

***Sanguinis haustor* — Drinker of Blood A Burgundian View of England, 1471**

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SOME ADDITIONS may be due to C. A. J. Armstrong's 'Verses by Jean Miélot on Edward IV and Richard Earl of Warwick.' This article was written in pre-war days when historians still felt able to publish Latin texts without translation and to criticise the 'lack of skill' in the writing of Latin verse and the 'narrow field' of the 'classical borrowings' of another age.

These days, though it is still fairly easy through indexes and concordances to locate the quotations that may have flowed quite naturally from the memory and the pen of fifteenth century writers, we are in even greater danger of hitting wide of the mark and failing to sense the implications felt in their time, when it comes to judging the quality of their Latinity or finding the sources of their mythological and literary allusions.²

Though I will not be making any claim to completeness, an attempt at translating the two poems on Edward IV and Warwick, some more comments on their classical background and a little additional information about the context in which they were written, may not be out of place.

There was no limit to Burgundian hatred of Warwick in the winter of 1471. Miélot and any of his patrons and colleagues at the court of Charles the Bold had no special love for the English and were no 'hot partisans of the House of York' even if 'only in ink', but they certainly were enemies of the Earl to their very marrow. During the eventful summer of the year before, Warwick, a fugitive from England and a pirate on the Narrow Seas, had for months almost paralysed Low Countries' trade all along the coast from Texel to Calais, and now his alliance with the King of France followed by his rise to power in England in the autumn, threatened the very existence of the Burgundian state. If he, Louis XI and Lancaster would have their way and manage to put their plans into execution, all the lands of Duke Charles would be cut up and shared between them, just as Edward IV and the Duke in their turn would, if possible, have dismembered France a few years later.

Even the Burgundian court may not have known the details yet, but people were well aware of what was hanging over them and Edward's astonishing success and Warwick's fall in the spring of '71 gave rise to a verbal flood of exultation and Schadeffreude at the Earl's expense. Songs on Warwick's fall were produced even at the ducal court itself: satirical epitaphs criticising every detail of his infamous career were composed and may perhaps be ascribed to such prominent men as Georges Chastellain, the poet and historian,' and Philippe de Croy-Chimay, the Duke's friend (and occasionally enemy).'

Several ballads, too, by unknown authors, full of heavy humour and irony, praised Edward and Duke Charles and derided Warwick 'et son vieux roi', Louis of France. What characterizes these poems however is their victorious feeling of contentment and their knowledge of facts: they were all written *after* the event, *after* the news of the outcome of the Battle of Barnet, fought on the first day of the Burgundian year of 1471, had reached the continent.

Miélot's chronogram in the first two lines of the second poem, together with the grandiloquent vagueness in which he clothes his prophecies and his hatred of Warwick, point to his lines having been written *before* the welcome news from England had arrived and most likely at the time when Edward had only recently sailed home from Sealand. During the month or so between this departure and the certain tidings of Barnet, the Burgundian poet could do no more than muse on the downfall of the 'drinker of blood' and compare future joint Anglo-Burgundian action against France — happily — to the quest for the Golden Fleece.

'Happily' because the similarity between the deeds of Jason and Hercules and — it was to be hoped — those of Charles and Edward, was too great and too obvious to be left unused. In the Burgundian version of Greek legend Jason and Hercules were companions-in-arms; they fought the centaurs together to rescue the fair Ypodaime (Hippodamia) and under Jason's command went in search of the Golden Fleece, kept and guarded by several monsters in the land of Colcos (Colchis).⁴ Appropriate, too, was the story that Hercules made Jason a knight or — as it was called in Jason's own case — gave him the 'ordre of knighthode'.⁵ This was too close to the real-life exchange of the Orders of the Garter and the Golden Fleece between Charles and Edward to be ignored. Even if the English King had been puny these coincidences would no doubt have been used unblushingly; as it was, Edward's stature and well-known good looks⁶ favoured the comparison and made it possible without detracting anything of the merits of the Duke of Burgundy: '... Hercules was more in membres & hyer then Iason was, but Iason was so wel on horseback, that no man might unhorse him.'

That Hercules was a figure generally popular with royalty all over Europe at the time, as a symbol of strength, endurance and victory over adversity⁷ and that this was singularly appropriate in the situation in which Edward found himself, probably did not interest Miélot: his first concern was Burgundy, its safety and the reputation of its prince.

The connection of Hercules with sheep (apart from the obvious one with English wool) may have been partly inspired by one of his 'Labours' as it was staged in Bruges on the occasion of the marriage festivities of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York. The hero was here shown stealing a flock of sheep and taking them home in his ship 'pour ce que au pays de Grece n'y en avoit nulz'."

