MISCOUPLINGS IN COUPLETS *

Oxford, Queen's College MS 320 contains a copy of *Isidori Hispalensis Originum siue Etymologiarum Libri XX*, written in the English square minuscule script associated with the period about 940 to 965. ¹ Before the list of chapter headings there is a poem about miscouplings in elegiac couplets on folios 1v-2r. ² Capital letters and punctuation marks in boldface represent features of the manuscript. Italics suggest rhymes at caesuras and ends of lines within couplets. Solid underlinings suggest alliteration within lines. Dotted underlinings suggest alliteration between adjacent lines.

IN NOMINE TRINITATIS.

SEriceum tegmen gemmatica tecta laconum
Pellibus hircinis aequiparanda loquor
Nobilis horribili iungatur purpura burrae
Nectatur plumbo fulgida gemma graui
Sit captiua sui nunc margarita nitoris
Et clausa obscuro fulgeat in calibe.
Leuconico pariter claudatur in aere smaragdos.
Conpar silicibus nunc hyacintus adest

^{*} I owe thanks for helpful criticism to Dr Leofranc Holford-Strevens.

^{1.} Copied probably from an exemplar in Insular script, not Cambridge, Trinity College MS B 15.33, which was written in Winchester about A.D. 920. Professor David Ganz in a private communication.

^{2.} D. SCHALLER & E. KÖNSGEN, *Initia carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquorum* (Göttingen 1977) no. 14935, record this manuscript as the unique source for this poem.

Rupibus atque molis similis dicatur <u>"aspis"</u>	
Eligat infernum iam modo luna caos.	10
Nunc etiam urticis mandemus lilea iungi	
Perspicuamque rosam dira cicuta premat.	
Nunc simul optemus despectis piscibus ergo	
Delicias magni nullificare freti	
Auratam crassantus amet saxatilis anguem	15
Limacem pariter nunc sibi tracta petat.	
Altaque iungatur uili cum uulpe leaena	
Perspicuam lincem simius accipiat	
Iungatur nunc cerua asino nunc tigris onagro	
Iungatur fesso concita damma boui	20
Nectarium uiti et nunc laus erat et raro satum	
Mellaque cum fellis sint modo mixta malis.	
Gemmantem sociem aquam luteumque baratrum	
Stercoribus mixtis fons eat inriguus.	
Praepes funereum cumuulture ludat hirundo.	25
Cum bubone graui nunc filomela sonet.	
Tristis perspicua sit cum perdice cauanus	
Lunctaque cum coruo pulchra columba cubet	
Haec monstra incestis mutent sibi tempora fatis	
Rusticus et seruus petat ëuceriam.	30

1 gemmatiqa. 2 æquiperanda. 7 Lenconico. 8 sⁱc[]licibus. 12 Praespicuam. dina *underpointed and corrected in left margin to* dira. præmat. 13 dispectis. 17 Altque. leena. 18 Prespicuam. 25 Prepes. funerē. 27 præspicua.

Analogy with pariter 7 and conpar 8 supports emendation to aequiparanda 2. Alliteration with similis 9 supports emendation to etymologically correct silicibus 8. Alliteration with delicias 14 supports emendation to etymologically correct despectis 13. Analogy with the Classical diphthong ae in aequiparanda 2 and burrae 3 supports restoration in leaena 17 and praepes 25. Grammar and metre alike require the form funereum 25. The manuscript misspellings praespicuam 12, prespicuam 18, and prespicua 27 may have issued from misreading of the abbreviation p as p. In this text h is present in Latin

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pulchra 28, but consistently absent from words derived from Greek spelled with χ ch, calibe 6, caos 10, euceriam 30, θ th, hyacintus 8, crassantus 15, baratrum 23, and φ ph, filomela 26. Retention of unassimilated consonants, as in inriguus 24, is normal in early Insular Latin texts.

There is elision in *clausa obscuro* 6, *cerua asino* 19, *uti et* 21, and *monstra incestis* 29, but not in *etiam urticis* 11 and *sociem aquam* 23. There is diaeresis in *ïaspis* 9 and *ëuceriam* 30. There are false quantities in *margarita* 5, *raro satum* 21, and *petat* 30.

IN THE NAME OF THE TRINITY.

A silken covering, jewelled covers,

I speak of as things to be made equivalent with goat skins of of menial servants.

Noble purple should be joined to bristly flock;

A shining jewel should be bound with heavy lead.

A pearl now the captive of its own brightness should Shine even closed in dark iron.

An emerald equally should be closed in Leuconian [or 'whitish'] [brass.

A jacinth is present now as equal partner with flints, And a jasper should be said of similar mass with cliffs.

At this point then the [high] moon should choose [low] [infernal chaos. 10

Now also let us order lilies to be joined to nettles

And dire hemlock should press the perspicuous rose.

