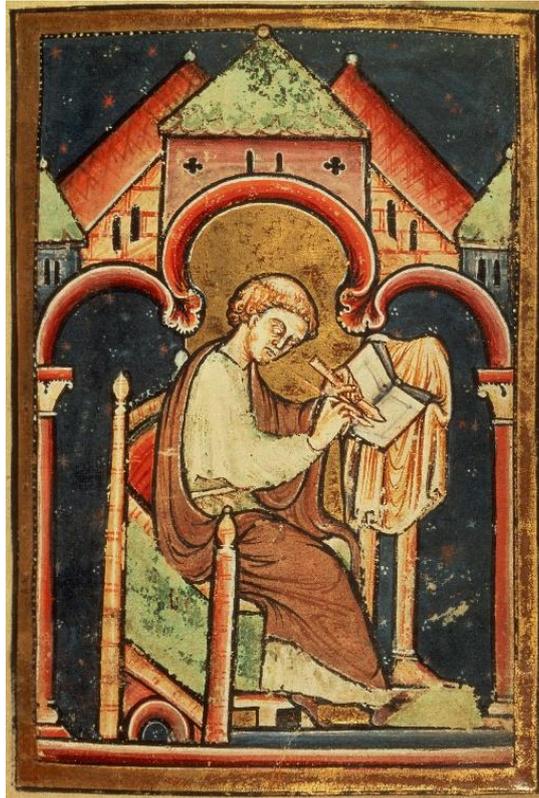


BELLARIA XXXVI



Beda Venerabilis

MEDIEVAL LATIN (4)

This sequence of texts will be drawn from Keith Sidwell's *Reading Medieval Latin* (Cambridge, 1995). It is a teaching text, with 86 passages, prose and verse, from St Benedict (b. 480) to Nigel Whiteacre (b. 1130), a monk active at the time of Henry II and Richard Lionheart.

The texts are supported by full historical and cultural introductions and running vocabulary and grammatical help. It ends with a brief grammar (summarising the main differences from classical Latin), a note on orthography, and total vocabulary for the texts.

Professor Sidwell has kindly translated, as literally as possible, the passages selected for this series of *Bellaria*. You can find the Sidwell's *Reading Medieval Latin* online [here](#).

ST AMBROSE (340-397)



St Ambrose excommunicating the emperor Theodosius I (390)

St Ambrose (Bishop of Milan) was an important influence on St. Augustine, persuading him towards Catholicism away from Manicheism (that there were two gods, one good and one evil). He has also been called 'the real father of hymnody'; indeed, in the Rule of St Benedict, a hymn was called an *ambrosianum*.

Here is his hymn for Christmas Eve, better known in J.M. Neale's hymn (v. 5 of the Latin)

Come, thou Redeemer of the earth,
and manifest thy virgin-birth:
let every age adoring fall;
such birth befits the God of all.

It is composed in iambic dimeters, i.e.

— — u — (with first foot occasionally resolved into *u u*)

u — u — (with third foot occasionally resolved into *u u*)



Crypt of Bishop Ambrose and two martyrs, Saints Gervase and Protase. Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio, Milan.

On the night of our Lord's Birthday

Hearken, thou who rulest Israel,/Who sittest above the Cherubim,/Appear with
Ephraim, arouse/Thy power and come./5 Come, redeemer of the gentiles [Classical
Latin 'peoples'],/Display the birth of the virgin;/Let every age marvel,/Such a birth is
becoming to God./Not from the seed of a man,/10 But through a mystic breath/The
word of God was made flesh/And the fruit of her belly burst into flower./The womb
of a virgin starts to swell,/The lock of her chastity remains [sc. unopened],/15 The
banners of virtue glitter,/ [sc. and] God dwells in his temple./Let him come forth
from his bedchamber/The royal hall of chastity/The giant of twin substance,/20 To
run his path with eagerness./His coming out is from the father,/His going back is to
the father,/His running out [sc. 'is'] as far as Hell,/His running back [sc. 'is'] to the
house of God./25 Equal to the eternal father,/ Be Thou clothed with the trophy of
flesh,/The infirmities of our body/Strengthening by Thine everlasting virtue./Now

Thy crib is shining bright,/30 And night time breathes its light,/Let no night stand in the way of that [sc. light]/And let it glow with constant faith.

