

A NEW MANUSCRIPT OF
PETER RIGA'S *AURORA* AT PIMS
AND ITS UNUSUAL CONTENTS

Greti Dinkova-Bruun

WITH the well-known fact that there are over 470 extant manuscripts of the *Aurora* around the world today, one might wonder why another copy of this widespread Latin versification of the Bible merits a mention, let alone a short article. What follows will show that the manuscript of the *Aurora* acquired in June of 2021 by the Library of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies (PIMS) in Toronto deserves to take central place in the complex textual history of Peter Riga's masterpiece. Even among the numerous copies of the *Aurora* that preserve different authorial versions,¹ combined with expansions by Riga's official reviser, Aegidius of Paris,² and various other anonymous accretions,³ this previously unknown early thirteenth-century copy of the poem represents an *unicum* that expands significantly our knowledge of the work's textual transformations through time. It is a surprising witness and a true game changer, especially in regard to both the versification of the Book of Job and the anonymous poem on the Fall of Jerusalem. These

¹ See *Aurora: Petri Rigae Biblia Versificata*, 2 vols., ed. Paul Beichner (Notre Dame, 1965), 1:xvii–xx.

² See *ibid.* 1:xxi–xxiv; Greti Dinkova-Bruun, “*Corrector Ultimus: Aegidius of Paris and Peter Riga's Aurora*,” in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Rancović, Papers in Mediaeval Studies 22 (Toronto, 2012), 172–89, and “Marking One's Own: Aegidius of Paris's Revisions of Peter Riga's *Aurora*,” *Filologia Mediolatina* 26 (2019): 127–42.

³ See *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:xxiv–xxivii. I have edited many of the anonymous accretions, most recently in Greti Dinkova-Bruun, “*Liber Esdre et Neemie: A Previously Unknown Accretion to Peter Riga's Aurora from Manuscript Paris, BnF, Lat. 13050*,” *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 48/2 (2013): 217–28.

texts are discussed in more detail below under sections II.2. and III.3. respectively.

The newly discovered manuscript has been assigned the siglum Lat. 15 in the PIMS collections of manuscripts.⁴ According to an *ex libris* in the lower margin of fol. 1r of the codex, the volume belonged to the Chartreuse Notre-Dame de la Prée, near Troyes,⁵ a fourteenth-century Carthusian foundation, from where it travelled at an unknown date to Southern Germany, eventually becoming part of a private collection and thus remaining unknown to the scholarly community until now. An early-modern hand adds in the right margin of fol. 1r the following inscription about the author of the work: “Petrus clericus de ecclesia Remensis, dictus de Riga, infra in Vespasiani prologo: ‘Magistris literature secularis Petrus Riga regularis, etc.’”

MS PIMS Lat. 15 comprises 145 parchment folios, measuring 260 × 165 mm and writing space measuring 197 × 100/105 mm. The text is written in two columns per page, each of fifty lines. The layout is typical for copying poetry, with the *litterae notabiliores* for each verse marked only by position at the beginning of each line. The rubrics are placed in the body of the text and initials are rendered in alternating blue and red ink. Further subdivisions of the text are sometimes added in the margins. The manuscript is written by one hand in a small thirteenth-century *Littera Gothica Textualis Media*. The only text copied in the codex is the *Aurora*, and there are only a few marginal glosses throughout the manuscript. The slight water damage in the upper margin of fols. 1–6 does not affect the writing space. The binding is modern.

I. CONTENTS AND ORDER OF BOOKS

As already intimated, because of the complexity of *Aurora*'s textual development, the manuscript copies of the poem often vary considerably from one another.⁶ In fact, even when macro elements, such as expan-

⁴ For a list of the various manuscript holdings at the PIMS library, see <https://pims.ca/article/a-conspectus-of-the-collections-at-the-pims/>.

⁵ The *ex libris* reads “Iste liber est domus Pratee ordinis Cartusiensis. A xii.”

⁶ One unique witness of the *Aurora*, among many, is examined in Greti Dinkova-Bruun, “The Verse Book of Revelation in Engelberg, Stiftsbibliothek, Ms. 117,” *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 55/1 (2020): 113–24.

sions, rearrangements, and revisions, coincide in some witnesses and thus seem to suggest affiliation, only careful examination of the text can reveal the true relationship between the codices. This tension between content evolution and textual variation is very difficult to navigate for long, fluid, and widely disseminated works such as the *Aurora*.

