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**FURTHER ECHOES OF VERGIL'S AENEID IN FELIX'S VITA SANCTI
GUTHLACI**

The Mercian hermit Guthlac of Crowland (d. 714) is the subject of an Anglo-Latin hagiography, the Vita sancti Guthlaci. This text was composed c. 730–40 by a certain Felix, about whom nothing is known save that which can be deduced from his work.¹ It is clear that Felix was a good scholar; as Bertram Colgrave highlights in his 1956 edition of the Vita sancti Guthlaci, Felix's text draws directly on sources including Gregory the Great, Aldhelm, Bede's prose Vita Cuthberti, Jerome's Vita Pauli, Evagrius's translation of the Vita Antonii, Sulpicius Severus's Vita Martini, the anonymous Vita Fursei, and numerous passages of Scripture.² In addition, Colgrave notes: 'like every other medieval writer, he [Felix] was familiar with Virgil, and frequent Virgilian echoes appear throughout the text.'³ The majority of these echoes are from the Aeneid, and Colgrave's marginalia identify numerous points of

¹ Bertram Colgrave argues that a terminus ad quem of c. 740 for the Vita's composition is suggested by the dedication of the text to Ælfwald, an East Anglian king who died in 749, and the description of Guthlac's contemporaries Cissa and Wilfrid as still living. The lack of reference to Guthlac in the Historia Ecclesiastica, despite Bede's interest in the region, suggests a terminus post quem of c. 730. Felix's Life of St Guthlac, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), 18–19. All references to the Vita sancti Guthlaci are to Colgrave's edition. Translations from the Vita sancti Guthlaci are Colgrave's; all others are the authors' own unless otherwise indicated.

² Colgrave, Felix's Life of St Guthlac, 16–18. Lisa Weston suggests Prudentius's Psychomachia I.483 ('in caligine noctis') is the origin of Ch. XIX's 'noctis caliginibus', a collocation also used in Chs XLI and LIII ('noctis caligine'). However, it is a relatively common pairing, also found in Aldhelm's prose De virginitate (XXII 'noctis caliginem') and Gregory the Great's Moralia in Iob (IV 'noctis caligine'), texts on which Felix draws elsewhere in the Vita. Lisa M. C. Weston, 'Guthlac Betwixt and Between: Literacy, Cross-Temporal Affiliation, and an Anglo-Saxon Anchorite', Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures, XLII (2016), 1–127 (6); Colgrave, Felix's Life of St Guthlac, 17–18, 60. Felix also quotes Philo, probably, Colgrave suggests, through Gildas or Rufinus. Colgrave, Felix's Life of St Guthlac, 148, 192.

³ Colgrave, Felix's Life of St Guthlac, 17. The effect of these Vergilian echoes has been the subject of some scholarly attention. See: Catherine Clarke, Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400 (Cambridge, 2006), 31–55; Britton Brooks, 'Felix's Construction of the English Fenlands: Literal Landscape, Authorizing Allusion, and Lexical Echo in his Vita sancti Guthlaci', in Guthlac of Crowland: Celebrating 1300 Years, ed. by Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Stamford, forthcoming).

correspondence.⁴ These are: Aeneid II.268 in Ch. XIX; Aeneid IV.151 in Ch. XXV; Aeneid II.268 in Ch. XXVI; Aeneid XII.592 in Ch. XXX; Aeneid I.301 and XI.210 in Ch. XXXIII; Aeneid II.303 and II.311 in Ch. XXXIV; Aeneid II.218, IV.705 and XII.592 in Ch. XXXVI; Aeneid V.217, IV.130 and I.371 in Ch. XLI; Aeneid I.371 in Ch. L; and Aeneid I.600 in Ch. LIII. Jane Roberts has detected an echo of Aeneid I.657–8 in Ch. XXIX.⁵ Two further correspondences may now be added to this list, while a third is highly probable.

In Chapter VIII of the Vita sancti Guthlaci a miraculous hand appears at Guthlac's birth, pointing to the cross at the door of his mother's house. Those present prostrate themselves in prayer, before debating the significance of this sign:

Illis ergo cum inmenso stupore variis sermocinationibus multa inter sese conferentibus, ecce ex aula propiante, qua supradictus infans nascebatur, mulier immensa velocitate currens, clamabat: 'Stabilitote, quia futurae gloriae huic mundo natus est homo.'

(So while they had much debate among themselves in vast amazement and with manifold discussions, a woman came rushing at great speed out of the house near by in which the said child was being born, and cried out: 'Stand still, for a man child who is destined to future glory has been born into this world.')

In this passage's description of the people's debates, Felix recalls Book VI of the Aeneid, where Aeneas and Achates discuss the Cumaean Sibyl's revelation that they

⁴ Colgrave identifies one borrowing from the Georgics in Ch. XXX.

⁵ Jane Roberts, 'On Multi-Using Materials from The Dictionary of Old English Project, with Particular Reference to the hapax legomena in the Old English Translation of Felix's Vita Guthlaci', Florilegium XXVI (2009), 175–205 (194, n. 31).

will need to bury a friend (who turns out to be Misenus) before descending to the underworld. Aeneid VI.160 states: ‘**multa inter sese vario sermone** serebant’ (‘they exchanged many various discussions among themselves’).⁶ Vergil’s line is clearly echoed by Felix’s opening description of the scene: ‘illis ergo cum inmenso stupore **variis sermocinationibus multa inter sese** conferentibus’. The correspondences between the two phrases are highlighted in bold.

