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**Appendix 3: Serlo of Bayeux, *The Capture of Bayeux*,<sup>1</sup> edited  
and translated by Moreed Arbabzadah**

Introduction

This poem is found only in a manuscript from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.XII, fols. 110v–112v), where it is introduced by the rubric *Incipiunt uersus Serlonis 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.

Brial 1827	Brial, Michel-Jean-Joseph. 1827. ‘Notice d’un manuscrit de la bibliothèque du chevalier Cotton, faisant partie aujourd’hui du Musée britannique’, <i>Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du Roi et autres bibliothèques</i> 11.2, 165–177.
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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 praecipitauit  
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, pugnantes te subigentes  
caede, labore, mora, patereris probra minora.  
sors tibi contingens noua res est, et pudor ingens.  
uates facundi referunt ab origine mundi

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- Brial 1833 Brial, Michel-Jean-Joseph. 1833. *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France. Tome dix-neuvième*. Paris. [See pp. xc–xcvii.]
- Brial & Delisle 1880 Brial, Michel-Jean-Joseph and Delisle, Léopold. 1880. *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France. Tome dix-neuvième. Nouvelle édition*. Paris. [See pp. xc–xcvii, and cf. Brial 1833.]
- Pillet 1839 Pillet, Victor-Évreumont. 1839. *Serlon*. Bayeux. [Pillet bases his text on Pluquet 1829: see Pillet 1839, 5.]
- Pluquet 1829 Pluquet, Frédéric. 1829. *Essai historique sur la ville de Bayeux et son arrondissement*. Caen. [See pp. 141–55. Pluquet bases his text on Brial 1827: see Pluquet 1829, 140.]
- Wright 1872 Wright, Thomas. 1872. *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century. Vol. II*. Rolls Series. London. [See pp. 241–51.]

#### 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<sup>2</sup> docta parum! lege libros historiarum;  
disce patrum mores; Mutinae cognosce labores;  
quaere 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; periit gens Dardana marte  
uicta decennali, nec cursu Pergama tali
- [25] capta fuisse ferunt: ciues urbem tenuerunt  
(fortes Normannos pudeat!) bis quinque per annos.  
subruit ira Dei modica uos parte diei.  
nam liquido nostis, muros dum scanderet hostis,  
non occurristis, sed terga repente dedistis.
- [30] urbis et in poenas miserae gentes alienas  
adiuuit digne cruciando reos Deus igne,  
ardua quem uentus per tecta tulit uiolentus,  
aedes urentem sacras, lateque furentem.  
ardet succensus qui per mala plurima census
- [35] accumulatus erat, si quis bene singula quaerat.  
ardent usurae, pereunt anathemata iure;  
ardent exustae fraus et fallacia iuste.  
debitus hic finis furtis erat atque rapinis;  
hac meruit meta consumi falsa moneta.
- [40] haec uis flammaram lacrimas urit uiduarum,  
et pupillorum gemitus; quia res miserorum  
nequiter emistis, comburi sic meruistis.  
ecclesiae demum culmen fumare supremum  
uidimus ardentis; tunc clausae milia gentis,
- [45] tacta metu mortis, properant<sup>3</sup> erumpere portis;  
sed timor hostilis uetat, et radiantia pilis  
agmina condensis, in limine plurimus ensis.  
barbara turba foris dum staret plena furoris,  
quaerens molimen quo posset frangere limen,
- [50] pulsabatque fores ut [census] interiores<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *contio* MS; *concio* Brial.

<sup>3</sup> *properant* Brial; *properauit* MS.