IN NOCTE NATALIS DOMINI

*Intende, qui regis Israel,
super Cherubim qui sedes,
appare Ephrem coram, excita
potentiam tuam et veni. †*

†Psalm 80. 1-2

*Veni, redemptor gentium, 5
ostende partum virginis;
miretur omne saeculum,
talis decet partus Deum.*

*Non ex virili semine,
sed mystico spiramine 10
verbum Dei factum est caro †
fructusque ventris floruit.*

†John 1.14

*Alvus tumescit virginis,
claustrum pudoris permanet,
vexilla virtutum micant, 15
versatur in templo † Deus.*

†I Corinthians 6.19

*Procedat e thalamo suo †
pudoris aula regia
geminae gigas substantiae, †
alacris ut currat viam. 20*

†Psalm 18.5 †Psalm 18.5

*Egressus eius a patre,
regressus eius ad patrem,
excursus usque ad inferos, †
recursus ad sedem Dei.
‡ 'the Harrowing of Hell', i.e.
despoiling it of its righteous captives*

*Aequalis aeterno patri, 25
carnis tropaeo cingere,
infirmi nostri corporis
virtute firmans perpeti.*

*Praesepe iam fulget tuum,
lumenque nox spirat suum, 30
quod nulla nox interpolet
fideque iugi lucea.*

BISHOP NINIAN

What we know of Ninian comes from Bede. He tells us that while St Columba converted the *Picti* of northern Scotland ('cut off from the south by "those high and shuddersome hills"'), St Ninian (5th C) converted the southern Picts. He was a Briton, taught in Rome, and based at *Candidam Casam* (i.e. Whithorn in Galloway, where he was buried), in the province of Bernicia (Norhumberland). But nothing for certain is known about his life or teaching.



St. Ninian's cave, said to be the saint's hermitage

In this false-quantity ridden hexametric poem from *The Miracula Nyniae Episcopi* (8th C), we hear 'how he freed a priest of his from a charge of incest by means of a new-born talking baby'.



St Ninian (15th C)

The Miracles of Bishop Ninian

Meanwhile a priest having performed the task of baptist/ [nominative absolute]
 whom a raving madness was accusing,/Barking with novel shouts that he had done
 the sacrilegious wrong of unchaste lust,/ That lurid infamy ceased because of the
 saint offering a remedy./5 When the splendid words [sc. of the saint] were flowing
 because of the edict of the king,/ [Ninian] broadly among the peoples publishing
 from his mouth speeches/Sowed many rivers by means of the quadruple-flowing
 streams,/ [and] was watering the hearts of the peoples with pure torrents./But while
 he was bedewing the believers with clear doctrine,/ 10 Lo! Among the peoples from
 the womb of a mother is brought forth/At the time of the night before a little
 son/And the holy priest of the saint is blamed on an ancient charge./But the older
 man having asked for silence said:

*Presbiter interea, baptiste munere functus,
 quem novo incesti pulsabat mania demens
 sacrilegum patrare nefas cum clamore latrans,
 lurida <de> sancto medicante infamia cessit.
 splendida dum proceris fluitabant dogmate dicta, 5
 late per populos provulgans ore loquelas
 plurima quadripluis seminavit flumina rivis,
 gurgitibus puris populorum corda rigabat.
 ast ubi credentes inrorat dogmate claro,
 ecce inter populos matris profertur ab alvo 10
 hesterne noctis natus sub tempore parvus
 atque sacer sancti culpatur crimine prisco
 presbiter, at senior petito silentio dixit:*