The phrase ‘multa inter sese’ is distinctly Vergilian. It does not appear in any other text in the Packard Humanities Institute’s database of Latin literary texts written before A.D. 200 (*PHI*).⁷ In the Patrologia Latina Database (*PL*), including the Acta Sanctorum, and Brepols’s Library of Latin Texts (*LLT-A* and *LLT-B*) the phrase occurs only as a direct quotation from the Aeneid in texts that predate the Vita sancti Guthlaci.⁸ Given the large number of Aeneid echoes elsewhere in Felix’s work, it is almost certainly Vergil’s text that he recalls in this passage. It is also clear that Felix is recalling Aeneid VI.160 rather than other similar passages. The phrase ‘inter sese multa’ does appear at Aeneid VIII.452 (of the Cyclopes working on the Shield of Aeneas) and at XII.720 (of two bulls fighting in a simile describing the fight of Turnus and Aeneas), but in both cases multa (multus ‘much’, ‘many’) is ablative singular feminine with the noun vi (vis ‘strength’), rather than neuter plural as in Aeneid VI.160 and the phrase used in Vita sancti Guthlaci.

Felix’s use of short quotations in his Vita sancti Guthlaci is characteristically adaptive. Richard Marsden’s analysis of Old Testament material in the Vita highlights Felix’s habit of skillfully modifying phrases taken from Scriptural sources to fit their

⁶ References to the Aeneid are to P. Vergili Maronis Opera, ed. by R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford, 1969).

⁷ Classical Latin Texts: A Resource Prepared by the Packard Humanities Institute <<http://latin.packhum.org/>> [accessed 16 March 2017].

⁸ Patrologia Latina Database <<http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 March 2017]; Library of Latin Texts–A <<http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/Default.aspx>> [accessed 16 March 2017]; Library of Latin Texts–B <<http://clt.brepolis.net/lltb/pages/Search.aspx>> [accessed 16 March 2017].

new context, both in terms of grammar and vocabulary.⁹ As Lisa Weston observes, Felix's handling of the Vergilian material shows the same approach.¹⁰ In the passage under discussion here, Felix's use of vari- and sermo- in 'variis sermocinationibus' is a modification of 'vario sermone' from Aeneid VI.160, indicating that this is indeed the precise line upon which Felix draws.

In addition, one small phrase in Vita sancti Guthlaci Ch. II appears to be a Vergilian borrowing. In Ch. II Felix describes the descent of Penwalh, Guthlac's father: 'Huius etiam viri progenies per nobilissima inlustrium regum nomina antiqua ab origine Icles digesto ordine cucurrit' ('Moreover the descent of this man was traced in set order through the most noble names of famous kings, back to Icel in whom it began in days of old'). The phrase 'antiqua ab origine' is found in Aeneid I.642 in a passage describing engravings depicting the exploits of Dido's ancestors, 'antiqua ab origine gentis' ('from the ancient origins of the people'). Again, this phrase is distinctly Vergilian; it occurs nowhere outside the Aeneid in the PHI database, nor anywhere in the PL, LLT-A and LLT-B in texts predating Felix's work.¹¹

There is also a possible further echo of the Aeneid in Vita sancti Guthlaci Ch. XLI, which is devoted to the healing of the possessed Hwætred. In his description of Hwætred's wasted condition Felix uses the phrase 'in corpore vires' which may be a quotation from Aeneid V.396 or V.395 (the boxing match episode, where it is also related to lost strength). This phrase is not as distinctly Vergilian as the two preceding examples: it also occurs in the works of Ovid (Epistulae ex Ponto I.4.3 and Fasti IV.541) and Propertius (Elegiae III.15.23), as well as in the Disticha Catonis

⁹ Richard Marsden, The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 15 (Cambridge, 1995), 73–4.

¹⁰ Weston, 'Guthlac Betwixt and Between', 5–6.

¹¹ PHI [accessed 16 March 2017]; PL [accessed 16 March 2017]; LLT-A [accessed 16 March 2017]; LLT-B [accessed 16 March 2017].

(IV.12).¹² However, these texts are unlikely to be the source of this phrase. As Michael Lapidge states, there is no evidence that Propertius was ever known in Anglo-Saxon England.¹³ While some of Ovid's works were available in eighth-century England (Bede cites Ars amatoria and Metamorphoses), no Anglo-Saxon author appears to have used the Epistulae ex Ponto, and the only use of Ovid's Fasti is by Wulfstan of Winchester, writing in the latter years of the tenth-century.¹⁴ Although the Disticha Catonis were a key schoolroom text in later Anglo-Saxon England, there is no suggestion that they were familiar in the first half of the eighth century, when Felix was writing.¹⁵ Given the lack of evidence that Felix had knowledge of Ovid, Propertius, or the Disticha Catonis, and his obvious fondness for quotation from Vergil, it is highly probable that the Aeneid is also the source for this phrase.

The parallels identified above provide further indication that Felix had a deep familiarity with and affection for Vergil's work, quoting apposite phrases, probably from memory, to shape the details of events in Guthlac's narrative.¹⁶ The addition of these three instances to the catalogue of Vergilian echoes in Felix's Vita sancti Guthlaci confirms the importance of the Aeneid to this eighth-century Anglo-Saxon author.

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¹² PHI [accessed 16 March 2017]; LLT-A [accessed 16 March 2017].

¹³ Michael Lapidge, The Anglo-Saxon Library (Oxford, 2006), 67.

¹⁴ Lapidge, The Anglo-Saxon Library, 221, 248, 323. See also Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Register of Written Sources Used by Anglo-Saxon Authors <<http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk>> [accessed 17 March 2017].

¹⁵ Michael Lapidge notes that they were unknown to Aldhelm and Bede. Michael Lapidge, Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899 (London, 1996), 460. Alcuin knew the Disticha Catonis, but this only provides evidence of their popularity in Carolingian schools. See Maurits I. Boas, Alcuin und Cato (Leiden, 1937).

¹⁶ See Brooks, 'Felix's Construction of the English Fenlands'.