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SOME CONJECTURES ON THE ORIGINS AND TRADITION OF THE HISPERIC POEM *RUBISCA*†

HENRY BRADSHAW, in his notes on the folios of Luxembourg 89 that contain fragments of *Hisperica Famina*, wrote: "... these uncouth Hisperic words, which abound here, are (so far as I know) only found elsewhere in the *Lorica* of Gildas (printed by Mone, *Hymni Latini* 1, 367, as 'Hymnus quem Lathacan scotigena fecit'), in a poem addressed to the redbreast (*rubisca*) in the Cambridge University Library, and in several manuscripts of the XIth century more or less clearly connected with Britanny."[1]

Bradshaw was perhaps the first to pay any real notice to the *Rubisca*; unfortunately, his untimely death deprived us of the fruits of his analysis of that and other texts related to *Hisperica Famina*. Zimmer and Stowasser, the great German investigators of these cryptic works, as far as I know, wrote nothing on the *Rubisca*. It was left to a successor of Bradshaw's in the post of librarian of the Library of Cambridge University, F. J. H. Jenkinson, to publish the poem and to write a short commentary on it.[2] Jenkinson correctly notes the unusual type of tmesis and contorted word order that makes certain passages almost impossible to construe. He is also right, I think, in referring to its metrical excellence. However, he is misleading when he writes, "The next stanza (esp. lines 15–16 "antris musarum passim priuata*m*/paupe*r*em p*r*eter fonen stridula*m*) resembles a verse in a passage printed in Giles (p. 273) at the end of the Aenigmata of Aldhelm from 'Codex A': *Pauper poeta nescit antra musarum sicut ego*.[3] Ehwald, in his 1919 edition of Aldhelm (MGH. *Auct. Antiq.* 15) showed beyond any doubt that the little verse at the end of the *Aenigmata* (found only in P^4) is not genuine Aldhelm. Even if it were, it can be traced directly to Servius' *De Centum Metris*, GL 4.458.24, as Ehwald noted.[4] Manitius adds one more interesting observation about the work: the name *Olimbrianus* in line 78 may be the name of the author.[5] The only other reference to the poem of my acquaintance is that of Kenney, who refers to it as a religious poem!

We are thus faced with an obscure and difficult poem, only once edited (Jenkinson's transcription is fairly precise, but his conjectures

† I am heavily debted to Dr. Proínséas Ní Chatháin, of University College, Dublin, and to Dr. Michael Lapidge, of Clare Hall, Cambridge, for numerous corrections and valuable suggestions for improvements.

[1] A letter attached to the manuscript, Sept. 27, 1876.

[2] *The Hisperica Famina* (Cambridge, 1908), p. xxiii, pp. 55–9.

[3] Jenkinson, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

[4] Ehwald, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

[5] *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1911), I, p. 160.

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and notes sparse), never translated, and the subject of precious little literary-historical attention. Perhaps I should remark here that I intend to produce a new edition of our poem with an English translation and a linguistic commentary in the second volume of my edition of *Hisperica Famina*.[6] In this article, however, I should like to devote some attention to the form and content of the poem, its literary parallels and antecedents, the problem of its authorship and place of origin, and its tradition in the schools of the early Middle Ages.

The poem is contained in a single manuscript: Cambridge University Library Gg. 5.35, (*saec. XI ex.*). As Jenkinson notes, "The handwriting, which is what the continental authorities call 'insular,' shews that it was copied by an Englishman: some of its contents, which relate to the Emperor Henry III (1039–1055) gives us a date before which it cannot have been written, while the writing itself prevents us from placing it much later."[7] The portion that contains the *Rubisca*, the *Adelphus Adelpha*, and Greek hymns (in Latin characters), fols. 419^{v}–424^{r}, exhibits "typical" eleventh-century insular features: the telltale *a*, out of proportion to the other letters; the marked preference for the uncial *d*; an excessively rounded *t*, with the bar frequently joined to neighbouring letters; signs of hooking in the *r*; and a decided clumsiness in the *g*. It would seem, then, that our manuscript dates from shortly after the Norman occupation. Of greater interest to us, however, is the arrangement of the works that follow our poem in the MS, for they demonstrate that the *Rubisca* was not an isolated work stuck in as filler between major compositions (witness the tradition of the *Altus Prosator* in continental MSS), but a part of a *corpus* of poems and hymns of a certain tradition. Thus, immediately after the *Rubisca* comes the text of the *Adelphus Adelpha Meter*, or "St. Omer Hymn" (after the MS in the Bibliothèque Municipale in Saint-Omer), included by Jenkinson in his volume because it shows a preponderance of Hisperic diction. There follows a Greek alphabet, in capital letters, with glosses giving the names of the letters (though with some queer variations); two hymns in Greek, written in Latin characters, and with Latin glosses: *O theos istin boythian mu . . . ke os tu eonos amin* and *Patir imon oen tis uranis . . . apotu poniru.* AMIN; two versions of the *Pater Noster* in Latin hexameters; a hymn *Doxa enipsistis theo ke epis ges yrini*, etc.; the Nicene Creed in Greek, but again in Latin characters, and with Latin glosses; a paraphrase in the same manner of the Apostles' Creed; finally, a riddle in both Greek and Latin that deals with medical terms: *Dic duo que faciunt pronomina nomina cunctis . . .*

[6] To appear in the Press of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1974.

[7] Jenkinson *op. cit.*, p. xxxvi.

