

University of Kentucky

UKnowledge

University of Kentucky Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

2007

THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHI

Kenneth Carr Hawley

University of Kentucky, Kenneth.Hawley@lcu.edu

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Hawley, Kenneth Carr, "THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHI" (2007). *University of Kentucky Doctoral Dissertations*. 564.

https://uknowledge.uky.edu/gradschool_diss/564

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Kentucky Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Kenneth Carr Hawley

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky
2007

THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY
MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Kenneth Carr Hawley
Lubbock, TX

Director: Dr. Walt Foreman, Professor of English
Lexington, KY

Copyright © Kenneth Carr Hawley 2007

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ*

While this analysis of the Old, Middle, and Early Modern English translations of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* provides a brief reception history and an overview of the critical tradition surrounding each version, its focus is upon how these renderings present particular moments that offer the consolation of eternity, especially since such passages typify the work as a whole. For Boethius, confused and conflicting views on fame, fortune, happiness, good and evil, fate, free will, necessity, foreknowledge, and providence are only capable of clarity and resolution to the degree that one attains to knowledge of the divine mind and especially to knowledge like that of the divine mind, which alone possesses a perfectly eternal perspective. Thus, as it draws upon such fundamentally Boethian passages on the eternal Prime Mover, this study demonstrates how the translators have negotiated linguistic, literary, cultural, religious, and political expectations and forces as they have presented their own particular versions of the Boethian vision of eternity.

Even though the text has been understood, accepted, and appropriated in such divergent ways over the centuries, the Boethian vision of eternity has held his *Consolation's* arguments together and undergirded all of its most pivotal positions, without disturbing or compromising the philosophical, secular, academic, or religious approaches to the work, as readers from across the ideological, theological, doctrinal, and political spectra have appreciated and endorsed the nature and the implications of divine eternity. It is the consolation of eternity that has been cast so consistently and so faithfully into Old, Middle, and Early Modern English, regardless of form and irrespective of situation or background. For whether in prose and verse, all-prose, or all-verse, and whether by a Catholic, a Protestant, a king, a queen, an author, or a scholar, each translation has presented the text's central narrative: as Boethius the character is educated by the figure of Lady Philosophy, his eyes are turned away from the earth and into the heavens, moving him and his mind from confusion to clarity, from forgetfulness to remembrance, from reason to intelligence, and thus from time to eternity.

KEYWORDS: Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, English Translations, Medieval and Renaissance, Eternity

Kenneth Carr Hawley

10/15/07

THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY
MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ*

By

Kenneth Carr Hawley

Walter Foreman

Director of Dissertation

Jeffrey Clymer

Director of Graduate Studies

10/15/07

DISSERTATION

Kenneth Carr Hawley

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky
2007

THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD, MIDDLE, AND EARLY
MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ*

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Kenneth Carr Hawley

Lubbock, TX

Director: Dr. Walt Foreman, Professor of English

Lexington, KY

Copyright © Kenneth Carr Hawley 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My initial interest in and early work on this topic were influenced and aided by the dissertation's first director, Professor Kevin S. Kiernan, whose commitment to research and learning proved integral to the development and oversight of the formative stages of this project. Particularly during my participation in his Electronic Boethius project but also in the classroom and at conferences, his guidance as a mentor and example as a scholar have left me continually in his debt. I am also very grateful to Dr. Walt Foreman, who directed the work to completion with encouraging enthusiasm and generous dedication. Dr. Jonathan Allison's helpful advice and kind support were always offered at just the right moments, and his energetic participation in this process has been consistent from the very beginning. This project has also benefited from the useful comments and constructive suggestions from the other members of the committee, Dr. Jennifer Lewin and Dr. David Bradshaw, as well as from Dr. Jane Phillips, the outside examiner. In addition, the library staff and interlibrary loan departments at the University of Kentucky and Lubbock Christian University provided invaluable assistance during the course of my research. I also thank Jeanette Heinrichs, whose planning, filing, arranging, and communicating kept everything in order and eliminated much anxiety.

This effort could not have been made without the loving support of my parents, Dan and Byrdie Hawley, and my in-laws, Odell and LaVonne Farr, as well as other members of my immediate and extended family. My colleagues at Lubbock Christian University, especially Provost Rod Blackwood, Dean Don Williams, and my companions in the department of Humanities (Jana Anderson, Susan Bailey, Susan Blassingame, Jim Bullock, Tim Byars, Carole Carroll, Kregg Fehr, Deborah Klein, Keith Owen, Ronna Privett, Ron Reed, Michael Whitley) have shown true friendship through every challenge and blessing along the way. Finally, my wife, Deborah, and my sons, William and Bennett, deserve my deepest appreciation for filling my life with love and for being a perpetual source of strength and happiness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
Translations of Boethius	1
The Afterlife of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i> in English	4
I. Boethius on Eternity	20
The Boethian Vision of Eternity	20
The Consolation of Eternity	29
II. The Boethian Vision of Eternity in Old English	40
King Alfred’s Prosimetric and Prose Translations	40
King Alfred and the Consolation of Eternity	62
Book I, Meter 5	62
Book II, Meter 3	68
Book II, Prose 7	70
Book III, Meter 9	73
Book IV, Prose 6	89
Book IV, Meter 6	95
Book V, Meter 2	98
Book V, Prose 6	102
King Alfred’s Translations of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	109
III. The Boethian Vision of Eternity in Middle English	112
Geoffrey Chaucer’s Prose Translation	112
Geoffrey Chaucer and the Consolation of Eternity	130
Book I, Meter 5	130
Book II, Meter 3	132
Book II, Prose 7	134
Book III, Meter 9	135
Book IV, Prose 6	137
Book IV, Meter 6	139
Book V, Meter 2	140
Book V, Prose 6	141
Geoffrey Chaucer’s Translation of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	150
John Walton’s Verse Translation	152
John Walton and the Consolation of Eternity	162
Book I, Meter 5	162
Book II, Meter 3	166
Book II, Prose 7	167
Book III, Meter 9	170
Book IV, Prose 6	174
Book IV, Meter 6	180

Book V, Meter 2	183
Book V, Prose 6	184
John Walton's Translation of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	191
IV. The Boethian Vision of Eternity in Early Modern English	193
George Colville's Prose Translation	193
George Colville and the Consolation of Eternity	197
Book I, Meter 5	197
Book II, Meter 3	200
Book II, Prose 7	203
Book III, Meter 9	205
Book IV, Prose 6	211
Book IV, Meter 6	214
Book V, Meter 2	218
Book V, Prose 6	218
George Colville's Translation of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	226
Queen Elizabeth I's Prosimetric Translation	228
Queen Elizabeth I and the Consolation of Eternity	234
Book I, Meter 5	234
Book II, Meter 3	236
Book II, Prose 7	237
Book III, Meter 9	238
Book IV, Prose 6	240
Book IV, Meter 6	242
Book V, Meter 2	243
Book V, Prose 6	244
Queen Elizabeth I's Translations of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	247
Conclusion	
<i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i> in Old, Middle, and Early Modern English	250
The Boethian Vision of Eternity in Translation	254
Appendix. Modern English Translations of <i>De Consolatione Philosophiæ</i>	258
Translations of Boethius	258
17 th -Century English Translations	263
John Bracegirdle's Verse Translation (1602)	263
I.T.'s Prosimetric Translation (1609)	265
Harry Coningsby's Verse Translation (1664)	269
Edmund Elys's Prosimetric Translation (1674)	272
Hxxxxx, Duke of Xxxxxxxxx's Prosimetric Translation (1693)	274
Richard Preston's Prosimetric Translation (1695)	275
18 th - and 19 th -Century English Translations	281
William Causton's Prosimetric Translation (1730)	281
Philip Ridpath's Prosimetric Translation (1785)	285
Robert Duncan's Prosimetric Translation (1789)	286
Anonymous Poet's Rendering of the <i>Metra</i> (1792)	288

Paul Preston’s Prosimetric Translation (1808)	291
H.R. James’s Prosimetric Translation (1897)	291
20 th - and 21 st -Century English Translations	294
W.V. Cooper’s Prose Translation (1902)	294
Richard Green’s Prose Translation (1962)	294
Victor Watts’s Prosimetric Translation (1969).....	296
S.J. Tester’s Prosimetric Translation (1973).....	298
Peter Glassgold’s Rendering of the <i>Metra</i> (1994)	298
P.G. Walsh’s Prosimetric Translation (1999).....	301
Joel C. Relihan’s Prosimetric Translation (2001).....	302
Bibliography	304
Primary Sources	304
Secondary Sources	307
Vita	317

INTRODUCTION

Translations of Boethius

Accused of treason and arrested by Theodoric, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was executed in 524 AD, his final days and weeks of exile having been spent writing *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, a prosimetric dialogue in five books. The *Consolation*'s combined form features an alternation between and a union of prose and verse: the prose passages contain primarily the dialogue between the fictional character of the suffering Boethius and the imagined figure of Lady Philosophy, while the verse passages (the majority of which are the songs of Philosophy) generally offer illustrative, monologic commentary during this debate. Boethius the former commentator, theologian, logician, and consul of the Western Empire opens his prose and verse *Consolation* with a *metrum* penned by Boethius the character—an aged poet who, overcome by grief, has set out to document the physical, political, social, and psychological aspects of the upheaval that has so suddenly and dramatically altered his lot in life. What we have in *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, then, is a document not of Christian doctrine and orthodox theology but of autobiographical philosophy, Boethius's own recollections and inner disputations eventuating philosophical counsel and comfort as he attempts to reconcile such loss with what he knows of natural theology and Neoplatonic thought. Countless scholars, students, and followers have turned to Boethius's text because, for many, its coherent and cohesive philosophical treatment of theodicy within the Ptolemaic cosmology has offered both instruction and consolation. Consequently, this great academic and literary achievement in prose and verse has long served as a rich resource for interpreters, commentators, translators, and imitators.

