
This is a critical edition of the Vatican text (A) of the *Hisperica Famina*, with an English translation on facing pages. There is also a detailed philological commentary, a lengthy study of all the problems associated with this text, appendices of foreign words and of desinences, and an index verborum. The text presents many new readings, while the translation is the first complete rendering into a modern language.

Michael Herren argues in his introduction that these bizarre Latin compositions were written in Ireland toward the middle of the seventh century, and were heavily dependent on the *Etymologies* and other writings of Isidore of Seville. Other sources included Gildas, Vergil, and possibly Virgilius Maro Grammaticus; the influence of Martianus Capella is discounted.

The purpose of these compositions in their present form seems to be pedagogical, but the impetus for the creation of an obscurantist “special language” is more difficult to explain. The language is made up of foreignisms (Greek, Semitic and Celtic), hybrids, archaic Latin words, neologisms and words used in unusual senses (often influenced by etymologies). There are numerous Vulgar Latin influences on the orthography, as well as examples of “Hibernisms.” The influence of Hisperic diction was considerable both in the British Isles from the seventh century onwards and on the continent during the Carolingian period.