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mininga est membranum . . . It should be also noted that earlier in the MS (fol. 381) comes the oft-copied *Versus cuiusdam Scoti de alphabeto* and poetry and *Aenigmata* of Aldhelm. Other Christian poets as Juvencus, Sedulius, and Prudentius are included in the volume.

Jenkinson was curious to know by what routes these various works found their way to Canterbury (the provenance of our MS). It is tempting to believe that at least fols. 419^{v}–424^{r} are derived ultimately from a school notebook of Aldhelm's left in Canterbury (or copied there) during his stay. Aldhelm's education reflects a two-fold tradition: the earlier and Irish education, based at least partially on a reading and mastery of *Hisperica Famina*, received at the hands of Máeldub in Malmesbury between 660–670;[8] and the later and continental background inherited from Hadrian c. 670–2,[9] whence Aldhelm's reading and imitation of the Christian poets. It is not therefore unreasonable to suppose that our eleventh-century scribe at Canterbury had access to a *codex* that was used by Aldhelm and that the Hisperic poem and hymn, Greek alphabet, the transliterations of Greek prayers, and the hybrid riddle go directly back to a school notebook composed from the dictations of Máeldub. The inclusion of a Greek alphabet—*with its strangely-named characters*—lends greater credence to this conjecture. Although there are differences in points of detail, it is instructive to compare the Greek alphabet of Gg. V. 35 with that given in the Irish *Auraicept na n-Éces*, which appears to represent genuine seventh-century Irish tradition.[10]

So much for the possibilities of the transmission of the poem. To establish its source and *milieu*, it will be necessary to examine rather carefully its form, diction, and content.

Let us commence with a summation: The *Rubisca* like the "St. Omer Hymn" and the *Altus Prosator*, is an alphabetical poem; it comprises twenty-four stanzas (an invocation plus one stanza for each letter of the alphabet) of four lines each. Almost every line consists of ten syllables, five before the caesura and five after. These hemistichs are in turn divided into two feet, which, when read accentually, give a dactyl and spondee, or what might be termed "rhythmic adonii", not iambics, as Manitius held. In general, there is one-syllable rhyme at the ends of lines, though there are a fair number of instances of good two-syllable rhyme. Both alliteration and assonance are frequent. The syntax is extremely difficult and at least twice relies upon some unprecedented *tmesis* (*anim* . . .

[8] See Père P. Grosjean, "Confusa Caligo," *Celtica* 3 (1956), pp. 66–7.
[9] See W. F. Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1967), p. 70.
[10] See G. Calder, *Auraicept na n-Éces* (Edinburgh, 1917), p. 86.

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aduerti [9–11]; *poeque tissam* [14]).[11] The diction is obscure and can be properly labelled "Hisperic". One finds rare Latin words, neologisms, Greek and Greek-derived words, Hebrew-derived words, and hybrids. There are numerous lexical correspondences with all the versions of the *H. F.*, some very significant correspondences with the *Lorica* of Laidcenn,[12] and less significant ones with the "St. Omer Hymn". The content is satirical: the poet taunts the redbreast for its unmusicality, voraciousness, and lack of physical charm. He is amazed that it is one of the Creator's doings. Except for the invocation and conclusion, the poem is secular—and strongly ironic—in tone, thus differing noticeably from the other *abecedarii*. In brief, the *Rubisca* is a most unusual piece of literature from every standpoint, and I can only reiterate my surprise that it has not been more often read.

Let us now examine more closely the question of vocabulary. The lexicographical correspondences between the *Rubisca* and the *H. F.* are as follows (asterisked forms indicate the more significant correspondences):

Rubisca	*H.F.*
1. tugurii = "hut, cottage, abode," v. 7	tugurio A221; –a A454; tugoria A479
2. *esus = "food", v. 19	essum B79, C76; essum A167
3. tinica (used as subst.) = "chirping, singing", v. 26	*cf.* tinolam A66; tinulo B42
4. garrulam piculam, v. 29	g. undae A395; g. flustra A389; g. limphis C30; g. undas B139
5. *brachen, v. 30	bracha B186
6. binis = duobus, v. 31 (*cf.* bis bina, v. 65)[13]	bis bino B75; –os 527
7. *sennis = "teeth" (*ex Heb.* shĕn), v. 32	senarum C184 (*gl.* dentium); *cf.* sennosis A158, 170, 298

[11] There are several instances of such *tmesis* in the *Vita metrica S. Brigidae* (Kenney, no. 151 [i]): 272 *marga — meis — ritas aptauit auribus;* 772 *circum — stant — quaque latrones;* 1663 *alle que — luia;* 1898 *septem — de parte — triones.*

[12] See my article "The Authorship, Date of Composition, and Provenance of the So-Called 'Lorica Gildae'" in *Ériu* 24, (1973), pp. 36–51, arguing that Laidcenn (or Laidcend), the monk of Clonfert-Mulloe, was the author of that piece, not Gildas, to whom it has been so often ascribed.

[13] The distributive form in place of the cardinal is a common feature in Hiberno-Latin; see the examples in the index to Adamnan, *De Locis Sanctis, S. L. H.* II, p. 144, col. 1.

