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(La poesia religiosa inglese antica / Old English Religious Poetry)

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ABSTRACTS

DANIEL ANLEZARK, ‘Finding friends in *Genesis A*’,
Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology 10 (2018), pp. 1-30.

The concept of friendship is one barely touched on in the Book of Genesis. However, the Anglo-Saxon poet of *Genesis A* makes the ideal of friendship into one of the major themes of the poem, in a discourse focused on the difficulties faced by the patriarch Abraham as he wanders from kingdom to kingdom, after leaving his homeland at God’s command. There are two major impulses towards this modification in the poem: the naming of Abraham as a “friend of God” elsewhere in scripture; and the practice of *amicitia* among early medieval social elites. Ultimately, Abraham in *Genesis A* searches for a powerful friend who will give him land and wealth. He finds this formal relationship of *amicitia* in the generosity of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

CLAUDIO CATALDI, ‘The “secret wound”: *Homiletic Fragment I* and the Vercelli Book’,
Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology 10 (2018), pp. 31-51.

In this study, I discuss some textual and thematic similarities between the Old English poem *Homiletic Fragment I* and other Old English religious poems such as *Soul and Body I*, *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, and *Judgment Day II*. In addition to the emphasis on the secrecy of sins – often paralleled with “wounds” in these Old English works – and the call to be wise in life, all these texts share, more or less explicitly, the Judgment Day theme. As I intend to note, the motif of the condemnation of the “Sins of the tongue”, which is central to *Homiletic Fragment I*, is frequently set by Anglo-Saxon writers in an eschatological context. The relationship between “sins of the tongue” and Doomsday imagery is also featured in some eschatological homilies of the Vercelli Book. I shall suggest that the preoccupation towards the “deviant speech” can be considered a “sub-theme” of particular significance for the Vercelli collector. This recurring attention on the “sins of the tongue” can be described within the major unifying themes of the Vercelli Book, such as the Judgment Day theme itself and the call to repentance.

GABRIELE COCCO, ‘*The Wanderer* 13-14a: a hint of private prayer’,
Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology 10 (2018), pp. 51-80.

The Wanderer 13-14a reveals that a man ought to “his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his

hordcofan” (bind fast the closet of his mind, to guard the chamber of his thoughts) in order to shelter his soul. This imagery of the compounds *ferðloca* and *hordcofa* recalls that of the word *cubiculum* in Ambrose’s exegesis on Mt. 6:6, “tu autem cum orabis intra in cubiculum tuum”, in *De Cain et Abel* I, 9.38, “cubiculum quod est in te, in quo includuntur cogitationes tuas, in quo versantur sensus tui”. The metaphorical portrayal of the heart as the innermost *cubiculum* of private prayer also occurs in some writings by Augustine. Ambrose’s elucidation on the term *cubiculum* concerning the *cogitatio* and the *sensus*, as well as Augustinian theology, may have influenced the poet in his lexical choice for the compound nouns *ferðloca* and *hordcofa* while attempting to portray the views the Anglo-Saxons had on the “fettered mind”.

CARLA CUCINA, ‘*Mid þearfan wædum*. Rappresentare la povertà nella poesia anglosassone’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* 10 (2018), pp. 81-155.

Poverty was certainly part of the Anglo-Saxon experience. In the literary corpus, there are several hints which prove that it was considered one of those very hard physical and psychological tests – such as extreme cold, pain, illness, old age, solitude, exile – men happen to face in their lifetime. Christian perspective intervenes in turning the moral perception of wealth vs. poverty upside down, with material values superseded by the spiritual acceptance of the model of Christ, who chose to stand on the beggar’s side. Through the doctrine of charity, the idea that the rich man has to give to the poor a portion of his possessions – since ultimately these are on loan from God – makes its way into society, so that a new and basically penitential carrying out of the traditional *giftstol* power system emerges. The purpose of this essay is to select from the corpus of Old English poetry significant examples both of *paupertas cum Petro* (i.e. poverty voluntarily chosen as a devotional form of life) and of *paupertas cum Lazaro* (i.e. indigence suffered as a permanent or occasional condition), as well as to find poetic evidence for the Christian idea that, since earthly wealth is granted by God, it has to be generously distributed by the wealthy men in the form of alms, which become the safest way for them to save their own soul. By reading the poetic corpus and also by taking into account some significant interactions of thought with and verbal echoes of both the homiletic tradition and the relevant Latin sources, the present analysis demonstrates that a wide range of types or aspects of poverty are represented in Old English poetry. Moreover, it shows that the material and psychological effects of poverty – even if the Anglo-Saxons certainly had no social conscience in the modern sense – were especially moving for authors, particularly when they could draw on the so-called “elegiac” set of *topoi*, such as precariousness, exile, loss, separation, solitude.

LORENZO LOZZI GALLO, ‘Per una interpretazione di *Juliana* 550b’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* 10 (2018), pp. 157-183.