When modern scholars and critics evaluate the *Consolation* and its importance, the fact of its many vernacular versions becomes proof of its influence and significance. For instance, Chadwick suggests that the work maintains its estimable position in the canon and in history as it continues to be turned into vernacular languages: “[b]y

common consent this remains one of the high masterpieces of European literature, translated since early mediaeval times into many languages . . .” (223). Likewise, Edmund Reiss considers *De Consolatione Philosophiae* “one of the most significant books ever written. In its Latin original and its several translations into virtually every European language, it represented a best seller in the Western world for more than a thousand years” (ix). The validity of his assertion regarding the *Consolation*’s importance is thus illustrated by its apparent popularity, which is itself demonstrated by the many versions of the text. In addition, Maarten Hoenen and Lodi Nauta explain their own reference to the *Consolation*’s influential status by measuring its pervasiveness—not only in various languages and cultures, but also among multiple layers of social and religious strata:

It has long been recognized that Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae* was a key text in the shaping of medieval thought and culture. The work was translated many times in different vernacular languages, and was studied throughout medieval society, at the courts, in schools and universities, in religious houses, and in lay circles. (Hoenen and Nauta vii)

Indeed, bringing the text into the vernacular gave it currency beyond the royal and ecclesiastical halls of authority, so that students and laypersons could also acquire and appropriate its content.

Especially in the centuries preceding the ascendancy of the Copernican model of the universe, mediators of Boethius’s text have brought not only the author’s story into their respective cultural moments but also his philosophy. Some of the more didactic translations have capitalized on those moments where moral instruction and/or spiritual exhortation can be delivered. A number of Boethius’s translators have heralded him as a martyr and saint who defended the faith and suffered for the cause, while others have upheld his orthodoxy, defending his faith and apologizing for his Neoplatonic, non-Christian treatise that explores natural and not revealed theology. A few have baptized his *Consolation*, immersing it in Christianity so that it emerges dripping with allusions, references, and interpolations, having thus approached Boethius’s text with the potentially contradictory positions that it is at once both perfectly acceptable as a

philosophical text and inadequately explicit as a religious text. Such re-presentations of his work reveal the tension between acceptance and/or celebration of what is consistent with orthodox faith (e.g., a creator bringing all things into being, good ultimately overcoming evil, returning to the divine cause, providence overruling fate, an omniscient God ordering all things) and suspicion and/or rejection of what is more reflective of Neoplatonic philosophy (e.g., the pre-existence of the soul, the doctrine of recollection, the absence of explicit references to salvation through Christ or participation in the kingdom of God). Still others, coming along after these more conflicted presentations of Boethius's philosophy, have prepared vernacular translations of this important Latin work so that readers may know this influential text in their own language and appreciate the contribution that Boethius has made to history. They have introduced his situation, explained his religious, political, and literary contexts, and presented his intellectual contribution to his own age and to those since, offering the man and his message to their readers for academic purposes.

Boethius's *Consolation* did not exist in any vernacular, however, until the version by King Alfred the Great (c. 890), the first in a long line of English translators. Alfred's Old English *Boethius* is unique, though, in that it exists in both a 5-book, prosimetric rendering (10th-century MS) and a 42-chapter, all-prose translation (12th-century MS). Middle English versions include the all-prose text of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1385) and the all-verse rendering by John Walton (1410). In the Early Modern period, George Colville (1556) produced an all-prose version, then Queen Elizabeth (1593) translated the *Consolation* as a prosimetrum. The long list of 17th-century translators begins with John Bracegirdle (1602), who produced an all-verse translation, while I.T. (1609) later presented it as both prose and verse. Sir Harry Coningsby (1664) then offered the *Consolation* entirely in verse, becoming the third and last English translator to date to have chosen such a form. Edmund Elys (1674), the mysterious Hxxxxx, Duke of Xxxxxxxxxx (1693), Sir Richard Graham (Lord Viscount Preston) (1695), William Causton (1730), Philip Ridpath (1785), Robert Duncan (1789), Paul Preston (incomplete, 1808), H.R. James (1897) all translated it as a prosimetrum. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, W.V. Cooper (1902) and Richard Green (1962) opted for all-prose versions,

while Victor Watts (1969), S.J. Tester (1973), P.G. Walsh (1999), and Joel C. Relihan (2001) have all turned the *Consolation* into English prose and verse. In addition to these attempts to bring the entire work into English, a few have concentrated their attention on only the *metra* (39 poems in all): Sir Thomas Challoner (1563, incomplete, 9 of 39), Richard Fanshawe (c. 1636, incomplete, 35 of 39), an anonymous poet (1792), and Peter Glassgold (1994).¹

The Afterlife of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* in English

English translators of Boethius have approached their work with a mindset very different from that of William of Malmesbury, who asserted that a vernacular rendering of Boethius was a relic of the past, that such work was required back in Asser's generation but not in early 12th-century England: "in those days it was necessary, in our days ridiculous" (qtd. in Patch 46).² Indeed, while wondering at the many versions of Boethius's work, Howard Patch reasons that since many in the aristocracy would have had sufficient fluency to have read the *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, there must have been some desire to go beyond "knowledge of the book" to "intimacy with it" (47), especially as Boethius's translators have brought his work into their own peculiar cultural moments. These vernacular versions of the Latin original have supplanted the source (and previous translations), giving readers more ready access to what time and change have conspired to obscure. Consequently, Boethius's text did not perish with its author, for as Patch notes, "after his death, he ceases to be the victim; he himself becomes the teacher and instructs the whole Middle Ages" (123). Consider also Walter Benjamin's assessment that translation is a "part of the 'afterlife' of a literary work, in which the original attains an 'ever-renewed and most abundant flowering'" (qtd. in Glassgold 14). The renderings of the *Consolation* into English, then, have contributed to its "afterlife,"

¹ Since the anonymous version from 1792 and Glassgold's version from 1994 both include renderings of all of the poems from Boethius's text, they will be the only translations of the *metra* that will be considered here and later in the Appendix alongside translations of the entire *Consolation*.

² Patch offers the Latin text in a footnote: ". . . labore illis diebus necessario, nostris ridiculo." *De gestis pontif. Angl.*, ii, section 80 (ed. *Rolls Series*, p. 177)" (46).

enabling it to survive centuries of political revolution, cultural transformation, and linguistic variation, and so become Boethius's most famous and influential text.

Over the years, the *Consolation* and its author have been so closely associated that scholars often refer to versions of the text as versions of "Boethius," and the two most famous English renderings are King Alfred's *Boethius* and Chaucer's *Boece*. Ironically, Boethius's philosophical treatise contains a good deal of autobiographical material, as the scholar, politician, and prisoner situates the dialogical narrative within the mind of a version of himself, committing his own written account to posterity—even though the Lady Philosophy persona asks the Boethius character, "quid ipsa scripta proficiant, quae cum suis auctoribus premit longior atque obscura vetustas?" [what is the value of such records themselves when they and their writers are lost in the obscurity of long ages?] (2p7.47-9).³ For although many of these translations have barely survived and although their accounts are hardly free from obscurity (e.g., Alfred's fire-damaged manuscript; obsolete Old, Middle, and Early Modern English words; Elizabeth's sometimes indecipherable handwriting; multiple versions existing in unique manuscripts), they have indeed survived long ages, abstruse though they may be.

The English translations of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* preserve Boethius in the language of another nation, another people, from times and places far beyond the reach of the man who died in 524 AD—and far beyond the scope of the original's contemporary influence. Emerging from periods of political revolution, cultural transformation, linguistic variation, and philosophical reassessment, the various renderings illustrate the mutability that Lady Philosophy warns the Boethius character about in Book II, many of Boethius's translators having personally experienced the transitory nature of the universe: fighting off invasion; negotiating political intrigue; witnessing renaissance, reformation, and restoration; experimenting with neologisms; supplanting an unintelligible precursor with a new rendering; educating students about an historically important philosophy whose immediate cultural relevance has diminished. However, just as Boethius's

³ Quotations from the Latin text and from the Latin text with an English translation will come from the Loeb Classical Library edition, revised in 1973 and translated by S.J. Tester.

Consolation has left its mark upon the generations that have taken it up, the passing of time has had an influence on how the text has been read, understood, and appropriated. As Maarten Hoenen points out in his preface to *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio Philosophiæ*, “the perception of the *Consolatio* has changed and shifted, depending on the cultural and intellectual preoccupations of the time and, as a consequence, interpretations showed many different faces: Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, devotional, religious, humanist, or often mixtures of these” (vii).

Indeed, the varying degrees of fame that Boethius the author has endured and enjoyed over the centuries demonstrate the validity of Lady Philosophy’s exhortation to consider the fleeting nature of earthly fame. However, it is worth noting that her argument emphasizes the geographical and political limitations of worldly renown:

Adde quod hoc ipsum brevis habitaculi saeptum plures incolunt nationes
lingua, moribus, totius vitae ratione distantes, ad quas tum difficultate
itinerum tum loquendi diversitate tum commercii insolentia non modo
fama hominum singulorum sed ne urbium quidem pervenire queat.
[Consider also that in this little habitable enclosure there live many
nations, different in language and customs and in their whole ways of life ;
because of the difficulties of travel, and differences of language, and the
rarity of trading contacts, the fame not merely of individual men but even
of cities cannot reach them all.] (2p7.24-30)

An ubi Romani nominis transire fama nequit, Romani hominis gloria
progredietur ?
[Or shall the glory of one Roman go where the fame of Rome herself
cannot?] (2p7.36-3)

Erit igitur pervagata inter suos gloria quisque contentus et intra unius
gentis terminos praeclara illa famae immortalitas coartabitur.
[Each man must therefore be content to have his glory well-known among
his own people, and the glorious immortality of his fame must be
restricted within the bounds of one nation.] (2p7.42-5)

Her argument here requires cultural isolation, nations rarely interacting because of different languages, customs, and value systems. It does not fully account for nor anticipate the great influence that Rome would continue to have throughout Europe in general and England in particular, and it could not (especially within the context of the

Consolation) fully appreciate the impact of the church and its ecclesiastical, educational, and literary contributions—in Latin. Moreover, it assumes that the stories and records documenting the deeds of a given fame-seeker would never be translated for neighboring peoples and would thus die out, vanishing then from living memory. However, something like immortality has been granted, not only through the Latin biographies of Boethius, the editions of his text, and the commentary traditions that surround it, but also through the adaptations and translations of such materials into other languages. It is through its many vernacular versions, then, that *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* lives on, taking on another mode of existence and reaching beyond the scope of the original—Boethius going where Rome could not.

