Appendix 3: Serlo of Bayeux, The Capture of Bayeux,\(^1\) edited and translated by Moreed Arbabzadah

Introduction
This poem is found only in a manuscript from the second half of the 12\(^{th}\) century (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.XII, fols. 110v–112v), where it is introduced by the rubric *IncipiuntuersusSerlonis de capta Baiocensium ciuitate.* I provide below a list of several works that contain the poem in its entirety; these will be cited by author and date or simply by the author’s name. ‘Brial’ in a footnote signifies the consensus of his 1827 and 1833 editions; the later edition is almost identical, save for the inclusion of some extra notes. Pluquet and Pillet follow Brial 1827, and can therefore usually be assumed to have printed the same text, except where differences are explicitly noted.


Text

[1] Corde fero tristi quod tam cito capta fuisti, urbs Baiocensis; non hasta cruenta, nec ensis sanguine perfusus, non longi temporis usus, non hostis caesus, non ciuis uulnere laesus,

[5] subiecit genti tua moenia capta furenti. te casus strauit uelox, et praeceptuait diros euentus uoluens incendia uentus, et Cenomannensis uigor, et furor Andegauensis. saltem si lente tua moenia tot uiolentae,

[10] et cum Normannis gens Anglica mixta Britannis, diruerent gentes, pugnantem te subigentes caede, labore, mora, patereris probra minora. sors tibi contingens noua res est, et pudor ingens. uates facundi referunt ab origine mundi

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\(^1\) In memory of Leonard Marshall. I would like to thank, above all, Elisabeth van Houts, who discussed and commented on all aspects of the text and translation. I am especially thankful for her assistance with the interpretation of medieval Latin usages. I am also greatly indebted to Michael Reeve, who also commented on both the text and translation. I have accepted almost all of his suggestions, even though only his Latin emendations are explicitly credited. I am also grateful to David Butterfield and Alex Thomson for their comments on various sections. Any errors that remain are mine alone.
The Fate of the Priests’ Sons in Normandy

Brial 1833

Brial & Delisle 1880

Pillet 1839
Pillet, Victor-Évremont. 1839. Serlon. Bayeux. [Pillet bases his text on Pluquet 1829: see Pillet 1839, 5.]

Pluquet 1829

Wright 1872

Translation

My heart is saddened because you were captured so quickly, city of Bayeux; no blood-soaked spear, no sword dripping with blood, no prolonged siege, no bloodthirsty enemy, no citizen afflicted with a wound [5] has cast your captured walls at the feet of a raging people. A swift misfortune has defeated you, and the wind fanning the flames has hastened the terrible misfortune, as has the strength of Maine, and the fury of Anjou. At least if so many violent peoples – the English people mixed with Bretons and the Normans – slowly demolished your walls, wearing you down with slaughter, suffering, and a lengthy assault, while you fought back, you would be suffering less dishonour. The fate afflicting you is something new and a great source of shame.
[15] urbes destructas et ad infortunia ductas; nullius talis casus fuit exitialis. contio\(^2\) docta parum! lege libros historiarum; discer patrum mores; Mutinae cognoscere labores; quare Saguntini cladem gregis, et Perusini,

[20] Massiliaeque fidem: sensus fuit omnibus idem, malle pati mortem quam laudis perdere sortem. Troia repentinam non est sortita ruinam, ut memorant cartae; perit gens Dardana marte uicta decennali, nec cursu Pergama tali

[25] capta fuisset ferunt: ciues urbe tenuerunt (fortes Normannos pudeat!) bis quinque per annos. subruit irta Dei modica uos parte diei. nam liquido nostis, muros dum scanderet hostis, non occurrístis, sed terga repente dedístis.

[30] urbis et in poenas miserae gentes alienas adiuuít digné cruciando reos Deus igne, ardua quem uentus per tecta tulit uiolentus, aedès urentem sacras, lateque furentem. ardet succensus qui per mala plurima census

[35] accumulatus erat, si quis bene singula quaearet. ardent usurae, pereunt anathemata iure; ardent exustae fraus et fallacia iuste. debitus hic finis furtis erat atque rapinis; hac meruit meta consuni falsa moneta.

[40] haec uis flammarum lacrimas urit uiduarum, et pupillorum gemitus; quia res miserorum nequiter emitís, comburi sic meruístis. ecclesiae demum culmen fumare supremum uidímus ardentí; tunc clauasæ milia gentíis,

[45] tacta metu mortís, properánt\(^3\) erumpere portís; sed timor hostílis utat, et radiantía pilis agmina condénsis, in limine plurímus ensís. barbara turba foris dum staret plena furóris, quaerens molímen quo posset frangere limén,

[50] pulsabatque òres ut [census] interiores\(^4\)

\(^2\) contio MS; concio Brial.

\(^3\) properant Brial; properauerit MS.

