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Some medieval French variations on images appearing in Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*, Book III, metre iii*

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ABSTRACT: *The third metre of Book III of Boethius'* Consolatio philosophiae *identifies three traditional goals of the wealthy avaricious man, goals which prove utltimately illusory. These three goals are represented by the following Latin expressions: «fluente auri gurgite», «bacis rubri litoris», «ruraque centeno scindat opima boue». This article explores the different shades of meaning ascribed to these Latin expressions by nine medieval French translators of the text. One of the most unexpected and at first puzzling results, arising no doubt from an obscure scribal transcription, is to find one copyist transforming the overflowing floods of gold into barracudas consuming garfish.*

KEYWORDS: *Boethius* – Consolatio philosophiae*, III,iii – Medieval French translations – Scribal variations*

The Latin Text

Quamuis fluente diues auri gurgite
non expleturas cogat auarus opes
oneretque bacis colla rubri litoris
ruraque centeno scindat opima boue,
nec cura mordax deserit superstitem
defunctumque leues non comitantur opes.[1]

* I dedicate this article to my friend Deirdre Stone, editor and translator of: *Bernardus Silvestris,* Mathematicus*, Edition and Translation*, «Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge», 63, 1996, pp. 209-283.

[1] Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolatio* (ed. Bieler).

Translation

Although the rich man may draw off from the floods of gold
Wealth overflowing, his greed cannot be filled to the brim;
Although he may weigh down his neck with Indian pearls,
One hundred oxen may plow his fertile country estates,
His gnawing cares do not forsake him while he lives;
Dead, his ephemeral wealth cannot attend to his needs.[2]

1. *The Question*

In preparing an edition of the later 14th century Walloon verse translation of the *Consolatio philosophiae* [*CP*], the translation now entitled the *Boèce en rimes* by Jean de Thys,[3] I was puzzled by difficult readings and variants in the first two verses of the translation of III,iii in each of the two manuscripts of this text, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF], fr. 576 (dated 1383, in the Walloon dialect, by the copyist Petrus de Palude) and BnF, fr. 1543 (dated 1402, with more markedly Picard features, by the copyist Alixandre Dannes). In fr. 576 (P), we read the following translation of the Latin, vv. 1-2: «Combien qu'avers quiere sans fin, | Comme uns suscis gouta(i)ns or fin, | Avoir or, […]». In the second manuscript, fr. 1543 (Q), this becomes: «Combien qu'avers quiere sans fin, | Commë un gouvion orfin, | Avoir or, […]». The image in this Latin ablative absolute construction is located within the unreal conditional clause which introduces the opening two verses Book III, metre iii. For Boethius, the 'diues auarus' may be likened to a turbulent or overflowing whirlpool (or stream?) of gold, endlessly augmenting supply but never being filled. The puzzle for me was to determine, as far as possible, how the 'fluente gurgite auri' became in one translation «uns suscis gouta(i)ns or fin», or, in a variant reading of the same text, «un gouvion» which seeks out «orfin». This led me to explore the resolutions of this passage chosen by other medieval French translators.

[2] Relihan 2001, p. 148.
[3] Atkinson 2011; Id. 2012.

2. *Book III, metre iii, Introduction*

I read this third metre of Book III of the *Consolatio* as Boethius' final onslaught on the insufficiency of riches as providing any substantial access to true happiness. This attack begins in Book II, metre ii with a description of greed and man's thirst for possessions which are not his own. It is continued in II, prose 5 where the value of the so-called gifts of Fortune are explored. Interestingly enough, amongst the riches explored by Fortune in that prose, gold, silver, precious stones and fair fields ('agrorum pulchritudo') all find their place. The following metre, II,v, recalls the Golden Age of satisfied simplicities and ends with the wistful query:

> Woe to him! Who was that inventor
> Who unearthed these treacherous treasures,
> The dead weight of gold covered over,
> The jewels that longed to lie hidden?[4]