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8. spissas, v. 32	spisso D143; –as A514; spisa B93; –is C164 (*gl.* cripeticion)
9. *forceps = "mouth", v. 33	forcipe B39, 68; C13 (*gl.* ore), 181 (*gl.* ore); forci C209 (*gl.* ore)
10. *iaris = "hair", v. 37	iaras B90
11. *panta, v. 39 (pantes, v. 89; panta, v. 94)	pantes A178, 423, 450, C93 (*gl.* ones); –ia A79, 86, 438
12. septenis = septem, v. 40	septenos B113
13. equiperatis, v. 40	equiperatam A48; equipera . . . D106
14. roseum = "red", v. 49	roseus A357; 426; –a A93; –um A266; –o B197; –os A304; –as D57; –is A462, 586; rosaea D26
15. *giboniferum = "fiery" (gibon *fort. corrupt. ex Heb.* gehennom, = ignis)	*cf.* ciboneus A95, 433; –um A289, D61 (*gl.* tanol); –a A138
16. plectrum, v. 52	*cf.* plextra A552
17. costae, v. 55	costas B214
18. trinum, v. 57	trinos A24, B20, 151; –a A489
19. nitoris, v. 61	nitore A452, B37
20. uterum, v. 62	uterum A424, D8, 24; –o A398; 440, B201, D42
21. aduncis, v. 68	adunca A252
22. histrio, v. 72	*cf.* historum A75, 102, 543, *likely derived from Isidore's etymology* histriones quasi historiones (*Etym.* 18.48.1)
23. fatur, v. 77	fandi B48

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24. *agion = ἅγιον, v. 88	ageum A283; –am A553; –as A232
25. thalasson, v. 90	talasum B137; *cf.* thalasicum A134; talisicum A415
26. ypanon = uranon, v. 90	uranon B106; *cf.* horanus A366; –i A378; –um A306; huranus D59
27. heros, v. 95	*cf.* heroico B77
28. poli = "the world, universe," v. 95	*very frequent in all versions*

There can be little doubt that so many correspondences of rare words and words with rare usages between this work (a poem of only ninety-six lines) and the various versions of *Famina* point clearly to the *milieu* of Ireland in the second half of the seventh century, especially the years 651–664, the *tempore Finani et Colmani episcoporum.*[14] I have argued elsewhere[15] that a large number of words in the *H. F.* are drawn from the *Etymologies* of Isidore and other writings of his, while a number of Hisperic words acquire their senses from Isidorian etymologies. The works of Isidore were received into Ireland and assimilated by the mid-point of the seventh century. The *Famina*, based upon Isidore, could be used as models of diction and as a source of vocabulary for those *qui egregiam urbani tenoris propinant faucibus linpham*,[16] and already in the fifties were part of the curriculum offered in Ireland, and by the very next decade were in evidence in the schools of England.[17] The date of Laidcenn's death, 661,[18] is an important landmark, as it gives us the *terminus-ante* for the *Lorica*, a work that blends Hisperic diction with more normal anatomical *lexica* drawn directly from Isidore. The *Lorica* provides us with a paradigm of the ways in which an Hisperic theme could be elaborated as it is at least in part inspired by the *De oratione* found in both the A and B recensions of the *H. F.* That the author of the *Rubisca* was Irish (as Jenkinson conjectured) and not an English

[14] Herren, *art. cit.*, p. 42.

[15] See the introduction, pp. 20–2, and commentary, *passim*, to my edition: *The Hisperica Famina, I. The A-Text: A New Critical Edition with Translation and Philological Commentary* (The Press of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies: Toronto, 1974).

[16] Grosjean, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–5.

[17] Herren, *art. cit.*, p. 44.

[18] It is possible that the "mortalitas huius anni" (*Lorica* 5–6) refers to the plague that devastated Ireland in 664, and that the annalists erred here, as elsewhere, in assigning Laidcenn's obit to 661.

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imitator of *Hisperica Famina* is shown by the use of the word *gilbam*, "beak, mouth" (line 32), from Irish *gulba*. To my knowledge, there are no examples of Irish-derived words in texts by English writers of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Let us now examine the relationship between the *Lorica* and the *Rubisca*. In respect to content, the two poems have little in common. The *Lorica* ("Breastplate") is a formulaic charm for every part of the body against the frequent plagues that occurred in Ireland in the early Middle Ages. The *Rubisca*, as we have noted, is a secular work, playfully satirical in tone. Yet the lexical correspondences are striking:

Rubisca	*Lorica*
1. lizinam (*gl.* linguam), v. 30	*cf.* liginam = linguam, v. 34
2. michinis (*gl.* naribus), v. 31	michinas, v. 34
3. binis, v. 31	binas, v. 36; –os, v. 66
4. sennis, (*gl.* dentibus), v. 32	sennas, v. 34
5. caladum (*gl.* uia qua cibi trahuntur), v. 34	(cladum, v. 35 Leabhar Breac)
6. anhele, v. 35	anile, (anele LB and Köln), v. 44
7. iaris (*gl.* pilis), v. 37	iaris, v. 33
8. panta, vv. 39, 94; pantes, v. 89	pantes, v. 77
9. tautonum (*gl.* palpebrarum)	tautonibus, v. 43
10. superciliorum, v. 46	supercilis, v. 41
11. carsum, (*gl.* uentrem), v. 49	*cf.* crassum (carsum LB), v. 35
12. humeros, v. 53	humeros, v. 54
13. costae, v. 55	costas, v. 57
14. ilis, v. 56	ilia, v. 71
15. iugulum, v. 62	iugulam, v. 67
16. dorso, v. 63	dorsum, v. 58
17. sennia, (*gl.* celos), v. 81	seneam, v. 87

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It can be seen at a glance from the above list that the lexical correspondences are almost exclusively anatomical. Furthermore, the order of appearance of these words in the respective poems is quite close. As with the *Lorica*, the first group of anatomical words are recherché, quite properly Hisperic, whereas items 10 and 12–16 are normal Latin words traceable to Isidore, *Etym.* 11.1.25 ff. This raises an interesting question: were both poems based independently upon glossaries of anatomical words comprising Isidore and some unknown source, or directly upon the *Etymologies* plus an unknown glossary? Or, did the author of the *Rubisca* cull his anatomical words out of the *Lorica*—assuming the *Lorica* to be prior to the *Rubisca*?

