

The Latin Poetry of William Bowyer's *Genealogia
Dominorum de Sancto Johanne de Basing*
British Library Additional 23923

Translated by the Members of the Utah State University Latin Lab

Fo. 1r

**Nobilissimo Viro Guilielmo Pouletto praenobilis ordinis Garterii Equo
Domino de Sancto Johanne Marchioni Winton... Thesaurario Angliae suo
summo Patrono: Guilielmus Bowyerus:**

Accipe mecaenas veterum monumenta parentum

Accipe, sunt animi pignora certa mei.

Si totum relegatur opus, spectabis aperte

Nobile principium stemmatis eximii.

Hic quisquis videat quanto spendescis honore, 5

Donaque quot dederit Jupiter ipse tibi,

Ingenium, doctrina, fides, sapientia, virtus,

Omnibus hic clare conspicienda manent.

Sanctificum nomen toto florebit in orbe,

Prepetuo vigeant Inclyta facta tua. 10

Quamvis digna satis non sunt munuscula nostra,

Nec mea tam claro carmina danda viro.

Haec tamen accipias aequali mente precabor,

Et mendis faveas quas mea scripta ferunt:

Musa (patrone) nequit dignas tibi reddere grates,

15

Reddet pro meritis praemia digna deus.

Nestoreos igitur vivas feliciter annos,

Te deus omnipotens ad sua regna trahat.

Dum terris vivam, dum spiritus hos regit artus,

Sum famulus meritis, premaneamque tuis.

20

Fo. 1r

To the most noble man, William Paulett, knight of the Noble order of the Garter, Lord of Saint John, Marquis of Winchester and Treasurer of England, his Greatest Patron, William Bowyer writes.

Receive, Maecenas, memorials of your ancient ancestors, receive them; these are the certain assurances of my heart. If the whole work is taken as a whole, you will see openly the noble beginning of a distinguished line. Here, let anyone see with how much honor you shine¹, and how many gifts Jupiter himself has given you: genius, learning, faith, wisdom, courage. These remain to be seen by all clearly. Your holy name will thrive in all the world; your famous deeds will live eternally. Our little gifts are not worthy enough, nor should my songs be given to so distinguished² a man. Nevertheless, please accept these things with a fair mind, I pray, and may you favor the little tracts of land which my writings bear out. The Muse, my patron, cannot return to you worthy thanks. God will return worthy rewards as you deserve. Therefore, may you happily live through a long old age³, and may God Almighty take you to his kingdom. While I live on earth, while the spirit rules these limbs⁴, I am and let me remain a servant to your kindnesses.

Fo. 40r

¹ *Splendescis* for *splendescas*, *metri causa*

² *Claro*, despite the temptation to read *clare* in the manuscript

³ Lit. "for Nestoric years," that is, as long as the Greek hero Nestor

⁴ Cf. Vergil *Aeneid* 4.336

Manerium de Stratfeld Mortimer Loquitur

Advertas lector fragilis quam sit tibi vita,

Utque solent dominos res variare suos.

Mortmeri Comititis fueram domus inclyta quondam

Ut videas, nunc me nobilis alter habet:

Invida mors fuerat domino, fallaxque prior,

5

Mortuus ille iacet, mortua fama sui.

Ast ego ter felix talis quam possidet heros,

Cuius divinum nomen ubique viget.

Virtutis fuerat semper studiosus amator,

Et tenuit meritis nomina clara suis.

10

Ut sancta vixit, sanctus sic dicitus ille,

Et caeli sanctis sit pius ille Comes.

The Manor of Stratfield Mortimer Speaks

You should pay attention, reader, to how fragile your life is, and how properties are accustomed⁵ to change their lords. I was once the famous house of the of the earl Mortimer, as you may see⁶, now⁷ another lord has me⁸. Death was greedy and deceptive to my earlier lord, and he lies dead, as does his reputation. But I am three times blessed, whom such a hero possesses, whose divine name thrives everywhere. He was always an eager lover of virtue and he had a name renowned for his achievements. Since he lived in a holy fashion, thus he is called a holy man, and may that pious earl live in the holy places of heaven.

Fo. 43r

⁵ Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.79

⁶ Either a potential subjunctive with an awkward use of *ut*, or *metri causa*. Possibly influenced by Ovid *Amores* 1.6.17

⁷ Cf. Ovid *Tristia* 5.1.8

⁸ Cf. Ovid *Heroides*, *Helene Paridi* 108, *Fasti* 5.186

Manerium de Clara nunc Regisclara loquitur

Clara domus primo Regis longeque remansi,

Clara fui visu, nomine clara meo.

Sed michi tam clarae talis fortuna dabatur,

Ut post id Monachi me coluere novi.

