your Order, for most of them labour neither day nor night since they serve perfectly neither God nor the world! And just as a good farmer purges his garden of useless herbs, rouse them from that ignorance.” Hildegard of Bingen, *Responsum Hildegardis, Patrologia Latina* 197 (1855), colls. 263-264. Likewise, Idung of Prufening in his dialogue between two monks, attempts to justify the existence of the lay brotherhood by drawing on ancient precedents of monks who were not clerics. That Idung identified the lay brotherhood as a real or potential point of contention indicates that not everyone accepted the Cistercians’ affirmation that lay brothers were their spiritual and temporal equals. See Idung of Prufening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: A Dialogue between Two Monks*, trans. Jeremiah Sullivan (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 133.

Beginning in 1157, a perceptible shift occurred in the statutes of the General chapter, and the accretions to later versions of the *UC*. In this period, Cistercian texts began to treat lay brothers and choir monks independently. While the initial efforts of the General Chapter had attempted to divide monks and lay brothers from the outside world, affirming their common goals and essential equality, the second period of legislation demonstrates that the Cistercian legislators show that they were no longer as concerned with defining themselves publically for an outside audience (e.g. the Cluniacs) as they were with articulating internal divisions within the Order.

The statutes of the late 1150s focused on two issues: manual labour and clothing. The statutes stress that a lay brothers' manual labour should take precedence over liturgical and spiritual considerations. One statute (dating to 1157) affirms that if lay brothers were sent out to work far from the abbey, they could receive communion in any other religious house. Evidently, physical community and shared space with choir monks (that is, of the monastery as a whole) was of secondary importance. Likewise, it was decided that for Easter celebrations blessed ashes could also be brought to the granges if necessary.²⁰ Perhaps responding to the requirements of lived reality, Cistercian legislators, therefore, supported a decentralized idea of the cloister, where lay brothers especially were at far away margins. This legislation also emphasizes that lay brothers' manual work was the central concern for Cistercian legislators. In the early period of the Order, the granges evidently were quite closely tied to their abbeys. They were not to be located more than a day's journey from their abbey, and the lay brothers were expected to

²⁰ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 65: "Licet communicare conversos ab abbatia longe remotos extra abbatias nostros in domo religiosorum, et cineres benedictos ad grangias ferre si abbati visum fuerint."

maintain close ties, travelling back every Sunday and on feast days for mass.²¹ This statute envisions lay brothers working so far away from any Cistercian abbey, that it was necessary for them to receive communion elsewhere. This statute also indicates that these brothers could be removed from any Cistercian abbey for extended periods of time, since lay brothers were not required to receive communion only on specific days. Rather, the system included some leeway specifically for brothers who were travelling or working. The *UC* stipulates that if a lay brother had missed receiving communion, which were set on specific feast days, he could make it up on any other Sunday.²² In this way, the statute recognizes that lay brothers could be living far removed from any Cistercian house for extended periods of time for their work, and more importantly, the general chapter did not consider this occurrence to be problematic. Thus, while the early legislation attempted to enforce granges' proximity to the abbey, the later statutes appear to have abandoned this concern in favour of supporting the lay brothers' unhindered agricultural work.

A statute from the same year (1157) presents the lay brothers' liturgical observations as less important than their manual labour, indicating that on transposed feasts—when one of the fixed feasts, such as the Annunciation, overlapped with one of the moveable feasts, such as Easter—lay brothers would only be free from work on one feast, while the choir monks simply celebrated it at a later date, and so were free from work. It is evident that the monks considered the celebration of these feasts important, as they celebrated them themselves, yet they did not wish for the lay brothers to interrupt their work in order to observe them. The statute even

²¹ Waddell, *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, 173-77. On the location of granges see, Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 459, which describes that, "In order to operate, cultivate, and administer all these [lands]—though not farther off than a one day journey—we may have granges, which are to be managed by lay brothers."

²² *Ibid.*, 176: "Whoever is unable to receive Communion on the above mentioned feasts will receive Communion on the day when he can fittingly do so."

specifically stipulates that lay brothers should work on these feasts, indicating that the interruption of their labour was the prime concern of the legislation.²³ As such, it is clear that authors of the statutes wished for the brothers' work to continue uninterrupted – even at the expense of liturgical observations.

A similar regulation appearing an accretion to the *UC* dating from roughly the same period (1147-1180) reinforces that the liturgy was much less important for lay brothers than it was for choir monks. The revised chapter of the *UC* cuts the number of times lay brothers received communion from twelve times a year, to seven.²⁴ This trend contrasts with the practice of Cistercian choir monks who communicated on all of the major feasts, as well as every Sunday and continued to do so throughout the medieval period.²⁵ The revised *UC* lists seven of the most major feast days at which it was suitable for lay brothers to receive the Eucharist.²⁶

I suggest that this reduction of the number of times a lay brother received communion stemmed from both practical and symbolic concerns. On one hand, as the aforementioned statute points out, lay brothers were frequently far removed from their home abbeys, and so the original stipulation that they receive communion once a month may have been difficult to achieve in practice. Likewise, it is possible that the numbers of lay brothers may have made it excessively difficult to provide for them all the necessary accoutements for taking communion. To

²³ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 68: “In festis transpositis laborent conversi.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 175. Waddell indicates that the earliest manuscripts including the *Usus conversorum* state that lay brothers should receive communion twelve times a year. In the second and third revisions of the text, dating from 1147-79, and 1180-1200, this number was reduced to seven.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 176, footnote 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 176. They received communion on The Birth of the Lord, the Purification of Saint Mary, Holy Thursday, Easter, Pentecost, the Birth of Mary, and the solemnity of All Saints.

understand the significance of this seemingly minor point, we need to understand more about the importance of Eucharist to Cistercian monasticism.

Independent of practical concerns, the Eucharist held significant symbolic value in the Middle Ages and within Cistercian theological discourse. The writings of Caesarius of Heisterbach, a Cistercian prior writing in the early thirteenth century, show the central concern of the Eucharistic sacrament for Cistercian spirituality:

All the sacraments of the church are far excelled by the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. In this is found the way, the truth and the life. The way, because it leads to God those who approach it worthily. The truth, because those who receive it, are incorporated into Christ. The Life, because it does not allow the death of the soul to pass over those who are thus incorporated into Christ.²⁷

Caesarius also recounts multiple stories in which the host mystically reveals the Eucharist rite to be a true communion with Christ. For instance, he describes seventeen different miracles by which Christ appeared himself to individuals celebrating the Eucharist in human form, or in the form of human blood or flesh.²⁸ In this way, it is evident that the Eucharist was highly significant and highly symbolic for the Cistercians, as it represented a true communion with the Divine.

Despite valid practical concerns, therefore, it seems that the decision to reduce the number of times lay brothers received communion was a statement about how lay brothers were conceived in the Order. Whether or not it was inspired by practical concerns, the General Chapter decided that it was unimportant for lay brothers to have extensive contact with the embodied Christ, while affirming its absolute necessity for choir monks. The reduction highlights the control of the monks and the general chapter over the monastic-clerical office and thus control over the central ritual of Christian life, and lay brothers' increased alienation from

²⁷ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue of Miracles*, vol. II, trans. H von E. Scott and C.C. Swinton Bland (London: Routledge, 1929), 105.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 103-169.

this central rite. Even though at seven times a year, lay brothers received communion seven times as often as typical lay people, the aforementioned legislation most certainly indicates that Cistercian legislators wished to further remove the brothers from direct and frequent access to Christ. As such, it is necessary to read this reduction as symbolically making lay brothers less close to the divine than they had been before.²⁹

The statutes for 1157-59 also carefully describe the quality of clothing which was appropriate to lay brothers. One statute, incorporated into the *UC*, banned brothers from wearing rare or colourful furs.³⁰ A second statute, also incorporated into the *UC*, reinforced that lay brothers must wear clothing made only of second-hand cloth and pelts.³¹ Further, if an abbot were to discover a brother, even visiting from another abbey, having bought himself a finer cloak, it was to be confiscated.³² All three of these regulations are concerned fundamentally with the quality of clothing which lay brothers were expected to wear. In this way, they function as sumptuary legislation intended to uphold moral values, to distinguish the lay brothers from other monks, and to regulate the expense for clothing born by the monastery.³³

²⁹ On the identification of communion with clerics, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 12-15. For an account of twelfth-century conceptions of the eucharist and communing with Christ, see Hugh of St. Victor: "The sacrament is completed, the virtue remains, Christ passes from the mouth to the heart. That food belongs to the soul, not the body. If, then, after this you seek the bodily presence of Christ, seek it in heaven."

³⁰ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 69: "Pellas nullas silvestres operentur fratres nostri: non catinas non varias vel grisias seu alias eiusmodi, etiam si qualibet occasione habere contigerit."

³¹ *Ibid.*, 70: "Conversi qui mantellos habent de novo panno vel pellibus novis quod est contra usum, nullomodo eis dimittantur. Si rebelles sunt interim non communivent et ultimi in ordine constituentur."

³² *Ibid.*, *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, 189: "Should any abbot discover that an unauthorized cloak is being worn by some lay brother who is passing through, he should retain it."

³³ For an understanding of the cultural meaning of medieval sumptuary laws, see Kim M. Phillips, "Masculinities and the Medieval English Sumptuary Laws," *Gender and History*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2007): 22-42, and James A. Brundage, "Sumptuary Laws and Prostitution in Late Medieval Italy," *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1997): 343-55.

The Cistercian concern over clothing connected intimately to their conception of morality. When monks and abbots characterized the sumptuary regulations which applied to themselves, they focused on creating an austere life style, with the ultimate goal of improving the ordering of their interior wills. For example, Bernard of Clairvaux characterized what he perceived as the excessive concern for temporal pleasures at Cluny:

If warm and soft furs, if fine and precious garments, if long sleeves and full hoods, if thick covers and soft shirts make a saint, why am I so foolish not to follow you? “Behold those who wear soft raiment are in kings’ houses.” Wine and white bread, meat and fatty food serve the body and not the spirit. It is the flesh not the soul that is fattened out of frying pans!³⁴

This characterization of an opulent lifestyle as drawing one’s attention away from interior development and toward the flesh is common in Bernard of Clairvaux’s letters and in his *Apologia ad Guilhelmum*, as well as in the wider Cistercian discourse of salvation.³⁵ In terms of the Cistercian monastic program, however, physical asceticism played only a part, and only in that it functioned as a strategy to improve internal development.³⁶ The regulation of physical things like decorations, food, and clothing served merely to avoid these things forcing a monk to stray from the path of interior development. As such Cistercians (in particular Bernard of Clairvaux) preached a moderate physical austerity. The Cistercians in general did not approve of extreme physical mortification, or excessive concern over physical things.

Furthermore, there appears to be an important difference in how Cistercian legislators approached sumptuary regulations for choir monks and for lay brothers. When Cistercian regulators stipulated that monks should wear simple robes and shoes, and should eat a plain

³⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *epistola I*, cited in Martha G. Newman, “Disciplining the Body Disciplining the Will: Hypocrisy and Asceticism in Cistercian Monasticism,” in *Asceticism and Its Critics*, ed. Oliver Freiberger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 95.

³⁵ For a discussion of asceticism in Cistercian monasticism, see *ibid.* 91-115.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91-8.

vegetarian diet, and coarse bread, the goal was to ensure that these monks were not concerned with worldly things.³⁷ The goal of this lay brother regulation, on the other hand, seems to be to legislate distinction and humility through regulating clothing. All four of the chapters above indicate that the lay brothers' clothes were to be of poor quality and, if possible, second hand. In this regard, the quality of clothing which lay brothers were wearing would have been lower than that which the monks wore. Furthermore, it is evident that these regulations were not inspired by concern for cost since the text stipulates that lay brothers were not to be permitted to purchase unsuitable clothing for themselves, and if they had, abbots were to confiscate them. I suggest that these attempts at regulating clothing were a disciplinary strategy intended to force lay brothers to adopt a humble way of life, demarcating boundaries between choir monks and lay brothers not only in their physical appearance, but also in terms of the Order's approach to disciplining each group independently. Again, this contrasts strongly with the approaches to inner reformation which monks were expected to uphold. Instead, it focuses on exterior regulation in Order to enforce the desired quality of humility. In this way, it also contrasts with the early legislation which, as I demonstrated in the preceding chapter, focused at least half of its content on regulating lay brothers' interior development.

THIRD PERIOD: REGULATING ROLES THROUGH SPACE

The third period of legislation directed toward lay brothers, between 1180 and 1190, further attempted to articulate differences between them and the choir monks. Between 1157 and 1179 lay brothers receive no special mention in the legislation, as if legislators felt the role had been well established and in need of no further treatment. But after a twenty year hiatus, twenty-

³⁷ Brian Patrick McGuire, "Self-Denial and Self-Assertion in Arnulf of Villiers," *Cistercian Studies* 28 (1993): 241-59.

one statutes directed at lay brothers were decreed between 1180 and 1190. Although they treat varying subjects, such as regulating blankets, or excessive drinking of alcohol at the granges, they focus primarily on the key issues of the regulation of monastic and non-monastic spaces and the activities appropriate to them. This late twelfth-century Cistercian regulation of space articulated separation between choir monks and lay brothers which was not apparent in the early Cistercian documents.

This legislation focused on outlining the activities appropriate to the granges and the abbey, and so redefined the granges as lay brother space, outside of the monastic orbit rather than within it. Two statutes from 1180 attempted to separate appropriate and inappropriate activities for the granges. The first affirmed that although existing altars could not be destroyed, new altars could not be built in granges, nor could masses be celebrated there.³⁸ Until 1180, it had presumably been an accepted practice for monks or priests to say mass at the granges on some occasions.³⁹ This statute sought to redefine granges as inappropriate places for mass, and restore this practice to the abbey alone. The second statute stipulated that lay brothers could only be bled at the abbey and not at the granges – again centralizing these practices around the abbey exclusively.⁴⁰ A centralizing impulse to redefine spiritual and medicinal action as limited to the monastery fought against the decentralizing impulse evident in the previous period of monastic legislation. Additional statutes indicate, however, that the intent to centralize did not have an intent to treat the choir monks and lay brothers as equals.

³⁸ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 88: “Altaria in nova non fiant. Antiqua que consecrata fuerunt absque licentia episcopi non diruantur, veruntamen nullatenus ibi cantetur.”

³⁹ Since it is unlikely that the statute refers to potential future problems, the very existence of this statute seems to indicate that the practice occurred.

⁴⁰ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 90: “Conversi non in grangiis sed in abbatia minuantur.”

A statute from 1180 affirms that not only did regulations intended for choir monks differ from those intended for lay brothers, but that regulations could also be specific to different spaces. The statute indicates that when monks were working at the granges, they should also follow the custom there of abstaining from alcohol. It had been established earlier that lay brothers were to abstain from alcohol in many Cistercian granges, yet monks were entitled to wine daily. It is certain that the statute intended to limit the monks' access to wine at the granges in order to avoid resentment between the two groups. The division between customs appropriate to the granges and the abbeys indicates, however, that conceptually the Cistercian legislators considered abbeys to be separate spaces from granges and so subject to differing regulations, thus the granges were not merely extensions of the cloister, but entirely different ideological spaces.

The legislation further affirmed these divisions by associating these places—the grange and the abbey—with lay brothers and monks. While lay brothers had been predominantly associated with the granges even in the earliest Cistercian sources, it had not been fixed in legislation, and there remained significant connections between the granges and their home abbeys. For instance, many lay brothers lived within the abbey in their own quarters, and monks could be asked to stay at a grange for an unspecified amount of time.⁴¹ In 1182, however, the statutes indicated that monks were prohibited from staying overnight at the granges unless they were very far away from their home cloister. Likewise, a statute from the same year stresses that according to the ancient custom, lay brothers at the home grange should eat in their own

⁴¹ Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 459.

buildings and not in the refectory of the abbey.⁴² These statutes affirm clearly that the grange was not considered a co-equal to the abbey, but a lesser marginalized outpost in that they present it as problematic for monks to stay in the granges for longer than a day, indicating that the grange was not considered part of the abbey. Again, the legislation demarcates boundaries between the spaces designated for lay brothers, and those for monks underscoring the separation between the two groups.