Whereas the exploration of the inherent inadequacy of the five goals which deluded human desire sets for itself as leading to happiness is first pursued in Book II, those goals being variously entitled as follows; 1) 'opes, diuitiae'; 2) 'honores, veneratio'; 3) 'potentia, regna'; 4) 'gloria, gloriosum nomen'; 5) 'voluptates', they are all re-examined in Book III, but this time in such a way as to determine what it is that human desire is really looking for through these mistaken goals – and these are the qualities of 1) 'sufficentia'; 2) 'reverentia'; 3) 'potentia'; 4) 'celebritas'; 5) 'laetitia'. But, enquires Philosophy, is there not some unifiying principle which binds these latter qualities together? By careful exploratory steps we are led to identify a unifying principle of supreme good, which can be identified with the true happiness one is to seek, which is none other than the Good itself (III,10,§§36-43, particularly §§42-43).[5]

This third metre of Book III completes the attack on the insufficiency

[4] Relihan 2001, p. 39.

[5] «Therefore, since all things are sought for the sake of the Good, it is not those things but the good itself that all people desire. But we have conceded that happiness is the reason why the other things are chosen. From this it is clearly obvious that the substance of the Good itself and the substance of true happiness are one and the same. […] But we have shown that God and true happiness are one and the same. […] Therefore we may confidently conclude that the substance of God is also located in the Good itself and nowhere else» (Relihan 2001, p. 77).

of riches that has been, once again, fully explored in the preceding prose. It confirms the conclusion of the Book, III, prose 3, §19: «If wealth cannot eliminate the feeling of need and creates its own feeling of need instead, what reason is there for you mortals to think that it can offer you self-sufficiency?».[6]

The objects of desire of the avaricious person in their attempt ever to increase their wealth and their standing confirm those found in earlier literary traditions. And so the gold, the precious stones and the fair fields which first appeared in Book 2, now reappear in III,iii, as masses of gold, Red Sea pearls and fertile ploughing landed property. Ultimatley they are all found to be wanting in achieving any true satisfaction. A sense of lack or poverty still haunts the rich and greedy person; and at the time of death, the uselessness of such wealth is starkly experienced.

3. *The medieval French translations*

An examination of those medieval French translations that do render this passage reveals some interesting variations of understanding. Our purpose here is to examine the three key objects of desire of the wealthy and avaricious man.

The multiple medieval French translations of the *Consolatio* dating from the 12th to the 15th century, the majority of which are now available in editions or online, provide a rich basis for comparative studies of syntax, lexical items, translation techniques etc.[7] Of the fifteen known translations or adaptations of the *Consolatio Philosophiae* most recently numbered in chronological order,[8] we exclude the Limousin *Boecis* (1) and the Anglo-Norman verses of Simun de Freine (2) from consideration. Of the remaining thirteen, there are ten which pay attention to the verses of III,iii (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15). Since the Franco-Venetian translation of Bonaventura de Demena (5), *La complainte de la tribulation et de la consolation de la Phylosophie*, is simply a paraphrase of the key ideas lying behind the Boethian imagery, we may exclude it from our present consideration.

[6] Relihan 2001, p. 57.
[7] Cfr. Atkinson 2004; Cropp 2012.
[8] Galderisi 2011.

Mes qi est cil home si beés de richeces a les qieles ne manchent maintes choses; anzois sont maintes riches homes qi ont toz tens maintes rancunes et poines et affliccions et defez. Donqes ne ont il verais beatitudens, la qiele nos avons dit qi est compliment de bien sanz affliccions et sanz aucuns defeiz.[9]
(Paris, BnF, fr. 821, f. 35va-vb)

Here then, as a point of reference, is the translation of each of the nine translations relevant to our purpose. Our interest is to explore the differing lexical items chosen in interpreting the three phrases 'fluente gurgite auri', 'oneretque bacis colla Rubri litoris' and 'ruraque centeno scindat opima boue'. While the variation of treatment of 'fluente gurgite auri' was the first to capture my attention, I choose to comment on the gold, the pearls and the rich fields in reverse order.

