

**BOETHIUS, *De consolatione philosophiae*; [Anonymous], *Expositio quinque librorum de consolatione philosophiae* (Commentary on the five books of the Consolation of Philosophy)**

**In Latin, illustrated manuscript on paper**

**Northern France (Anchin Abbey?), dated 1422**

145 folios on paper, three watermarks: bell (similar to Briquet 4082), dolphin (unidentified), and cat (Briquet 3557), modern foliation in pencil, 1-145, complete (collation i<sup>12</sup> [-1, lacking one leaf before f. 1, without loss of text; the leaf was blank, but had some contemporary notes] ii-v<sup>12</sup> vi<sup>14</sup> vii-xii<sup>12</sup>), horizontal catchwords, leaf signatures in Roman numerals, i-vi, written in red ink in the upper corner on the verso of the leaf (in the first half of the quire), frame ruled in lead point (justification 165 x 105 mm.), ff. 1-63 written in brown ink in gothic cursive script generally in one column (occasionally in 2 to 3 columns) on c. 24-30 lines, ff. 74-145 written in brown ink in gothic cursive script in two columns on c. 40 lines, capitals touched in red, some underlining in red, 2- to 4-line initials in red, some of which are decorated with small flowers, fish or geometric motifs left in reserve within the body of the initial, four large initials in red and brown inks and blue paint decorated with dragons, soldiers and flowers, some minor water stains, the first quire is detached and several quires are partially detached, in overall very good condition. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of limp vellum reusing an act of the Antipope John XXIII dated 1415 in Constance, the covers are lined with contemporary paper for reinforcement reusing pages from school manuscripts containing "versus memoriales" concerning grammar, history and medicine, attached to the spine are pieces of brown leather serving as bands onto which the sewing of the quires is attached, the sewing of the quires is reinforced with a strip of parchment placed in the middle of the quire reusing leaves from a contemporary music manuscript, covers stained and contain some worm holes, on the spine some of the visible sewing cords are broken, modern buckram case with decorated paper covers, in overall good condition. Dimensions 218 x 150 mm.

Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* was a true medieval bestseller – in fact, the most widely copied work of secular literature of the Middle Ages. Our manuscript was copied and almost certainly decorated (in an exuberant fashion) by a young scribe who inserted his name in multiple colophons, Pierre Toullet. Twenty-six years later in 1448, he became abbot of the Abbey of Anchin. The text was an essential schoolbook throughout the Middle Ages; this copy, still in its original binding, was certainly used for study and includes an anonymous commentary (to be identified), and interlinear glosses, making its monastic provenance particularly interesting.

## PROVENANCE

1. The entire manuscript was copied by Pierre Toullet, who completed it in 1422, very likely at Anchin Abbey; see his colophons (ff. 92v, 106, 133v, 142v) and the two signatures on ff. 9v and 41 (included in Bénédictins de Bouveret, 1979, no. 15953, citing this manuscript from the Gougy sale catalogue, see below). From the dated colophons we know that Toullet wrote most (or all) of the commentary on ff. 74-142v during the month of March in 1422. The colophon ending the commentary to the first book is dated March 4, 1422 (f. 92v), while the colophon ending the commentary to book five is dated Maundy Thursday, March 31 (f. 142v).

Our scribe can undoubtedly be identified with the monk, Pierre Toullet (or Toulet) who entered the Anchin Abbey during the abbacy of Jean de Batère (1414-1448), and succeeded Batère as abbot in 1448 until his death in 1464 (*Souvenirs*, 1843, p. 777; Online resources, Gerzaguët, 1997, ch. 2, n. 49). The Benedictine Abbey of Anchin was founded in 1079 (commune Pecquencourt) and prospered for centuries. It was suppressed during the French revolution and demolished in 1792.

The paper on which the manuscript was written concurs with the textual evidence. The numerous variants of the watermark of the cat (Briquet nos. 3552-3557) are localized almost exclusively in northern France, with one previously known use of it in Douai in 1414. Anchin Abbey was situated in northern France near Douai.