While even the earliest Cistercian legislation incorporated barriers which demarcated lay brothers from monks, these barriers were further refined according to the General Chapter's conception of a lay brothers' role. The legislation created a situation where lay brothers were increasingly separated from the liturgy and the abbey, and more closely identified with physical work outside the monastery precinct. These divisions became increasingly strict, culminating in three key statutes (dating from 1181, 1188, 1223 respectively), which many scholars have viewed as the pinnacle of monks' oppression of the lay brothers.⁴³ The first of these statutes banned lay brothers from participating in abbatial elections, indicating that they had no position of power within their monasteries.⁴⁴ The second stipulated that all nobles entering Cistercian monasteries were required to become choir monks instead of lay brothers. What this meant was that the secular power structure, which had initially been subverted within Cistercian monasteries by nobles becoming lay brothers, began to exert influence within monasteries as well as they

⁴² Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 107: "non licet monacho in proxima grangia pernoctare, nec pro capitulo tendendo," and "Conversi qui in domibus iuxta abbatiam sitis extra terminus habitant et laborant, iuxta pristinam consuetuetudinem in ipsis domibus comedant; nec abbatibus id licet mutare."

⁴³ For example Noell, 258; Megan Cassidy-Welch, "Status, Space, and Representation: The Cistercian Lay Brother" in *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 168-89); Jane Sayers, 33-42; Bruce Lescher, "Lay Brothers: Questions Then, Questions Now," *Cistercian Studies* 23 (1988), 63-85.

⁴⁴ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 92: "Interdicitur generaliter ne conversi intersint electionibus abbatum."

became demarcated according to class divisions.⁴⁵ Finally, a statute from the early thirteenth century affirmed that lay brothers, who had always been called the monks' "brothers" could no longer use that title, since it implied an exalted status.⁴⁶ These strict divisions, though not united in period or explicit theme, serve to underscore the divisions that I have outlined in this chapter. Increasingly over the course of the twelfth-century, the apparent egalitarianism and inclusivity of the representations of lay brothers from the early period of the Order shifted drastically, culminating in an increasingly strict articulation of the lay brother's role as fundamentally separated from that of a choir monk.

CONCLUSION

While I have not addressed every statute which refers to lay brothers, I have attempted to outline the major trends in the evolution of the Cistercian legislation regarding lay brothers in order to demonstrate how, through regulation, the Cistercian Order continued to redefine the lay brothers' role over the course of century. Thus, I break down the concept of a unified expression of lay brother identity even within the dominant discourses of the Cistercian Order and show instead that the essential qualities which characterized lay brothers continued to be negotiated over time through legislative strategies. In the following chapter, I consider how Cistercian reformers, represented by Abbot Burchard of Bellevaux, sought to convince members of the Order, through sermons, of the validity of the divisions between monk and lay brother which the statutes legislated. This chapter allows me to demonstrate the importance of persuasion in how power functioned within the context, since the legitimacy of the injunctions of the General Chapter needed to be affirmed through rhetorical justification. More importantly, however, the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 151: "Nobiles laici venientes ad monasterium non fiant conversi sed monachi."

⁴⁶ *Statuta Generalis Capituli*, ed. Canivez, vol. 2, no. 67 (1933): 1233.

following chapter demonstrates that the “official” representation of lay brothers discussed in this chapter was not merely a reflection of reality, nor was it universally accepted. Rather, as I will show, it was necessary for the centralizing forces of the Cistercian Order to produce rhetorical texts which legitimized the “official” discourse. Thus, Cistercian reformers were required to convince members of the Order of the validity of their pronouncements in order to enact change in ideology and practice, an occurrence which further demonstrates the point of this thesis, that lay brothers were an active social construction, the meaning of which varied across times and space.

CHAPTER THREE

NEGOTIATING STATUS THROUGH RHETORIC: BURCHARD OF BELLEVAUX
AND THE *APOLOGIA DE BARBIS*

In the mid-twelfth century, Abbot Burchard of Bellevaux wrote a lengthy response to a group of affronted lay brothers at the nearby monastery of Rosières. He demanded they desist in their angry resistance to him, stating, “let the beards of those men be burnt and become food for fire, who knowingly and consciously stir up a tempest that shipwrecks the soul,” deriving his inspiration from the book of Isaiah.¹

This letter was the last word in an extended dialogue between the abbot and his lay brothers. In justifying his latest letter, Burchard notes that he had previously written the brothers an earlier letter (no longer extant) criticizing their moral failings and threatening that if they should continue their disruptive behaviour, their beards should be burnt. He further indicates that their response had been harsh and unwelcome – calling him “alienated from the grace of love.”² And so, he was forced, Burchard justifies in his letter, to deliver a new letter and treatise, the *Apologia de barbis* (*An Apologetic or Defence of beards*) to make a resolution.

The *Apologia* is a lengthy treatise on beards covering the subject in great detail through exegetical commentary. In the context of the lay brotherhood, however, it also serves as an admonition and argument for the reformation of behaviour. Burchard’s injunction that the lay brothers’ beards be burnt should they continue their tempestuous behaviour, would have hit close to home. Within Cistercian monasteries, beards were the fundamental sign which marked the lay

¹ Burchard of Bellevaux, *Apologia Duae*, ed. RBC Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 151: “Barbae illorum fiant in combustionem et cibus ignis, qui scientes et prudentes movent tempestatem quae facit animas naufragari.” Cf. Isaiah, 9:5: “Quia omnis violentia praedatio cum tumultu, et vestimentum mistum sanguine, erit in combustionem, et cibus ignis.”

² Burchard, 151: “Nocerent autem michi barbae vestrae, si propter illas me offensum haberetis et a gratia dilectionis faceretis alienum, quem solebatis habere propinquum antequam de barbis negotium istud nasceretur.”

brothers office and distinguished them from clean-shaven and tonsured monks. While it is uncertain exactly what behaviour instigated Burchard's rebuke, his attack on their beards must be understood as a symbolic attack not only on their masculinity, but on their very office.

This introductory letter forms a prologue of sorts to the *Apologia* and helps explain for the reader the context of the work. Burchard's allusions to conflict between himself and the lay brothers of Rosières place the *Apologia* as one part of a vigorous debate between an abbot and a group typically seen by scholars as disempowered and meek.³ Whether the result of the lay brothers' excessively garrulous behaviour, or Abbot Burchard's paternalistic chiding, the letter suggests that power and authority were being fought for by both parties.⁴ This contention becomes evident in that the lay brothers' response indicates that they did not accept the position of authority which Burchard allotted himself or the actions and values he ascribed to them. Likewise, although Burchard frames his response to the brothers as an apologetic or defence of their beards, he does recant his previous position which had incited the brothers' angry retort. Instead, the *Apologia* sought to reaffirm his power over the lay brothers at Rosières not only through an appeal to his abbatial responsibilities and the lay brothers' duty of obedience, but also by justifying the division of status and function between choir monks, like himself, and the lay brothers beneath them. Burchard's text complicates our understanding of the power dynamic that existed between choir monks and lay brothers in the early period of the Cistercian order.

³ See in particular Bruce Lescher for a resumé of this point of view. Bruce Lescher, "Lay Brothers: Questions Then, Questions Now," in *Cistercian Studies* 23 (1988): 71-9.

⁴ Due to the fact only one letter of this purported exchange is extant, it is difficult to determine whether this exchange of letters ever happened in reality, or whether it is mere literary artifice. In either case, Burchard presents these lay brothers as transgressors, and at times dissatisfied with their position, and provides arguments for why it was necessary for them to follow his advice. In this way, whether the exchange was real or fictive, it demonstrates the same negotiation over status since Burchard represents the brothers as individuals to be convinced, and not merely compelled by obedience.

In this chapter, I argue that Burchard's *Apologia de barbīs* was intended to be a treatise on the role and status of lay brothers. Since this interpretation of the *Apologia* differs significantly from past explanations of its purpose, I begin with a discussion of the extant historiography on this text. I then demonstrate how the form and genre of the *Apologia* suggests its function as a serious commentary on the role of lay brothers within the Cistercian Order. Finally, I consider how Burchard uses his allegorical interpretation of Biblical texts and physical bodies to refute lay brothers' rejection of their role by affirming his conception of their status and chastising those who rejected it.⁵

I contend that the *Apologia* itself fits with the later twelfth-century Cistercian legislative agenda –discussed in the previous chapter– whereby choir monk was increasingly distinguished from lay brother, despite earlier statutes and norms that recognized a permeable dividing line between these two groups.⁶ If indeed, the dissent which Burchard cites is real (a claim for which we have no evidence, but which we have no reason to doubt) it likely suggests that lay brothers saw the line between themselves and monks as alterable. In response to this questioning of divisions, it is probable, even though they may not have survived, that other persuasive texts, in addition to the *Apologia*, were produced in the twelfth century to complement legislation which also attempted to demarcate these roles.

⁵ I discuss below that these lay brothers which appear in his text may or may not refer to real individuals. Whether the exchange was real or symbolic literary artifice, it shows the same concern over lay brother status.

⁶ It is particularly significant that in traditional Benedictine monasticism, the men who became lay brothers would in many cases likely have been considered monks, or lay people as I discuss in the first chapter of this thesis. As such, these dividing lines that the Cistercians dictated may have seemed largely arbitrary or unclear. See in particular, Giles Constable, "Famuli and Conversi at Cluny," in *Cluniac Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), 326-50, and Constance Berman, "Distinguishing Between Humble Peasant Lay Brother and Sister, and the Converted Knight in Medieval Southern France," in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000-1400*, ed. Emilia Jamroziak and Janet Burton (Turnout: Brepols, 2006), 263-86, for a discussion of lay monks, *conversi*, and *famuli* in Benedictine monasticism.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT AND ITS AUTHOR

The *Apologia* is a relatively understudied text. It was written by Abbot Burchard of Bellevaux around 1160 and probably produced at the Burgundian monastery of Bellevaux.⁷ The unique manuscript copy now extant did not appear in the historical record until 1929 when E.P. Goldschmidt, a prominent London bookseller and scholar, discovered it in Geneva at a book sale and subsequently published the first edition.⁸ A new diplomatic edition of the text appeared in 1985 with improved notes, but based on the same manuscript.

Little is known about the author of the text. Benoit Chauvin's article on Burchard offers the only study of his life and work, describing him as a monk at Clairvaux during the time of Bernard's abbacy who became his devoted disciple.⁹ He oversaw the entry of the venerable Benedictine Abbey of Balerne to Cistercian customs around 1138 and remained the abbot there for nearly twenty years. At the end of his life he moved from Balerne to Bellevaux sometime between 1157 and 1161. Although there is very little extant material on which to base an

⁷ The dating of this manuscript to the early 1160s is based on the observation that Burchard was abbot of Bellevaux between roughly 1157 and his death in 1163 or 1165. See Giles Constable, "Introduction to the *Apologia de barbīs*," in *Apologia Duae*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 136-7. Constable raises the possibility that the manuscript was actually produced at the Abbey of Balerne where Burchard had previously been abbot, and the copyist merely updated his title knowing that he had moved to Bellevaux later. Neither theory can be proved conclusively.

⁸ Constable, 130-33. The British Library online manuscript database provides a helpful description of the manuscript condition of the text. It consists of 95 folios on vellum in gatherings of eight leaves, and measures 5 3/8 by 3 3/4 inches. It includes "large decorated initials in green, red, and yellow composed of foliage, birds, and the heads of dragons" on a number of folios and includes a page depicting styles of beards, which the library dates to a later hand around 1200 without explanation for this dating. The library further describes that the manuscript was bound in the nineteenth century in brown leather. Over all, the manuscript is unremarkable. The content is divided into three sermons of unequal length, made up of a number of individual chapters (9 in the first, 14 in the second, 55 in the third) which are all ostensibly devoted to the allegorical interpretation of beards. See British Library entry MS. 41997 "APOLOGIA DE BARBIS AD CONVERSOS" <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/HITS0001.ASP?VPath=html/31933.htm&Search=41997&Highlight=F> (last accessed July 25, 2010).

⁹ Benoit Chauvin, "Un Disciple méconnu de Saint Bernard, Burchard, Abbé de Balerne Puis de Bellevaux (vers 1100-1164)," *Cîteaux* 40, no. 1-4 (1989): 5-68, see 11. Chauvin bases his argument on the closeness of Bernard and Burchard on two principal pieces of evidence. One, is that when Burchard was abbot of Balerne, he built his church according to a Bernardine plan. The other, is that Burchard wrote the last section of Bernard's saint's life, the *Vita Bernardi*.

understanding of Burchard's life and times, there is some evidence to suggest that he was a notable author during his lifetime, and was perceived by his contemporaries as an ardent promoter of Cistercian values and monastic reform.¹⁰ In particular, Chavin points out that Burchard very strongly supported a Bernardine form of Cistercian monasticism, so much so that Burchard was the author of the epilogue to the *Vita prima Bernardi*, the first hagiographic account of Bernard of Clairvaux's life.¹¹

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Despite this reputation, Burchard's only extant text has not been considered a serious work. Over the past seventy years since the *Apologia de barbibus* was rediscovered and printed, scholars seem not to have known exactly what to make of this strange book. When it was first published in 1935 there was an initial flurry of reaction to the text, most of which ridiculed its seeming bizarre interest in applying elaborate exegetical thinking to the mundane world of hair, beards, and shaving. For instance, R.G. Austin's assessment of the first critical edition (appearing in the *Classical Review*) comments, "it is gratifying to know that in the Future Life there will be no shaving—the beard will remain static, and will not need washing or combing."¹² G. G. Coulton suggested likewise in 1935 that the *Apologia* could inform modern audiences

¹⁰ See Chauvin (p. 32) who provides contemporary accounts. In addition to the *Apologia* there were at least four other texts attributed to Burchard which were lost during the French Revolution and the dissolution of abbey libraries. They were entitled, *Vidi Dominum*, *Vetus et Novum*, *Oximellita*, *Epistola de corde et animo*, and a series of *epistolae*.

¹¹ There is significant evidence that despite rhetoric of unanimity in Cistercian sources, there existed many diverse opinions and practices within the order. The Claravallian or Bernardine model, however, became one of the most dominant due largely to the influence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. For a discussion of this variation, see Constance Berman. In particular, she points to the existence of Cistercian nuns well before they were officially accepted as such by the order, indicating a certain diversity of practice. Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 221-35.

¹² R. G. Austin, "Untitled Review," *The Classical Review* 50, no. 2 (1936): 90.

about monastic leisure, asserting that, “abbot [Burchard] here is jesting; he is wasting his time in a way that his master [Bernard of Clairvaux] could have never approved.”¹³ He continues with an assertion that the work was nonetheless significant because “this *πάρεργον* [parergon] tells us much more than a great many serious professional treatises.”¹⁴

These few scholars who first addressed the *Apologia* determined that it was an instance of medieval humour based on its apparent mixing of sacred and mundane discourses, but also on a brief passage in which Burchard refers to the “play of nature [*ludus naturae*]” which develops into a longer consideration of laughter.¹⁵ As developed in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, Burchard suggests that a monk engages in two kinds of laughter – one positive, one negative. Jean Leclercq read this section of the *Apologia* as showing the reader that it was intended to create “positive laughter”.¹⁶

This suggestion that the text was meant to induce laughter, however, is based in a decontextualized reading of Burchard’s words. His description of laughter does not come at the outset of the work (where one would expect authorial statements to be placed), nor does it make explicit link between his text and the experience of laughter. And his evocation of the theme is short and passing, appearing in one chapter exclusively. To describe “positive laughter” Burchard uses the Biblical example of Sarah laughing from joy when she discovered that she was pregnant with Isaac. He contrasts this example with its opposite: the laughter which occurs when one person derides another. This discussion of laughter, moreover, is part of Burchard’s

¹³ G. G. Coulton, “Untitled Review,” *The English Historical Review* 52, no. 206 (1937): 311.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹⁵ Burchard, 209.

¹⁶ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 172.

condemnation of those who deride lay brothers for their way of life and their physical appearance. As such, his discussion of laughter becomes a way to encourage lay brothers' acceptance of their way of life, and not allow secular derision to sway them from their path.¹⁷ From Burchard's characterization, we can conclude that he did not seek to engage in a humiliatingly derisive discourse, but neither does he give indication that he was trying to provide some kind of uplifting positive laughter to his audience.¹⁸ Since Burchard provides no further references to the treatise's jocular nature, it seems difficult to conclude that it was the text's purpose, especially when abundant evidence exists for other more serious possibilities as I discuss below.

After the initial flurry of interest in the *Apologia* subsided, the debate over the treatise's tone took a backseat to the use of the text as a fact book for the history of manners and comportment (e.g. fashion). The most influential of these studies is Giles Constable's introduction to the second edition of the *Apologia* published in 1985. In the 100 pages of introduction, 20 were spent discussing the manuscript and its contents, whereas 80 pages were spent laying out the history of hair styles.