\(^4\) Brial reads ut recessus interiores, with recessus filling a gap caused by damage to the MS. This gap is perhaps eleven letters/spaces in size, though there is no guarantee that the lost reading was the correct one. This recessus is repeated in later works, but does not scan. Since Serfo generally observes classical vowel quantities, this reading should be abandoned. A noun for interiores to modify seems likely. I have printed census (accusative plural; cf. lines 34–5) merely as a placeholder. Pillet prints ut ... interiores and notes ‘fortasse sedes vel partes’. There is little that can be done beyond the suggestion of a metrically-suitable conjecture that would fit the context.
Eloquent poets speak of [15] cities destroyed and brought to ruin since the beginning of the world; no city’s misfortune has ever been this destructive. Uninformed people! Read the history books, learn about your fathers’ ways, familiarize yourself with the sufferings of Modena, ask about the disaster of the people of Sagunto and Perugia, [20] and the resolve of Marseille; they all had the same opinion: they preferred to suffer death, rather than lose their share of praise. History records that Troy did not suffer sudden destruction; it was only after a decade-long war that the Trojan people were conquered and perished. They say that Pergamum [25] was not captured quickly: the citizens held the city (may this shame the brave Normans!) for 10 years. The anger of God tore you down in just part of a day. You know well that you did not oppose the enemy as they climbed our walls; instead you suddenly fled.

[30] God rightly helped the foreign peoples punish the wretched city by torturing the guilty with a fire that the violent wind carried across the high roofs, burning sacred buildings and raging far and wide. The possessions that are set alight and burn [35] were accumulated through many evil deeds, if anyone should look carefully into the details. Wealth acquired through usury burns and accursed people rightly perish. Fraud and deceit are set alight and justly burn; this was the end destined for theft and plunder; this was the end that false wealth deserved.

[40] The force of the flames burns the tears of widows and the groans of orphans; because you shamefully acquired the property of unfortunate men, you deserved to be consumed in this way by fire. At last we saw that the highest roof of the burning church was smoking; at that point, the thousands of people shut inside rush to leave through the doors, [45] moved by fear of death; but fear of the enemy prevents them, as well as the columns of soldiers gleaming with serried spears, and the numerous swords at the threshold. The raging enemy were standing outside full of fury, looking for something heavy with which to break down the door, [50] and banging on the doors so that they might plunder the [property] within, if by chance the opportunity
depraedaretur, si copia forte dare tur, 
eclesia clausi ciues, magnum nihil ausi, 
turpia terga dabant, miroque modo trepidabant. 
infima linquentes, et templi summam petentes, 

[55] credo uoalaissent ad sidera, si potuisset; 
uix illic tuitis spes esset certa salutis. 
perdiderant mentes, omni ratione carentes, 
adauersas gentes ope nulla reiciientes, 
uei lapidum iactu, uel forti quolibet actu, 

[60] sic defensuri templum quasi robora muri, 
in neutram partem uires adhibendo6 uel artem. 
hostilem uultum Deus hic non linquit inultum, 
haud7 … 
umum fecissent, si consilio [ualuisse]:7 

[65] arna reliquisse uxoribus, et [petiisset]8 
agmina firma parum defendi uiribus [harum]. 
hi bellatores, soliti reprehendere mores 
et uitam cleri, nec canonicos reuereri, 
quod deliquerunt, in nos traducere quaerunt: 

[70] quos hoc infamant oppressos crimine, clamant 
nostro se tactos anathemate, sicque subactos. 
is responsa damus quae recte danda putamus: 
non anathema ferunt, si non illud meruerunt; 
si merue pati, merito sunt dedecorati. 

[75] ut sese purgent, sic nos, ut diximus, urgent. 
hac in clade tamen nostrum sensere iuuenam, 
ad nos fugerunt et in ecclesia latuerunt, 
praesidio cleri;9 nolunt tamen hoc profiteri. 
plebs Baiocarum, nimis esse probat tibi carum 

[80] uitae mortalis cursum trepidatio talis. 
nam re sic gesta potior10 mors esset honesta. 
si uitam seruas, ignominiam coaceras, 
et tu proba feres, et in aeternum tuus heres. 
quae freta, quae terrae cessabunt ista referre? 

[85] faex Normannorum! patrum pudor et proauorum!

5 adhibendo Brial; adhibenda MS.
6 Sections marked with an ellipsis ‘…’ are no longer extant.
7 ualaissent is a conjecture that appears in Brial 1827 and later works; there is little more than a 
trace of the first letter.
8 potuisset appears in Brial 1827 and is followed by others. I note, however, that the MS seems 
to have pet/ not pot/ and therefore might have had petiuissent rather than potuissent (whether due 
to corruption or not). The general sense, however, is clear.
9 cleri MS; Dei Brial, even though he notes (1833) that Dei is clearly wrong, since it does not 
rhyme properly with profiteri.
10 gesta potior MS; gesta et potior Brial.
presented itself. The townspeople, locked in the church and not daring to do anything heroic, turned their shameful backs and showed their fear in an astonishing manner. Leaving ground level and seeking the top of the church, [55] I believe that they would have flown to the stars if they had been able to. Even in that safe place there would scarcely have been a strong chance of salvation. They had lost their minds, they were lacking all reason, not taking any measure to drive back the enemy, neither throwing rocks nor undertaking any sort of brave action, [60] they were thus about to defend the church like a solid wall, using neither force nor skill against either side. Here God does not leave a hostile face unpunished, not ... They would have done one thing, if [they had been good at] strategy: [65] they would have surrendered their arms to their wives, and the weak columns [would have asked] to be defended by the strength [of these women]. These warriors, who are accustomed to rebuking the customs and way of life of the clergy, and not respecting canons, try to blame us for the offence that they themselves have committed: [70] they defame us and we are burdened by the charge; they proclaim that they have been touched by our curse, and that is why they have been conquered. To these people we give responses that we think are right to give. They do not bear a curse, unless they have earned it. If they deserved to suffer, then they have deservedly been disgraced. [75] In order to absolve themselves, they attack us in this way, as I have said. In this disaster however they enjoyed our help, they fled to us, and they hid in the church, under the protection of the clergy; they do not wish, however, to admit this.