A copy of the Decretals of Gregory IX with a gloss, now held in Douai, was copied at Anchin Abbey and contains the following colophon in French by Pierre Toullet: "A Damp. pierre Toullet est chu livres chy pries pour lame de celle qui luy dona che fu le mere Damp Pierre Bustin" (Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 543; see Duthillœul, 1848, p. 159).

2. Belonged to the famous Parisian bookseller and bibliophile, Lucien Gougy (1863-1931); no. 613 in the catalogue of the sale of his personal library in Paris in November 7-9, 1934, [Besombes, Blaizot, and Giraud-Badin], *Bibliothèque de M. Lucien Gougy* (for more about Lucien Gougy and his collection, see Online Resources).
3. Private European Collection.

## TEXT

ff. 1-63v, [Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*:

ff. 1-9v, [Liber I], incipit, "Carmina qui condam studio florente peregrii / Flebilis heu mestos cogor inire modos/ (Verses I made once glowing with content / Tearful, alas, sad songs must I begin) ... Nec dolor assit / Nubila mens est / Vincitque frenis / Hec ubi regnant," *Explicit primus liber boecii de consolazione philosophie. Sequitur secundus eiusdem.* [in red] Toullet;

ff. 10-21v, [Liber II], incipit, "Post hec paulisper obticuit atque ubi attentionem meam modesta taciturnitate collegit ... O felix hominum genus / Si vestros animos amor / Quo celum regitur regat," *Explicit secundus liber boecii de consolazione philosophie. Sequitur tertius;*

ff. 21v-41, [Liber III], incipit, "Iam cantum illa finierat cum me audiendi avidum stupentemque ... Quicquid praecipium trahit / Perdit dum videt inferos," *Explicit tertius liber boecii de consolazione philosophie. Sequitur secundus [sic].* Toullet;

ff. 41v-59v, [Liber IV], incipit, "Hec cum philosophia dignitate vultus et oris..."; explicit, "Ite nunc fortes ubi celsa magni / Ducit exempli via cur inertes / Terga nudatis superata tellus / Sidera donat"; colophon, "*Explicit quartus liber boecii de consolazione philosophie. Sequitur quintus*";

ff. 60-63v, [Liber V], incipit, "Dixerat orationis que cursum ad alia quedam tractanda atque expedienda ... ita cum quid futurum novi id ipsum futurum esse necesse est; sic fit igitur ut eventus//"; [ff. 63v-73v, ruled, otherwise blank].

Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, ed. PL, vols 63-64; edited by Bieler in 1984 and Moreschini, 2005; English translation, Tester, 1973. The text in our manuscript ends imperfectly in the middle of the third prose text; the first four books are complete. Glosses have been added fairly extensively on ff. 1-9v, with additional interlinear glosses (usually brief explanations of the sense of a word) on ff. 22, 22v-23, 24, 24v-25, 25v-26, 26v-27, 27v-28, 28v-29, 29v, 32, and 32v.

ff. 74-142v, *Expositio quinque librorum de consolazione philosophiae*:

ff. 74-92v, [Liber I], incipit, "Laudamus et sapientem propter habitum, primo Ethicorum et est quasi ...; [f. 74v], Carmina qui quondam hiis visis procedendum est ad formulam tractatus ... [colophon], *Explicit liber primus finitus uno millesimo CCC<sup>o</sup> vigesimo 2<sup>o</sup> iii<sup>ia</sup> die martii per manus petrus toullet*;

ff. 93-106, [Liber II], incipit, "Post hec paulisper ... [colophon], *Explicit secundus liber finitus per manus petri sequitur 3<sup>o</sup> eiusdem boecii de consolazione philosophie*;

ff. 106v-121v, [Liber III], incipit, "Iam cantum illa ...; [Gloss on song 9 on f. 115v], O qui perpetua, hic ponitur in isto metro quod invocat divinum auxilium ...," *Et sit est finis tercii libri de consolazione philosophie amen*";

ff. 122-133v, [Liber IV]; incipit, "Hec cum philosophia. Iste est quartus liber qui ... [colophon], *Explicit quartus liber de consolazione philosophie finitus per manus petri toullet vigesima die martii. Toullet*;

ff. 134-142v, [Liber V], incipit, "Dixerat orationis. Iste est quintus liber ... et natura infallibile vos concedat attingere qui vivat in secula seculorum," [colophon], *Explicit expositio quinque librorum de consolazione philosophie scripta per manus petri toullet anno millesimo quadringentesimo vigesimo 2<sup>o</sup> ultima die mensis martii in cena domini. Toullet*.