Since each manuscript of Riga's composition might and often does contain a unique version of the poem, it is important in each case to describe not only what the codex contains, but also in which order the material is copied and moved around. In this context, it needs to be stressed that the way in which the *Aurora* text is presented in Paul Beichner's edition of the work does not exist in any manuscript witness. This remark is not offered as a criticism, but as a reminder of the divide that exists between the rationalized world of the edited text and the unpredictable universe of the handwritten copy, especially when we are confronted with a text preserved in hundreds of manuscripts produced in the course of centuries—from the early thirteenth to the late fifteenth century in the case of the *Aurora*.

The following outlines the contents of MS PIMS Lat. 15 as well as the order in which the books of the *Aurora* are copied in it. Books that contain additions incorporated within Riga's text are marked with an asterisk (*), and elements that represent completely new expansions of the original are rendered in *italics*:

1. "Peter Riga's Preface" (fol. 1ra)⁷
2. Genesis (fols. 1rb–9va)
3. Exodus (fols. 9va–17ra)
4. Leuiticus (fols. 17ra–21rb)⁸
5. Numeri (fols. 21rb–24vb)
6. Deuteronomium (fols. 24vb–26rb)
7. Iosue (fols. 26rb–27va)
8. Iudices (fols. 27va–29ra)
9. Ruth (fol. 29ra–va)
10. I Regum (fols. 29va–32va)
11. II Regum (fols. 32va–34vb; *expl.* not marked)

⁷ See *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:7–8, no. III. *Inc.*: "Frequens sodalium meorum petitio. . ."

⁸ The text here ends with v. 796: "Qui tumet, ascribens candida facta sibi" (see *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:178). The last ten verses of Riga's Leviticus are missing.

12. III Regum (fols. 34vb–36va; *inc.* and *expl.* not marked)
- * 13. IV Regum (fols. 36va–38ra; *inc.* not marked).
14. Tobias (fols. 38ra–40va)
15. Daniel (fols. 40va–44vb)
16. Iudith (fols. 44vb–45vb)
17. Hester (fols. 45vb–47ra)
18. Macchabei (fols. 47ra–49va)
19. Euangelia (fols. 49va–65rb)
20. Recapitulationes (fols. 65rb–67vb)
21. Actus apostolorum (fols. 67vb–72vb)
22. *Cantica canticorum Beate uirginis Marie* (fols. 73ra–75ra)
23. *Cantica canticorum* (fols. 75ra–82vb)
- * 24. Iob (fols. 82vb–95vb)
25. *Lamentationes Ieremie* (fols. 96ra–98va)
26. *Vaspasianus* (fols. 98vb–145va), a.k.a. *De excidio urbis Ierosolimorum*

This list shows that MS PIMS Lat. 15 preserves the third authorial version of the *Aurora*, without any of the revisions of Aegidius of Paris, but with some accretions that are either not edited critically (no. 22)⁹ or not edited at all (nos. 25 and 26), and thus remain relatively unknown and unstudied.

II. THE EXPANDED BOOKS

1. The Fourth Book of Kings (no. 13)

The additional passage in *IV Regum* is not long. It comprises 46 verses that versify chosen elements from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, the twelve minor prophets, and the Canticle together with their Christological interpretation. Forty-two verses are included after v. 178 of Riga's text,¹⁰ while the remaining four are added—somewhat incongruously—at the end of the book.¹¹ The verses after v. 178 interrupt the flow of Riga's narrative, and since there is no obvious reason for them to be

⁹ See n. 21 below.

¹⁰ See *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:312.

¹¹ The “Qui sedet in tenebris” is added at the end of *IV Regum* in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. Salem IX 62 (part 1) (saec. XIII med, Salem), fols. 47vb–48ra (<https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX62>). The passage is found after the *Recapitulationes* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 8323 (saec. XIII), fol. 166r–v (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10033009n#>).

placed here, one might speculate that they could have been copied from a source that placed them in the margin at this point in the text. The impression that the verses on the minor prophets did not have a fixed place is confirmed by the Heidelberg and Paris manuscripts mentioned in n. 11. The passage seems to be preserved in only half a dozen copies of the *Aurora*, so it has to be considered a relatively rare text. I include here a transcription of this accretion from the PIMS manuscript, where it appears on fols. 37va–38ra, in order to make the text available for future study and comparison with other witnesses.¹² I also have added in triangular brackets the precise biblical verse to which the poetry is related:

Ysaïas propheta (Is 9:2)

Qui sedet in tenebris populo lux orta refulget,
Cum lucem mundi uirginis aula parit.