Ad Regem Anglie"

- 1 Maior in Oceano mundi iacet insula vasto,
Anglia et a Bruto cui primo Britannia nomen
Divitiis patrum multis dotata priorum,
Olim serpentum atque ferorum ignara luporum
5 Nunc infecta illis torvisque draconibus, unde
Lanigere sparguntur oves et dilacerantur.
Hos arto et validis capere audet casse molosis
Insontum Alcides ovium custos, modo fretus
Jasonis auxilio; gens aurea surget in arvo.
10 Angli, discordes vestras iam expellite sordes,
Jason et Alcides repetant ut Colcos Oetis;
Ignescunt ire, duris dolor ossibus ardet.

On the King of England

In the vast ocean of the world lies a large island:
England, at first by Brutus called Brittannia;
it is endowed with many treasures of its fathers
and in the old days knew no snakes or savage wolves.
Today it is infested with them and grim dragons,
by which the woolly sheep are scattered and torn up.
Now Hercules, the shepherd of the harmless sheep, ventures
to catch them with his tight net and with strong hounds
by Jason's help; a golden race will spring up in the land.
You English, put an end soon to your sordid strife:
let Jason and Hercules go again to Aetes's Colchis;
their anger is kindling, grief burns their hard bones.

Line 1, reminiscent of Virgil's *Aeneid* III, 104, where Crete is meant. Incidentally this was according to legend one of the lands cleared of wild animals by Hercules in the course of his labours; the 'Ocean' was possibly still thought of as *surrounding* the known world.

1.2, 'a Bruto' — 'by Brut' or 'after Brut', the legendary Trojan founder of Britain in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his imitators.

1.3-6, the image of a lost Golden Age, without savage beasts etc., is of course a common one and no doubt the wording of these lines, too, is not wholly original to Miélot, but I have been unable to find his sources; 'lanigere oves', compare Virgil's *Georgics* III, 287; 'wool-bearing' is fairly common in Virgil for sheep (and bees). Sheep as symbols of Warwick's

victims in England could spring easily to the mind of a Burgundian in view of the importance of English wool to Low Countries' economy. Compare also St. Mark 14,27: 'dispergentur oves'.

1.7, the 'hunting net' or 'snare' and 'strong Molossian hounds' (a reminder of the popularity of English hunting dogs on the continent?) occur frequently in classical poetic hunting scenes, but this line appears to be Miélot's own.

1.8, 'Alcides', 'descendant of Alceus' usually means 'grandson of Alceus' =Hercules; it is an often used synonym. E.g. in Capgrave's *De Illustribus Henricis* (ed. F. C. Hingeston, Rolls Series, vol. 7, 1858, p.66) a poem on Henry I is quoted where 'Alcides' is already used as the symbol of that King's 'probitas', 'prowess'.

1.9, compare Virgil's *Eclogues* IV, 9; the second half of this line is a clear echo of one in the *Fourth Eclogue*, the famous and much discussed prophecy of the return of the Golden Age. The poem was used by the Christian church to prove that its author was a Christian *avant la lettre* and had foretold Christ's birth forty years before it happened." It earned Virgil his position as Dante's guide through the next world. The whole weight of the *Fourth Eclogue* may — in Miélot's mind — have been behind these few words to promise a happy future to England if Edward, by Duke Charles's help, would be successful.

1.11, 'Oetes' (=Aetes, in classical Latin), King of Colchis, whom Jason had to face in his search for the Golden Fleece. Most likely Louis XI is meant: if the English would end their civil wars, Edward and Charles would at last be free to tackle France and the French King!

Compare *The Croyland Chronicle (Historiae Croylandensis Continuatio in Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores Veterum*, ed. W. Fulman, Oxford 1684, pp.556-7): Edward had hardly restored order in his kingdom, when Duke Charles sent him messengers to remind him of the iniquity of their common enemy and of his (Edward's) rights to the French crown. Charles exhorted him to prepare the invasion of France in which he would be his ally 'in prosperity and adversity'.

Again, after the Battle of Guinegate (7 August 1479) Jean Molinet wrote a poem on this Flemish victory over the French. The French, he says, do not know to what saint they should pray and Roland is dead, but the valiant Flemish Scipios (!) were brave and audacious 'pour conquerre/La toison d'or en l'isle de Colcos/Et pour donner aux François de leur cops.' (A. J. V. le Roux de Lincy, *Recueil de chants historiques français depuis le xie jusqu'au xviiiè siècle*, Paris 1841-2, pp.389-99).

It appears that Burgundian eyes saw the war against France as a continuous chivalrous quest: of the principal 'exploits en armes' of Charles the Bold, supposed to have been celebrated by Chastellain (and neatly divided into eleven items to leave room for a final twelfth 'labour'), the first is the 'voyage en France dont ensuivit la journée de Mont-le-Hery' and four others are campaigns against the French King, too. (*Oeuvres de Georges Chastellain*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles 1864, vol. 5, pp.504-5.)

