Abstract: In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries secular medieval Latin songs attracted the attention of musicians. Two examples (*Vinum bonum et suave*, and *Potatores exquisiti*), in their medieval and renaissance manifestations, highlight the differences of approach to music in the two periods. Both are drinking songs but have associations with sacred repertoire; and seem to be connected to monastic culture; and the two seem to have migrated to disparate regions of Europe.

Keywords: medieval and renaissance music, drinking song, parody, Orlandus Lassus, *Carmina Burana*

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when medieval aesthetic preferences had decidedly begun to wane, secular Latin songs with roots in the twelfth century attracted the attention of renaissance musicians. Though such a phenomenon is common enough in purely sacred music, there are not copious quantities of gothic secular material which was subjected to such transformation. In what follows, I shall explore the vagaries of two Latin lyrics over several centuries of their existence.

One of these, the drinking song *Vinum bonum et suave*, an obvious parody of the well-known twelfth-century sequence *Verbum bonum et suave*, surfaces in fifteenth-century manuscripts from the Czech Republic and Vienna (respectively Prague, National Library, MS I.E.22 and Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Codex 5371). In the sixteenth century it apparently was again set by two well-known composers: Jean Richafort and Orlandus Lassus. I say apparently, because when examined closely, the two versions are quite different.

Another lyric song, *Potatores exquisiti*, survives in *Carmina Burana* (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4660) as well as the thirteenth-century textual source Oxford, Bodleian Library, Additional A44. The two medieval versions lack melodies, but the fifteenth-century manuscript London, British Library, Egerton 3307 includes a three-voiced arrangement.
These two examples, in their medieval and renaissance manifestations, highlight the differences of approach to music in the two periods. Since medieval lyric song is notoriously vexed by uncertainties of rhythm and pitch, one is also tempted to seek vestigial information embedded in the more explicit later settings with the potential of retro-extrapolation to the earlier material. A closer examination of each of them should illustrate whether or not this is possible.

**Verbum bonum et suave**

*Verbum bonum et suave* was one of the most popular sequences of the Middle Ages, its ubiquity coinciding with the burgeoning interest in Marian themes emerging in the twelfth century. It survives in over thirty manuscripts dating from the twelfth to fourteenth century, many of these in polyphonic settings.\(^1\) It is recorded, with variant details, in manuscripts from widely scattered European libraries. These include French centres such as Reims, Paris, Limoges, Fontevrault, and Anchin; Cividale in Italy, Las Huelgas in Spain; and various sites in the low countries and the United Kingdom. It is now impossible to assign its genesis to a single location or individual, though it was widely distributed in monastic centres. Being so well known, it was apt for parody which tends to work best with familiar referents. It is not clear when the first burlesques of *Verbum bonum* appeared. However, the inclusion of the parody in company with the famous dialogue between water and wine, *Ego quodam superum*, in the fifteenth-century manuscripts from Prague and Vienna, suggests that it originated as early as the thirteenth century. *Ego quodam*, which dates from ca. 1200, is sometimes attributed to Philip the Chancellor, or more generally to the so-called ‘Goliardic’ repertoire. *Verbum bonum* consists of three double versicles, usually with a terminal Amen which in some versions replicates the music of the third versicle of the sequence proper. The parody begins in a similar way but wanders on in some versions and is completely modified in others, as we shall see.

But first, more about the sources for *Vinum bonum*. The two fifteenth-century manuscripts share common poetry, but differ in a variety of other ways. Both have the parody of *Verbum bonum*, as well as the dialogue between water and wine, probably copied from the same exemplar, or one from the other. Vienna, Codex 5371 is a large paper manuscript (ca. 10×14 inches). In the tradition of monastic manuscripts dating back to the eleventh century and earlier, it is a miscellany of studies, including an astrology, lapidary, ornithology, her-

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Barium, and medical writings. On ff. 213v–214v we encounter the “Disputatio vini et aquam” – a lengthy expostulation comparing the merits of the two liquids. *Vinum bonum* follows on f. 214v in an obtuse fifteenth-century hand.