'I believe this man to be innocent, but do you, child, even through speech/15 Say now, I adjure you by the kingdoms of the highest Thunderer,/Who is your father and what author did [lit: 'had done'] this./And the tender infant at once, while all marvelled,/Thundered forth from his stolid breast with words—/He had completed [sc. just] this space of one night, as before/20 We have said – and bursting the tardy bonds of speech/He began from pious mouth to reveal holy mysteries./'O holy and blessed man, called Ninian by name,/Making known my begetter with my finger I shall speak of him with my voice,/As you command, adjuring [sc. me] in the name of the king enthroned on high./25 O peoples, compelled [as I am] to settle the case of my father—/Lo! this is my begetter, turn your faces this way,/For this man begat me from my mother's body through the act of intercourse [*nuptis = nuptiis*]./But chaste in his limbs with a pure mind the priest/Remains and has succumbed to no tricks [lit: 'shadows'] of the devil./30 When he had spoken these words, having unloosed the laws of nature,/He fell silent, binding his throat in a silent knot./The people having seen this re-echoed pious words for Christ/And likewise to the Lord paid back praises and thanks.

*'hunc credo insontem, sed tu quoque fame, pignus,
dic nunc, adiuro summi per regna tonantis, 15
quis tuus est genitor vel quis hoc fecerat auctor.'*
*at tener extimplo, cunctis mirantibus, infans
intonuit stolido doctis de pectore verbis—
hoc unius spacium noctis complevit, ut ante
diximus—et rumpens retinacula tarda loquele 20
cepit ab ore pio mysteria pandere sancta:
'o sacer et Felix Nyniau cognomine dictus,
insinuans digito genitorem voce fatebor,
mandas ut altithroni contestans nomine regis.
o populi, patris pulsati discernere causam— 25
en meus hic genitor, vultum | huc vertite cuncti,
hic nam me genuit matris de corpore nuptis.
at castus membris pura sub mente sacerdos
permanet et nullis zabuli succubuit umbris.'*
*hec ubi dicta dedit, nature iura resolvens, 30
conticuit stringens silenti guttura nodo.
quod populus cernens pia Christo verba resultat
et Domino pariter laudes gratesque rependit.*

ALCUIN OF YORK (730-804)

Alcuin (Eahlwine in Anglo-Saxon) was generally known as Albinus and (in Aachen) as Flaccus (after Horace). He was born in Northumberland and educated in the 'Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Saint Peter' (i.e. what became York Minster). It was a school known for its intellectual rigour in Latin, literature and

science. There he became a teacher and eventually 'headmaster' (c. 767). He was never ordained a priest.

In 781 King Elfwald sent him to Rome to get the pope's permission to turn York into an archbishopric. On his return he met Charlemagne, who persuaded him to take on the mastership of Charlemagne's palace school in Aachen, to which he agreed, rather reluctantly. He was at the heart of the Carolingian 'renaissance', one mostly restricted to the court and committed to the revival of a Latin-based education and culture (many Latin manuscripts were rediscovered as a result). In 796 he moved to Tours to become Abbot of St Martin, where he died. He left over 300 letters and many poems. Here, as a preface to his *Rhetorica* - that rhetoric and Christian training must go hand in hand - he reflects in elegiac couplets on youth as the time for study. Alcuin here nods to Ovid, who reflected on youth as the time for love (l. 2 = *Ars Amatoria* 3.62, with *ludite* in place of *discite!*).



A Carolingian manuscript, c. 831. Rabanus Maurus (left), a fertile poet, encyclopedist and military writer, with Alcuin (middle), dedicating his work to Archbishop Odgar of Mainz (right)

Advice to youth

O you young men, for whom the age [sc. you have reached] is suited for reading,/Learn. The years go like flowing water./And do not lose the days of easy learning to empty things;/The flowing water does not return, nor returns the hurrying hour./5 Let your first youth flower with the study of the virtues,/So that an old man may shine forth with the great honour of praise,/Use thou thine happy years, whoever (sc. thou art) that readest my book,/And, remembering its author, say 'God have mercy'./If, reader, thou seekest to remove my mote,/10 Remove first the beam from thine own eye./Young man, learn so that thine eloquence may plead cases,/That thou mayest be a defender, a protection and a salvation to thine own./Learn thou, I pray, young man, elegant tropes and manners,/That thy name may be praised upon the whole earth.