People of Bayeux, such fear proves that [80] this mortal life is too dear to you. An honest death would be better than acting like this. If you save your lives, you amass shame, and you will suffer disgrace, as will your descendants for all eternity. What seas, what lands will stop speaking of those disgraces? [85] Dregs of the Normans! Shame of your fathers and ancestors! While you turn your backs in flight, the
dum uertis dorsum fugiens, est uersa deorsum
laus antiquorum uirtute parata uirorum,
famaque Normannis cumulata prioribus annis.
impetus ille fuens, quondam nos acriter uere
et clerum uerbis solitus lacerare superbis,
nunc iacet obtusus, cum belli postulat usus.
nunc animis esset uobis opus; amodo cesse
tastus ciuillis, factus super omnia uilis.
turba probata satis, plebs foeda, uae feritatis
litibus atque minis sit post haec tempora finis,
atque tegens uultus, pomposos linque tumultus,
quaeque solent uoces postrema sonare feroces.
gens ignaua! mori uitans, parcensque cruori,
turpiter ut uiuas, claro te nomine priuas.
gens inhonesta satis! tua linquens omnia fatis,
natos et natas, opibusque domos cumulatas.
plebs Cenomannensis, uulgi faex Andegauensis,
xuores uestras rapiunt; aperite fenestras,
cernite clara foris uestri documenta pudoris,

... ... ... ... tem, paternisque maritus,12
... ... ... ...ri, cum sit tibi copia ferre.13
[denique]14 bella uelis antiqua reuoluere? telis
[namque]15 cadens laxis, domitus fuit Angilicus axis.

Anglos uicerunt patres qui uos genuerunt
degeneres natos et ad omnia proba paratos.
in Siculis oris, animi longe melioris,
proelia gesserunt Normanni; signa dederunt
uirtuisque fidem Calabris in finibus idem,
quorum res gestas gens Appula nouit honestas.
Roma subacta pati didicit gregis arma probati.
subdita Normannis urbs esse solet Cenomannis;
tu Cenomannenses uitas, ut degener, enses.
hostis adest hirtus: quid clausa latet tua uirtus?

es defensor hebes, qui nos defendere debes,
et sic te claudis, querulos dum turpiter audis.16

11 post haec MS; per haec Brial, which would not scan.
12 ...tem, paternisque ma... Brial; ...tem, paternisque maritus Wright; ]tem, paternisque marit[j
is just about visible in the MS, but even paternisque maritus does not scan.
13 ...ri, cum sit copia ferre Brial; ]ri cum sit tibi copia ferre MS, which cannot be right, since -ri
and ferre would not rhyme; cēritēr tibi copia ferri (Wright) cannot scan.
[denique] is in Brial 1827; the MS is damaged here and I can see nothing, but Brial (1833)
comments that a few traces of this word (and namque below) remain.
15 [namque] cadens Brial 1827 (see note above); [namque ca]dens] laxis MS.
16 querulos dum turpiter audis Brial; quaerende turpiter laudes MS.
praise earned by the virtue of previous generations has been hurled downwards, as has the fame accumulated by the Normans over the previous years. That wild fury, which once burned us fiercely [90] and used to attack the clergy with proud words, now lies wounded, when the necessity of warfare requires it. Now you need to be brave; henceforth let civil arrogance cease and be considered more contemptible than anything else. You well-known crowd, you wicked people: let there be an end after this to your [95] violent quarrels and threats, and, covering your faces, leave behind pompous uproar and the terrible things that your fierce voices were used to uttering.

[100] Cowardly people! Avoiding death and bloodshed, you deprive yourselves of an illustrious name in order to live in shame. Dishonourable people! You leave all of your possessions to fate, along with your sons and daughters, and your houses full of riches. The common people of Maine and the dregs of the crowds from Anjou are seizing your wives; open the windows, look outside at the clear evidence of your shame, [105] … since you have enough weapons.