Let us first investigate the last-mentioned possibility. The first third of the *Lorica* constitutes a proper prayer against various evils physical and spiritual—though mostly physical—whereas a full two-thirds or more of the poem catalogue in minute detail, and sometimes redundantly, the parts of the body for which protection is sought. Thus, the work serves a double purpose: it is an actual charm following an ancient formula; but it is also an anatomical catalogue and thus has a didactic function. Hence it could have served as a kind of appendix to the *Hisperica Famina*, which only occasionally refer to the parts of the body. As a source of diction, it would have been committed to memory by students along with the *H. F.* A poet would have known both and would have selected from both the words he needed. There is a further reason for positing a later date for the *Rubisca*: the poem for its time was highly sophisticated—metrically, stylistically, and even in content. It was in fact a true *oeuvre littéraire*, a proper *jeu d'esprit*, while the *Lorica*—like much of the *Hisperica Famina*—smacks of the classroom. In my opinion, it is more likely that the *Rubisca* poet would have paraphrased a portion of a work he must have known by heart than that he would have gone back to the glossaries which formed the basis of that work.

On the other hand, lines 49–52 may display a direct acquaintance with at least one passage in Isidore:

> **Mundi ceu fantur carsum roseum**
> **olim gnostici giboniferum**
> **inter fistule uelut timpanum (*lege* fistulā?)**
> **plectrum buxinum mouens modulum.**
>
> **The natural philosophers have long seen**
> **that your red breast is like fire,**
> **and in your pipe is a boxwood lyre**
> **making melodies like a tambourine.**

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The *gnostici* (gl. *scientes*) *mundi* are, of course, no more than a thin disguise for a passage from a book of natural history. In the *Hisperica Famina* they are called the *phisici*:

A378 *Septemplicem horani asserunt cyclum phisici*
A484 *Bis senos phisici ecferunt* (*et ferunt* MS) *zephiros*

The first of these passages appears to be drawn from *Etym.* 3.32.2, the second from *Etym.* 13.11.3. Whether the *Rubisca* passage is based on a precise reference to Isidore, or some other treatise in natural philosophy, or is merely in imitation of the learned affectations of the *Hisperica Famina*, is open to question. Since the poem's intent is more to amuse than to instruct, I am inclined toward the latter possibility.

Let us now examine several other passages in the *Rubisca* in the hope of shedding some light on the subject of its origin. Lines 77–80:

> Tuus monarchus per has ut fatur
> olimbrianus totum rimatur
> molosi rerum res dominatur
> bellique uigil cloca solatur (sonatur, *Jenk.*)

The first, second, and fourth lines can be translated with relative ease:

> Your monarch Olimbrianus investigates all,
> as he speaks through these (lines).,
> . . . . . .
> and the bell sounds, the harbinger of war.

But how do we make anything of *molosi rerum res dominatur*? Can we read *rex* for *res* and allow *rerum* to be a gen. after *dominatur* in the Greek fashion occasionally affected by Latin poets, especially as *dominatur* renders Gr. ἄρχει? Thus line 3 might be translated:

> the king of the molossus has mastery of his subject

Line 4 then neatly fits the context, as the whole stanza becomes a *topos* of the taunt and boast so well developed in the *Hisperica Famina*, *e.g.*, A22–23:

> Hinc lectorum sollertem inuito obello certatorem,
> qui sophicam pla⟨s⟩mauerit auide palestram.
>
> Thus do I challenge the adroit wrangler to a verbal duel,
> to engage in rhetorical gymnastics with eagerness.

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Our poet, styling himself *Olimbrianus monarchus*, while ostensibly addressing the subject of his poem, is proclaiming his mastery of the *molossus*[19] (a synecdoche for metre?) and is sounding the bell as a challenge to other poets. So much can be explained by the tradition of the *Hisperica Famina*; but whence is derived the ploy of the pseudonym in the body of a poem, especially so precious a one as *Olimbrianus*? We shall return to this question later; for the moment let us look at another stanza, lines 81–4:

> Uiam mecalbo sennia secat (se///ia, *Jenk.*)
> porcelanusque legens exultat
> canellus nimphus iussa ministrat
> stabilis esto, nil te disperdat.

The glosses give *mecalbo, porcellanus, canellus* each as *proprium*; *nimphus* is given (wrongly, I think) as *minister*. But let us attempt an emendation of the first line before proceeding:

> Uiam me calba sennia secat, Hence:
>
> Bald old age[20] cuts off my path,
> Porcellanus reading (my will?) rejoices,
> Canellus Nimphus carries out my behests,
> Be calm (O redbreast), let nothing distress you.

The poet, now an old man, envisions his death; but he beseeches the redbreast not to mourn him—ironically enough, as the poor bird would have little cause to grieve the demise of his tormentor. But who might be these personages Porcelanus (the heir) and Canellus Nimphus (the executor)? Surely, they are no more than seventh-century Piglets and Poohs,[20a]—names that delight us by combining animal characteristics and important offices—quite in keeping with the mock-heroic tone of much of the poem. But can we not detect here the cloven hoof of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus? For who else gave to a credulous world such monstrous implausibilities as Balapsidus, Falanx Lacedaemonicus, the glorious Galbungus (author of an *In laudibus indefunctorum*), the almost equally egregious Glengu, three Virgili (Troianus, Assianus, V. Maro Grammaticus), and a host of other luminaries who have provided scholarly employment for Germans and others for the near-century that has elapsed since the

[19] But compare Aldhelm's use of that word, *Ep.* 5, p. 493 (Ehwald): "etiamsi Theodorus summi sacerdotii gubernacula regens Hibernensium globo discipulorum, ceu aper truculentus *molosorum* catasta ringente vallatus, stipetur," etc.