Anonymous commentary on the five books of the *Consolation* (title from the colophon on f. 142v), complete. This commentary is not found among those identified by Pierre Courcelles in his detailed study (Courcelles, 1939; Courcelles, 1967, pp. 403-418), and we know of no other copy. The author of the commentary cites the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, Symonides, and the *Tusculanes* of Cicero, amongst others.

ff. 143-145, [Lengthy Latin religious poem], incipit, "Ave porta paradisi/ lignum vite quod amisi/... quem sanctorum exercitus omnis que laudat spiritus, amen" [*Analecta hymnica Medii aevi*, vol. XL, no. XIII], followed by the prayer, incipit, "Deus qui es sanctorum tuorum splendor mirabilis atque [lapsorum] sublevator inerrabilis... sempiterna"; [f. 145v, blank].

## ILLUSTRATION

Four large, illustrated initials, presumably by the scribe Pierre Toullet, beginning the first four books of the *Consolation*. The motifs decorating the initials are: f. 1, flowers; f. 10, two soldiers combatting a dragon; f. 21v, a scroll; and f. 41, a dragon. A space was left for the initial 'D'

beginning the fifth book on f. 60, but the initial was never painted; several spaces reserved for the smaller initials were also left unpainted. Some of the smaller initials were decorated with fish motifs that recall notarial style of decoration.

The Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius (c. 480-524) made important contributions to studies in contact with the Hellenic culture, initially concentrating on the scientific disciplines of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy, as well as translating and explaining works of logic by Aristotle. His translation of Porphyry's *Isagoge* (an introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*) became a standard medieval textbook in European universities. Boethius wrote his chef-d'œuvre, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, in 524 while he was imprisoned by the Ostrogothic King Theodoric for the alleged crime of treason. Mixing prose and verse, it is a dialogue between the allegoric figure of Philosophy and Boethius. Philosophy consoles Boethius by discussing the transitory nature of fame and wealth and the ultimate superiority of things of the mind, arguing that happiness comes from within. The work treats the subjects of free will, the problem of evil, human nature, virtue, and justice. Boethius was heavily influenced by Plato, and the vast popularity of the *Consolation* from the Carolingian period until the Renaissance can in part be explained by its Neoplatonic and Christian ethical messages.

The *Consolation of Philosophy* was one of the most popular and influential philosophical works, through which much of the thought of the Classical period was made available to the Western medieval world. The *Codices Boethiani* identifies 97 manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland (vol. 1), 100 manuscripts in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland (vol. 2), 245 manuscripts in Italy and the Vatican (vol. 3), and 14 manuscripts in Portugal and Spain (vol. 4). In total, some 900 manuscripts are known (FAMA, Online resources), making it one of the most widely copied works of secular literature from the Middle Ages. It was widely translated, with versions including those in Old English, Middle English (by Geoffrey Chaucer), German.

The *Consolation* inspired hundreds of commentaries in the Middle Ages between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries. The text was a staple in the medieval classroom, often studied in medieval grammar schools, as well as by more advanced students. The famous song 9 of Book III, summarizing, in 28 verses, the purpose and nature of the universe, proved especially inspiring to commentators. Commentaries circulated both as glosses (copied in the margins and between the lines of manuscripts of the *Consolation*), and as independent texts of varying length. In our manuscript we see both formats. The text of the *Consolation* is followed by a commentary, not yet identified, and the text itself includes glosses, more extensive on ff. 1-9v, with briefer interlinear explanations of words on seventeen later folios.

