

Cicero or Cyprian in Hieronymian Hoodoo? (*Vita Hilarionis* 12, 3)¹

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A nun of Gaza was the object of sexual attentions from the swain next door, who endeavoured to win his heart-throb with magic spells fetched specially from Memphis. The tale is told in ch. 12 of Jerome's *Life* of St. Hilarion, whose intervention broke the magic. An edition of this work was published in 1975 by Antoon Bastiaensen, who qualified his text as "critico"². In fact however this recension was based merely on earlier editions. In Bastiaensen's own edition the swain's thaumaturgics are described as follows: *subter limen domus puellae portenta quaedam verborum et portentosas figuras, sculptas in aeris Cyprii lamina, defodit* (12, 3). Here Bastiaensen failed to identify a source for Jerome's particular phraseology³.

¹ Texts are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*², Leipzig 1990, and its online *Addenda* at <http://www.thesaurus.badw.de/pdf/addenda.pdf>.

² C. MOHRMANN, A.A.R. BASTIAENSEN, J.W. SMIT, L. CANALI and C. MORESCHINI, *Vita di Martino, Vita di Ilarione, In memoria di Paola*, Milan (Vit. Sant. 4) 1975, 69.

³ The words *portentosas figuras... in aeris Cyprii lamina* evince the influence of Apuleius according to S. WEINGARTEN, "Jerome and the *Golden Ass*", in E.A. LIVINGSTONE (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 33, Louvain 1997, 385 with n. 12; cf. ead., *The Saint's Saints: Hagiography and Geography in Jerome*, Leiden and Boston (Anc. Jud. Early Christ. 58) 2005, 93-4 ("Shared images").

Jerome's attitude to Cicero's *Orator* is problematic. Whereas Augustine refers more frequently to this treatise than to any other of Cicero's works on rhetoric⁴, Hagendahl's masterly investigation of Jerome's own debt to the classics was able to identify only three echoes of the *Orator*⁵. At *Orator* 26 Cicero's discussion of Atticism leads him to report the question put by Aeschines in his attack on the style of Demosthenes: *utrum illa verba an portenta sint*⁶. It would seem possible to show that this Ciceronian combination of *verba* and *portenta* has exercised a considerable and hitherto unidentified influence on Jerome. The online *Library of Latin Texts* provides no further instance of this collocation before the Middle Ages.

The first occasion on which Jerome echoes these words of the *Orator* would appear to be a passage of his *Commentary on Galatians* where critics of the uncouthness of Christian neology are parried as follows: *mittamus eos ad Ciceronis libros qui de quaestionibus philosophiae praenotantur et videant quanta ibi necessitate compulsus sit tanta verborum portenta proferre*⁷. Kunst has observed how mention of Cicero's name tends in Jerome to be followed by imitation of Ciceronian phraseology⁸: here the sentence starts by mentioning *Ciceronis libros*. When Jerome appropriates formulations from elsewhere, he is accusto-

For an attempt to rebut Weingarten's case for Apuleian influence on the *Vita Hilarionis* cf. the present writer, "Some Alleged Echoes of Apuleius in Jerome", forthcoming in *CPh* 106 (2011).

⁴ Cf. H. HAGENDAHL, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, Göteborg (Stud. Graec. Lat. Gothoburg. 20) 1967, 554.

⁵ H. HAGENDAHL, *Latin Fathers and the Classics: A Study on the Apologists, Jerome and Other Christian Writers*, Göteborg (Acta Univ. Gothoburg. 64, 2) 1958, 401. An attempt to identify further borrowings from the *Orator* is made by id., "Jerome and the Latin Classics", *VChr* 28 (1974) 220-1, where he states explicitly that "Jerome did not make much use of the *Orator*". On the passages in Jerome where Hagendahl postulates the influence of this treatise cf. the present writer, "Cicero's *Orator* and Jerome", *VChr* 51 (1997) 25-39; for a further debt to the *Orator* cf. id., "The Classics and Jerome's Prefaces to the Biblical Translations 'From the Hebrew'", *Helmántica* 60 (2009) 170-5. The Hieronymian texts to be adduced below should be added to this dossier.

⁶ For another Hieronymian debt to the same passage (*Orat.* 27) cf. E. NORDEN, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*¹⁰, Stuttgart 1995, 635 n. 1.