Now at the same time let us wish therefore with despicable fishes To make as nothing the delights of the great sea.

Let the fat heron that lives among rocks love the gilded water [snake; 15]

Drawn to itself [i.e. the snake] let it now seek equally the [slug.

And the lofty lioness should be joined with the vile fox; The ape should receive the perspicuous lynx.

Now the hind should be joined to the ass, now the tigress to the [wild ass,

The swift doe should be joined to the wearied ox. 20 Nectary fruit was praiseworthy for the grapevine both now and

And meads should be mixed then with apples of bitterness. May I combine water sparkling like a jewel and the slimy pit; May the well-watered fountain flow with mixed mucks.

May the straight-flying [i.e. well-omened] swallow play some-[thing funereal with the vulture;

With the grave owl let the nightingale now sound.

Let the sad owl be with the perspicuous partridge,

And let the beautiful dove lie joined with the crow.

The times may change these monsters with fates unchaste [for them,

And the rustic servant may seek ease.

The poem exhibits words not recorded in the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources fascicules I-V (A-L), antedatings of words recorded only from later periods, and postdatings of words poorly recorded from an earlier period.

1 sericeum The adjective, as distinct from CL sericus, is not recorded from the Classical period.

1 gemmatica The adjective, as distinct from CL gemmatus, is not recorded from the Classical period, nor in DMLBS.

1 laconum genitive plural of 2 laco in DMLBS antedates John of Salisbury's usage of 1159 in Policraticus 594C and

603C.

3 burrae antedates the quotation of 1206 recorded in DMLBS.

5 captiua The word is not otherwise recorded in DMLBS s.v.

captivus 2 as a feminine substantive.

6 calibe CL chalybs < χάλυψ.

7 leuconico CL Leuconicus 'of the Gallic tribe Leucones' or neuter as substantive 'Leuconian wool (used for stuffing

pillows)' is not recorded in DMLBS. As neither sense is particularly appropriate here one wonders whether the word derives from λευκόν + -ικος

'whitish'.

7 smaragdos CL < σμάραγδος here representing the Greek nomi-

native singular form.

8 hyacintus CL hyacinthus < τάκινθος.

9 iaspis CL iaspis < λάσπις. 10 caos CL chaos < χάος.

15 crassantus CL crassus + anthus < ἄνθος, not otherwise

recorded in DMLBS.

23 baratrum CL barathrum < βάραθρον.

25 funereum is not recorded as a neuter substantive in DMLBS.

27 cauanus DMLBS s.v. cavannus records one quotation from

Aldhelm and two from glossaries.

30 euceriam < εὐχέρεια is not recorded in DMLBS.

The poet may have been reading the beginning of *Horatii de Arte Poetica Liber*. In the first of the poet's inconcinnities the first words of the second verse remind one of coincident diction at the end of the seventh-century pseudo-Isidorean Hiberno-Latin text *De Ordine Creaturarum* §13: ³

in aurato tabernaculo, ubi aurum argentumque et gemmarum pretiosarum, bissi et purpurae et hiacinthi et cocci dona conferuntur, etiam eorum qui pelles caprarum deferunt diligentia non dispicitur.

There the *pelles caprarum* are the goat skins on which the author presents his work to his patron. Here the *laconum pelles hircinae* may allude to the poet and his clothes, if not his work. He may refer to himself at the beginning and the end of the poem, at the end of the first couplet in *loquor* 2 and at the beginning of the last line, *rusticus seruus* 30, and in three verbs in the first person, *mandemus* 11, *optemus* 13, *sociem* 23. Observing a widespread convention the poet refers to himself at places determined by sesquioctave ratio (9:8) and one-ninth and eight-ninths of the text. The 170 words of the poem divide by sesquioctave ratio at 90 and 80, at the centre of the lines, there being eighty words in lines 1-15 and ninety words in lines 16-30. The ninety words of lines 16-30 divide by the ratio 9:8 at 48 and 42. After *sociem* 23 the forty-second word is the last of *rusticus et*

^{3.} Liber de ordine creaturarum, ed. M.C. Diaz y Diaz (Santiago de Compostela 1972), p. 204. D.R. Howlett, 'Insular Latin Writers' Rhythms', *Peritia XI* (1997), pp. 53-116 at 64-6.

seruus 30. The eighty words of lines 1-15 divide by $\frac{1}{9}$ at 9, at the ninth word, loquor 2. There are nine words between mandemus 11 and optemus 13. The 170 words of the entire poem divide by $\frac{1}{9}$ and $\frac{8}{9}$ at 19 and 151, at cauanus 27, which might suggest, but for the early date of the manuscript, that the composition was written by a poet surnamed Howlett.

D. R. HOWLETT

Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources Bodleian Library Oxford