By producing what is arguably the most detailed and rigorously researched history of beards in the Middle Ages, Constable has had a determinative effect on the subsequent scholarly understanding of the *Apologia de barbibus*. Scholarly studies have often cited the *Apologia* since

¹⁷ There is a much later thirteenth century story in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue of Miracles* which also discusses the idea that lay brothers felt derided by their peers for their menial work. These two references, Caesarius and Burchard, seem to indicate a relatively broad acknowledgement of how lay brothers may have been perceived outside the order. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, vol. 1, trans. H. Von E. Scott, and C. C. Swinton Bland (London: Routledge, 1929), 197-8; and Burchard, 158: "Crebro vos derident seculars, dicentes: "Quam longa colla, quam rotunda, quam crassa: quale, quam dulce, quam suave foret in lardum illud et arvinam illam ferire pugno fortiter!"

¹⁸ In particular, he cites the Biblical story of boys who were deriding a bald man, and so were mauled to death by two bears. Notably, Giles Constable, in his introduction to the *Apologia* also interprets this passage's significance as condemning those who would mock his text. Constable, 140.

its 1985 second edition, but only for the information it shed on medieval beards, hair, or ideas of gender. The *Apologia* simply becomes a footnote; these works rarely cite the text itself, but only Constable's introduction.¹⁹ His introduction, however, acknowledges (if in passing) that the text was much more than simply a treatise on beards. About Burchard's purpose in composing the text Constable wrote,

His object was to treat beards "from every point of view, theological, moral, social, monastic, sanitary," and in each case to find "a divine or an ethical application for almost every hair." The result may impress readers as far-fetched, or even extravagant, but it is a notable example of medieval allegorical reasoning.²⁰

Despite his own and others' use of the *Apologia*, Constable's assessment of the allegorical import of Burchard's text here cautions scholars against using the text as a source for reconstructing medieval habits (e.g. the medieval quotidian) or for medieval ideas about hair. Instead, the work is very openly theological in tone and content, and from the prologue very explicitly about the lay brothers. Hair may be the content of Burchard's discussion but we should not take the medium as an indication of the message he wanted to send. By returning to Burchard's own words and explanations of his text, I wish to consider its audience and genre in order to reconstruct what Burchard had originally intended his work to do.

AUDIENCE

The prologue explicitly notes the lay brothers of Rosières as the intended audience, but a closer analysis of the text renders this assumption problematic. Its incipit is addressed to them

¹⁹ Several recent examples of this trend are "Veil Hat and Hair? Reflections on an Asymmetrical Relationship," *The Medieval History Journal* 8, no. 1 (2005): 25-47; Simon Coats, "Scissors or Swords: The Symbolism of a Medieval Haircut," *History Today* 49 (1999): 7-13; or Robert Barlett, "The Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1994): 43-60.

²⁰ Constable, 140.

and the text continually exhorts lay brothers in the vocative as *fratres*, but it is evident from context that he does not address his sermons to *fratres* in the more general sense of all monastic individuals.²¹ Rather, by referring to the *fratres* in conjunction with references to beards—the distinguishing physical characteristic of lay brethren—Burchard makes clear that his explicit audience is the lay brothers. Burchard writes, for example, “I hope, brothers, that your beards may be found free from all uncleanness and that they may be saved from any burning.”²² For this reason, it is certain that the *Apologia* was explicitly addressed to lay brothers. This assertion is, however, somewhat problematic due to the style in which the text was written and its genre.

In light of additional evidence, outlined below, it seems that this text was not intended to be a specific response to the lay brothers of Rosières questioning Abbot Burchard’s condemnation, but rather a broader statement about lay brothers. It is likely a statement also directed at a broader monastic audience. Cistercian customs—as codified in the *Usus conversorum* roughly thirty years before Burchard wrote his text and thus well-established—expressly forbade lay brothers from having books, reading, or learning to read.²³ As such, this

²¹ To cite two of many examples where Burchard addresses these brothers in the vocative see Burchard, 152: “mundentur et unctione unguenti barbae vestrae, fratres carissimi, sicut per unguentum quod descendit in barbam illius, barba ipsius mundata est”; or Burchard, 155: “intuemini, fratres, a barba sancti David Barbas vestras tranferri per misterium cognovistis.”

²² Burchard, 160: “Opto, fratres, ut ab omni inmundicia barbae vestrae, inveniantur immunes et illesae conserventur ab omni combustione.”

Although it is possible that his reference to beards may have been intended to include choir monks, whose beards were shaven in theory but in practice would have been apparent throughout much of the year, it seems unlikely. There may have been very little physical difference between a choir monk and a lay brother in regards to his beard throughout much of the year. The *Ecclesiastica officia* dictates that choir monks should shave seven times a year, while lay brothers were to trim their beards to a length no longer than two finger widths. In this way, monks would have certainly had beards throughout much of the year. For a brief discussion of these differences see *Usus conversorum* in *The Cistercian Lay Brother: Twelfth-Century Usages and Related Texts*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Brecht: Brepols, 2000), 193; and Constable, 127. Burchard considers choir monks to be unbearded, but does make a distinction between men unbearded by artifice (i.e. shaving) and those unbearded by nature (i.e. men who never grow beards). Burchard, 175 and 192.

²³ “Usus Conversorum,” in *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-Century Usages with Related Texts*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Brecht: Brepols, 2000), 182: Let no one have a book nor learn anything except only the *pater noster*, and the *credo*, and *Miserere* mei and other things which ought to be said by them and this not by

long text with its complex Latinity and elaborate reasoning seem highly unlikely to be something intended to be read by lay brothers. If Burchard seriously intended this work for the lay brothers, he would have been contravening a long established custom of the Order. Given Benoit Chauvin's assertion of Burchard's orthodoxy of behaviour in his past endeavours, the latter seems highly unlikely.²⁴

Another possibility is that Burchard intended his Latin text to serve as the basis of oral sermons or was a Latinized version of a sermon he had presented, likely in the vernacular. Through title and form, Burchard identifies that his text comprised three sermons, a form which originated as an oral genre. By the twelfth century, however, the sermon genre had split into two distinct types of literature, one oral, the other written. Sermons could be written that were never intended to be preached, but rather used for private study, and oral sermons could be delivered without any written component.²⁵ While these two genres were not necessarily mutually exclusive, since the same sermon could exist in both oral and written forms, they differed from one another considerably in function and form.²⁶ As I will outline below, a number of characteristics of the text suggest that the copy of the *Apologia* that survives was intended for

reading, but by heart. (Nullus habeat librum nec discant aliquid nisi tantum pater noster et credo in deum, miserere mei deus, et cetera que debere dici ab eis et hoc non littera sed cordetenus.) Waddell, 68.

²⁴ Chauvin, 32.

²⁵ Except perhaps a rough outline of points the speaker wished to make. See Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "The Twelfth-Century Monastic Sermon," in *The Sermon*, ed. B.M. Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 271-323.

²⁶ See Kienzle, 293-5. For instance, an oral sermon would have been preached in chapter house. If it were directed to lay brothers it would likely have been translated into a vernacular language by the preacher as he spoke. According to Kienzle, spoken sermons tend to survive as rough notes of points which may have been recorded by the speaker or a member of the audience. Oral sermons tended to be written for specific feast days in order to exhort the audience to further devotion. Written sermons exist, on the other hand, in an edited form and would have been used for private reading and contemplation.

private reading and not public preaching. Among these are its complex Latinity and evident heavy editing.²⁷

The complexity of Burchard's Latinity suggests that it is unlikely the text would ever have been translated for vernacular preaching.²⁸ Several scholars have observed Burchard's "propensity for word play" (puns, homonyms, paronyms) which function only in Latin and often would only have made sense as written text.²⁹ If this text was composed in Latin to be given in the vernacular, such word play would have been completely lost. If the text was presented in the vernacular and then revised to include the Latin word play, then it provides evidence that the original sermon was significantly altered for a new audience. Burchard often uses the verb "*lego*" (to read) to refer to his audience's consumption of the text, which gives further evidence that an oral sermon had either never been or was no longer the intended means to experience the work, and thus, is unlikely to be heard or read by lay brothers.³⁰

The text, like most written monastic sermons in the twelfth century, was almost certainly intended for monastic *lectio*, or private meditation on texts. I contend that it was meant to disseminate an argument about the role and status of lay brothers among a broader monastic community – particularly to the choir monks of the Cistercian Order. Choir monks' participation

²⁷ For example, Burchard introduces a number of neologisms such as *rariberbes*, *pleniberbes*, *barbilogus*, or *demivirum*, and *feminavirum*.

²⁸ Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "The Sermon Before 1200," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 660.

²⁹ An example of one of these puns comes from the prologue to the text in which Burchard plays on the words *barba* (beard) and *barbara* (barbarous). Burchard, 151: Far be it from me that so barbarous a thought should come into my mind to hope that your beards would be burnt. (Absit a me ut venerit in mentem mean tam barbara cotitatio barbas vestras optare comburi!)

³⁰ Burchard, 168: "He who reads this barbilogia of the barbilogus diligently" (Qui barbilogam istius barbilogi legerit diligenter) and "Read the end of Isaiah: Their fire, he says, is not extinguished, and they are always for the satiation of the vision of the flesh" (Legite finem Ysaiae: Ignis inquit, eorum non extinguetur et erunt usque ad satietatem visionis omni carnem).

in *lectio divina* is well established in secondary literature, as is the prohibition against reading by lay brothers.³¹ Due to the complexity of style, it seems far more likely that Burchard expected his *Apologia* to be read, at least partly but perhaps even exclusively, by choir monks.

If the text was to be read by choir monks, then why was it addressed to the lay brothers? The evocation of a lay brother audience was likely a textual device which Burchard implemented to mark these brothers as the subject of his treatise but not necessarily as its recipient.

Although it is uncertain whether there were ever additional copies of this text produced and the single extant copy suggests that its influence was limited, the content indicates that Burchard was writing to influence a monastic audience. On the surface, the *Apologia de barbibus* seems to lack an overarching structure. The text is divided into three sermons of unequal length: The first on the “cleanliness of beards”, the second “on the composition of beards” and the third on the “nature of beards”. The chapter titles presented in the original manuscript demonstrate a heterogeneous composition. For instance, the chapter development in Burchard’s second sermon goes as follows: concerning the many styles of beards and facial hair, concerning the semi-shorn beards of David’s heralds and what so disgraceful a deed signifies, and what ought to grow in Jericho until it grows.³²

He divides his argument into three complementary parts. In the first part –corresponding to the first sermon– he accuses lay brothers of a series of transgressions against the order. In the second sermon, he continues to affirm these transgressions, but suggests that they can be fixed by ending schismatic behaviour and accepting an ordered monastic hierarchy. In this section he provides a series of examples which demonstrate that choir monks are separate from lay

³¹ See fn. 27 above, and Terryl N. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2002), 58 for a recent discussion of this concept.

³² Burchard, 161-3: “De varia compositione barbarum et grennonum, de barbibus nuntiorum David semirasis et quid significet tam turpe factum, quid sit manere in Hiericho donec crescat barba.”

brothers, and suggests that brothers should not question their status. In the third sermon, he bases his authority not only in his personal authority as an abbot and preacher, but draws on the concept of “natural order” to buttress his argument for the lay brothers’ acceptance of the reforms to their behaviour he advocates.

As historians of monastic learning have repeatedly emphasized, however, Cistercian texts often follow a peculiar rationality based on digressive exegetical allusions or affectivity.³³ Considered through this monastic lens, a rational structure with the *Apologia* becomes clear. The inspiration is biblical; Burchard derives his inspiration and central argument from two specific Biblical texts, Psalm 132 on brotherly unity, and his own variation on Isaiah 9:5.

This latter text reads, “let the beards of those men be made unto fire and become food for fire, who knowingly and understandingly stir up a tempest which makes the soul to be shipwrecked,” and the other, Psalm 132 (beginning, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity.”) As is typical for medieval sermons, Burchard begins by analyzing a line of text, and from there develop a spiritual argument, thus Burchard’s focus on these two texts is typical of the genre.

Burchard opens with these two texts and continually refers back to them throughout the entire text. Although differing considerably in content, these two lines attempt to achieve the same end, to accuse lay brothers of disorder, and the disruption of unity with the Order. Isaiah is used to advocate for the punishment or purging of those who create schisms, while the Psalm text holds up brotherly unity as an ideal from which the lay brothers have fallen away. In this way, they both attempt to restore order. Although Burchard’s prologue focuses on the

³³ See especially Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, Vol. 2, trans. Marc Sebanc (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 151, for this particular form of Christian exegesis, and Martha Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1-19, for a discussion of the affective rhetoric which characterizes Cistercian writing.

punishment of transgressors, his reference to beard burning as a punishment for lay brother disobedience is qualified as only a last resort. He promises, instead, that his intention was to foster unity not punish faults. He writes:

I wish for the conservation and wholeness of your beards and I hope it can be done as with the beard of Aaron, so that ‘like the ointment on the head that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron’ it may allow a cleanness and purification of beards for worship. Through Jesus Christ, a spiritual unction will descend onto your beards from your head, cleaning and purifying all your interior senses by which manly vigour and venerable age in maturity are indicated, a state which not dissimilarly is shown by beards.³⁴

The passage speaks of Burchard’s text functioning as ointment to heal and purify the impure interior senses of the brothers whom he addresses explicitly, as well as the theme of brotherly unity implicitly. The reader grasps the association with this last theme from the excerpt’s original context, Psalm 132, the incipit of which Burchard again cites later in his work while reaffirming his desire for fraternal unity.³⁵ By beginning with this psalm (if not the explicit evocation of the theme of unity), he outlines that it is the central concern of his sermon.³⁶ Burchard’s intention behind this introduction becomes even clearer when his reading of Psalm 132 is compared to that of one of his major textual authorities, Augustine of Hippo. In juxtaposing Augustine and Burchard’s interpretation of 132 it is clear that Augustine’s commentary structured Burchard’s own reading of the Biblical text. Augustine writes in his *Commentary on the Psalms*:

³⁴ Burchard, 152: “Volo autem ad conservationem et integritatem barbarum vestrarum, et opto, ut fiat de barbis vestris secundum barbam Aaron, hoc est ut *sicut unguentum in capite, quod descendit in barbam, barbam Aaron*, illic operatum est mundiciam et purificationem ad misterium barbarum omnium, ita descendat in barbas vestras, a capite vestro Christo Iesu spiritalis unctio, purgans et purificans omnes sensus interiores vestros, in quibus vigor virilis et etas maturitate venerabilis dinoscitur, quae forma non inconvenienter monstratur in barbis.”

³⁵ Burchard, 168: “Woe to those beards whose men do not delight to hear, behold how good and happy joyful it is for brothers to live in unity.” (*Ve barbis illorum quos non delectat audire: ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum!*)

³⁶ According to Kienzle, sermons typically followed a structure of interpretation in which a primary text was presented at the beginning of a sermon and then commented upon in the body. Kienzle, 280-2.

The beard signifies the courageous; the beard distinguishes the grown men, the earnest, the active, the vigorous. So that when we describe such, we say, he is a bearded man. Thus that ointment descended first upon the Apostles, descended upon those who bore the first assaults of the world, and therefore the Holy Spirit descended on them. For they who first began to dwell together in unity, suffered persecution, but because the ointment descended to the beard, they suffered, but were not conquered.³⁷

Burchard's interpretation of this biblical text echoes Augustine's interpretation of the beard's signification of maturity and vigour when he writes, "the spiritual unction descends into your beards...purging and purifying your interior senses, in which manly vigour and venerable maturity are discerned, the form of which is not inconveniently shown in beards."³⁸ Any educated monastic audience would have been intimately familiar with the Psalms and with Augustine's authoritative commentary on them and so would have recognized that Burchard was interpreting the text the same way. Thus, Burchard's reference to the Psalm was also actually a reference to Augustine's commentary on it, and his particular interpretation of this Psalm's significant for monastic life.