[And finally], would you care to recall ancient wars? [Indeed] the English chariots were conquered and fell without even lifting their weapons. [110] The men who fathered you conquered the English, whilst you degenerate sons are ready for all shameful deeds. The Normans waged wars with far more courage in the land of Sicily; those same Normans gave proofs and confirmation of their virtue in Calabria, [115] and their honourable deeds are known to the Apulian people. Conquered Rome learned to suffer the arms of good warriors. The conquered city of Le Mans is accustomed to being subject to the Normans; you, degenerate Bayeux, now avoid the swords of Le Mans. A rough enemy is present: why does your virtue lie hidden and shut away? [120] You are useless defenders, you who should defend us, and you shut yourselves off like this, while you shamefully listen to
prorumpens extra, fortī nos protege dextra; 
clerō línque chorum; domus haec est canonicorum. 
ueī nostri formam sumens gregis, amodo normam 
[125]  
canicam serua, claustralīs facta catērua. 
sic bene nostrorum grēx cresceτ canonicorum. 
ērgo coronāti pannisque nigris onerāti 
ad psalmos rite promendos, ut decet, ite; 
cantantes horas17 uocēs aptate canorās. 
[130]  
uitam laudatam totiens, uestroque beatam 
īudicīō dictam, uobīs gaudēte relictam. 
nos defendemus patriam; nos arma geremus; 
non pugnaturī peius, nec tergā datūri 
tam cito; fortassī nōbis, nisi18 uulnera passīs, 
[135]  
quae minime nostis, patriam non auferet hostis. 
uos sanctī factī stabilīs sub foedere pactī 
nuptas atque toros, cameras, cultūsque décoros, 
argentō plenas gēmmīs auōque cūmenas, 
nobis linquetīs, postquam loca nostra tenetīs. 
[140]  
orbem dies per totum cognīta fies,19 
quando est multorūm conversio facta uirorum. 
nunc praeter morem Domino laudes et honorēm 
conuenit ut demus, cum ἡνοα20 facta uidentem, 
unum ferre chorum tria mília canonicorum. 
[145]  
ērgo tot et tales personae prodigiales 
hymnōs cantabunt, et more nouo resonabunt 
†atria plenī modulo nec consōna lenī†.21 
ux huīus gentīs Patris aures omnipotentēs 
uxēxītī multum, grandem factura tumultum. 
[150]  
concensus horum mirabitur aula polorum. 
de grege damnando, quod ceneset mens mea, pando; 
laudo22 castrentur, ne prorsus ab his generentur 
iste damnati patrum pro crimen nati.

17 ‘Singing the canonical hours’, i.e. singing the offices. 
18 nisi MS; ni Brial. 
19 Literally ‘you will become’ (fies), i.e. addressing the day. 
20 The meter here is defective in the MS. Brial (1833) suggests cum tot noua, though that would 
make tot in line 145 more repetitive than we might expect. 
21 atriā pleni modulo nec consōna lenī MS; atriā plena rudi modulo nec consōna lenī Brial. 
Note the odd suggestion in Brial 1833: ‘Forsan laudi, nisi de industria auctor consonantiam hic 
imperfectam reliquerit.’ It seems unlikely that the original text did not rhyme here. I cannot see rudi 
or even a gap for it in the MS, but the meter clearly shows that something must be added. Given 
pleni...lenēi in the MS, however, it seems odd to emend lenē and create a rhyme with a conjectural 
addition. In the translation I offer (between obeli) what I think to be the general point. 
22 Brial (1833) suggests emending laudo to ilico ‘on the spot, right there’: ‘Mendosa scriptio: 
melius legetetur illico’.
our groans. Break out, protect us with a strong right hand. Leave the
choir to the clergy; this is the house of canons. Or join our flock and
henceforth [125] observe canonical rule, having become soldiers of
the cloister. In this way the flock of our canons will grow well. So,
tonsured and weighed down by black cloth, go to solemnly recite the
psalms, as is fitting; put on harmonious voices as you chant the hours.

[130] Rejoice in having left behind that life which was so often
praised, and which was declared blessed by your judgement. We
will defend our fatherland; we will bear arms; we will not fight any
worse than you, nor retreat so quickly; perhaps then, unless we have
suffered wounds, [135] about which you know very little, the enemy
will not steal our fatherland from us. You, ordained as holy men by
an irrevocable vow, will take our place and leave behind your brides,
marrige beds, chambers and their fitting adornments, purses full of
silver, gems, and gold.

[140] This will become a day of celebration known across the whole
world, when the conversion of many men was accomplished. Now it
is fitting to give praise and honour beyond measure to the Lord, when
we see a single choir holding three thousand newly-made canons.

[145] Then so many excellent people will sing wondrous hymns, and
the halls will resound in a new manner †ringing with loud noise, but
not pleasant music‡. The voices of these people will greatly annoy the
ears of the almighty Father and make a huge uproar.