(3) *Del Confortement de Philosopfie*, an anonymous Burgundian prose version, *ca* 1230.
Philosophie mostre en cest metre quant plus a li riches avers e plus veut, et di: «Ja seit ce que li riches avers ajoste ses richeces neient aemplissables par le decorrant flum d'or e puisse chargier ses cols des pierres precioses de la roge mer, e ja seit ce que il puisse trenchier les plenteis chans par cent jous de bués, nequeden la mordable cure ne delaisse celui vivant, e les trespassables richeces non acompaignent celui mort.»[10]

(4) *Boeces de Consolation*, an anonymous prose version from the region of Flanders, *ca* 1300.
Encore soit ce que riches avers ait un regort d'or et plentét de bués et de biestes et de biens de terre, ja tant qu'il vive, li angoisse de l'avarisce ne le laira et quant il morra, les legieres richeces ne l'acompaingneront mie.[11]

(6) *Li livres de Confort de Philosophie*, a prose translation by Jean de Meun, *ca* 1300.
Ja soit ce que li riches avers a tout un gort decorant d'or amoncelle richesses qui ja ne li acompliront sa couvoitise, et ait chargié son col de pierres precieusez et face ses champs planteureus arer a cent beus, ja la cure mordans *et angoisseuse* ne le laissera

[9] We may compare this with the Venetian version of Bonaventura, published by Anna Maria Babbi: «Mo qual è quel homo si biado de le richeçe al qual non mancano assai coxe? Anche sono assai richi homeni li quali hanno sempre assai rancure e pene e affliçione e defetti: adonca non hanno elli veraxe biatitudine, la qual nui havemo ditto che sè complida de bene sença aflicione e sença alguno defetto» (Babbi 1995, p. 134).
[10] Bolton-Hall 1996-1997, p. 61.
[11] Schroth 1976, p. 173.

tant comme il soit vis, ne les fuitivez richecez ne li feront pas compaingnie quant il sera mort.[12]

(7) *Le Livre de Boece: De Consolation*, a prose translation by Pierre de Paris, French d'Outremer, *ca* 1309.[13]

Ja soyt ce que le riche habonde de un flot de l'or descorrant et ja soit ce que le riche avaros constraingne les richesces qui ne sont pas a complir et ja soit ce que il charge ses espales de pierres precioses de la rouge mer et ja soit ce [48rb] que il taille les grans champs par cent charrues, certes, toutes voyes por toutes ces choses, la cure des homes qui est si mordable ne delaissera ja le desirrant, et les ligieres richesces ne acompaignent pas le mort.

Exposition sur ces vers. La lettre est assés clere par sens. Don besoing n'est pas de trop grant exposition come soit chose que la Philosophie ne vuet nulle autre chose dire se non tant seulement que ja l'ome ne saura ja tant avoir que il ne desirre encore plus.

Car tel est la nature humaine que en nulle guise ne puet estre saollee. Et ja l'ome ne saura tant avoir que il ne conveingne qu'il laisse tout quant il vient a la mort. Por la quel rayson il s'ensuit la folie des homes estre bien apparant, quant il s'esforcent de assembler ce que il leur covient laisser en la fin.

(Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4788, f. 48ra-rb)

(8) *Boeces: De Consolacion*, an anonymous translation originally from the region of the Franche-Comté; prose and verse alternating, *ca* 1320-1330.

Se riches estoit engorgiez
D'or, et de gemmes touz chargiez,
Et eüst cent paires de buefs
Pour arer grans champs a son eus,
N'auroit il ja paiz en sa vie
N'a la mort des biens compaignie.[14]

(10) *Le Livre de Boece de Consolacion, (avec gloses)*, anonymous, prose and verse alternating, second half of the 14th century.

Se li avers avoit ruisseaulx
D'or et d'argent et de joyaulx
Chargiez de precïeuses pierres
Et cent beufs pour arer ses terres, –

[12] Dedeck-Héry 1952, p. 211.
[13] Concina 2014; Ead. (to appear). I am extremely grateful to Chiara Concina (University of Verona) for providing me with this transcription from her edition of this text (in preparation).
[14] Atkinson 1996, p. 83.

La premiere raison –
Ja senz angoisse ne seroit –
La seconde –
Et a la mort trestout lairoit.
Note cy dessus trois choses en quoy riches gens se delictent, c'est assavoir or, pierres precieuses et grant possession de terre.[15]

(11) *Boèce en rimes,* a verse translation by de Jean de Thys, Walloon dialect, *ca* 1370.