The scribe of our manuscript, Pierre Toullet, copied this manuscript twenty-six years before he became his monastery's abbot; he must have been a young man at the time, and likely was already a monk, making this an interesting example of a schoolbook-copy of the *Consolation* with an early monastic provenance. Further research is required to study the place of the unidentified commentary in our manuscript within the complex tradition of medieval commentaries on this essential text (overview, Nauta, 2009, citing numerous relevant studies and editions of commentaries).

## LITERATURE

Bénédictins de Bouveret. *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle*, vol. 5, Fribourg, 1979, no. 15953.

Bieler, L., ed. Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio*, CCSL 94, Turnhout, 1984.

Boethius. *Hec sunt opera Boetii: que in hoc volumine continentur: in Porphyrii Isagogen a Victorio translata commentariorum editio prima [...] De philosophiae consolatione libri quinque [...]*, Venetiis, per Joan, et Greg. de Gregoriis fratres, 1492 (Brunet, Manuel, I, p. 238; Paris, BnF, Res.-R-386; Pellechet, 2490; Hain, 3351; Goff, B-767).

Beaumont, J. "The Latin Tradition of the *De consolatione philosophiae*," in M. Gibson, ed., *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 278–305.

*Codices Boethiani. I. Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland*, Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 1995.

*Codices Boethiani. II. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland*, Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 2001.

*Codices Boethiani. III. Italy and the Vatican City*, Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 2001.

*Codices Boethiani. IV. Portugal and Spain*, Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 2009.

Courcelle, P. *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire, antécédents et postérité*, Paris, 1967.

Courcelle, P. "Etude critique des commentaires sur la *Consolatio Philosophiae* de Boèce," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 12 (1939), pp. 5-140.

Duthillœul, H.-R. *Catalogue descriptif et raisonné des manuscrits de la bibliothèque de Douai*, Douai, 1848.

Gibson, M., ed. *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, Oxford, 1981.

Gibson, M. and L. Smith, *Codices Boethiani: A Conspectus of Manuscripts of the Works of Boethius*, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts, 25, 27, 28, London, 1995.

Grafton, A. "Epilogue: Boethius in the Renaissance," in M. Gibson, ed., *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 410-415.

Hoenen, Maarten J. F. M., and Lodi Nauta, eds. *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin & Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio Philosophiae*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, No. LVIII, Leiden, 1997.

Moreschini, C. ed. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae; Opuscula theologica*, Bibliotheca Teubneriana, editio altera, ed. C. Moreschini, Monachii, 2005.

Nauta, Lodi. "The *Consolation*: The Commentary Tradition, 800-1700," in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 255-278.

Patch, H. *The Tradition of Boethius: A Study of his Importance in Medieval Culture*, New York, 1935.

*Souvenirs à l'usage des habitans de Douai*, Douai, 1843.

Tester, S. J., tr. Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1973.

Troncarelli, F. *Tradizioni perdute: la "Consolatio philosophiae" nell'Alto Medioevo*, Padova, 1981.

Troncarelli, F. *Boethiana aetas: Modelli grafici e fortuna manoscritta della Consolatio philosophiae tra IX e XII secolo*, Alessandria, 1987

### ONLINE RESOURCES

J.-P. Fontaine, "Lucien Gougy (1863-1931), le libraire de Louis Barthou" (2020)  
<http://histoire-bibliophilie.blogspot.com/2020/04/lucien-gougy-1863-1931-le-libraire-de.html>

Jean-Pierre Gerzaguet. *L'abbaye d'Anchin de sa fondation (1079) au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Essor, vie et rayonnement d'une grande communauté bénédictine*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1997. Available online,  
<http://books.openedition.org/septentrion/120663>

The *Consolation of Philosophy* in FAMA (IRHT, Paris)  
<http://fama.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/268392>

The *Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by W. V. Cooper, London, 1902  
<https://www.exclassics.com/consol/conintro.htm>

The *Consolation of Philosophy*: 275 translations, manuscripts, studies, and other works by Boethius in the Internet Archive  
<https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3Aboethius+-contributor%3Aagutenberg+AND+mediatype%3Atexts&page=6>

"Restoring Lost Songs: Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*" (University of Cambridge):  
<https://boethius.mus.cam.ac.uk/>

TM 1279

