

# THE MEDIEVAL AVATARS OF *KALILAH WA-DIMNAH*: THE DIGRESSION ON WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE RINGDOVE CHAPTER

In memory of my teacher Annemarie Schimmel

## Resumen

*En este ensayo se analizan algunos modelos de traducción literaria en la baja Edad Media, tomando como base la comparación de cuatro versiones distintas de una digresión sapiencial sobre la pobreza inserta en una fábula del Kalilah wa-Dimnah: la versión árabe de Ibn Muqaffa, su romanceamiento alfonsí, la traducción hebrea de rabí Joel y el Directorium latino de Juan de Capua.*

Palabras clave: Calila e Dimna, Alfonso X, Ibn Muqaffa, traducciones hebreas, cuentística medieval, literatura sapiencial

## Abstract

*This essay examines a few models of literary translation in the late Middle Ages, taking as its point of departure the comparative analysis of four different versions of the same gnostic excursus about poverty from a Kalilah wa-Dimnah fable: Ibn Muqaffa's Arabic text, its Alfonsine Castilian 'romanceamiento,' the Hebrew translation by rabbi Joel and the Latin Directorium by Johannes of Capua.*

Keywords: Calila e Dimna, Alfonso X, Ibn Muqaffa, Hebrew translations, medieval short stories, wisdom literature

## I: INTRODUCTION

This essay takes as its point of departure a suggestive talk by Ángeles Navarro Peiró on a 12<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew translation of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*.<sup>1</sup> As students of this classic know, there are only two medieval translations of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* into Hebrew still extant, both in incomplete form. These Hebrew versions, published by Joseph Derenbourg in 1881 and made from different recensions of their Arabic source, were both prepared between the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first one, attributed to a Jew named Joel,<sup>2</sup> was a

<sup>1</sup> The lecture, entitled "Las versiones hebreas de 'Calila y Dimna'" was given at the University of Salamanca on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996 as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Howard Gilman International Colloquium, "The Spanish-Jewish Cultural Interaction." Most of the papers presented at the three Howard Gilman Colloquia were published by Carrete Parrondo et al., *Encuentros y desencuentros. Spanish-Jewish Cultural Interaction Throughout History*, Tel Aviv, University Publishing Projects, 2000, but her engrossing lecture, for reasons that elude me, was not included. This paper, in turn, was first presented at the Sixth Cardiff Conference on "The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages" (Santiago de Compostela, Spain: July 20, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> The attribution goes back to *La Filosofia morale del' Doni, tratta da molti antichi scrittori* (Venice, 1552: vol. 1, intro-4<sup>o</sup>)—cf. Joseph Derenbourg (ed), *Johannis de Capua. Directorium vitae*

crucial work for the medieval dissemination of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* in Christian Europe via John of Capua's 13<sup>th</sup> century Latin translation entitled *Directorium vitae humanae, alias parabola antiquorum sapientum*.<sup>3</sup> The second one, less repercussive, was an exquisite rendition in rhymed prose by the Toledan *maqama* author Jacob ben Eleazar.<sup>4</sup> Navarro Peiró's lecture aimed at a preliminary characterization of Joel's translation method. She briefly compared a few passages from his Hebrew translation with their ostensible counterparts in Ibn Muqaffa's Arabic and the Alfonsine Castilian versions. Her main point was to show that the Hebrew translator expanded upon the didactic digressions of the original story with the insertion of pertinent quotes from the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic sources. Sadly, Navarro Peiró did not pursue any further her inspired juxtaposition of these medieval sources (no version of that lecture appeared in the proceedings nor has she published it elsewhere, at least to my knowledge). However, I welcomed her remarks at the time as an invitation to revisit the medieval recensions of these passages from *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* and further pursue her comparative appreciation of premodern translations.

In this essay, I reexamine four literary reelaborations of a single text—the

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*humanae alias parabola antiquorum sapientum, version latine du livre de Kalilah et Dimnah*, Paris, Émile Bouillon, 1889, p. xiii. Nothing is known for certain about this translator. It has been surmised, probably based on both his knowledge of Arabic and the Italian Capua's ready access to his Hebrew *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*, that the latter was made in either Italy (Derenbourg) or Spain (Navarro Peiró). In the introduction to his edition of the *Directorium*, Derenbourg also suggests that the name Joel was more popular among Italian Jews than elsewhere in Europe—*ibid.*, p. xiii. However, there is no conclusive evidence for either conjecture about his origins.

<sup>3</sup> Little is known about John of Capua. He lived in Italy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As stated in the prologue of the *Directorium*, he was a Jewish convert to Christianity, ("Verbum Johannis de Capua, post tenearum olim palpationem ritus iudaici divina sola inspiratione ad firmum et verum statum orthodoxe fidei revocati"). He translated a couple of medical works into Latin, including *al-Taysir* by Ibn Zuhr and Maimonides' treatise "On Hygiene" (the former, dedicated to Martin d'Oliveira, Archbishop of Braga; the latter to the pope Boniface VIII). His influential translation of *KD*, dedicated to cardinal Matteo Orsini, was prepared between 1263 and 1278. Cf. L. Hervieux, *Les fabulistes latins depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge*, Paris, F. Didot, 1899 (reimpressed by G. Olms Verlag, 1969), Vol 5: "Jean de Capoue et ses dérivés," pp. 3-337; and Udo Kühne, "Johannes von Capua," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch des Märchens*, edited by Kurt Ranke, vol 7, fasc. 2/3, Berlin and New York, 1992, cols. 580-583.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob ben Eleazar was a grammarian, philosopher and poet from a distinguished Toledan family, best known for his exquisite collection of *maqamot* entitled *Sefer ha-meshalim* and written around 1233. Other extant works include some fragments of his Arabic treatise on grammar and lexicography *Kitab al-Kamil*, his philosophic work *Sefer pardes rimmon ha-hokhmah wa-'arugat bosem ha-mezimma*, the ethical treatise *Gan te'udot* and a few liturgical poems. Cf. Hayyim Schirmann, "Les contés rimés de Jacob ben Eléazar de Tolède," *Etudes d'Orientalisme dédiées à la Mémoire de Levi-Provençal*, Paris, I (1962), 85-297; and Ángeles Navarro Peiró, *Literatura hispanohebraica (siglos X-XIII)*. *Panorámica*, Córdoba, El Almadro, 1988, pp. 109-110 & 116). Cf. finally, my recent study on another *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* tale ("How the Go-Between Cut Her Nose: Two Ibero-Medieval Translations of a *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* Story," *Under the Influence*, Leyla Rouhi and Cynthia Robinson [eds], Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 231-259), a similar comparative exercise where I examine in depth Eleazar's Hebrew version vis a vis the Arabic original and the Alfonsine *romanceamiento*.

digression on wealth and poverty in one of the stories. The excerpted selections are drawn from the four following sources:

- (1) Ibn Muqaffa's 8<sup>th</sup> century Arabic version (the oldest version preserved in its entirety and the basis of most subsequent translations into European vernaculars);
- (2) Joel's 12<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew version;
- (3) The 13<sup>th</sup> century Castilian *romanceamiento* associated with Alfonso X (the first Eastern collection of stories ever translated to Castilian and a veritable monument of medieval Spanish literary prose)<sup>5</sup>; and
- (4) John of Capua's influential *Directorium*.<sup>6</sup>

Our comparative analysis is set against the literary backdrop of its remote Indian archetype in the *Panchatantra*. It is our hope this brief exercise will shed some light both on the individual translations of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* and on the translation process itself as an intellectual activity in the Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup>

## II: THE MOUSE'S TALE IN THE RINGDOVE CHAPTER

The ringdove chapter that contains our passage is one of the main invariants in the multiseular history of the *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* cycle. Its frame narrative and nested *exempla* remain essentially unaltered throughout the chain of transmission that connects the Indian *Panchatantra* to its medieval avatars. This narrative cluster is prefaced in turn by a run-of-the-mill premise from the mirror of princes tradition unifying the whole chapter. A king asks his sage for instruction on the value and cultivation of loyal friendships. The sage, in reply, tells him a complex story involving five animal protagonists (a raven, a

<sup>5</sup> For a general overview of this important translation and some relevant bibliography, see the introduction to Juan Manuel Cacho Bleuca and María Jesús Lacarra's splendid edition of *Calila e Dimna*, Madrid, Castalia, 1987, pp. 9-77.

<sup>6</sup> Quotations from each of these translations will be according to the following editions: Louis Cheikho (*La version arabe de Kalila et Dimnah d'après le plus ancien manuscrit arabe daté*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Beirut, 1923) for Ibn Muqaffa's *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*; Joseph Derenbourg (*Deux versions hébraïques du livre de Kalilah et Dimnah, publiées d'après les manuscrits de Paris et d'Oxford*, Paris, F. Vieweg, 1881) for Joel's version; J. M. Cacho Bleuca and M.J. Lacarra (*op. cit.*) for the Alfonsine *Calila e Dimna*; and L. Hervieux (*op. cit.*) for Capua's *Directorium* (although compared with Derenbourg [1889]). Two small lacunae in the manuscript edited by Cheikho will be partially supplied by Khalil al-Yaziji (*Kalilah wa-Dimnah*, Beirut, 1888). Thomas Ballantine Irving's English translation of the Arabic collated with the Spanish (*Kalilah and Dimnah. An English Version of Bidpai's Fables Based upon Ancient Arabic and Spanish Manuscripts*, Newark, Delaware, Juan de la Cuesta, 1980) will be cited, but our emendations to his rendering will be duly noted. All other English translations from Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish and Latin are strictly our own.

