Ælfric Bata's Colloquia:

Reassessing an Eleventh-Century Latin Textbook

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Abstract

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This article reassesses one collection of colloquies composed by Ælfric Bata (fl. 1005), a monk and teacher of Latin likely working in Winchester or Canterbury. Bata was a student of Ælfric of Eynsham (c.955–c.1010) and later editor of his work and his own colloquies continue in the same educational tradition. The only extant manuscript is in St John's College, Oxford MS 154, a collection of pedagogical resources for the teaching of Latin.

There are two printed editions of the text, first by Stevenson (1929) and Gwara & Porter (1997), both of which take an editorial approach to the text that is not represented in the materiality of the manuscript, particularly in where different dialogues start and end and how different colloquies are grouped through the use of initials, which causes the contextual connections between the dialogues to be obscured. This has resulted in negative interpretations of the work that are less founded when the work is taken as a whole, namely the deliberate contrasting of poor and idealised monastic behaviour and the embedding of morality within the dialogues.

This article seeks to critique their approaches to the text and discuss how their decisions have impacted the treatment of Bata's work in scholarship and reassess its importance a pedagogical work in pre-conquest English monastic education.

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Introduction

Colloquies form a 'curricular triangle' with glossaries and grammars offering practice conversation, which could be used as models of productive language in use.[1] Nowadays, we would likely call them 'roleplays', proving examples of spoken language seeking to create 'something resembling the unconscious, effortless flow of speech in the first language.'[2] Many language textbooks and autodidactic materials start with a similar format today, with a short conversation before leading into study of grammar. Colloquies provide us with a view into the day-to-day vocabulary of monastic life and some suggestion of how Latin was taught in the latter days of Anglo-Saxon England.

Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955- c. 1010)[3] is a figure of almost universal praise, being called a 'genius[who] was able to impart liveliness and spontaneity to the dialogue'.[4] He is responsible for the first vernacular grammar of Latin and marks a turning point in the production of teaching resources written for non-native speakers.[5] Ælfric's *Colloquy* has been called 'after *Beowulf* perhaps the best known writing of the Anglo-Saxons' not least because it survives at least partially in some 15 manuscripts but also because its thorough glossing and approachable language makes it a good learning material for the study of Old English.[6] Nonetheless, the technical nature of his work means that his impact is limited outside the field of Old English study.[7] There are no metaphors or kennings to ponder over and instead he writes concisely about Latin and Old English grammar. Ælfric's *Colloquy* survives in three copies that 'differ

[1] Rebecca King Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in *Literary Cultures and Medieval and Early Modern Childhoods*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Diane Purkiss (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 21–35 (p. 22) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14211-7_2>.
[2] David W. Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools', *Neophilologus*, 78.3 (1994), 463–82 (p. 464).
[3] Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric of Eynsham [Ælfric Grammaticus, Ælfric the Homilist] (c. 950–c. 1010), Benedictine Abbot of Eynsham and Scholar', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/187>.
[4] George Norman Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, Exeter medieval English texts, Revised ed (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1978), p. 1.
[5] Vivien Law, *The History of Linguistics in Europe from Plato to 1600* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 192.
[6] David W. Porter, 'Anglo-Saxon Colloquies: Ælfric, Ælfric Bata and de Raris Fabulis Retractata', *Neophilologus*, 81.3 (1997), 467–80 (p. 446) <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004220716172>; David W Porter, 'Ælfric's Colloquy and Ælfric Bata', *Neophilologus*, 80.4 (1996), 639–60 (p. 639).
[7] Hugh Magennis, 'Chapter One. Ælfric Scholarship', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. by Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 5–34 (p. 5).

enough from one another to show that the text underwent multiple processes of revision and amplification in the early eleventh century', almost certainly edited by his student Ælfric Bata.[8]

Bata (fl. c. 1010)[9] is a figure we know comparatively little about.[10] Even his name is something of a mystery, with sources variously suggesting it means 'fifty pints' or 'the barrel'.[11] Until recently, he has been treated as a maligned figure and quietly ignored; his scenes depict debauchery and suggestive sexual impropriety, his monks are lazy and his students liars and thieves. Even those who praise him call him a rascal and talk of his 'moral blindness'.[12] His Latin is imperfect, being literary in places and error-prone in others. Lindsay, in his introduction to the first published edition of the *Colloquia* says 'we must write down Ælfric Bata with Dogberry. No plea can save a man capable of pages like pp. 52, 62-63', referring to the insults and pleas used in the scenes he depicts.[13] Some writers have only barely stopped short of calling Bata a drunken child-molester, using the scenes as a sort of record of misdeeds.[14]

In this dissertation, I will examine one of Bata's *Colloquia* found in Oxford, St John's College 154. In Chapter One, I outline the educational heritage of Bata and of his *Colloquia*. In Chapter Two, I discuss it in its published form and the critical responses it has had in literature. In Chapter Three, I comment upon the materiality of the manuscript and compare it to its treatment in modern printed form. In Chapter Four, I critically examine the colloquies sequentially, exploring intra- and intertextual links and discuss both their pedagogical value as Latin-teaching texts and as exemplars of how to navigate monastic life. I also explore anomalies that were introduced in later publication, not present in the manuscript, and how they have impacted interpretation. In the conclusion, I briefly summarise the (modern) teaching methodology suggested in the work and the points discussed.

I argue that the moral messages in Bata's colloquies are clear when the work is taken as a whole, regularly contrasting bad behaviour with modelled good behaviour. Bata's work is worthy of

[8] Thomas N Hall, 'Ælfric As Pedagogue', in *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), pp. 193–216 (p. 20).
[9] 'Ælfric Bata', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/186>.
[10] Anthony E Farnham, 'Review of Gwara, Scott, Ed., and Porter, David W., Trans., "Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of AElfric Bata"', *Speculum; a Journal of Mediaeval Studies*, 75.1 (2000), 188 (p. 188).
[11] David W. Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, ed. by Scott Gwara (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1997), pp. 2–4; Stephen J Harris, 'Aelfric's Colloquy', *Medieval Literature for Children*, 2003, 112–30 (p. 113).
[12] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 15.
[13] W.H. Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. vii.
[14] Dan Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 49.

reassessment as an unusually presented, but ultimately contextually appropriate collection of texts that teach Latin with care and embed lessons of morality and monastic identity.

A note on terms and languages

To avoid confusion, which is inevitable when discussing two men with near-identical names, who produced near-identically named works with near-identical structures and purposes, I have made the following editorial decisions:

- Ælfric of Eynsham will be referred to *Ælfric* and his colloquies will be referred to as the *Colloquy* (in English);
- Ælfric Bata will be primarily referred to as *Bata* and his colloquies will be referred to as the *Colloquia* (in Latin); and
- When colloquies are referred to in a general sense, they will be uncapitalised.

Where Latin, Old English and Present Day English are used within the same text, Latin will be *italicised*, Old English will be in **bold** and Present Day English is unmarked or in inverted commas, depending on context. In translation, parentheses mark sections originally in Old English.

Chapter One: Ælfric, Bata and Education

Ælfric of Eynsham's contributions to Anglo-Saxon Latin education in England cannot be overlooked. Taught by Æthelwold in Winchester, he instigated a process of correcting grammatical, vocabulary, conversational, and pedagogical inconsistencies in Anglo-Latin learning.'[15] His three resources, the *Colloquy*, *Grammar* and *Glossary* mark a textual shift in the teaching of Latin in monastic England. Whereas previous didactic works were, effectively, reference grammars for people who already had a high level of Latin understanding, Ælfric's writing marks a development of texts for pedagogical purposes. The *Colloquy* is a series of conversations, likely to provide a roleplay script for students to follow in the classroom.

There are other manuscripts that show a clear influence from Ælfric's other works, such as the *Vocabularium Cornicum*, which is based on the *Glossary*. The *Vocabularium Cornicum* is itself one of the most important texts in the history of Cornish language studies, being 'the largest extant source of vocabulary from the Old Cornish period',[16] but it is also one of the clearest uses of Ælfric's *Grammar* as a template to be used in the study of languages other than Latin or Old English.

The *Grammar* begins with a self-deprecating introduction:

> *Ego Ælfricus, ut minus sapiens, has excerptiones de Prisciano minore uel maiore uobis puerulis tenellis ad uestram linguam transferre studui, quatinus perlectis octo partibus Donati in isto libello potestis utramque linguam, uidelicet latinam et anglicam, uestrae teneritudini inserere interim, usque quo ad perfectiora perueniatis studia*.[17]
>
> I, Ælfric, having only slight pretensions to learning, have taken the trouble to translate these excerpts from Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* for you young children into your language, so that once you have studied the eight word classes of Donatus's grammar in this book you will be able to incorporate both languages, Latin and English, into your tender minds until you arrive at more advanced studies. (Translation Vivien Law)[18]

[15] Ian Morgan, '"Foolish Speedgm Frequent Joking, and Naughty Chattering" Humor in the Anglo-Saxon Monstary' (Pennsylvania State University, 2012), p. 17.
[16] Jon Mills, 'The Vocabularium Cornicum: A Cornish Vocabulary?', *Zeitschrift Für Celtische Philologie*, 60.1 (2013), p. 142 <https://doi.org/10.1515/zcph.2013.009>.
[17] Julius Zupitza, 'Aelfrics Grammatik Und Glossar' (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880), p. 1, /z-wcorg/ <https://archive.org/details/aelfricsgrammati00aelfuoft>.
[18] Fabienne Toupin, 'Exploring Continuities and Discontinuities Between Ælfric's Grammar and Its Antique Sources', *Neophilologus*, 94.2 (2010), 333–52 (p. 7) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11061-009-9185-5>.

Acknowledgement of the *Grammar* being based on the work of Priscian and Donatus is consistent throughout the work. The section *De Personis* contains numerous references to Priscian, both in descriptions and examples:

> *lego ego Priscianus* **ic PRISCIANUS rǣde** […] *Priscianus sum* **ic eom PRISCIANUS**,[…] *Priscianus uocor* **ic eom geciged PRISCIANUS**. *Priscianus nominor* **ic eom genemned PRISCIANUS**, *Priscianus nuncupor* **ic eom gehaten PRISCIANUS**. [19]
>
> I read Priscian (I read Priscian) […] I am Priscian (I am Priscian) […] I'm called Priscian (I'm called Priscian) I'm named Priscian (I'm named Priscian) I am named Priscian (I am called Priscian).

The inclusion of references to Priscian (and indeed, to reading Priscian), suggests that this work was a companion piece, rather like a modern study guide; it neither seeks to replace or diminish the work of the originals but present the contents in a way that is approachable to learners. This praise of the masters is something of a hallmark of Ælfric's.