*O vos, est aetas, iuvenes, quibus apta legendo,
discite: eunt anni more fluentis aquae.
atque dies dociles vacuis ne perditibus:*

nec redit unda fluens, nec redit hora ruens.
floreat in studiis virtutum prima iuventus, 5
fulgeat ut magno laudis honore senex,
utere, quisque legas librum, felicibus annis.
auctorisque memor, dic 'miserere deus.'
si nostram, lector, festucam tollere quaeris,
robora de proprio lumine tolle prius: 10
disce tuas, iuvenis, ut agat facundia causas,
ut sis defensor, cura, salusque tuis.
disce, precor, iuvenis, motus moresque venustos,
laudetur toto ut nomen in orbe tuum.

PAUL THE DEACON (c.720-799)



Rebuilt Monte Cassino (post-Second World War)

A Lombard by birth, Paul became a monk in Monte Cassino where, apart from a stint in Aachen for a few years (from c. 782), he wrote on grammar, composed poems and widely-used homilies and, most important of all, a *Historia Langobardorum*. Here he addresses an epitaph to Hildegard, the last of nine children to Charlemagne's second wife (also Hildegard).

Epitaph for Hildegard

Hildegard, bitter death has snatched thee suddenly away,/As the North Wind
 snatches away the primroses in early spring./Nor had the circle of thy life
 completed yet one year,/Nor did the yearly light come twinned for thee./5 O small,
 small Mädchen, it is no small grief thou leavest,/Piercing thy father's regal heart
 with a dart;/Because thou hast thy mother's name, thou renewest his grief about
 thy mother,/ After whom thou hast lived barely forty days./We from our sad hearts
 pour forth rivers of tears,/10 Thou, very happy, seekest joys that are long.

Hildegard, rapuit subito te funus acerbum,
ceu raptat Boreas vere ligustra novo.
explevit necdum vitae tibi circulus annum,
annua nec venit lux geminata tibi.
parvula, non parvum linquis, virguncula, luctum, 5

*confodiens iaculo regia corda patris;
matris habens nomen renovas de matre dolorem,
post quam vixisti vix quadraginta dies.
pectore nos mesto lacrimarum fundimus amnes,
tu nimium felix gaudia longa petis.*

10

CARMINA CANTABRIGIENSIA

So-called because they are found in the 11th C *Codex Cantabrigiensis* in the Cambridge University Library, the *Carmina's* 49 songs derive from a German anthology which consists of poems from classical times (extracts) through to the 11th C, both religious and secular, perhaps for the imperial court. Love poetry appears here for the first time, of which the following poem from Verona (10th C) is a famous example. Whether it is hetero- or homo-sexual (or should that be 'genderic'? One does try to keep up) depends on your view of the sex/gender of the speaker.

This poem rhymes and uses a stress-based metre: each verse consists of 2 x 6-syllable units, each unit ending with a stress on the antepenultimate (as illustrated in the first five lines). Note the learned classical references and Greek vocabulary.

Wondrous image of Venus



Medieval gay encounter

O wondrous image of Venus,/In the matter of whom there is no defect,/May the leader protect thee, he who the stars and heaven/Did manufacture and made the seas and the land./5 Mayest thou not experience trickery through the intelligence of a thief,/May Clotho love thee, she who holds the distaff./'Keep the boy safe', not hypothetically,/But with firm heart [i.e. earnestly] I beg Lachesis,/ [sc. and] her sister Atropos that he should not pay attention to a heresy./10 May thou have Neptune as thy companion and Thetis,/When thou art borne over the river Tesis. †/Whither fleest thou, please [sc. tell me], although I love [lit: 'have loved'] thee?/Wretched me, what am I to do, when I do not see [lit: 'have not seen'] thee?/ Hard matter from their mother's bones/15 Created men when stones were thrown, ‡/Of which one is this little lad,/Who cares not for my tearful groans./When I am sad, my rival will rejoice./I roar, as does a doe, when its kid runs away.