<sup>7</sup> For a general overview of the extant pre-modern translations, see C. Brockelmann, "Kalila wa-Dimna," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Nouvelle édition, Paris-Leiden, E. J. Brill-G. P. Maissonneuve, IV (1975), 524-528; and Hains and Sophia Grotzfeld & Ulrich Marzolph, "Kalila and Dimna," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch des Märchens*, ed. Kurt Ranke, vol 7, fasc. 4/5, Berlin and New York, 1993, cols. 888-95.

ringdove, a mouse, a tortoise and a deer). This fable illustrates his views on the nature of true friendship.<sup>8</sup>

Our chosen digression is in one of the nested stories: the “autobiography” of a mouse.<sup>9</sup> This tale is one of the only three portions of the *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* cycle told in the first person. It corresponds to the story of Hiranyaka in the second book of the *Panchatantra*. The autobiographical saga can be summarized as follows. Midway through the chapter, a raven and a mouse, who had just become friends, move to an island to live in the company of a tortoise and the mouse confides to them the story of his life. He had been born in the house of a religious man, a mendicant ascetic with no children or wife. Every day, a small basket with food was brought to the solitary monk. The man would eat some and hang the basket with the remainders at some height, but the mouse would always manage to reach the basket, nibble away to his heart’s content and even share his food with the other mice below. The ascetic tries several times to place the basket beyond the mouse’s reach but to no avail. Then, one day, the monk lodges a guest for a night. They have supper together and sit down to chat. The ascetic asks his guest about his home and travelling plans, but the latter’s efforts to comply are continually interrupted by the monk’s frequent clapping while trying to keep the rodent away from the food basket. Angered at his seeming rudeness, the visitor demands an explanation. The contrite monk explains his quandary and the cunning guest, with due recourse to a couple of nested stories, surmises the reason behind the mouse’s ability to avail himself of the basket’s content ahead of his peers. The ascetic brings him a spade, they dig up his hole and find a mound of coins inside, which the guest correctly identifies as the hidden source of the mouse’s strength. The mouse, indeed, now deprived of his wealth, is physically unable to jump all the way up into the basket. His ungrateful companions, who can no longer profit, abandon their benefactor and viciously turn against him. Our destitute hero proceeds at this juncture with his poignant rumination on the evils of poverty. Later, he sees how the lucky monk divides the booty with his guest, puts his share in a purse and places it by his head when he goes to sleep. He tries to steal it at night, in the hope of regaining some of his strength and the adulation of his peers, but the guest, unlike the monk, is still awake and gives him a painful blow with a stick over the head. The mouse scampers back to his cave, but prompted by greed, tries once again to steal back his coins. Of course, the guest is now awaiting, hits him even harder and the bleeding mouse

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<sup>8</sup> On the centrality of friendship in *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* and the Arabic gnomic tradition, see María Jesús Lacarra, *Cuentística medieval en España: los orígenes*, Zaragoza, Universidad de Zaragoza, 1979, pp. 142-154. Lacarra discusses in some detail the general plot of the “ringdove” chapter and the ideal of friendship it represents.

<sup>9</sup> The story corresponds to the motif D1561.2.2 “Magic treasure gives miraculous powers” in Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1955-58, vol. 2, p. 271.

barely manages to crawl back into his hole where he faints and almost dies. He is finally deterred, realizing (in yet another excursus) that greed and avarice are even worse evils than poverty, and peace of mind is only found in contentment with one's situation in life. He decides to leave the monk's house and ends up in the company of his newly found friends.

This is the mouse's story in a nutshell. Now, our comparative exercise will center on the didactic portions of this passage. So, one may ask, what is the relationship of this tale to its didactic excursus? There are two sides to the answer. Generally, the non-narrative digressions in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, as in most didactic fiction, are but explicit condensations of the wisdom lessons exemplified by its fables. They are carefully woven into the narrative flow of the overarching story, making explicit the didactic content of each individual tale. This is doubly the case in the "ringdove" chapter with the mouse's ruminations on poverty and wealth. On the one hand, these digressions are coherently framed by the immediate, autobiographical narrative. As perceptively noted by Cacho Blecua and Lacarra,<sup>10</sup> the *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* stories told in the first person are all about characters that convert to a new form of life in agreement with some sort of "natural religion," that is in line with some ethical directive or wisdom lesson embraced in direct response to the life experiences chronicled therein. Their claim's applicability to the mouse's tale is for us self-evident: a betrayed and impoverished mouse waxes eloquent about the instrumental necessity of wealth; a wiser mouse, painfully dissuaded from greed by experience, eventually comes to embody the ascetic virtue of contentment. These excursus, on the other hand, are also implicitly set in a thematic counterpoint to their outermost narrative frame. As mentioned before, the "ringdove" chapter was carefully framed by a mirror-of-princes narrative conceit: a king seeks advice from his sage on the value and nature of true friendship. In this case, a taxonomy of friendship is progressively outlined throughout the main story and inserted *exempla*. The mouse's digressions also tie in with this taxonomic effort. Our hero is driven to ruminate on the circumstances of his own fate by a painful realization about the false friendships of convenience. The wisdom attained undergirds, in turn, his protagonic role within the larger story as a fabulistic avatar of the perfect friend. His musings may be primarily about wealth and poverty, but their narrative trigger and practical content directly connect to the main theme of the chapter.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 210, n. 112.

<sup>11</sup> On the general question of didacticism and narrative technique in this collection, see M. Parker, *The Didactic Structure and Content of "El Libro de Calila e Digna"*, Miami, Ediciones Universales, 1978; M. J. Lacarra, *op. cit.*; and Fernando Gómez Redondo, *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana. I. La creación del discurso prosístico: el entramado cortesano*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1998; pp. 182-213 (These studies are centered primarily on the Castilian *Calila e Dimna*, but their fine remarks on this issue are applicable to the other pre-modern translations).

## III: FOUR VERSIONS OF THE MICE'S BETRAYAL: A COMPARATIVE EXERCISE

Our guiding principle in what follows can be easily summarized. A comparative assessment of our chosen versions of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* should show that the medieval translators made linguistic, stylistic and narrative choices as well as content alterations, and these changes were both based on literary criteria and in deference to the sensibilities of their respective audiences.

Let us first consider a revealing example from the immediate narrative frame to the poverty excursus: four different versions of the treacherous words uttered by the other mice just before they turn into enemies of their former benefactor:

هلك اخو الدهر ويوشك ان يحتاج الى ان يعوله بعضكن .

Aterrado es este por sienpre, pues quitémosnos dél et non esperemos dél nada; ca non cuidamos que pueda fazer lo que solía, mas que averá menester quien lo gobierne.

נשחת העכבר ולא יוכל על דבר ועתה נלכה לדרכנו ונע זבהו אין לנעזבהו אין לנו חלק בעכבר ולא נחלה בו איש לאוהליו ואל נא תטו אחרי הבצע כי אנחנו רואים כי לא יוכל על דבר ולא יעשה אשר היה עושה אבל אני אומר לכם כי אחרי אשר הזקין עתה הוא יצטרך אלינו ויבקש ממנו מאכל ומשתה נטה ממנו ונלכה איש לדרכנו

Iam perditus est socius iste noster, nec valet ad aliquid. Nunc abiit vnusquisque in viam suam et de[re]linquamus eum, nec amplius attendamus ei; quoniam videmus ipsum nihil posse nec facere ea, scilicet que faciebat; ymmo dico vobis quia deinceps ipse indigebit nobis, querens a nobis subsidium. Declinemus igitur ab eo, et curet vnusquisque negocia sua propria.<sup>12</sup>

How do these versions compare?

Ibn Muqaffa's formulation of the mice's shared sentiment is the most succinct of the four. The creatures—in the plural—say to one another: "Fate has finally destroyed this fellow and he will soon be in want, so that some of you will be looking after him."<sup>13</sup> This collective utterance harkens back to the murmured exchange between Hiranyaka's servant mice in the *Panchatantra*. Edgerton's reconstructed version of the Sanskrit original is akin in briefness and spirit to Ibn Muqaffa's.<sup>14</sup> However, in the longer version translated by Benfey, there is a key idea visible throughout the scattered remarks by these unfaithful servants that seems to serve as a pivot for the Arabic text: the notion that fate,

<sup>12</sup> The quotations can be found in the following texts as follows: Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Sp: Cacho Blecua and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-4; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 206. For Irving's English translation, see below.

<sup>13</sup> I have substituted Irving's rendering of *halaka* (p. 41) with "destroyed" (rather than "caught up with" ["Fate has finally caught up with this fellow .."]).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Franklin Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed*, 2 vols., American Oriental Series (vols. 2 and 3), New Haven, Connecticut, 1924, 2:343: "And I heard how my followers were murmuring to each other: 'Come, let us depart; this fellow cannot even support his own belly, to say nothing of other people's. (So what is the use of waiting on him?)'."

destiny will be the primary culprit in his descent to poverty.<sup>15</sup> In Benfey's text, the ungrateful mice predict their leader's impending fall by dint of *daiva* (an adjectival form of *deva*, "god" and the most common term for fate in classical Sanskrit literature).<sup>16</sup> This notion carries well into the Arabic الدهر, "time, eternity." There are literary allusions in pre-Islamic *jāhiliya* poetry to the idea of *dahr* as a cipher for blind fate, the impersonal power that rules the universe and predestines all creatures to either prosperity or disaster.<sup>17</sup> This term is also redeployed with fatalistic connotations as part of an utterance ascribed to pagans in a Quranic *ayyah* (45: 24)<sup>18</sup>:

وقالوا ما هي الا حياتنا الدنيا نموت ونحيا وما يهلكنا الدهر

This pessimistic conception of *dahr* is eventually subsumed within Islamic theology as a conventional expression of God's will: cf. the *ḥadīth qudsī* according to which God says "He who curses *dahr* annoys me, for I am *dahr*."<sup>19</sup> Ibn Muqaffa, though, seems to evoke deliberately the stark phraseology of this Quranic verse, as if to conjure a Scriptural context for his use of *dahr* that would have been readily obvious to his Muslim audience. The treacherous mice, after all, are using the language of the haughty unbelievers scorned by God who dared to say "there is nothing but our present life; we die and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us." By dint of allusion, the Quranic backdrop

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Theodore Benfey, *Pantschantastra. Fünf Bücher indischer Fabeln, Märchen und Erzählungen. Aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, 2 vols. Leipzig, 1859 (reimpressed by Hildesheim, G. Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966) 2:178: "Unglücklich ist Tapferkeit, wenn feindlich das Schicksal? ... Ach, wenn das Schicksal feind, wie entflieht der dem Unglück? ... Denn das Schicksal ist Herr von Glück und Untergang." A clarification is in order. Edgerton's reconstructed *Panchatantra*, based on a wide array of textual sources unknown at Benfey's time (e.g. the *Tantrakhyayika*), is probably the closest approximation to the written archetype of the fables' collection. The Sanskrit edition translated by Benfey (Godfried Kosegarten [ed], *Pantschatantrum sive Quinquupartitum de moribus exponens*, Bonn, 1848) was also defective, uncritical. But the extraneous materials in Benfey's text could sometimes reflect additions in the course of its multiseccular history that also made it into the lost Pehlevi version translated by Ibn Muqaffa.