This focus on pedagogy and an understanding of learners' needs is present throughout Ælfric's writing, consistently defining Latin terminology with a brief English explanation and an example:

> *Praesens Tempus* **ys andwerd tîd**: *sto* **ic stande**;
> *Praeteritum Tempus* **ys forðgewiten tîd**: *steti* **ic stôd**;
> *Futurum Tempus* **is tôwerd tîd**: *stabo* **ic stande nû rihte oððe on sumne timan** [20]
>
> Present tense (is present time); I stand (I stand);
> Preterite tense (is past time); I stood (I stood);
> Future tense (is future time); I will stand (I'm standing right now or in some time)

This structure of term-description-example is 'invariable'.[21] Later copies of the *Colloquy* show a similar level of attention to detail from Bata, who edited Ælfric's originals with expanded dialogues, often adding extra vocabulary and repeating grammatical structures rather than have them simply presented in lists.[22]

[19] Zupitza, 'Aelfrics Grammatik Und Glossar', p. 128 (translation mine).
[20] Zupitza, 'Aelfrics Grammatik Und Glossar', pp. 123–24 (translation mine).
[21] Edna Rees Williams, 'Ælfric's Grammatical Terminology', *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 73.5-part1 (1958), 453–62 (p. 455) <https://doi.org/10.2307/460287>.
[22] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 5–7.

In the words of Morgan, 'while the feats of pedagogy performed by Ælfric and Æthelwold were remarkable, they weren't very funny.'[23] Ælfric's *Colloquy* shows an idealised world; it is how a monastery should be run under Benedictine Rule. Ælfric Bata's *Colloquia* are very different in tone; whereas Ælfric's work was 'as an expression of the Benedictine monastic Ideal',[24] Bata's colloquy is full of violence and 'Cokaygne-like' excess,[25] with self-effacing humour and occasional comments on the artificial nature of learning vocabulary from lists (of which he was identifiably fond) and the memorisation of names of trees that the learners would likely never encounter outside the page. They are examples of an exaggerated day-to-day setting that would have been familiar to their learners, and for later readers they 'paint a vibrant picture of the lives of both teachers and students unequalled in the period.'[26] They explore the social and religious necessities of becoming part of a monastic community, without ever forgetting that his audience are boys becoming young men; 'Bata's colloquies vividly represented oblates who were simply boys living in a monastery and whose two identities remained disconnected.'[27]

Like his teacher before him, he is aware of his learners and seeks to make the material fit their needs as learners. Bata addresses his use of humour, saying in the final colloquium that 'joking is often mixed and joined with wise words and sayings. For that reason I've written and arranged these speeches in my own way for you young men.'[28] Some of the 'jokes' are fairly dark, discussing the often violent consequences of unruly behaviour and unwanted sexual attention, and we lack the context to know 'whether Bata's real students laughed wholeheartedly or with a nervous titter when asked to memorise and recite these dialogues.'[29] The age of his students is unclear as the 'terminology for "boys" versus "youths" or "adolescents" [was] not entirely stable' but it was likely they were in their early teens from the mixture of terms such as *pueri* (throughout) and *iuvenis* (in the final colloquia).[30] There is also a lack of context about what came before or after the use of the texts, other than that they were

[23] Morgan, '"Foolish Speedgm Frequent Joking, and Naughty Chattering" Humor in the Anglo-Saxon Monstary', p. 17.
[24] Earl R. Anderson, 'Social Idealism in Ælfric's "Colloquy"', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 153–62 (p. 159).
[25] *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 3.
[26] Benjamin Weber, 'A Brief History of Anglo-Saxon Education', *History Compass*, 17.2 (2019), e12518 (p. 7) <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12518>.
[27] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 26.
[28] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 171.
[29] Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 102 (Cambridge, United Kingdom New York, NY Port Melbourne, Australia New Delhi, India Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 66 <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108242103>.
[30] Christopher A. Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s.37 (2006), 241–60 (p. 243).

written to aid students in learning to speak (as opposed to read or compose) Latin, although there are many instances that where issues of morality are raised and then addressed.[31]

The *Colloquia* show a strong connection to *De Raris Fabulis Retractata*, a text also written for learners, as Porter convincingly details at some length in a paper published in the same year as the book.[32] Bata 'disassembled the original conversation, paraphrased parts, freely substituted new vocabulary, and inserted phrases and whole clauses where none were before' reflects his edited versions of Ælfric's *Colloquy*.[33] Comparison to the *Retractata* also shows that 'he sometimes rewrites them in such a way as to draw attention to their inappropriateness, and that he prefers to raise objections using the voices of the oblates.'[34] Dumitrescu argues convincingly that 'the scenes of the Colloquies are imagined, but the boys acting them out would have performed real possibilities of themselves' and the emotionally heightened scenes would aid their learning.[35] With this knowledge, it does suggest that the scenes of both monks and boys behaving badly may have some part in teaching morality as well as their Latin instruction.

A lack of scholarly attention

Lapidge notes that Bata 'has never received the scholarly attention he deserves', and while his Colloquy has received some study since, he often little more than a footnote to his teacher.[36] One reason for this comparative lack of attention is that Ælfric marked a turning point in Latin education and that his *Colloquy* is well regarded within Anglo-Saxon studies, but it is also certainly true that Bata's works would not exist without Ælfric's; his *Colloquia* is the 'intermediate' successor to Ælfric's 'beginner' resources.

Another reason is undeniably that Bata's *Colloquia* are written with 'obscenity, humor, and originality, made all the more exceptional for is rarity amid the piety of so many Anglo-Latin writers' and indeed the 'questionable content' of the *Colloquia* suggests that some early scholars and researches may have reacted with a similar piety, saying that his students must have hated him, or that there was 'no plea' for a man capable of making jokes about violence, sexual impropriety and scatological humour.[37] This distaste for his work is evident in some early

[31] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 34.
[32] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 109; Porter, 'Anglo-Saxon Colloquies: Ælfric, Ælfric Bata and de Raris Fabulis Retractata', p. 497.
[33] Porter, 'Anglo-Saxon Colloquies: Ælfric, Ælfric Bata and de Raris Fabulis Retractata', p. 499.
[34] Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 71.
[35] Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, pp. 77–79.
[36] Michael Lapidge, 'The Study of Latin Texts', in *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), p. 128.
[37] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 15.

works and may be responsible for his relative obscurity – Jones outright calls him 'bizarre.'[38] In his review of Gwara's transcribed edition of Bata's *Colloquia* and *Difficiliora* , Wirtjes calls for the reader to 'pity the poor monklings on whom Bata was let loose […] What the modern student might learn from Bata is a mystery to me.'[39]

Nonetheless, Bata's work has received some praise, particularly more recently. I am personally fond of Porter's somewhat sardonic remark: 'The fun will be apparent to anyone graced with a sense of humor';[40] the *Colloquia* were clearly written to entertain the learners in order to keep their attention. There is a 'self-reflexive' approach to humour that shows an awareness of the needs of learners and of the predilections of Latin masters to employ 'clever concatenations of quotations' that may leave learners feeling demotivated.[41] As a clear continuation of Ælfric's work, there is a focus on depicting, and sometimes subverting, expectations of the social aspect of monastic life.

Bata's 'eccentric and appealing personality' is evident in his writing;[42] texts are lively and contain vivid depictions of monastic life, with monks who drink to excess, students who misbehave and a touch of metahumour about the tedium of language learning. Ælfric's students proclaim to eat 'with sobriety, as befits a monk',[43] while Bata's fictionalised students are heartily encouraged to drink by magisters.[44] Unlike the idealised version of monastic life depicted by his teacher, 'Bata was certainly alive to the realities of schoolboy life' and his work seems to actively prepare them for it.[45]

[38] Christopher A. Jones, 'Ælfric And The Limits Of Benedictine Reform', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. by Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, v. 18 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009), p. 104.
[39] H. Wirtjes, 'Review of Gwara & Porter Anglo-Saxon Conversations', *The Review of English Studies*, 50.197 (1999), 72–74 (p. 74) <https://doi.org/10.1093/res/50.197.72>.
[40] Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools'.
[41] Irina Dumitrescu, 'The Grammar of Pain in Aelfric Bata's Colloquies', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 45.3 (2009), 239–53 (p. 245) <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqp043>.
[42] Farnham, 'Review of Gwara, Scott, Ed., and Porter, David W., Trans., "Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of AElfric Bata"', p. 188.
[43] Harris, 'Aelfric's Colloquy', p. 125.
[44] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 105.
[45] Martha Bayless, 'Gwara, Scott. Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology: A Quarterly Devoted to the English, German, and Scandinavian Languages and Literatures*, 99.2 (2000), 253 (p. 254).

Chapter 2: Recent Views and Literature Review

The *Colloquia* are 'a promising but problematic window into Anglo-Saxon monastic life and practices.'[46] They consist of example dialogues (or role-plays) nominally following the daily lives of students, giving them 'the opportunity to acquire and practice they would use for ordinary communication in the monastic community.'[47] Bata's *Colloquia* exist in only one manuscript: Oxford St John's College MS 154 (160v-198r). It starts with a very short introduction, then a short space and the start of the *Colloquia*.

The first transcription was the posthumously published *Early Scholastic Colloquies* by W. H. Stevenson in 1929, described as 'a meticulous piece of scholarship' by Wirtjes,[48] presumably unaware of the occasional omitted word (such as *frater* present on f. 175r but absent in the transcription).[49] Lindsay, in his introduction to the work, is criticises Bata, saying that his enlargement of Ælfric's *Colloquy* 'marred it sadly' and that his writing 'disgusts us.' He notes that Bata uses 'rare, out-of-the-way […] glossary abominations' and dismisses his writing as affected and extravagant before conceding that 'we must make allowance for an age where there were no printed dictionaries, but only written glossaries, and these usually available in abridged and miscopied form.'[50]

Contemporary reviews say little. Vaughan notes that Bata's colloquies are 'crammed with citations from the Scriptures' and that is it for 'more advanced students' and Bata received almost no scholarly attention for around thirty years.[51] Garmonsway was the first to write about Bata at any length and he is almost entirely negative in comments on both his own colloquies and also of his amendments to Ælfric's own, accusing him of 'filching' from Ælfric's *Glossary* and of 'brow-beating his pupils.'[52]

The most comprehensive translation is by Porter in a work edited by Gwara, whose Latin transcription was published a year previously, and the combined work it published as *Anglo-Saxon Conversations.*

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[46] Irina Dumitrescu, 'Violence, Performance, and Pedagogy in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', *Exemplaria*, 23.1 (2011), 67–91 (p. 68) <https://doi.org/10.1179/104125711X12864610741783>.
[47] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 7.
[48] Wirtjes, 'Review of Gwara & Porter Anglo-Saxon Conversations', p. 72.
[49] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. 43.
[50] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, pp. vi–vii.
[51] Elinor Vaughan, 'Review of Early Scholastic Colloquies by W. H. Stevenson', *The Modern Language Review*, 25.4 (1930), 485–86 (p. 486) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3715560>.
[52] Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, p. 2; Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, p. 14.

Porter's introduction to *Anglo-Saxon Conversations* does at times veer into overt praise without critical exploration but it is undeniably the most thorough treatment of the *Colloquia* as a whole, with a meticulous attention to intertextual references made by Bata. There are notable formatting and proofing inconsistencies throughout the work, including misspelling the editor's own name on the spine. This is worth mentioning as Gwara, who edited the work and transcribed the Latin texts, has made several editorial decisions that impact how the content is analysed, just as Stevenson before him, that I will explore in the following section.