However, the *Consolation*'s afterlife manifests itself not only in the various translations themselves, or even in the extant manuscripts that attest to what a particular author may have contributed, but also in the many editions of such versions. These multiple incarnations of Boethius's work come to life through the labor of editors, whose textual criticism (stemma constructions, paleographical studies, codicological analyses, editorial emendations and restorations, etc.) and literary criticism (glosses, glossaries, notes, introductions, etc.) package particular versions of the manuscript witnesses. The early versions, such as those by King Alfred, Chaucer, Walton, Colville, Elizabeth, Bracegirdle, and I.T., all have been re-presented by modern editors as specimens of English literature. Moreover, the Alfredian *Boethius* has itself been translated for readers unable to access the Old English for themselves.

The earliest known version of any translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* is preserved in British Library MS Cotton Otho A.vi, a 10th-century manuscript that almost did not survive long enough to have been published by an editor. In the 17th century, Francis Junius collated his transcriptions of the 12th-century prose text from Bodley 180 with the prosimetric version from Otho A.vi, and because the Cottonian meters differed so greatly from his prose primary source, he decided to paste in sheets of paper containing his transcriptions of them, little knowing, perhaps, the great service he was offering to the future audience of the Alfredian *Boethius*. When the Cotton Library

caught fire in 1731, Otho A.vi was badly damaged—deeply scarred but surviving. Junius’s transcriptions, then, became vital, offering a more fully realized afterlife to Otho A.vi and thus to the oldest copy of the *Consolation* in English—one which happens to be in the prosimetric form of its Latin source. Since then, Alfred’s versions of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* have been edited many times: Christopher Rawlinson produced an edition based largely upon Junius’s work (1698); J.S. Cardale published an edition and translation (1829); Samuel Fox printed an edition and translation of the Alfredian meters (1835); Martin Tupper translated the Anglo-Saxon meters into modern stanzas with rhymed lines (1850); Fox then appended his 1835 edition of the poems and Martin Tupper’s verse translations to a new edition and translation of an all-prose text (1864); Walter J. Sedgefield produced an edition of the prose version with the meters added in a separate section in the back (1899) and then published a translation of the same (1900); George P. Krapp edited only the meters for the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (1932); Fred C. Robinson and E.G. Stanley reproduced only those Cottonian manuscript pages containing meters for the *Old English Verse Texts* portion of the Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile project (1991); Bill Griffiths published an edition of the Alfredian meters (1991); Malcolm Godden (print) and Kevin S. Kiernan (electronic) are currently producing the first editions based upon the prosimetrum found in Otho A.vi (forthcoming).

The survival of Alfred’s translations has depended, then, not only upon the work of those who in the 10th century copied a prosimetric version into what is now known as Otho A.vi and upon the labor of those who in the 12th century copied an all-prose rendering into what is now called Bodley 180, but also upon those responsible for keeping it alive until such copying was possible. Moreover, the texts preserved by the collations by Junius have allowed the gaps in the aged and damaged manuscripts to be filled in. More recently, however, the digital images captured under ultra-violet lighting by Kiernan and used as the basis for his electronic edition are reviving the text with the aid of modern technology, restoring much of what has been illegible since 1731.⁴ The

⁴ For more on electronic editions and the use of digital images in such projects, see the following: Kiernan, “Digital Facsimiles in Editing: Some Guidelines for Editors of Electronic Editions.” *Electronic Textual*

Kiernan and Godden editions that will be informed by these images will give new life to the badly burned Cottonian manuscript, raising its testimony to a level of textual authority heretofore unparalleled, as every other edition of the Alfredian *Boethius* has relied primarily upon the prose Bodley 180 and has regarded the prosimetric Otho A.vi as derivative and therefore ancillary.

Because of the great distance between modern literary critics and the actual manuscripts, most discussions of Alfred's translations have been based upon scholarly editions such as those by Rawlinson and Sedgefield, their versions of the text (and Sedgefield's modern English rendering in particular) providing access to the otherwise inaccessible works. In addition, the translations by Cardale, Fox, and Tupper offer the text to readers untrained in Old English. For example, Oliver Leigh's anthology of *English Belles-lettres from A.D. 907 to 1834* devotes a chapter to Alfred and provides 21 pages of untitled selections from the prose translation by Samuel Fox without attribution. It also does not provide a sample of the Old English version from which Fox derives his Modern English rendering, so that this section featuring what is in fact Fox's version is titled "THE CONSOLATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY / A Translation from Boethius, with Original / Renderings and Additions / by / KING ALFRED THE GREAT."⁵ Thus, the translation is presented as Alfred's, as though he has done the rendering and adding, rather than Fox, whose uncredited work here in this volume gives readers a modern incarnation of Alfred's rendering of Boethius's *Consolation*. This version of Fox's translation, then, extends the life of both Fox and King Alfred but through what might be considered artificial means. Moreover, Martin Tupper's modern prosody casts Alfred's meters into forms quite different from their original Anglo-Saxon verse, taking the alliterative half-lines and pouring them into the patterns he has designed. Tupper's own

Editing. ed. John Unsworth, Lou Burnard, and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe. New York: Modern Language Association, 2006. 256-262. Preview available: <http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/MLA-TEI/ETE-ksk.html>; Kevin Kiernan, Jerzy W. Jaromczyk, Alex Dekhtyar, Dorothy Carr Porter, Kenneth Hawley, Sandeep Bodapati, and Ionut Emil Iacob, "The ARCHway Project: Architecture for Research in Computing for Humanities through Research, Teaching, and Learning." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 20.1 (2005): 69-88. Abstract available: <http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/20/Suppl/69?ijkey=a2FHqg7XTTULMJz&keytype=ref>

⁵ See Leigh's *English Belles-lettres from A.D. 907 to 1834*. Universal Classics Library. London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901.

work as a versifier takes precedence, then, as his title suggests: *King Alfred's Poems: Now First Turned into English Metres*. He apparently does not believe that the king of England's poems qualify as "English Metres," claiming that distinction for himself. His modern verse forms take on new life, though, as Samuel Fox decides to substitute Tupper's poems for his own translations of the Alfredian meters when he publishes his 1864 edition.

In his preface to an 1895 edition and translation of Alfred's version, Fox relishes the thought that the king still speaks some 1000 years after his passing. For it is through the Old English translation and its modern counterpart provided in Fox's edition that Alfred is able to express his views and commit them to the future.

[W]e can hear, as it were, our revered sovereign speaking to us in his own language on some of the most important topics of human life! For although Alfred professed to translate the work of Boethius, yet he inserted in various parts many of his own thoughts and feelings, and thus composed several moral essays, in which he has, in a manner, transmitted himself to posterity. (v-vi)

The disembodied voice echoes across the ages and reveals the king's emotional and intellectual self that has been preserved in his version of Boethius's *Consolation*. Fox's edition and translation, along with Tupper's modern verse renderings of the *metra* (which Fox provides rather than his own literal translation in this 1895 printing), record an impression of that royal voice. As a result, Alfred's contribution to the afterlife of Boethius in English is given again in Fox's offering, as his edition and prose translation combine with Tupper's poems to form an entirely new and distinctly different embodiment of the king's work—and thus of Boethius's.

In response to the millennial celebration of King Alfred's translation and upon the anniversary of the king's death, W.V. Cooper published an 1902 all-prose version as a part of the Temple Classics series. He brought Boethius into 20th-century English, then, because a neat measurement of 1000 years existed between his own day and that of a 10th-century, Old English translation. Cooper's version was also included in a 1943

printing by The Modern Library, which titled the entire work *The Consolation of Philosophy*, even though Cooper's translation of it was placed alongside a version of Thomas a Kempis's "The Imitation of Christ" and Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici." Capping off a millennium of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* in English, Cooper contributed to the afterlife of Boethius because King Alfred the Great did and because a later editor appropriated Cooper's translation for a volume comprised of influential texts on suffering and consolation.

Chaucer's *Boece* exists in multiple manuscripts and has been printed and edited many times, perhaps most famously by Caxton in 1478—a volume that has caused numerous critics over the years to believe that Caxton had translated *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* himself. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler's textual notes indicate that F.J. Furnivall (1886) and Richard Morris (1868) have each printed one of the extant manuscripts, while Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's *Boece* has been reproduced by both Skeat (1904) and Brewer (1969) (*Riverside Chaucer* 1151). Most recently, Morris's 1868 Early English Text Society edition of Chaucer's translation was re-printed as an unabridged facsimile by Elibron Classics in 2005. However, Chaucer's *Boece* has not been anthologized in modern English translation for students like his *Canterbury Tales* often is, since those interested in what has come to be regarded as one of his "minor" works are apparently expected to have already received the training to read it in Middle English themselves. In fact, the language barrier has been a problem since the time of Preston, whose introduction to his own 1695 translation justifies its existence by considering Chaucer's version "*almost as unintelligible to the English Reader as the Original is*" (iii).