[150] The hall of the heavens will marvel at the concerts of these men.
Let me say what I think about these contemptible people: I suggest
that they be castrated, lest they produce sons justly condemned for
their fathers’ crimes.
hostiles turbæ, subuersa taliter urbe,
[155] uincliis urgebant captos quos inueniebant,
praedam ducentes, thesauros effodientes.
rem miseræ gentis, sua criminæ magna luentis,
aut raptam sparsit fera gens, aut ignibus arsit,
flammaque destruxit, quam turbo per omnia duxit,
[160] cum templis aedes; ni cernas, uix mihi credes.
hac fuit ulla die sacra Virginis aula Mariae,
templaque bis quina simili periere ruina.
sors caret exemplo de quodam cognita templo,
in quo mors hausit quos portarum sera clausit,
[165] reddens ter denos exsangues atque nouenos,
quos si uidisses, mirabiliter doluiisses.
praelucens grata specie perit aula cremata,
miro picta modo, quam praesul condidit Odo,
tali digna uiro; casu pessundata diro,
[170] tecta decore pari desperant se reparari;
et domus insignis Conani fit cibus ignis.
sortis mundanae fluxum decus est et inane:
splendida res transit quasi sordida, nulla remansit
talis in hac tota regione domus mihi nota.
[175] aedes nostrorum pretiosas canonicorum,
dum sine more furit, uigor omnes igneus urit.
si quae manserunt, pauperrima tecta fuerunt:
nam nihil insigni specie reliquum fuit igni.
quid de castello referam? patuit sine bello,
[180] militibus fractis soloque timore subactis;
principis alta pari didicit domus igne cremari.
festino rerum metam contingere: clerum
iam diffidentem, supremaque fata uidentem,
aedibus e sacræ flamмae uigor expulit acris;
[185] sorsque fuit talis, non permisit furialis
arma subire gregis nos indulgentia regis.
ergo securi, metuebant qui prius uri,
sacra reliquerunt loca quam citius potuerunt.
concitus ipse pedes ad nostras dirigo sedes;
[190] cumque cremaretur mea res, et iam pateretur
omnem defectum quod seruerat mihi tectum,
spe captus uana, frumenti tollere grana
de cinerum massa coepi mediocriter assa.

23 mirabiliter MS; miserabiliter Brial, plausibly.
24 uigor MS; uis Brial.
25 securi MS; Brial (1833) prints sacrati, commenting that it is corrupt but that he does not know
how to make it rhyme with uri, suggesting instead sacraturi.
Enemy crowds, with the city thus ruined, [155] captured and chained anyone they met, leading their booty away and emptying the treasure-chests. The property of the wretched people atoned for their great crimes: it was either seized and divided up by the savage enemy, or burned with fire. The flames, which the wind spread across the city, destroyed [160] the buildings and churches; if you did not see it, you would scarcely believe me. On this day the holy hall of the Virgin Mary was burned down, and ten churches perished in a similar destruction. The fate of a certain church is unparalleled; in that church, death took those whom the bolt across the doors locked in, [165] producing thirty-nine lifeless corpses; if you had seen them, you would have lamented greatly. Shining brightly the beautiful, wondrously-painted hall built by Bishop Odo burns and perishes, a hall worthy of such a man; [170] there is no hope of restoring the buildings destroyed by this terrible disaster with similar decoration. The famous home of Conan also becomes food for the fire. The splendour of worldly riches is transient and worthless: valuable property perishes as though it were worthless; I know of no splendid home that survived in this whole area.

[175] The fiery onslaught burns all of the valuable houses of our canons as it rages wildly. If any buildings remained, they were the poorest ones, since nothing with a distinguished appearance was left by the fire. What should I say about the castle? It opened up without a fight, [180] with the soldiers defeated and subdued by fear alone; the great home of our ruler also learned how to be burned by fire. I hasten to reach the conclusion of these events: the clergy, already despairing and seeing their final fate, were expelled from the sacred buildings by the force of the fierce flame; [185] but our fate was such that the King’s kindness did not allow us to suffer the arms of the frenzied troops. So the clergy, who previously feared being burned, were safe and left the sacred places as quickly as possible. I myself hurry home on foot.

[190] Although my property, that building which had sheltered me, had been burned to a crisp and completely destroyed, I was seized by a vain hope and began to gather up lightly-toasted grains of corn from the pile of ashes: I thought that the grain snatched from the flames
nam flammis raptam faciendis panibus aptam
[195] annonam rebar, sed prorsus decipiebar.
nescio si nostis; sed ego noui quia tostis
compositus granis uix transit guttura panis.
huius odore graui me26 paene uomendo rigaudi,
 quem uix consumi patitur uis insita fumi.
[200] fel sapit hic panis, sed dulcia uenter inanis
quaelibet esse putat, nec amara uorando refutat
anxietae graui. quae profero uera probau,
nunc temptans escas non ante quidem mihi uescas.
pandere cur nolim quis me dolor urgeat olim?
[205] non mihi res gestas ut agam, modo cogit egestas;
cum uideo flentes quia deficit esca clientes,
meque relinquentes inopem, panemque sequentes,
solus in aede sedens, et fletu lumina laedens,
multa diu uoluo; tandem ieiunia soluo.
[210] a solito purus uitio, iam non Epicurus,
escarumue reus luxu, sed Pythagoraeus,
infundens ollae laticem quiddam paro molle,27
namque manu parca, quae custoditur in arca,
mixta farina sali sociatur aquae fluuiiali:
[215] haec calefacta parum uice sorbeo deliciarum.
in serie cleri non debeo uilis haberi,
si manibus tollam fumantem pultibus ollam,
quas caute fundo cumulans28 in uase profundo,
ut nihil effusum uitare gulae queat usum.
[220] ad quam mulcendam, rabiemque famis remouendam,
escas nulla ferunt cochlaria: nam perierunt.
fastus et ut desit, quem res mea perdita laesit,
ore traho totum, sorbens escam quasi potum.
donec se purget, quam sarcina tam grauis urget,
[225] pace caret uenter; pugnans29 indeficienter30
indignans multum; mouet hunc natura tumultum,
seque reclamat ali, mirata bitumine tali
quo fit nemo satur, quamuis illo repleatur,
nec quaerit uinum uacuans hac faece catinum.
[230] hic cibus est ... ... ...