Contemporary with Vienna 5371 is Prague I.E.22, from the Prague National Library. It is also a large paper manuscript. A part of the latter can be dated to 1412, 2 which suggests that both are from around that date. On the frontispiece of the Prague source is written:

> Ex bibliotheca Illustrißimi Principis Domini Petri Vok, Ursini, Domini Domus à Rosenberg, ultimi et senioris, et è Primatibus Bohemorum celsissimi et antiquissimi Anno Christi m. dc. ix [1609].

Though this was doubtless added later when taken to the Prince’s library, it does suggest that the document, and perhaps the Vienna manuscript came from the Bohemian orbit. Rosenberg is not too far from Nuremberg and Regensburg, nor from Prague and Vienna. As in the Vienna source, the contents are mixed, but of different material. There are treatises, lives of philosophers, and various other prose writings. The disputation between wine and water appears on ff. 87v–88v and is immediately followed by *Vinum bonum* on ff. 88v–89v. As the versions in the two manuscripts are very close, written in a similar hand in corrupt Latin, they likely were copied from a common source or one from the other: it is not clear which. A textual conflation of the Vienna and Prague versions serves to illustrate how the original sequence (in this case given in a version from Cividale, see below) compares with the parody. 3

**Example 1**

A textual comparison of *Verbum bonum* with *Vinum bonum* (original spelling)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Text</th>
<th>Wien 5371, with help from Prague I.E.22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a Verbum bonum et suave personemus illud ave per quod Cristi fit conclave inter spinas lilia:</td>
<td>1a Vinum bonum et suave bonis bonum previs pravum dulce vernem sapor ave mundana letitia:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Per quod ave salutata mox conceptit fecundata virgo David stirpe nata inter spinas lilia</td>
<td>1b Ave felix creatura quam perduxit vina pura omnis mensa est secura in tui punicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Ave veri Salomonis mater vellus Gedeonis cuius Magi tribus donis laudant puerperium:</td>
<td>2a Ave liquor vini clari Cuius sapor sine pari Tua nos inebriari dignetur potentia:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3 The text for *Verbum bonum* is available in the sources mentioned in note 1 above.
2b Ave solem genuisti
ave prolem protulisti
mundo lapso contulisti
vitam et imperium.

2b Per te mundus ylarescit
Per te bonis honor crescit
Omnis largus erubescit
Sum tui copia.

3a Ave sponsa verbi summi
maris portus signum dum
aromatatum virga fumi
angelorum domina

3a Ave pulcra in colore
ave fragrans in odore
ave rapidum in ore
dulce liqui vinculum:

3b Supplicamus nos emenda
emendatus nos commend ad
 tuo nato ad habenda
sempiterna gaudia.

3b Ave salus in modestis
 In gulosus mala pestis
pim amissi omnes vestis
sequitur patibulum

4a Monachorum grex devotus
clerus omnis orbis totus
bibunt ad equales potus
cum in ager leticum.

4b Felix ventus quem interbis
felix os que tu lavabet
et beata labia

5a Supplicamus nos humunda
Nos inunda letabunda
Ut bibamus mente iocunda
tua clara pocula. Amen.

If set to the music of the original sequence, the textual parody might have looked something like this:

Example 2
Beginning of Vinum bonum set to melody of Verbum bonum

The melody is taken from Cividale, M.A.N., Codex LVIII, ff. 334−336.
The text is a parody of the sequence Verbum bonum et suave whose melody was used.
Though this textual parody was on the cusp of the transition from Middle Ages to Renaissance, there are at least two later parodies, surviving in printed documents, which are firmly in the High Renaissance tradition. The earlier of these two is that by Jean Richafort (ca. 1480–1548), who flourished in the circle of chanson composers in Paris in the 1540’s. His works and others of the Parisian school were published in Attaingnant’s collections of the same period. Though it shares the first few words with all the parodies, Richafort’s setting is textually different from the earlier versions and is set to five voices. It is not medieval in musical style, other than the minutiae of its text, yet it also differs from the approach taken a little later by Orlandus Lassus. This is signalled from the beginning:

Example 3
Comparison of the first stanza
a) Vienna–Prague sources, b) Richafort, c) Orlandus Lassus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Vinum bonum et suave</td>
<td>bonis bonum previs pravum</td>
<td>bibit abbas cum priore</td>
<td>nunquam bibi vinum tale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dulce vernem sapor ave</td>
<td>sed conventus de peiore</td>
<td>vinum cor laetificat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mundana letitia</td>
<td>bibit cum tristitia</td>
<td>vinum cor laetificat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lassus published his version of the parody in Munich (Berg) in 1570. He wrote both a “motet” based on a parody of “Verbum bonum” and then, in turn, a parody mass of the parody in the Missa Vinum bonum et suave, both for eight voices. His text and music varies from both the Bohemian versions and that of Richafort. Lassus frequently repeats phrases of text, tossing them back and forth between two four-voice choirs, and largely abandons the tight poetic structure of the medieval original. The text appears in Example 4 and a part of the music in Example 5.

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4 For a brief discussion of Richafort and his circle, see Gustave Reese, Music in the Renaissance (New York: Norton, 1959), 300–301.

5 See Reese, Music in the Renaissance, 696–697.
Example 4

Text of the Lassus version

Vinum bonum et suave
nunquam bibi vinum tale
vinum cor laetificat
vinum cor laetificat.

Vinum purum et germanum
morbos pellit reddens sanum
corpus quod rectificat
corpus quod rectificat.

Vinum bonum mere sumptum
senem facit mire promptum
formosulis commendans
Christus vinum semel fecit
ex aqua, quod non deficit
et bibentes saturans

Ne mireris semel factum
sed mirere tale factum
In vite quotidi

Ergo Christum invocemus
quod laetantes hic bibemus
tale vinum porrigat

Fiat, fiat, fiat, fiat
ergo Christum invocemus
quod laetantes hic bibemus
tale vinum porrigat
fiat, fiat, fiat, fiat.

Lassus repeats textual passages, both in immediate reiteration and sometimes returning after interspersing other words. In many ways, his version abandons the medieval roots of the composition. There is freedom, complexity, and less intimacy between text and music, although as might be expected, his musical setting is effective.

Example 5

Music from the beginnig of the Lassus version of Vinum bonum et suave
The Transmission of two Secular Latin Songs
Potatores exquisiti

Our second exemplar, the drinking song, *Potatores exquisiti*, has a different history and presents a different set of problems. It is not a product of parody like the previous piece. It exists in three manuscripts, as far as I know: *Carmina Burana* (Clm 4660), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Additional A44; and London, British Library, Egerfton 3307. The only version with full music is the third. A few remarks about each of these sources would seem to be in order.

*Carmina Burana*, was found upon dissolution of the monastery of Benediktbeurn in Bavaria in 1803 and is now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. In spite of its celebrated reputation as a source of secular music, it mixes secular and sacred Latin content seemingly at random, drawing on an international repertoire of lyric song. The inclusion of secular material has been accepted as evidence that the manuscript could not have originated in the monastery, but also has led to the most outlandish and ill-founded speculations about its social matrix. Different theories were invented as to where it might have come from (prelate’s court, pedagogical models used by schoolmen, goliardic theory), none of which has been proven. It seems more realistic to admit, that, like many other sources containing secular Latin poetry, it came
from a monastery, likely Benediktbeurn itself. The library there, and this manuscript in particular, served as a regional repository for an international commodity, and perhaps featured the script of a Tyrolean scribe. The dating of Carmina Burana is difficult since the orthography is rather old-fashioned in some respects. The German dialect in the poetry and a lai which discusses the schism of 1177, together suggest that it could not have been written earlier than the late twelfth century, most likely dating from about 1230.6