Augustine identifies Psalm 132 as central for the organization of monastic life, suggesting that it was this psalm which drew the monks of the desert together to live in cenobitic communities. "By this sound [of this Psalm]," he writes, "were stirred up the brethren who longed to dwell together. This verse was their trumpet. It sounded through the whole earth, and they who were divided, were gathered together."³⁹ Further, Augustine suggests that even the

³⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* Cl. 0283, SL 40, *psalmus : 132* Barba significat fortes; barba significant iuvenes, strenuous, impigros, alacres, quando tales describimus: barbatus homo est, dicimus. ergo illud primum unguentum descendit in apostolos, descendit in illos qui primos impetus saeculi sustinuerunt: descendit ergo in illos spiritus sanctus. Nam et illi qui primum in unum habitare coeperunt, persecutionem passi sunt; sed quia descenderat unguentum in barbam, passi sunt, non uicti. Burchard wrote almost in tandem "In quibus vigor virilis et etas maturitate venerabilis dinoscuntur, quae forma non invenienter monstratur in barbis.

³⁸ Burchard, 152 : "Spiritualis unction, purgans et purificans omnes sensus interiores vestros, in quibus vigor virilis et etas maturitate venerabilis dinoscitur, quae forma non inconvenienter monstratur in barbis."

³⁹ Augustine of Hippo, Cl. 0283.

term “monk” was drawn from the words of this Psalm indicating its centrality to the monastic identity.⁴⁰ Due to the importance of this Psalm to the monastic program, as Augustine suggests, and Burchard’s placement of it at the beginning of his text, it is necessary to read it as setting the tenor of his argument. Since Burchard uses this psalm to refer to a healing spiritual unction that would descend into the beards of the lay brothers who were at fault, his citation of Psalm 132 functions as a call to brotherly unity within the monastic life.

After introducing the central theme as monastic unity, Burchard outlines the ways in which the lay brothers’ vices disrupted this ideal. Burchard connects what he calls, the “exterior” beards with the “interior” beards, representing insects infesting these beards as the exterior form of inner vice. He highlights three principal faults, in particular, of which he considers lay brothers guilty: namely, *voluptas* [excessive will/desire] *inhonestas* [impropriety], and *duplicitas* [deceit] which correspond to various pests: slow footed bugs (*lentipedes*), slugs (*lendum*), and the insect known for its “foot in its eye.”⁴¹ “Excessive will”, he writes, “occurs in sluggish, lazy, and idle men and every idler lives in his desires, and his desires destroy the lazy man.”⁴² Like bugs distracted by what they see, impropriety, on the other hand, arises among men from a desire for trifling and superfluous objects. He suggests that lay brothers who are guilty of impropriety concern themselves too much on exterior vanities by cultivating flowing beards to give them the appearance of philosophers. He continues, “Thus indeed they wish to seem wise so that they are

⁴⁰ Ibid., Further evidence that Burchard explicitly draws his inspiration from Augustine’s commentary comes later in the text when he cites Augustine’s description of the beard as a sign of strength from his Commentary, word for word. In fact, an entire chapter of Burchard’s work is quoted from Augustine’s commentary. See Burchard, 193.

⁴¹ Burchard, 152: “The that third kind of insect which is said to have taken its name from the foot in the eye,” (et illud tertium genus quod a pede in oculo nomen sibi dicitur sumpsisse). It is uncertain to which insect Burchard refers. It can be inferred, however, that it is some kind of pest which would be likely to infest the beard.

⁴² Burchard, 153: “Voluptas in lentis et pigris et otiosis est et in desideriiis est omnis otiosus et desideria pigrum occidunt.”

thought to philosophize and as if in a beard, they pretend to the veneration of wisdom.”⁴³ Finally, he defines duplicity (a doubleness) as directing one’s heart toward concerns of the world (the feet) while one’s eyes pretend to focus on God, and so one’s feet are where one’s eyes should be. In each of these cases, Burchard suggests that lay brothers are not sufficiently directed toward God, and instead focus on exterior and worldly things.

Burchard’s critique of possible faults of brothers casts them firmly within a monastic frame of reference by demanding proper humility, obedience, and rejection of worldly pleasures, which together form the cornerstone of Benedict’s monastic program.⁴⁴ His treatment of these vices and virtues, however, focuses attention on how lay brother transgress ideals in particularly lay fashion – with the result that these vices indicate not mere failure at the monastic life but is rejection in a schismatic and disorderly manner. His criticism is two-pronged: He accuses them of arrogance and not being true to their monastic calling, and criticizes their focus on temporal gain and vanities.

At the end of his second sermon, he returns to these accusations, that the brothers focus too much on the pleasures of the flesh, linking it to these lapses in devotion to transgression of God’s law and order, and disruption of the unity of monastic life. He makes this point by describing the story of Ezechiel whom God told to shave his beard and divide the pieces, cutting the first with a sword, burning the second, and casting the third into the wind.⁴⁵ Burchard connects three faults to the threefold punishing of the beard – accusing lay brothers of acting

⁴³ Burchard, 153: “sapientes videri volunt ut philosophari putentur et quasi in barba sapientiae venerationem pretendunt.”

⁴⁴ *Rule*, ch. 4; 5; 6.

⁴⁵ See Burchard, 167 and Ez. 5. 2-4.

against order and creating schisms.⁴⁶ Specifically, he connects the hair cut by the sword with brothers who “cut up unity” and create schisms.⁴⁷ The part which is burnt, he connects with incontinent and impure men who are enflamed with desire. Finally, he associates the hair cast to the wind with brothers who are insufficiently dedicated to the monastic life and so wander ceaselessly like St. Benedict’s *gyrovagues*.⁴⁸

He uses these faults, centred on brothers who create unrest and who have lukewarm devotion, to suggest that these brothers were disordered and transgressed the rules of proper behaviour. He writes, “Divine reproach is rightly made against unbelievers and transgressors of His law and His Order and against corrupt manners (*mores*) and fit punishment is to be meted out in accordance with the quantity and quality of those deserving it and to be allotted among each one by the balanced scales of equity and justice.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, Burchard constantly refers to the brothers he criticizes as disobedient, murmuring, and detractors, and suggests that if they do not accept his spiritual “unguent” to which he referred at the beginning of his first sermon, that their “dry, filthy beards” would sow confusion instead of order, and be fit for burning.⁵⁰ In this way, Burchard portrays these brothers

⁴⁶ NB this story of Ezechiel and Burchard’s moral interpretation of his actually occurs in the second sermon of his text, not the first. I have taken the liberty of moving this discussion to my first section since Burchard himself links them explicitly in his text. His citation of the story of Ezechiel largely expands upon his initial criticisms. I adjust this structure in an effort to demonstrate the logic behind the argument without also reproducing its digressive structure.

⁴⁷ Burchard, 168.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁹ Burchard, 167 : “contra incredulos et legis suae et Ordinis transgressores et corruptos mores inveniatur increpatio divina fieri et secundum quantitatem qualitatem meritorum condigna retributio ponderari et equa lance equitatis et iusticiae per singulos distribui.”

⁵⁰ Burchard, 167-168: “De transgressoribus Ordinis sui et inordinate viventibus atque dissolute et deo conversationem eorum pessimam puniente dictum est : misit in eos iram indignationis suae, indignationem et iram et tribulationem, immisiones per angelos malos. Si inobedientes, si murmuriosi, si detractores fueritis inventi, ad magnam confusionem barbas nutritis quia non remanebit pilus qui non abradatur.” And “ve barbibus sordentibus et arefactis, quibus non fluit unguentum in capite, quod defluit in barbam Aaron.”

as acting against order, specifically affirming that they are “*exordinati*” suggesting that they are literally “out of” order, or “away from” order due to their unacceptable excessive will, half-hearted and misleading devotion to God, and other unspecified schismatic behaviour. He advocates, therefore, that lay brothers should allow these beards to sully their interior beards, and should instead seek out “clean beards” as he suggested in the title to his sermon.⁵¹

Burchard constructs lay brothers as transgressors, therefore, linking these seemingly minor faults with sowing confusion and discord and creating schisms and so connects all of their spiritual faults with acting against proper order.

Despite Burchard’s argument that these lay brothers behaved against “order” he does not suggest that they were anti-monastic.⁵² Instead, he affirms specifically that they were acting within a monastic framework, when he describes the perils of lay brothers’ contact with the temporal world, referred to merely as the “world” in the primary sources. Burchard highlights the danger of contact with the secular through his commentary on the biblical story of King David and Hanun of the Ammonites.⁵³ The story tells of how, when Hanun’s father, old King of the Ammonites died, David decided to repay a past kindness by sending his servants to the new king in order to help them grieve. The new king Hanun believed David’s men to be spies so he decided to humiliate them by cutting off half of their beards and cutting their clothes off at the

⁵¹ Burchard, 152: “*Sermo primus de mundicia barbarum.*”

⁵² This point is important to emphasize since “*ordo*” could also refer to monastic life more generally, implying that lay brothers were anti-monastic. This discussion of lay brothers as monastic indicates that he more likely meant a meaning of *ordo* similar to the modern English usage of “order” as in correct rank, or correct placement. See Constable’s discussion of the concept of “*ordo*” in the Middle Ages for a discussion of the term’s usage. Giles Constable, “The Orders of Society,” in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 68-84.

⁵³ This story is recounted in 2 Samuel 10:2-5. Burchard’s explains its allegorical meaning, Burchard, 162 “*Tulit Anon servos David rasitque dimidiam partem barbae eorum et precidit vestes eorum medias usque ad nates et dimisit eos. Quod cum nuntiatum esset David, misit in occursum eorum—erant enim viri confuse turpiter valde—et mandavit eis David: “Manete in Hierico donec crescat barba vestra et tunc revertimini.”*

buttocks. When David heard what had transpired, he ordered his men to stay in Jericho until their beards grew back.

Burchard interprets the story as cautioning against involvement in secular affairs. He suggests that sometimes even when one seeks to do good things for others he is repaid with bad things in return. He uses this interpretation to caution against too excessive involvement of lay brothers in secular affairs.⁵⁴ He indicates that a lay brother, who may be sent out into the world for business, goes because of obedience to his abbot.⁵⁵ He suggests a comparison between lay brothers and David's messengers; and so cautions that while lay brothers were doing work for the lover of the world (*amator mundi*) they must take care to work only for the sake of obedience and not be enticed from their calling.⁵⁶ He suggests that if they fail in their devotion, they too would be humiliated and confused as were David's messengers.⁵⁷ Thus, Burchard firmly places lay brothers within a monastic sphere of reference by suggesting that they too might be drawn away from the monastic calling by coming into excessive contact with "the world". In particular, he frames these brothers as "falling into confusion."⁵⁸ Thus when Burchard criticized the lay brothers for their disorderly behaviour, he does not portray them as pitting themselves against monks or monastic life. Instead, he suggests that their disruption of proper order and their spreading of disorderly behaviour and confusion disrupted monastic life, it did not oppose it.

⁵⁴ Burchard, 162. Literally, he writes, "because bad things are accustomed to arise unexpectedly from good deeds, and bad deeds pay back for good deeds when good men are eager to return good deeds for good deeds" (*Ex quibusdam bonis incaute gesis mala solent oriri, et mala pro bonis reddunt mali quando pro bonis reddere bona student boni*).

⁵⁵ Burchard, 163.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: "Sed quia secularibus negotiis implicate sunt quia ad amaroem mundi missi sunt, decepti incident in confusionem et in forma stultorum derisione digni revertuntur qui forma sapientium fuerant delegati."

In this first sermon, therefore, Burchard criticizes lay brothers for their schismatic behaviour suggesting that they sow confusion and disorder, while holding up the idea of fraternal unity as his ideal. In the following section, I consider his discussion of order as a response to the lay brother's disorderly behaviour.

UNITY AND ORDER

Burchard entitled his second sermon "on the styles of beards."⁵⁹ This title signals his intention to discuss the differing kinds of beards worn by men from various walks of life since he began this sermon by discussing different styles of beards and their suitability for religious life. In content, his tone moves away from his previous fear-inducing polemic in which he accused the brothers of disorder, to a discussion of ideal order which lay brothers must love and enjoy. In this order, he affirms, lay brothers and monks should remain separate and lay brothers should not question their status or role. His conception of order thus reflects a monastery in which everyone knows and respects their placement within the hierarchy.

Burchard begins this sermon by linking the second sermon to the first, "But behold, o beloved brothers, just as you ought to have clean beards thus also it is fitting to have ordered beards."⁶⁰ He had entitled his initial sermon "on the cleanliness of beards" suggesting that the schismatic and disorderly faults he outlined represented filthy beards externally and internally. Thus, in ending schismatic behaviour and reforming their character, the brothers would have "clean beards." In the second sermon, he focuses on orderly beards, suggesting that they were necessary just as clean beards were. In this way, his first and second sermon link in a common

⁵⁹ Burchard, 161: "Sermo secundus de compositione barbarum."

⁶⁰ Burchard, 161: "Sed ecce, fratres amantissimi, sicut barbas debetis habere mundas, sic et ordinatas habere vos convenit."

argument: that lay brothers are too worldly and schismatic, and that they should cease living disorderly. In his second sermon he describes what he means by proper “order” in opposition to the “disorder” of which he accused the brothers in his opening sermon. The bulk of his argument in the second sermon centres on the question of rightful divisions between choir monks and lay brothers by describing the reasons for and “moral signification” of having or shaving beards.

The maintenance and shaving of beards had significant symbolic value within Cistercian discourse independent of Burchard’s discussion, which is helpful to understanding Burchard’s discussion of the subject in his text. Throughout the Middle Ages, the prime identifier of clerical (and monastic) status was a shorn face, and for monks additionally a shorn head. In many Cistercian sources, including the earliest references to lay brothers, they are called *conversi barbati*, or ‘bearded converts.’⁶¹ This association follows into Cistercian sign language in which the sign for a lay brother was to “take hold of the beard, or an imaginary one, with right closed hand then pull on the beard slightly.”⁶² In text, gesture, and spoken language, therefore, beards became the primary identifier of a lay brother and became a highly symbolic way for his physical body itself to be immediately distinguished from that of a choir monk.

It is likely that the Cistercian inspiration for lay brothers to be bearded derived from the traditional Benedictine association of beardedness with secularity in opposition to clerical un-beardedness. There is some indication, however, that the association of beardedness with lay

⁶¹ For an early usage, see “*Exordium Parvum*,” in *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Citeaux*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses, 1999), 254: “*Tunque diffinierunt se conversos laicos barbatos.*”

⁶² Robert Barakat, *The Cistercian Sign Language: A study in non-verbal communication* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 109. Barakat’s book focuses on Cistercian sign language in the twentieth century. This sign in particular, however, has great antiquity. Scott Bruce describes that this same sign was part of the Cluniac lexicon dating from at least the eleventh century. In the Cluniac context it signified “layman, because of the beard that this sort of man did not shave long ago.” Scott Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 180.

status was one which functioned largely within the monastic milieu and may not have had credence outside of this particular monastic symbolic structure. One example comes from Burchard's *Apologia*. Burchard suggests that lay brethren should not allow lay men mocking their beards sway them from their calling. This observation seems to indicate that the beards these brothers were wearing were not the same as whatever fashions were customary amongst their secular peers.⁶³ Likewise, the Cluniac lexicon indicates that their association of beards with laymen was inspired by the beards those men "used to have." Since the lexicon refers to this phenomenon in the past tense, it is highly likely that lay men no longer wore that kind of beard.⁶⁴ Regardless it is evident that beardedness and un-beardedness took on specific cultural meaning within monastic culture whether this was paralleled in outside culture or not.

Due to the highly symbolic meaning of beards to Cistercian monks, it is likely that Burchard's "apology" for beards as a whole would be read with a certain amount of cultural baggage, especially regarding issues of identity and social structures. Burchard gives an indication that perhaps the reason for lay brothers' "disorder" may be that they were "successively uneasy and complaining with questions why [they] are called *conversi* or why [they] do not shave [their] beards" and this question forms the basis of his second sermon.⁶⁵ He devotes three chapters to the justification for this division, treating first the idea why monks shave their beards and lay do not. Second, he considers the moral similarity in the having and

⁶³ Burchard, 168.

⁶⁴ Bruce, 180. Giles Constable also suggests that beards were out of fashion in this period amongst lay people but does not clarify whether this distinction spread across social strata. See Constable, 94-97.