However, while Preston found inspiration in the obscurity of the *Boece*, John Walton looked to it as a useful source—alongside a copy of the Latin original and a version of Nicholas Trevet's commentary. For, just as Chaucer relied upon a vulgate Boethius, Trevet's volume, and a copy of Jean de Meun's French translation, Walton depended upon a handful of resources, not the least of which was Chaucer's Middle English prose version, the influence of which helped bring Boethius's work into Middle

English poetry and thus afford it an all-verse afterlife. John Walton's 1410 all-verse rendering exists in 19 manuscripts and in 3 extant copies of the 1525 edition by Thomas Rychard. In addition, Mark Science edited it for the Early English Text Society in 1927, publishing a volume that includes commentary from Rychard's 1525 printing. Thus, Walton's contribution to the long life of Boethius in English is one that is infused with the influential lines of Chaucer's prose.

Another translation that benefited from the source material in Chaucer's *Boece* is George Colville's 1556 facing-page prose translation, which apparently found a receptive audience, having been re-printed in 1561, offering both the Latin and the Early Modern English version of it to an interested public.⁶ Colville's work was later taken up by Ernest Bax in 1897 for the Tudor Library series. In contrast, Queen Elizabeth I's 1593 work was held privately until edited by Caroline Pemberton for the EETS in 1899. Since then, the queen's prosimetric version has not been printed and is hardly even mentioned in collections of her complete works. However, a renewal of interest may develop soon, as the unique manuscript containing Elizabeth's translation is currently being edited by Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. Likewise, John Bracegirdle's all-verse rendering from 1602 has existed in only one manuscript and has been virtually ignored until Kaylor and Streed published an edition of it in 1999. Since both Elizabeth and Bracegirdle left behind unique manuscripts of their respective translations, and since these texts apparently had few opportunities to generate interest in their own day, these modern editions are breathing new life into the 16th- and 17th-century Boethius.

I.T.'s 1609 version has had considerable influence, and not just in its own day and in the years following its publication as the "official" English translation for the Loeb Classical Library's 1918 edition of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. For while it may have reached a larger audience after the printing of Loeb's 1918 volume (and since the publication of William Anderson's 1963 edition), I.T.'s translation certainly made quite an impression on readers coming along later in the 17th century. A generation after

⁶ This latter printing is especially curious, since Colville's prefatory dedication to Queen Mary would appear anachronistic if not inappropriate, with Elizabeth I ruling since 1558. See page 194 and note.

I.T., Sir Edward Spencer (1654) offers readers a Latin-English summary of the *Consolation*, printing some excerpts from “the translator” that are actually quotations from I.T.’s 1609 translation.⁷ As he dedicates this work to the Earl of Southampton, he calls the work, “*my Boethius, whom I by many reasons may cal mine, having studied him at least these forty yeares, and used as many meanes and helps of Commentators and Interpreters as I could get, to make him wholly mine*” (ii). Spencer also mentions that he is passing on “*a good Translation of him in English Print, signed with G.G.*” (ii) for the earl’s perusal. By this he means, again, the version by I.T., the prefatory poems to which are initialed, “G.G.”⁸

Then, twenty years after Spencer’s use of I.T.’s version, Edmund Elys (1674) produced an incomplete translation of Boethius’s text, having omitted a significant portion of Book 4 and all of Book 5. Elys supplies a note to the reader, explaining that once he “had perfected the Translation of all I intended to Translate of BOETIUS, I receiv’d from a Learned Friend the Notice of a very good Translation of all His Five Bookes Consolationis Philosophiæ, which was Publisht 1609 [I.T.’s]” (viii). He claims that while he appreciates I.T.’s work, he has “not taken so much as one Expression from this Excellent Person” (viii). However, despite this disclaimer, the subtitles for each section in Elys’s version come directly from the 1609 translation. Houghton suggests that Elys’s initial interest appears to have been in the poetry of the *Consolation*, since it is in the *metra* that his version seems “quite free from borrowing or apparent influence, while his prose was eeked out with the aid of Walpole’s [I.T.’s] translation” (139). In addition, Dolson and Houghton find that Elys has also lifted I.T.’s comments along the margins and turned them into footnotes (74). Thus, I.T.’s role in the afterlife of Boethius in English can be evaluated in part by how it has inhabited the work of others who have translated *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*.

⁷ Spencer also includes an English translation “Taken out of *Peter Bertius*, and *Jul. Martianus Rota*” (57), by which he means the Latin preface by Berty (published in various forms in 1620, 1633, 1640, 1649, and 1668) and the Latin biography by Rota (published in 1640 and 1668).

⁸ See Anderson’s edition of I.T.’s translation, 25.

These versions live on and so does Boethius's *Consolation*, because generation after generation has found something in his text worth preserving—providing editions of the source itself, commentaries, translations of the entire work, renderings of selected *metra*, editions of a given translation, textual studies, intellectual histories, philosophical analyses, literary critiques, bibliographical annotations, thematic overviews, plot summaries, allusions, parodies, and intertextual references. Authors, poets, translators, editors, clerics, ministers, scholars, and teachers—they have brought Boethius into their own day and age and afforded him and his *De Consolatione Philosophiae* an afterlife. Perhaps this 6th-century Latin text would have been lost to time and distance had not Boethius's prosimetrum been taken up by commentators, hagiographers, linguists, and other scholars who have allowed the martyr to live on through their editions, interpretations, and translations of what—because of their labor—has become the most widely read and consequential work by the author also known as Saint Severinus.⁹ For just as Boethius himself reached back into antiquity and brought significant works into the language of his own day, reviving and preserving them for those who would not have known them otherwise, so the devotees of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* have unearthed not just the text, but also the Latin author himself, translating St. Severinus into a public place so that others may gather around and receive a blessing.

Often, however, those who have wished to promote the text's spiritual qualities have felt obligated to apologize for the text's non-Christian perspective. Modern editors and critics do not appear to be as preoccupied with such concerns, though they do present a defense of Boethius's approach. For example, H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand offer an explanation in the preface to their Loeb Classical Library edition of the text:

If it is asked why the *Consolation of Philosophy* contains no conscious or direct reference to the doctrines which are traced in the *Tractates* with so sure a hand, and is, at most, not out of harmony with Christianity, the answer is simple. In the *Consolation* he is writing philosophy ; in the

⁹ The occasion of Boethius's beatification is recorded in William Turner's entry in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume II. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907: "The local cult of Boethius at Pavia was sanctioned when, in 1883, the Sacred Congregation of Rites confirmed the custom prevailing in that diocese of honouring St. Severinus Boethius, on the 23rd of October." 22 Jan. 2007. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02610b.htm>

Tractates he is writing theology. He observes what Pascal calls the orders of things. Philosophy belongs to one order, theology to another. (xiii)

C.S. Lewis also defends the content of Boethius's treatise, challenging critics to consider the nature of the text before them:

If we had asked Boethius why his book contained philosophical rather than religious consolations, I do not doubt that he would have answered, "But did you not read my title? I wrote philosophically, not religiously, because I had chosen the consolations of philosophy, not those of religion, as my subject. You might as well ask why a book on arithmetic does not use geometrical methods." (77-78)

Thus, Boethius has worked within self-imposed limitations, restricting himself to natural theology, even though (as his writings on the Trinity demonstrate) he was perfectly able to write on topics pertaining to revealed religion. Likewise, Henry Chadwick notes that "in this profoundly religious book there is an evidently conscious refusal to say anything distinctively Christian" (224). Indeed, Boethius's "*Consolation* is a work written by a Platonist who is also a Christian, but is not a Christian work" (249). Gerard O'Daly insists that those who identify Boethius the author too closely with Boethius the character find themselves in this predicament wherein they must find some explanation for this Christian writer's apparently purposeful avoidance of explicitly Christian terminology and doctrine:

We must resist the temptation to read the work as documentary biography and nothing more, and to conclude that, because in it Boethius makes no mention of the consolations of Christianity, he was immune or indifferent or even hostile to these in his prison cell. The *Consolation* is a literary artefact. Its prisoner is consoled by philosophy, by reason and argument. It should not be allowed to become identical with the life which, inaccessible to us, was lived in the Pavia prison. What Boethius has chosen to show us is the extent to which philosophy can make his condition bearable and, even, blessed. (25)

Nevertheless, many of Boethius's translators have prefaced their work with disclaimers, defenses, apologies, and explanations, hoping to deflect any criticism of the *Consolation*

and its philosophical stances and to answer any questions about its author and his theological credentials.

Some modern translators, though, moved not so much by religious fervor, philosophical inquiry, or personal admiration as by the fact of Boethius's historical and literary significance, have translated *De Consolatione Philosophiae* for students and teachers of the medieval period. For example, P.G. Walsh offers his 1999 translation in view of the recent and "significant revival of interest in Boethius: this has been marked by several studies which have partially restored him to the prominence which he enjoyed for over a millennium from the Carolingian age onwards" (v). Thus, Walsh's rendering takes advantage of the new life given to Boethius by scholars, his translation proper and the apparatus surrounding it having been informed by the doctors who have resuscitated the fading author within the last few years. Indeed, many of these incarnations of Boethius come as second- or third-generation descendants, as first-generation works are the basis for second-generation versions, which are themselves the stuff from which other renditions are produced. For example, a striking illustration of this intertextuality is the work of Glassgold, whose poetic arrangements of Boethius's *metra* are the product of his experiment in linguistics, poetry, the history of the English language, and translation. He has pillaged a word-hoard filled with the collected works of his forebears (Alfred, Chaucer, Walton, and Elizabeth), giving new life to "the supposedly 'dead' ancestral strains of our language" (Glassgold 21). Thus, the many English translations, editions, versions, adaptations, and appropriations of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* have added to its reach—broadening its influence, offering its comforts, and disseminating its philosophical approach.