Ieremias propheta (Ier 11:19)

Mittitur in panem lignum, cum tempore mortis
Angelicus panis in cruce Christus obit.

Osee propheta (Os 14:6)

Est Christus quasi ros, sunt tamquam lilia iusti,
Cum mentes iustas gracia summa replet.
Lilia sex flores producunt munere roris:
Ex Christi dono sex bona iustus habet.

Qui panem, potum, tectum, tegumenta, medelam,
Clauem fert miseris, sex nitet ille bonis.

Ioel propheta (Ioel 3:18)

Ex ortu Christi stillat dulcedinis ymber,
Ros lactis manat, dulcia mella fluunt.
Lac Christi carnem, mel declarat deitatem;
Lac iunctum melli Christus utrumque simul.

Amos propheta (Amos 7:7)

Stando super murum quasi cementarius esset,
Cum trulla Dominus se manifestat Amos.
Trulla parans murum cemento gracia Christi est,
Cemento fidei qua renouatur homo.

¹² For example, the rubrics preserved in the PIMS manuscript are not found in either the Heidelberg or the Paris manuscript.

Abdias propheta ⟨Abd 1:17⟩

Est in monte Syon saluatio facta reorum,
Cum micat ex sacra uirgine nostra salus.

Ionas propheta ⟨Ion 4:6–7, 10⟩

Vermiculus nascens unbracula facta prophete
Diripit et nudat mestificatque Ionam.
Absque uiro nascens de uirgine Christus Hebreos
Lege sua nudat que fuit umbra prius.

Micheas propheta ⟨Mic 4:8⟩

Virgo Maria “gregis turris nebulosa” uocatur
Sicut Michee uox nebulosa sonat.
Est turris que nos munit, nebulosa uocatur
Nam perfusa fuit pneumatis imbre sacri.
Ros est in nebula, deus est in uirgine, turris
Clausos custodit, nos sacra uirgo tegit.

Naum propheta ⟨Naum 1:13⟩

Virgam de dorso Iudei distrahit actor,
Vincula dirumpit, dum synagoga redit.¹³

Abacuc propheta ⟨Hab 3:4⟩

Cum sidus rutilat, lux Christi splendet in ortu,
Cuius sunt manibus cornua fixa crucis.

Aggeus propheta ⟨Agg 2:24⟩

Nos saluat Dominus fortis, cum fortiter hostem
In cruce contriuit¹⁴ sanguinis unda sacri.

Zacharias propheta ⟨Zach 9:10⟩

Dat pacem Dominus, cum pacem nunciat orbi
Angelus et pacis actor in orbe micat.

Malachias propheta ⟨Mal 3:3⟩

Ad templum uenit Dominus, cum regia uirgo
Optulit in templo munera digna Deo.

Sophonias propheta ⟨So 3:17⟩

Filia Ierusalem uultu locare sereno
In medio populi rex dominator adest.

¹³ redit] perit *Toronto MS a.c.*

¹⁴ contriuit] contrituit *Toronto MS*

⟨Cant 6:9⟩¹⁵

Virgo nitens meritis surgens aurora uocatur,
 Que rutilans mundo nubila cuncta fugat.
 Aurore species est solis nuncia, solem
 Iusticie¹⁶ nobis aurea uirgo tulit.¹⁷

Two comments need to be made in regard to this short addition: first, the order in which the books of the minor prophets are presented here is not the order seen in the Vulgate, where Zephaniah (Sophonias) follows Habakkuk (Habacuc) and precedes Haggai (Aggeus); and second, the passage on Zephaniah is lacking altogether in the Heidelberg and Paris manuscripts; the reason for this omission is unclear. These peculiarities might be explained when the remaining manuscripts containing the “Qui sedet”-text are examined. One thing, however, is clear: the verses were not widely copied, possibly because the *Recapitulationes*, which Riga added in his second authorial version, incorporate a section on the twelve minor prophets, even though it is worth noting that for most of the prophets “Qui sedet” and the *Recapitulationes* have different scriptural references.¹⁸