⁶⁵ Burchard, 174: "Non itaque deinceps debetis esse scrupulosi vel quereulosi questionibus cur dicamini *conversi* sive quare barbas non radatis, cum ita debere fieri ratione probatum sit et auctoritate."

lacking of beards. Finally, he considers “reasons and examples of shaving and not shaving beards.”⁶⁶

Burchard starts with the fundamental assumption that choir monks shaved, while lay brothers did not, and acknowledges that some might question the logic behind how shaving could be good for one person, while bad for another.⁶⁷ In order to justify this physical difference, Burchard contrasts representations of the New and Old Testament in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. He suggests an analogy between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (law vs. grace) with lay brothers and choir monks – affirming that grace does not destroy law, but rather fulfills it. In this way he suggests that it can be good for both lay brothers and monks to differ in their having and lacking of beards, since the lack of beards complements the presence of beards on lay brothers. Burchard then presents the idea that having could be in opposition to lacking beards (representing choir monks), but then immediately breaks down this idea by suggesting that lacking beards does not oppose having beards, but rather fulfills it. The implication is that by having beards and lacking beards monastic individuals complete the bipartite community and he suggests, therefore, that lay brothers should embrace this relationship. He develops this idea of breaking down the notion of choir monks and lay brothers as oppositional further in the following chapter on the moral symmetry (Latin *proportio*) of having and lacking beards.

In his chapter on the moral symmetry of beardedness and unbeardedness, Burchard further reaffirms that choir monks should be separate from lay brothers by portraying their roles as opposite from one another, but not in conflict. In order to convey this idea of moral symmetry, he

⁶⁶ Ibid., 169. These reasons form the basis of one of his chapters, “capitulum XI. De causa et exemplis radendi barbas aut non radendi et horum rationibus.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., 165: “Thence perhaps you suggest the question, ‘why do we shave our beards and why do you not shave your beards and how is it good for one when it seems to be contrary to lack and have beards?’” (Inde forsitan movetis questionem quare nos barbas vestras nostras radimus et cur vos barbas vestras non raditis, et quomodo bonum sit utrumque, cum videatur esse contrarium barbas habere et barbas carere?).

carefully outlines the equality of the two groups by portraying them as mutually exclusive, yet mutually necessary and thus constructs a harmonious and properly ordered whole through the combination of spiritual and physical halves.

Burchard emphasizes his conception of order by creating a series of successive rhetorical divisions designed to demarcate choir monks from lay brothers:

You undertake **corporal works** as is necessary so that you may sustain and foster the **old man**, something which your hair and beard show. We engage in **spiritual pursuits**, by which we strengthen the **new man** in spirit, to cut off superfluous things which are signified by shaving hair and beard. You keep your hairs and beards and you do not shave, so that you make provision for **exterior** things, which should be done with laughter and not from desire. We shave our head and beards so that we –scrutinizing happily our innermost – both obtain for us and share with you those things which together we will be able to enjoy eternally. [...] We –lacking beards and with a tonsure– plant **spiritual works** in you and we harvest your **corporal works**, since you –with beards and with hair– labour for us; you are **outside** exposed to the heat and cold and thus have beards and hair as a result; we are **inside**, enclosed in claustral discipline, and so we do not require beards and hair like you. And finally, know that beards are not appropriate for the duty of the **altar**, which is ours, but are not inconsistent but well suited for **agriculture**, which is of your duty. We, **entering** the holy of holies, cut away the hairiness of beards, you **going out** to till fields show by the condition of your beards what is your labour.⁶⁸

Burchard lists key dichotomies of spiritual versus physical and interior versus exterior to distinguish choir monks and lay brothers. He frames his discussion as an attempt to demonstrate the similarity between monks and lay brothers, portraying them as two equal (*proportionis*) parts

⁶⁸ Burchard, 166: “Vos carnalia exercitis opera ut veterem hominem sustentetis et foveatis in necessitate, quod capillatura et barba demonstrant, nos spiritalia exercemus studia quibus novum hominem in spiritu roboremus, ut abscidamus a nobis superflua, quod in racione capitis et barbae figuratur. Vos capillos et barbas servatis et non raditis, ut exteriora, quae in risu et non in appetitu debent esse preparatis, nos caput et barbas radimus ut interiora cum appetitu scrutantes, sic nobis adquiramus ut vobiscum communicemus, quibus simul perfrui debemus aeternaliter, quia pro nobis et vobis laboratis temporaliter[...]Nos spiritalia vobis seminamus sine barbibus cum corona et vestra carnalia metimus, quid nobis laboratis cum barbibus et capillatura, vos foris ad estus et frigora expositi barbibus et capillaturam ad remedium habetis, nos intus ad claustralem disciplinam clausi barbibus et capillatura non ita ut vos indigemus aut opus habemus. Videte denique a quod ad officium altaris, quod nostrum est, barbibus non conveniunt, sed ad agriculturam, quae vestri officii est, barbibus non disconveniunt sed congruunt. Nos ad sancta sanctorum ingredienti barbarum pilositatem resecamus, vos ad culturam agrorum egredientes et habitu barbarum ostenditis quod de labore estis.”

of a whole.⁶⁹ Although Burchard is careful to emphasize the likeness between choir monks and lay brothers, he clearly distinguishes between what is appropriate to each. Using the metaphor commonly used to distinguish Jews from Christians (Old Testament from the New; *Synagoga* from *Ecclesia*) Burchard notes the groups as uniquely corporal or spiritual, exterior or interior. In emphasizing these “symmetrical” dichotomies, he contrasts choir monk with lay brother underscoring that the two groups are not, and cannot be the same. It also provides justification for why lay brothers should be supporting choir monks with their labour. He cites the biblical letter of Paul in which he defended his authority as an apostle and argued that he and all churchmen should not be called upon to engage in manual labour. Citing Paul, he wrote, “If we have sown spiritual things for you, why should you be surprised if we harvest your material things?” Burchard characterizes monks as the clerical elite who were to be supported by the laity because they provided spiritual services.⁷⁰ The lay brothers, in this analogy, are the lay people who should support clerics. In Burchard’s representation, the monastery has become a microcosm of the human world and the choir monk/lay brother division is a clear separation of clerical and profane members.

Burchard thereby outlines his conception of an ordered monastery which functioned according to a rational division of labour based on spiritual and physical functions. He hints that the division of tasks was not arbitrary, but rather preordained. Burchard suggests that monks “form a crown by shaving their hair and shave their beard by laying bare their chins, so that in mind and spirit they might extend to perfection, while they desire to cut off everything that is

⁶⁹ In this characterization of a Cistercian monastery as two equal parts Burchard is not alone. Idung of Prufening suggested a similar reasoning in his dialogue of two monks. Idung’s Cistercian monk said to his Cluniac adversary, “We [The Cistercians] now have two monasteries within the precincts of the monastery, one of lay brothers and another of clerics.” Idung of Prufening, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: A Dialogue between Two monks*, trans. Jeremiah Sullivan (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 133.

⁷⁰ Corinthians 1, 9:11.

superfluous and temporal from their disposition.”⁷¹ He contrasts this picture of zealous and spiritual monks free from temporal desires with lay brothers:

You are not tonsured and do not shave your beards since lay simplicity, devoted to the experience of terrestrial labour, is neither skilled in letters to be able to discern spiritual matters, nor able to rise to the practice of perfection, having been burdened by the weight of base worries, since an unencumbered mind and spirit rises to higher things.”⁷²

In denying lay brothers the ability to “rise to the study of perfection” Burchard explains the great benefit and gift granted to them by the spiritual monks who act as their spiritual proxies. These differences are presented as firm and unchangeable. He implies that lay brothers must not only accept their lower position because of customary regulations, therefore, but also because they are inherently unable to overcome their inherent lay simplicity.

Burchard concludes his section with a visceral image to reaffirm and solidify this argument. He suggests, “consider how it would offend the eyes of onlookers to see bearded men clothed in albs and vestments! It is not fitting to hang beards over books and chalices, and therefore ... you with beards are assigned to plows and hoes.”⁷³ “Be certain, therefore,” he affirms, “why you have beards and do not shave and why we do not at all keep our beards but we shave.”⁷⁴ Burchard intends his image to be highly persuasive by relying on the reader’s emotional response or disgust at a lay brother assuming the role of a choir monk, rather than

⁷¹ Burchard, 166: “Nos in capite coronam figuramus capillos radendo et barbam radimus mentum denudando, ut mente et spiritu ad perfectionem tendamus, dum omne quod superfluum est et temporale ab affectu et desiderio abscidere studemus.”

⁷² Burchard, 166: “vos in capite coronam non figuratis et barbam non raditis, quia laicalis simplicitas, usu terreni laboris occupata, nec litteris erudita est ut spiritalia penetrare valeat nec ad perfectionis studiu exurgere potest, infimae sollicitudinis inferius pondere depressa ut spiritu et mente expedita ad superiora conscendat levigata.”

⁷³ Burchard, 166-7: “Considerate quantum oculos intuentium offenderet esse barbato et albis aut casulis! Non deceret super libro saut super calices dependere barbas ideoque sine barbibus versamur circa altaria et calices, vos cum barbibus deputati estis ad aratra et ligones.”

⁷⁴ Burchard, 167: “Deinceps igitur estote certi quare vos barbibus conservatis et non raditis et cur nos minime conservamus barbibus sed radimus.”

reasoned argument.. His argument in essence relies on a feeling that “it would just be wrong” if the situation were otherwise, suggesting the normative was natural. Burchard portrays a lay brother who should wish to transgress this carefully delineated order he outlined as offensive (*offendo*) and unseemly (*non deceret*) and so portrays the suggestion of a lay brother crossing the boundaries of his office as disgusting not only to monks, but also to secular people.

In his second sermon, Burchard describes the menial tasks ascribed to the brothers as having prestige by suggesting that having and lacking beards, and thus working spiritually and working manually are, at their core, morally symmetrical. On the other hand, he demeans the lay brothers by arguing that they are inherently unable to perform the specialized function of a choir monk. Furthermore, he suggests that since lay brothers benefit from the spiritual labour of monks, then they are obligated to furnish the monks with physical goods. Burchard’s concept of a fitting and ordered monastery was one, therefore, in which status and function were clearly delineated and no one transgressed the boundaries of his chosen vocation whether he was a monk or a lay brother. Burchard’s final paragraph of his second sermon reaffirms the concept that status and order were his fundamental concerns. He concluded,

Also, diligently consider this that the prophet [Ezechiel] was one and the same when first he kept his beard and afterwards when he had shaved his beard; likewise we and you are one and the same through that symbolic likeness, since first not shaving the beard, he held to the custom of the lay brothers of not shaving beards and afterwards, upon shaving the beard, he prefigures the order of monks. And so, you ought not successively be uneasy and complaining with questions why you are called lay brothers or why you do not shave your beards since thus it ought to be done and it is proved by reason and authority.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Burchard 174: “Hoc etiam advertite diligenter, ut quemadmodum ille propheta non nisi unus et idem erat, et cum prius barbam nutriret et postea cum barbam rasisset, sic et nos et vos per illam significationem unum et idem sumus quoniam prius barbam non radens conversorum barba non radentium tenuit consuetudinem et postmodum barbam radens monachorum prefiguravit Ordinem. Non itaque deinceps debetis esse scrupulosi vel querelosi questionibus cur dicamini converse sive quare barbas non radatis, cum ita debere fieri ratione probatum sit et auctoritate.”

In his final section, therefore, Burchard reiterates his central theme that lay brothers and monks represent two different incarnations of the same monastic life, yet he concludes that reason (*ratio*) and authority (*auctoritas*) prove that lay brothers should not question the monastic hierarchical divisions and power structure and so he portrays lay brothers and choir monks divided into essential orders based on natural divisions in their character and abilities.

Burchard is not alone in his characterization of lay brothers as separated from choir monks by educational levels and class. Picking up on the assertion of the sources, a significant body of scholarship has argued that there was a tangible difference between choir monks and lay brothers, suggesting that choir monks derived from the aristocracy while lay brothers derived from the peasant class. Yet there is some evidence to suggest that the image Burchard puts forward of lay brothers and choir monks as inherently separate did not reflect reality in many cases. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the legislation that most effectively separated lay brothers from choir monks, in the form of the statute of the general chapter which ruled that aristocrats coming into the Cistercian order would be required to become choir monks instead of lay brothers, did not occur until 1188, well after Burchard's death in 1165. As such, Cistercian sources from the twelfth century do not portray aristocratic (possibly literate) lay brothers as unusual. The conception of lay brothers and monks as inherently divided by social class is, therefore, largely a modern historiographical construct. For instance, a notable example of a literate and aristocratic lay brother is Alan of Lille. Despite being one of the most celebrated and notable theologians in the twelfth century, he decided to become a lay brother at Cîteaux at the end of his life.⁷⁶ Likewise, the *Dialogue of Miracles*, an early thirteenth-century miracle collection cites multiple examples of lay brothers having derived from the aristocracy, and

⁷⁶ Kinder, 308. For a resume of Alan of Lille's theological influence, see Gillian R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: the Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

having even taken holy orders prior to entering the Cistercian order. Again, since Caesarius portrays this act as commonplace, it suggests that the inherent divisions Burchard outlines did not derive merely from his personal observation of the differences between choir monks and lay brothers since these distinctions were most certainly not obvious.⁷⁷ Although it is likely that many aristocrats also could not read, it is telling that the General Chapter's statute insisted that nobles become monks, suggesting that they would be more suitable for the monastic office than that of the lay brother. If these nobles were, and remained illiterate, they could not have fulfilled monastic obligations which required reading. It would seem to suggest, therefore, that literate nobles, who could have become monks, were becoming lay brothers. Furthermore, the clerics whom Caesarius described becoming lay brothers would have most certainly been able to read Latin at least to a limited degree. In this way, his argument should be viewed as an attempt to shape social realities, not reflect them. In the following chapter, I demonstrate that Burchard affirms this separation of roles not through his own personal authority as abbot, or the authority of the Cisterian order, or even the Bible. Rather, he bases his argument in the authority of Natural Order. As such, he draws attention away from his own personal opinion, instead implying that this division was the will of God.⁷⁸

BEARDS, NATURE, AND ORDER

⁷⁷ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue*, vol. 1, 197.

⁷⁸ I suggest here that the division between choir monks and lay brothers was not as essential as Burchard suggests, since there were most certainly some lay brothers who had the ability to read Latin, such as Alan of Lille. This literacy does not take away from the concept that the *Apologia* was not meant to be read by lay brothers. Although some lay brothers could read, they were forbidden to do so as I discussed earlier. The very fact that the Cistercian customs forbid lay brothers from reading seems to suggest that some could. It should be noted also that "literate" in this context refers to the ability to read Latin, not merely vernacular languages. For a discussion of the meanings of "literacy" in the Middle Ages, see Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

Burchard's third sermon provides the final part of his argument. In it he affirms that the authority for his division of labour derives not from himself, but from natural order, an argument that, though largely digressive, follows a tripartite logic. He suggests first that Nature is ordered and follows rational logic which leads to his second argument that behaviour is informed by Nature. Finally, he indicates that if Nature can be interpreted according to rational logic, then nature should inform customs. His point, therefore, is that custom is not merely dictated by tradition, but also by nature. Since God created Nature and its structure, then it follows that human order was ultimately decided by God, and not by humans. Thus, he suggests that proper customs (and religious order) derive not from human intentions (possibly flawed), but from divine authority.

Burchard begins his third sermon by linking it to the previous two. He states, "just as we are thoroughly taught through the form of faith and the discipline of manners, thus also we wonder at the work of nature in beards, or rather we glorify the work of Nature."⁷⁹ In this passage, Burchard identifies his organizing principal and purpose of his discussion and further notes, "but since wisdom shows us and instructs us from its working, it exposes the form of nature. From the form, wisdom makes doctrine, and from doctrine it informs and instructs manners for discipline."⁸⁰ Thus, Burchard underscores that his seemingly digressive inquiry into beards and nature connects to his previous argument by suggesting that wisdom (*sapientia*) can uncover the form of nature, which then creates doctrine. In this context he demonstrates that he uses "wisdom" (in the form of exegetical interpretation) to uncover the workings of nature to develop doctrine and from that *mores* (e.g. prescribed custom)

⁷⁹ Burchard, 175.

⁸⁰ Burchard, 180: "Sed quia sapientia nos docet et erudit ex operatione sua, in operibus exponit naturam ad figuram et de figura facit doctrinam et de doctrina mores informat et instruit ad disciplinam."

