

Walafrid Strabo – Poem to Empress Judith

(ca. 834–835)

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Translated by

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Courtney M. Booker

University of British Columbia

(cbooker@interchange.ubc.ca)

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	<i>Temporis infausta sub potestate dolendi</i>	In an inpropitious time under the dominion of suffering,
	<i>Dum fraudis commenta pios populumque patremque</i>	when the falsehoods of deceit were oppressing both the pious people
	<i>Opprimerent, sanctamque fidem delere pararent</i>	and [their] father, and were at the point of destroying the holy faith,
	<i>Proscriptam exiliis, odio, vi, carcere, ferro,</i>	[which itself had been] outlawed by exile, hatred, force, prison, and iron,
5	<i>Tunc iacuere boni nebula meroris opaci,</i>	then good men lay hidden by a cloud of grief,
	<i>Solaque per gremium regni nutantis ineptos</i>	and a singular treachery vehemently spread the improper designs
	<i>Perfidia exeruit fervore tyrannidis ausus.</i>	of a faithless tyranny throughout the heart of the kingdom.
	<i>Dum mihi sollicito et recti pro parte gementi</i>	When enormous concerns flowed quite frequently into that breast of mine,
	<i>Saepius ingentes fluxere in pectora curae,</i>	[!] who was worried and lamenting for the side of Good,

10	<p><i>Nec requies praesaga mihi per somnia, donec</i></p> <p><i>Haud dubia virtute deus, prisci atra timoris</i></p> <p><i>Nubila decutiens, nitidum sperare serenum</i></p> <p><i>Edocuit, tenebris dum nox includeret altis</i></p> <p><i>Pallida, quod terram et longum quod inane vocamus.</i></p>	<p>no comfort came to me</p> <p>through prophetic dreams, until God</p> <p>with His virtue beyond any doubt,</p> <p>driving away the dismal clouds</p> <p>of old fear, informed [me] to expect</p> <p>a bright, clear sky,</p> <p>when the pale night was enclosing</p> <p>with deep darkness</p> <p>that which we call the Earth</p> <p>and the "great void."</p>
15	<p><i>Dum sopor internis animalia fessa medullis</i></p> <p><i>Solvit, et angores longi curasque diei,</i></p> <p><i>Munere divino, moderamine temperat aequo,</i></p> <p><i>Visa libri series coram pulcherrima longi</i></p> <p><i>Ante meos vultus, metricis qui versibus omnem</i></p>	<p>When sleep relieves beasts,</p> <p>tired to their inner marrow,</p> <p>and, by a divine gift, may soften,</p> <p>by an even moderation,</p> <p>the anxieties and troubles</p> <p>of a long day,</p> <p>[I came] face to face with a most beautiful</p> <p>sight; before my gaze [were] the contents</p> <p>of a great book, which had</p> <p>its entire surface filled</p>
20	<p><i>Rite superficiem gestabat in ordine plenam.</i></p> <p><i>Dumque avidus rerum cautus per singula lector</i></p> <p><i>Irem, animadverti seriem de casibus ipsam</i></p> <p><i>Et regni et regis textu resonare pedestri.</i></p> <p><i>Caesaris hic nomen quadam sub imagine versum,</i></p>	<p>with poetic verses</p> <p>in the proper sequence.</p> <p>And when I, the reader, eager and wary,</p> <p>went through each of the verses,</p> <p>I discerned that the very content</p> <p>[of the book which I was reading]</p> <p>spoke, in prosaic wording, about</p> <p>events of the king and the kingdom.</p> <p>Here, under a certain image,</p> <p>the name of Caesar was changed,</p>
25	<p><i>Proque sacro semper Ludowici Equitatus illic</i></p> <p><i>Nomine scriptus erat, neque me cognominis huius</i></p> <p><i>Turbabat novitas, cum causa videlicet ipsa</i></p>	<p>and for that ever-sacred name of Louis</p> <p>there was written <i>Equitatus</i>,</p> <p>and the newness of that name</p> <p>did not disturb me,</p> <p>since that condition clearly</p> <p>described the person,</p>

	<i>Personam exprimeret, notis notissima gestis.</i>	things being most well-known by [their] familiar deeds.
	<i>Namque legebatur geminae discessio fraudis,</i>	For [within the book] was read the division of dual deceit,
30	<i>Impietas, raptusque duplex, patientia victrix,</i>	sin, and two-fold rape, victorious patience
	<i>Rectoris rerumque decus reparabile semper.</i>	and the ever-retrievable honor of the governor and [his] belongings.
	<i>Cumque oculi, sensus, aures, atque intima cordis</i>	And when [my] eyes, senses, ears, and the innermost chamber
	<i>Antra siti arderent relegendo sive legendo,</i>	of my buried heart burned from reading and re-reading,
	<i>Frater ab aspectu librum, miracula cuius</i>	a monk, snatching [it] away, held far from [my] view the book,
35	<i>Praebuit, eripiens memori superaddidit ore:</i>	to whose wonders he added for remembering even more by a speech:
	<i>‘Tristor ex oculis humor, quam tota decebat</i>	“Tears sadder than it was right for any breast to bear fall from the eyes
	<i>Pectora, non longae passuri damna ruinae.’</i>	of one who will not suffer the misfortunes of a long overthrow.”
	<i>Evigilans, pariterque volens retinere quod hausit,</i>	Vigilant, and at the same time wishing to remember that which I took in,
	<i>Vix versus in fine duos, et nomen adauctum</i>	in the end I remembered the two verses— [they] scarcely having suffered
40	<i>Mente recordabar, reliquorum obliviam passus.</i>	the oblivion of the rest—and that name, having grown in [my] mind.
	<i>Nominis auspicio pacis spem protinus auxi:</i>	I further increased the hope of peace by the omen of the name:
	<i>Veloces virtutis opes Equitatus ille</i>	That <i>Equitatus</i> foretells a quick means of strength,
	<i>Portendebat, idemque sequens assertio firmat,</i>	and consequently the same statement confirms,
	<i>Tristari nimium tolerantem pondera dura</i>	that oppressive burdens ought not sadden the overly tolerant man,
45	<i>Non debere, citos facturum in laeta recursus.</i>	[who] will make the rapid returns to joy.

	<i>Haec ego cum videam factis impleta, quid ultra</i>	Although I saw these things fulfilled
	<i>Occulerem? placuit vobis offere probanda,</i>	in deeds, what more might I have been
	<i>Quae nobis longi nutribant gaudia voti.</i>	concealing? It is pleasing that things
	<i>Augustae pauper decies dat munera quina</i>	which should be further examined,
		[and] which for me nourished the joys
		of a great desire, be given to you.
		Seeking the grace of her Highness,
		the poor Strabo gives ten times five gifts,
50	<i>Strabo petens veniam, signat quam calculus idem.</i>	which this same amount [of verse]
		signifies.