

# Oxford Scholarly Editions Online

## Walter of Châtillon, Part II. Poems from Various Sources (1160 - 1184): 56 "Vtar contra uitia carmine rebelli." (1167 - 1169)

David A. Traill (ed.), Oxford Medieval Texts: Walter of Châtillon: The Shorter Poems: Christmas Hymns, Love Lyrics, and Moral-Satirical Verse

Published in print: 2013

Published online: October 2019

### 56

1.

Vtar contra uitia carmine rebelli.  
Mel proponunt alii, fel supponunt mellii;  
pectus subest ferreum deaurate pelli  
et leonis spolium induunt aselli.<sup>778</sup>

2.

Disputat cum animo facies rebellis;  
mel ab ore profluit, mens est plena fellis.  
Non est totum melleum, quod est instar mellis;  
facies est alia pectoris quam pellis.<sup>779</sup>

3.

Vitium in opere, uirtus est in ore;  
tegunt picem animi niueo colore.<sup>780</sup>  
Membra dolent singuli capitis dolore  
et radici consonat ramus<sup>a</sup> in sapore.<sup>781</sup>

4.

Roma<sup>b</sup> mundi caput<sup>b</sup> est, sed nil capit mundum,  
quod pendet a capite, totum est immundum;  
trahit enim uitium primum in<sup>c</sup> secundum,  
et de fundo redolet, quod est iuxta fundum.<sup>782</sup>

.....  
pg 198

5.

Roma capit singulos et res singulorum,

Romanorum curia non est nisi forum.  
Ibi sunt uenalia iura senatorum  
et soluit contraria<sup>783</sup> copia nummorum.<sup>d</sup>

6.  
In hoc consistorio si quis causam regat  
suam uel alterius, hoc imprimis legat:  
nisi det pecuniam, Roma totum negat;  
qui plus dat pecunie, melius allegat.

7.  
Romani capitulum habent in decretis,  
ut petentes audiant manibus repletis.  
Dabis, aut non dabitur;<sup>784</sup> petunt, quando petis.  
Qua mensura seminas, et eadem metis.<sup>785</sup>

8.  
Munus et petitio currunt passu pari;<sup>786</sup>  
opereris munere, si uis operari.  
Tullium ne timeas, si uelit<sup>e</sup> causari.  
Nummus eloquentia gaudet singulari.<sup>787</sup>

9.  
Nummis<sup>f</sup> in hac curia non est qui non uacet;  
crux placet, rotunditas<sup>g</sup> et albedo placet.<sup>g</sup>  
Et cum totum<sup>h</sup> placeat et Romanos<sup>i</sup> placet,  
ubi nummus loquitur, et lex omnis tacet.<sup>788</sup>

10.  
Si quo grandi munere<sup>j</sup> bene pascas<sup>j</sup> manum,  
frustra quis obiceret<sup>k</sup> uel Iustinanum  
uel Sanctorum canones, quia tamquam uanum  
transeunt has paleas et imbursant granum.<sup>789</sup>

11.  
Solam auaritiam Rome neuit Parca.  
Parcit danti munera, parco non est parca.  
Nummus est pro numine<sup>l</sup> et pro Marco marca,  
et est minus celebris ara quam sit arca.

12.

Cum ad papam ueneris, habe pro constanti:  
non est locus pauperi, soli fauet danti,  
uel<sup>m</sup> si munus prestitum non sit aliquanti,  
respondet: 'hec tibia non est michi tanti'.<sup>790</sup>

13.

Papa, si rem tangimus, nomen habet a re:  
quicquid habent alii, solus uult papare,  
uel si uerbum gallicum uis apocopare  
<sup>n</sup>1 paiez! paiez!<sup>n</sup> o dit li mot,<sup>o</sup> si uis impetrare.

14.

<sup>p</sup>Porta querit, chartula querit, bulla querit,<sup>p</sup>  
<sup>q</sup>papa querit etiam, cardinalis querit,<sup>q</sup>  
omnes querunt, et si des— si quid uni deerit,  
totum mare falsum<sup>r</sup> est, tota causa<sup>791</sup> perit.

15.

Das istis, das aliis, addis dona datis,  
et cum satis dederis, querunt ultra satis;  
o uos burse turgide, Romam ueniatis:  
Rome uiget physica bursis<sup>792</sup> constipatis.

16.