2. The Book of Job (no. 24)

The *Liber Iob* in MS PIMS Lat. 15, contains an expansion on a completely different level than the one in the Fourth Book of Kings. It is apparent to any reader of the *Aurora* that Riga's versification of this biblical book is not complete, despite spanning 578 rhyming hexameters.¹⁹ The text covers relatively thoroughly Job 1:1 through 14:8–9 (to verse 537), after which the narrative jumps to Job 42:7 (vv. 538–49) in order to end hastily with two non-biblical sections about God's affection towards Job and the numerous years of life he was granted because of it (vv. 550–78). It is evident from this brief content summary that a lot is missing from Riga's versification. The PIMS manuscript fills the gap by adding on fols. 86vb–95vb as many as 1,318

¹⁵ No rubric.

¹⁶ sol iusticie: Mal 4:2.

¹⁷ tulit *Heidelberg MS* : dedit *Paris MS* : fuit *Toronto MS*

¹⁸ See *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 2:621–24.

¹⁹ See *ibid.* 2:669–702.

lines that deal with the biblical text from Job 14:10 to Job 41:24. Even though this expansion makes this version of the Book of Job the second longest text in the entire *Aurora* (only the Gospels are longer), Job 42 is still missing. We know that this final chapter was also versified at some point because a section of it is preserved in a fragment used for a cover binding of a volume printed in London in 1610 and containing some of the works of the English clergyman Matthew Sutcliffe (1550–1629).²⁰ But even without this final biblical section the expansion in the PIMS manuscript of the *Aurora* is extraordinary, turning Riga's original composition into a new text that merits both an edition and a serious investigation of its textual affiliations.

III. THE NEW ELEMENTS

1. The Cantic of Mary (no. 22)

The previous section already showed that MS PIMS Lat. 15 is not a regular copy of Riga's *magnum opus*. There is, however, much more that makes the codex a truly exceptional witness of the work. First, it contains the so-called *Cantica canticorum Beate uirginis Marie*, an anonymous accretion of over 300 rhymed hexameters which was edited from a single Oxford manuscript (Bodleian Library Laud misc. 576) by Paul Beichner in 1959.²¹ Since then it has been established that the Marian cantic, a versification inspired by Riga's own *Cantica*, is copied in eleven manuscripts. In nine of them the text is incorporated within the *Aurora* and in two it appears separately from the Riga context. Now, we can add to this count the copy in the PIMS manuscript (Plate 1), bringing the total of manuscripts preserving the Cantic of Mary to twelve.²²

²⁰ The book is Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 897.1 Theol. For the entry in the library catalogue, see OPC4 - results/titledata (gbv.de). I am grateful to Dr. Christian Heitzmann for drawing my attention to this fragment.

²¹ See Paul Beichner, "Cantica canticorum B. Marie," *Marianum* 21/2 (1959): 1–15. The poem is also mentioned in *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:xxvi. *Inc.*: "Sponsum cum sponsa Salomonis cantica regis || Altius extollunt super omnia cantica legis."

²² I am preparing a new critical edition based on all manuscript witnesses and a study of the manuscript context in which the poem appears.



Plate 1. Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies MS Lat. 15, fol. 73r
(by permission of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies)