⁷ *In Gal.* 1, 11 ll. 68-71. No comment on these lines is to be found in the *apparatus fontium* of the recent edition by G. RASPANTI, *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri opera* 1, 6: *Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas*, Turnhout (CCSL 77A) 2006, 27. A date of 387 is assigned to this commentary by P. JAY, *L'exégèse de S. Jérôme d'après son "Commentaire sur Isaïe"*, Paris 1985, 408.

⁸ C. KUNST, *De S. Hieronymi studiis Ciceronianis*, Vienna and Leipzig (Diss. Philol. Vindobon. 12, 2) 1918, 183 n. 5.

med to enhance the wording by tightening it up⁹. Such is also the case here. Cicero's ambagious disjunction (*utrum illa verba an portenta sint*) has been compressed into an elegant hendiadys: *verborum portenta*.

Such enhanced phrasing tends to be the form in which Jerome deploys his borrowed material on subsequent occasions¹⁰. Again Jerome can be shown to have followed the same procedure here. At the start of his *Adversus Iovinianum* he caps a specimen of Jovinian's style with the following question: *rogo, quae sunt haec portenta verborum?*¹¹ Eight years later Jerome's *Adversus Rufinum* expresses dismay at his opponent's use of language: *ausum illum esse haec Romam verborum portenta transmittere!*¹² Finally Jerome's letter to Sunnia and Fretela on the text of the Psalter makes the following comment on Psalm 88, 39: *nisi forte ἐξουδένωσας non putatis transferendum "despexisti", sed... "adnihilasti" vel "adnullasti" vel "nullificasti" et si qua alia possunt inveniri apud inperitos portenta verborum*¹³. In the *Vita Hilarionis* the magic spells would accordingly be a further echo of the same Ciceronian text. It may be noted that this would be the only time Jerome used the wording in a context which did not involve literary criticism.

It would seem however that the *Vita Hilarionis* does not in fact supply another instance of the phrase *portenta verborum*. A new edition of this work has recently been provided by Edgardo Morales, who unlike Bastiaensen does base his text on an examination of the ma-

⁹ Cf. the present writer, "Some Features of Jerome's Compositional Technique in the *Libellus de virginitate servanda* (Epist. 22)", *Philologus* 136 (1992) 234-55.

¹⁰ Cf. the present writer, "Tertullian's *De idololatria* and Jerome Again", *Mnemosyne* N.S. 49 (1996) 48.

¹¹ *Adv. Iovin.* 1, 3. For the view that this Jovinianic text exemplifies the pitfalls of the *genus grande* that are discussed at *Rhet. Her.* 4, 10, 15 cf. the present writer, "Potamius of Lisbon, *De martyrio Isaiae prophetae* Again", *Helmántica* 56 (2005) 102-3. The *Adversus Iovinianum* belongs to 393; cf. F. CAVALLERA, *S. Jérôme: Sa vie et son oeuvre* 1, 2, Louvain and Paris (Spic. Sacr. Lovan. 2) 1922, 157.

¹² *Adv. Rufin.* 2, 11. For a defence of Jerome's negative view of Rufinus' style against the consentaneity of modern scholarship cf. the present writer, "*Rufinus Sallustianus*", forthcoming in *Orpheus*. For the date of the *Adversus Rufinum* (401) cf. CAVALLERA, *o.c.* (n. 11) 162. No source for Jerome's wording in this passage is identified in the extensive commentary by P. LARDET, *L'Apologie de Jérôme contre Rufin: Un commentaire*, Leiden, New York and Cologne (Suppl. Vig. Christ. 15) 1993, 178.

¹³ *Epist.* 106, 57, 3. This letter was written between 404 and 410 according to B. ALTANER, "Wann schrieb Hieronymus seine *Ep. 106 ad Sunniam et Fretelam de Psalterio?*", *VChr* 4 (1950) 246-8.

nuscripts¹⁴. In the passage at issue Morales prints *tormenta* instead of *portenta*: Bastiaensen's *portenta* is in fact the reading of only one of the manuscripts used by the new editor. Like Bastiaensen, Morales fails to identify a source for Jerome's wording in this passage¹⁵. Here the failure of *Quellenforschung* is all the more unfortunate, since Winterbottom's review of Morales' text states expressly: "One would welcome a defence of the phrase *tormenta verborum*"¹⁶. It would seem that the source which Morales has missed and the defence Winterbottom desiderates are both to be found in Cyprian.