Predantur marsupium singuli paulatim,  
magna, maior, maxima preda fit gradatim.  
Quid irem per singula? Colligam summatim:  
omnes bursam<sup>s</sup> strangulant, et exspirat statim.

17.

Bursa tamen Tityi iecur imitatur:  
fugit res, ut redeat, perit, ut nascatur.  
Et hoc pacto loculum Roma depredatur,  
ut, cum totum dederit, totus impleatur.<sup>793</sup>

18.

Redeunt a curia capite<sup>t</sup> cornuto.<sup>794</sup>

Ima tenet Iupiter, "celum habet" Pluto.<sup>795</sup>  
Et accedit dignitas animali bruto,  
tamquam gemma stercorei uel pictura luto.<sup>796</sup>

.....  
pg 202

19.  
Diuites diuitibus dant, ut sumant ibi,  
Et occurrunt munera relative sibi.  
Lex est ista celebris, quam fecerunt scribi:  
'si tu michi dederis, ego dabo tibi'.<sup>797</sup>

## EDITOR'S NOTE EDITOR'S NOTE56

1. I am going to employ a poem that will fight back against vice. Others make a show of offering honey but conceal gall under the honey. Beneath their gilded skin lurks an iron heart. But it is asses that cover themselves with a lion's skin.<sup>778</sup>

2. Their faces are completely at variance with their thoughts. Honey flows from their mouths while their hearts are full of gall. Not all that looks like honey is honey-sweet. The face is not the outer skin of the heart.<sup>779</sup>

3. Vicious in what they do, while virtuous in what they say, they conceal the blackness of their hearts under a snow-white exterior.<sup>780</sup> When the head is sick, so too are the limbs; the quality of the fruit on the branch is dependent on the root.<sup>781</sup>

4. Rome is the capital of the world but it contains nothing clean. Everything that depends on the head is unclean. The first vice leads to the second and what is next to the bottom, smells of the bottom.<sup>782</sup>

.....  
pg 199

5. Rome takes individuals and their property. The Roman curia is merely a marketplace. The senate's laws are up for sale and a large chunk of cash resolves contradictions.<sup>783</sup>

6. Anyone who might be in charge of a case before this assembly—his own or someone else's—should first read this: unless he gives money, Rome says 'no' to everything; the man who gives more money presents the better case.

7. The Romans have a clause in their decrees to the effect that they will hear petitioners whose hands are full. You will give or it will not be given unto you.<sup>784</sup> When you ask for something, they ask for something. As you sow, so shall you reap.<sup>785</sup>

8. Gifts and petitions go hand in hand.<sup>786</sup> If you want to achieve your goal, do so with a gift. Do not fear a Cicero, should he choose to plead. Money enjoys eloquence second to none.<sup>787</sup>

9. Everyone in this curia is focused on money. They like the cross, the roundness, and the silvery hue and, since they like it in all respects and since it keeps the Romans quiet—when money talks, even every law is silent.<sup>788</sup>

10. If you can feed a hand well with some large gift, it would be pointless for someone to cite either the Justinian code or the canons of our sainted fathers because they pass over such chaff as worthless and pocket the wheat.<sup>789</sup>

11. For Rome Fate has spun only greed. She spares the giver of gifts and is unsparing of anyone who is sparing in their giving. The denarius is her deity, and the mark is her Mark and there is less celebration at the altar than at the strongbox.

.....  
pg 201

12. When you come before the pope, bear this constantly in mind: there is no room for a poor man; he favours only the donor. If the gift presented to him is not significant, his answer is: 'I don't think this flute is worth that much.'<sup>790</sup>

13. If we get to the heart of the matter, the pope takes his name from reality: whatever others have, he wants as pap for himself—or if you want to shorten the French word, it means 'Pay up! Pay up!', if you want to win your plea.

14. The gate asks for payment, the charter asks for payment, the bull asks for payment; the pope asks too, and so does the cardinal; everyone asks for payment and if you pay them and one comes up short, then the whole sea is treacherous and everything<sup>791</sup> is lost.

15. You give to one group, you give to another. You add more gifts to the gifts you have already given and when you have given enough, they ask for some more. Bloated pouches, come to Rome! Rome abounds in medicine for constipated pouches.<sup>792</sup>

16. One by one and little by little they make your purse their booty. Gradually their booty becomes big, bigger, very big. Why go into detail? I will cut the story short. They are all strangling your purse and it promptly breathes its last.