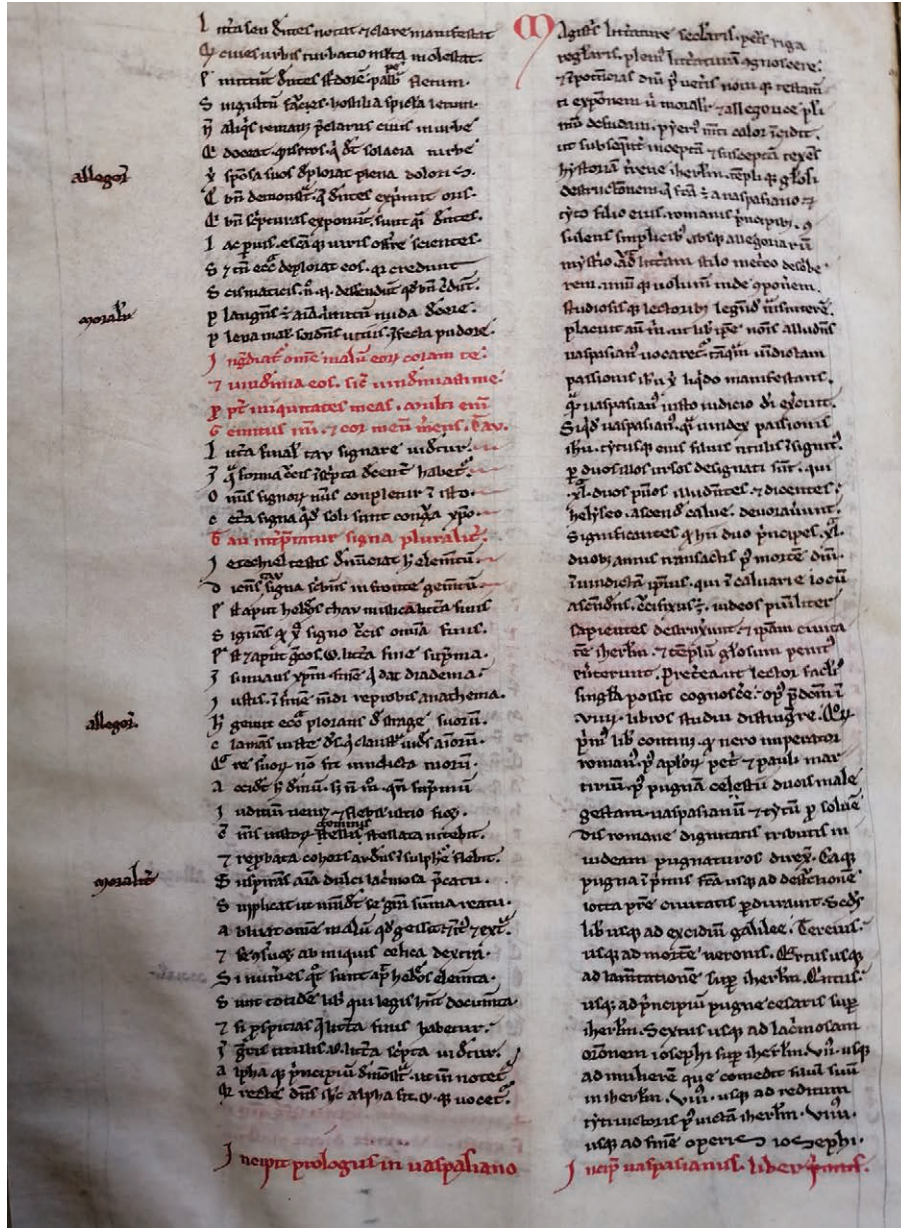


Plate 2. Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies MS Lat. 15, fol. 98v
(by permission of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies)

2. The Lamentations of Jeremiah (no. 25)

MS PIMS Lat. 15 preserves a copy of another anonymous accretion, the 440-verse, widely circulated, and still unedited *Lamentationes Ieremie*, also called *Treni Ieremiae* and *Lamentationes Lamentationum*.²³ As with the Canticum of Mary, Beichner knew of this addition, but was not aware of its presence in manuscripts of the *Aurora* that did not contain Aegidius's revisions and thus concluded that the piece could not have been written by Riga.²⁴ However, the *Lamentationes Ieremie* are in fact copied in a few codices that contain only Riga's versions (around ten), and at present I am aware of sixty manuscripts preserving the versification, PIMS Lat. 15 included. The popularity and rather early compositional date of the *Lamentationes Ieremie* suggests that the poem could have been written either by Riga himself or by a very close collaborator/imitator in order to be added to the *Aurora* as its last installment. This hypothesis would explain why the work did not make it into what became the "canonical" *Aurora*, copies of which must have been already in circulation by the time the versification of the *Lamentationes* was completed. The early date of PIMS Lat. 15, ca. 1220, and the fact that it contains only Riga's text without Aegidius's revisions supports this suggestion, which, however, cannot be fully substantiated.