<sup>4</sup> 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 Serlo 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 daretur,  
ecclesia clausi ciues, magnum nihil ausi,  
turpia terga dabant, miroque modo trepidabant.  
infima linquentes, et templi summa petentes,  
[55] credo uolauissent ad sidera, si potuissent;  
uix illic tutis spes esset certa salutis.  
perdiderant mentes, omni ratione carentes,  
aduersas gentes ope nulla reiicientes,  
uel lapidum iactu, uel forti quolibet actu,  
[60] sic defensuri templum quasi robora muri,  
in neutram partem uires adhibendo<sup>5</sup> uel artem.  
hostilem uultum Deus hic non linquit inultum,  
haud<sup>6</sup> ...  
unum fecissent, si consilio [ualuissent]:<sup>7</sup>  
[65] arma reliquissent uxoribus, et [petiissent]<sup>8</sup>  
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.  
his responsa damus quae recte danda putamus:  
non anathema ferunt, si non illud meruerunt;  
si meruere pati, merito sunt dedecorati.  
[75] ut sese purgent, sic nos, ut diximus, urgent.  
hac in clade tamen nostrum sensere iuuamen,  
ad nos fugerunt et in ecclesia latuerunt,  
praesidio cleri;<sup>9</sup> nolunt tamen hoc profiteri.  
plebs Baiocarum, nimis esse probat tibi carum  
[80] uitae mortalis cursum trepidatio talis.  
nam re sic gesta potior<sup>10</sup> mors esset honesta.  
si uitam seruas, ignominiam coaceruas,  
et tu probra feres, et in aeternum tuus heres.  
quae freta, quae terrae cessabunt ista referre?  
[85] faex Normannorum! patrum pudor et proauorum!

<sup>5</sup> *adhibendo* Brial; *adhibenda* MS.

<sup>6</sup> Sections marked with an ellipsis ‘...’ are no longer extant.

<sup>7</sup> *ualuissent* is a conjecture that appears in Brial 1827 and later works; there is little more than a trace of the first letter.

<sup>8</sup> *potuissent* appears in Brial 1827 and is followed by others. I note, however, that the MS seems to have *peſt[* not *pot[* and therefore might have had *petiissent* rather than *potuissent* (whether due to corruption or not). The general sense, however, is clear.

<sup>9</sup> *cleri* MS; *Dei* Brial, even though he notes (1833) that *Dei* is clearly wrong, since it does not rhyme properly with *profiteri*.

<sup>10</sup> *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,  
 famaue Normannis cumulata prioribus annis.  
 impetus ille furens, quondam nos acriter urens  
 [90] et clerum uerbis solitus lacerare superbis,  
 nunc iacet obtusus, cum belli postulat usus.  
 nunc animis esset uobis opus; amodo cesset  
 fastus ciuilis, factus super omnia uilis.  
 turba probata satis, plebs foeda, tuae feritatis  
 [95] litibus atque minis sit post haec<sup>11</sup> 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.  
 [100] gens inhonesta satis! tua linquens omnia fatis,  
 natos et natas, opibusque domos cumulas.  
 plebs Cenomannensis, uulgi faex Andegauensis,  
 uxores uestras rapiunt; aperite fenestras,  
 cernite clara foris uestri documenta pudoris,  
 [105] ...        ...        ...        ...  
 ...        ...        ...tem, paternisque maritus,<sup>12</sup>  
 ...        ...        ...ri, cum sit tibi copia ferre.<sup>13</sup>  
 [denique]<sup>14</sup> bella uelis antiqua reuoluere? telis  
 [namque]<sup>15</sup> cadens laxis, domitus fuit Anglicus axis.  
 [110] Anglos uicerunt patres qui uos genuerunt  
 degeneres natos et ad omnia probra paratos.  
 in Siculis oris, animi longe melioris,  
 proelia gesserunt Normanni; signa dederunt  
 uirtutisque fidem Calabris in finibus idem,  
 [115] 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?  
 [120] es defensor hebes, qui nos defendere debes,  
 et sic te claudis, querulos dum turpiter audis.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *post haec* MS; *per haec* Brial, which would not scan.

<sup>12</sup> ...tem, paternisque ma... Brial; ...tem, paternisque maritus Wright; ]tem, paternisque mari[ is just about visible in the MS, but even *paternisque maritus* does not scan.