Farnham notes the book 'deserves praise for attempting much, but criticism for doing what little of what it attempts well' and suggests Porter may have overread the texts. Nonetheless, he praises the quality of the translation, calling it 'lively, readable, and with very few exceptions, accurate.'[53] Bullough was more favourable, noting Porter's attempts to contextualise the colloquies and provide some comment on language pedagogy, although there is some question as to the extent to which this adds to what is known.[54]

Howe notes that the translation 'sometimes lacking fluency, keeps faithfully to the original', but also shows some caution about Porter's claims about its unique importance as a reflection of everyday monastic life, which have 'more to do with our desire to find vivid details about Anglo-Saxon daily life than with the ethnographic reliability of colloquies.'[55] He does note that 'education, then and now, was a bit of a jumble and sometimes required amusing young boys with off-colour phrase so that they would learn their wisdom lore and natural history.'[56]

Bayless' review is largely favourable of the work, noting that 'Bata's interest in the details of corporal punishment is rivalled in the text only by the passages on drinking. She also notes that twice the dialogues mention going to town by boat, which may have some bearing on the location where Bata spent his teaching life, most likely Canterbury or Winchester. She praises the clarity and accuracy of the translation, although notes that 'mysteriously they cease on pp. 39-42.'[57]

Wirtjes, commenting on an earlier version of Gwara's transcription, is critical of Gwara's interpretation of the Latin 'hermeneutic' literary style but does draw attention to the Old English influence on Bata's Latin, stating that 'he was no Latinist, and his work is a bleak

[53] Farnham, 'Review of Gwara, Scott, Ed., and Porter, David W., Trans., "Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of AElfric Bata"', pp. 188–89.
[54] D. A Bullough, 'Review of Anglo-Saxon Conversations. The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata. Edited by Scott Gwara, Translated with an Introduction by David W. Porter.', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52.3 (2001), 521–83 (p. 573).
[55] Nicholas Howe, 'Review of Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 30 (2000), 274–75 (p. 274).
[56] Howe, 'Review of Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata', p. 275.
[57] Bayless, 'Gwara, Scott. Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata', p. 254.

reflection on the state of learning around the millennium. What the modern student might learn from Bata is a mystery to me.'[58] Personally, while I cannot comment on Gwara's analysis of whether individual words are truly 'hermeneutic', I will highlight that Wirtjes spends half a page listing examples of the influence of Old English in the monastic English Latin text then questions what a modern student might learn from it apparently without irony. Gwara has published work discussing language transfer and error analysis in Anglo-Latin and Old English texts, concluding that 'Latin was probably acquired during the pre-conquest period with prodigious labor and spoken at marginal competence, aided by a census of memorized centos and formulae' and that there was a degree of fossilisation of Old English influence on Anglo-Latin.[59] Medieval monastic English Latin a valid dialect of Latin in its own right (compare this to post-colonial views about Indian or Singapore English) and worthy of academic interest. Aside from that I find Wirtjes' views that 'Gwara's treatment of this leaves much to be desired' pedantic and his praise of Stevenson's near-identical work arbitrary, particularly when it has identifiable editorial flaws, as discussed below.[60]

There is also the point that an imperfect teacher can still be a good teacher. Bata was teaching in a language that was exclusively used by non-native speakers and taught using materials that had accrued errors over time, and those errors had become part of the standard form of Latin in England at the time. He was not teaching in Rome under Caesar, he was teaching (probably) in Canterbury a millennium later.

There are certainly some irregularities in the grouping of passages into colloquies in both Stevenson and Gwara's editions; the manuscript uses clear enlarged initial letters around twice the size of the main scribal hand that are largely consistent with a change in time or a change in topic and these appear to mark a shift from one colloquium to another and neither editor follows them with particular consistency.

My impression is that, at times, Porter's translations drift into 'translationese' and while I think some of his choices for words are a bit odd (e.g. 'our need' for *necessitatem corporis nostri* totally omits the 'bodily' *corporis* in *Colloquium 1* or 'head' for *intellectum*, in *Colloquium 6*), it does not negatively impact readability or clarity. A part of this is the inevitable push-and-pull between fidelity and transparency in translation and the need to make editorial decision as a translator,

[58] Wirtjes, 'Review of Gwara & Porter Anglo-Saxon Conversations', pp. 73–74.
[59] Scott Gwara, 'Second Language Acquisition and Anglo-Saxon Bilingualism: Negative Transfer and Avoidance in Ælfric Bata's Latin Colloquia, ca. A.D.1000', *Viator*, 29 (1998), 1–24 (pp. 5–7) <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.300920>.
[60] Wirtjes, 'Review of Gwara & Porter Anglo-Saxon Conversations', p. 73.

but the treatment of the text does vary at times from the transliterated version *and* from the manuscript itself, particularly in where a section starts or stops and I disagree with the divisions made in both Gwara's and Stevenson's interpretations.

Chapter 3: Materiality of Oxford St John's College MS 154

Initials

The manuscript makes fairly consistent use of initial capitals (often left blank) to mark (usually) when a new colloquy begins, although some appear erroneous and some seem to indicate a place to pause rather than a new section entirely. Several colloquia start without any sort of initial but are usually marked by a clear change of subject.

Porter laments that 'unfortunately, Bata's [*Colloquia*] contain no stage directions, so there is no definite proof of their classroom performance',[61] a statement that I disagree with; as mentioned above, there are clearly demarcated changes in speaker through the use of red-slashed capitals in fols 163v–166r, 189v–190r, 197v–198r, 203v-204r (not mentioned in the Bodleian catalogue entry) and 205v–206r. This method of marking speakers is not featured elsewhere in the manuscript and shows an attention to readability that is not frequently seen in colloquies, which suggests that this manuscript may have had some classroom use, or at least been written by a scribe with sympathy for the difficulties of learning new language from fairly dense texts.

Glosses

Vocabulary is glossed irregularly throughout the manuscript, rarely more than one or two words at time. Both Gwara's and Stevensons' transcriptions include a thorough treatment of glosses. Despite the extensive glossing of Ælfric's *Glossary* in Cotton MS Tiberius A III, it is similarly sparsely glossed in St John's College MS 154.

The abbreviation of .s, which Stevenson expands to *s(cilicet),* repeats throughout marking a clarification. For example at the start of *Colloquium 2*, there is *.s.o* which Stevenson expands to *s(cilicet) o*, indicating the use of a vocative.[62]

A note on numbering

Modern scholarly literature almost exclusively follows Gwara and Porter's numbering of the colloquia and I am using their numbering system, although I will highlight where they differ significantly from Stevenson or where I think a decision has been made erroneously as neither numbering system is totally consistent with the text of the manuscript.

[61] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 55.
[62] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. 27.

In the table below, Marked by initial indicates that a larger initial letter was either present in the text or that there was a clear space for one. Start unmarked indicates that the first letter of the colloquy is unmarked visually but marked by a clear change of subject.

TABLE 1 NUMBERING AND TEXTUAL INDICATORS

Gwara & Porter	Stevenson	Manuscript Start	Notes
1	1	160v *Surge*	Marked by initial.
2	2	160v *Audi*	Start unmarked.
3	3	161r *Rogo*	Marked by initial.
4	4	162r *O mei*	Marked by initial.
	5	163r *O boni*	Marked by initial.
5	6	163v *Tu*	Marked by initial.
6	7	164r *Reddidistis*	Marked by initial.
	8	165r *Vultis*	Marked by initial.
7	9	165r *Mihi*	Start unmarked.
8	10	165v *Tu*	Marked by initial.
9	11	167r *Tu*	Marked by initial. Fairly long with no obvious breaks.
10	12	170v *O puer*	Marked by initial.
11	13	170r *Tu*	Start unmarked.
12	14	170r *Tu*	Start unmarked. Initial on f. 170v.
13	15	170v *Tu*	Start unmarked.
14	16	171r *Quo*	Start unmarked. Fairly long with space left for initials on ff. 172r and 173r.
15	17	173v *O nostri*	Start unmarked. *Pulchre* is indented slightly, but this looks erroneous.
16	18	174r *Frater*	Marked by initial.
17	19	174v *Doctor*	Start unmarked.
18	20	174v *Quid*	Marked by initial.
19	21	175r *Quae*	Start unmarked.
20	22	175r *Audi*	Start unmarked. Space for an initial on f. 175v.
21	23	175v *Ubi*	Start unmarked.

22	24	176v *Tu*	Marked by initial, likely filled in later by a different hand?
23	25	176v *Quando*	Marked by initial. Space for an initial on f. 178v. Fairly long.
24	26	179r *Eamus*	Start unmarked. Space for an initial on f. 179v
25	27	181r. *Tu*	Marked by initial. Space for initials on ff. 182v, 185v, 188r and, 188v
	28	188r *Rabbi*	Start unmarked. Space for initial on f. 189r.
26	29	189v *Pueri*	Marked by initial.
27	30	190v *Interrogo*	Marked by initial. Space for an initial on f. 191r
28	31	191v *Pueri*	Marked by initial.
29	32	194v *O karrissimi*	Marked by initial. Space for an initial on f. 195r

Neither Gwara nor Stevenson follow the text of the manuscript exactly, each making editorial judgments about where one colloquy started. Some of these are fairly arbitrary and one or two truly puzzling, as discussed below.

Chapter 4: The Colloquia

Preamble

The work begins with a short introduction, outlining the purpose of the work and mirroring the modest introduction of Ælfric's *Colloquy*, albeit making a joke about his height rather than his educational status.

> *Denique composuit pueris hoc stilum rite diuersum, qui uocatur Bata Ælfricus monachus breuissiumus, qualiter scolastici ualent resumere fandi aliquod initium latiniatis sibi.*
>
> In short, one called Ælfric Bata, a very short monk, wrote these appropriately varied pieces for boys, so as students they might take up some introduction to speaking Latin.[63]

Colloquia 1 & 2

These two colloquia detail a boy assisting a monk in getting up and getting ready to go to church, first getting him his clothing and then getting some water to clean with.

Colloquia 1 and 2 are not separate in any way in the manuscript, and the context suggests that they may be a continuation of one another.

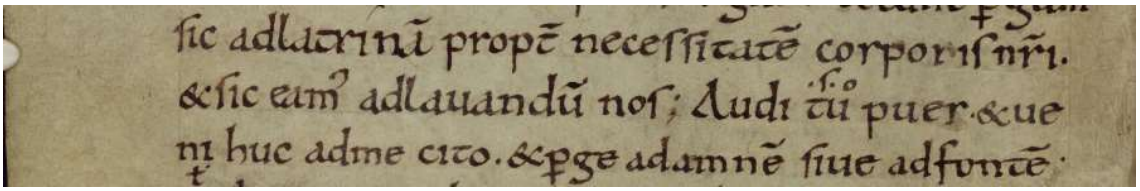

FIGURE 1 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 160V

Colloquium 1 ends with

> *et postea surgam, et tun pegamus sic ad latrinam propter necessitatem corporis nostri, et sic eamus ad lauandum nos*.
>
> And after that, I'll get up, and then let's go to the toilet for our need and afterwards to wash

Which segues immediately into *colloquium 2:*

[63] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 80–81.