26 odore graui me Brial; odore me MS.
27 Brial (1827) comments that we should understand this as gruel made with toasted oats (‘intellige
pulmentum ex avena tosta confectum, gruel vel grau vel grau vulgo dictum’). Note that pürō displays
shortening of final –o: cf. 215 sorbeô, 216 debeô, etc.
28 cumulans Pillet; cumulam MS.
29 pugnans MS; pugnat is Brial, even though it does not scan.
30 indeficienter MS; indesinenter Brial.
would be suitable for making bread, [195] but I was completely wrong. I do not know if you know; but I have learned that bread made from roasted grain scarcely passes through the gullet. I almost spewed forth vomit at the acrid smell of this bread: the smoky taste makes it barely edible.

[200] This bread tastes bitter, but an empty stomach thinks that anything is sweet, and in great anxiety it does not fail to devour bitter food. I have proved the truth of what I am relating, now trying food that I have never eaten before. Why would I not want to write of the long-standing grief that troubles me? [205] Poverty now drives me to do things I have never done before; when I see my companions weeping because they lack food and leaving me helpless as they search for bread, while I sit alone in my house and reden my eyes with crying, I think for a long time of many things; at last I end my hunger.

[210] Free from the usual vice, I am now neither an Epicurean nor a hostage to indulgence in food. I am instead a Pythagorean: pouring water into a pot I prepare something meagre. And with a frugal hand I mix the flour kept in my treasure-chest with salt and river-water.

[215] Once the mixture is a little warm, I wolf it down as if it were delicious. Amongst the ranks of the clergy I should not be looked down on because I lift with my hands the pot steaming with gruel and carefully pour the contents in heaps into a deep bowl, so that nothing is spilt and able to escape my gullet.

[220] No spoons bring food to soothe my gullet and eliminate my ravenous hunger: they have all been destroyed. And since I have no pride (the loss of my property got rid of that), I guzzle it all with my mouth, sucking up the food like a drink.

[225] My stomach lacks peace until it purges itself, just as so heavy a load urges; it is greatly indignant and fights incessantly. Nature stirs up this rumbling, and denies that it is being nourished, amazed by such bitumen, which satisfies no-one, even though it might fill them up. It does not seek wine as it empties these dregs from the bowl. [230] This food is … whoever is filled by this no longer suffers from thirst.
quo quisquis turget, sitis hunc nullatenus urget.
est etiam\textsuperscript{31} nudo uhehems mihi sollicitudo,
dedecorisque genus patior graue, uestis egemus;
meque pudore premo, latitans a sole supremo,
donec lege poli succedant sidera soli.
anxius expecto tenebras, ut noctua, nocto
non egressurus nisi noctu; quippe daturus
materiam risus, turpi cum tegmine uisus.
et quia me digito monstrat plebs improba, uito
plebis conspectus; nimiumque mouet mihi pectus,
quod me quando uident, lacrimas quibus affluo\textsuperscript{32} rident;
nec mea solari dignatur uulnera cari,
multotiens gratum quibus exhibui famulatum.
quam prauam gentem! cum me cernunt uenientem,
mox uertunt dorsum, flectuntque gradus aliorsum.
si censu plenas mihi scirent esse crumenas,
me uenerarentur, gressusque meos sequentur,
non me, sed censum; merito genus hoc reprehensum
spem sibi de uaniu trahit, extollitque profanis
diuitis plenum, nec amat, nec honorat egenum.
spernit egestatem, nec honorificat probitatem.
si decus immensum uis, grandem collige censum.
res tua dum stabit, te mobile uulgu amabit;
fias mendicus, tibi non remanebit amicus.
non ipsi curant mala me quaecumque perurant.\textsuperscript{33}
qui mihi cognati fuerant, mutatio fati,
quae censum laesit, facit ut cognatio desit.
et quia nil carum sine massa deliciarum,
anxius ipse nimis penetralibus uror in imis,
cura succensus qua restituum mihi census\textsuperscript{34}
elapsae sortis, rapuit quam dextera fortis.
ut locuples fiam, non exercebo sophiam:
hic\textsuperscript{35} mercede labor caret;\textsuperscript{36} hac nil arte lucrabor.
Plato subtilis foret hoc in tempore uilis;
de nullis donis gauderet musa Maronis;
sors tenuis rerum grauiet cruciaret Homerum.
de nulla certus mercede, poeta disertus