<sup>13</sup> ...ri, cum sit copia ferri Brial; ]ri cum sit tibi copia ferre MS, which cannot be right, since *-ri* and *ferre* would not rhyme; *cērtūtēr tibi copia ferri* (Wright) cannot scan.

<sup>14</sup> [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.

<sup>15</sup> [namque] cadens Brial 1827 (see note above); [namque ca]d[ens] laxis MS.

<sup>16</sup> 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, forti nos protege dextra;  
 clero linque chorum; domus haec est canonicorum.  
 uel nostri formam sumens gregis, amodo normam  
 [125] canonicam serua, claustralis facta caterua.  
 sic bene nostrorum grex crescet canonicorum.  
 ergo coronati pannisque nigris onerati  
 ad psalmos rite promendos, ut decet, ite;  
 cantantes horas<sup>17</sup> uoces aptate canoras.  
 [130] uitam laudatam totiens, uestroque beatam  
 iudicio dictam, uobis gaudete relictam.  
 nos defendemus patriam; nos arma geremus;  
 non pugnaturi peius, nec terga daturi  
 tam cito; fortassis nobis, nisi<sup>18</sup> uulnera passis,  
 [135] quae minime nostis, patriam non auferet hostis.  
 uos sancti facti stabilis sub foedere pacti  
 nuptas atque toros, cameras, cultusque decoros,  
 argento plenas gemmis auroque crumenas,  
 nobis linquetis, postquam loca nostra tenetis.  
 [140] orbem festa dies per totum cognita fies,<sup>19</sup>  
 quando est multorum conuersio facta uirorum.  
 nunc praeter morem Domino laudes et honorem  
 conuenit ut demus, cum †noua†<sup>20</sup> facta uidemus,  
 unum ferre chorum tria milia canonicorum.  
 [145] ergo tot et tales personae prodigiales  
 hymnos cantabunt, et more nouo resonabunt  
 †atria pleni modulo nec consona leni†.<sup>21</sup>  
 uox huius gentis Patris aures omnipotentis  
 uexabit multum, grandem factura tumultum.  
 [150] concentus horum mirabitur aula polorum.  
 de grege damnando, quod censet mens mea, pando;  
 laudo<sup>22</sup> castrentur, ne prorsus ab his generentur  
 iuste damnati patrum pro crimine nati.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Singing the canonical hours’, i.e. singing the offices.

<sup>18</sup> *nisi* MS; *ni* Brial.

<sup>19</sup> Literally ‘you will become’ (*fies*), i.e. addressing the day.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> *†atria pleni modulo nec consona leni* MS; *atria plena rudi modulo nec consona leni* 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...leni* in the MS, however, it seems odd to emend *leni* and create a rhyme with a conjectural addition. In the translation I offer (between *obeli*) what I think to be the general point.

<sup>22</sup> Brial (1833) suggests emending *laudo* to *ilico* ‘on the spot, right there’: ‘Mendosa scriptio: melius legeretur *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, marriage 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 turbae, subuersa taliter urbe,  
 [155] uinclis urgebant captos quos inueniebant,  
 praedam ducentes, thesauros effodientes.  
 rem miserae gentis, sua crimina 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 usta 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 exsanguis atque nouenos,  
 quos si uidisses, mirabiliter<sup>23</sup> doluisses.  
 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 sacris flammae uigor<sup>24</sup> expulit acris;  
 [185] sorsque fuit talis, non permisit furialis  
 arma subire gregis nos indulgentia regis.  
 ergo securi,<sup>25</sup> 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 seruierat mihi tectum,  
 spe captus uana, frumenti tollere grana  
 de cinerum massa coepi mediocriter assa.

<sup>23</sup> *mirabiliter* MS; *miserabiliter* Brial, plausibly.

<sup>24</sup> *uigor* MS; *uis* Brial.