1.12, is identical with *Aeneid* IX, 66, where it is used to describe the humour of Aeneas's enemy Turnus, stalking around the Trojan camp to

find an entrance. It is added to convey the growing anger of Duke Charles about the military actions of Louis of France in Burgundian Picardy that same winter. Perhaps it should be translated with reference to Jason only.

Ad comitem Warvici

- 1 o Comes et terra et peLago ConfVse sereno
nVdVs In Ignota riCarde IaCebIs arena.
Quo moriture ruis, maioraque viribus audes?
Te calidus sanguis, te rerum inscitia vexat,
- 5 Indomita cervice ferum, ast ubicumque locorum
Proditor accedis fraternum rumpere fedus,
Seditione, dolo, scelere ac fraude insidiisque,
Fallit te incautum feritas: extrema feroces
Parce fila legunt: tenues tua vita per auras
- 10 Descendet mesta ad manes, corpusque relinquet.
Arma quibus létatus habe tua, sanguinis haustor;
Infelix cinis et manes et fabula fies.

On the earl of Warwick, 1470.

Undone on land and on the quiet sea, earl Richard,
you'll lie unburied on an unknown beach!
Where else but to death are you rushing?! You,
who venture on things too great for your powers.
Hot blood and your ignorance troubles you,
fierce and stiff-necked as you are, but wherever you come,
traitor, to break up the league between brothers,
through strife, deceit, by vice and fraud and snares,
your fierceness leads you to folly and the savage Fates
are spinning your last thread: unhappy will your life
through thin air sink to hell and leave your body here.
Keep, then, the arms in which you had such joy, drinker of blood;
you shall be miserable dust, a wraith and nothing but a tale.

For the chronogram, see above. C. A. J. Armstrong has discussed most of the quotations in this poem (though not, curiously, those of the other one), but not one line of it turns out to be original.

1.1-2, adapted from the last two lines of book V of the *Aeneid*, where the helmsman Palinurus, whose name has here been replaced by 'Ricardus', is deceived ('confusus') in the night by the quietness of the sea and the sky: sleep overpowers him and he falls overboard.

1.3, 8-10, are culled from *Aeneid* X, 811-2, 814-5, 819-20 and 827, a battle scene in which Aeneas is forced to fight a youth coming to his father's aid. It is the boy's 'pietas', his love for his father, that leads him to attempt feats beyond his strength, while Warwick is led by his 'feritas', his animal ferocity. The boy's spirit 'concessit ad manes' 'fled away to join the spirits', Warwick's soul 'descendet' 'will descend', presumably to hell. Both losers are allowed to keep their armour, the one to do him honour, the other because he is doomed and can do no more harm.

1.4-6, Horace, *Letters* I, III, 33-6, a verse letter written to a young man of literary leanings away on campaign. His hot blood, ignorance of the world and indomitable wildness, supposedly proper to youth, are ironically put at the great Earl of Warwick's door. Horace's friendly exhortation to the young man to live in amity with one of his companions-in-arms and in letters, is used to upbraid Warwick with causing, to his own ruin, the disastrous rift between King Edward and his brother Clarence and the renewed conflict between Louis XI and Charles of Burgundy, "brothers-in-law since the Duke's first marriage to Catherine of Valois.

1.7, is almost identical with Horace, *Letters*, I, II, 15 and mirrors the Burgundian attitude towards Warwick's conduct: trickery and treachery are his greatest talents. 'He made right wrong without shame', 'his old enemies of France he made his friends "par beau parler"'. "He is made to say of himself: '... onques en ma vie a nul bien ne pensay sy non a tricherie', 'never in my life did I think of any good, but only of deceit'." Especially his treatment of Henry VI, who had 'made him a knight' and 'nourished him for thirty years' is a cause of great indignation to continental poets and chroniclers."

1.11, 'sanguinis haustor' is perhaps Miélot's own choice of words," and no doubt in accordance with the judgment of him and his contemporaries. Instances of Warwick's thirst for blood in Burgundian sources are his killing of the Duke of Somerset 'in the presence of King Henry'" and his beheading of the Earl of Pembroke and his brother after Banbury and of Earl Rivers and Sir John Woodville a few weeks later, all with some exaggeration summed up in one of the epitaphs: 'du sainc royal englois jay occhis mainte vie, plus de soixante troix fiz morir par envye', 'of the English royal blood I killed many, more than sixty three I caused to die by envy'." In addition his treatment of captured crews of ships from the Low Countries and elsewhere in the summer of 1470 had earned him a reputation for cruelty."