17. However, your purse imitates the liver of Tityus—bits slip away only to return and perish only to be reborn and Rome makes its depredations on your purse in such a way that when it has given its all, it gets filled up again.<sup>793</sup>

18. They come back from the Curia with horns on their heads.<sup>794</sup> A Jupiter rules the lowest depths, a Pluto rules the sky.<sup>795</sup> High office is given to a brainless animal, as one might add a jewel to a dunghill or a painting to a pile of mud.<sup>796</sup>

.....  
pg 203

19. The rich give to the rich so that they may then receive and gifts flow back and forth between them. This is the famous law that they caused to be written: 'You give to me and I will give to you.'<sup>797</sup>

## NOTES

*Cb 1-18; Cd 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 11-13, 15, 17-19; D 6-9 then after other pieces 4-5; F 4-19; H and Sp 1-13, 15-19; Lt and Lv 1-19; O 1-16; U 4-7, 13-16, 18, 19*

<sup>a</sup> pomum *H Sp*

<sup>b-b</sup> caput mundi *Cb F U*

<sup>c</sup> et *C Sp F U*

### 56, 5a

*Cb* alone has the following stanza after stanza 5:

si te forte traxerit    Romam uocatiuus  
et si te deponere    uult accusatiuus  
qui te restituere    possit ablatiuus  
uide quod ibi fideliter    presens sit datiuus.

<sup>d</sup> *In Cb alone there follows a stanza that is probably spurious; see Appendix III.*

<sup>e</sup> uelis *Cb D Lt*

<sup>f</sup> nummus *Cb D Sp Ct*

<sup>g-g</sup> *H Sp; placet totum placet Cb D F Ct Cd Lv O*

<sup>h</sup> totum *H Sp; ita Cb D F Ct Cd Lv O*

<sup>i</sup> romanis *Cb Cd D*

<sup>j-j</sup> si quis pascat *Cb*

<sup>k</sup> obiciet *H Sp; omitteret Cb*

<sup>l</sup> munere *Cb Cd Lv F*

<sup>m</sup> et *Cd Lt Lv O F*



<sup>n-n</sup> O F paez paez Cd Lt H Lv; paga paga Cb

<sup>o-o</sup> O Cd Lt H Lv Ct; dyst li moyte U

<sup>p-p</sup> sic papa sic ianitor sic bullator querit Cb

<sup>q-q</sup> cardinales etiam grex hanc uiam terit Cb; cardinales eciam querit papa querit U

<sup>r</sup> Traill; salsum Cb Ct Lv O F

<sup>s</sup> bursas Cb

<sup>t</sup> uertice Cd F U

<sup>u-u</sup> celum tenet H Sp U; summa regit Cb

#### Poem 56

Strecker wavered over assigning this poem to Walter, remarking at one point that he had no doubt that it was by him but later relegating it merely to his 'school'.<sup>241</sup> His dilemma, as well as the rigour of his method, finds vivid expression when he remarks that he believes that the poem is by Walter but can find no evidence to support this belief. He then goes on to cite a number of striking phrases that seem to link *Utar contra vitia* with poems known to be by Walter but then undercuts this evidence by arguing that these phrases belonged to the *koine* of contemporary satire.<sup>242</sup> Besides the similarities to Walter's poems, the manuscript tradition offers some support for Walter's authorship. Though nowhere flanked on both sides by poems known to be by Walter, *Utar contra vitia* is found next to *Propter Sion non tacebo* (poem 64) in *Carmina Burana* and close to several poems by Walter in **D** and **F**.<sup>243</sup>

The poem is remarkable not only for its sustained attack on the Roman curia, which is extraordinarily well done, but also for its explicit condemnation of the pope (stanzas 12–14).<sup>244</sup> No doubt what Walter chose to say about the pope would vary according to his assessment of the views of his audience and we seldom have any information on where and when a given poem was performed. The fact that there were two popes for most of the time Walter was writing satires and that he performed his poems at different venues in France, Italy, and Germany further complicates matters. It seems clear that his request for a prebend from Alexander III in 1165 or 1166 was unsuccessful. It would be only natural if Walter's feelings about him were coloured by this experience. The poem also seems to reflect a heightened awareness of legal concepts. For instance, 'Ubi nummus loquitur, et lex omnis tacet' (9. 4) parodies a legal principle, first laid down in 1010 in the *Consuetudini* of

Amalfi, that came to be universally recognized in the Middle Ages: 'ubi consuetudo loquitur, lex omnis tacet'.<sup>245</sup> This principle effectively rendered null and void any provision of Roman law that ran counter to a prevailing local custom.