\textsuperscript{31} etiam MS; itaque Brial, which does not scan.
\textsuperscript{32} affluo Brial; effluo MS.
\textsuperscript{33} It is presumably by accident that this line is omitted by Brial and Brial & Delisle.
\textsuperscript{34} Wright (1872) notes that the emendation census (which appears in Brial 1827) has been
suggested for MS partem, since a rhyme for succensus is needed.
\textsuperscript{35} hac MS.
\textsuperscript{36} caret MS; nihil Brial.
I also have no clothes: this is a great source of anxiety for me in my state of destitution, and I suffer a terrible form of disgrace. I conceal myself out of shame, staying hidden from daybreak [235] until, by the law of the heavens, the stars follow the sun. Anxiously I await the darkness, like a night-owl, and I will only leave my house at night, since I would be an object of ridicule, if I were seen in such shameful clothing. The wicked common people point at me, so I avoid [240] being seen by them. It breaks my heart that they look at me and laugh at the tears I shed; these dear friends whom I have often served well do not think it worthwhile to soothe my wounds. What wicked people! When they see me coming, [245] they quickly turn away and walk off in a different direction. If they thought that I had purses full of money, they would revere me and follow my footsteps, not following me, but following my wealth; these people are rightly rebuked, who place their faith in vain things and extol a man [250] full of ill-gotten wealth, but do not love or honour a poor man. They spurn poverty and do not honour goodness. If you want great glory, then amass great wealth. So long as your property stands, the fickle rabble will love you; should you become poor, you will not have a friend left.

[255] They do not care what ills consume me. There are those who were once close to me; but a change of circumstance wiped out my wealth, and suddenly our relationship also disappears. And because nothing is enjoyable without a mass of delights, I myself burn greatly with deep-seated anxiety, [260] consumed with concern as to how I might regain the my lost wealth, which a strong right hand has snatched away. I will not use wisdom to become rich: such efforts are without reward; I will not profit in this way. Clever Plato would be held in contempt these days; [265] the poetry of Vergil would delight in no rewards; poverty would weigh heavily on Homer. An eloquent poet cannot count on any reward and is deprived of all honour in our land.
in nostris oris est expers omnis honoris.
subtilis cartae nil blanda proficit arte,

nec quemquam tangit quod lingua poetica pangit.
uade, poeta, foras; nostri fuge cardinis oras,
[270] ... ... ...
[laudans] primates, non amplius, inclite uates,
per modulos dulces asini quam pectora mulces.

[275] o nimis ignari proceres, hebetes et auari!
dissimiles plane tibi sunt, pater Octauiane.
nil illis gratum profert facundia uatum
qui grandem quaestum nomenque meretur honestum.
ui nimium dura defensurus mea iura,

[280] cunctaque rapturus uicinorum bona, durus
efficerer miles (quia uos considero uiles),
mortis respectus nisi terreret mihi pectus.
quanam cautela fugerem tot bellica tela,
quoque modo censes possem uitare tot ense?

[285] mentiri nolo: bellorum nomine solo
deficerem uictus, metuens ut conuenit uctus.
nunquam bella geram, nec praesidium mihi quaeram
per gladii motum; malo dimittere totum.
quod si mercator fierem, lapsae reparator

[290] esse rei possum, sed non nisi fallere nossem.
qui uult immensum cumulare cito sibi censum,
praeferit iure forum doctrinis philosophorum.
maior ibi quaestus, quamuis ita non sit honestus:
nam mercaturae non uoluitur actio pure.

[295] mercator iurat falso, dum fallere curat,
adquiritque fident urbis fallacibus idem.
nil peccare putat quotiens uenalia mutat,
ad lucra dum tendit, si pluris singula uendit.
non habeo uotum fallendi, nec mihi notum

[300] hoc genus est artis; non haec lucra praefero cartis.
agriculturae tractantur munia iure;
se labor hic durus, pigro mihi non placitus,

37 ... quaeris Wright; but even that is not really legible, or at least not any more.
38 [laudans] Brial. The final letter is visible, but the rest of the word is damaged.
39 o armis ignari MS; o nimis Reeve; ignavi Brial, who nevertheless comments (1833) ‘melius ignari’.
40 honestum MS; aeternum Brial. I am not sure how aeternum entered Brial’s text, but he says (1833, xcvi) that it should be emended to honestum, despite the fact that honestum is already in the MS.
41 rapturus MS; capturus Brial.
42 uos Wright; nos MS.
43 ad lucra dum MS; ad lucrum Brial.
A fine poem put together with graceful skill is of no use, [270] and no-one is moved by the compositions of a poetic tongue. Go abroad, poet; flee our region. … [By praising] the nobles, distinguished poet, you soothe with your sweet verses nothing but the heart of an ass.

[275] How stupid and greedy those nobles are, and far too foolish as well! They are clearly unlike you, father Octavian. The eloquence of poets produces nothing pleasing for those who deserve great riches and an honoured name. In order to defend my rights with great force [280] and seize all of the property of my neighbours, I would become a tough soldier (since I consider you worthless), if fear of death did not terrify my heart. What measure would you suggest that I take, in order to flee so many fierce missiles? How could I avoid so many swords?