<sup>16</sup> Kosegarten, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> See W. Montgomery Watt's article on "Dahr" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition*, Leiden, Brill, 1961, vol. 2., fasc. 24., 94-95. For Arabic and Hebrew poetic references to this conception of time (*zaman* in Hebrew), see also Yisrael Levin, "Zeman ve-tevel beshirat hahol ha-'ivrit bisefarad," *Osar yehude sefarad*, V (1961-1962), 68-79 (esp. 75-79).

<sup>18</sup> The term only appears twice in the Qu'ran: here and in Surah 76:1.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ: Tawḥīd* 35 (en *Kitāb jāmi' aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols., eds. Ludolf Krehl and W. Juynboll, Leiden, Brill, 1863-1902, vol. 4, p. 476):

يؤذيني ابن ادم يسب الدهر وأنا الدهر

Cf. also Al-Bukhārī, *Tafsīr* 45.24 and *Adab* 101; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Alfāz* 4,5 (other *ḥadīth* references in Montgomery Watt, *op. cit.*). The term *dahr* is eventually extended also to the material universe and the Quranic verse helps substantiate the coinage *dahriyya* for philosophical materialists in later Islamic polemics (cf. the article on "Dahriyya" by I. Goldziher and A. Goichon for *The Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition.*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, fasc. 24, 95-97).

dramatically recasts the mice's lapidarian sentence as an eloquent expression of their wicked intent.

The other three versions, ultimately derived from Ibn Muqaffa, belabor as well the mice's words with literary adroitness and a keen eye for their intended audiences. The Alfonsine version, ever so faithful to its Arabic source,<sup>20</sup> eschews the allusion to fate for a more literal translation. *الدهر* in here is rendered "por sienpre" (forever), a justifiable *romanceamiento* connected to its primary meaning as "eternity." "Aterrado," on the other hand, which in the 13th century could mean both "destroyed" and "terrified" as attested elsewhere in the Alfonsine corpus, perfectly renders the primary meaning of the Arabic *هلك*, while introducing an added connotation that suits the situation ("he is destroyed/terrified for ever...").<sup>21</sup> Perhaps for the sake of dramatic effect, the Spanish text also incorporates a explicit declaration—apparently absent in the Arabic—of their intended course of action ("pues quitémosnos dél et non esperemos dél nada").

Joel is even more ambitious in his literary expansion of this passage. He goes out of his way to illustrate the selfish motivations and inner reasoning of the ungrateful companions. First, a minor but significant detail, the said complaints are now voiced by a single mouse, a change that lends greater dramatic efficacy to the ensuing scene. Secondly, Joel also amplifies his antagonist's aggravating efforts to persuade the other mice with an insistent reiteration—clearly absent from the Arabic—that they need to abandon their former benefactor. More important, the mouse's repudiation is now woven with two precise Biblical allusions which a learned Jewish reader would have immediately recognized. Their almost comical assertion that "we have no portion in the mouse, no share in him, everyone back to his tent!" playfully adapts the treacherous words of Sheba against David as he lured the men of Israel into abandoning their king in II Sam 20, 1. The admonition that immediately follows ("do not lean on [his]

<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding the complications raised by the colophon to the Escorial manuscript of *Calila e Dimna* as to the putative existence of a Latin intermediary between the Arabic text and the Castilian *romanceamiento*, most scholars agree (and I concur) that this translation was made directly from the Arabic (cf. Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes, *Influencias sintácticas y estilísticas del árabe en la prosa medieval castellana*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition corrected and enlarged, Madrid, Gredos, 1996 and A. Hottinger, *Kalila und Dimna. Ein Versuch zur Darstellung der arabisch-altspanisch Übersetzungskunst*, Berne, A. Francke Verlag, 1958; see also Gómez Redondo, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 184-5, for a recent argument about the possible existence of an earlier Latin translation sponsored by Alfonso yet independent of the Castilian).

<sup>21</sup> The earliest use of *aterrado* seems to be in Berceo's *Milagros de nuestra Señora* 226d: "tornó en la Gloriosa ploroso e quessado / que li dresse consejo, ca era aterrado" (cf. Victor R.B. Oelschläger, *A Medieval Spanish Word-List: A Preliminary Dated Vocabulary of First Appearances up to Berceo*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1940; p. 22). For its use with the meaning of "frightened, terrorized," see Alfonso X, *General estoria. II*: "En lo que fueron despues muy lorasos e aterradas" (Antonio Solalinde, Lloyd Kasten and Victor Oelschläger, *General estoria. II*, Madrid, CSIC, 1957-1961; 1:1275, 248a). For an overview of its semantic range, with attendant prooftexts, see Martín Alonso, *Diccionario medieval español*, 2 vols., Salamanca, Universidad Pontificia, 1986; 1:438.

favor...")<sup>22</sup> recalls, likewise, the Biblical denunciation against the corruption of the two sons of Samuel, whom the latter had appointed judges over Israel, in I Sam 8, 3. With a mere turn of phrase, these Scriptural allusions thus serve a dual purpose. They lend the traitor's speech the rhetorical flavour of Biblical Hebrew. They also evoke a Biblical context of meaning that sharply highlights his ostensible malice in the knowing eyes of its Jewish readership.

As to John of Capua, a typical trend is already evidenced in his Latin translation of this brief passage. Capua faithfully renders most of Joel's version into a somewhat perfunctory Latin. However, he expunges in the Latin the two Biblical additions. The entire line is reduced in the *Directorium* to the stark "nec amplius attendamus ei." Such elisions are habitual for the Italian convert, who proves quite attentive to the Jewish-gearred interpolations in his Hebrew source.

#### IV: POVERTY, WEALTH AND DESIRE IN *KALILAH WA-DIMNAH*

To facilitate comparison, the digressions on poverty and wealth have been arbitrarily divided into six clusters of juxtaposed passages from the various translations. Each cluster is followed by a brief set of comparative remarks on issues of content and language. Our analysis will be capped with some general conclusions about each of these pre-modern translations and the process itself of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*'s multiseccular dissemination.

##### Cluster 1

فقلت في نفسي ما ارى التبع والاخوان والاهل والصديق والاعموان الا تبعا للمال وما ارى المروءة يظهرها الا المال ولا الرأي ولا القوة الا بالمال ووجدت من لا مال له اذا اراد ان يتناول امرا قعد به العقر عما يريد فانقطع عن بلوغ غايته كما ينقطع ماء امطار الصيف في الأودية فلا يصل الى البحر ولا الى نهر حتى تنشفه الارض لانه مادة له يبلغ بها نهايته

Et dixi en mi corazón: --Veo que la conpañia et los amigos et los vasallos non son sinon seso nin la fuerça sinon con el aver. Ca yo veo qu' el que non ha aver, si se entremete de alguna cosa, torna a la pobredat atrás, así commo el agua que finca en los ríos de la lluvia del verano que nin va al mar nin al río que non ha ayuda.

ואומר בנפשי לא אראה החברים והידידים והאחים והמשפחה והקרובים והרעים אלא כלם ילכו אחרי העושר ואין נדבה ועצה ואמונה וחכמה כי אם בעושר כי מצאתי מי שאין לו עושר בעת ירצה לעשות דבר לא יתכן הדבר בחפצו ואין לו כח להשלימו כמו מימי הנחלים אשר הם בימי הקיץ יבשים ואין בהם כח ללכת ולהיות נגרים

Tunc dixi in mea mente: Non videntur mihi socii et amici consanguinei, fratres et proximi, nisi omnes declinantes ad avariciam et sequentes divitias et glorias mundi, nec est nobilitas,

consilium, fides et sapientia nisi in divitiis. Inveni enim illum qui caret divitiis, quando aliquid facere intendit, non succedit ei illud sicut vult nec habet potestatem illud perficere; sicut aqua rivi in potestate sua, que, si exsiccat, non habet potestatem fluendi.

*Then I said to myself: I see that one's brethren and family, friends and helpers, follow nothing but wealth; nor do I see any manliness apparent except with riches, nor any insight and strength. Whenever a man without wealth wants to reach some objective, I find that poverty keeps him away from his desire, cutting him off from attaining his aim just as water from the summer rains is cut off in the coulees and never reaches the sea nor even a river before the earth absorbs it, since it has (no) constant flow with which to reach its goal'...*<sup>23</sup>

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The mouse begins with two basic assertions: (1) most people close to us are only interested in wealth, even family and friends; and (2) wealth is instrumental both in the cultivation of certain desirable traits and in the attainment of personal goals. These statements are followed by a haunting analogy that harkens back to the *Panchatantra*: the futile efforts of a poor man to achieve a life objective are compared to the slight waters of summer rain that are absorbed by the earth before they can ever reach either a river or a sea.<sup>24</sup>

Thematically, there is only one relevant discrepancy at this point. Each version of this passage offers a different enumeration of the personal attributes enabled by the possession of wealth. Ibn Muqaffa identifies three: "manliness" (المرورة), "insight" (الرأى) and "strength" (التوة). The Alfonsine *romanceamiento* only ventures the last two: "seso" for *al-ra'y* and "fuerza" for *al-quwwat*.<sup>25</sup> Joel offers an altogether different list: "liberality, generosity" (נדבה),<sup>26</sup> "counsel"

<sup>23</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Sp: Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, p. 214; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, p. 40; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 207; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> In the corresponding *sloka* in book 2 of the *Panchatantra*, the deeds of a man who is both poor and lacking in smarts are compared to evaporating brooks in the hot season (cf. Benfey, *op. cit.*, 2:179-80; Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 2:343). There are only minimal variants in the various renditions of Ibn Muqaffa's version of the ancient Indian metaphor. The Castilian version faithfully renders the Arabic. The Hebrew version (followed by Capua) only excises a small portion of the original, perhaps a textual corruption in the Hebrew manuscript tradition, if not a lacuna in the Arabic recension used by Joel.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the following words by the treacherous mice in Benfey's translation of *Panchatantra* (*op. cit.*, 2:179): "Durch Geld hat jedermann Stärke; wer Geld besitzt, der hat Verstand." In Edgerton's reconstructed version, the monk's guest tells his host, while watching the mouse's futile efforts: "By wealth it is that every man becomes powerful, and by wealth he becomes learned" (*op. cit.*, 2:343).