3. The Poem on the Fall of Jerusalem (no. 26)

Finally, PIMS Lat. 15 contains a poem that is given the title *Vaspsianus* in a prose prologue copied on fol. 98v (Plate 2). This is probably the most extraordinary addition found in the codex. Until now, three *Aurora* manuscripts were known to contain a version of this poem without the prologue and under the title *De excidio urbis Ierosolimorum* (*On the Destruction of the City of Jerusalem*) given in two of them.²⁵ This work

²³ *Inc.*: "Aleph doctrinam notat et doctrina uocatur || Vt se cognoscat homo corde Deusque colatur."

²⁴ See *Aurora*, ed. Beichner, 1:xxv.

²⁵ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 990 (saec. XIII¹), fols. 1v–145v; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 973 (saec. XIII¹), fols. 1v–252v; and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Archivio Capitulare S. Petri in Vaticano G. 56 (saec. XIII²), fols. 2r–219v (the Vatican manuscript does not preserve the title). *Inc.*: "Nero stupens fremuit quod uictus cessit Hebreis || Cestius

offers a partial versification of the Latin translation of *The Jewish War* (*De bello iudaico*),²⁶ one of the two major works of the Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37 BC–ca. 100 AD) which recounts the events of the first Jewish-Roman war in the first century. The text of the *De excidio* is 1896 verses long, covering Books III–V of the *De bello iudaico* and ending with the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem.²⁷ Thus, despite its title, the *De excidio urbis Ierosolimorum* never reaches Book VI of Josephus's text where the last days of the siege and the fall of the city are described in great detail. This is a puzzling situation, suggesting that the poem was most likely unfinished.

The PIMS manuscript changes the *status quo*. In this copy of the *Aurora* the versification of the *De bello iudaico* continues for another 1,400 verses (fols. 108va–115va) in which the Josephan narrative is completed and the last days of the City of Jerusalem and its Fall are depicted with all the fascinating, gruesome, and tragic moments provided by the poet's prose sources. This is not the place to outline all the intricacies of the added verses. It suffices to say that a preliminary reading shows that whoever completed the story used also Book V of the Pseudo-Hegesippus's Christian retelling of the *De bello iudaico*, known as *De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae*.²⁸ In addition, as already mentioned, PIMS Lat. 15 provides a short prose prologue to the poem, where we learn that the poem should be called *Vaspasianus* and the text divided into nine books.

It is unclear what the relationship between the short and long version of the poem is. Was the incomplete text written first and copied in some manuscripts despite its unfinished state? But, then, when the text was expanded, why did it not circulate? This accumulative compositional at-

et titulos hostica pugna tulit." The poem is not edited, but I am preparing an edition with English translation.

²⁶ For the Latin *Bellum*, see *Flavii Josephi De Bello Judaico libri septem*, ed. Edward Cardwell (Oxford, 1837), 2 vols. (vol. 1: Greek; vol. 2: Latin). One can also consult the Latin Josephus and its English translation on the website of the Latin Josephus Project: <https://sites.google.com/site/latinjosephus>.

²⁷ For a detailed description of the *De excidio urbis Ierosolimorum* and its place among other Latin versifications of Josephus, see Greti Dinkova-Bruun, "Latin Versifications of Josephus's Latin *Bellum*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 46 (2021): 37–53.

²⁸ Pseudo-Hegesippus's text is edited in *Hegesippi qui dicitur Historiae libri V*, ed. Vincenzo Ussani, CSEL 66 (Vienna, 1932).

titude is typical of Riga's *modus versificandi*, but was it him personally who wrote the *Vaspasianus*? It is impossible to tell, even though one thing is certain: whoever wrote the poem was capable of adopting and imitating Riga's style perfectly.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Even though it is not unusual to encounter unique manuscripts among the multiple codices that preserve Peter Riga's *Aurora*, the PIMS copy still has to be considered one of the most unique witnesses of the work. Two main elements make it so: first the expanded versification of the Book of Job, and second, the complete text of the poem on the Fall of Jerusalem. Together, these two accretions add several thousand lines to the textual fabric of Riga's masterpiece. PIMS Lat. 15 does not contain the fullest redaction of the *Aurora*—after all Aegidius's revisions, which amount to over 5,000 verses are not present in it—but the rare texts we see here make the codex one of the most significant witnesses of the poem, a codex that truly enriches our understanding of the textual and cultural significance of one of the most influential verse Bibles of the Middle Ages.

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