[DOCUMENT]

Ut rursus, segni monachismate dempta,

5

Vendor Meltono sors ea dura fuit.

Me Regis claram dixit (quod iure vocabar)

Atque domo tali nomina digna dedit.

Ast ego non potui tali servire Magistro,

Et cupii dominum linquere saepe meum.

10

Horrui serpentis vultum, nunquamque quievi,

Donec me domino vendidit ille novo.

Nunc avium falco mitis dux atque magistra,

Possidet et domina est illa benigna michi.

Haec bona sors tandem multos optata per annos,

15

Sic mea perpetuo candida fama viget.

Fo. 43r

The Manor of Clere, now Kingsclere, Speaks

At first and for a long time I remained the famous house of a king for a long time, I was famous in appearance, famous by my name. But to famous me, such fortune was so given, such that after this, the new monks cultivated me. When again I thrived, with lazy monkhood removed, I am sold to Melton. This lot was harsh. He called me Kingsclere, which I was rightly called, and to this house he gave worthy names, but I was not able to serve such a master and I desired often to leave my master. I shuddered at the expression of the serpent and never was I quit. Then that man sold me to a new master. Now, of the birds, the falcon, a gentle one, is in possession of me, and she is a kind mistress to me. This good fortune was desired for many years. Thus my pure reputation thrives in perpetuity.

Manerim de Bromeshill quondam Johanne et Thoma de Foxle sine de Foxole

Regia primo fui domus, insignis quoque fame,

Exuperans reliquas fertilitate domos.

Nomine splendescens claro dicebar Olympus,

Cui multis causis similis ipsa fui.

Temporis accessu vulpi vendebar edaci,

5

Et me speluncam reddidit ille suam.

[DOCUMENT]

A Jove flammifero contendi nocte dieque

Ut voluit tali me liberare viro.

Ecce piis votis auscultans aedibus⁹ altis,

Sustulit hunc dominum, tum dedit ille novum.

10

[DOCUMENT]

Me iussit Claris Gemmam remanere Britannis,

Thesauri Custos quam tenet iure Comes.

Jupiter hunc servet multos feliciter annos,

Fulgida quem caeli scandere regna precor.

⁹ *Cedibus* in manuscript

Fos. 47v-49r

Manor of Bromeshill

I was first a royal house, also of notable fame, surpassing the remaining houses in fecundity. Shining with a brilliant name, I was called Olympus, to which I was similar for many reasons. With the passage of time, I was sold to a greedy fox, and he turned me into his den. Under the influence of flame-bearing Jove, I fought night and day, as he wished, to free myself from such a man. Behold, listening to my pious prayers from his high palace¹⁰, he sustains this lord, and then gives him a new manor. He ordered me to remain the jewel for the brilliant Britons, a gem which the Lord Treasurer holds by law as earl. May Jupiter serve this man happily for many years, and I pray that he will ascend to the shining kingdom of heaven.

Fo. 49v

Alias

En ego quae fueram primo domus inclyta fama,

¹⁰ *Cedibus*, error for *aedibus*, or perhaps *sedibus*

Exuperans omnes commoditate mea.

Nomina florescens claro dicebar Olympus,

Cui simile multi me putavere viri.

Temporis accessu vulpi vendebar edaci, 5

Et me speluncam reddidit ille suam.

Heu puto me miseram tali servire magistro,

Et precibus superos invoco saepe meis.

Vendere me tandem voluit, vendi cupiebam,

Nec michi gratis erat, grata nec ipse sibi. 10

Jupiter omnipotens sortem mutaverat illam,

Et me tum domino vendidit ille novo.

Quem volo, quem veneror, quem charum semper habeo,

Quem deus omnipotens ad sua regna ferat.

Ne tamen hic dubites quis sit modo candide lector, 15

Thesauri custos dicitur ille Comes.

Splendida fama sui clarum penetrabit Olympum,

Inclita quam virtus religioque dedit.

Fo. 49v

Alias

Behold, who I was first, a house famous by reputation, surpassing all others in my amenities.

Flourishing in my brilliant name, I was called Olympus, to which many men thought I was

similar. With the passage of time, I was sold to a greedy fox, and he turned me into his den. Alas, I think I am miserable to serve such a master, and I often call to the gods with my prayers. Finally, he wished to sell me, I wanted to be sold, and this was not an easy thing for me, nor was I myself¹¹ pleasant for him. All-powerful Jupiter changed this lot, and he sold me then to a new master, whom I worship, venerate, I will always hold dear, whom may God all-powerful bear to his kingdom. Nevertheless, do not doubt here who that is, dear reader, that earl is called the Lord Treasurer. His splendid fame will pierce brilliant Olympus, a fame which his renowned virtue and devotion gave.

¹¹ *Ipsa*? Possibly attracted by Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.84