Moreover, the ongoing and future work of students, teachers, scholars, archivists, editors, translators, and publishers will see that such propagation continues, especially as they benefit from one another's efforts to preserve and represent Boethius and his *Consolation*. The academy continues to keep the memory of Boethius fresh in the minds of its members, as Helen Barrett explains in the preface to her 1965 treatment of the author, his milieu, and his importance:

This study has been written as an attempt to rescue Boethius from being generally forgotten. It seems to me that because of the circumstances of his life and death he is too interesting and because of the influence of what he wrote too significant to be known only by the few. (vii)

Consequently, this kind of scholarship has prompted new English versions, such as the one published in 1999 by Walsh:

This is an appropriate time to launch a new translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In the past few years there has been a significant revival of interest in Boethius: this has been marked by several studies which have partially restored him to the prominence which he enjoyed for over a millennium from the Carolingian age onwards. My rendering, with its accompanying introduction and annotation, has sought to exploit these important researches. (v)

Thus, the afterlife of Boethius in English is extended further and the *Consolation's* legacy continued as scholars and translators develop their mutually beneficial projects. This kind of synergistic collaboration is promoted by organizations such as the International Boethius Society, whose purpose is

to promote interest in Boethius and to advance Boethius studies; to make accessible to all members, by means of publications approved by the Society, information of common interest, especially concerning the teaching of and research in Boethius; to hold annual international meetings and other gatherings for the purpose of exchanging ideas and techniques pertinent to the proper study of Boethius and his times; to promote and publish research and texts in Boethius and related fields; to promote the teaching of Boethius and related areas at all appropriate levels of education; and to operate and maintain the Society exclusively for educational purposes.¹⁰

Future seminar papers, theses, dissertations, conference presentations, journal articles, monographs, and editions will thus contribute to an already extensive collection of works that have brought Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* into English, variously promoting, advocating, perpetuating, teaching, explaining, justifying, challenging, transforming, altering, reproducing, and so re-presenting his most enduring work.

¹⁰ International Boethius Society homepage: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~english2/Journals/boethius/ibs.html>.

In addition, projects such as this present study draw from those who have come before, including Houghton (whose 1931 dissertation surveys 17th-century English translations) and Kaylor (whose 1985 dissertation studies and provides an annotated bibliography for the medieval English, French, and German traditions of Boethius in translation). My own focus upon the Old, Middle, and Early Modern translations of the *Consolation* comes within the larger context of the rich and varied English tradition that has afforded Boethius such an extended and extensive afterlife. In particular, the attention paid to the Boethian vision of eternity demonstrates its indispensable role, not only in those passages that feature discussions of God's eternal nature, but also in the work as a whole. For Boethius the character, consolation comes only insofar as he is able to understand, appreciate, and accept knowledge of the divine mind, which alone operates from an eternal perspective. However, the consolation of eternity comes not only by achieving some vision of the eternal *summum bonum* but also by striving to contemplate the view from such a unique position, by attaining not only to knowledge of the divine mind but also to knowledge like that of the divine mind.

The first chapter of this study presents the Boethian vision of eternity, demonstrating its essential function within Boethius's text and considering how *The Consolation of Philosophy* offers, then, the consolation of eternity. Since this tradition spans so many decades and includes so many different re-presentations of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, the scope of a more detailed analysis of the texts could usefully be narrowed to the early English versions, especially to those by the most renowned translators—King Alfred (Old English), Chaucer (Middle English), and Queen Elizabeth I (Early Modern English). Thus, the discussion in the subsequent chapters takes up two texts from each of these three seminal periods: the second chapter analyzes the two translations by King Alfred (prosimetric and all-prose), the third covers the versions by Chaucer (all-prose) and Walton (all-verse), and the fourth follows with the renderings by Colville (all-prose) and Elizabeth I (prose and verse). Moreover, an analysis of these six works could usefully be focused upon those passages that typify the work as a whole, and so the focus here is upon those that cast the Boethian vision of eternity. Addressing issues such as change and order, fate and providence, foreknowledge and free will, the

finite and the infinite, the passages on eternity include some of the most complex and rich portions of the text: Book I, meter 5; Book II, meter 3; Book II, prose 7; Book III, meter 9; Book IV, prose 6; Book IV, meter 6; Book V, prose 6. Such famously Boethian selections reveal how the the *Consolation of Philosophy* is available only to those who attend to and receive the consolation of eternity, which for Boethius is found only in the eternal nature and providential order of the divine mind. Consideration of these passages will demonstrate, then, not only how these early translators have treated this fundamental concept and brought it into English, but also how such mediators of Boethian philosophy have applied their various interests, motivations, and purposes to the most difficult and challenging lines of prose and verse from the *Consolation*. The conclusion will reflect upon some similarities, differences, and connections between the Old, Middle, and Early Modern English translations and upon how each has cast the Boethian vision of eternity, while the appendix will provide a brief introduction to and discussion of various Modern English versions of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*.

I. BOETHIUS ON ETERNITY

The Boethian Vision of Eternity

The *Consolation's* key passages on eternity all speak in some way to the exalted position from which an immutable and eternal God views and orders the universe: the Maker sits on an eternal throne as he rules the heavens but chooses not to control the acts of men (Book I, meter 5); an eternal law establishes that all created things are bound to change, and so the transitory goods of earth are too ephemeral to be trustworthy (Book II, meter 3); some of the most famous men of ages past are now unknown and unsung, and in comparison with infinite eternity, the fleeting praise of men is nothing for which to live and the loss of fame nothing over which to lament (Book II, prose 7); the perpetual order of the universe has been ordained by the highest good, gathering all back to himself and granting light to any who would seek him as the beginning and end of all things (Book III, meter 9); the unfolding of fate in time proceeds from the simplicity of the immutable divine mind, whose providential ordering embraces and foresees all things, and so the upheavals of fate are negotiated and even overcome as men draw ever nearer to the eternal, immovable, supernal mind (Book IV, prose 6); the eternal motions of the heavens are directed by the hand of a king and lord whose rule brings stable order, for the Creator who is both origin and destination gives all things a beginning from which to spring and an end to which to return (Book IV, meter 6); the true Sun is the Creator, whose eternal perspective allows him a continuously instantaneous view of all things in the cosmos, whether past, present, or future (Book V, meter 2); God alone exists in eternity, possessing fully in an eternal present the immensity of his unbounded existence, with nothing lost to time that has passed and nothing out of reach in the time that is to come, and so he sees and knows all at once without imposing necessity upon the acts that fall within the scope of his uniquely eternal perspective (Book V, prose 6).

Throughout the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy moves the character Boethius along a path toward a greater and more complete perspective, urging him to see his self

and his situation more clearly by coming to a more perfect understanding of the highest intelligence. His problem is chiefly epistemological, as he struggles to know more than he knows or remembers, so that his journey from the senses to the imagination, from the imagination to reason, and from reason to intelligence brings him through his initial ignorance and confusion, toward the light of knowledge, and to the place of divine perspective. Boethius is brought, then, from the shadows of the earthly prison, beyond the dim flames of partial knowledge, out into the bright purity of the *summum bonum*. Moreover, like those enlightened philosophers depicted in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," Boethius the author brings his story of freedom and illumination back into the dark recesses of the cavern within which others are bound.

De Consolatione Philosophiae describes the education of Boethius's character, as his eyes are turned away from the earth and into the heavens, so that he moves from confusion to clarity, from forgetfulness to remembrance, from reason to intelligence, and thus from time to eternity. The consolation afforded him along the way comes only insofar as he understands, appreciates, and accepts knowledge of the divine mind, which alone operates from an eternal perspective. Such comfort is not even possible in the beginning, as the old man laments the aging of his body and the loss of his power, wealth, and reputation. Lady Philosophy appears to the suffering Boethius and finds him bowed low with sadness, disoriented and overwhelmed:

At ego cuius acies lacrimis mersa caligaret nec dinoscere possem,
quaenam haec esset mulier tam imperiosae auctoritatis, obstipui visuque in
terram defixo quidnam deinceps esset actura, exspectare tacitus coepi.
Tum illa propius accedens in extremalectuli mei parte cedit meumque
intuens vultum luctu gravem atque in humum maerore deiectum his
versibus de nostrae mentis perturbatione conquesta est.

[I myself, since my sight was so dimmed with tears that I could not clearly see who this woman was of such commanding authority, was stuck dumb, my eyes cast down ; and I went on waiting in silence to see what she would do next. Then she came closer and sat on the end of my bed, and seeing my face worn with weeping and cast down with sorrow, she bewailed my mind's confusion bitterly in these verses.] (Loeb 1p1.44-52)

Tears are not all that obscure his vision, however, as the perturbations have sent him reeling, rendering him unable to even raise his head, much less perceive his circumstances aright. Lady Philosophy diagnoses her patient accordingly:

Nunc iacet effeto lumine mentis
Et pressus gravibus colla catenis
Declivemque gerens pondere vultum
Cogitur, heu, stolidam cernere terram.
[But now he lies
His mind's light languishing,
Bowed with these heavy chains about his neck,
His eyes cast down beneath the weight of care,
Seeing nothing
But the dull, solid earth.] (1m2.24-7)

Focused only on what is below and beneath him, Boethius cannot look above and thus cannot attain to a higher plane of knowledge, leaving him encumbered with his cares and unable to see the path that would lead to any respite. The light of his mind is dim and the line of his sight is bent only downward, not upward towards greater awareness or understanding. Soon, however, he is afforded enough comfort and clarity to at least know the one who will nurse him through his illness: “Haud aliter tristitiae nebulis dissolutis hausi caelum et ad cognoscendam medicantis faciem mentem recepi” [Just so the clouds of misery were dispelled, and I drank in the clear light, recovering enough to recognize my healer's face] (1p3.1-3). Lady Philosophy promises to be careful, though, offering her patient measured doses of soothing relief:

Sed quoniam firmioribus remediis nondum tempus est et eam mentium constat esse naturam, ut quotiens abiecerint veras falsis opinionibus induantur ex quibus orta perturbationum caligo verum illum confundit intuitum, hanc paulisper lenibus mediocribusque fomentis attenuare temptabo, ut dimotis fallacium affectionum tenebris splendorem verae lucis possis agnoscere.
[But it is not yet time for strong medicines. Men's minds are obviously such that when they lose true opinions they have to take up false ones, and then a fog arises from these false ideas, which obscures that true vision. So I shall try for a while with gentle and moderate applications to lessen that fog, so that when the darkness of those deceptive ideas is removed, you may be able to recognize the glory of the light of truth.] (1p6.55-62)

She must clear the fog to reveal the truth, banishing false opinions to let in the illuminating rays that would disabuse him of his ill-informed notions.