Base manuscript fr. 576:

Combien qu'avers quiere sans fin,
Comme uns suscis gouta(i)ns or fin,
Avoir or, pierres a grant cherge
Que mers rouge enfante et descherge, 4940
Et ait .c. boés en caruage
Pour recauper son hiretage,
Tant comme il vit, tant plus se mort [33va]
D'avoir, qui le laist a le mort.[16]

Text of the second manuscript, fr. 1543, f. 27rb:

Combien qu'avers quiere sans fin,
Commë un gouvion orfin,
Avoir or, pierres a grant carche
Que mer rouge enfante et decarche, 4940
Et ait .c. beus pour caruage
Pour recoper sans heritage,
Tant com plus se vest, plus se mort
D'avoir, qui le laisse a la mort.

(12) *Böece de Confort*, verse translation by an anonymous Dominican, *ca* 1382, Picard dialect.

Se li riches avers avoit
Tant d'or qu'en .i. gouffre entreroit,
Et, son col chargié tant qu'il peust
De pierres precïeuses, eust, 4468
C'om treuve emprés la rouge mer,
Et grasse terre pour semer
Autant que .c. buefs gaigneroient,

[15] Cropp 2006, p. 159.
[16] Atkinson (to appear).

Toutes ces choses ne pourroient 4472
Son cuer tenir, tant com il vive,
Que toudiz ne tende et estrive
A assembler d'ardant desir
Ce que ja ne pourra emplir; 4476
Plus, compaignie ne comfort
Ne fait richece au riche mort.[17]

(15) *Le Livre de Boece de Consolation de Phylosophye*, prose and verse, incunabulum, Colard Mansion, 1477.

En ce tiers metre phylosofie monstre que en richesses n'est aucune suffisance ou aucune felicité. Texte : *Quamuis fluente diues auri gurgite et cetera.*

Combien que l'auaricieux
Assemble tant d'or precieux
Qu'il en face courant riuiere,
Et de la tresgrande mouliere
De la rouge mer il ait prises
Perles riches par ses emprises
Pour son col orner richement, [132ra]
Ou que sans nul empeschement
Il possesse tant spacieuses
Terres et si tresfructueuses
Que a les labourer cent boeufz faille,
Toutesfois ainçois qu'il deffaille
De vivre, tresmordante cure
Le blesse, par poignant pointure,
Et aprez sa mort fuit arriere
Sa richesse vaine et legiere.

Pour la declaracion de ce metre devons savoir que trois manieres de richesses mondaines sont esqueles les hommes se glorifient souverainement. C'est assavoir en or, en pierres precieuses et en possessions de terres et signouries.

Notez que philosophie appelle ou latin perles 'bayes' de la rouge mer pourtant qu'elles sout [sic] rondes a faicon de bayes qui croissent sus les arbres. Et comme dit le maistre des *Proprietez* elles croissent dedens aucunes manieres de moulles ou oistres qui sont au bort de la rouge mer. Philosophie appelle la cure et solicitude de ce monde mordan[132rb]te, car elle semble mordre et rongier la char; car elle rend l'omme curieux et maigre. Elle appelle les richesses legieres car elles sont transitoires et muables a semblance de vent, ou pour ce qu'elles font les hommes legiers et dissolus.

[17] Noest 1999-2000, p. 128 (text slightly emended).

(ff. 131vb-132rb)[18]

4. *Commentary on the translations of CP III,iii. v. 4, «ruraque centeno scindat opima boue»*

In the translations, the 'rura opima' are represented minimally as *ses terres* (10) and maximally as *tant spacieuses terres et si tresfructueuses* (15). In gradations between, we find the *grans champs* (7, 8), the *grasse terre* (12), and two that respect the full sense of 'opima': *plenteis chans* (3) and *champs planteureus* (6). Nevertheless, the Latin 'rus, ruris' may signify a "country estate" and it is in this sense that Jean de Thys (11) interprets the term, *son hiretage*.[19]

Certainly the verb 'scindere' "to cleave" is used often enough in contexts signifying the ploughing of fields. This sense is represented by the verbs *arer* (6, 8, 10) *labourer* (15) and *gaignier* (12). Three translators choose terms that reflect more closely the primary sense of 'scindat' "to cut, to split", used with the sense of cutting a furrow: *trenchier* (3), *taillier* (7), *recauper* [= recouper] (11).