> *Audi tu, puer, et ueni huc ad me cito et perge at amnem siue ad fontem, et deporta nobis [ad puteum] huc limpidam aquam cum aliquo scipho uel urceo ut manus nostras […] possimus lauare*
>
> Listen, boy. Come here to me right now. Go to the stream and bring back for us [to our cistern] here some clear water in a bowl or a pitcher so that we can wash our hands…[64]

This type of abrupt time-skip is typical in later *Colloquia*. In *Colloquium 23*, we have the following exchange:

> *Volo facere tib iam aquam bonam, et pectinem meum lauare, et sic postea lauare caput tuum bene et dorsum tuum et brachia tua.*
> *Fac sic cito.*
> *Nunc es bene lauatus et rasus.*
>
> Wait a bit! I want to fix you some clean water and wash my comb and then wash your head, back and arms.
> Do so quickly!
> Now you've well washed and shaved. [65]

Given the lack of an initial marking a new section and the continuation of the topic of washing, I find the analysis of this section as two colloquia an odd choice. The same division was made by Stevenson.[66] My interpretation of this is that neither transcriber had made it further into the text and had not fully decided on how to break it up and neither thought to go back and change it. It is also possible that Gwara was following Stevenson's model for numbering.

Colloquium 3

This depicts an argument between two students, one of whom has forgotten his book and another who refuses to lend his out. It shares some similar phrasing with both the *Retracata* and Ælfric's *Grammar*.[67] The depiction of the boys' relationship is an antagonistic one, with accusations of lying and one blames the other that 'we're beaten with the harshest whips and rods by our tutors practically every day.'[68] The rest is mostly a string of insults and accusations before the boy finally says he let the tutor decide his fate.

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[64] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 80–81.
[65] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 130–31.
[66] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. 27.
[67] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 83–85.
[68] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 84 (translation mine).

This depiction of misbehaviour accompanied by an acceptance of personal responsibility suggests to me that the texts that display unruly behaviour may have been used as part of discussion of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour; the characters are clearly depicted negatively.

Colloquium 4

This colloquium, given the subtitle *Exhortation to Study and Good Behaviour* by Gwara and Porter consists of a magister or older student admonishing boys with quotes from five books of the Bible and references to Cato in an effort to impress upon them the need to respect wisdom and obey their teachers.[69] Within the context of the *Colloquia*, it serves as a response to the argument between students in *Colloquium 3*; a boy argues by hurling insults, but a monk uses quotations from respected sources to justify his point of view.

Colloquium 4 is interpreted in Gwara and Porter as one continuous text but contains a clear initial partway though:

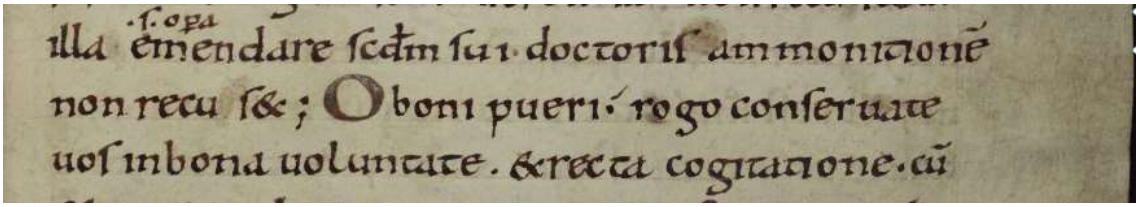

FIGURE 2: ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 163R

The section starting from *O boni pueri* is clearly a continuation by the same speaker so this may be an error, or it may have been a section break to mark a break in the text for classroom use (as is frequent in later, longer colloquia). This is the point where Stevenson's numbering diverges from Gwara and Porter.[70]

The colloquium ends practically on a joke:

> *O bone magister, bene doces et recte ammones nos et ualde profunde supra nostre humanitatem nature. Sed cessa paulisper, et loquere iterum ad nos iuxta nostrum intellectum.*
>
> Good master, you teach us well and very profoundly, beyond our nature. But stop for a while and talk to us again according to our understanding. [71]

[69] Dumitrescu, 'The Grammar of Pain in Aelfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 245.
[70] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. 29.
[71] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 88–89.

Dumitrescu sums it up succinctly:

> 'What a wonderful lesson,' the now docile boys seem to be saying, 'we didn't understand one word of it.'[72]

Bata's writing shows a clear fondness for difficult language, which is the focus of the *Difficiliora* supplemental material, so it is not hard to imagine that this interaction may have been based on real classroom events.

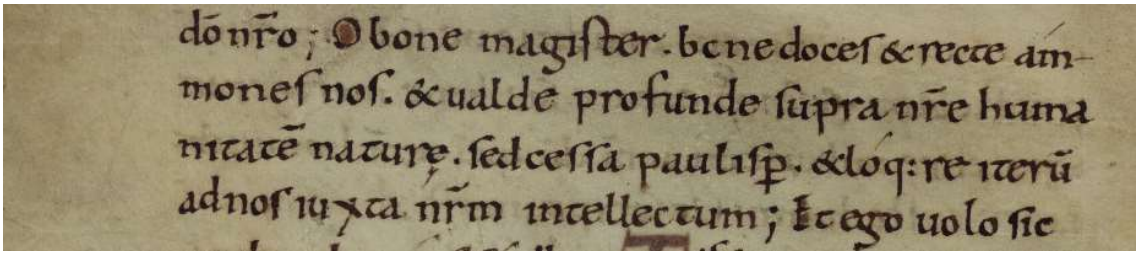

FIGURE 3 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 163V

Colloquium 5

Colloquium 5 starts with a rubricated initial, a feature absent in *Colloquium 4*, and demonstrates further the use of red shading to show a change in speaker or a short time skip.

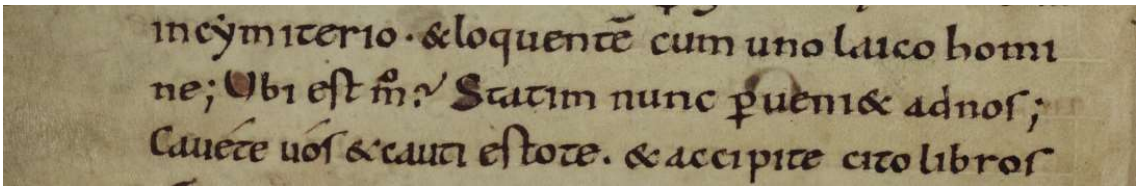

FIGURE 4: ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 163V

Ubi est modo?
Statim nunc perueniet ad nos.

Where is he now?
He's coming to us right away now. [73]

This is also one of the earlier colloquies to take the form of a conversation, depicting a group of boys keeping an eye out for their teacher so that they can avoid getting caught not working when he arrives. They then describe in some detail all the things they *should* have been doing when he was out speaking to a layman in the cemetery. This is a rather neat subversion of the

[72] Dumitrescu, 'The Grammar of Pain in Aelfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 245.
[73] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 88–89.

expected norm – rather than diligently list what they had been doing, there is a brief but humorous framing narrative that makes it very clear that they are lying to the master.

Colloquium 6

Aside from very short utterances, mainly on f. 164r, someone has diligently marked the start of each speaker's 'part' in this fairly natural conversation. It depicts a conversation between a schoolmaster and a student talking about how his fellow students failed to do their recitals, followed by him telling the teacher they do not have good enough intellects (translated as 'good enough heads' by Porter) to recite every day. The master eventually changes his mind about punishing the boys, impressed by their humble behaviour, but notes that they will likely do it again and telling them '*promissio uestra recta non est nec ualet omnino*' – he doesn't believe a word they are saying and he's heard it all before, but lets them off all the same.[74]

There is an initial capital about two thirds of the way through this colloquium – there is no change of either speaker or subject. This marks a section break in Stephenson, but not Gwara and Porter.

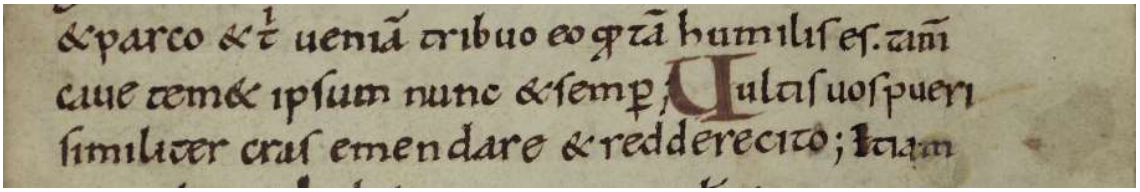

FIGURE 5: ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 165R

As this not only breaks the text into shorter chunks similar in length to previous colloquia, I think this is likely deliberate and agree with Stevenson's interpretation that this marks the end of one section.

Colloquium 7

Again, missing an enlarged initial, this short piece depicts two boys asking for, and getting, permission to play outside even through it was almost the time for vespers. Benedictine Rule shows 'moderation and discretion when it comes to children' and the commentary of Hildemar de Corbie 'recommended that oblates be taken to a field to play for an hour once a week or once a month—as the master saw fit', which would suggest that this is not unusual.[75]

Whereas the previous colloquies have mostly shown boys as, at best, co-conspirators, this illustrates a playfulness between students and relaxed attitude of the masters. It is also

[74] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 92–93.
[75] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy*, p. 45.

reminiscent of childhood models of friendship as something that can be denied or withheld to punish or reward someone ('I'll be your best friend!') as it fits into Kohlberg's stages of moral development model of friendship as a bartering tool, but it could also just be a depiction of a very enthusiastic young man.[76] There are many kinds of male friendship and homosocial relationships depicted in the *Colloquia*, some of which differ starkly with prescribed behaviour under Benedictine Rule, as is illustrated with surprising detail in the following colloquia, but this is one of the more innocent depictions.[77]

Cerling highlights the use of *bene sit tibi semper* 'Bless you always'[78] being used by one of the boys; he is showing an assimilation of his monastic identity even in a relatively unguarded moment of play. He has 'begun to cross the bridge and unite his two identities.'[79]

Colloquium 8

This colloquium marks the start of one of the more subversive sections of the text. It depicts a senior brother and his guests sending his junior to the kitchen to fetch his food from the kitchens, wait on them and them. The senior brother then encourages the junior to eat and drink with them. The younger boy humbly drinks in moderation and offers to serve the brother and his guests. The older monk gradually becomes pushier and encourages him to drink and eat more until the younger brother begins to protest. The younger brother eventually gives in and drinks even though he is not thirsty.

There is also a good example of Bata's apparent fondness for lists in dialogue:

> *Non erurimus quippe pater, neque sitimus. Set tamen bibere uolumus adhuc una uice aus bis aut ter siue quater antequam exeamus.*
>
> Really, I'm not hungry, father, or thirsty either. But anyway I'm willing to drink once or twice or three or four more times before we leave.[80]

Ælfric's *Colloquy,* a text almost certainly likely familiar to the learners, decries eating to excess, ending with a boy being questioned about what he eats and drink, with him replying that 'I enjoy at times this food, other times that – with sobriety, as befits a monk, not with voracity,

[76] Peter Mitchell, *The Psychology of Childhood*, 3 (London: Taylor & Francis, 1992), p. 151.
[77] David Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 205.
[78] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 94–95.
[79] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 32.
[80] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 97–97.

since I am not a glutton.'[81] Bata's writing suggests that the standards of monastic behaviour did not always follow either the spirit or the letter of Benedictine Rule, but it also models the boy moving between acceptance of the offer of food and drink and then polite but firm refusal of more against the monk's protestations.