In a similar context of exorcism Cyprian's *Ad Demetrianum* had affirmed: *torquentur spiritalibus flagris et verborum tormentis de obsessis corporibus eiciuntur* (15, 1). Here Cyprian is in turn dependent on Minucius Felix¹⁷. No other instance of the combination of *tormenta* and *verborum* is furnished by the online *Library of Latin Texts* before the Middle Ages. Jerome himself would appear to be specifically indebted to the *Ad Demetrianum*, which he knew very well: the same Cyprianic treatise can be shown to have been the source of a further Hieronymian borrowing that is roughly contemporary¹⁸. Winterbottom's desire for a defence of the present phrase is understandable: it is precisely such noteworthy phraseology that Jerome can be shown to have remembered and redeployed¹⁹. Again Jerome enhances the stylistic level of his source: his own *tormenta verborum* is marked by an elegant cretic spondee clausula that corresponds accentually to the *cursus planus*²⁰. The conclusion may accordingly be drawn that in this piece of Hieronymian hoodoo we do not have an imitation of Cicero, but of Cyprian²¹. At the

¹⁴ P. LECLERC, E.M. MORALES and A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Jérôme: Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus, Hilarion)*, Paris (Sources Chrét. 508) 2007.

¹⁵ The new edition resembles Bastiaensen's in merely supplying a long note on "magic" (p. 246-7 n. 2).

¹⁶ M. WINTERBOTTOM, *JThS N.S.* 59 (2008) 373.

¹⁷ 27, 5 (*quotiens a nobis tormentis verborum et orationis incendiis de corporibus exiguntur*). For Cyprian's dependence cf. M. PELLEGRINO, *Studi su l'antica apologetica*, Rome (Stor. Lett. 14) 1947, 123-4.

¹⁸ Cf. the present writer, "Hier. *Epist.* 53, 1, 2-3: Cyprian, Horace, Virgil", *Sileno* 23 (1997) 87-97. Letter 53 belongs to 394; cf. P. NAUTIN, "Études de chronologie hiéronymienne (393-7)", *REAug* 19 (1973) 222-4. The *Vita Hilarionis* is to be placed between 393 and a date after 387-8; cf. the present writer, "Virgil, *Eclogues* 2 and 10 in Jerome", *Eirene* 35 (1999) 110.

¹⁹ Cf. The present writer, *art. c.* (n. 9).

²⁰ There is also agreement between metrical ictus and linguistic accent.

²¹ On the dangers of over-zealous identification of classical reminiscences in this work cf. the present writer, "Two Further Echoes of Sallust's *Histories* in Jerome (*Vita Hilarionis* 22, 3 and 30, 2)?" , *VetChr* 37 (2000) 209-15.

same time it would seem to have been possible to show that elsewhere Jerome does evince a strong and hitherto unrecognized predilection for the Ciceronian cluster of *verba* and *portenta*: this partiality is evidently responsible for the ousting of *tormenta* by *portenta* in part of the manuscript tradition of the *Vita Hilarionis*²².

ABSTRACT

Whereas Bastiaensen's text of Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* had qualified the thaumaturgy of 12, 3 as *portenta verborum*, the new critical edition by Edgardo Morales instead reads *tormenta verborum*. It would seem possible to show that this latter phrase has been appropriated by Jerome à sa façon from Cyprian's *Ad Demetrianum*. Other Hieronymian texts do however employ the syntagm *portenta verborum*, which turns out to be a hitherto unidentified debt to Cicero's *Orator*.

KEY WORDS: Jerome, Cicero, Cyprian, *Vita Hilarionis*, *Orator*.

²² For a comparable instance cf. the present writer, *art. c.* (n. 10) 51-2. The final point may be made that the reading *tormenta verborum* is explained as *intorta verba* by V. DE BUCK, "Vita S. Hilarionis Abbatis auctore S. Hieronymo", *Acta Sanctorum* Oct. 9 (1869) 50 n. dd, where reference is also made to *tormentum ferreum* and *stupeum tormentum* as equivalent to *ferrum tortum* and *stupa torta*. The same view is repeated by H. HURTER, *Sulpicii Severi opuscula de S. Martino Episcopo Turonensi et S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri vitae S. Pauli, S. Hilarionis et Malchi monachorum*, Innsbruck (Sanct. Patr. Opusc. Sel. 48) 1885, 227 n. 1. The Cyprianic source identified above shows this interpretation of *tormenta verborum* to be wrong: Cyprian's immediately antecedent *torquentur spiritalibus flagris* makes clear that here the point is not "twirls", but "torture".