<sup>25</sup> *securi* MS; Brial (1833) prints *sacрати*, commenting that it is corrupt but that he does not know how to make it rhyme with *uri*, suggesting instead *sacратuri*.

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

- [195] nam flammis raptam faciendis panibus aptam  
annonam rebar, sed prorsus decipiebar.  
nescio si nostis; sed ego noui quia tostis  
compositus granis uix transit guttura panis.  
huius odore graui me<sup>26</sup> paene uomendo rigaui,  
quem uix consumi patitur uis insita fumi.
- [200] fel sapit hic panis, sed dulcia uenter inanis  
quaelibet esse putat, nec amara uorando refutat  
anxietate graui. quae profero uera probaui,  
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.<sup>27</sup>  
namque manu parca, quae custoditur in arca,  
mixta farina sali sociatur aquae fluuiali:
- [215] haec calefacta parum uice sorbeo deliciarum.  
in serie cleri non debeo uilis haberi,  
si manibus tollam fumantem pultibus ollam,  
quas caute fundo cumulans<sup>28</sup> in uase profundo,  
ut nihil effusum uitare gulae queat usum.
- [220] ad quam mulcendam, rabiemque famis remouendam,  
escas nulla ferunt cochlearia: 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; pugnans<sup>29</sup> indeficienter<sup>30</sup>  
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 ... ..

<sup>26</sup> *odore graui me* Brial; *odore me* MS.

<sup>27</sup> Brial (1827) comments that we should understand this as gruel made with toasted oats ('intellige pulmentum ex avena tosta confectum, *gruel* vel *gruau* vulgo dictum'). Note that *pārō* displays shortening of final *-o*: cf. 215 *sorbeō*, 216 *debeō*, etc.

<sup>28</sup> *cumulans* Pillet; *cumulam* MS.

<sup>29</sup> *pugnans* MS; *pugnat is* Brial, even though it does not scan.

<sup>30</sup> *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 redden 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<sup>31</sup> nudo uehemens mihi sollicitudo,  
 dedecorisque genus patior graue, uestis egenus;  
 meque pudore premo, latitans a sole supremo,  
 [235] donec lege poli succedant sidera soli.  
 anxius expecto tenebras, ut noctua, tecto  
 non egressurus nisi noctu; quippe daturus  
 materiam risus, turpi cum tegmine uisus.  
 et quia me digito monstrat plebs improba, uito  
 [240] plebis conspectus; nimiumque mouet mihi pectus,  
 quod me quando uident, lacrimas quibus affluo<sup>32</sup> rident;  
 nec mea solari dignantur uulnera cari,  
 multotiens gratum quibus exhibui famulatum.  
 quam prauam gentem! cum me cernunt uenientem,  
 [245] mox uertunt dorsum, flectuntque gradus aliorsum.  
 si censu plenas mihi scirent esse crumenas,  
 me uenerarentur, gressusque meos sequerentur,  
 non me, sed censum; merito genus hoc reprehensum  
 spem sibi de uanis trahit, extollitque profanis  
 [250] diuitiis plenum, nec amat, nec honorat egenum.  
 spernit egestatem, nec honorificat probitatem.  
 si decus immensum uis, grandem collige censum.  
 res tua dum stabit, te mobile uulguis amabit;  
 fias mendicus, tibi non remanebit amicus.  
 [255] non ipsi curant mala me quaecumque perurant.<sup>33</sup>  
 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,  
 [260] cura succensus qua restituam mihi census<sup>34</sup>  
 elapsae sortis, rapuit quam dextera fortis.  
 ut locuples fiam, non exercebo sophiam:  
 hic<sup>35</sup> mercede labor caret;<sup>36</sup> hac nil arte lucrabor.  
 Plato subtilis foret hoc in tempore uilis;  
 [265] de nullis donis gauderet musa Maronis;  
 sors tenuis rerum grauius cruciaret Homerum.  
 de nulla certus mercede, poeta disertus

<sup>31</sup> *etiam* MS; *itaque* Brial, which does not scan.