Colloquium 9

This colloquium, the longest so far by some margin, depicts 'a raucous monastic drinking party.'[82] It continues the theme of monks drinking and encouraging younger boys to join them.

Colloquia 9 begins with an elder monk asking a younger boy (*fratercule,* translated as 'little brother') to accompany him to the toilet. The boy correctly replies that he must not go without his master's permission, to which the older monk responds *mentiris certe* 'you are surely lying'!

The master responds

> *Licet bene, karissime amice. Vadat tecum libenter. Fili mi, surge, et accipe lucernam unam, et unam candelam accende, et porta uobiscum, et sic uade secum ministrans ei in omnibus in latrina, et sterne lectulum eius, et ficones uel calciamenta illius trahe foras, et ei humili deuotione oboedi in omnibus quamdiu secum eris modo, et ueni postea hucad me et ad tuos socios quando totum hoc habes perfectum.*
>
> He certainly may, dearest friend. He may freely go with you. My son, get up and take a lamp, light a candle and carry it with you. Go with him, taking care of everything for him in the latrine, and make his bed and pull off his shoes or footwear. Obey him in every way with humble devotion as long as you're with him. Afterwards when you've finished all this, come here to me and your mates.[83]

This is a direct violation of Benedictine Rule, which declares that '[Not on any excuse] shall any monk presume to take with him a young boy alone for any private purpose.'[84] The implication of sexual abuse or sexual activity is likely clarified in a joke as the boy, upon his return, thanks God that the monk is resting in his bed and then, when instructed to sit with the other boys *quia fatigues es ex parte* 'as you're so tired from your errand' he replies that would rather stand than sit, with his master's permission, in an act that suggest that he had been sodomised by the

[81] Harris, 'Aelfric's Colloquy', p. 125.
[82] Nina Rulon-Miller, 'Sexual Humor and Fettered Desire in Exeter Book Riddle 12', in *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by JonathanE Wilcox (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp. 99–126 (p. 106).
[83] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 98–99.
[84] Cited in Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 99.

monk.[85] It should be noted that there was a tendency of victim-blaming in some monastic writing.[86]

This is then followed by encouragement to eat and drink, a rather weak protest by the boy and then an exchange of affectionate, or supplicant, compliments. When the boy receives a horn of best beer, he 'utters a paean to the drinking horn he has been brought, the term for horn chosen, *cornu*, playfully associates the drinking of alcohol with oral sex:':[87]

> *Cornu bibere uolo. Cornu habere debeo, cornu tenere. Cornu uocor. Cornu est nomen meum. Cum cornu uiuere, cornu quoque iacere uolo et dormire, nauigare, equitare et ambulare et laborare atque ludere […]*
>
> I want to drink the horn! I should have the horn, hold the horn. I'm called the horn. Horn is my name. I live with the horn, and also I want to throw the horn up and sleep with the horn and to sail, ride, walk, work and play with the horn […][88]

From a pedagogical standpoint, the repetition of *cornu* does have value; it is a fourth-declension noun with an invariant singular form and so would have to be learnt as a specific exception. Porter speculates upon a textual intersection as it also appears in the *Etymologiae*, as though drinking from the horn can lead to overindulgence 'as though giving horns'[89] but I think this may be a bit of a reach; *cornu* is a noun with an atypical declension and the whole paean is a fun way of drumming the point home, illustrating *cornu* in the singular accusative, nominative, ablative and the plural and with fairly common and simple vocabulary.

Later, there is a discussion about the type of drink that one of the boys is being sent to ask for, revisiting drinks from Ælfric's *Glossary* and using them in a context familiar to his learners. One of the brothers admits he forgot his weekly stint as a server in the kitchen and refectory, emphasising adherence to the duties of the monastic community.[90] The scene closes with the monks drinking up and heading to their compline services before bed.

The juxtaposition of depictions of enthusiastic drinking, suggested sexual impropriety, reminders to do one's duty and tottering of after a night of drinking to perform their nightly prayer service is an interesting one. From an anthropological perspective, it seems that the Benedictine Rule that benefited the cohesion of the community seemed to be valued more

[85] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 100 (translation mine).
[86] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy*, p. 49.
[87] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 205.
[88] Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools', p. 102 (translation mine).
[89] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 103 (note 72).
[90] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 105 note 76.

highly; forgetting one's shift as a server of food and drinks has a negative impact on the community as a whole, whereas drinking heavily when entertaining guests does not seem to have been met with much criticism. The flouting of the rule against a monk being alone with a boy is acknowledged and then discarded, with the outcome being played for comedy.

From a pedagogical perspective, a few comments can be made. Firstly, we know nothing about the context of the lesson. We have no lesson plan, objective, preamble or concluding remarks – only a single text. Secondly and as discussed below, Bata wrote for his audience knowing they enjoyed a joke and showed a clear interest in writing vivid scenes to engage his learners. It could well be that that this was followed by a discussion in what was wrong with the scene, or as part of a series of comic admonishments of poor behaviour.

According to Elliot, *Colloquium 9* depicts a series of scenes that are 'all highly, and seemingly deliberately, eroticized' and suggests a 'normalization of same-sex desire in monasteries.'[91] Clark dismisses this idea, pointing out that 'the activities described above are not recommended in the text as normative, nor are they claimed to be representative of actual monastic life.'[92] Nonetheless, there is the suggestion that 'the Benedictine Reform may have had limited effects even on the clergy as far as interpersonal relations were concerned'[93]and Bata provides a linguistic framework with which to navigate this.

Bata himself explicitly stated while describing his own teaching that:

> *iocus cum sapientiae loquelis et uerbis inmixtus est et sepe coniunctus. Ideo autem hoc constitui et meatim disposui sermonem hunc uobis iuunebis*
>
> 'joking is often mixed and joined with wise words and sayings. For that reason I've written and arranged these speeches in my own way for you young men.'[94]

The 'speeches' were composed to be fun, not an accurate depiction of the monastic experience and while the bawdy humour is likely humorous because the scenarios were familiar, or at least based on familiar jokes, I do not see how one can interpret them as evidence in and of themselves of normalised same-sex interaction. In any case, there is some positive modelling from the boy who tries to follow the rule of not being alone with a monk, before it descends into comedy.

[91] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy*, p. 49.
[92] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 205.
[93] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 206.
[94] Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools', pp. 170–71.

Colloquia 10, 11, 12 & 13

Colloquium 10 borrows heavily from Isidore's *Synonyma*.[95] It depicts a boy accompanying a monk, possibly a guest, to the toilet in order to hold a candle for him.[96] The monk complains that the boy is blocking the light and then comments *Deo gratias, non sum cecus nec ebrius nimis* 'Thank God I'm not too blind or drunk…' before bidding him to go and make ready his bed. He then asks that the other brothers be quiet and go to bed. [97] The brothers request the father's blessing, which he provides, and then finishes by asking them to be quiet and not wake him up. In *Colloquium 11* a boy is asked where the abbot is, and he replies that he is in bed and he dare not rouse him, expecting him to wake *de suo somno uel de sua quiete* 'from his sleep or rest' in the early morning.[98]

The transition to *Colloquium 11* is unmarked in the manuscript and continues the narrative of *Colloquium 10*, suggesting they were likely a part of one continuous passage (c.f. *Colloquia 1* and *2*) rather than two very short colloquia.

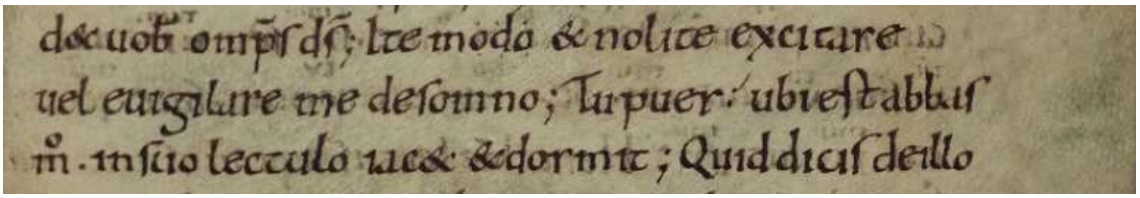

FIGURE 6 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 170R

Colloquium 12 consists of three rebukes, one telling a boy to wake the sacristan, who has overslept (a fairly severe lapse of responsibility),[99] one chastising a boy for missing nocturnes and another asking why he did not ask his classmates to wake him. The boy says he was following the master's instructions not to wake him.

Its beginning is unmarked, other than coincidentally being at the start of a new page. There, is, however, a clear line break and Space for an initial.

[95] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 109 (notes).
[96] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 255 (note 29).
[97] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 108 (translation mine).
[98] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 108–9.
[99] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 245.

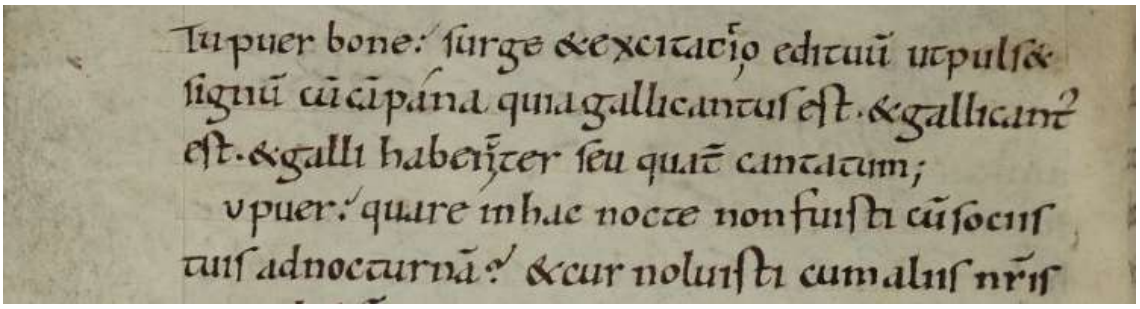

FIGURE 7 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 170V

These colloquia run into one another to an extent; they are variations on a theme. The initial may have been used as a guide to the reader, or the teacher, but it is difficult to take much meaning from it, which is likely why it is ignored by both Gwara and Stevenson.

Colloquium 13 is a longer rebuke, formulated largely to practice ordinal numbers but also the varied ways of saying 'or' in Latin:

> *Debuisti legere primam lectionem aut seundam aut tertiam vel quartam aut quintam uel sextam aut septimam uel octuam seu nonam aut decimam siue undecimam aut duodecimam?*
>
> Should you have read the first or second or third or [...] twelfth? [100]

This has a structural similarity to *Colloquium 5*, in which a fairly tedious point of grammar is worked into a comic scenario in order to make it more palatable.