[20] That meaning for *sennia* is based upon v. 87 ff. of the *Lorica: donec iam dante deo seneam / et peccata mea bonis deleam . . . . / laetus uehor regni refrigeria.*

[20a] Dr. Bieler wonders if the author might have known the *Testamentum Porcelli* as transmitted by Jerome, in Isaiam, p. 493, Vall.

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appearance of Huemer's edition? Does not the use of the pompous pseudonym Olimbrianus, so like Olimpianus, remind us of that master leg-puller?[21] The boast is also evidenced in the *Epitomae* (p. 18, H.): *sepissime uersus mei soliti meminisse conpellor, quem frequenter in exprobationem nostri temporis gurgonum decanto* 'mulctaui tornores logii nec arenam ⟨arena *Stangl*⟩ cessi',[22] ("Very often I am moved to recite a verse of my wont, which frequently I employ for the reproval of our age of babblers: 'I slaughtered the twisters of speech nor did I quit the ring.' ")

Now let us return for a moment to our conjecture *rex* for *res* at line 79. The conjecture can, of course, be defended on phonetic grounds;[23] yet a glance at the section *De nomine* in the *Epitome* (p. 27, H) may give a different explanation:

> de re autem et corpore multi hessitant. res hebrea litera est quae interpretatur caput. res ergo hoc est quod et primarium nomen. sicut ergo a primario quolibet ducatur exercitus inferior, ita et capite corpus omne regitur. appellatiua autem nomina multifidas species habent; quaedam enim nomina principalia sunt ut *rex* . . .

The derivation of *res* from the Hebrew letter meaning head and its elaboration into the part that rules the body, plus the fact that the very next item is the name *rex*, leads us to the folk etymology *rex a re*.[24] In that case, we may be well advised not to emend our text at all, but to explain to the reader how the word *res* could have been understood by a writer in the Hisperic tradition.

The unusual word *molas* (line 75, *molas colligis metis seminas*), apparently meaning "many", to my knowledge occurs nowhere else except here and in Virgilius. That grammarian cites a certain *Catonis eligantissimi rhetoris* as the author of these lines:

[21] The view that the *Epitomae* and *Epistolae* of *Virgilius Maro* are an exquisite hoax is cleverly argued by Macalister, *The Secret Languages of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 83 ff. However, I now tend to agree with Grosjean ("Quelques remarques sur Virgile le Grammairien", *Mediaeval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn*, Dublin 1961) that at least some of the personal and place names may have an allegorical basis.

[22] This line reflects either the author's thorough knowledge of the *Hisperica Famina* or his inspiration of them. *Cf.* A25–7 *inertes mactaui duelles/ac robustos multaui coaeuos/fortioresque prostraui in acie ciclopes.* The *tornores logii* may be the *sophiae . . . arcatores/qui egregiam urbani tenoris propinant faucibus linpham/uipereosque litteraturae plasmant syllogismos*".

[23] Cf. *Appendix Probi* 186 "*locuples non locuplex*"; other -es/-ex confusions are noted at 30, 147, 148, 185.

[24] The *Hisperica Famina* exhibit a fondness for assigning meanings to words based on a true or false etymology; hence *pruritus* = "a star" a *perurendo* (A137, 357); *cluit* = *cludit* through *clypeus a celando vel cluendo* (A33, 265); *populat* = "produce, spring forth" by association with *populus* (A40, 59, 180, 301).

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bella consurgunt poli praesentis sub fine,
precae temnuntur sensum suetae doctrinae.
regis[24a] *dolosi fauent dolosos tyrranos,*
dium cultura molos neglecta per annos. (p. 14, H)

Wars arise at the boundary of the present world,
the usual prayers and admonitions of elders are ignored;
Deceitful kings nourish deceitful tyrants,
the cult of the gods is neglected for many (?) years.

We noted above that the author of the *Rubisca* employs the word *gilba* (-ae?) from Ir. *gulba*. It is interesting that several of the names of Virgilius' "authorities" might also contain the *gulb-* element, viz. *Galbarius, Galbungus, Gelbidius*, perhaps all with the satirical meaning "mouthy".

Another peculiarity of the *Rubisca* that may owe its origin to *Virgilius* is the employment of an unprecedented type of *tmesis*, already noted. The third stanza, already noted by Jenkinson, breaks *animaduerti* into two elements: *anim* in line 9 and *aduerti* in line 11! In the following stanza we find a less flagrant example: *poeque tissam* in line 14. Virgilius in his *De scinderatione fonorum* in the *Epitomae* assigns the origin of such unusual *tmeseis* to "Terrentius": *motato more syllabam ex hoc uersu trahens et ex illo aliam uel commotobat uel minuebat atque addebat secundum illud "tempora ·quae ·ra· prae· suum suo sub iure finem finitem sibi ·runt· mundi compage statuta" hoc est "quaerunt tempora praefinitum finem".* (p. 80, H).