Burchard demonstrates that nature follows a rational structure. To prove this point, he systematically considers how beards operate in nature. For instance, he indicates that beards distinguish men from women to distinguish sex.⁸¹ He considers that beards naturally appear on men during certain ages, noting that young boys also are unbearded.⁸² He also outlines many other issues: what colours beards may take, how nature can cause men to gain or lose their beards, what forms beards take (under the chin, on the jaw, or on the chin), how their thickness also varies.⁸³ Finally, he considers how the natural order of things could be perverted by accident, as in the case of women who grow beards.⁸⁴ Burchard discusses how it is natural that men should have beards while women do not, but points out that there are some natural instances in which men's beards are lost:

In the male sex, it is characteristic that at certain ages according to nature [*ex natura*] men do not have beards at all. At other ages, except if inborn corruption or an accident occurs, it is characteristic for men not to be wholly without beards. [...] A contradiction of beards occurs from inborn corruption when in the period from conception to birth, masculine men grow under such a degree of cold association that some of them are not able to be distinguished from women and until their final age they remain unbearded. Beards are absent by accident when the genitals are cut off through violence or for medicinal reasons, men are deprived of their beards which they were about to have or, if already they had beards, the beards diminish in every way for them or they become very thinly bearded.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Burchard, 175.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Burchard, 178.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 175. Specifically, he refers to women's natural frigidity. He suggests that women who by accident are born with excessive heat can go against nature and grow beards.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 175: "In sexu virili, quibusdam aetatibus ex natura proprium sit barbas omnino non habere, aliis, nisi ex ingenita vitiositate vel ex accidenti occasione contigerit, penitus barbibus non carere [...] Ex vitiositate ingenita contradictio barbarum fit, cum a conceptione ad partum masculi tam frigidae complexionis prodeunt, ultimam eadem imberbes permaneant. Ex accidenti occasione auferuntur barbae, cum violenter vel medicinaliter genitalibus abscisis, barbibus quas habituri fuerant viri privantur aut, si iam habuerant barbas, omnino defluant illis aut multum rariberbes fiant."

This excerpt serves to demonstrate Burchard's conception of biological sex and the characteristics which demarcate it as occurring according to a natural and rational structure, that men develop beards at a certain age, and that women do not. Thus, Burchard suggests that when men develop "inborn frigidity" and do not grow beards, this trend works against the natural order of things.⁸⁶

Burchard's second point, that there is an interplay between natural forms and human behaviour, further demonstrates his understanding of nature as rationally ordered, since he demonstrates through exegetical method, that nature informs behaviour. In many of his chapters, he discusses a point referring to beards, and then unpacks its moral and allegorical meaning. For example, he suggests that in nature both male and female goats have beards. In expanding upon this observation allegorically he states,

And therefore, this goat is prefigured and aforementioned as a sign of the sinner so that by its uncleanness and its sub-chin beard it reminds how greatly the filthiness of sin and the wisdom of the flesh displeases God since it is hated by him. And since this all stinks before God, this goat is ordered to be sacrificed so that when sacrificed, it is changed into the order of sweetness for the Lord. Indeed on account of the likeness to the flesh of a sinner, the goat prefigures the Saviour so that the beard which is under the chin on it, signifies the incarnate and inferior wisdom and in its sacrifice it is given to be understood that he bore the sins of others on the cross which he himself did not have.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Burchard, 177. When discussing this same transgression of "natural sex" in regards to women who develop excessive heat and so grow beards, he describes them literally as against nature (*contra naturam*). He entitled his chapter, "De barbibus feminarum contra naturam, sicut Gallae (Concerning the beards of women against nature, such as Galla)."

Burchard's discussion of heat and cold in relation to the sexes is based on the Greek theory of humorism, by which humans were composed of four elements, and four humours. For an excellent source on how the elements separated men from women in medieval thought, see *The Trotula: an English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Health*, trans. and ed. Monica Helen Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

⁸⁷ Burchard, 181 "Et iccirco prefiguratus est et prescriptus hircus peccatori pro signo, ut fetore illius et barba submentanea recognoscat quantum deo displiceat immundicia peccati et sapientia carnis, quae inimica est illi. Et quoniam hoc totum fetet apud deum, immolari iubetur hircus ut in odorem suavitatis domino convertatur immolatus. Pro similitudine vero carnis peccati Salvatorem figuravit hedus, ut barba quae est illi sub mento sapientiam incarnatam et inferioritatem signaret et immolatione sua daret intellegi quod ille in cruce peccata toleraret aliena, qui propria non haberet."

In this way, he treats the observable world as a text to be interpreted through exegetical methods. This strategy makes clear his underlying belief that nature was inherently rational, and not coincidental or subject to constant change according to God's whims, and thus its patterns can be understood through the application of wisdom.

In this way, Burchard connects natural dispositions to physical characteristics and vice versa. For example, he suggests that boys who develop beards early have arrived at a sense of prudence, while those who develop beards late are found to be lazy and sluggish.⁸⁸ In multiple other cases, he links behaviour and the physical body suggesting that while one's physical form (as in a beard) influences one's behaviour, one can also change one's physical form by changing behaviour, although he is careful to note that this act contravenes natural order. As an example, I mention his description of the story of Galla, a bearded woman. Instead of attributing her beardedness to an "inborn" or "accidental" cause, as he suggested for men who lack beards, he indicates that she developed excessive heat due to her "spurning of men's embraces" and this led to her unnatural beardedness.⁸⁹ While Burchard explains that Galla was still loved by God despite her "deformity", and so men who are thinly bearded should not despair, he is careful to explain that it was a perversion of natural order which caused her beardedness, writing "just as it is a deformity and confusion for a man to remain entirely without a beard, thus it is foul and insulting for a woman to be bearded."⁹⁰ Burchard presents an argument for the rationality of nature which can either be followed or opposed, and suggests that one's behaviour shapes nature and vice versa.

⁸⁸ Burchard, 188.

⁸⁹ Burchard, 177: "Huic, scilicet Gallae, cum valde ignea consperso corporis inesset, ceperunt medici dicere quia nisi ad amplexus viriles redirect calore nimio contra naturam barbas esset habitura."

⁹⁰ Burchard, 178: "Ediverso quoque sicut deformitas et confusion est viri sine barba radicitus permanere, ita fedum est et contumeliosum mulierem barbatam esse."

Burchard suggests that the beard is naturally a sign of a number of virtues, including strength, wisdom, maturity, and it is sign of religion. In order to prove this association, he describes both natural beards (i.e. physical beards), and provides biblical stories which corroborate his observation of these virtues.⁹¹ He cautions against men in whom beards might be false signs, underscoring that these men contravene the natural order of things:

In every way a beard is fitting for a man to be a sign of propriety, of strength, wisdom, maturity, and a religious way of life. Since those signs are equally present in a man, justly a full-bearded man is able to be called neither half-man, nor girly-man, but a full man with a beard showing what fully appears on the chin, jaw, and under the chin.⁹²

He admonishes men, however, in whom these manly traits do not appear, likening them to taverns without wine, and accusing them of wearing beards as a false sign, thereby contradicting the signs which beards naturally show.⁹³ In this specific passage, Burchard directly links these false-bearded men to the lay brothers he criticized in his first and second sermons, by recalling his central passage concerning the burning of beards:

If rather, the aforementioned good things of manliness do not correspond to the sign of the beard, the sign lies and is a false sign and the beard is false, it is plainly worthy of burning so that it might be put into fire and become food for fire.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Burchard suggests, for instance that beards are a sign of wisdom based on beards being referred to in the “description and renown” of a wise man, such as St. Gamaliel, who was considered wise and bearded. Burchard, 195.

⁹² Burchard, 187: “Omnino barba decet virum ad signum decoris, ad signum fortitudinis, ad signum sapientiae, ad signum maturitatis, ad signum religionis. Et cum ista partier adsunt in viro pleniberbium iure potest dici, non semivirum aut feminivirum sed plenuvirum monstrante barba, quae pleniter apparet in mento et in maxillis atque sub mento.”

⁹³ Ibid.: “Circulus quidam in fronte domus vel tabernae ponitur ut sit vini signum et signet vinum esse in domo vel taberna[...] si vinum non est in domo cui prefixum est signum, signum falsum est et fallit quaerentes et incurrit maledictionem combustionis.”

⁹⁴ Ibid.: “Si vero prefata virilitatis bona signo barbae non respondent, signum mentitur et falsum est signum est falsa est barba, digna plane incendio ut fiat in combustionem et cibus ignis.”

He mentions this specific passage seven times throughout all three sermons each time suggesting that the symbolic burning of beards would purge the lay brotherhood of bad conduct and bad individuals and reform and cleanse them.⁹⁵ His citation of this line in reference to false beards, which contravene their natural signs, makes clear his argument that the divisive behaviour of these schismatic brothers contravened not only the order befitting monastic life, but also contravened a natural order, and so they display perverse behaviour.

Although Burchard does not mention God specifically as the creator of Nature, by placing his use of the concept of Natural Order within the context of twelfth-century philosophy, it is clear that God's involvement would have been understood without it being necessary for him to state it explicitly. Numerous twelfth-century writers treated the topic of nature, order, and God. One particularly illustrative example of this trend is Arnold of Bonneval's *Commentary on Genesis*. Arnold saw nature as reflection of the divine order of the trinity and the Bible. He observed,

God distributed the things of nature like the members of a great body, assigning to all their proper places and names, their fitting measures and offices...By God's moderating rule diverse and contrary things are brought into orderly line; huge things do not swell larger, and the smallest things do not disappear. The entire fabric of the world—consistent though made of such dissimilar parts, one though composed of such diverse things, tranquil though containing such opposed elements—continued in its lawful and ordered way, solid, harmonious, and with no dread prospect of ruin.⁹⁶

Arnold presents nature in much the same way as Burchard. Both portray the natural world as harmonious, and dictated by a rational order, each thing knowing and reflecting its proper placement and behaviour. Likewise, Burchard's interpretation of physical bodies as if they were

⁹⁵ The entire passage reading "Let their beards be burnt and become food for fire, those who knowingly and understandingly stir up a storm which causes souls to be shipwrecked." Burchard mentions it first in his prologue, page 151, and then again on pages, 151, 156, 158, 168, 173, 187, in full, and make allusions to burning beards in many other instances as well.

⁹⁶ Arnold of Bonneval cited in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 9.

a book, and in conjunction with textual evidence from the Bible, is echoed by Hugh of Saint Victor, a prominent twelfth-century scholar and theologian who wrote, “the entire sense-perceptible world is like a sort of book written by the finger of God.”⁹⁷

Given this twelfth-century conception of Nature as following an inherently rational structure like the Bible, and yet created by God gives significant rhetorical credence to Burchard’s argument that the brothers for whom beards are a “false sign” of their natural significations, contravene natural order. Within the religious discourse of the time, Burchard’s accusation of these brothers acting contrary to nature, and thus not accepting the natural ordering of nature, would mean that they were reacting against the natural ordering dictated by God. Therefore, Burchard suggests that lay brothers must accept his admonition and argument for an ordered and harmonious monastery in which individuals are divided according to their natural aptitude for spiritual or physical work, or else they act directly against God’s will.

BURCHARD IN CONTEXT AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter has been to reinterpret the *Apologia de barbibus* in light of its purpose of explaining and justifying the hierarchical divisions between choir monks and lay brothers within Cistercian monasticism. I demonstrated that previous scholarship, which sought to explain the existence of the *Apologia* as a joke or medieval guide to hair, was highly problematic in that it focused excessively on Burchard’s medium of beards, and so failed to fully consider the import of abbot Burchard’s message. By considering audience, genre, and historical context, I have shown that the *Apologia* presented a logical argument for a marked and

⁹⁷ Independent of these authors opinion of nature as rationally ordered, Burchard, as a medieval abbot, would certainly support the assertion of *Genesis* which attributed all creation to the hand of God.

permanent division between choir monks and lay brothers based on a concept of a naturally ordered monastery.

Burchard's work highlights two important points: First, it reveals the existence of twelfth-century writing which sought explicitly to demarcate a role and status for lay brothers independent from that of choir monks which was not legislative in nature. I suggest that by observing Burchard's argument for division in conjunction with that of the statutes and Cistercian customaries, that these two types of documents attempted to enforce the same message of division, one through coercive means, and the other through discursive. The second point that Burchard's text suggests is that lay brothers themselves were not only unsure of their status, but that they questioned the validity of their separation from monks in terms of role and hierarchical status.⁹⁸ Burchard himself certainly recognized that the hierarchical division between monks and lay brothers was not obvious, even though he felt that it should be. As such, it is clear that Cistercian authors engaged in literature such the *Apologia* as a form of public relations which was likely intended to convince a broad monastic audience (probably comprising monks, abbots, and indirectly lay brothers themselves) of the validity of this division, and to promote their understanding of what they desired a lay brother to be. In Burchard's case, the office of a lay brother was that of a temporally focused monk who existed to complement the spiritually focused monks of his monastery. Implicit in this argument is that Burchard's opinion was just one of many. This observation is supported by the fact that he directed his public relations campaign through a written medium.

This medium indicates that choir monks or abbots formed his primary target audience, suggesting that a significant enough audience disagreed with, or was unaware of, his way of

⁹⁸ I discussed this point with reference to Burchard suggesting that "you [lay brothers] ought not successively be uneasy and complaining with questions why you are called *conversi* or why you do not shave your beards since thus it ought to be done and it is proved by reason and authority. See *Ibid.*, 28.

thinking that it justified the production of his text. Though it cannot be determined conclusively, I suggest that Burchard was promoting specifically the ideas of the Bernardine textual community, which had formed around Clairvaux.⁹⁹ This argument seems plausible given Benoit Chauvin's characterization of Burchard as an ardent Bernardine supporter and reformer, and from the fact that similar ideas may be found in the statutes of the general chapter, an institution heavily influenced by Clairvaux and the other mother-abbeyes of the Cistercians. It is widely argued that Clairvaux largely dominated Cistercian culture throughout the twelfth century. It is very likely, therefore, that Bernardine, or Claravallian ideas would likewise dominate the decisions of the General Chapter.

I suggest, therefore, that the reason for Burchard's writing was to popularize the Bernardine conception of what a lay brother was—a separate, and naturally subordinate group—amongst the other abbeyes of the Order thereby legitimizing the legislation of the General Chapter with reasoned arguments supporting its injunctions. In the following chapter, I return to the concept of divergent Cistercian practices in Order to explicitly show how lay brothers, monks, and abbots both supported and contested the hegemonic discourses of the lay brotherhood presented by Burchard and the statutes of the General Chapter.

⁹⁹ Textual community is Brian Stock's term. He defines them as microsocieties organized around a common understanding of a script. Brian Stock, *The Implication of Literacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 108.

CHAPTER FOUR

COUNTER-NARRATIVES AND DIVERSITY OF PRACTICE: THIRTEENTH-CENTURY NEGOTIATION OF THE LAY BROTHERS' ROLE

From the very beginning of the Cistercian Order, the founders stressed the unity of purpose and mind of their brothers. The prologue to the Charter of Charity, for instance, generally considered the founding charter of the Cistercian Order, describes,

The brethren, taking precaution against future shipwreck of their mutual peace, elucidated and decreed and left for their posterity by what covenant, or in what manner, indeed, with what charity their monks throughout abbeys in various parts of the world, though separated in body could be knit together in mind. They considered that this decree should be called the *Charter of Charity*, because, averting the burdensome levying of all exactions, its statute pursues only the charity and the advantage of souls in things human and divine.¹

Recent scholarship has cast doubt on the veracity of the Cistercian Order's claims for unity, most famously in Louis Lekai's *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality*.² Lekai's paradigm contrasts Cistercian "ideals" as presented in the founding texts of the Order, with the "reality" resulting from necessary adaptations to the economic and political reality of the times. Scholars such as Constance Berman and Martha Newman suggest that this paradigm has allowed a generation of scholars to study local variations in Cistercian practices without having to question the veracity of the Cistercian founders' practices and thus to subsume evidence about divergent practices into the category of local movements from original homogeneity.³

¹ Chrysogonus Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux* (Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 1999), 442: "In hoc ergo decreto fratres, mutuae pacis futurum praeventes naufragium, elucidaverunt et statuerunt suisque posteris relinquerunt quo pacto, quove modo, immo qua caritate monachi eorum, per abbatias in diversis mundi partibus corporibus divisi, animis indissolubiler conglutinentur. Hoc etiam decretum *Cartam caritatis* vocari censebant, quia eius statutum, omnis exactionis gravamen propulsans, solam caritatem et animarum utilitatem in divinis et humanis exsequitur."

² Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977).

³ Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 55; and Martha Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 3.

I have shown in the previous three chapters, however, that within the Cistercian order a single hegemonic “ideal” —at least when applied to lay brothers—did not exist. Rather, over the course of the twelfth century the representation of lay brothers which appeared in the “official” sources of the Order underwent significant change, and were at times presented contradictory. Furthermore, Burchard of Bellevaux’s text demonstrates that this discourse required significant effort, in terms of rhetorical justification, in order to convince members of the Order that they should accept its legitimacy.