Colloquia 14 & 15

Colloquium 14 opens with a master questioning a boy, who replies with a fairly long and defensive list that is clearly composed to practice the verb tenses of *facere*, containing over twenty instances of different conjugations of the verb in half a dozen lines in Gwara & Porter.[101] As with the opening colloquy listing tasks within a lie, this is an exemplar of 'one of the peculiarities of Bata's pedagogical strategy [in] that he often places what might be dull lists of vocabulary and phrases into a negative grammatical framework.'[102]

The response of the master is *ualde uerbosus es multiloquax* 'you're a real blabbermouth and talker' and then a rebuke that the speaker knows how to talk but does not do anything he actually says he does. This text also explicitly references the Rule of Saint Benedict in *Ostiositas,*

[100] Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools', pp. 110–11.
[101] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 110.
[102] Dumitrescu, 'Violence, Performance, and Pedagogy in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 71.

inquit, inimica est amine 'laziness in the enemy of the soul.' The boy admits that he has not been a good student, but blames his lack of writing materials, which he lists extensively, once again demonstrating vocabulary listen within a negative framework, and finally claims 'no craftsman can work well without tools.' [103]

The master agrees and provides him with the tools he needs, and this is followed by an argument about who will sharpen the pen. There is some bartering and the boy asks for a knife so that he can use it to eat in the refectory in return for a sharpened pen. Another argument ensues, claiming the boy will just get drunk and use the knife to stab other students. The boy then asks for another list of things, ending in a sling so that he can shoot birds. The master chides him for asking for a lot but offering little in return and the boy says he is asking for alms and claims to be too stupid to be trying to pull a fast one on the monk.

As Dumitrescu notes, 'this pattern gives us an indication as to how Bata composes, and how we might read him accordingly. He attempts to make his dialogues more interesting, and the presentation of long lists of words more engaging.'[104] There is a deliberateness in his composition, and he repeatedly shows concern for making the texts both relatable and palatable to his learners. I think the fact that he ends on a point about the need to work hard and learn wisdom supports the idea that, though his scenes portray some rather wild behaviour, they do mostly serve a purpose of either teaching morality or the social etiquette that is expected in a monastic environment. As well as teaching them Latin, Bata is teaching his students 'that they should be monks'.[105]

The text ends reminding the reader to 'learn wisdom so you'll be wise; keep and cherish holy learning, useful skills and good habits, for the love of God, so you'll be dear to him and all men.'[106] However, there is an initial near the end of the colloquium as it is categorised both by Stevenson and Gwara, beginning with the master's retort.

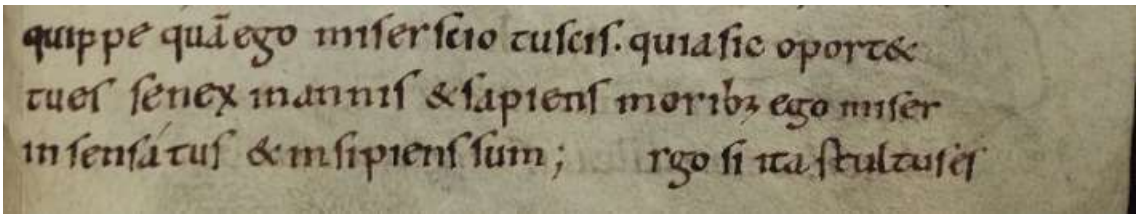

FIGURE 8 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 173V

[103] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 112–13.
[104] Dumitrescu, 'Violence, Performance, and Pedagogy in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 72.
[105] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 33.
[106] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 117.

This is second instance where I disagree with both transcribers' interpretations of the text; *Colloquia 14* and *15* seem to have a call-and-response relationship, with *14* showing the learner vying for sympathy and the master eventually seeing through his ruse, followed by *15* demonstrating a much more positive relationship between teacher and student. *Colloquium 15* reinforces the positive message at the end of the previous colloquium and contains an amount of overlapping vocabulary. It acts as an exemplar of what good scholarship looks like, with learners modest but keen and the teacher encouraging and generous. It contains passages from Deuteronomy and Proverbs and clearly models and contextualised the importance of learning.[107] This is the clearest illustration of the mixture of humorous scenes and moral teaching in the Colloquia so far and starting *colloquium 15* may allow a positive message to be shoehorned into *colloquium 14* but is disruptive of the narrative being put forward; it sets up the 'bad' version and follows it with a 'good' version – tacking a 'good' ending onto colloquium 14 is inauthentic to the manuscript and I think undermines the intentions of the text.

From a teaching perspective, Bata's texts offer many discussion points. What *should* the boy have said? What *should* he have done? Bata's students 'are not simply conjugating verbs; they are also performing the kind of active engagement and rigorous self-possession they might aspire to.' [108]

While the materia of Anglo-Saxon education are fairly well evidenced, 'it is more difficult to find evidence of Angle-Saxon classroom practice' but it is generally accepted that memorisation of texts copied onto wax tablets was a key component.[109] It seems unlikely, however, that, this was the only teaching method employed; I struggle to see how the texts were used without some sort of discussion or comment and the natural break between the two sections is a sensible place to do so.

Colloquia 16 & 17

Colloquium 16, 'based wholly on *Retractata 24*',[110] opens with a brother being asked if he speaks Latin, to which he relies modestly *Non utique nisi paulisper et perpauca uerba* 'Actually no, just a little, very few words', followed by an admission that he has forgotten much of what he had learnt.[111] He says he understands more than he can speak or write grammatically and forgotten the works of grammarians and of poets that he once knew, 'to which his interlocutor replies

[107] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 117.
[108] Erica Weaver, 'Performing (In)Attention', *Representations*, 152.1 (2020), 1–24 (p. 14) <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2020.152.1.1>.
[109] Weber, 'A Brief History of Anglo-Saxon Education', p. 7.
[110] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 117.
[111] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 116–17.

with Gregory's verbal commonplace that divine speech doesn't serve the rules of the grammarians.'[112] He then notes that 'no book is properly written or arranged unless the one who composes it first studies the grammatical art.'[113]

The inclusion of this scene shows an awareness and a tolerance of his learners' fallibilities and will feel familiar to any language learner. It both provides the learners of a model for how to talk about their own skills humbly, but also reassures them that it is normal to struggle at times with a second language and to reach the level of Latin seen in written works one must continue to study; mastery of Latin was an arduous but achievable goal. Once again this suggests a level of empathy to his students in Bata's work and a connectedness to their experiences.

Colloquium 17 appears to borrow heavily from *Retractata 18* and has thematic links to Ælfric's homily on the blind man.[114] The master offers to help the student learn so that he may *[ea] in memoria semper custodire* 'keep it in memory forever'[115], which acts as something of a counterpoint to *Colloquium 16*'s admission of forgetfulness; while the brother in *16* is losing his Latin, but *17* clearly concerns itself with the subject matter and its importance.

The relationship between *16* and *17* bears a similarity to *14* and *15* in that a negative, but understandable, portrayal is followed by a more positive or idealised one, with a clear thematic link. *16* and *17* discuss learning and forgetting and *14* and *15* discuss willingness to learn. Notably, neither pair is split by an initial in the manuscript. This suggests that each part may have formed part of the same lesson and certainly shows an experimentation with formatting. Earlier colloquia often have a well-behaved student following the rules but led astray, whereas these show a sort of call-and-response method of modelling morality.

Colloquia 18 & 19

These two colloquia show strong links to *Retractata 10*.[116] They are relatively simple, starting with a cavalcade of questions in the present tense and followed by a list of vocabulary using present participles within a framing narrative of what the boy saw earlier that day. This is a return to the vocabulary-in-lists seen in *Colloquium 5*'s list of lies. It ends on a humorously dismissive *hoc est uanum. Cogita aliud aliquid, quod melius sit* 'That's a waste of time. Think about something better', with worship of God being a suggested better use of time.[117]

[112] Porter, 'The Latin Syllabus in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Schools', p. 466.
[113] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 119.
[114] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 119.
[115] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 118–19 (translation mine).
[116] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 117–18.
[117] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 120 (translation mine).

Once again, I think the decision of both Gwara and Stevenson to split this into two colloquia somewhat arbitrary. They are not separated in the manuscript and together form a fairly short grammar and vocabulary exercise.

Colloquium 20

This colloquium is marked by a clear change of topic rather than an initial. It shows repetition of several phrases from *Retractata 4* and *7*.[118] It starts with a few lines that use the second person imperative as the master gives instructions to look after his belongings *et precipue scolam nostrum* 'and especially our students' lest they fall idle.[119]

There is then a space for an initial, which in the narrative marks a tonal shift and another explicit breach of custody as the monk asks the *frater* to sit beside him, kiss him and hold him in his memory. The younger man replies *non audio osculari te* 'I don't dare kiss you'[120] and the father 'reluctantly accepts the boy's refusal'[121]. This passage has been extensively analysed, often without the context of the earlier part of the colloquy.

Jones comments that 'unless the older monk is a *magister*, custody has already been violated by his addressing the boy and asking him to come sit down to him for a while'[122] With the part of the colloquium before the initial, I would suggest that this is a conversation between two adults; while the younger speaker is referred to as *puer mi* 'my boy', he is then referred to as *frater* throughout and is clearly trusted with the important duty of taking charge of the school for the day.

Nonetheless, the fact that the refusal of the kiss is taken graciously and the older monk 'accepts the boy's refusal without qualm, and gives him a blessing' in an act reminiscent of earlier examples of the younger members of the monastic community modelling more appropriate behaviour.[123]

The initial in the middle of the colloquium is puzzling. It could be erroneous (as is suggested in *colloquium 7*), but it could also be a mark to indicate that the reader should stop as the sections above and below the initial cover different areas of grammar, while also isolating the more morally ambiguous section from the introduction.

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[118] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 121–23.
[119] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 120 (translation mine).
[120] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 122–23.
[121] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 205.
[122] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 255 note 20.
[123] Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 72.

Colloquium 21

Starting without an initial but a clear change in topic, this opens with a discussion of a senior monk and three brothers going on a to a party (forbidden under the *Regularis Concordia*).[124] A boy is then sent to fetch provisions for a trip, showcasing a variety of food-related vocabulary, some of which is likewise forbidden, and to instruct a boy to ride with him, also forbidden.

The fact that these indiscretions go unremarked upon is unusual for Bata; there is no schoolboy questioning them and no modelling of positive behaviour. While many of the colloquia have situation that would 'stir his audience's expectations for some kind of morally redeeming point', this one is notably lacking a response.[125] It is reminiscent of the humorous framing narratives of the lying section in *colloquium 5, colloquium 13*'s ordinal numbers *or* the *cornu* 'paean.'

Colloquium 22

Marked by an initial in a different hand, this is another example of a vocabulary list embedded in a short narrative, focussing once again on ordinal numbers as in *colloquium 13*.

Colloquium 23

This colloquium discusses shaving and hygiene, borrowing extensively from *Retractata 16*.[126] It 'seems realistic on the preparation and infrequency of baths, and in the detail that bathing rotations were not interrupted even for liturgical duties', but nonetheless defies expectation with the depiction 'of an *adolescens* helping one monk to get undressed, bathe, then get dressed again defies the letter and spirit of most prescription.'[127]

The shaving of a monk by a younger boy seems at first to be another breach of custody. Zimmerman puts forwards that typically '*die Mönche setzen sich nach dem Kapitel in den Kreuzgang in zwei Reihen und je zwei erhalten die Rasiergeräte, und einer rasiert den anderen*', suggesting it was expected to be a communal activity.[128] However, it is made clear that others are present (references to *balneatores* abound and the bath is for *mihi et nostris fratibus*)[129] so I suspect that at least some of the criticism of may be based on isolating parts of the text without attention to context.