Yet in the final analysis, it is not in matters of grammatical and rhetorical peculiarities that we find the greatest influence of Virgilius, but rather in the areas of metrical and poetic theory—however conflicting these theories may be with classical and even late classical theory and practice. Thus we find in the *De metris* (pp. 16–7) the metrical paradigm for our poem:

sicut etiam quaedam carminum genera, quae quamquam extraordinaria esse uideantur; tamen a rhetoribus ac leporicis secundum inlectum sepiter usurpantur, ut sunt cantamenta et cantatellae, quibus uel maxime *Sagillius* germanus et *Uitellius* utuntur. et ille quidem in libello de mare et luna scripto statim in prooemio cantamentum insuit ⟨*sic*⟩ dicens

mare et luna concurrunt una
uice altante temporum gande.

In an earlier passage from the same section (p. 14, H), Virgilius provides a paradigm for the practice of alliteration in a metre very similar to that of our poem:

[24a] The *i* of *regis* must be taken as long, as G. Murphy (*Early Irish Metrics*, Dublin, 1961, p. 16) notes.

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ueritas uera,
aequitas aequa,
largitas lauta,
fiditas fida
diurnos dies ⟨†⟩tranquilla
tenent tempora.

But who are the *rhetores* and *leporici* mentioned in the first passage? *Virgilius* divides *filosofia* ("knowledge") into six branches: *poema, rhetoria, grama, leporia, dialecta, geometria et cetera, quae non tam emulitatem quam curiositatem praetendunt* (p. 17, H). He also believed that each branch had clear boundaries: *Sed multi in hoc tempore uim deffendentiamque harumce artium ignorantes in rhetoria poema et in poema rhetoriam agglomunt non habentes in memoria, quid Felix Alexandrorum magister praeceperit,*" etc., (p. 18). Previously (p. 17) he has distinguished between *poema* and *rhetoria: inter poema et rhetoriam hoc distat, quod poema sui uarietate contenta angusta atque obscura est; rhetoria autem sui amoenitate gaudens latitudinem ac pulchritudinem cum quadam metrorum pedum accentuum tonorum syllabarumque magnifica numeratione praepalat.* "Between a poem and a rhetoric there is this difference: that the poem is limited and narrow in content and is obscure; the rhetoric, on the other hand, preens in its loveliness and displays its breadth and beauty in a rather opulent accumulation of metres, feet, accents, tones, and syllables." Not all that varied and rich, however, as he tells us (p. 24, H): *omnis uersus exametrus siue eptametrus rhetoricus est; trimetrus autem et tetrametrus et pentametrus poeticus est,* etc.

As for the *leporia, est ars quaedam locuplex atque amoenitatem mordacitatemque in sua facie praeferens, mendacitatem tamen in sua internitate non deuitat; non enim formidat maiorum metas excedere, nulla reprehensione confunditur.* (p. 18, H). "The *leporia* is a rich kind of medium, having beauty and a biting quality in its preface, and does not avoid falsehood in its body; nor does it hesitate to exceed the bounds established by our ancestors and is not criticised for being mixed."

Thus it appears that in Virgilius there are three basic literary genres: the *poema* (poem), narrow in content, obscure (in diction?), and confined to lines of three to five metres (= feet); the *rhetoria* (rhetoric, or *retoiric*?), broad in content, amenable to numerous kinds of rhythm of six or seven metres; and the *leporia* (satire?), a "rich" genre with a biting quality, capable of falsehood, and apparently not limited by strictures of rhythm or metre; it can also be mixed with other genres—despite the Grammarian's earlier warning against this *delictum.* The three examples of the *leporia* given by our author bear out the stated absence of metrical unity: (1) *sol in*

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occursu metitur maria; (2) *sol in occursu tinguit mare*; (3) *uentus acer roborum radices euellit altas.*

Do we not have in the *leporia* the literary prototype for *Hisperica Famina*? First, there can be no doubt that all of the versions of *Famina* begin in a spirit of raillery at other *arcatores sophiae*, who are newcomers.[25] As for the *mendacitatem*—by which *Virgilius* seems to imply no more than broad metaphor—the *H. F.* are replete with examples.[26] Finally, in the *leporia*, we may have the key to the long perplexing, and oft-debated,[27] problem of the metrical structure of the *Hisperica Famina*. Despite numerous theories, no one to date has succeeded in providing a thoroughly satisfactory system.[28] If the *leporia* is in fact the prototype, then the *Hisperica Famina* would have no specific metrical structure: *non enim formidat maiorum metas excedere, nulla reprehensione confunditur.* This could well explain the presence of lines of greatly divergent lengths and the extreme difficulty of scanning them, whether on a metrical, syllabic, or accentual basis.

Let us glance once more at two of Virgilius' three examples, for I believe that they set off a sense of *déja vu.* Does not *sol in occursu tinguit mare* remind us of A303 *Titaneus occiduum rutilat arotus pontum*? "The Titanian star reddens the Western Sea." *Uentus acer roborum radices eullit altas* brings to mind two lines: A477–8 *Hic sonoreus alma mactat sepherus robora,/aniosas terrestribus plicat ilices sulcis.* "This rustling wind destroys the sacred oaks, it bends the aged ilexes to their earthen furroughs." It is interesting to note that *Virgilius* claims the first of these examples as his own: *ergo nos dicimus*, etc., (p. 19, H).

At this juncture, we are confronted with the terrible problem of who Virgilius was and when and where he lived. Far from entering into the debate, a mere review of the scholarship on the subject would be in itself a Herculean task.[29] However, the evidence that he was born in Toulouse and was a member of some school of Gaulish grammarians is unconvincing.[30] Nor do I believe the oft-quoted *bigerro sermone*

[25] See especially A61–87, wherein a native master or scholar chides a newcomer for attempting to penetrate the *sophica mysteria.* Better that he should go back to his farm, mend his fences, and look after his erring wife.