One such error from which Boethius the character must be freed pertains to his view of fortune, particularly as he feels completely destitute and abandoned from having lost all that he holds valuable: “Anxia enim res est humanorum condicio bonorum et quae vel numquam tota proveniat vel numquam perpetua subsistat” [For the condition of human good fortune is never free from worry ; a man never wholly possesses it, nor does it last forever] (2p4.43-6). Lady Philosophy exposes fortune here, revealing it for what it is by showing how short it falls from bringing anything like happiness. Indeed, fortune and its goods cannot bring such freedom from worry because they cannot be fully possessed even if they were perpetually present, and ultimately because they cannot in fact endure eternally. The character Boethius is eventually able to see this clearly:

“Atqui haec,” inquam, “vel caeco perspicua est eamque tu paulo ante monstrasti, dum falsae causas aperire conaris. Nam nisi fallor ea vera est et perfecta felicitas quae sufficientem, potentum, reverendum, celebrem laetumque perficiat.”

[“It is indeed clear,” I said, “even to a blind man, and you have shown it to me just now, while you were seeking to display the causes of false happiness. For unless I am wrong, that is true and perfect happiness which makes a man sufficient, powerful, respected, famous and joyful.”] (3p9.78-82)

Unfortunately, though, as Lady Philosophy will explain, such true and perfect felicity is not to be found among the earthly and the mortal, since whatever they possess in terms of happiness is but a counterfeit joy.

However, what is truly good can be found, though the journey may not be easy nor the way clear: “quorum animus etsi caligante memoria tamen bonum suum repetit, sed velut ebrius domum quo tramite revertatur ignorat” [man’s mind, though the memory of it is clouded, yet does seek again its proper good, but like a drunken man cannot find by what path it may return home] (3p2.52-4). Indeed, the complementary processes of

recollecting one's knowledge of such an ideal and returning toward such an origin are both complicated but not impossible:

Vos quoque, o terrena animalia, tenui licet imagine vestrum tamen principium somniatis verumque illum beatitudinis finem licet minime perspicaci qualicumque tamen cogitatione prospicitis eoque vos et ad verum bonum naturalis ducit intentio et ab eodem multiplex error abducit. [And you also, earthly creatures that you are, have some image, though hazy, in your dreams of your beginning ; you see, though with a far from clear imagination yet with some idea, that true end of your happiness.] (3p3.1-6)

In fact, the realization of such dreams is what the hymn to the creator prays for: “Da pater augustam menti conscendere sedem / Da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta / In te conspicuos animi defigere visus” [Grant, Father, to my mind to rise to your majestic seat, / Grant me to wander by the source of good, grant light to see, / To fix the clear sight of my mind on you] (3m9.22-4). Moreover, the images of good that some mutable things portray reflect the nature of true goodness and happiness that must exist: “Quod si, uti paulo ante monstravimus, est quaedam boni fragilis imperfecta felicitas, esse aliquam solidam perfectamque non potest dubitari” [But if, as we have just shown, there is a certain imperfect happiness in a good that perishes, it cannot be doubted that there is some enduring and perfect happiness] (3p10.19-21). Something that holds anything less than complete felicity must derive whatever happiness it does possess from some source that is more perfect: “omnia namque perfecta minus integris priora esse claruerunt” [For it has become clear that all perfect things are prior to the less perfect] (3p10.32-3). The recovering Boethius is thus shown how true goodness and happiness are found in the very substance of God (3p10.138-44). In his assent to such propositions and conclusions, the character Boethius has claimed God as the beginning and end of all things, committing himself to the pursuit of divine knowledge so that he might know the good itself, “si quidem mihi pariter deum quoque qui bonum est continget agnoscere” [since together with that I shall also come to know God, who is the good] (3p11.4-5).

However, such a pursuit cannot be undertaken unless he prepares himself for higher things and in fact submits further to the direction of Lady Philosophy:

Pennas etiam tuae menti quibus se in altum tollere possit adfigam, ut
perturbatione depulsa sospes in patrium meo ductu, mea semita, meis
etiam vehiculis revertaris.

[And I shall affix to your mind wings, whereby it may raise itself aloft, so
that with all disturbance dispelled, you may return safely to your
homeland, under my guidance, on my path, and in my carriage.]
(4p1.35-8)

This journey is patterned after the Book III, meter 9 depiction of the Neoplatonic path of a good human soul as it is bound to a star and taken back to its source in the heavens, returning to the divine Mind, with Boethius as the soul and Lady Philosophy as the divinely ordained path that even provides the vehicle. His movement onward and upward would bring him, then, to a place of clarity and peace, where perturbations are driven far away and he is able to find his way home again. Boethius's flight to the heavens would take him beyond the earth, the air, the clouds, and even the stars themselves—all the way to the divine Mind dwelling in the highest heaven, to the self-moving Intelligence far above all visible, mutable, created substances:

Hic regum sceptrum dominus tenet
Orbisque habenas temperat
Et volucrem currum stabilis regit
Rerum coruscus arbiter.

[Here the lord of kings his sceptre holds,
Controls the reins of the world,
And guides its swift chariot, though himself unmoved,
The shining master of the universe.] (4m1.19-22)

God rules the cosmos, then, from this exalted position beyond the reach of motion or influence, and his power is unmatched. In fact, it is not within the capacity or ability of man to even understand the operations of the divine mind: “Neque enim fas est homini cunctas divinae operae machinas vel ingenio comprehendere vel explicare sermone” [For it is not allowed to a man either to comprehend with his natural powers or to express in words all the devices of the work of God] (4p6.197-9). Thus, when the confused Boethius inquires into the divine order of a universe wherein a good God apparently allows evil, Lady Philosophy's explanation of how the *summa providentia* directs all things toward the good and even brings forth good from evil is punctuated by the declaration that it will

always seem disordered and unjust to those who cannot begin to understand how God works. His difficulty is diagnosed yet again as a problem of knowledge.

Lady Philosophy teaches that all men suffer such epistemological obstacles, especially those whose minds have been affected by their own free will, choosing to indulge those things that would only confuse and inhibit them even further. These damaged eyes are unable to perceive rightly the causes of the things they observe or the consequences of the acts they commit:

Nam ibi oculos a summae luce veritatis ad inferiora en tenebrosa deiecerint, mox inscitiae nube caligant, perniciosis turbantur affectibus quibus accendendo consentiendoque quam invexere sibi adiuvant servitutem et sunt quodam modo propria libertate captivae. Quae tamen ille ab aeterno cuncta prospiciens providentiae cernit intuitus et suis quaeque meritis praedestinata disponit.

[For when from the light of the highest truth they have lowered their eyes to inferior, darkling things, at once they are befogged by the cloud of unknowing, they are disturbed by destructive affections, by giving in and by consenting to which they strengthen that servitude which they have brought upon themselves, and are in a way made captive by their freedom. Yet that regard of providence which looks forth on all things from eternity sees this and disposes all that is predestined to each according to his deserts.] (5p2.22-9)

Only divine providence is able, then, to see from the perspective of eternity, judge all things aright, and govern the universe accordingly.

Men, however, will continue to face impossible odds, incapable as they are to know—even in their reasoning minds—how to consider the issue of necessity in the context of divine foreknowledge:

Cuius caliginis causa est, quod humanae ratiocinationis motus ad divinae praescientiae simplicitatem non potest admoveri, quae si ullo modo cogitari queat, nihil prorsus relinquetur ambigui.

[The cause of this obscurity is that the movement of human reasoning cannot approach the simplicity of divine foreknowledge ; if that could by any means be conceived, no doubt whatever will remain.] (5p4.6-9)

The thoughts of rational man occur in time, proceed from the present into the past, and cannot embrace the future. Ever moving and never unmoved, then, human reasoning cannot attain to knowledge of the eternal, divine mind:

In quo illud maxime considerandum est : nam superior comprehendendi vis amplectitur inferiorem, inferior vero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit.

[And herein the greatest consideration is to be given to this : for the higher power of comprehension embraces the lower, while, the lower in no way rises to the higher.] (5p4.92-4)

Indeed, while man is able to comprehend and even manipulate the thinking of lower, irrational animals, mastering their mode and scope of thought, he is unable to embrace, contain, or constrain the mind, the knowledge, or the thinking of a higher intelligence, such as God:

ratio vero humani tantum generis est sicut intellegentia sola divini. Quo fit ut ea notitia ceteris praestet quae suapte natura non modo proprium sed ceterarum quoque notitiarum subiecta cognoscit.

[But reason belongs only to human kind, as intelligence only to the divine. So it is that that kind of knowledge is better than the rest which of its own nature knows not only its own object but the subjects of other kinds of knowledge also.] (5p5.17-21)

Boethius can employ reason to consider anything that operates according to its senses, in view of its imagination, or even in light of its reason, but he is by nature restricted from complete knowledge of one whose very nature is pure intelligence.