The main portion of CB contains some 244 Latin works and 55 German lyrics, 45 of which seem to be attached to Latin poems. Approximately half of the material in the source is sacred, but many of the texts lack music. Even one of the greatest drinking songs of all time (in the words of Helen Waddell), In taberna quando sumus, lacks neumes. The musical notation is old-fashioned for the time of the manuscript, resorting as it does to staffless neumes less sophisticated than those from St Gall several centuries earlier. Hilka and Schumann identify at least six hands involved in the musical notation. This scribal team managed to set about forty of the Latin songs and seven of the German ones. In addition, there is a Gambler’s Mass, a Christmas drama and a Passion play set to music. In the Fragmenta Burana, another five songs and part of another Passion play bear neumes.

Since poems without music are in the majority, it should be no surprise that Potatoes exquisiti lacks them too, but even if it was notated, its resolution would be very conjectural in the absence of a pitch-articulate concordance. Likewise, in its other medieval source, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Additional A44, it survives as text only. Oxford A44 contains no music, although it is a rich anthology of texts set to music elsewhere. It shares concordances with important sources such as CB and the great Florence manuscript, Pluteus 29.1. As is the case with many medieval collections of poetry, it mixes lyrics with a very broad array of subject matter, from the highly sacred to the scurrilous. The manuscript belonged to Thomas Bekyngton, Bishop of Bath and Wells in the fifteenth century, but dates from much earlier – likely from the beginning of the thirteenth century – and possibly has its origins in the Victorine house of Wigmere in Herefordshire, which was founded in 1174. In its mixed array of music, we again find a copy of the text of Potatoes exquisiti, perhaps intended for a monastic audience.

London, British Library, Egerton 3307 (first half of the fifteenth century), is a parchment manuscript of 88 folios, and seems to come from the Chapel Royal of St. George in Windsor. It contains mainly polyphonic sacred music,

6 For more on this, see Peter Dronke, “A Critical Note on Schumann’s Dating of the Codex Buranus”, Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 84 (1962), 173–183.
including Mass Ordinaries and Propers, antiphons, motets and carols.\footnote{See Bertram Schofield, “A Newly Discovered 15th-Century Manuscript of the English Chapel Royal Part I”, \textit{The Musical Quarterly}, XXXII (1946), 509–536.} As the bulk of the material is sacred, the appearance of a drinking song is unusual. This version, and that in \textit{Carmina Burana}, lack some verses, the A44 version being the most complete. But the texts that do appear are reasonably consistent from version to version, rather than being modified as in “Vinum bonum”.

\textit{Example 6}

Text of [O] potatores exquisiti:

\begin{tabular}{llll}
\hline
CB & A44 & L3307 \\
\hline
1. & O potores exquisiti licet sitis sine siti en bibitis expediti et ciforum inobliti cifi crebro repetiti non dormiant et sermones inauditi prosiliant. & O potores exquisiti licet sitis sine siti en bibatis expediti et cyphorum inobliti cyphi crebro repetiti non dormiant et sermones inauditi prosiliant. & O potores exquisiti licet sitis sine siti en bibatis expediti et cyphorum inobliti cyphi crebro repetiti non dormiant et sermones inauditi prosiliant. \\
2. & Qui potare non potestis ite procul ab his festis non est locus hic modestis inter letos mos agrestis modestie et est sue certus testis ignavie. & Qui potare non potestis ite procul ite quid hic estis non est locus hic modestis inter letos mos agrestis modestie iudex est et certus testis ignavie. & Qui potare non potestis ite procul ab his festis procul ite quid hic estis. inter letos mos agrestis. modestie. iudex est et certus testis ignavie. \\
3. & Siquis latitat hic forte. qui non curat vinum flete. ostendantur iili porte. exeat ab hac cohorte. plus est nobis morte gravis si maneat. si recedat a consorte tunc perceat. & Siquis latitat hic forte. qui recusat vinum forte ostendantur ei porte exeat hac de cohorte. plus est nobis gravis morte si maneat. ergo sic a nobis eat ne redeat. & [lacking] \\
4. & Cum contingat te prestare ita bibas absque pare ut non possis pede stare neque recta verba dare sed sit tibi salutare potissimum semper vas evacuare potissime. & [lacking] & [lacking] \\
5. & [lacking] & Vina qui non gustat pura miser iuvat in cura vino fors lenitur dura procul ergo sic mixtura. multum enim contra ima delinguitur. cum hec dei creatura corrupitur. & Vina qui non gustat pura vinat miseret in cura vino fors lenit dura procul ergo fit mixtura mustus et quam pura delinquitur. In hec dei creatura corrupitur. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
A tempting question, since the London source alone has music, is: can the music of the polyphonic version be used to reconstruct the original melody of the thirteenth-century original? Although vestiges of the tune may be embedded in the musical lines, it is not clear which voice carries the appropriate notes, or the extent of embellishment. The underlay is often uncertain and important musical material periodically migrates from voice to voice (see Example 7). The answer to the question, then, is doubtless negative. The one comforting aspect of this setting is that, unlike many medieval melodies, there is no doubt as to what the rhythm should be.
Conclusions