[26] Let one good example suffice: A387 *Astrifero spargit spumas sulco.* "(The sea) shoots its spray to the furrow of the stars."

[27] Bradshaw, Stowasser, Zimmer, Jenkinson, W. Meyer, Macalister, and Grosjean have all discussed this problem. For the bibliography, consult the introduction of my edition pp. 57–61.

[28] Though Macalister, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–2, and Grosjean, "*Confusa*", p. 81, have, in my opinion, succeeded in exploding the theory that there is a regular caesura.

[29] For a summation of the scholarship to 1928, see D. Tardi, *Les Epitomae de Virgile de Toulouse, Essai de traduction critique, avec une bibliographie, une introduction et des notes* (thesis, Paris, 1928), p. 12 ff.

[30] See Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 83 ff.

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clefabo (p. 8, H) to be certain proof that he came from the *Bigorre*.[31] But in lieu of further research, bald statement must suffice.

Throughout the *Epitomae* and the *Epistolae* there are only a few indications of real acquaintance with the late classical grammatical tradition, apart from the titles of the divisions and some idea of what comprises a *liber de grammatica*. Our Virgilius had read enough in Latin to coin the wonderful bogus names that have perplexed so many, but surely such a facility could have been attained from a perusal of Servius and Isidore of Seville. His section of the *Epitomae*, *De cognominationibus*, obviously owes a good deal to Isidore's *Etymologiae*,[32] and indeed, one of the authorities quoted in that section is named *Origenes*! (p. 85). As for the *duodecim latinitatibus* (pp. 88–91, H) ascribed to a book by our author's mentor, "Virgilius Assianus", surely these are nothing more than "code languages", possibly intended as spoof,[33] but more likely as a reflection of the spirit of linguistic inventiveness prevalent in his time. No one yet has succeeded in establishing the etymologies of these fanciful words, despite many attempts.[34] (Huemer, reverent as always, had the good sense to avoid conjectures, stating ponderously *in sequentibus verbis perobscuris nihil mutavi* [p. 88, H. *app. crit.*]).

I am currently of the belief that Virgilius must be placed in Ireland towards the middle of the seventh century. He seems to have had a significant role as either a shaper or critic of *Hisperica Famina*, as much of the foregoing evidence tends to show. His date after Isidore can be deduced from the *De cognominationibus*, while his *terminus ante* can be established from a citation in Aldhelm, *Ep.* 5. (p. 494, Ehwald): *digna fiat fante Glingio: gurgo fugax fambulo* (cf. *De pronomine* in the *Epistolae*, p. 121, H).[35]

[31] A view accepted by Tardi, *op. cit.*, p. 12 and P. Grosjean, "Quelques remarques," p. 399. I have recently written a note on that phrase arguing that the reading of Neapol. IV A 34 (s. XI) *bigero sermone defabo* is to be preferred. Neither *bigerro nor bigero* can be interpreted as *bigerrico* with the meaning "of the Bigorre". The suggestion that *bigerro/bigero* represents a latinisation of Irish Beg Ére (a monastery in Wexford) is ingenious, but I think that the sense of the passage demands a word for "two" or "double".

[32] Compare Virgilius *nox dicitur ab eo quod humanis noceat* with *Etym.* 5 31.1. I acknowledge Kuno Meyer's objection ("Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century", Dublin, 1913, p. 22, fn. 7): "When they (sc. the etymologies) are examined it will seem that though the actual etymology is the same, nowhere is there any literal agreement such as we might reasonably expect to find had there been borrowing either way." I am presently at work on a paper in which I hope to show that direct borrowings from Isidore occur not only in that section but throughout the whole of the works.

[33] Macalister, *loc. cit.*, and P. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalters*, (Munich, 1923), p. 97.

[34] See especially A. Ernault, *De Virgilio Marone grammatico* (Paris, 1886), p. 26 ff.

[35] I do not accept Grosjean's theory based on Lejay that the citation of *Glingio* in Aldhelm does not come from Virgilius Maro, but from a source common to both, "peut-être un traité grammatical qui circulait sous le nom de Glengus" (Grosjean, *art. cit.*, p. 406 and 406 fn.).

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Virgil's work, though highly satirical in places, shows a considerable seriousness in others. For example, his division of *filosofia* ("learning") into the branches *poema, rhetoria, leporia, inter alia* in my view, demonstrates neither ignorance nor parody of classical tradition, but rather may constitute an attempt to create an Hiberno-Latin "poetics" out of elements of Irish literary practice. A study of Virgilius Maro in this area may be of considerable use to Celticists, who have attempted for some time to set a precise definition for such literary terms as *retoiric*. It is interesting that Gerard Murphy applies the term *retoiric* in the narrow sense to works "in which the rhythm of the lines varies greatly and no strict rule of alliteration prevails" as well as to poems composed "in short lines of almost identical rhythm with regular alliteration".[36]

Let us return to our problem of the *Rubisca*. Surely we find in it the perfect specimen of what Virgilius Maro calls a *poema*: *sui varietate contenta angusta atque obscura*. It also fits the classification of *poema* because it is *tetrametrus*. However, it is not lacking in the qualities of the *leporia*, namely *mordacitas* (raillery) and *mendacitas* (broad metaphor or hyperbole). Yet we remember that the *leporia* can be a mixed form, *nulla reprehensione*.