In speaking of the 'centeno boue' Scheible[20] has already pinpointed earlier echoes of oxen ploughing fertile fields as a symbol of wealth and status: cfr. Tibullus, *Elegies* Book 3,3: «aut ut multa mei renouarent iugera tauri | et magnas messes terra benigna daret,» (v. 5-6);[21] and «Nam graue quid prodest pondus mihi diuitis auri, | aruaque si findant pinguia mille boues?» (v. 11-12);[22] Seneca, *Troades*, 1018f.: «removeto multo | diuites auro, removeto centum | rura qui scindant opulenta bubus»;[23] Horace,

[18] I am grateful to Désirée Cremer, University of Bonn, for sharing her transcription of this passage with me. Further work on this text is being conducted at the University of Bonn by Franz Lebsanft and Désirée Cremer; cfr. Lebsanft 2010; Cremer 2015.

[19] The reading of the second manuscript, fr. 1543, is *sans heritage*. This is either a misreading, or it may be interpreted in the sense of a totally selfish person who tills his fields for himself alone, without any concerns about preserving his properties for future generations.

[20] Scheible 1972, pp. 85-86; cfr. Gruber 2008, p. 250.

[21] «Not wider fields my oxen to employ, Nor flowing harvests and abundant land (I ask of heaven)», *Delphi Complete Works of Tibullus* 2015, trans. by J. P. Postgate.

[22] «What profits me a ponderous golden store, Or that a thousand yoke must plough my field?», *Ibidem*.

[23] *Remove those moneyed with much gold, remove those who cleave rich acres with a hundred oxen*, John G. Fitch [ed. and trans.], Loeb Classical Library, *Seneca*, vol. 8.

Carmina 2, 16, vv. 33-35: «Te greges centum Siculaeque circum | mugiunt vaccae, tibi tollit hinnitum | apta quadrigis equa».[24]

The translators interpret the collective singular 'centeno boue' in a variety of ways: apart from the minimal 'cent bœufs' (6, 10, 12, 15) we find variations of the notion of oxen yoked for ploughing:[25] *cent paires de buefs* (8), *cent jous* 'yokes' *de bués* (3), *cent boés en caruage* (11) and *cent charrues* (7), where *charrue* 'plough' applies, by metonomy, to the yoked oxen.

5. *Commentary on the translations of CP III,iii, v. 3, «oneretque bacis colla Rubri litoris»*

As Scheible (p. 85) points out there is a long literary tradition where pearls from the Red Sea function as a symbol of riches.[26] Only five of the translators (3, 7, 11, 12, 15) choose to specify the Red Sea (*rouge mer*) as the origin of the 'bacae'.[27]

As far as the 'bacae' themselves are concerned, they are classified as *pierres precieuses* by five translators (3, 6, 7, 10, 12), as *gemmes* by translator 8, and then as *perles riches* by the 1477 translation (15). Jean de Thys (11) refers to *pierres a grant charge* which provides him with a suitable rhyme for his following verse: *Que mers rouge enfante et descherge*.

One of the primary meanings of the Latin word 'baca' is 'a (fruit) berry', and then by extension 'a pearl'. This distinction is made explicit in the 1477 translation (15), with a further reference to Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*.[28]

[24] *A hundred herds of Sicilian cattle low around you, mares fit for the chariots bring you their neighing*, (http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceOdesBkII.htm), (trans. A. S. Kline) [last access: 28/09/2017].

[25] We note that William of Aragon interprets the expression as 'quinquaginta paribus bouum', Olmedilla 1997, p. 151.

[26] Lucan 10, 139f.; Propertius, *Elegies* 1,14,12; Tibullus, *Corpus tibullianum* 4,2,19f.; Seneca, *Thyestes*, 371f.; Dracontius, *Laudes Dei* 1, 317f. Cfr. Horace, *Epodes* 8, 14: «nec sit marita que rotundioribus onusta bacis ambulet» («May no wife perlustrate laden with fatter rounder pearls than yours», trans. W. G. Shepherd, Penguin, 1983).