<sup>26</sup> A semantic clarification is in order. In Maimonidean ethics (*Shemonah Peraqim* 4), a clear distinction is made between the Aristotelian virtues of "liberality" and "magnificence" (loosely rendered here as "generosity"). "Liberality" ("ἐλευθεριότης," the Aristotelian mean between miserliness and extravagance—cf. *Nichomachean Ethics* 4,1) refers to the right disposition in spending money on oneself—Maimonides renders it in Arabic as *al-sakhā'* (*nedibot* in Ibn Tibbon's translation). "Magnificence, generosity" ("μεγαλοπρέπεια," the Aristotelian mean between prodigality and stinginess—cf. *Nichomachean Ethics* 4,2) is the right disposition in giving to others—Maimonides renders it in Arabic as *karam* (Ibn Tibbon's *tob leb*). However, Joel later on also translates the Arabic *jawād* ("generous") as נדב. It is not clear from this translation whether Joel differentiates between *al-sakhā'* and

(עצה), “faithfulness” (אמונה—but which can also connote “strength”—cf. Exod 17:12) and “wisdom” (חכמה). The Hebrew quartet is literally rendered as “nobilitas, consilium, fides et sapientia” in Capua’s *Directorium*.<sup>27</sup> Of the four versions, Joel’s is the only one that introduces substantive changes. His additions underscore an implicit theme of this passage—the positive appraisal of wealth as an aid to virtue. The instrumentality of wealth in the exercise of *nʿdabah* (and the other virtues) is also reiterated in medieval Jewish ethics.<sup>28</sup> As will be seen throughout this exercise, many of his alterations are meant to underscore our passage’s affinities with the Jewish ethical tradition.

### Cluster 2

וوجدت من الاخوان من لا مال له ولا اهل له ولا ولد له ولا ذكر له ومن لا مال له فلا عقل له عند الناس ولا دنيا ولا اخرة ولان الرجل اذا اصابته الحاجة نبذه اخوانه وهان على ذوي قرابته فربما اضطرته المعيشة وما يحتاج اليه لنفسه وعياله الى طلب ذلك فيما يغرر فيه بدينه فيهلك فاذا هو قد خسر الدنيا والاخرة

Et vi qu’ el que non ha amigos non ha parientes, et el que non ha hijos non es memoria dél, et el que non ha aver non ha seso, nin ha este siglo nin el otro. Ca el omne, quando le acaesçe alguna pobredat et mengua, deséchanlo sus amigos et pártense dél sus parientes, et sus bien querientes, et despréçianlo et con cuita ha de buscar vida trabajándose para averla para sí et para su compañía, et de buscar su vito a peligro de su cuerpo et de su alma, pues qu’ él ha de perder este siglo et el otro.

ומצאתי כי כל מי אין לו עושר אין לו אחים ומי אין לו אחים אין לו משפחה ומי אין לו משפחה אין לו ילדים ומי אין לו ילדים אין לו זכר ומי אין לו זכר אין לו עושר ומי אין לו עושר אין לו שכל ומי אין לו שכל אין לו עולם הזה ועולם הבא ולא ראשית ולא אחרית כי האיש בעת אין לו עושר יצטרך וימאסוהו חבריו ויעזבוהו קרוביו ומיודעיו שכחהו וישוב נקלה בעיניהם ויש פעם אשר יצטרך האדם ומרוב אשר יהיה צריך למחיה יביא עצמו במות ומכור נפשו ימכור תורתו ואלהיו וישכח אותו ולא יביט לא לפנים ולא לאחור ויעזב הכל עד יאבד עצמו מן העולם הזה והעולם הבא

*karam* along Aristotelian/Maimonidean lines. (For the Judeo-Arabic text, we consulted Maurice Wolff [ed], *Acht Capitel*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1981—a reprint of the 1903 edition [Leiden: Brill]).

<sup>27</sup> Capua translates נובה as *nobilitas* in line with its related Biblical meaning (e.g. Job 30:15 [נבתי] and Job 12:21 [נדיבים])—on the Latin “nobilis” and “nobilitas,” J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, Leiden, Brill, 1976; pp. 718-9). His literal rendition of *emunah* as “fides” also corroborates Capua’s dependence on Joel and his unawareness of the Arabic term thus rendered in Hebrew.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Maimonides, *Shemonah Peraqim* 7 (Raymond Weiss and Charles Butterworth [eds], *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, New York, Dover, 1983; p. 75): “Similarly, if he bestirs himself and sets out to acquire money, his goal in accumulating it should be to spend it in connection with the virtues and to use it to sustain his body and to prolong his existence, so that he perceives and knows of God what is possible for him to know.” Maimonides here dovetails Aristotle’s positive appraisal of wealth (e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1, 8, 15-17). On the Maimonidean views about wealth and their reception among Spanish Jewish thinkers through the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see Eleazar Gutwirth, “Hispano-Jewish *fortuna* of Maimonidean Ideas on Wealth,” in Jesús Peláez del Rosal (ed), *Sobre la vida y obra de Maimonides*, Córdoba, El Almendro, 1991; pp. 295-304).

Et inueni quoniam qui non habet diuitias non habet fratres, et qui non habet fratres non habet genus, et qui non habet genus non habet prolem, et qui non habet prolem, non habet memoriam, et qui non habet memoriam non habet intellectum, et qui non habet intellectum non habet hoc seculum, scilicet nec futurum, nec principium neque finem. Homo enim, quando caret diuitijs, indiget subsidio aliorum et tunc habetur a sociis odio, et eum de[re]linquunt consanguinei et amici, et noti eius obliuiscuntur ipsius et creditur vilis apud eos. Et quando quis constituitur in paupertate, exponit se morti et vendit animam suam et Deum suum et eius obliuiscetur, nec respicit ante et retro, et relinquit omnia donec deicietur.

*I found that whoever [has money] has friends, and whoever has no money has neither family, children, nor fame, nor is anyone without money considered intelligent by people in this world nor in the next. When a man falls in need, his friends cut him off and he becomes contemptible to those who are close to him. He may even be forced to earn his livelihood and seek it for himself and his family, going out into the world and ruining his future life so that he loses both this world and the next...*<sup>29</sup>

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In the Arabic version, the mouse's lament continues as follows: "I found that whoever [has money] has friends, and whoever has no money has neither family, children, nor fame, nor is anyone without money considered intelligent by people in this world nor in the next."<sup>30</sup> The Alfonsine *romanceamiento* of this statement is typically faithful to the Arabic original, an accurate translation and a perfect example of the Arabic syntactic and stylistic influences in 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish literary prose studied by Galmés de Fuentes.<sup>31</sup> Joel, however, slightly retouches this passage, this time to highlight poverty's domino-effect as a causal chain of related catastrophes. He rearranges the above portrayal of misfortunes befalling on the poor into a syllogistic sequence: a series of clauses of the type "he who lacks A also lacks B." Joel's reformulation of the final portion even lends a potentially rationalistic twist to Ibn Muqaffa's statement. The Hebrew reads: "he who has no wealth has no intellect, and he who has no intellect has neither this world nor the world to come (העולם-הבא): Joel's rendering of the Arabic (اخرة)." This version could perhaps be read as suggesting, in a Maimonidean line, that economic self-sufficiency undergirds the attainment of that intellectual perfection which, in turn, is the precondition

<sup>29</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Sp: Cacho Blecua and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, p. 214; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 207; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Panchatantra*: "Verwandte schämen sich und lehnen alle Verwandtschaft ab mit ihm, Freunde verwandeln sich in Feinde, wenn einer keinen Heller hat" (Benfey, *op. cit.*, 2:181); "When a man is deprived of money, his friends desert him, and his sons, and his wife, and his brothers. When he gets rich, back they come to him again. For money is a man's [only] kinsman in this world" (Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 2:343).

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*

for both worldly success and the attainment of 'olam ha-ba.<sup>32</sup> Otherwise, Joel's version only has one superfluous addition—probably a clarificatory touch—but it is perceptively elided by Capua in the *Directorium*.<sup>33</sup>

Continuing on, the core idea about the destitutions of the poor is restated in the next line, which all four reproduce. However, this is followed by an unusual assertion. In the Arabic and Castilian versions, it is argued that poverty forces one to work for a livelihood, which may bring about a person's moral downfall.<sup>34</sup> This negative indictment of labor has been loosely connected by some scholars to the Hindu ideal of the renunciant: the person who, having properly discharged his family duties as a householder (hence the necessity of wealth), no longer desires to work, but rather withdraws from the world in the unwavering pursuit of a contemplative life.<sup>35</sup> Be that as it may, Joel's Hebrew version subtly rewrites the Arabic original. Instead of an unqualified condemnation of labor (which is not the case either with classical Hindu thought), the Hebrew version states that a man in need, "because of all that he needs to subsist, exposes himself to mortal danger, sells himself and after selling himself, sells his Torah and his God. He forgets it and looks neither forward nor back. He abandons everything, until he loses himself from this world and from the world to come." The problem is no longer the presumed evils of having to earn a living (an idea that is inimical to the Jewish ethical tradition), but the extent to which an impoverished man may be willing to prostitute himself with dubious means of earning money, bringing about his moral downfall in this world and eternal deprivation from the next. The clause about selling "his Torah and his God" intimates that poverty is detrimental to religious observance and may lead to the abandonment of Judaism (perhaps even conversion into another faith?). As to Capua's *Directorium*, there is only a minor, albeit predictable, alteration in an otherwise faithful translation. Capua's poor does not disavow "his Torah and his God." He only sells "his soul and his God" ("...vendit animam suam et deum suum").

<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to gage from Joel's translation of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* his views on Maimonidean rationalism, but this passage is, at least, plausibly compatible with Maimonides' conception of 'olam ha-ba' as "the immortal existence of the disembodied soul of the righteous man who has perfected his deeds and his intellect" (Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition. The Career and Controversies of Ramah*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982; p. 41: cf. *Mishneh Torah Teshuvah*, 8)

<sup>33</sup> Capua excises the fragment:

אין לו עושר ומי אין לו עושר

<sup>34</sup> "He may even be forced to earn his livelihood and seek it for himself and his family, going out into the world and ruining his future life so that he loses both this world and the next" (Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 82).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 196, n. 9. There may be some truth to this claim. However, no such idea is found in the corresponding section of either Edgerton's reconstructed *Panchatantra* or Benfey's longer text.

## Cluster 3

وان الشجرة النابتة في السباح المأكولة من كل جانب كحال الغدير المحتاج الى ما في أيدي الناس.) فالغدر رأس كل بلاء وداع الى صاحبه مقت الناس وهو مع ذلك مسلبة للعقل والمروءة ومذهب للعلم والادب ومطية للثمة ومقطعة للحياء ومن انتطع حياؤه ذهب سروره ومقت ومن مقت اودى ومن اودى حزن ومن حزن فقد عتله واستنكر حفظه وفهمه ومن أصيب في عتله وحفظه وفهمه كان اكثر قوله فيها يكون عليه لا له.