This paper deals with the interpretation of OE *þweorhtimbran* in Cynewulf’s *Juliana*, line 550b; a preliminary analysis of the poem aims to establish its context and background, as well as its complex relation with the Latin text. The subsequent etymological research and review of occurrences are intended to ascertain the exact meaning of the elements in the compound, their analogues and their uses in the association of ideas. Through a survey of the occurrences of adjectives with the same element *-tīeme*, the semantic evolution of the root can be used to interpret the meaning as ‘abounding [‘teeming’] with opposition’, hence ‘fiercely adverse’ and also ‘generating enmity [against the devil]’, referring to Juliana’s example, as her martyrdom will gain many conversions. This new interpretation would be consistent with the emphasis laid on Juliana’s firmness and her prominent role in the war waged against evil in this world by the spiritual soldiers of Christ in the Old English poem.

MARIA ELENA RUGGERINI, “‘*Felices oculi qui cernunt gaudia coeli*’”: la sezione finale anglo-latina

di *The Phoenix*,

Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology 10 (2018), pp. 185-227.

The Phoenix ends with a section of eleven lines characterised by the use of a mixed poetic language (a-verses are in vernacular, b-verses are in Latin). The aim of this paper is to discuss the method of composition and the criteria followed by the poet in his choice of the Latin phrases to be coupled with the OE ones. Starting from an interesting parallel between *milde ond bliðe* in *Elene* 1317a and *blandem et mitem* in *Phoenix* 674b, a detailed analysis of each Latin b-verse will show how the poet selected phrases which could fit in the line also with regard to the traditional technique of collocating words. To prove this assumption, the b-verses will be back-translated into OE, and the resulting lines will be compared with other attested passages in the corpus, to test their combinative appropriateness. The second step will be to look for the possible Latin sources of the Latin metrical fragments, even though their content is too generic to allow any direct borrowing hypotheses. However, the rich harvest of parallel phrases will enable us to prove that the poet exploited a familiar Latin vocabulary drawn from his religious readings and liturgical practice (especially hymns and prayers). We can therefore safely state that he must have been a monk poet whose ability to compose in the traditional style manifests itself also in the use of poignant *iuncturae*, equally well suited to the hexameter-ending and the Germanic half-line: in composing the final section on such a relevant monastic subject as the *laus perennis* of God, he wished to weave a double-faced fabric which could be appreciated on both (linguistic) sides.

ERIC G. STANLEY †, ‘The religious riddles of the Exeter Book’,

Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology 10 (2018), pp. 229-246.

Exeter Book *Riddles*, nos 4, 26, 43, 46, 66, 85, 90 (Latin), 95, are certainly on religious subjects, or at least probably, after consideration of proposed solutions; and this paper deals only with these eight *Riddles*. Usually the first significant word in each riddle guides the reader to the solution. That has not always been recognized by the scholars who have attempted to solve them. Thus in *Riddle 4* the compound *þragbysig*, in line 1a, guides the reader to “bell”; the word is composed of ‘time’ and ‘busy’, and bells are busy at definite times to summon to divine service or to strike the canonical hours. That is a religious subject. Other solutions that have been proposed, “millstone” for example, are not subject to ‘time’. A principle of how to proceed from the beginning of a riddle to its solution is established for *Riddle 4*, which is discussed at greater length than any of the others. As early as 1835 *Riddle 26* has been solved as “book” or more precisely “Bible codex”. *Riddle 43* was solved as “soul and body” in 1859, after recognizing some wordplay that might misdirect to a heroic solution. Latin sources are often important, and *Riddle 40* is based on a very long riddle by the Anglo-Saxon Latin poet Aldhelm. The proportion of religious riddles in the total of Exeter Book *Riddles* is relatively small, whereas in Old English poetry as a whole the proportion of religious poetry is very high. Perhaps religion was considered too serious a subject in the monasteries for the lighthearted game of setting and solving riddles.

VERONKA SZÓKE, ‘Weeping eyes and the Old English phrase *wopes hring*’

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The aim of the present article is to reconsider the Old English poetic formula *wopes hring*, which is used in four poems, where the contexts indicate that the phrase refers to shedding of tears. However, the meaning of *hring* (?‘sound’ or ?‘circle’) and the origin of the formula, long subject to scholarly debate, have not been conclusively clarified. The prevailing view was advanced by Kenneth Brooks, who claims that *hring*, meaning ‘circle, ring’, refers to the eye and the formula indicates eyes wet with tears. He supports his thesis by pointing to the use of the compound *ēaghring* (lit.

'eye-ring'). In this essay, further lexical evidence is provided to uphold the connection between *hring* and the eye in *wopes hring*, which appears to be a learned coinage referring to the shedding of tears in contexts where crying plays an important role in the spiritual progress of the weeping characters.