[285] I do not want to lie: I would fail, defeated by the mere mention of wars, rightly afraid of being hit. Never will I wage war, nor will I seek defence by brandishing a sword; I prefer to lose everything. If I were a merchant, [290] I would be able to regain the property I lost, but not unless I learned how to lie. He who wishes to quickly accumulate great wealth for himself, rightly prefers the marketplace to the teachings of philosophers. There is more profit in that place, although it is not so honourable, since the business of commerce cannot be carried out in an honest manner.

[295] A merchant tries to deceive people by swearing falsely, and he acquires trust with false words. He does not think that he is sinning when he alters his merchandise and sells individual objects at a higher price in his quest for profit. I have no wish to deceive anyone, nor am I familiar with [300] this skill; I do not prefer profits to books. The business of agriculture rightly carries on; but it is hard work, unsuitable for a lazy person like me, and this extremely difficult work does not
arsque molesta nimia rebus non sitat optimis.
si mendicarem, quid tunc? probrum tolerarem,
[305] et mihi fortassis pretium nemo dare assis.\textsuperscript{44} gratia adulari, sine fructu militia fari,
nec ratio, nec honor, si quando talia conor,
ore uerecundo male uerba rogantia fundo.
me nimis obtusum talem credatis ad usum:
[310] non importunus, quotiens mihi postulat unus,
personam blando, si quam sermone nefando
demulcere paro, fieri quod credite raro.
mox uultus mutor, sed nec sermonibus utor
oris melliti, uel rhetoris arte politi.
[315] sunt deceptores hominum qui urtere mores
ad quodcumque ferunt animali urbis didicertet.
hi sibi dona petant qui sese sic locupletant.
nil mihi quod detur fallax mea lingua meretur,
nec quemquam tangit qui me dolor intimus angit.
[320] et tamen est unus cui magnum debo munus:
nam mihi sponte dedit, quod honestum mens mea credit.
pactum\textsuperscript{45} si leni fieret prece uatis egeni,
non tot ei grates deberet reddere uates:
non gratis dantur, prece munera si qua parantur.
[325] ueste carens apta, postquam fuit haec mihi rapta,
utebar uili, personae donec heril
mouit respectus probatitae nobile pectus
ut daret ornatum, causa duplici mihi gratum,
et pretio dantis, tunicae quoque me\textsuperscript{46} decorantis.
[330] me putet ingratum cu promitio famulatum,
munus sponte datum nisi reddam multiplicatum.
reddam thesaurum qui gemmas uincit et aurum,
qui famam\textsuperscript{47} seruat laudesque merentis aceruat,
dans infinitam post mortis tempora uitam,
[335] a quo productum nescit corruptio fructum,
nomen herile ducum qui non sinit esse caducum.
arte quibus uatum deces est insigne paratum,
milibus annorum durans labor integer horum
non tineas pascet, nec in aeternum ueterascet.

\textsuperscript{44} The as was a Roman coin of low value.
\textsuperscript{45} pecte MS; puta is printed by Brial, but he comments (1833) that the reading seems corrupt (it
does indeed not scan), presumably thinking puta is in the MS.
\textsuperscript{46} tunicae\textsuperscript{d}on quoque me MS. Wright prints uel doni me, commenting, ‘So the MS. apparently’;
clearly the agent who examined the MS for him was confused by the variant written above tunicae,
and, in order to accommodate uel into the meter, had to delete quoque.
\textsuperscript{47} famam Reeve; famat MS.
bring riches and prosperity. If I were to go begging, what then? I would endure disgrace, [305] and I might not even receive a single penny. Fawning for nothing and saying thousands of things without reward – there is no reason or honour in that; if ever I try such things, I unhappily pour forth pleading words from a modest mouth. You may think me too weak for such a task: [310] if necessary, I offer suitable flattery whenever I wish to soothe someone with shameful speech; but believe me, that rarely happens. I alter my expression quickly, but I do not use honey-sweet words or the skill of an accomplished orator.

[315] They are deceivers of men, they who have learned to use words to change someone’s character in any way they like. Let men who enrich themselves this way seek gifts for themselves. My unreliable tongue earns nothing that is given to me; the profound grief that troubles me does not touch anyone.

[320] Yet there is however one person to whom I owe a great service, because he gave things to me of his own accord: that is something I consider honourable. If an agreement were made as a result of the modest request of a poor poet, the poet would not owe him so much gratitude: gifts are not given for nothing, if they are in any way obtained by request. [325] I lacked suitable clothing after it had been stolen from me and had to wear rags until regard for goodness moved the generous heart of this noble person to provide me with fine clothes. These were doubly welcome to me, because of both the worth of my benefactor and the value of the cloak adorning me.

[330] May the man to whom I promise servitude think me ungrateful, if I do not repay many times over a gift that he gave unmasked. I will give him in return a treasure better than gems and gold, something which preserves a deserving person’s reputation and increases their praise, giving them immortal life after death. [335] Decay does not affect the reward produced from this gift that does not allow the noble name of dukes to perish. The work of men for whom the skill of poets creates great glory endures for thousands of years; it will not feed the worms, nor will it ever grow old.