Non es ninguna cosa más fuerte que la pobredat; que el árbol que nasce en el aguaçal, que es comido de todas partes, [en] mejor estado está que el pobre que ha menester lo ageno. Et la pobredat es comienzo et raíz de toda tribulación, et faze al omne ser muy menudo et muy escaso; et fázele perder el seso et el buen enseñamiento, et han en él los omnes sospecha, et tuelle la vergüença, et quien ha perdida la vergüença pierde la nobleza de coraçón; et quien pierde la nobleza es fecho muy vil; et quien es fecho vil resçibe tuerto; et quien resçibe tuerto et daño ha grand pesar; et quien ha pesar enloqueçe et pierde la memoria et el entendimiento, et al que a esto acaesçe todo quanto dize es contra sí et non ha pro de sí.

ועל כן אין בעולם קשה מן העניות ואמרו חכמים ז"ל חסרון כיס קשה מכולם וכי העץ אשר בעפר שרשה והיא אכולה מכל פה היא טובה מן הדל אשר יצריכהו האל לבלתו והעניות ראשית כל נגע וסבה לכל תלאה ומסיר לב ראשי עם הארץ ומוליך יועצים שולל ואיתנים יסלף ומסיר שפה לנאמנים וטעם זקנים יקח ומסיר השכל והתבונה מן האדם והוא מקור לכל יגון וגוזר החיים ואוסף התלאות וכל מי הוא מנוגע בעניות לא יוכל שלא יסיר הענוה ויעז פניו וכל מי אין לו ענוה אין לו נדיבת מעשים ומי אין לו נדיבת מעשים יחטא וכל מי יחטא יכשל וכל מי יכשל יאבל ומי יאבל יסור שכלו וישכח בינתו ויאבד לבו

Et ideo non est in mundo peius paupertate. Lignum enim, plantatum in terra et rasum ab omni parte, melius est apud me quam qui indiget donis aliorum. Paupertas enim est principium omnis laboris et causa omnis timoris et tribulationis. Aufert enim corda magnatorum terre, ducit consules stulte et dominos infatuit. Aufert enim sermonem sapientum et consilium senum tollit. Et est origo omnis tristicie, decidit vitam, aggregat tribulationis. Et quicumque vulneratus est vulnere paupertatis impossibile est quod non tollatur sibi mansuetudo et acquiratur promptitudo. Et quicumque caret mansuetudine operum caret nobilitate, [et quicumque caret nobilitate peccabit, et quicumque] peccabit et precipitabitur, et quicumque precipitabitur, contristatur, et quicumque contristatur, perdit intellectum et obliuiscitur sue intelligentie.

*There is nothing stronger than poverty; a tree growing in a saltmarsh, gnawed all over, is better off than a poor man who needs what others have. Poverty is the beginning of every misfortune and calls people's hatred down upon its victim so that he is thereby deprived of intelligence and virtue, his knowledge and breeding slip away from him, and he becomes a butt for suspicion and shorn of modesty. Whoever is shorn of modesty finds his happiness flees him and he is hated; whoever is hated is doomed; whoever is doomed is depressed; whoever is depressed loses his mind and forgets what he has remembered and understood; and whoever is affected in his mind, memory and understanding, talks and acts more against himself than for himself...*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Sp: Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-5; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-2; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 207; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

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This section opens with three basic aphorisms about poverty which are faithfully transmitted in the four translations: (1) "there is nothing stronger than poverty";<sup>37</sup> (2) "a tree growing in a saltmarsh, gnawed all over, is better off than a poor man who needs what others have";<sup>38</sup> (3) "poverty is the beginning of every misfortune."

Linguistically, there is only a minor but revealing lexicographic issue that could be noted here. The Hebrew and the Latin versions seem to miss the Arabic point about the saltmarshes, making the proverbial tree grow on the earth, literally on the dust (Joel: בעפר; Capua: "in terra"). The Alfonsine version, on the other hand, beautifully renders the Arabic السبخ, "saltmarshes" as "aguaçal": the earliest documented use of the term in Spanish and a good example of the king's linguistic ideal of a "castellano drecho."<sup>39</sup>

Thematically, Joel makes the most revealing additions to this series of epigrams. His Hebrew version of the first aphorism is identical to the beginning of a Midrashic sentence on poverty (*Midrash Rabbah, Exodus* [31, par. 12]):<sup>40</sup>

אין בעולם קשה מן העניות שהוא קשה מכל יסורין שבעולם

This assertion is buttressed, in turn, by explicit recourse to Rabbinic authority with a quotation from *Qohelet Rabbah* that expresses the same idea (89b):

חסרון כים קשה מכולם

Always attentive to the digression's resonance with Jewish gnomic sources, he easily recasts its sentences into a small cento of Rabbinic statements on poverty. Of course, Joel's recourse to Jewish *auctoritates* would not be lost on John of Capua. He excised from the *Directorium* the latter's Midrashic apothegm and Joel's explicit allusion to its Rabbinic origin. In the absence of any need for a Rabbinic proof-text, he deems superfluous the sentence from *Qohelet Rabbah*.

Now, up to this point, we have dealt primarily with semi-platitudinous utterances. But the mouse's ruminative speech soon adopts a more analytic tone.

<sup>37</sup> This line is missing both in the Arabic manuscript at the basis of Cheikho's edition and in the text published by al-Yaziji. We have not been able to consult other Arabic manuscripts, but its inclusion in the Alfonsine version certifies its presence in the Arabic recension used by the Castilian translator.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Edgerton (*op. cit.*, 2:344): "A crooked tree that grows in salty earth, gnawed by worms, its bark stripped off by a forest fire—even its existence is better than a beggar's."

<sup>39</sup> There are other instances of "aguachal" ("pond")—13<sup>th</sup> century—and "aguasal" ("brine")—15<sup>th</sup> century. The Alfonsine "aguaçal" (como "aguasal"), if it was not already in use before this translation, could be a clever coinage based on the combination of "agua" (water) and "-çal" ("sal": i.e. salt) and dependent on the well-known "aguachal" (again, a typical Alfonsine effort to translate Arabic words into easily recognizable Castilian forms according to his ideal of a "castellano drecho"—cf. Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *El concepto cultural alfonsí*, Madrid, Mapfre, 1994; pp. 35-42).

<sup>40</sup> This parallel was not discerned by either Derenbourg or Navarro Peiró. Cf. also *Midrash Rabbah Exodus* 31, paragraph 14.

These sentences are followed by a perceptive gloss on the sociological and psychological effects of poverty: a cluster of insights that are perhaps the most resonant with modern sensibilities. Here is, again, Irving's English translation of the Arabic version:

"Poverty is the beginning of every misfortune and calls people's hatred down upon its victim so that he is thereby deprived of intelligence and virtue, his knowledge and breeding slip away from him, and he becomes a butt for suspicion and shorn of modesty. Whoever is shorn of modesty finds his happiness flees him and he is hated; whoever is hated is doomed; whoever is doomed is depressed; whoever is depressed loses his mind and forgets what he has remembered and understood; and whoever is affected in his mind, memory and understanding, talks and acts more against himself than for himself."

The mouse describes with great poignancy the social and mental deterioration of a destitute man: the sudden ostracism, the loss of social standing and decorum, the intensification of hatred towards others, the attendant deterioration of his mental faculties and the gradual descent into depression, that psychic instability that turns a destitute man potentially self-destructive. The text breaks away from previous gnomic abstractions, as if a closely observed reality were being translated into another syllogistic sequence.<sup>41</sup>

Moving along the translation cycle, the terrifying picture etched in this passage is readily conveyed with the typical alterations. As usual, except for some minor variants, the Alfonsine version reproduces the Arabic gloss in an exquisite translation of paradigmatic clarity.<sup>42</sup> As to the Hebrew, the original text is carefully subjected once again to the expected interpolations and didactic expansions. This time, the text is recast as an exegetical gloss based on a Biblical quotation (Job 12: 17a, 19b-20): "He makes counselors go about naked [i.e. go mad] ... and leads temple-servants [others: "the mighty"] astray. He deprives trusty men of speech and takes away the reason of elders." The Jobian interpolation lends a theodicial twist to the Arabic portrait of poverty's onslaught. Its gloomy depiction of how the mighty fall is now framed by Job's unequivocal affirmation of God's role (they all fall—Job reminds us—by God's very own hand). Each of the Jobian characters is struck, in turn, by one of the many catastrophes which the mouse ascribes to poverty: madness, loss of status,

<sup>41</sup> For its corresponding passage in the *Panchatantra*, see Edgerton (*op. cit.*, 2:344, verse sections 39-40).

<sup>42</sup> Where the Arabic says that "he is deprived of intelligence and virtue" (a phrase set in parallelistic juxtaposition to the loss of "knowledge and breeding" immediately after), the Alfonsine text reads "faze al omne ser muy menudo et muy escaso" ("it turns a man miserable and greedy"). This could perhaps reflect a variant in the Toledan recension of the Arabic text used by the translator. As to the translation choices, we may also note the beautiful rendering of سرور as "la nobleza de corazón": *surûr* means "happiness, mirth," but it has the same root as *sirr*, a term which can also mean "heart" in the sense of "inner secret."

loss of speech and intelligence. The evils of poverty are subsumed within the inscrutable designs of divine Providence.<sup>43</sup>

The exegetical recasting of this passage as a Jobian theodicy is, however, partially tempered by subsequent alterations. The Hebrew translator rewrites the psychological effects of poverty in the language of moral failure and individual sinfulness. In Joel's version, the impoverished man loses his humility (הענוה), turning insolent, as well as his generosity, which prompts him to sin (יחטא). The loss of economic independence prevents the individual from virtuous action. The subsequent descent of the poor into mental chaos becomes a consequence of the sinful deeds prompted by his destitution.

This moralizing refashioning of poverty's aftermath is foreign to the Arabic text (Ibn Muqaffa seemed more interested in the psychological portrait than in its moralizing potential). However, it was carried over into subsequent European versions via Capua's *Directorium*. The latter translated fully Joel's expanded version, including the Jobian quote (in his own Latin version!) with all the concomitants.<sup>44</sup>

#### Cluster 4

• ووجدت الرجل اذا افتقر اتهمه من كان له موتينا وأساء به الظن من كان يظن به حسنا .  
 فان اذنب غيره ظنوه به وكان للثمة وسوء الظن موضعا . وليس من خلة هي للغني مدح  
 الا وهي للغني عيب فان كان شجاعا سمى اهووج وان كان جوادا سمى مفسدا وان كان  
 حلييا سمى ضعيفا وان كان وقورا سمى بليدا وان كان لسنا سمى مهذارا وان كان صموتا  
 سمى غيبا .