However, this journey toward a higher level of thought and action is the path of the narrative, as the character Boethius is called toward participation in the perspective of the divine mind:

Si igitur uti rationis participes sumus, ita divinae iudicium mentis habere possemus, sicut imaginationem sensumque rationi cedere oportere iudicavimus, sic divinae sese menti humanam submittere rationem iustissimum censeremus.

[Now if just as we have a share in reason, so we could possess the judgement belonging to the divine mind, then just as we have judged that

imagination and sense ought to give way to reason, so we should think it most just that human reason should submit to the divine mind.] (Vp5.46-50)

Indeed, he is called to consider what is not just within himself but also beyond himself: “Quare in illius summae intelligentiae cacumen, si possumus, erigamur” [Wherefore let us be raised up, if we can, to the height of that highest intelligence] (5p5.50-2). If he and Lady Philosophy are able, if they have the power to do so, they may be drawn further onward and upward to the *summae intelligentiae*. Turning away from where he has been, taking his focus off of the things around and beneath him, Boethius is having his eyes re-trained. Lady Philosophy reminds Boethius that, by his very nature, man has been made for gazing upward, for turning his eye heavenward and seeking something greater and higher than himself or his own circumstances.

Prona tamen facies hebetes valet ingravare sensus.
Univa gens hominum celsum levat altius cacumen
Atque levis recto stat corpore despicitque terras.
[Yet their downturned faces make their senses heavy grow and dull.
Only the race of men lift high their lofty heads
And lightly stand with upright bodies, looking down so on the earth.]
(5m5.9-11)

Just as she does in the beginning, when she finds him with downcast eyes and a burdened mind, Lady Philosophy urges him to stop feeding on the earth, to clear his head and his vision so that he can see and know the splendor of the true light.

Thus, as the narrative comes to its culminating final passage in Book V, prose 6, which defines eternity so that the nature of divine knowledge can be made clear, Boethius the character turns his eyes upward to this highest promontory. Looking to the place from which the eternally present sight of God views all things, then, everything is meant to fall into the proper perspective. The struggle to achieve and maintain earthly fame is measured against the finality of the grave and the relative insignificance of momentary glories; the apparent happiness of the wicked is judged in light of the everlasting joys of the virtuous; and fatalistic determinism is challenged by an eternally present foreknowledge that allows God to afford his creatures freedom within his providentially

ordered creation. The consolation of eternity comes, then, to those whose vision of the divine mind allows them to achieve some measure of the actual perspective of the eternal *summum bonum*, so that they find more than even knowledge about God and begin to appreciate how the universe may be seen from the stability and simplicity of immutable eternity. This theophany enables those who lament the reversals of fortune to reject ephemeral earthly pursuits, remember their true home, and make the journey from becoming to being.

The Consolation of Eternity

Confused and conflicting views on fame, fortune, happiness, good and evil, fate, free will, necessity, foreknowledge, and providence are for Boethius only capable of clarity and resolution to the degree that one appreciates and (to the greatest degree possible) appropriates the eternal perspective of the divine mind. Lady Philosophy explains, then, the nature of God's eternity and how awareness and understanding of it places all these difficult questions in the proper context: "Quit sit igitur aeternitas consideremus ; haec enim nobis naturam pariter divinam scientiamque patefacit" [Therefore let us consider, what is eternity ; for this makes plain to us both the divine nature and the divine knowledge.] (5p6.7-9). Thomas Curley suggests that "[i]t is precisely in this harmony of all aspects of the cosmos: of the human and the divine, of the temporal and the eternal, of becoming and being, of change and order, that the central point of the *Consolatio* as a work of philosophy lies" (220). Indeed, since "the divine," "being," and "order" are characterized by and proceed from "the eternal," whatever harmony Boethius has produced here in the *Consolation of Philosophy* would not have been possible without the consolation of eternity.

Ironically, however, Boethius's vision of eternity in Book II, prose 7 establishes a principle that his own commentaries and translations had struggled against as they imported major works and ideas from the Greek tradition and effectively preserved them for the Latin middle ages: to wit, the literature and philosophy of ages past are destined to

lose influence, eventually die out among the people, and thus fall from popularity into obscurity. During Lady Philosophy's discourse on the futility of living for the sake of worldly fame, she poses a rhetorical question to Boethius the character that challenges not only the career of Boethius the exiled author but also the potential value and influence of his ongoing literary project. She wonders how many men who had been famous in their own day are entirely unknown in the present, either because they had not been the subject of literary attention in the past, or because the material products and cultural processes through which written accounts get transmitted are innately transitory and ephemeral. The fame-seekers themselves are long since dead, and even if biographies had at one time carefully documented the actions, successes, and speeches of their important subjects, such sources can hardly be expected to withstand the natural elements, much less the dynamic cultural and political forces at work in and around a nation's language and literature.

Early in the narrative, however, the ailing and barely lucid character Boethius had asserted his commitment to preserving a record of his demise:

Verum id quoquo modo sit, tuo sapientiumque iudicio aestimandum relinquo. Cuius rei seriem atque veritatem, ne latere posteros queat, stilo etiam memoriaeque manavi.

[But what the truth of the matter is, I leave to your judgement and to that of philosophers ; though so that the true details of this affair cannot lie concealed from later generations, I have written it down to be remembered.] (1p4.84-8)

This dedication to the vindication of his name, reputation, and honor finds an unsympathetic audience in Lady Philosophy, who later asks her patient to place any lingering desires for achieving lasting glory within the context of his finite world: "Quod si aeternitatis infinita spatia pertractes, quid habes quod de nominis tui diuturnitate laeteris?" [if you really consider the infinite space of eternity, have you any reason to rejoice in the long life of your own name?] (2p7.51-3). From the perspective advocated by Lady Philosophy, earthly fame is infinitely insignificant, and so no one can then hope in anything bound by time. In a finite universe that is naturally mutable, then, the ancient ways, words, and works slip away from future generations unless someone records and

recites them. Even then, however, the practices, languages, and media are so unstable in this transitory world that lasting fame is not only difficult to achieve and maintain, but also futile and worthless to pursue in the first place. For Boethius the author, therefore, the reality of eternity should both humble and comfort those who struggle to win immortal fame, for while (as Philosophy will later explain) Boethius the character is free and his will is his own, he also is bound by what sort of creature he is, what kind of universe he dwells in, and what various forces beyond his control are at work within that realm. Lady Philosophy tries to remind the suffering Boethius that he lives within a temporal universe ruled by an everlasting God—the eternal *summum bonum* whose qualities cannot be lost to the passage of time nor to the passing of men. She suggests, then, that boasts about earthly accomplishments are lost in this mutable world populated by dying bodies, and that since this transience is unavoidable for any and all who would devote themselves to garnering worldly renown, the impact of such loss is lessened and consolation offered, if only because no one escapes mortality.

However, Lady Philosophy promises the character Boethius that true immortality comes to those who move beyond temporal concerns and physical rewards and live for the glory of virtue itself, having learned to “despise all earthly affairs, and in the joy of heaven rejoice to be freed from earthly things” (2p7.85-6). Such liberation comes to those like Boethius the author, whose mind—in the time preceding the *Consolation*’s construction or perhaps even during its composition—seems to have been made “fully aware of its own nature, loosed from its earthly prison” and thus “free to seek its heavenly home” (2p7.83-4). Having stepped away from Plato’s cave, as it were, Boethius relates his story of an epistemological journey from ignorance to enlightenment, from knowing only what the senses prove to understanding what intellectual contemplation of an eternal and immutable goodness reveals. Along the way from becoming to being, he realizes the futility of earthly fame and takes consolation from the prospect of eternity.

One of the most important and influential portions of Boethius’s entire text comes at the beginning of Book V, prose 6, as Lady Philosophy discusses how everything that is known is known not according to its own nature but according to the nature of those

comprehending it. For this assertion leads to a consideration of God's epistemological position—so that she might explain how it is that God's foreknowledge does not compromise human free will. She begins with the assumption that God is eternal and reasons that assessing this quality of the divine nature is integral to any inquiry into the divine knowledge, for if the suffering Boethius cannot comprehend God's eternal nature, he will never approach issues such as fate, free will, foreknowledge, and providence from the proper perspective. Thus, the *Consolation's* theodicy would not just be incompletely or improperly constructed without a discussion of God's eternity—it could not even be constructed at all.

In a passage owing considerable debt to Plotinus and Proclus,¹¹ the suffering Boethius is told, then, that eternity “est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio” [is the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life] (Loeb 5p6.10-1). This concept of possession differs markedly from any discussion of incalculable longevity or infinite existence, since the definition requires an all-encompassing, all-at-once, all-surpassing awareness of and hold on interminable life. Helen Barrett asserts that although Boethius's view on eternity was certainly influenced by his predecessors, “by his own contribution and by the great lucidity with which he treated a most difficult subject, he developed what he had received into something characteristically and peculiarly his own” (123).¹² She explains “that Eternity, properly speaking, is *quality* of life, not mere quantity, something quite different from everlastingness, something infinitely richer and fuller than timelessness or perpetual duration” (133, emphasis in the original).

In fact, this quality of life suggests a conscious and intelligent vivacity that, for instance, even the seemingly limitless universe itself cannot claim. Consider here John Marenbon's treatment of this passage, which emphasizes that “for Boethius, God's eternity is a way of *living*” and that “Boethius is describing God's way of thinking” (136,

¹¹ See Helen M. Barrett, *Boethius: Some Aspects of His Times and Work*, 130-31.