†an unknown river

‡ Deucalion and Pyrrha threw stones over their shoulders to repopulate the earth (Ovid)

*O admirabile Veneris ídolum,
 cuius matérie nihil est frívolum,
 archos te prótegat, qui stellas ét polum
 fecit et mária condidit ét solum.
 furis ingénio non sentiás dolum,
 Cloto te díligat, que baiolát colum.
 ‘Salvato puerum’ non per ipotesim,
 sed firmo pectore deprecor Lachesim,
 sororem Atropos, ne curet heresim.
 Neptunum comitem habeas et Tetim,
 cum vectus fueris per fluvium Tesim.
 quo fugis, amabo, cum te dilexerim?
 miser quid faciam, cum te non viderim?*

5

10

*Dura materies ex matris ossibus
 creavit homines iactis lapidibus,
 ex quibus unus est iste puerulus,
 qui lacrimabiles non curat gemitus.
 cum tristis fuero, gaudebit emulus.
 ut cerva rugio, cum fugit hinnulus.*

15

THE ROTULUS MORTUORUM OF MATILDA (1113)

Matilda was a daughter of William the Conqueror, and first abbess of a female monastery set up by him at Caen in Normandy 1066. At her death, a *rotulus* (round-robin), prefaced with a eulogy of Matilda, was sent round some 253 sister foundations in England and Normandy, inviting verse tributes and prayers for Matilda's soul. Most dealt seriously with notions of death and the forgiveness of souls, but some are distinctly odd.

This poem from the church (*Titulus*) of the nuns of Sts Mary and Julian in Auxerre is an example of the unexpected. It recommends death to abbesses who punish nuns for falling in love, as the writer has been. Note the AA, BB etc. rhyme scheme, and the stress on the penultimate.

The Church of the Monks of St Julian



A nun phallus plucking...

... and a monk

Abbesses deserve to die,/Who order us, who have been conquered by love,/To be shut in because of our grievous fault./This torture I have already tried./5 Shut beneath a dark place,/I have lived for long upon hard bread./For this punishment the reason was/That I am said to have dared to fall in love.

TITULUS SANCTI JULIANI MONACHARUM

*Abbatissae debent móri,
 quae, subjectas nos amóri,
 claudi jubent culpa grávi.
 quod tormentum jam temptávi.
 loco clausa sub obscúro,
 diu vixi pane dúro.
 hujus poenae fuit caúsa
 quod amare dicor aúsa.*

5

CARMINA BURANA

The *Codex Buranus* was written c. 1230 and was found in a Bavarian monastery in 1803. Its 228 poems, going back to the 11th and 12th C, were the work of three compilers, working broadly thematically—satirical and moralising poems first, then love songs, drinking song and party songs, ending with some religious plays, though with a bit of miscellany in the middle. It was original set to music, but only some of that survives. Carl Orff set 24 to music.



The Wheel of Fortune from *Carmina Burana*

Of the three poems here, the first two are *pastourelles*, love encounters with a shepherdess; the last, the lament of the roasting swan, is taken from the miscellany section.

(i) *A pastourelle: the love of clerics and peasants*

Note the rhyme scheme (ABAB x2, CDCD) and the extra syllable in the very last line 11; and the penultimate rhythm.

There came out at dawn/A country girl/With flock, with staff,/With her new wool./5
There are in her tiny flock/A ewe and a female donkey,/A female with a male calf,/A
billy and a nanny-goat./She spied upon the grass/10 A scholar sitting down:/'What
are you doing, master?/Come to play with me!'

*Exiit diluculo
rustica puella
cum grege, cum baculo,
cum lana novella.*

Sunt in grege parvulo 5
*ovis et asella,
vitula cum vitulo,
caper et capella.*

Conspexit in cespite
scolarem sedere: 10
*'quid tu facis, domine?
veni mecum ludere!'*



(ii) *Peasant women: the same old story*

While sweet spring was at its middle/Not in May, but a little earlier/While the sun's
light was shining,/A young woman of elegant features/5 Stood beneath a budding
frond,/Playing on [lit: 'singing with'] a pipe./I came thither, because fate gave [sc.
the opportunity]./No nymph there is of such great beauty,/ Equalling her foot!/10
She, seeing me, in haste [but note that *festinante* goes with *grege...balante*]/ Fled
with her bleating flock,/Destroyed by fear./