The purpose of this final chapter is to draw attention to the ideological competition regarding the lay brotherhood in the thirteenth century demonstrating that the constructed “lay brother” remained a contested social category. I focus on this later period because scholarship has portrayed Cistercian culture as having culminated and even begun to decline by 1300 suggesting that all of the major innovations of the Cistercians had occurred prior to 1200. It is also noted that the number of new foundations dropped off considerably in the thirteenth century as the new mendicant Orders arose, better able to respond to popular concerns of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴ In this way, the thirteenth century sources which demonstrate continued attempts to fashion lay brothers after the period of formation had supposedly ended are particularly illustrative of the pervasive concern for the definition of the lay brother’s role which existed within Cistercian monastic culture.

This argument consists of two parts. In the first part, I focus on Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *exempla* collection, the *Dialogue of Miracles*, to demonstrate that as late as the 1220s, Cistercian monks continued to attempt to articulate and argue for what it meant to be a lay

⁴ Lekai, 91, and James Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Lay Brotherhood* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1949), 39-59.

brother and how it differed from a choir monk's role. I suggest that the continued use of disciplinary literature intended to enforce through discursive means a particular image of the "lay brother" as inherently separate from monks, demonstrates that there were conflicting understandings of what a lay brother was which these texts sought to reform. In the second part, I consider reports of lay brother transgression in the statutes of the Cistercian General Chapter spanning the thirteenth century. By questioning interpretations of this evidence, I show that these reports of transgression do not reflect a historical problem with deviant lay brothers nor evince a history of rebellion. Rather, I suggest that in some circumstances when lay brothers contravened the regulations of the statutes, they were demonstrating through their actions rather than words that they contested the role assigned to them within the Cistercian hierarchy. When the Cistercian General Chapter presents these brothers as deviant, it demonstrates an attempt to use legal mechanisms to legitimize one hegemonic understanding of the lay brother, while discouraging and undermining alternate conceptions of their role.

THE *DIALOGUE OF MIRACLES*: CONSTRUCTING THE LAY BROTHERS AS A SOCIAL REALITY

The *Dialogue of Miracles* was among the most extensive and well-known collections of Cistercian miracle stories (*exempla*), both in the present and in the Middle Ages.⁵ As Stefano Mula points out, the *exempla* served a highly didactic purpose intended to "unify the Order through a common treasury of memories and a common experience."⁶ They were thus targeted at an internal Cistercian audience for the purpose of unifying Cistercian culture and attempted to shape a social reality based on the values of the Order. Implicit in the existence of such an

⁵ Stefano Mula, "Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Exempla Collections: Role, Diffusion, and Evolution," *History Compass*, vol. 8, no. 8, (2010): 905.

⁶ Mula, 906.

intention is that there must have been a diversity of practice and belief in the Order which they sought to correct. It is certain that this diversity would have taken many forms regarding numerous issues which may have arisen within the Order and is consistent with Western Christianity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷

In respect to lay brothers, Caesarius's concern is clear: He wished to emphasize the brothers' simplicity and humility, and demarcate the brothers from monks portraying the two classes of "monk" one clerical and the other lay, as essential categories which could not be crossed.⁸ In the following section I demonstrate that Caesarius of Hesterbach's monastic *exempla* literature likewise sought to shape a particular conception of lay brothers' role from the perspective of a choir monk. This observation illustrates it was necessary for the later Cistercians to continue to fashion models of hierarchy and power in order to ensure that their models became reified.

In this section, I outline two strategies that Caesarius employs in order to articulate and enforce his conception of the lay brother's role. First, he uses the moral examples of his miracle stories to create a picture of lay brothers as exceedingly humble, obedient, and simple. Second, he justifies separation between choir monks and lay brothers by portraying choir monks as being

⁷ For instance, the stories might address issues of excessive involvement in the world for monks, or their greed, or insufficient piety. There could be any number of ways in which this particular conception of Cistercian discipline could be transgressed.

⁸ The exceptional clarity of Caesarius's representation of the lay brotherhood has led some to consider the lay brother in these texts as a particular stock figure intended illustrate the values of humility and simplicity, or to show the possibility of deviance, See Brian Noell, "Expectation and Unrest Among Cistercian Lay Brothers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 254-74; and Megan Cassidy, "Non Conversi Sed Perversi," in *Deviance and Textual Control*, eds. Megan Cassidy, Helen Hickey, and Meagan Street (Parkville: University of Melbourne, 1997), 34-55. While this may be the case to some extent, the texts do reveal that these issues were particularly important to the author's conception of what a lay brother should be. If, as Stefano Mula and others have affirmed, *exempla* were intended to correct diversity and encourage uniformity in the Order, it is evident that the traits of lay brothers which the texts prescribe depict areas which the author pinpointed as being at the most risk of disrupting the unity of beliefs within the Order. In this case specifically, the key area of tensions for lay brothers was whether they would keep to their carefully articulated office, or not.

chosen by God to fulfill a clerical role. He further justifies this separation by ascribing a certain taint of “worldliness” to the brothers, implying that their marginal status was deserved.

Scholars such as Megan Cassidy-Welch, Stefano Mula and Brian Noell have noted how Cistercian *exempla* literature sought to shape behaviour.⁹ Cassidy-Welch sees the *exempla* literature as fulfilling the same function as the statutes, which is to “mark out and eradicate deviant behaviour”.¹⁰ She suggests that the Cistercian *exempla* portrayed lay brothers as a deviant “other” in order to illustrate the possibility of transgression, and thus the zone of proper conduct.¹¹ Noell disputes this disciplinary intent, suggesting that lay brothers were merely used as stock figures for choir monks to illustrate the virtues of humility. He suggests that the idea of a lay brother as humble and obedient was so well-established by the end of the twelfth century, that they were the ideal figures to illustrate these virtues to choir monks, not to lay brothers.¹² Noell contends that the monks who portrayed lay brothers in this subordinate way imposed a model antiquated by Caesarius’ time, when lay brothers were no longer the simple labourers of the stories but acted as managers and diplomats for their monasteries. He contends that it was this very disconnect of representation and reality with led lay brothers to resist and revolt.¹³

Both Cassidy-Welch and Noell have much to offer and points of difficulty. Noell highlights the existence of multiple roles and representations of lay brothers in the thirteenth-century, but overlooks the disciplinary intent that Cassidy-Welch argues for. Both Noell and Cassidy-Welch, however, assume that there was a single hegemonic discourse among the

⁹ Cassidy, 42-7; Noell, 260-262; and Mula, 905.

¹⁰ Cassidy, 46.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Noell, 262.

¹³ Ibid., 262-64.

Cistercian order. My research in the past chapters has demonstrated the opposite. The need for the *exempla* to act with a disciplinary intent, I suggest instead, arose from the heterogeneity of Cistercian discourse and practice; there were multiple ideas of what a lay brother should be and Caesarius sought to privilege one.

Caesarius emphasizes the character of the lay brother in very explicit and obvious ways. The values Caesarius prescribes are threefold: humility, obedience, and simplicity. Caesarius never deviates from his intent to reaffirm these values in any of his stories. A large number of *exempla* concerning lay brothers in the *Dialogue of Miracles* praise their humility, or chastise their pride. For example Caesarius of Heisterbach recalled a story about a lay brother swineherd “whose heart began to dwell on such thoughts as this: ‘What is it that I am doing? I am a man of good birth, and yet I am looked down upon by all my friends because of this menial office. No longer will I bring confusion upon them by remaining a swineherd in this place.’”¹⁴ Caesarius recounts how then an angel of the lord came to the brother and showed him the rotting corpses in the cemetery, saying that he should not be so foolish as to give up his safe haven of salvation for the sake of pride because he would one day be as they were.

This story demonstrates two important points. First, the story emphasizes the ideal trait of humility for a lay brother, and encourages his devotion to menial labour – chastising him for his pride. It also demonstrates that the individual in question was not an oppressed and illiterate peasant who was forced into menial work. Instead, the brother indicates that he was a man of “good birth” who was made fun of by his friends (who are presumably of similar “good birth”) for being assigned to menial labour. In this way, the story demands that the lay brother abandon the secular political hierarchy and embrace its replacement with the monastic spiritual hierarchy,

¹⁴ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles*, vol. I (London: Routledge, 1929), 197-8.

suggesting that lay brothers who question their status will ultimately be damned. While this story describes an individual transgressing the humility of his office, other stories describe lay brothers being blessed due to their humility. In one story, Caesarius described the intense humility with which a lay brother asked God to repair a pot he had broken carelessly. Since “the Lord mark[ed] his servant’s humility, he listened to his prayer” and so mended the pot.¹⁵ These are just two examples of many which attempt to reinforce the same humble and obedient model of behaviour.

The virtue of obedience pervades the Cistercian *exempla*. In one story, an abbot orders a severely injured lay brother not to die while he was away. Despite this command, the lay brother fell prey to his wounds. When the abbot later returned and found the lay brother’s corpse, he upbraided the body which immediately returned to life, so as not to disobey the abbot’s order.¹⁶ This story asserts that God himself worked miracles to ensure that even the most impossible commands were followed to the word by lay brothers.

In another incident, Caesarius praises how a lay brother’s obedience was rewarded with divine aid. A lay brother in the infirmary was called by his supervisor to help turn peas in a field before it rained. Despite his illness, Caesarius describes, this brother hastened quickly to the field before all the others. When he arrived at the field, he found that God had already turned over the peas as a reward.¹⁷ Caesarius thus attempts to reinforce the concept that lay brothers’ obedience to authority ultimately would reward them and gain them divine favour.

While the *exempla* construct this humble and obedient ideal type for lay brothers, they also indicate that a lay brother’s role should be demarcated from that of a monk, thereby dividing the two groups into distinct categories which could not be crossed. Caesarius’ *Dialogue on*

¹⁵ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue*, Vol. II, 184.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245-6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

Miracles also portray the lay brothers and choir monks as two essential categories or *ordines*. They do this by stressing the exclusivity of reading for monk-clerics, by portraying lay brothers as attached to the secular world, and by suggesting that having achieved clerical orders marked one as distinctly separate from lay people.

I begin by discussing the exclusivity of reading. One of the most prominent examples of this trend is a story about a lay brother who learned to read, which I mentioned briefly in the introduction to this thesis. According to Caesarius, a lay brother from the abbey of Kloster-Camp learned just enough to read after associating with fellow monks. He was so delighted by his learning that he went against the Cistercian injunction against lay brother reading to have books made up for him and then his discontent with his lack of learning drove him to apostasy. He enrolled in secular schools, but as Caesarius describes, he was too old to make much progress. Later after returning to his monastery and apostatising several times, the devil visited this brother and told him that he would become the next bishop of Halberstadt. When the previous bishop died, this brother went to Halberstadt and stayed with a priest to prepare himself for his expected ordination. Early in the morning he borrowed a horse and cloak from this priest in order to ride to claim his bishopric with dignity, but when the priest's servants discovered the horse missing they pursued and arrested the brother. He was tried, found guilty of theft and was hanged.¹⁸

This story portrays the lay brother as disobedient, proud, concerned with the temporal world and covetous. More importantly, however, it portrays the lay brother as having attempted to transgress the boundaries of his profession. Just as Burchard emphasized that it would be offensive and unseemly for lay brothers to act as priests, Caesarius likewise portrays the lay

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, 336-7.

brother learning to read as ridiculous as attempting to become a bishop.¹⁹ Furthermore, he connects the act of reading and the acquisition of knowledge to excessive ambition and pride. He underscores the lesson that brothers should respect their own station – underlining that not only was the brother inherently unable to acquire an advanced level of literacy “since he was too old” but also that this desire to rise beyond his station ultimately led to his humiliation, death and damnation.²⁰

Other stories complicate how Caesarius, and likely a broader community of monks, understood lay brother literacy, and have bearing on how the previous story should be interpreted. These stories present literacy as a mystical and divine gift not as a learned ability. For example, there is a story of a monk whom Caesarius described as a feeble-minded deacon. This monk was unable to read until he had a vision in a dream that he was reading the gospel in the presence of God. When he awoke he miraculously read the gospel in front of his whole community. Caesarius likens this incident to the dream of Solomon who also miraculously obtained knowledge while sleeping.²¹ Literacy therefore can be a divine gift, but never in the text is it one granted to a lay brother.

A similar story takes place at Hemmenrode. A clerk there who was being bled lost the ability to read. Caesarius describes that he “knew not a single letter and could neither understand nor utter a single word of Latin.”²² When a year had passed, this monk was bled on the same date

¹⁹ Burchard of Bellevaux, *Apologia Duae*, ed. RBC Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 166-7: “Considerate quantum oculos intuentium offenderet esse barbatus et albis aut casulis! Non deceret super libro saut super calices dependere barbas ideoque sine barbibus versamur circa altaria et calices, vos cum barbibus deputati estis ad aratra et ligones.”

²⁰ Caesarius points out in several stories that it is likely that apostates will be damned. Evidently he expects that this was the case for this brother who was hanged as a thief. See Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue*, vol. I, 337.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 174.

²² *Ibid.*, 175.

and miraculously recovered his lost knowledge. Caesarius again frames the ability to read as a divine gift which is possessed at the will of God. The resulting picture justifies separation between clerical monks and lay brothers by implying that reading marks the former as especially sanctified and so divinely chosen for the clerical office. And, as the story of the lay brother from Kloster-Camp demonstrates, a lay brother who thought himself fit for clerical offices was merely being arrogant and gullible. Again, Caesarius suggests that a lay brother's innate simplicity was ordained by God who created these essential distinctions between choir monks and lay brothers.

The *exempla* stories also stress a fear of lay brothers over-involvement in the secular world. One story depicts a lay brother accused of enticing a nun into the world with his magical arts.²³ In another, a brother's inability to eat the communion wafer reveals that he had not given up all of his personal property.²⁴ Or, a brother is unable to enter heaven because he owed money to a ferry man.²⁵ A telling story describes an abbot chastising a lay brother for his greed since he managed the Cistercian granges so effectively, again indicating that he was too concerned with material wealth, whether it benefited him personally or not.²⁶ These few examples must stand in for a much larger number of stories which affirm an identical message – that lay brothers were subject to worldly influences and suggest that worldliness was merely part of their character.

Other stories further reinforce the concept that lay brothers were uniquely well-suited to the physical tasks which they undertook. For instance, Caesarius described a brother Simon who showed a miraculous ability to read the interior thoughts of others and identify hidden sins. When addressing the origin of this ability, however, Caesarius indicated that it was because

²³ Ibid., vol. I, 240.

²⁴ Ibid., 166.

²⁵ Ibid., 267.

²⁶ Ibid., 260.

brother Simon was such a good administrator of “outward things” that he was awarded with a spiritual gift.²⁷ The implication of this statement is that a gift like this would not have occurred if brother Simon had sought spiritual enlightenment, but because he attended to his “outward” instead of “inward” things assiduously, he was blessed with spiritual power. The origin of this power was in his embracing of his auxiliary, physical role. In other instances, lay brothers were rewarded for embracing their menial tasks. For instance, Caesarius describes one brother to whom God gave pig troughs because of his uncomplaining devotion to his physical tasks.²⁸

Finally, Caesarius’s text also justifies an inherent division between choir monks and lay brothers by considering the remarkable incidence of priests hiding that they were ordained out of humility in order to become lay brothers instead of monks. Caesarius describes that frequently these men first chose to become lay brothers out of humility, yet afterwards sought to become monks. It is at this point that he moves from the narrative of his account to support relevant Cistercian legislation. He outlines that in light of these occurrences, the General Chapter was forced to disallow this practice—deciding that it was best that these men remain with the lay brothers.²⁹ What is particularly interesting about this story is Caesarius’ commentary. He notes, “I am not surprised if some conceal their orders at conversion when we read that in former days that women such as the blessed Eugenia and Saint Euphrosyne...through their zeal for conversion, even concealed their sex.”³⁰ In this way, Caesarius portrays the concept of a cleric becoming a lay brother as similar to a woman becoming a monk, thus implying that a cleric and lay brother are essential categories, just as sex was. This portrayal further reinforces Caesarius’s

²⁷ Ibid., 169-73.

²⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, 215.

²⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, 50-51.