[27] For the ancients the Red Sea could be either the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, or what we call the Red Sea itself. Cfr. William of Aragon: 'maris egipciaci' (Olmedilla 1997, p. 150).

[28] The passage where Bartholomeus Anglicus speaks of the formation of pearls, 'margaritae', is to be found in Book XIII *De aqua et eius ornatu*, chap. xxvi *De piscis*. I am indebted to Professor Franz Lebsanft for this identification; the passage in question is to be found on image 248

Notez que philosophie appelle ou latin perles 'bayes' de la rouge mer pourtant qu'elles sout [sic] rondes a faicon de bayes qui croissent sus les arbres. Et comme dit le maistre des *Proprietez* elles croissent dedens aucunes manieres de moulles ou oistres qui sont au bort de la rouge mer.

Of the medieval Latin commentaries on the *CP* consulted, this distinction appears explicitly in the the 12th century commentary known as the Pseudo-John Scot:

Baccae sunt proprie fructus hederarum uel margaritae et gemmae rotundae quae praecipue abundant in litore rubri maris. Bacchae uero sunt mulieres quae in sacrificio Veneris bacchantur.[29]

To this distinction we note that he also identifies the 'bacchae' as Bacchantes devoted here to Venus.

6.1 *Commentary on the translations of CP III,iii, v.1, «Quamuis fluente diues auri gurgite»*

The use of the expression 'gurges fluens' calls to mind two distinct literary forbears: in the first, the accent is on 'gurges' as a mass of water, a stream, a flow, and the 'fluens' suggests overflow, excess. In illustration of this concept, Scheible (p. 85) refers to streams of wine and milk, as in the *Carmina* of Horace (2,19,8-12f.).[30]

The second notion contained in the use of the word 'gurges' is that of a whirlpool, a swirling mass of water, a vortex even, recalling its use in a pas-

of the digital version of the post-incunabulum of Strasbourg (Argentoratum), 1505, held in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich: http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/bsb00018287/image_248 [last access: 28/09/2017]. There is however no mention of the Red Sea in this passage. The formation of pearls is also mentioned by Bartholomeus in Book XVI, chap. lxii *De margarita* (images 308-309 of the pdf). There is no evidence that the Mansion translator has consulted the 1372 French translation *Le livre des propriétés des choses* of Jean Corbechon. The corresponding passages of Corbechon are *Des poissons*, XIII,xxv, image 272 of the pdf; *De la margarite*, XVI, lxiiii, images 337-338 (Incunabulum of the Bibliothèque d'Agglomération de Saint-Omer, Lyon, Jean Siber, 1495, accessible on the site http://bibliotheque-numerique.bibliotheque-agglo-stomer.fr/collection/659-le-proprietaire-des-choses/, [last access: 28/09/2017]).

[29] Silk 1935, p. 128.

[30] «fas pervicaces est mihi […] lactis et uberes cantare rivos atque trunci lapsa cavis iterare mella»; «My holy task is to sing of […] the brooks of rich milk and the honey dropping from hollow trees», trans. W. G. Shepherd, Penguin, 1983.

sage of Prudentius, where it applies specifically to avarice.[31] But whereas the whirlpool of Prudentius continues to gulp riches down, the Boethian 'gurges' seems so full already as to spit out excesses of gold as from some underground depth.

In commenting on the expression 'fluente gurgite auri', Nicholas Trevet, the medieval Dominican commentator on the *Consolatio*, identifies the definition offered by Isidore of Seville:[32] «secundum Ysidorum Ethimologiarum liber 13, capitulo de fluminibus gurges est locus altus id est profundus in flumine unde significat habundantem affluenciam auri»[33] — *some deep hole in a river signifying an overflowing abundance of gold.*

Associated with the verb 'fluere' then, we have the sense of excess, or to use Trevet's verb, 'habundare', 'to overflow'. Implicit in the word 'fluere' is also the sense of a random or uncontrolled overflow. With a view to understanding the meaning captured by at least one medieval French translator, we may note that in Latin it may be rendered by the idea of 'exude'.

Amongst the French translators, there are those who envisage 'gurges' as some form of river or stream overflowing with gold:

(3) […] *li riches avers ajoste ses richeces neient aemplissables par le decorrant flum d'or*: 'The wealthy avaricious man augments his riches, never satisfied to the full, by a river overflowing with gold'.

