

## SINGERS' RATIOS IN *RAUCA SONORA* \*

In an appendix to an article about the adonic verses *Ad Fidolium* now attributed to the Irish *peregrinus* Columbanus of Saint-Trond Michael Lapidge published an edition and translation of some adonic verses *Rauca Sonora*,<sup>1</sup> composed perhaps in the ninth or tenth century, perhaps by an Irishman roughly contemporary with Sedulius Scottus, who wrote

*Rauca sonabat enim pastorea fistola nostra  
nos quia deseruit pastor honestus oues.*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS latin 8069, folios 1v-2r

f. 1v	<i>Rauca, sonora, languida uoce tibia nostra est, pater, inquam. ast gerit ora fusca colore ; tristis habunde flens modo, sarta forte diremp&lt;ta&gt; : nam rosa mollis, fragmina la&lt;ne&gt;.</i>	Harsh, noisy, dull in tone is my flute, father, I confess.	
	<i>lilia clara, pinguia quoque (quid memorem nunc ?) nectara mixta —</i>	5 And it produces speech dark in colour ; exceedingly sad, weeping now, it is deprived by chance of its laurel : 10 for the delicate rose, pieces of wool, bright lilies, and also rich (why need I mention it now ?) 15 blended nectars —	

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\* I owe thanks for helpful criticism to Dr Leofranc Holford-Strevens.

1. M. LAPIDGE, 'The Authorship of the Adonic Verses "ad Fidolium" Attributed to Columbanus', *Studi Medievali* 3rd ser. XVIII ii (1977), pp. 249-314 at 312-4.

plurima sunt hic.		all these are here in abundance.
sed mihi baccus		But it tells me that wine,
inquit, abest, heu !		unfortunately, is lacking —
conficiatur		(the wine) through which the poetry-
unde fonascus :	20	teacher is made ready:
“ quo medicata,		“ Revived (it says) by this (wine)
uiuida passim		I shall produce lively
carmina fingam ! ”		poems all over the place ! ”
larga potestas,		O abundant potency (of wine),
perface uelle	25	grant that it may be able
ut queat illud		to hymn that desired (song)
psallere uoto !		to the very best of its wishes.

Readings in MS: 1 rauco 8 scieta 11 fracmina 12 clana  
13 queque.

Let us make only trifling changes to this text, restoring the manuscript readings *fracmina* 11 and *queque* 13, altering the punctuation of lines 13-4 (to smooth the awkward interruption caused by the parenthetical question) and 17-21 (to extend the passage of direct discourse), and suggesting possible rhymes by italics in the first third of the poem. Let us make a few changes to the translation. Lapidge taxed earlier editors with not knowing ‘that *uelle* can be a neuter substantive in medieval Latin’. One might (but need not) construe *uelle* as an infinitive.

f. 1v	Rauca, sonora,	a		Husky, buzzing,
	languida uoce	b		feeble in tone
	tibia <i>nostra</i>	a		our pipe,
	est, pater, inquam ;	c		is, father, I say;
	ast gerit <i>ora</i>	a	5	moreover she produces utterances
	fusca colore ;	b		dark in colour,
	tristis habunde	b		very sad,
	flens modo, <i>serta</i>	a		weeping now, [her] garlands
	forte dirempta,	a		by chance pulled apart,
	nam rosa mollis,		10	for a delicate rose,
	fracmina lane,			broken bits of wool,
f. 2r	lilia clara			bright lilies
	(pinguia queque	13	14	(why should I call to <i>mind</i> now
	quid memorem nunc ?)	14	13	these several luxuriant things ?),
	nectara mixta,	15		mixed nectars,
	plurima sunt hic ;			very many things are here;
	‘Sed mihi Baccus’			‘But to me Bacchus [ <i>i.e.</i> wine]’

inquit, 'abest, heu,			she says, 'is absent, alas,
conficiatur	19	20	whence a singing-teacher
unde fonascus ;	20	19	may be made ready;
quo medicata,			treated with which
uivida passim	22	23	I shall compose songs,
carmina fingam.'	23	22	lively ones, all over the place.'
Larga potestas,			O great power,
perfice uelle	25		bring it about
ut queat illud			that she may be able
psallere uoto.			to play that wish according to desire [or 'realize that wish, that she may play according to desire' or 'bring it about that she may be able to will to play that (song) according to desire'].

The spelling *fracmina* may imply that the poet understood the orthographic system of a Celtic language, as in *Bricte - Brigitte* and *Ricemarch - Rhygyfarch*.

The metre is nearly faultless, with only one false quantity, in *fonascus* 20 < φωνασκός.

The poet has filled his composition with words (like the first five) that bear musical senses so obvious as to need no comment. But some, in lines 8-12, are less immediately apparent than others. *Serta*, rendered here as 'garlands', are actually 'what have been linked together', that is 'compositions', which have been *dirempta* 'pulled apart'. The garlands of presumably red roses and presumably white lilies, held together by woollen threads now broken, *fracmina lane*, are modified by adjectives that bear musical senses, *mollis* 'soft' or 'flat' as well as 'delicate' and *clara* 'clear' to the ear as well as 'bright' to the eye. The red and delicate nature of the roses and the white and clear nature of the lilies are appropriate also to *baccus* 'wine', the lack of which has made the pipe's song dull.

The composition divides by the ratios of music theory, symmetry (1:1), *duplus* or duple ratio (2:1), *hemiolus* or sesquialter ratio (1 1/2:1 or 3:2), *epitritus* or sesquitercian ratio (1 1/3:1 or 4:3), and *epogdous* or sesquiocave ratio (1 1/8:1 or 9:8, or reckoned another way 1/9 and 8/9).

The poem divides by symmetry at the poet's reference to himself, at the centre of the central fourteenth of twenty-seven lines, in the

thirty-first word from the end of sixty-two words, | *memorem*, which also contains the central letters of the composition.

The sixty-two words of the poem divide by duple ratio at 41 and 21, at the forty-first word, *baccus*, the substance that empowers a singing-teacher. The remaining twenty-one words divide by the same ratio at 14 and 7, at *quo* | 21, referring to wine, and *potestas* | 24, referring to its power.

Every pentasyllabic line of the poem divides by sesquialter ratio with three short and two long syllables.

The twenty-seven lines of the poem divide by sesquitercian ratio at 15 and 12. The sixty-two words divide by the same ratio at 35 and 27. From *est* 4 to *abest* 18 inclusive there are fifteen lines. Between *est* and *abest* there are thirty-five words.

The twenty-seven lines of the poem divide by sesquioctave ratio at 14 and 13. The sixty-two words divide by the same ratio at 33 and 29, exactly at the poet's parenthetic question | *pinguia queque quid memorem nunc?* | from the twenty-ninth word to the thirty-third inclusive in lines 13-14. In the fourteenth line after *inquam* 4 the thirty-third word is *inquit* 18.

The sixty-two words of the poem divide by  $\frac{1}{6}$  and  $\frac{5}{6}$  at 7 and 55, at the references to the poet's patron, | *pater* 4, and the power to perfect the will, *larga potestas* | *perfice uelle* 24-5.

D. R. HOWLETT

Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources  
Bodleian Library  
Oxford