Et veo qu' el omne, quando enpobreçe, sospéchaló el que fiava por él, et cuida mal dél como cuidava bien. Et si otro alguno ha culpa, apónenla a él, et non ha cosa que bien esté al rico que mal non esté al pobre. Ca si fuere esforçado, dirán que es gastador, et si fuere mesurado, dirán que es de flaco coraçón, et si fuere sosegado, dirán que es torpe, et si fuere fablador, dirán que es parlero.

ומצאתי האיש כי כעת ידלדל יחשוד כל איש אותו ברעה אשר לא עשה ואם יחטא בלעדיו ישימו  
 העון עליו ואין בעולם מדה שיהללו בה לעשיר אלא ובמדה ההיא יחרפו לעני אם יהיה נדיב היד  
 יאמרו בעדו מאבד הון ואם יאריך אפו בכל דבר יאמרו חלש ורפה ידים ואם יהיה בעל שכל בנפש  
 נכבדת יאמרו נמהר הוא ואם יהיה מעביר על מדותיו יאמרו סכל ואם יהיה אמיץ הלב שוטה מהולל  
 ואם ידבר יאמרו בעל לשון ואם יחריש יאמרו בהמה

<sup>43</sup> Even his choice of language may underscore this Providential conception of poverty as God-sent: cf. the destitute man of this gloss is struck down by poverty, literally "touched" [מנגע] as if by a Biblical plague [נגע].

<sup>44</sup> Capua, interestingly, has no recourse to the Latin Vulgate in the few Biblical addenda kept in the *Directorium*: e.g. Job 12: 17a, 19b-20: *Capua*: "...ducit consules stulte et dominos infatuat. Aufert enim sermonem sapientium et consilium senum tollit"; *Vulgate*: "...adducit consiliarios in stultum fines ... et optimates subplantat. Commutans labium veracium et doctrinam senum auferens."

Et inueni quoniam, quando quis depauperatur, suspicatur de eo omne malum quod non patrauit, et que alii faciunt attribuuntur ei, nec est in mundo bona consuetudo qua laudatur diues, quin etiam vituperetur pauper. Quoniam si fuerit prodigus, dicetur consumptor bonorum, et si prorogauerit iram suam in negocijs, dicetur debilis atque remissus, et si fuerit vir intelligens cum nobili anima, dicetur festinus, et si fuerit refrenans suos mores, dicetur ignorans, et si fuerit fortis corde, dicetur fatuus et stultus, et si fuerit sermocinator, dicetur verbosus et linguosus, et si fuerit taciturnus, dicetur bestia.

*I find that when a man becomes poor, he is suspected by whoever has trusted him, and whoever thought well of him thinks ill of him. If someone else commits a crime, then they blame him, and he becomes the object of every sort of suspicion and evil thought. There is no motive for praise in a rich man which does not become a fault in a poor man: for if he is daring, he is called foolhardy; if he is generous, he is called a wastrel; if he is meek, he is called weak; if he is serious, he is called dull; if he is talkative, he is called a chatterbox; while if he is silent, he is called stupid...<sup>45</sup>*

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The first assertion—that an impoverished man immediately becomes the target of unjust suspicions—remains constant in the four translations. The related idea that the same attributes extolled in a rich man become objects of derision among the poor is also faithfully conveyed in all four.<sup>46</sup> However, the attendant list of contrasts to illustrate this *topos*, which is quite popular in gnomic literature,<sup>47</sup> varies slightly from version to version. The Arabic text offers six: (1) daring/foolhardy, (2) generous/wastrel, (3) meek/weak, (4) dignified/dull-witted, (5) talkative/a chatterbox, and (6) silent/stupid. The Castilian version reduces it to four: (2), (3), (5) and (6). The Hebrew version modifies the description of some attributes with periphrastic excess and also adds one pair (“indulgent”<sup>48</sup> / “fool” [סכל]) for a total of seven.<sup>49</sup> They are all accurately conveyed in the Latin translation.

<sup>45</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Sp: Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, p. 215; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-3; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> This general assertion is made as well in the *Panchatantra*, but without any of the attributes clearly specified: “He has the same faculties unimpaired, the same name, the same mind uninjured, the same voice; he is the same man, and yet, when he loses the radiance of wealth, he suddenly becomes another: a curious thing” (Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 2:343).

<sup>47</sup> Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, p. 215, n. 118.

<sup>48</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Instead of حلييا, Joel's version reads:

The Arabic وقور (“dignified, grave”) here becomes a “thoughtful person with a remarkable character”:

מעביר על מדותיו

יארין אפו בכל דבר

בעל שכל בנפש נכבדת

## Cluster 5

فالموت اهون من الغاقة التي تضطر صاحبها الى المسألة ثم لاسيما مسألة الاشحاء اللوماء . فان الكريم لو كلف ان يدخل يده فا التنين فيستخرج سما ثم يبتلعه كان ينبغي ذلك ان يكون اخف عليه من مسألة اللئيم البخيل . وقد قيل انه من ابتلي بمرض في جسده لا يفارقه او بفراق الاحبة والاخوان او بالغرابة حيث لا يعرف ميّتا ولا مقبلا ولا يرجو اياها او بغاقة تضطره الى المسألة فالحياة له موب والموت له راحة . وربما كره الرجل المسألة وبه حاجة فحمله على السرقة والغصب والسرقة والغصب شر من التي راغ منها فانه قد قيل الخرس خير من اللسان بالكذب والغبن خير من التاهر (التهر) والضر والغاقة غير من السعة والنعمة من اموال الناس .

Pues la muerte es mejor al omne que la pobreza que faze al omne pedir con cuita, quanto más a los viles escasos. Ca el omne de grand guisa, si le fiziesen meter la mano en la boca de la serpiente et sacar dende el tósigo et tragarlo, por más ligera cosa lo ternía que pedir al escaso. Et dizen qu' el que padescę grant enfermedat en su cuerpo, tal que nunca la perdiese o que perdiese sus amigos et sus bien querientes, o que fuese en agena tierra do non supiese casa nin alverge nin oviese esperança de se tornar, mejor le sería todo esto que pedir a los viles; que la vida les es muerte et la muerte les es folgura. Et a las vezes non quiere el omne pedir, seyéndole mucho menester, et fázal' esto furtrar et robar, que es peor que pedir. Ca dizen que más vale callar que dezir mentira, et mejor es la to[r]pedat de la lazería que la infamia. Et mejor es la pobredat que pedir averes agenos.

על כן המות טוב מן העניות אשר יביא בעליו לידי נסיון וקלון שישאל מה שיש ביד בני אדם ויותר רע מזה אם ישאל מנבל כי יבקש להם וישיבוהו ריקם והנדיב העני יותר קל הוא בעיניו שיביא נפשו בפני נחש ויוציא משם סם המות ויאכלהו והוא טוב בעיניו משישאל מנבל שאלה וכבר נאמר כי כל מי מנוגע בחלי גופו על מנת שלא יסור ממנו עד יפרד מאהביו וחבריו או שיהיה גר ותושב בארץ לא יאספהו איש ולא יהי לו עוזר טוב מותו מחייו כי החיים לו מות ובמות לו מנוחה ורוחה ויש פעם אשר יצטרך האדם ולא יבצע לשאול שאלה לאיש עד אשר יביאהו הדבר ההוא לגנוב וירצח ויגזול והוא יותר רע מכולם וקשה מן המעשה אשר עזב כי אמרו החכמים טוב לו לאדם שיהיה אלם ואוהב אמת משיהיה בעל לשון ושקרן וטוב לו לאדם שלא יהיה איש דברים משיהיה מרבה דברים ואפי באמת

Et ideo mors melior est paupertate que inducit hominem in temptationem et vilitatem, vt petat ab alijs, et maxime quando necesse fuerit petere a stultis aut auaris, quoniam reddunt ipsum confusum. Expediit virum nobilem pauperem immittere manum suam in ore serpentis et extrahere inde venenum et illud sorbere magis quam petere homini stulto. Et dicitur quod quicumque fuerit laborans languorem sui corporis ita vt non cessat ab eo, donec separetur a socijs et amicis, vel qui fuerit peregrinus in terra que non recolligitur ab aliquo nec habet coadiutorem, est ei mors melior quam vita, quia vita sibi mors est; mors autem est ei liberatio et requies. Et aliquando cogitur pauper, propter sui nimiam paupertatem, furari, occidere et defraudare, que peiora sunt primis operibus que relinquit. Quoniam dicunt sapientes: Expediit hominem potius esse mutum et veracem quam loquentem et mendacem, et melius est non esse quam esse verbosum et etiam in ipsa veritate.

*Death is easier than destitution which compels the destitute to beg, and especially to beg from rotten tightwads. If a high-minded man were forced to put his hand into a sea-monster's mouth, take out its poison, and then swallow it, that would be easier for him than begging from a dirty miser. It has been said that one who is afflicted with some bodily ailment which he cannot get rid of, or is separated from his loved ones and friends, or is in exile where he doesn't know any lodging or resting place and from where he does not expect to return, or is in such destitution that he is obliged to go begging; then life is a death for him, and death brings him peace. Perhaps indeed the man dislikes begging when he is in need, and is thus brought to theft and robbery. Theft and robbery are worse than what they supplant, for it has been said that silence is better than falsehood, acting stupid than violence and injury, and misery than ease and comfort which man's wealth affords...*<sup>50</sup>

This digression concludes with a long series of gnomic statements, hyperbolic analogies and contrasting antitheses about the undesirability of begging. Death is easier to bear than begging, especially from “rotten tightwads.” A man of stature brought down in life would rather swallow a snake's poison, extracted by his own hand, than beg from a miser. A destitute man who is either terminally ill, without family and friends or homeless in exile would rather welcome death than be obliged to go begging. A man who dislikes begging may be forced to steal, yet begging is better than theft just as silence is better than lying, acting stupid is better than violence and misery is better than recourse to someone else's wealth.<sup>51</sup>

The Castilian version, as usual, is, from a historic angle, a marvel of translation. It is literal, precise and clear, even if the translator can not always match the lexicographic richness of the Arabic: cf. for example, the Spanish “viles escasos” / “escaso” as translation of the two Arabic synonyms for “miser” (اللييم البخيل الاشعاء اللوماء).