(7) […] *le riche habonde de un flot del or descorrant…*: '[…] the rich man has abundance (of wealth) from a stream overflowing with gold…'.

(10) *Se li avers avoit ruisseaulx| D'or et d'argent et de joyaulx*: 'If the wealthy man had streams of gold and silver'.

[31] Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* (ed. and trans. Thomson 1899, pp. 222-223): «sorbeat ut cumulos nummorum faucibus amplis | gurges auaritiae, finis quam nullus habendi | temperat, aggestis addentem uota talentis. | Auri namque fames parto fit maior ab auro», 254-257; «and the maw of greed swallows piles of money down its wide throat, since no limit of possession controls it and it only puts new desires on top of the riches it has amassed. For the hunger for gold only grows keener from the gold it has got». We note the word 'gurges' used by Cicero in the sense of an abyss of vices: «gurges vitiorum turpitudinum omnium», *In Verrem*, 3,23. Relevant also to an understanidng of the use of 'gurges' in Cicero are *Pro Publio Sestio*, §93 and §111.

[32] «Gurges proprie locus altus in flumine», *Etymologiae*, 13, 21.5.

[33] Silk (undated), p. 329.

(15) *Combien que l'auaricieux | Assemble tant d'or precieux | Qu'il en face courant riuiere*: 'Although the avaricious man pile up so much precious gold that he creates a flowing river (of gold) …'. Here the river of gold is the creation of the greedy man by means of his piling up of gold.

Other translators envisage a deep river hollow or abyss, overflowing, as we have observed in Isidore/Trevet:

(6) *Ja soit ce que li riches avers à tout un gort decorant d'or amoncelle richesses qui ja ne li acompliront sa couvoitise*: 'Although the rich and greedy man pile up riches from a whole river depth gushing with gold …'.[34]

(12) *Se li riches avoir avoit, | Tant d'or qu'en .i. gouffre entreroit, …*: 'If the wealthy man had as much gold as could fill an abyss, …'.[35]

At least one translator seizes rather on the notion of a whirling or surging stream of gold:
(4) *Encore soit ce que riches avers ait un regort d'or.*[36]

(8) Translator 8 (*Boeces: De Consolacion*) has associated the Latin 'gurges' with a derivative form, such as 'gurgilio' "the throat" and pictures the wealthy man choked up with gold: *Se riches estoit engorgiez | D'or…*

6.2 *The translation of CP III,iii, v.1 in each of the manuscripts of* Boèce en rimes *(11)*

We turn now to the two manuscripts of the *Boèce en rimes*. Each copyist provides a quite different and unique interpretation. In ms. 576, the copyist, Petrus de Palude uses the figure of *uns suscis goutans or fin*; here we discern the *suscis* as a draining well or a deep pit for storing liquid overflows,[37] full to the brim and overflowing with pure gold, image of a mon-

[34] 'gort', *DEAF*, G1024.
[35] 'gouffre', *DEAF*, G1066.
[36] We attribute to 'regort' in this context the meaning of a "swirling mass of water" (cfr. *DEAF,* G1025).
[37] The example offered by Gdf 7, 523a, seems appropriate: «À Reims on appelle un *soussi* un petit trou creusé en terre pour absorber les eaux sales». Cfr. *soussi*, Gdf 7, 557b-c, 'puisard', 'puits en pierres sèches destiné à recevoir les résidus liquides'; TL 9, 1017-1018, s. v. *soussi*, 'Abgrund', 'Erdschlund'; *FEW* 12, 352b-353a, s. v. *subsidere*.

eyed man still grasping for more.

As far as the participle *goutans* is concerned, the manuscript reads *goutains*, which we have 'corrected' to *goutans.* The verb 'gouter',[38] in addition to a primary meaning of 'to allow to flow' may signify either 'overflow' or 'to drip' as does an effluent of whatever nature.

The text of the second manuscript, fr. 1543, work of the Picard copyist, Alixandre Dannes, is even more extraordinary. It was this puzzle of the verses «Combien qu'avers quiere sans fin, | Commë un gouvion orfin», that motivated this enquiry. Here we see the Boethian image of a whirlpool of gold transformed, almost certainly by some scribal misreading and reinterpretation, into the image of a gudgeon voraciously seeking out more and more garfish to swallow.