Shouting she made for the sheepfold,/Following her I prayed 'Be quiet!'/15 Do not
 fear anything hostile!'/She spurned my prayers, and the necklace/Which I showed
 [sc. 'her'], the young woman considered worthless,/ Speaking thus:/'Your gift' she
 said, 'I do not want,/20 Because you are full of deceit!' /And she defended herself
 thus with her distaff./I grabbed her and threw her on the ground./There is no
 woman beneath the heavens more brilliant/Than she dressed in cheap clothing!/25
 For her it was pretty serious,/For me pleasing and sweet./'What have you done,' she
 said, 'wicked man!'/Woe, woe upon you! Yet farewell!'/Beware lest you reveal [sc.
 'this'] to anyone,/30 So that I may be safe at home!'/If my father learns [sc. 'of it'],Or
 my elder brother Martin,/It will be a black day for me;/And if my mother were to
 know,/Since she is four times worse than a serpent,/35 I would be handed over [lit: 'I
 have been...'] to the rods!

Note the rhyme scheme (AAAAAB x 2, CCCCCB, DDDDDDB, EEEEEB, and FFFFFB) and penultimate rhythm

*Vere dulci mediánte
 non in Maio, paulo ánte
 luce solis radiánte,
 virgo vultu elegánte
 fronde stabat sub vernánte, 5
 canens cum cicúta.*

*'Munus vestrum' inquit 'nolo,
 quia pleni estis dolo!' 20
 et se sic defendit colo.
 comprehensam ieci solo;
 clarior non est sub polo
 vilibus induta!*

*Illuc veni, fato dante.
 nympha non est forme tante,
 equipollens eius plante!
 Que, me viso, festinante 10
 grege fugit cum balante,
 metu dissoluta.*

*Satis illi fuit grave, 25
 michi gratum et suave.
 'quid fecisti,' inquit, 'prave!
 ve ve tibi! tamen ave!
 ne reveles ulli cave,
 ut sim domi tuta! 30*

*Clamans tendit ad ovile,
 hanc sequendo precor 'sile!
 nichil timeas hostile!' 15
 preces spernit, et monile
 quod ostendi, tenet vile
 virgo, sic locuta:*

*Si senserit meus pater
 vel Martinus maior frater,
 erit michi dies ater;
 vel si sciret mea mater,
 cum sit angue peior quater,
 virgis sum tributa!' 35*

(iii) *The roasting swan*



A balletic interpretation

Once I dwelt on the lakes,/Once I was beautiful,/When I was a swan./Wretched [sc. 'me']! Wretched [sc. 'me']!/ 5 Now [sc. 'I am'] black/And stoutly burnt!/ 7 I was whiter than the snow/More beautiful than any bird you like;/Now I am blacker than a crow./Wretched...[etc.] 13 The fire burns me strongly,/The servant turns [sc. 'me'], then turns [sc. 'me'] back,/The chef sets me before [sc. the guests]. Wretched... [etc.] 19 I would rather live on the waters,/Always beneath the naked sky,/Than to be dipped in this pepper./ Wretched... [etc.] 25 Now I lie upon a platter/And I can no longer fly;/Gnashing teeth I see./ Wretched... [etc.]

Rhythm: antepenultimate (ll. 1-3, 6) and penultimate (4-5); rhyme AAA, CCC etc., with refrain BBB.

*Olim lacus colúeram,
olim pulcher exstíteram,
dum cygnus ego fúeram.
miser! miser!
modo níger
et ustus fórtiter!*

5

*Eram nive candidior,
quavis ave formosior;
modo sum corvo nigrior.
miser! miser!
modo niger
et ustus fortiter!*

10

*Me rogus urit fortiter,
gyrat, regyrat garcifer;
propinat me nunc dapifer.
miser! miser!
modo niger*

15

et ustus fortiter!

*Mallem in aquis vivere,
nudo semper sub aere, 20
quam in hoc mergi pipere.
miser! miser!
modo niger
et ustus fortiter!*

*Nunc in scutella iaceo 25
et volitare nequeo;
dentes frendentes video—
miser! miser!
modo niger
et ustus fortiter! 30*