Our Hebrew translator, once again, selectively modifies *Kalilah wa-Dimnah's* condemnation of beggary with a Jewish readership in mind.<sup>52</sup> Where the Arabic text succinctly states that it is even harder to beg from a miser, Joel declares why: (“because when he asks them for something, they send him out empty-handed”).<sup>53</sup> The Arabic series of misfortunes that make death preferable to begging is slightly rewritten (in Hebrew, the terminally ill man has to leave

<sup>50</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6; Sp: Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-6; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-4; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 208; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>51</sup> For the *Panchatantra's* counterpart, see Edgerton (*op. cit.*, 2:344-5).

<sup>52</sup> Begging is an object of critique in medieval Jewish ethical literature: e.g. Jonah Gerondi, *Perush Mishle* 18:23 (ed. Abraham Loewenthal, Jerusalem, 1966; p. 107—quoted and discussed by B. Septimus, “Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia,” in Isadore Twersky [ed], *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979, pp. 197-230 [esp. p. 218]):

הריש והעוני גנאי לאדם כי יביאנו לדבר תחנונים ולהשפיל נפשו לבריות ולהחניף להם ויראת  
הבריות והחנופה פחיתות הנפש הצריך לבריות גנאי

friends and family). Most importantly, the Hebrew translation of the Arabic line (“then life is a death for him, and death brings him peace”)<sup>54</sup> is partially recast in a Biblical key through periphrastic recourse to Jonah 4:3 and 4:8. His textual rendering is prefaced by the added clause “he would rather die than live,”<sup>55</sup> thus rewriting in the third person Jonah’s histrionic profession of anguish at God’s mercy towards the contrite Ninivites.<sup>56</sup> Capua’s translation, once again, is substantially faithful to the Hebrew.

### Cluster 6

ثم ذكرت فوجدت البلياء في الدنيا انما يسوقها الى اهلها الحرص والشهه فلا يزال صاحب الدنيا يتقلب في بلية وتعب لانه لا يزال يداخله الشهه والحرص. ورايت اختلاف السخاء والسخيد (شديدا) ووجدت ركوب الاهوال وتجشم الاسفار البعيدة في طلب المال اهون على الحريص من بسط اليد الى قبض المال على السخي ولم ار كالرضي شيئا. وسمعت العلماء قد قالوا لا عقل كاتديبير ولا ورع كحسن الخلق ولا غنى كالرضي واحق ما صبر عليه ما لم يكن الى تغييره شيليل. وكان يقال افضل البر الرحمة ورأس المودة الاسترسال ورأس العقل المعرفة بما يكون وما لا يكون وطيب النفس وحسن الانصراف عما لا سليل له.

Desí pensé y fallé que las tribulaciones deste mundo non las han los omnes sinon por golosía et por cobdiçia, et sienpre están por ellas en tribulaçión et en lazeria; et vi que más ligera cosa es meterse omne a las grandes aventuras et al grand peligro et a grand ocasión et a luengas carreras en buscar el algo deste mundo, que parar su mano a pedir; et vi que non ha mejor cosa en este mundo que tenerse omne por abastado con lo que ha; et of a los sabios dezir que non es ninguna obra tan buena commo asmar, nin ningund temor de Dios tal commo retenerse de mal fazer, nin ningund linaje commo buenas costumbres, nin ninguna riqueza commo tenerse por abastado con lo que Dios le da. Et dizen que la cosa que omne con mayor derecho deve sofrir es aquella que por ninguna guisa non puede mudar. Et dizen que la obra más santa es piedad, et raís del amor es la fiança, et el más provechoso entendimiento es saber lo que fue et lo que ha de ser, et dexarse omne de grado de las cosas que non averá por ninguna guisa.

واحשב بلبي واراهه كي كل نגע وكل צרה שבכולם לא יביאו אותם לאדם כי אם התאוה והיצר הרע ולא יצא שוכן זה העולם אלא מצרה ליגון כל ימיו וראיתי החילוף אשר בין הנדיב והכילי כי הוא דבר גדול מאד ומצאתי כי השמח בחלקו ואשר לא ירצה יותר ממה שנתנו לו הוא עשיר וכי העושר ההוא יעמד לו לבדו מכל עושר ומכל הון ושמעתי החכמים אומרים כי אין שכל כמו החושב כל מעשיו ואין הון כמו המדות הטובות ואין עושר כמו השמח בחלקו וכבר אמרו החכמים איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו ויהיה לו טוב המעט ההוא כי יעמד לו יותר מן העושר הרב אשר יסור ממנו מהר והיו אומרים טוב מכל כבוד הרחמים ורוב האהבה שליחת הכתבים וספרי ההכרה וראש השכל המדע באשר היה ובאשר לא היה ואיזה טוב הנפש הזה שירחק עצמו מן הדבר אשר לא יוכל להגיע אליו

فالحياة له موب والموت له راحة

טוב מותו מחייו

<sup>54</sup>

<sup>55</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The identification of the poor with the dead is topical in gnostic literature: cf. *Panchatantra* (Benfey, *op. cit.*, 2:181, sloka 104[105]; Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 2:344-5). Also, Shem Tov of Carrión, *Proverbios*

Et consideravi in mea mente et vidi quoniam nullus languor et tribulatio in mundo est qui non causetur ex concupiscentia et vitio, et habitator huius mundi transfertur continue de tribulatione in tristicium. Et vidi differentiam que est inter prodigum et auarum, quia maxima est. Inueni enim quoniam qui contentus est sua porcione bonorum nec appetit vltra quam datum fuerit sibi, diues est, et illud ei valet plus quam omnes diuitie. Et audiui sapientes dicentes, quoniam non est intellectus sicut illius qui premeditatur sua facta, nec est nobilitas sicut boni mores, nec sunt diuitie sicut diuitie eius qui gaudet sua sorte. Nam ei melius est illud modicum quod ei permanebit quam multe diuitie que cito recedunt. Et dicunt sapientes quod melius cum honore est miseratio, et caput dilectionis est transmissio litterarum et epistolarum societatis, et caput intellectus consistit in scientia rei presentis et non presentis. Et homo melioris animi est qui procul se facit a re ad quam non potest peruenire.

*Then I reflected and found that the trials of this world are only forced upon people through greed and gluttony, and the worldly individual is constantly tormented by misfortune and weariness since he is obsessed by greed and gluttony. I saw that the difference between generosity and stinginess is great, and that moving along with circumstances and undertaking distant journeys in search of wealth is easier for a miser than for a generous person to stretch out his hand to snatch money. I don't see anything like contentment. I have heard wise men saying: There is no better sense than good management, no piety like (keeping from doing harm), no (beauty) like a fine character, and no riches like contentment. The most fitting patience is where there is no way of changing one's lot. And it is said: The finest of deeds is mercy, the beginning of affection is familiarity, the origin of understanding is knowledge about what is so and what is not so, and peace of mind and beauty lie in turning away from the unattainable...<sup>57</sup>*

The gist of the mouse's hard-won lessons at the end of his tale (in the Arabic version) are easy to summarize: greed, desire, cupidity is the root source of all misfortunes, a greater evil than poverty itself; accepting one's lot in life—contentment—is the greater virtue. This final digression, which follows the protagonist's failed efforts to recuperate his money, harkens back as well to the *Panchatantra*.<sup>58</sup> However, the text itself changes somewhat over time as

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*morales* 423a "Omne pobre, preñado non es más que el muerto" (edition by Paloma Díaz-Mas and Carlos Mota, Madrid, Cátedra, 1998; p. 194; Leopold Stein, *Untersuchungen über die Proverbios Morales von Santob de Carrion mit besonderem Hinweis auf die Quellen und Parallelen*, Berlin, Mayer & Müller, 1900; p. 86, connects this line to a Hebrew proverb: עני חשוב כמה).

<sup>57</sup> Ar: Cheikho, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-7; Sp: Cacho Bleuca and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-7; Heb: Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6; Lat: Hervieux, *op. cit.*, p. 209; Eng: Irving, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>58</sup> The text reconstructed by Edgerton is quite similar to the Arabic. His translation reads: "Knowledge is the true organ of sight, not the eye. Righteousness is true nobility, not birth in a noble family. Contentment is true prosperity. True wisdom consists in desisting from what cannot be accomplished. All fortune belongs to him who has a contented mind. Surely the whole earth is covered with leather for him whose feet are encased in shoes. The joy of those whose minds are at peace, because they have drunk their fill of the nectar of contentment, is far beyond the reach of those who are ever rushing hither and yon in their greed for gold. A hundred leagues is not far to a man who is driven by cupidity; but the contented man pays no heed to money that comes into his very hand. So since wealth is unattainable, discernment is (really) the best course. And it is said: What is religion? Compassion for all living creatures. What is happiness for people in this world? Good health. What is affection? A kind disposition. What is wisdom? Discernment" (Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 2:346). In Benfey's text, this stark lesson is fleshed out by Hiranyaka in a long, interpolated story which is missing in here. The latter did not make it into the *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* cycle.

it becomes centered on the evils of cupidity (الحرص والشهه) and the virtue of contentment (الرضى).

For Ibn Muqaffa's Muslim audience, the mouse's final resignation to his present state, his disavowal of greed and climactic praise of contentment would have been partially resonant with the religious ideals of *zuhdiyya* spirituality. Ibn Muqaffa's digression falls short of an endorsement of *faqr* (poverty) as desirable, but these early ascetics also extolled the virtue of *ridā* as renunciation of desire and acceptance of their condition in perfect accord with God's decree.<sup>59</sup> In the Arabic version, the mouse's autobiography chronicles his evolution into an incipient *zāhid*.

Nothing new can be added about the Alfonsine *Calila e Dimna*. Except for one seeming effort at *simplificatio*,<sup>60</sup> Alfonso's translation is yet again a model of clarity and accessibility for 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish prose.

Joel's translation, on the other hand, tries to reformulate this passage in the language of Rabbinic ethics. The trials and tribulations of an individual are now brought upon him as a result of his passion (התאוה) and evil inclination (היצר הרע).<sup>61</sup> The comparison between a miser and a generous man is also eschewed, giving way instead to a Rabbinic restatement of Ibn Muqaffa's praise of *ridā*. The only lasting wealth—Joel now explains—is to be satisfied with one's own lot in life, for all other riches are evanescent. This nuanced expansion of *KD*'s lapidarian statement (لا غنى كالرضى) is buttressed with yet another pertinent dictum: "Who is rich? He who is content with his lot" (*Pirkei Avot* 4,1). By resorting to this Talmudic interpolation, the mouse's speech is aligned, once again, with medieval Jewish ethical discourse (cf. Maimonides' interpretation of *Pirkei Avot* 4,1 in *Shemonah Peraqim* 7).<sup>62</sup> He even adds a clarificatory

<sup>59</sup> *Ridā* means literally "the fact of being pleased or contented" (Lane 1100). *Ridā* does not occur in the Quran, but other nominal derivatives of the root RDY do (e.g. *riḍwan*), also signifying the virtue of contentment or acquiescence to the will of God (e.g. 3.156 and 77.20). On *ridā* in Muslim piety, see Constance Padwick, *Muslims Devotions*, London, 1960; pp. 268ff. For early Sufi reinterpretations of this idea, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 125-127.