There are certain elements in common between *Vinum bonum* and *Potatores exquisiti*: their roots seem to extend back at least to the twelfth century and perhaps further; both were transmitted to the sixteenth century but in ways that are enigmatic now; both are drinking songs but have associations with sacred repertoire; both seem to be connected to monastic culture; and the two seem to have migrated to disparate regions of Europe.

But there are also differences: In *Vinum bonum*, the text was modified in subsequent editions. There are at least three different versions: 1) the Bohemian text (Wien, Prague same); 2) the Richafort Parisian chanson-like setting, 3) and that of Lassus, adapted to his own motet style.
As for the music, there is no extant version of the parody from the Middle Ages, but if adapted to *Verbum bonum*, a medieval rendition would be monophonic or two-voiced, perhaps using the original sequence melody in a syllabic setting with close links between text and music as in Example 2. The Richafort version is in five voices in the style of the Parisian chanson. Lassus’ setting is for double choir in eight voices, which in turn became the basis of a parody mass, that is, a parody of a parody. Lassus abandoned the original poetic structure of *Verbum bonum* and its earlier parodies; he also apparently did not quote the original melody of the source sequence. In short, a piece containing elements of parody became a new item subjected to further modification.

There is apparently no surviving melody from the Middle Ages of the other song, *Potatores exquisiti*, but it does appear as text in two of the most important collections of thirteenth-century Latin lyrics. The only musical setting, for three voices, exists in the fifteenth-century manuscript, Egerton 3307. If any of the medieval musical characteristics are preserved, they are well disguised, since the textual underlay is less than careful and the chief musical motifs seem to migrate from voice to voice. Schenkerian reductions of the voice lines could be made, but this might not truly reflect the nature of the original tune which has been lost. On the other hand, the medieval text is quite closely adhered to and not modified as in the Richafort and Lassus versions of *Vinum bonum*. All three extant renditions of the text are similar, though stanzas are omitted here and there. In other words, *Potatores exquisiti* is closer to its textual roots than late settings of *Vinum bonum*. Musically, the original song was probably in strophic form, whereas the version in L3307 is through-composed. The musical freedom suggests that the composer had lost touch with its original melody, or simply ignored it.

To conclude, it would seem dangerous to extrapolate musical and/or textual features back from the renaissance settings. The musical characteristics of the late settings are vestigial replications of their medieval forebears at best with so little in common that the concept of “variant” is not useful. There are two approaches evident from these case studies, which, in the spirit of neologistic post-modernism, can be dubbed ‘transmutation’ and ‘transformation’. The modifications to text and music in one lyric are substantial (transmutation), while not in the other, which features only an expansion through musical transformation of texture and harmony. Such gothic revivals seem to require a case by case study and do not well support general theories, whether cultural, musical or textual.