Do all these factors—the classical type of pseudonym, fictitious characters with fantastical comic names, correspondences of very rare words and word meanings, the employment of far-fetched *tmesis*, and the conformity to the metrical and poetic prototypes of the *Epitomae*—point to Virgilius Maro Grammaticus as author of the poem? Hardly with certainty. These affinities and agreements prove only an awareness of Virgilius and his doctrines on the part of the author, though we cannot exclude the possibility that Virgilius wrote the *Rubisca* as an illustration of his own poetics. The author was almost certainly an Irishman educated on *Hisperica Famina* and the literature surrounding them. He almost certainly knew the *Lorica*, and for this reason, I would place the *Rubisca's* time of composition after 661.

One clue to the authorship that we have left to the last is the name *Olimbrianus*. We have already noted its playful affinity to *Olimpianus*. Yet we would be quite wrong to emend it to that form, for how do we explain the intrusive *r*? I am indebted to Dr. Próinséas Ní Chatháin, of University College, Dublin, for the analysis of that name into the elements *olim* and *Brianus*, i.e. formerly Brian! Was Brian the same of an Irish monastic composer before he assumed a monk's habit? Grosjean, in his list,[37] does not mention a Brian.

[36] *Early Irish Metrics* (Dublin, 1961), p. 3. For a markedly different discussion of that term, see the important article of Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtica* 7 (1966), 65–90.
[37] *Irish Texts* (London, 1934), fasc. 4, p. 99.

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However, an entry under the name Máeldub in the Félire Óengusso (Stokes, p. 224), proves more interesting. There, Máeldub is said to be of the race of Brian: "Máeldub im*morro* atb*e*rat com*ad* do Eogana*cht* Caisil dó, nó is do śil Briain meic Ech*ach* Muidmedoin .i. Máeldub m*ac* Amalgaid *meic* Foth*aid* m*eic* Co*n*aill Gluni m*eic* Briain m*eic* Ech*ach* M*uid*m*edoin*."

What, then, is the sense of *olim Brianus*? In the *Hisperica Famina* there are several references to things being formerly something else, as, e.g. fire was once flint, a school slate was once a tree. In that sense a man could be described as *formerly* his ancestor. Note the use of *olim* in the *H. F.*, A538. How sure can we be that the Máeldub of the Félire can be identified with the founder of the *urbs Mailduf*? The evidence is not conclusive, but certain facts are favourable. He was the *daltae* of St. Fechín, who died, according to the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of the Four Masters*, in 664.[38] Aldhelm succeeded his master as abbot in 675, so we can be fairly sure of that year as the date of that Máeldub's death. Apparently the Máeldub of the Félire founded a community, for that text refers to a *Muinter Mail duib*, which could correspond to Bede's *urbs Mailduf*.[39] On the negative side, St. Fechín is portrayed in the Félire as delivering a eulogy on Máeldub. This need not be conclusive, however. The author of the martyrology may well have been employing a literary convention in assigning a panegyric to the saint's spiritual father. There is considerable scope for invention in this case, where the known facts are few.

We conjectured that the Hisperic poems, Greek alphabet, and the Greek compositions could well be drawn from a school notebook of the young Aldhelm—either exercises or copies of the dictation of his master Máeldub. Now we noted above (p. 84) that Aldhelm was acquainted with at least the *Epistolae* of Virgilius Maro. Where else would he have acquired this knowledge except from Máeldub at Malmesbury? Aldhelm was at Malmesbury between 660 and 670, a period that coincides perfectly well with other evidence for the time of composition of the *Rubisca*. Is it not at least within the realm of possibility that Aldhelm received from his master one of Máeldub's own compositions that exhibits the heavy influence of the bizarre grammar. That the work may have been a specimen of the *juvenilia* of Aldhelm himself can be safely discarded, I think, on the basis of line 81 (cited above): *Uiam mecalbo* (*me calba*) *sennia secat*. "Bald old age cuts me from my path."

[38] Whitley Stokes, "Life of St. Féchín of Fore," *Revue celtique* 12 (1891), 319.
[39] *H.E.* 5.18.

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Let us conclude with a brief summation:

1. The *Rubisca* was written after 661 by a poet thoroughly familiar with *Hisperica Famina* and the *Lorica* of Laidcenn. He was also acquainted with the grammatical and poetical theories as well as with certain *lexica rariora* of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus. The poet was more likely an Irishman than an English imitator of *Hisperica Famina*.

2. Aldhelm shows close acquaintance with *Hisperica Famina* in his more abstruse writings and we have at least one clear citation of Virgilius Maro. It is almost certain that a knowledge of such works was acquired from Máeldub, his teacher prior to his sojourn in Canterbury. Could he not also have learned the *Rubisca* from him, as that poem, so closely connected to the *Hisperica Famina* in vocabulary, comes to us through Canterbury, where Aldhelm studied, and is bound in our eleventh-century MS with another "Hisperic" poem, translation of hymns and prayers into Greek (though in Latin characters), and a Greek alphabet with strange names for the letters (reminiscent of the Greek alphabet in the Irish *Auraicept na n-Éces*)? Hence, that section of Cambridge Univ. Gg. V. 35 might be a copy of a notebook made by Aldhelm under Máeldub and taken to Canterbury.

3. That Máeldub himself might have written the poem is shown in the pseudonym *Olimbrianus* (referring to the poet). The Félire Óengusso attests a seventh-century Máeldub, founder of a community, who may have come from the race of Brian. The author of the *Rubisca* alludes to his old age in the poem; it is probable that Máeldub was a *senex* in the 660's.*

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*P.S. I have just learned from Professor Bernhard Bischoff that a new manuscript of the *Rubisca* has been discovered. It is Paris, Ste. Geneviève 2410, saec. X–XI.

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