1.12, was not, as Armstrong supposed, inspired by a combination of Virgil and Horace, but except for the first word taken verbatim from Persius's *Satires* V, 152. In Horace's letter (I, XIII, 9), as in many other places in his work, 'fabula' means 'topic of the day', 'talk of the town'. Persius uses it rather in the context of the transitoriness of life: remember you are mortal, enjoy yourself; one day you will be: first ashes, then a mere ghost and finally nothing but words.

Miélot's knowledge of Latin literature thus appears to be slightly wider than has been said: a little more of the *Aeneid* than book X, some of Virgil's other poems, a little Horace and a satire of Persius are visible above the surface. What else lies hidden in his borrowed and home-made hexameters will perhaps be uncovered in time.

The fact remains that apart from other similar work, Miélot had also been able to translate for the Duke of Burgundy Cicero's interesting but very lengthy and very pedantic letter on the government of provinces, which in itself constitutes no mean feat both of learning and perseverance.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Medium Aevum*, vol. 8 (1939), pp.193-7.
2. E.g. Margaret Kekewich in Edward IV, William Caxton and literary patronage in Yorkist England, *Modern Language Review*, vol. 66 (1971), p.485, dodges one problem by speaking vaguely of 'Alcides's quest for the Golden Fleece in which he was aided by Jason', and Armstrong himself writes '... the person designated by Oetis ...', meaning 'Oetes', of which 'Oetis' is the genitive.
3. F. A. T. de Reiffenberg, who printed a variant of the (first) epitaph of Warwick in *Annuaire de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, vol. 8 (1847), pp.83-6, ascribes it to Chastellain. Chastellain knew Margaret of Anjou well and was certainly no Yorkist, even on paper.
4. Above a variant of the other epitaph is written. 'Epitaphle du conte de warwic angloix faite et composee en ryme par monsieur philippe de croy conte de chimay' Vienna, National Library, cod. 3391, f.486r. and v.
5. A. Y. V. Le Roux de Lincy, *Chants historiques et populaires du temps de Charles VII et Louis XI*, Paris 1857, p.168.
6. See Caxton's *The Historie of Jason*, ed. J. Munro, Early English Text Society, ES.111 (1913), a translation of the French edition by Raoul le Fèvre known at the Burgundian court at the time.
7. See Caxton's translation, p.6.
8. Commynes III, 5: 'fort beau prince' and 'jeune et beau autant que nul homme qui ayt vescu en son temps'. See Philippe de Comynnes, *Memoirs* (English translation), Penguin Books 1972, pp.184 and 188. The Monstrelet-continuator has: 'edouard roy dangleterre que len nommoit edouard a longues jambes ung des beaulz chevaliers dangleterre', BL Harl. MS. 4424, f.193v.
9. Caxton's translation, *Historie of Jason*, p.7.
10. W. C. MacDonald, Maximilian I of Hapsburg and the veneration of Hercules: on the revival of myth and the German Renaissance, in *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976) pp.139-54.
11. Olivier de la Marche, *Memoires*, ed. H. Beaune and J. d'Arbaumont, Paris 1883-8, vol. 3, p.145.
12. I have not seen the manuscript (BN ms.fr. 17001, f.34r.) and I have copied most of Armstrong's spelling and punctuation, though both are probably not original. I have also retained the classical 'haustor', while the ms. appears to have 'hauser' and both spellings were possible at the time.
13. E.g. see Caxton's *Mirroure of the World*, ed. O. H. Prior, EETS. ES.110 (1913), pp.xii-xiii and 25.
14. See the variant of the (first) epitaph of Warwick, printed in A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, II, London 1982, p.486, lines 10-11.
15. *Ibid.*, lines 4-5.
16. *Ibid.*, p.487, lines 15-16.
17. E.g. the epitaph in Vienna (see n.4), lines 14-17; the *Cronycke van Vlaenderen*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, ms.13073-4, f.264v. (a).
18. Possibly it is taken from Blossius Aemilius Dracontius, a late fifth century Christian poet in North Africa, who, like Boethius, wrote much of his work as a prisoner. 'De laudibus Dei', (ed. F. Vollmer, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, XIV, Berlin 1905, vol. 3, p.361), was known throughout the Middle Ages and there is a twelfth century manuscript at Brussels (this, however, appears to have the reading 'sanguinis hostis'). The 'sanguinis haustor' is the first Brutus, who expelled the kings of Rome and later had his own sons executed for conspiring to restore the monarchy. After some forty lines of similar rhetorical antitheses, Dracontius in the climax calls him: 'the enemy of his house, the death of his children and a drinker of (his own) blood'.
19. *Cronycke van Vlaenderen*, *ibid.* (n.17); presumably Edmund, Earl and second Duke of Somerset is meant, killed (near Henry V17) in the first Battle of St. Albans.
20. The Vienna epitaph (see n.4), lines 28-9.
21. *Cronycke van Vlaenderen* (see n.17), f.266r. (a); the Monstrelet-continuator (see n.8), f.260r.