There are two memorable images at 18. 4. Christian writers frequently employed the image of a gem in a dunghill to justify their study of pagan authors, for 'gems' were to be found there amidst the 'dung'.<sup>246</sup> The 'picture in the mud' may be Walter's own contribution. Nigel of Canterbury later took it up and he in turn was the source for Geoffrey of Vinsauf.<sup>247</sup>

<sup>241</sup> Strecker, 'Schule I', p. 113 and 'Schule II', pp. 187-8.

<sup>242</sup> Strecker, 'Schule II', p. 187.

<sup>243</sup> Strecker, 'Schule I', pp. 104-6 and 109.

<sup>244</sup> *Propter Sion* (poem 64), by contrast, singles out the pope for praise, though the barb in the second half of stanza 29 tends to be overlooked.

<sup>245</sup> See *The Black Book of the Admiralty*, ed. Twiss, iv, p. xciv.

<sup>246</sup> See further in Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Seanc, i. 409.

<sup>247</sup> Nigel of Canterbury, *Speculum Stultorum*, 47-8; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, 743 (Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 220).

<sup>778</sup> For fable, see Avianus, 5. 5-18; cf. Walther, *Prouerbia*, 23027: 'Que non conueniunt uestes tibi sumere noli! / Hoc docuit asinus spoliatus pelle leonis.'

<sup>779</sup> Cf. Walther, *Prouerbia*, 30543: 'Sub niue pix et fel sub melle lutumque sub auro, / Pelle sub agnina corda lupina latent.'

<sup>780</sup> See note on stanza 2. 4.

<sup>781</sup> Cf. Rom. 11: 16: 'et si radix sancta, et rami' and Walther, *Prouerbia*, 26234: 'Radicis uitio sordet ramusculus.'

<sup>782</sup> Apparently, a rendering of 'sincerum est nisi uas, quodcumque infundis acescit' (Horace, *Epistles*, i. 2. 54); 'fundus' is the bottom of the jar, where the dregs accumulate.

<sup>783</sup> These are probably contradictory statements in a legal document, such as a will, which might be held to invalidate the document; cf. 62, 23. For 'copia nummorum' cf. Werner and Flury, *Sprichwörter*, C. 105.

<sup>784</sup> Cf. Luke 6: 38: 'date et dabitur uobis'.

<sup>785</sup> Cf. Gal. 6: 8: 'quae enim seminauerit homo, haec et metet' and Luke 6: 38: 'eadem quippe mensura, qua mensi fueritis, remetietur uobis'.

<sup>786</sup> Cf. 51, 1. 1-2.

<sup>787</sup> Put more bluntly, 'money talks' and can out-talk a Cicero. 'Gaudere' in medieval Latin has the same ambiguity as 'enjoy' in English; see *DMLBS*, s.v. 3.

<sup>788</sup> See Introduction.

<sup>789</sup> See note at 8, 2. 4 above for the grain/chaff imagery.

<sup>790</sup> Ovid, *Met.*, vi. 386, where the dying Marsyas screams: ' "a! piget, a! non est", clamabat, "tibia tanti" '; cf. Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, iii. 505.

<sup>791</sup> Or 'your entire case'; *causa* can mean 'thing' or 'case'.

<sup>792</sup> Given the medical metaphor, it appears that Walter is again playing on the ambiguity of *bursa* (here 'purse' and 'bladder'); cf. 22, 5. 9. The enlargement of the prostate, common in older men, can cause 'constipation of the bladder'.

<sup>793</sup> The secondary meaning of 'scrotum' is probably in play here for 'loculum'; cf. 22, 5. 2.

<sup>794</sup> The 'horns' are the two sharp peaks on the bishop's mitre; cf. *CB* 39, 4. 1, but may also suggest the devil's horns.

<sup>795</sup> That is to say, wholly inappropriate appointments have been made.

<sup>796</sup> See introductory notes.

<sup>797</sup> Cf. Walther, *Prouerbia*, 28646: 'Si mihi das, tibi do.'