The 'gouvion'[39] 'gudgeon' is a small European freshwater fish (*Gobio fluviatilis*), allied to the carp. The *DMF* (s.v. goujon) defines it as a 'jeune brochet', 'young pike' and provides us with a 15th century example, where the fish receives three successive names, *lus, gougon, brochet*, names which allow us to extend its use to include a fish such as the barracuda.

Le *lus* en son temps change III fois son nom et premierement se nomme *gougon* quant il est ienne. Et quant il est de moyen aage se nomme *brochet*. Et quant il est parcreu se nomme *lus* et est adonc tres rauissant. (*Best. hérald.* H.E., c.1435-1450, 498).

The lus *changes in name three times as it grows; firstly, when young, it is called* gougon; *then as it matures it is called* brochet*; when fully grown it is called* lus, *and by now very rapacious*.

The 'brochet' [or 'gougon', 'lus'] 'barracuda' feeds on an array of prey including a range of other fish. The following passages, where we meet this fish under the title of a 'lus', reveal its voracious nature:

> Eles me mangeront plus tost crue que cuite,
> Tout aussi volentiers com li *lus* fait la truite.
> (Adenet le roi, *Berte,* 926, A. Scheler 1874)
>
> *They will sooner eat me raw than cooked, just as readily as the barracuda the trout*.

[38] Cfr. *DEAF* G1053, G1056. *FEW* 4, 345a records a medieval usage in the region of Liège (place of origin of this translation) as 'tomber goutte à goutte'.
[39] GdfC 9, 710b; TL 4, 417 *gojon*; *FEW* 4, 183b, s.v. *gobius*; *DEAF* G 955-956.

Du poisson qui est nommez *lus*
Leur dirai la nature et l'us.
Quant on l'a mis en un vivier,
Moult desport le treuvent et fier
Autre poisson, qu'il les deveure.
(J. de Condé, *Dis de lus et des beches*, 27, ed. Scheler)[40]

Of the fish named the barracuda, I will tell you the nature and habits.
When it is placed in a fish-pond, the other fish find it playful (irresponsible?)
and aggressive because it devours them.

The manuscript fr. 1543 reads *or fin* still as two separate words; but what sense are we to attribute to the barracuda seeking out fine gold? It would seem then that the original *or fin* has suggested to this Picard scribe a subtle play on a regional word *orfin* 'garfish'.[41] Once we understand that the *orfin* is the word for 'garfish' or 'sea needle', the full force of the image is finally seized. The greedy rich man is likened to a barracuda augmenting his riches by consuming others.

7. *Concluding remarks*

The translations explored in this study include a simple paraphrase (5), a quite literal prose translation (6), and a quite expansive verse translation accompanied by a prose commentary (15). Our exploration of the three chosen expressions has revealed a variety of interpretations. Many of the Latin lexical items are multivocal, and different shades of meaning are revealed in different translations; this may be used to explain many quite significant variations.[42]

Yet while the variations of *courant riviere, decorrant flum, flot, gort, gouffre, regort, ruisseaulx* and even *suscis* may be seen to relate to the Latin 'gurges', there appears nothing in the Latin to prepare us for the *gouvion [qui quiere] orfin*. Thus the greedy man, seen in the Latin text as an overflowing whirlpool of gold, becomes a rapacious barracuda devouring garfish.

[40] Both examples found in Gdf 5, 54c.
[41] The word is first attested in the *Viandier valasain*, a collection of recipes, late 13th century, Picard characteristics, *DEAF* s. v. *orfin*; repeated in the *Menagier de Paris*, TL 6, 1249; *TLF* 12, 654a, s. v. *orphie*.
[42] Cfr. for example the translations of 'rus, ruris'.

Some variants, which may at first sight be seen simply as the result of a superficial or even an ignorant reading, could well deserve more serious attention on our part. Here we conclude that the creation of a new image, a bold new reinterpretation, induced almost certainly by puzzlement or confusion at the sense of a previous manuscript reading, is evidence of an active and creative professional scribe.

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