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[124] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 123–25.
[125] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 247.
[126] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 128–31.
[127] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 245.
[128] Gerd Zimmermann, *Ordensleben Und Lebensstandard; Die Cura Corporis in Den Ordensvorschriften Des Abendländischen Hochmittelalters* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1973), p. 127 <https://archive.org/details/ordenslebenundle0000zimm> (the monks sit by the chapter in the cloister in two rows and each two gets the shaving tools and one shaves the other).
[129] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 126–28.

Nonetheless, it suggests a 'special relationship between the master and his favourite student'.[130] As mentioned above, Benedictine Rule took specific care to safeguard children and 'the child oblate's vulnerability to sexual predation looms large in monastic commentaries', although there was a clear idea that it was the victim who was at fault and sexual aggression, particularly from older boys, was expected to some extent.[131]

There is an initial towards the end of the colloquium with no clear reason for it; the narrative is a continuation and there are no clear differences in the grammar or vocabulary. It ends with telling the boys to bathe the other brothers well and then to tell the cellarer to give them plenty to eat and drink as a reward for their work. The boys then ask for money to buy beer and their request is granted.

Colloquium 24

The start of this is unmarked, though there is an initial about halfway through the text. It starts with a boy being sent by another student to get some food from the cook, then food is served and they eat and drink and then they are instructed to hurry to the cloisters and 'the boys nervously await the appearance of their master with a whip in one hand and rods in the other.'[132] The boys discuss being afraid to go in, but are pleased to see their master is 'sitting there with his brother, laughing and talking about something or other.' Some bartering between the boys takes place and they ask an older boy to 'go with us and intercede with him on our behalf.' [133] The boys then enter and it is revealed that the monk was expecting them to do work they had already done. The monk then asks *Quid vultis tunc agree?* 'What do you want to do then?'[134]

After the initial, there is a change of topic to some extent. The boys discuss a book and one asks about the scribe of a particular book and the other replies that the scribe is now old and can no longer write because of his failing sight. This is met with praise, with the boy saying *dignus es certe , ut bene vivat. Multum bonum sue manus habent factum* 'it's certainly worthy that he lives well; his hands have done much good' and his educational legacy is praised, noting that some of his students are working as scribes in the monastery who 'write large numbers of books, sell them and earn lots of money for themselves.'[135] 'He is, we may take it, a model for the young

[130] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 205.
[131] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy*, pp. 46–48.
[132] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 11 (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 122.
[133] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 113.
[134] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 132–33.
[135] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 135.

boys to emulate, and his legacy a reason to submit to and embody the constant discipline of the classroom', an opinion that Bata likely sympathised with as a teacher.[136]

The boy then begins to flatter and bargain with the other to commission 'a psalter or hymnal, or an epistolary or troper, or a missal or a good itinerary or capitulary, well composed and laid out' and the would-be scribe requests two pounds *puri argenti* 'as payment.[137] They settle on a price of twelve mancuses noting that *amplius non valet* 'it's not worth more.'[138] As one mancus was worth 30d and a medieval agricultural worker could expect to earn a little over a penny a day, this seems a comically astronomical amount.[139] The c. 1300 valuations of the library of Hereford Cathedral put their average manuscript at 97d, going as low as 24d.[140] Porter notes that the *Regularis Concordia* requires that monastic artisan goods 'always be sold a little cheaper than by men in the world' a virtue they hardly seem to be exemplifying here.[141]

While the praise for the older scribe is overt, the two scenes of this colloquy are seemingly played for comedy; it is reminiscent of a *Carry On* film and it is hard not to imagine the boys acting out jingling the silver coins before saying *certe boni sunt omnes*.[142]

Colloquium 25

I believe both transcriptions have made severe errors in analysing where this colloquium starts and ends and both have deviated puzzlingly from the manuscript. It has space left for several initials throughout that not only clearly indicate a change of tone or of topic entirely. Stevenson breaks it into two colloquia, although he does so mid-conversation in what I can only assume is an editorial mistake.

It begins with a monk questioning a boy. They quickly fall into a string of insults, starting with the monk admonishing the boy for being late, then attacking his character and showcasing 'the vocabulary of vice',[143] likening the boy to a fox 'running here and there and switching its tail when from hunger it's about to bite' and 'the seed of a demon, flattering and seducing [his]

[136] Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 87.
[137] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 134–35.
[138] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 136–37.
[139] Gregory Clark, 'The Long March of History: Farm Wages, Population and Economic Growth, England 1209-1869', Working Paper (Davis, CA: University of California, Department of Economics, 2005), p. 44 <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/31320>; Pamela Nightingale, 'The Ora, the Mark, and the Mancus: Weight-Standards and the Coinage in Eleventh-Century England: Part 2', *The Numismatic Chronicle (1966-)*, 144 (1984), 234–48 (p. 237).
[140] Joanne Filippone Overty, 'The Cost of Doing Scribal Business: Prices of Manuscript Books in England, 1300-1483', *Book History*, 11 (2008), 1–32 (p. 5).
[141] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 135 (note 147).
[142] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 136.
[143] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 29.

fellows' and that 'no demon is worse than a son of discord or a murmurer among harmonious and peaceful people.'[144] There is a strong focus on the idea of the boy being the instigator of bad deeds and a reference to scripture is made with *filius discordiae, filius diaboli*, reinforcing 'the idea that the blabbering that characterised little boys was foolish and antithetical to their monastic identity', and indeed the boy points out the monk's hypocritical actions.[145]

The teacher then 'descends into near madness as he breaks several Benedictine rules in a single speech',[146] illustrating an array of animals and their appropriate faecal vocabulary (c.f. English *cow manure* but not *cat manure* etc) and the student responds with a string of insults, including the charming *Habe scibalum in barba tua et in ore tuo stercus et scibalum*. 'May you always have shit in your beard and shit and turds in your mouth.'[147] *Stercus* was 'a very general word' and *scibalum* seems to be a somewhat rare term borrowed from Greek meaning *manure* and there does seem to be a difference in usage, although its rarity does bely Bata's tendency towards literary language.[148]

An initial begins a new section and a change of tone with the monk asking the boy to act wisely and asking why he will not behave like another boy, amidst some tamer insults calling to the boy's better nature. The boy replies with *non curo de sapiential tual […] mea stultitia mea sapiential est. Omnis stultus antequam sapiens* 'I don't care for your wisdom […] my stupidity is my wisdom. Everyone is stupid before he is wise.'[149]

Unexpectedly, the boy then recites 'a string of over 100 biblical proverbs' intermingled with the occasional scatological insult.[150] Spaces for initials break up this dense section at f. 185v, marking a sensible point to pause in the text at *Per sapientem Salomonem* 'Through the wise

[144] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 136–39.
[145] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 29.
[146] Morgan, '"Foolish Speedgm Frequent Joking, and Naughty Chattering" Humor in the Anglo-Saxon Monstary', p. 22.
[147] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 138–39.
[148] James Noel Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London: G. Duckworth, 1982), p. 135; 'Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Σκυ?βα^λ-Ον' <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=sku/balon> [accessed 6 August 2021].
[149] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 140–41.
[150] Cerling, 'Learning to Talk: Colloquies and the Formation of Childhood Monastic Identity in Late Anglo-Saxon England', p. 30.

Solomon….'[151]

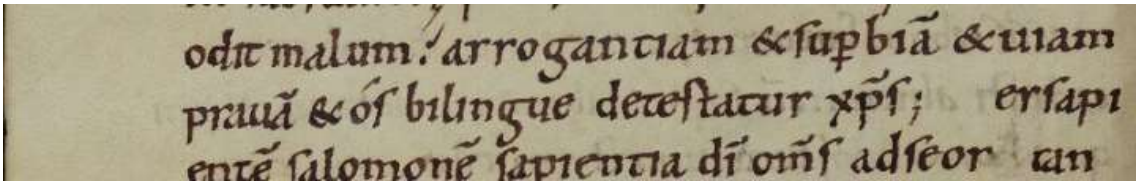

FIGURE 9 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 185V

This is not marked by a paragraph break in either Gwara and Porter's or Stevenson's transcriptions despite, I would argue, being a clearly intentional in the manuscript itself.

Another initial appears on f. 188r marking the end of the proverb recital and a direct address to the brothers listening. This, again, does not warrant a paragraph break in Gwara and Porter's transcription, but is acknowledged by Stevenson.

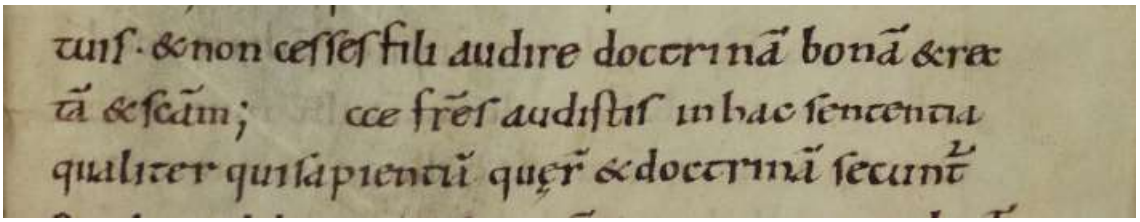

FIGURE 10 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 188R

Shortly thereafter, Stevenson marks the start of the next colloquium in a decision I can see no reason behind, deciding that the next colloquy begins at *Rabbi* in the below:

> *Proinde cauete uos ut sensati sitis et non insensate.*
> *Rabbi bone, sic uolumus semper*… [152]
>
> 'Therefore take care to be wise and not foolish!
> Good teacher, we always will.[153]

This is unmarked in the original manuscript and may be erroneous. Given that his work was published posthumously, it is possible that it was not given the editorial attention it deserved.

[151] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 147.
[152] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. 57.
[153] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 154–55.

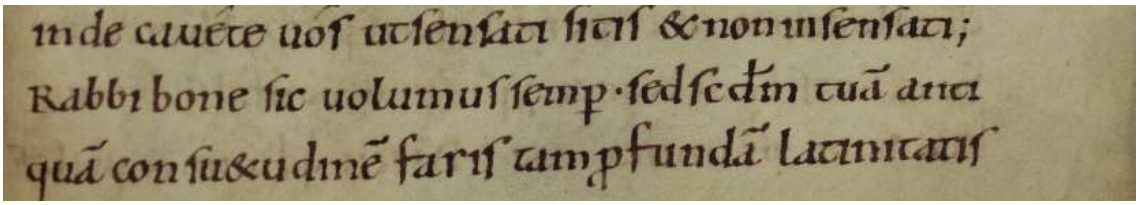

FIGURE 11 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 188R

While this colloquy is a clash of tones, it does strongly emphasise the importance of learning and links it to monastic identity through biblical quotations, as well as doubtlessly essential words for manure as well as showcasing two very different styles of disagreement, first a childlike slinging of insults, and then a more sophisticated example of using scripture to validate your arguments. 'By constructing his Latin textbook to be at once threatening and funny, serious and ludic, he offers his students the opportunity to perform both discipline and dissent.'[154]

Dumitrescu comments that Bata 'serves as a model for how boys might adopt authoritative discourse for their own defiant ends, as he uses the language of wisdom to oppose its disciplinary claims on him' and that 'it is fair to assume that these speeches made Latin more engaging and memorable for the students memorizing them.' [155]

Puzzlingly, neither Gwara and Porters' not Stevenson's transcriptions separate the following into its own colloquy, despite being clearly a change of topic and clearly marked by an initial in the manuscript starting from *[K]ari pueri* on f.188v.