<sup>60</sup> Where the Arabic says "...moving along with circumstances and undertaking distant journeys in search of wealth is easier for a miser than for a generous person to stretch out his hand to snatch money," the Spanish elides the contrasting reference to a miser versus a generous man, so that the statement simply compares the levels of difficulty between two actions undertaken by the same person.

<sup>61</sup> The Biblical notion of a human inclination to evil (*yetzer ha-ra'*—cf. Gen 8:21) and of an opposing tendency to good (*yetzer ha-tov*) is a central tenet of Rabbinic psychology. *Yetzer ha-ra'* is the drive that entices a man to sin, to gratify his passions, his untamed natural urges. It is not intrinsically evil and may be even essential to life (cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 9:7), but it must be severely harnessed, held in check, lest one becomes prey to sin, allowing it to grow into a habit (*Sukkah* 52a-b). Its effects can always be countered by the assiduous study and observance of the Torah (*Kiddushin* 30b).

<sup>62</sup> Commenting on a Rabbinic *dictum* about prophecy, Maimonides states: "*Rich* refers to one of the moral virtues, I mean contentment (אלקנאעה); Ibn Tibbon's translation (ההסתפקות) for they call the contented man *rich*. This is what they say in defining the *rich man*: *Who is rich? He who rejoices with his lot*. That is, he is content with what time brings him, and he is not pained at what it does not bring" (Weiss and Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p. 81).

note on the nature of a virtuous deed: for contentment to bring such benefit to the soul, our turning away from the unattainable must also be voluntary (שִׁרְחִיק־עֵצְמוֹ).<sup>63</sup>

John of Capua's Latin rendition is again twice revealing. Some of his Latin choices are attuned to the language of Christian ethics. Joel's passion and evil inclination now become the Augustinian *concupiscentia* and the Aristotelian-Thomistic *vitio*.<sup>64</sup> Capua also preserves most of the additions and revisions. The discussion on greed and contentment is also recast *à la Joel* in the moral language of sinfulness. However, he persists with the obliteration of all strictly Jewish references. Capua omits, as would be expected, that most pertinent citation from *Pirkei Avot* 4,1.

## V: CONCLUSIONS

The passages compared are all too brief, mere fragments of a lengthy section and not fully representative of the entire work. Still, this exercise suffices to sketch a few preliminary observations about each of the four translations.

1) Scholars of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* know well that, although Ibn Muqaffa did not aim at a systematic "islamization" of his Arabic translation, he selectively modified those allusions to Hindu religious and social life that were bound to ruffle the sensibilities of his 8<sup>th</sup> century Muslim audience: e.g. its various references to the pantheon of Hindu deities, the belief in reincarnation, and the caste system.<sup>65</sup> In introducing the mirror of princes to Arabic literature with the *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* translation, Ibn Muqaffa tried to articulate a moral and political code of conduct that did not conflict with the divine order as conceived in the religious law to which he had recently converted.<sup>66</sup> A careful rereading of the Arabic text could still yield new evidence to other ways in which Ibn Muqaffa made his impressive translation even more amenable to a Muslim readership. The allusive redeployment of Quranic phraseology exemplified in

<sup>63</sup> There is one translation error to be noted. The Arabic الاسترسال "familiarity, chumminess" ("the beginning of affection is familiarity") is rendered and glossed as "the exchange of letters and writings of acknowledgement." An "exchange of letters" is an accepted meaning of the term *istirsāl*, but not the right translation in context. This error carries over to John of Capua: "transmissio litterarum et epistolarum societatis" (the "societatis," in turn, suggests that the Hebrew manuscript at his disposal may have read החברה rather than ההכרה).

<sup>64</sup> For a classic scholastic formulation on the nature of concupiscence, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1-2, q.30.

<sup>65</sup> Some of these features—still preserved in the Syriac—were modified in the Arabic: e.g. the metamorphosis of a rat into a girl and viceversa was performed by a religious man in the original version, whereas in the Arabic the transformation took place by direct divine intervention. The story of the jackal who was a sinful king in a previous life was omitted and he also added a chapter to the Dimnah episode to mitigate the amoral nature of the original, where the culprit goes unpunished for his crime (in Ibn Muqaffa's addition, Dimnah is sentenced to death for her wrongful actions).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. F. Gabrieli, "L'opera di Ibn al-Muqaffa," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, XIII (1932), 197-247, and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.

the use of *dahr* offers a case in point. Other sections can be fruitfully reassessed as well against the emergent spiritual and intellectual currents in 8<sup>th</sup> century Islam (our suggestion in connection with the final discussion on the virtue of contentment). From a stylistic angle, the passage analyzed corroborates what scholars of Arabic literature also know well. Ibn Muqaffa's *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* belonged to a body of works that helped forge the characteristic prose style of the Arabic translations of narrative fiction so influential in the West, an Arabic prose made by courtly scholars into an instrument for literary expression at the service of a new intellectual ideal.<sup>67</sup>

2) The Alfonsine passage is most revealing from a linguistic and literary angle. Alfonso seems to have become involved with the translation of *Calila e Dimna* while he was a young prince. The work was probably translated in 1251,<sup>68</sup> years before his full-fledged sponsorship of the sundry translations and composition of scientific, historical and juridical works that would help consolidate the Castilian vernacular as a sophisticated instrument of literary expression. Still, Alfonso's literary personality, cultural directives and linguistic ideals are clearly evidenced even in this minute portion of his remarkable work. This important translation of Ibn Muqaffa's prose is obsessively literal, yet lively, adroit, eminently readable and remarkably accurate. Based on the concerted assimilation of Arabic syntactical forms and style, the writing is agile, supple and its vocabulary rich, refreshingly unencumbered by Latinate cultisms: a precocious embodiment of his "castellano drecho." Moreover, unlike many of the European and Near Eastern translations of *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* by Christian (and Jewish) scholars, there are no religiously motivated emendations or additions to Ibn Muqaffa's text in the Alfonsine *romanceamiento*. His straightforward rendering of the mouse's tale lacks in additional didactic amplifications, Scriptural paraphrase or edifying glosses. Nothing can be gleaned about contemporary Christian views on wealth and poverty from the Alfonsine text. Translation as an intellectual activity was, for him, the foundation of a distinctive cultural project: the reassertion of Castile's political preeminence through the concerted assimilation of the Arabic cultural and scientific heritage in his vernacular. There was no space therein for didactic reelaborations of a clerical nature. This early *romanceamiento* was guided by the same commitment to literal accuracy as in the mature translation projects where Latin was cast aside in favor of Castilian as an official language of culture.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Aboubakr Chraïbi, "La réception de *Kalila et Dimna* par la culture arabe," *Aux origines du conte. Crisol*, XXI (1996), 77-88.

<sup>68</sup> For a summary of the scholarly debate on the date of this translation (1251 or 1261), see Cacho Blecua and Lacarra, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-19.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Márquez Villanueva, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

3) Joel's translation is the most radically altered in comparison to the Arabic original. His Hebrew prose is simple, unadorned, especially when compared to Eleazar's more ambitious, sophisticated rendering in elegant rhymed prose. However, Joel proves himself quite adept at the literary reelaboration of his Arabic source for a different didactic purpose. The passages considered in here are systematically amplified. Ideas are clarified, nuanced, modified. Six quotations from Biblical and Rabbinic sources are interpolated in the course of its exposition. These alterations are both formal and substantial. Some are prompted by literary concerns over narrative efficacy. Others reflect his theological attentiveness to their thematic affinities with Jewish ethical thought. This dual motivation is clearly evidenced in his selective usage of Biblical and Rabbinic materials: (1) some of the latter lend Scriptural and/or Rabbinic authority to the didactic excursus, whether they are recast as exegetical glosses or brought in line with the medieval Jewish ethical tradition; (2) others invoke a broader context of meaning by dint of allusion, effectively illuminating the literary scene with narrative skill and subtle reliance on the shared Biblical literacy of his learned readers. Either way, the translator actively intervenes in the adaptation of this ancient animal fable for the benefit and enjoyment of a medieval Jewish audience. Joel's translation is a Hebrew model of medieval translation as didactic *amplificatio*.

4) Capua's *Directorium vitae humanae* is almost as faithful to Joel's Hebrew as the Alfonsine *Calila* was to Ibn Muqaffa's translation. All the personal additions that do not involve quotations from Biblical and Rabbinic sources are literally rendered. Besides, there are very few alterations that could reflect a deliberate effort to make the text more amenable to a medieval Christian audience (e.g. the translation of *yetzer ha-ra'* as *concupiscentia*). However, Capua—the recent Christian convert—is clearly attuned to the “judaizing” features of Joel's Hebrew version and, so, he systematically excises all the explicit references to strictly Jewish sources from his Latin translation. He even expunges some (not all) of the Biblical interpolations. As a rule of thumb, the Biblical citations that illuminate the main content (Job 12 and Jonah 4) are preserved, but those whose appreciation depend on the Scriptural literacy of the Jewish audience are discarded (e.g. the textual quotes from I and II Samuel at the beginning). Even the few Biblical quotes kept are translated into Latin: he does not resort to the Vulgate or make any other effort to enhance the recognizability of the Biblical interpolations for his Christian readers. This “dejudalized” version of Joel's Hebrew *Kalilah* became the standard text known to most premodern European readers in subsequent translations.

In sum, the medieval translation process evidenced here can not be reduced to the passive transmission of the inherited learning encased and exemplified in these popular fables. An active engagement with *KD*'s narrative materials and their didactic excursus shapes their creative reappropriation in different

cultural and religious settings. Although the narrative core of most stories is remarkably constant in the chain of transmission, they are altered at various points to conform to new sociocultural circumstances.<sup>70</sup> It is true that the poor mouse always loses his money. But his way to friendship is paved each time in the changing languages of medieval wisdom.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. the basic tenets of "Conduit Theory" on the transmission of the content and messages of folktales in Linda Dégh, "Conduit-Theorie," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch des Märchens*, ed. Kurt Ranke, vol. 3, Berlin and New York, 1981, cols. 124-26.