³⁰ Ibid., 51.

focus on the justified separation between lay brothers and monks. The preceding examples show that when Caesarius wrote his miracle collection in the 1220s, lay brothers' status was still an object of concern. Not only did the author feel it necessary to affirm models of appropriate lay brother behaviour by stressing the need for humility, obedience, simplicity, but he also took great pains to demonstrate through rhetorical examples that lay brothers and monks could not be the same due to lay brothers' supposed inability to learn to read, and their inherent aptitude for physical labour, their taint of worldliness, and the idea that holy orders separated clerics from lay men just as sex separated men from women.

Caesarius's one-dimensional representation of lay brothers, stemming from the didactic purpose of his text, attempted to construct a unified hegemonic discourse and eradicate deviant understandings of what a lay brother was, or could be, in order to homogenize Cistercian morality and customs. While it is possible that Caesarius merely used lay brothers as stock figures to illustrate moral truths, reports of deviance in the statutes of the Cistercian General Chapter make it clear that his emphasis on the one "true" lay brother was met with opposition both from lay brothers themselves, and from abbots and monks of the Order as well.

DIVERSITY OF PRACTICE IN THE STATUTES OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

The very existence of didactic or moralistic literature such as the *exempla* presupposes that there were individuals who deviated from this unified ideal and thus required correction. One of the best ways to reconstruct this diversity of practices and customs within the Cistercian Order is to analyze reports of transgression from Cistercian ideals which appear in the statutes of the General Chapter.

Although the General Chapter's statutes initially functioned as a medium through which to decide and disseminate the customs of the Order, a shift occurred in 1190. Preceding the 1190 General Chapter there was a meeting of 15 abbots (including those of the five primary Cistercian abbeys, Cîteaux, La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux, and Morimond) called the preparatory commission which met to "deal in greater detail with the affairs of the Order" and to provide for the "welfare and good repute of the Order."³¹ The result of this commission was that the General Chapter began to assume a disciplinary role meting out punishments in order to eradicate threats to the Order's welfare and good repute. Due to the General Chapter's increased interest in discovering and eradicating deviant behaviour, after 1190 the statutes became an excellent source through which to understand the variation of practices within late twelfth and thirteenth century Cistercian monasticism. At this time, practices which opposed the decisions of the General Chapter became discussed openly in order to discipline the transgressors. While the General Chapter's statutes paint these monks, abbots, and lay brothers who transgressed the customs of the Order as deviant, it is clear that at least in some cases, these practices merely represent a diversity of long existing attitudes and customs which the Chapter now sought to eradicate. In this way, the General Chapter sought to legitimize one form of Cistercian monasticism and portray alternate practices as invalid.

As an example of this trend I point to the case of Irish abbot-bishops. Over many years the General Chapter attempted to discipline Irish abbots for accepting Episcopal offices without the approval of the General Chapter. The Chapter portrays these Irish abbots as persistently deviating from the customs of the Cistercians. In context, however, it is evident that these abbots

³¹ Chrysogonus Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes* (Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 2002), 171.

were merely following traditional Irish customs.³² Unlike the European Ecclesiastical system, the Irish church centred around monastic foundations headed by abbot-bishops. As late as 1106, the Episcopal-abbacy of Armagh was even hereditary.³³ Thus, the Irish abbots appear to have been privileging the local customs of the Irish church over those of the Cistercian Order to which they were attached. In this way, they strongly represent a local interpretation of Cistercian monasticism, not just an individual aberration or intentional flouting of Cistercian custom as the statutes suggest. I contend that a similar variation occurred concerning the place and role of lay brothers within Cistercian monasticism.

The statutes of the General Chapter recount 123 incidents between 1190 and 1308 in which lay brothers contravened the customs of the Order, or rose up in violence against abbots, monks, guests, or other lay brothers.³⁴ In most cases, Cistercian statutes do not outline why lay brothers transgressed the proper order demanded in the statutes of the general chapter. The lay brothers involved in these disturbances are most frequently accused of “excesses” (Latin *excessus*) or identified as “conspirators” (*conspiratores*). Megan Cassidy-Welch has focused closely on the language which these statutes employ to describe lay brother’s transgressions against the Order. She notes that *excessus* is an exceedingly broad category which could apply to anything from “unspecified disruptive behaviour to homicide.”³⁵ Furthermore, Cassidy-Welch draws attention to the fact that lay brothers are frequently portrayed as arrogant or presumptuous.

³² Daibhi O Croinin, *Early Medieval Ireland: 400-1200* (London: Longman, 2000), 212-20.

³³ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. John T. Koch (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 80.

³⁴ Donnelly, 72-9.

³⁵ Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 183.

In some cases, a more detailed description of their behaviour is given. Several cases involve lay brothers and monks who stole an abbot's seal, or threatened him with violence. These cases –few in number– show clear symbolic or explicit resistance to monastic authorities. In many more cases, however, lay brothers mutilate or threaten other lay brothers, monks, or abbots for unspecified reasons. It is difficult to reconstruct what may have been the root cause for dissent in each case and there is no evidence that the Cistercian monks themselves viewed a common pattern of dissatisfaction in these events. Even the frequent complaint of lay brother excesses likely indicates incidents of the incomplete obedience to the Cistercian customs – something for which choir monks were also often chastised in the statutes.

But perhaps there are clues to lay brothers' attempt to have greater control over their definition and governance. The earliest report of lay brother discontent in the statutes appears in the records dating to 1190 and relates the failure of lay brothers to follow clothing regulations.³⁶ As discussed in chapter two, the *Usus conversorum* and Cistercian statutes forbid lay brothers from wearing clothing considered lavish. The *UC* emphasized that their clothing should consist of coarse skins, and coarse common cloth, used if possible.³⁷ We can assume that when the General Chapter describes that these brothers refused to comply with clothing norms, it was referring to those laid out in the *UC*. These entries indicate that the brothers involved did not accept clothing regulations, instead preferring to dress in more ornate clothing than the monks

³⁶Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 210: “Conversi Fontisfrigidi qui inobedientes existunt mandato Capituli de dimmittendis cotis floccatis sententiae quae lata est in conversos Bonaevallis subiaceant scilicet ut dum in hac rebellione perstiterint non communicent, nec oratorium ingrediantur; et si fuerint infirmati vel mortui nec communionem sanctam nec ecclesiasticam habeant sepulturam. Abbas Grandis-Sylvae huius sententiae sit executor.”

³⁷ See Chrysogonus Waddell, *Cistercian Lay Brothers* (Brecht: Brepols, 2000), 70.

dictated.³⁸ This observation suggests that the brothers refused to accept their lowly status and may have, in this instance, attempted to redefine their status by wearing clothing signifying a higher status.

We could perhaps see two more entries from 1223 and 1230 which describe lay brothers accused of presumptuousness and arrogance, as further evidence of the disobedient lay brother. Although the statutes do not specify the exact acts of presumption or arrogance the implication is that lay brothers were attempting to act above their station.³⁹ At other times, the statutes elucidate clear incidents of disobedience, when lay brothers broke into the chapter house during abbatial elections in order to exert influence over the election even though by statute lay brothers had been forbidden to be involved in the election of the abbot.⁴⁰ These acts again demonstrate the similar theme of lay brothers not accepting the role which was specified for them and instead attempting to show that they should be involved in the central affairs of their abbeys instead of working at its margins.

By acts rejecting their lowly position, the lay brothers described in the statutes seem to have been, consciously or unconsciously, redefining their roles and positions within the Cistercian hierarchy. By wearing clothes considered above their station, by behaving “presumptuously” and by attempting to exert influence on abbatial elections, they were refuting the social *mores* which suggested that they were less important than choir monks, and instead

³⁸ As I mentioned in chapter two, the legislation for choir monks was quite different than that for lay brothers. It insisted that monks dress simply so as not to distract themselves with worldly goods. Lay brothers were supposed to dress in very poor and second hand clothing in order to reflect their extreme humility. There were no specified colours or cuts for the brothers’ clothing, so a contravention of legislation must mean that it was too fine. (page 51 above).

³⁹ Joseph-Marie Canivez, *Statuta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, vol. 2 (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933), 2, 28, 25; and Donnelly, 74.

⁴⁰ Canivez, vol. 2, 265, 273-4, and vol. 3, 154-5.

they were attempting to affirm a higher status, and certainly in the case of the abbatial elections, a more prominent position within the monastic political structure. They thereby sought to redefine what it meant to be a lay brother vis à vis choir monks.

The difficulty in attempting to unpack the meaning of these brothers' actions is that they produced no writing describing their motivations and any attempt to explain reasoning behind their actions must be an inference. Given this observation, I merely cite these examples to show that regardless of their intention, these brothers, whom the General Chapter marked as deviant, demonstrate that they perceived themselves and their role differently from the way they were expected to behave in Cistercian legislation and in the miracle stories. Thus, although lay brothers did not speak directly in the statutes as monks could in their writing, their actions indicate continued negotiation of their status and the power relations of the monastic hierarchy.

There is some indication that this variation in attitude toward lay brothers was not exclusive to the lay brotherhood itself. In many reports monks and abbots were also implicated in the same "excesses", or did nothing to stop disobedient or violent behaviour. For instance, the statutes report that in 1247 at Boscanio, lay brothers hit the abbot and stole his abbatial seal, while the monks present pretended not to see.⁴¹ In another instance, an abbot provided an ecclesiastical burial to a lay brother who had been considered a "conspirator" and was censured for allowing this by the General Chapter.⁴² Although it is possible that the abbot was merely acting out of pity, other evidence suggests that some abbots may have been sympathetic to alternate understandings of the lay brothers' role. The General chapter also chastised three separate abbots for sending lay brothers to Jerusalem with secular attendants and censured others

⁴¹ Canivez, vol. 2, 20.

⁴² Ibid., vol. 1, 207.

for having lay brothers preach outside of their monasteries, thus taking on roles forbidden by the statutes.⁴³ Therefore, the existence of these statutes censuring monks and abbots for treating their lay brothers contrary to the “legitimate” form of Cistercian monasticism which the statutes attempt to enforce, seems to indicate that the lay brothers’ transgressive actions do not only represent the deviant individuals. Rather, they suggest that these ideas existed at different levels within Cistercian monasteries and demonstrate the plurality of understandings of what a lay brother was, or should be and so represent Cistercian diversity even well into the thirteenth century.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have indicated how the socially constructed “lay brother” remained a contested social category whose fundamental characteristics and expected roles continued to exhibit variation even in the heyday and “decline” of the Cistercian Order in the thirteenth century. Furthermore, this chapter represents a cautious attempt to approach the concept of reception with regard to Cistercian texts. Save for a few examples in which annotated manuscripts survive, it is difficult to know how ideas were received in the Middle Ages. This chapter demonstrates that the discourses which were proposed throughout the twelfth century in Cistercian legislation and rhetoric were not exact reflections of practice, but rather exercises in discursive power intended to convince others of the legitimacy of the social realities that they presented. It demonstrates this concept in that even decades after they were written, the Cistercians continued to produce literature intended to reaffirm these social realities. It also demonstrated that even though the Cistercian sources presented one “legitimate” hegemonic discourse—itsself subject to external pressures and dramatic shifts—which attempted to define

⁴³ Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, 204, 456, 477.

the “lay brother”, alternate “illegitimate” discourses continued to function throughout the period, demonstrating the highly contentious and socially constructed nature of lay brothers’ place within the Cistercian monastic program.

CONCLUSION

It has been well-established in Cistercian historiography that the Order was not as unified as it portrayed itself to be, particularly in the early years of its foundation. Scholars, such as Louis Lekai, Jean Auberger, and Constance Berman have drawn attention to the variety and diversity of experience which characterized Cistercian monasticism as a whole. For example, Berman points to the existence of Cistercian nuns long before they were recognized officially by the Order.¹

Despite the accepted diversity of Cistercian culture as a whole, the lay brotherhood is one facet of Cistercian life which scholars have portrayed as remarkably uniform. Although earlier scholarship accepted that Cistercian documents reflected real experience and attitudes, recent work and my study has attempted to demonstrate that representations do not necessarily reflect reality. Despite this observation, however, even recent scholars' interpretation of the 'representation' of lay brothers has remained exceptionally limited. Most scholars to date have assumed that the 'Cistercians' functioned as a unified and homogenous group able to act in concert. Other scholars have taken this point even further suggesting that the 'Cistercians' oppressed 'the lay brother' in a struggle between perfectly unified classes.²

Key to these scholars' arguments is the concept that Cistercian culture consisted of one hegemonic discourse which may or may not have reflected the 'reality' of the historical record. My study has shown that the dominant hegemonic discourses which attempted to define the "lay

¹ Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977); Jean Baptiste Auberger, *L'unanimité cistercienne primitive: mythe ou réalité* (Achel: Sine parvulos, 1986); Constance H. Berman, "Where were the Twelfth-Century Nuns," in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed. Constance H. Berman (New York: Routledge, 2005), 217-48.

² Jane Sayers, "Violence in the Medieval Cloister," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 533-42.

brother” were internally divided and contradictory, changing over the course of the twelfth century as some conceptions of lay brothers’ role and identity were privileged over others, for instance the idea that lay brothers were inherently unsuitable for clerical work, or that they carried a taint of worldliness. Furthermore, I have underscored that, as is evident from rhetoric and legislation, these dominant discourses were in a constant struggle to convince members of the Order of their legitimacy, and the illegitimacy of alternate cultural expressions.

My hope has been to complicate our understanding of how the lay brothers’ office developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I have sought to show that contrary to historiographical representations, there was no monolithic lay brother. Rather, I have elucidated strategies which various individuals and groups employed to attempt to shape lay brothers’ role and social position. I consider this study to have contributed to scholarly debate for two primary reasons. First, it cautions against assuming that medieval Cistercians themselves were unified in their understanding of what a lay brother was, or how he related to the monastic power structure and so suggests that any future scholarship concerning the lay brotherhood should be conscious of the determining role political, ideological, and temporal context have on shaping what the term ‘lay brother’ meant in any given text. Secondly, I view this thesis as having expanded our understanding of how power and the formation of identity functioned within the context of twelfth-century Cistercian monasticism. As Carolyn Walker-Bynum suggests, the twelfth century was a time in which society increasingly divided itself into types or models, such as canons, knights, and guildsmen.³ In the case of the lay brother, subject to much debate and redefinition, it is clear that the model did not develop organically. Thus, in studying the strategies

³ Carolyn Walker Bynum, “Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Walker Bynum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 95.

by which Cistercian authors attempted to construct a legitimate model or identity for lay brothers, one can understand some of the ways in which social identity was constructed in this period. Likewise, due to the connection of the lay brother identity to the issues of authority and hierarchy, the subtle strategies by which Cistercian authors attempted to justify their authority and power over the brothers, reveal much about the functioning of power within the monastic context.

In this study, I have focused on how lay brothers' role and identity were created, yet I have not sought to explain why. I do, however, present a theory and suggest questions for future consideration. In chapter 2, I alluded to the necessity for the early Cistercians to reaffirm that lay brothers were truly 'monastic' in order to respond to internal and external pressure for them to live by the labour of their own hands. Articulating distinctions between choir monks and lay brothers seems almost immediately to have become a major concern for at least some monastic authors and one which pervaded Cistercian literature well into the thirteenth century, as I demonstrated in chapter 4. My hypothesis for why the 'lay brother' became so problematic within Cistercian ideology was that the office transgressed the boundaries of secular and clerical roles, and thus posed a threat to the exclusivity of the monastic office.

I suggest that a monk's authority largely rested in his sanctified status based on his exemplary lifestyle devoted to prayer and meditation and his distinction from secular individuals through conduct and appearance. Despite the fact that lay brothers did not engage in spiritual work, but instead completed mundane tasks typical of any medieval secular worker, the Cistercian Order recognized them as spiritual equals. I contend that this concept became problematic within Cistercian ideology since it called into question the boundaries between secular and monastic culture, and the validity of distinctions which monks created between

themselves and other social groups. Thus, the lay brotherhood poses the questions: What makes a monk? Why was it necessary to break with the Benedictine tradition to form lay brothers as 'monastic' yet not 'monks'? What impact did the lay brotherhood have on monastic culture? Were the strategies for forming identity the same for both choir monks and lay brothers within the Order? What impact did non-monastic discourses have on internal monastic policy, i.e. to what extent was the Cistercian approach to lay brothers like that of aristocrats and peasants? While these areas may prove fruitful for future research, this study merely suggests that it is necessary to think more carefully about the lay brotherhood, and group identity in general. Contrary to past assertions which portray lay brothers as a unified representation or unified reality, I have demonstrated that there was no one lay brother role. Rather, the lay brother was always and remained an amorphous and debated figure whose place in Cistercian monasticism and its meaning remained vigorously contested throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

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