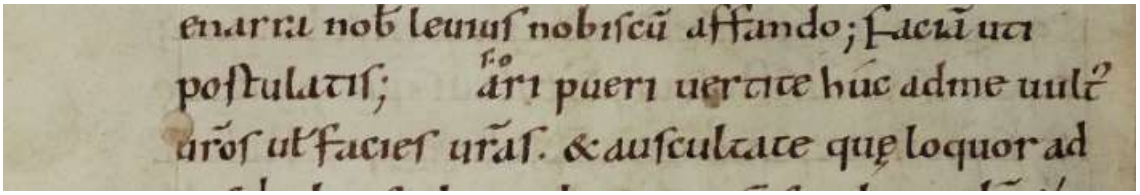

FIGURE 12 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE MS 154 FOL. 188V

What follows is a series of questions to the boys about orchards and gardens and the names of trees with vocabulary embedded into conversational lists. There is then a second initial with a similar conversation that ends with a list of kitchen plants. It is light in tone, with the humorous framing narrative of the boys being in the garden without permission. There is some metahumour about the boys not being able to translate them all into English, suggesting that

[154] Dumitrescu, 'Violence, Performance, and Pedagogy in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 88.
[155] Irina Dumitrescu, '"Pas de Philologie": On Playful Appropriation and the Anglo-Saxon Scholar', in *Des nains ou des géants ?*, ed. by Claude Andrault-Schmitt, Edina Bozoky, and Stephen Morrison, Culture et société médiévales (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), XXVIII, 181–200 (p. 188) <https://doi.org/10.1484/M.CSM-EB.5.108665>; Dumitrescu, 'Violence, Performance, and Pedagogy in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 87.

they had been learnt from lists rather than actually encountering them themselves (*palma* and *olea uel oliua* appearing on the list likely confirms this).[156]

This 'colloquy' has been mishandled by Gwara and Porter and was mishandled earlier by Stevenson. It is, at the very least, two unrelated colloquies and clear textual divisions in the manuscript are ignored with others introduced with no regard to the narrative.

Colloquia 26 & 27

Colloquium 26 is another vocabulary-focussed text framed humorously as boys complain about their lack of good clothing and the paucity of their provisions. Much of the vocabulary comes from Ælfric's *Glossary*.[157]

Colloquium 27 is similar, consisting largely of lists of vocabulary within a conversational frame. It is lists vocabulary to do with monastery itself and things one might find inside it, including the names of building and things found in different rooms.

The framing is weak, with *quododmo nominantur illa in latino sermon, dic mihi* 'tell me what they are called in Latin' being uncharacteristically direct.[158] The vocabulary itself borrows heavily from Ælfric's *Glossary* once more.[159]

These two short colloquia are similar in construction to the plants and trees section at the end of *colloquium 25*, which I think suggests strongly that it was not originally connected to the rest of the colloquium it is now conventionally associated with.

Colloquium 28

This colloquium starts with a monk questioning boys about who among them stole some apples. One group of boys blames another, who is quick to defend himself, but when faced with a long vocabulary list of other things he has stolen, he quickly admits it and says he wants to do penance. As in *colloquium 6*, he is told that he has said that before and carried on his behaviour, but unlike the earlier boy who manages to 'wheedle his way out of a whipping', the master instructs two boys to beat him and says he will beat him himself afterwards.[160] The boy complains and is met with the rather brutal *non est mortuus adhuc, sed uiuis* 'you're not dead yet – you're still alive.'[161]

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[156] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 156.
[157] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 159–61 (notes).
[158] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 162–63.
[159] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, p. 165.
[160] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 112.
[161] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 166–67.

The boy replies with a very long selection of pleas and accusations, many of which appear to be adapted from Isidore de Fleury's *Synonyma*, a 'dialogue between a complaining man and Reason.'[162] This section luxuriates in melodrama, with phrases like *Melius mihi esset modo mortuum esse quam sit miserabiliter uiuere* 'I'd rather die than live in such misery' and *o mors quam dulcis es miseris cunctis* 'death, how sweet you are to all the unhappy.[163] He is told to stop his wallowing in sadness and acknowledge his sin and change his ways. The boy agrees and promises not to steal or lie again.

In the other colloquia, boys often as the voices of reason amidst wayward monks and while the threat of violence is often there it is rarely acted upon. The moral message is handled with unusual clarity and rather mockingly 'poking fun at little boys who cry too hard when receiving their just punishment.'[164] Jones notes that 'in no customary known to me is any boy or adolescent still under custody ever deputized to whip a peer' and this may have been inherited from the *Synonyma* written at Fleury, where boys do seem to have been disciplined unusually harshly.[165]

Colloquium 29

The final colloquy is an address to *o karrisimi pueri*, starting with a monk saying *tempus modo est nobis loquendi aliquid de utilate animarum uestrarum* 'it's time now for us to say something for the utility of your souls.'[166] He explains that he has used jokes to introduce them to the wisdom he seeks to impart so 'as to make them more attractive to young boys who could not attend to more sober instruction.'[167] A boy replies that he speaks truly and bids him to teach something for the salvations of their souls. The monk says he will not deny them that.

An initial introduces the next section, in which the monk discusses that it means to be a Christian, listing virtues and acts of benevolence and selflessness and calls for acts of charity, reminding them not to make false accusations or steal, warns them against drinking to excess and *uerba turpia uel luxuriosa cantare* 'singing shameful lecherous words.'[168] He bids the boys at length do good works and remind others to do good themselves.

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[162] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 167–69; Dumitrescu, '"Pas de Philologie": On Playful Appropriation and the Anglo-Saxon Scholar', XXVIII, p. 189.
[163] Porter, 'Anglo-Saxon Colloquies: Ælfric, Ælfric Bata and de Raris Fabulis Retractata', pp. 166–68 (translation mine).
[164] Dumitrescu, '"Pas de Philologie": On Playful Appropriation and the Anglo-Saxon Scholar', XXVIII, p. 189.
[165] Jones, 'The Irregular Life in Ælfric Bata's Colloquies', p. 246.
[166] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 170–71.
[167] Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 65.
[168] Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata*, pp. 174–75.

In this final text, 'Bata acknowledges his own motives and explains a considerable portion of his own digressions' and 'we can discern that Ælfric Bata saw a need for a more colloquial, relaxed teaching environment.'[169] Some have taken a more cynical view of this, suggesting it was

> 'voicing the official view which Bata should be taking, and the preceding colloquies as reflecting a more tolerant and pragmatic approach to monastic life which was adopted in practice by many clerics, including most likely Bata himself'[170]

or that the 'author is merely using the dialogue-form as a convenient framework for his treatise', both viewpoints that I see very little evidence to support when the *Colloquia* are taken as a whole work.[171]

[169] Morgan, '"Foolish Speedgm Frequent Joking, and Naughty Chattering" Humor in the Anglo-Saxon Monstary', p. 22.
[170] Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*, p. 206.
[171] Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, p. 14.

Conclusion: Bata's Teaching Methodology

We can summarise several trends in Bata's teaching methodology in both the teaching of Latin, but also the teaching of morality and desired monastic behaviour:

- Lists of vocabulary within a conversational, often humorous, narrative framework (in 5, 8, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 27 & 28);
- Paired stories, one with 'bad' behaviour and the next with 'good' behaviour (in 3 & 4, 14 & 15, 16 & 17, 18 & 19?);
- Boys modelling good behaviour or questioning poor behaviour, often from adults (throughout); and
- The use of contextually relevant monastic vocabulary (throughout).

The use of humour is clearly and explicitly present in order to help the boys learn, and the focus on the day-to-day activities of monastic life ensures the material be relevant to the learners. 'Motivation provides […] the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process', a fact that Bata was evidently aware of.[172] Modern teaching methodology uses similar practices with 'centring of lesson content on topics of immediate personal concern'[173] In his introduction to the colloquia, 'Bata claims that his dialogues emphasize elements of *spoken* Latin, and a passage exemplifies their structure and scope', and conversational language is woven throughout.[174]

In terms of modern pedagogical theory, the *colloquia* suggest elements from the Direct Method (maximal exposure to the target language with cultural aspects taught implicitly) and Audiolongualism (heavy use of dialogues, mimicry and memorization), although it is undeniable that rote memorisation was also a key component.[175] The use of lists of vocabulary offers students options of how to use language within an understood grammatical structure; the combination of 'chunks' of language in a pre-grammatical state 'seem likely to help pupils

[172] Zoltán Dörnyei, 'Motivation in Second and Foreign Language Learning', *Language Teaching*, 31.3 (1998), 117–35 (p. 117) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480001315X>.
[173] Rosamond Mitchell and Cynthia Martin, 'Rote Learning, Creativity and "understanding" in Classroom Foreign Language Teaching', *Language Teaching Research*, 1.1 (1997), 1–27 (p. 13).
[174] Gwara, 'Second Language Acquisition and Anglo-Saxon Bilingualism: Negative Transfer and Avoidance in Ælfric Bata's Latin Colloquia, ca. A.D.1000', p. 9 (italics mine).
[175] Marianne Celce-Murcia and Lois McIntosh, 'Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language', (New York, USA: Newbury House 1991), pp. 4–5; Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 80.

identify 'choice points' within learned chunks.[176] It is imprudent to say more, though, with so little context of the environment the colloquia were composed for.

Moral lessons are also taught through contextually relevant scenarios, partly obscured by inappropriate divisions as one part responds to another. I am reminded of when I used to teach at a further education college and to discuss money skills I used a video series depicting a group of friends where one would make a bad financial decision and then their friend would talk them through better ways to handle their money.[177] Similar methods are used to raise awareness of health and safety hazards and food safety training; it is difficult to talk about what is correct without examples of what is at fault, and there are enough instances of inappropriate behaviour being followed by either modelling by students or paired 'good example' that I feel this was clearly intentional embedding of appropriate monastic behaviour.

As discussed above, both Gwara & Porter and Stevenson's publications of the text are flawed. Colloquia are split in two based on little textual evidence, others are combined in defiance of material evidence and separations within longer colloquia are often ignored entirely. Early views on Bata seem to take a fragmentary and puritan view, focussing exclusively on the negative portrayals and omitting the discussions of morality, or are pedantically dismissive finding fault wherever possible.

We lack the original context of the *Colloquia*, but I would strongly argue that in their original collected format, there is both material and contextual evidence that they were composed with morality and monastic identity, as well as humour, at their core. To borrow from Linsday's disparaging remarks about Bata's expansion of Ælfric's own colloquies, by chopping the *Colloquia* up in places and stitching it together in others, both Gwara and Stevenson 'marred it sadly.'[178]

[176] Mitchell and Martin, 'Rote Learning, Creativity and "understanding" in Classroom Foreign Language Teaching', p. 24.
[177] *Minted & Skinted* (Inside Job Productions, 2012) <https://www.insidejobproductions.co.uk/films/barclays-money-skills>.
[178] Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, p. vi (Introduction).

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