<sup>32</sup> *affluo* Brial; *effluo* MS.

<sup>33</sup> It is presumably by accident that this line is omitted by Brial and Brial & Delisle.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> *hac* MS.

<sup>36</sup> *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,  
 [270] nec quemquam tangit quod lingua poetica pangit.  
 uade, poeta, foras; nostri fuge cardinis oras,  
 ... ..<sup>37</sup>  
 [laudans]<sup>38</sup> primates, non amplius, inclite uates,  
 per modulos dulces asini quam pectora mulces.  
 [275] o nimis ignari<sup>39</sup> proceres, hebetes et auari!  
 dissimiles plane tibi sunt, pater Octauiane.  
 nil illis gratum profert facundia uatum  
 qui grandem quaestum nomenque meretur honestum.<sup>40</sup>  
 ui nimium dura defensurus mea iura,  
 [280] cunctaque rapturus<sup>41</sup> uicinorum bona, durus  
 efficerer miles (quia uos<sup>42</sup> considero uiles),  
 mortis respectus nisi terreret mihi pectus.  
 quanam cautela fugerem tot bellica tela,  
 quoque modo censes possem uitare tot enses?  
 [285] mentiri nolo: bellorum nomine solo  
 deficerem uictus, metuens ut conuenit ictus.  
 numquam bella geram, nec praesidium mihi quaeram  
 per gladii motum; malo dimittere totum.  
 quod si mercator fierem, lapsae reparator  
 [290] esse rei possem, sed non nisi fallere nossem.  
 qui uult immensum cumulare cito sibi cenum,  
 praefert 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,  
 acquiritque fidem uerbis fallacibus idem.  
 nil peccare putat quotiens uenalia mutat,  
 ad lucra dum<sup>43</sup> 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;  
 sed labor hic durus, pigro mihi non placiturus,

<sup>37</sup> ... *quaeris* Wright; but even that is not really legible, or at least not any more.

<sup>38</sup> [*laudans*] Brial. The final letter is visible, but the rest of the word is damaged.

<sup>39</sup> *o armis ignari* MS; *o nimis* Reeve; *ignauis* Brial, who nevertheless comments (1833) ‘melius *ignari*’.

<sup>40</sup> *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.

<sup>41</sup> *rapturus* MS; *capturus* Brial.

<sup>42</sup> *uos* Wright; *nos* MS.

<sup>43</sup> *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 nimis rebus non ditat opimis.  
 si mendicarem, quid tunc? probrum tolerarem,  
 [305] et mihi fortassis pretium nemo daret assis.<sup>44</sup>  
 gratis adulari, sine fructu milia 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 uultu mutior, sed nec sermonibus utor  
 oris melliti, uel rhetoris arte politi.  
 [315] sunt deceptores hominum qui uertere mores  
 ad quodcumque ferunt animo uerbis didicerunt.  
 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 debeo munus:  
 nam mihi sponte dedit, quod honestum mens mea credit.  
 pactum<sup>45</sup> 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 herili  
 mouit respectus probitatis nobile pectus  
 ut daret ornatum, causa duplici mihi gratum,  
 et pretio dantis, tunicae quoque me<sup>46</sup> decorantis.  
 [330] me putet ingratum cui promitto famulatum,  
 munus sponte datum nisi reddam multiplicatum.  
 reddam thesaurum qui gemmas uincit et aurum,  
 qui famam<sup>47</sup> 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 decus est insigne paratum,  
 milibus annorum durans labor integer horum  
 non tineas pascet, nec in aeternum ueterascet.

<sup>44</sup> The *as* was a Roman coin of low value.

<sup>45</sup> *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.

<sup>46</sup> *tunicae<sup>l</sup> doni 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*.

<sup>47</sup> *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 unasked. 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.