¹² For more on Boethius's influence on medieval conceptions of eternity, see Gillian R. Evans, “Time and Eternity: Boethian and Augustinian Sources of the Thought of the Late Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries,” 105-18.

emphasis in the original). Marenbon suggests that God's "way of living leaves no room for time. Time is the condition of the life of less powerful minds, which have to grasp one thing after another" (137). Indeed, Lady Philosophy's definition requires that such a being be extra-temporal, so that no moments actually pass back behind its grasp and no instances stand out ahead of its reach: "nihilque est in tempore constitutum quod totum vitae suae spatium pariter possit amplecti" [and there is nothing established in time which can embrace the whole space of its life equally] (Loeb 5p6.13-5).

Possessing an eternal nature, therefore, means that one holds all temporality at once, that past, present, and future are not separate conceptions, as though each represents a different aspect of incomplete cognition—the past being that which is to one extent or another "gone," the present being that which looks backwards and forwards to glimpse what it cannot fully know, and the future being that which is to one extent or another "not yet":

Quod igitur interminabilis vitae plenitudinem totam pariter comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque futuri quidquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur, idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi semper adsistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem. [Whatever therefore comprehends and possesses at once the whole fullness of boundless life, and is such that neither is anything future lacking from it, nor has anything past flowed away, that is rightly held to be eternal, and that must necessarily both always be present to itself, possessing itself in the present, and hold as present the infinity of moving time.] (5p6.25-31)

Being outside of time, then, Lady Philosophy's eternal God exists in a sort of never-passing present and can thus possess a constant and full awareness of what to temporal beings is past, present, and future. Thus, God's eternal present is the perspective from which he views all things, no matter what their relation to those living in an ever-passing present. In fact, he relates to them in a way that the terminology for temporality cannot accurately describe, but "present" most fittingly characterizes the viewpoint God has on all he sees. In this regard, Helen Barrett usefully argues that "we are not here using *present* as one of the forms of Time, but rather are trying by means of it—for want of a more exact word—to describe a form of existence which is not conditioned by

successiveness, an existence upon which Time has no final hold” (137, emphasis in the original). Indeed, Lady Philosophy asserts that God’s life does not have any direct relation to time, nor is his existence measured by it: “Neque deus conditis rebus antiquior videri debet temporis quantitate sed simplicis potius proprietate naturae” [Nor should God seem to be more ancient than created things by some amount of time, but rather by his own simplicity of nature] (Loeb 5p6.38-40).

Lady Philosophy goes on to apply this explanation of eternity to the nature of divine knowledge:

scientia quoque eius omnem temporis supergressa motionem in suae manet simplicitate praesentiae infinitaque praeteriti ac futuri spatia complectens omnia quasi iam gerantur in sua simplici cognitione considerat.

[then his knowledge too, surpassing all movement of time, is permanent in the simplicity of his present, and embracing all the infinite spaces of the future and the past, considers them in his simple act of knowledge as though they were now going on.] (5p6.62-6)

As Boethius establishes in Book V, meter 2, “Quae sint, quae fuerint veniantque / Uno mentis cernit in ictu” [What is, what has been, and what is to come, / In one swift mental stab he sees] (5m2.11-2). This act of divine knowledge is, from man’s temporal perspective, continuously instantaneous, so that there is no moment when God does not know everything all at once. Lady Philosophy characterizes this divine epistemological perspective with a spatial metaphor, though not in terms of placement within a temporal continuum, but rather in terms of vertical distance from the objects of his knowledge. He stands on a promontory, gazing from on high:

non esse praescientiam quasi futuri sed scientiam numquam deficientis instantiae rectius aestimabis ; unde non praeventia sed providentia potius dicitur, quod porro ab rebus infimis constituta quasi ab excelso rerum cacumine cuncta prospiciat.

[you will more rightly judge it to be not foreknowledge as it were of the future but knowledge of a never-passing instant. And therefore it is called not prevision (*praeventia*) but providence (*providentia*), because set far from the lowest of things it looks forward on all things as though from the highest peak of the world.] (5p6.67-72)

Thus, what he sees and knows is not foreknowledge (in the sense of looking ahead into the future or perceiving before the fact), but rather providence (in the sense of seeing what is present before him). Since his knowledge is of an eternally present moment, of an instant that does not and will not pass, God's perspective is neither dependent upon human action—as though he must repeatedly commit an act of *providentia* in order to discern a single potentiality among multiple ones—nor coercive to it—as though God's present knowledge of what to a man is an unrealized future experience somehow destines or dooms the man to that eventuality. Indeed, for Boethius's Lady Philosophy, God's eternal nature clears him of such suspicions.

In view of these concerns and accusations, though, Lady Philosophy questions the recovering Boethius, asking him why he requires that God's *providentia* makes that which he knows necessary:

Quid igitur postulas ut necessaria fiant quae divino lumine lustrentur, cum ne homines quidem necessaria faciant esse quae videant? Num enim quae praesentia cernis, aliquam eis necessitatem tuus addit intuitus?
[Why then do you require those things to be made necessary which are scanned by the light of God's sight, when not even men make necessary those things they see? After all, your looking at them does not confer any necessity on those things you presently see, does it?] (5p6.72-6)

She then explores this idea further by dividing necessity into two basic categories, offering the illustrations of the sun's movements (simple necessity) and a man's walking (conditional necessity). Some things (inanimate objects) must follow the course laid out for them, naturally tending in directions and along lines that have already been determined. However, others (sentient beings) are free to act, moving as they will, and the only necessity that binds them is that which is derived from the observations of witnesses to their movement. If one sees a man walking, he must be walking—unless of course the seer's perception and/or interpretation is unreliable. In God's case, however, he witnesses men's acts from an infinitely reliable and eternally present perspective but (as the suffering Boethius complains in Book I, meter 5) refuses to intervene and constrain them.

At the conclusion of this case for foreknowledge and free will, as opposed to predestination and necessity, Lady Philosophy returns to the image of God seated above all things, viewing and knowing all things at once:

Manet etiam spectator desuper cunctorum praescius deus visionisque eius
praesens semper aeternitas cum nostrorum actuum futura qualitate
concurrit bonis praemia malis supplicia dispensans.
[There remains also as an observer from on high foreknowing all things,
God, and the always present eternity of his sight runs along with the future
quality of our actions dispensing rewards for the good and punishments
for the wicked.] (5p6.166-70)

This passage on punishment and reward recalls the discussion from Book IV, where Lady Philosophy establishes her case for retribution: “In quo perspicuum est numquam bonis praemia numquam sua sceleribus deesse supplicia” [From which it is obvious that good deeds never lack their rewards, nor wicked deeds their punishments] (4p3.2-4). She even posits that each way of life is its own reward: “Sicut igitur probis probitas ipsa fit praemium, ita improbis nequitia ipsa supplicium est” [As therefore goodness is itself reward for good men, so for wicked men wickedness is itself the punishment] (4p3.36-8). Here, then, Lady Philosophy reasons that the rewards and punishments that men receive for their behavior are not predetermined or predestined, as though God were unfairly dispensing justice—giving either rewards or punishments to people whom he had purposed ahead of time to be either good or evil. If men are free to act and are not bound by necessity, then their good and wicked actions bring about their own blessings and curses.

Moreover, as Lady Philosophy also establishes in Book IV, death brings some kind of an end to wickedness, but if man’s infinite mind is such that death does not end everything, then the wicked are the most wretched of all:

Etenim si de pravitatis infortunio vera conclusimus, infinitam liquet esse miseriam quam esse constat aeternam.
[for indeed if we have come to a true conclusion about the misfortune attendant upon evil-doing, clearly that wretchedness is infinite which it is agreed is eternal.] (4p4.29-31)

If the wicked are infinitely so, then they are likewise infinitely wretched. In response to Boethius's subsequent question, "'Sed quaeso,' inquam, 'te nullane animarum supplicia post defunctum morte corpus relinquis?'" [But now I ask you, do you keep no punishments for souls after the end of the body in death?] (4p4.75-6), Lady Philosophy insists that the penalties are great. Barrett offers a useful summation of how Boethius's position on God's eternity offers consolation to those who seek greater knowledge of the divine mind, even if only in the afterlife:

The conception of Eternity which Boethius, following in the footsteps of Plotinus and Plato, reached and handed on to the Middle Ages was of something with an unbounded richness of content, belonging properly to the Divine life, and thus only to be experienced by a human spirit, if at all, through communion with God, whether in some mystical experience of "this" life or in the life beyond death. (135)

For Boethius, then, the nature of eternal life involves more than just an infinite progression of moments (even if spent in God's presence), for it includes a quality of existence shared by those who draw near to the divine mind, view things increasingly from that extra-temporal perspective, and find value in the quality of life offered by One who maintains complete possession of past, present, and future. Thus, in view of the other passages on retribution, the concluding passage about God's eternal vision of our future actions guiding his dispensing of rewards and punishments suggests that divine justice is realized in both temporal and eternal manifestations, both during and after life on earth.

The text's instruction thus becomes exhortation, warning its audience as Lady Philosophy cautions her patient. In fact, as Michael Means suggests in *The Consolatio Genre in Medieval English Literature*, "[t]he nature of the *Consolation of Philosophy* is primarily educational" (4), explaining that the content itself considers "some of the knottiest problems of ethics and metaphysics—the nature of prosperity and adversity, of good and evil, of human free will and divine prescience" and that "its action involves the education of the narrator and, through him, the reader" (4). Thus, the epistemological journey of the Boethius the character becomes the path along which the reader travels as

well, so that what Lady Philosophy teaches the suffering narrator and causes him to remember becomes instruction for the reader, too. Means goes on to suggest that while modern students of the text have been led “to disapprove of the kind of direct didacticism found in the Boethian *consolatio*, it is an important part of our literary heritage” (5), citing Northrop Frye’s discussion in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) of the literary form called the “anatomy”:

The anatomy deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. . . . It thus resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization, which is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent. (qtd. in Means 5)

He then notes how Frye applies this definition to *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, which “with its dialogue form, its verse interludes and its pervading tone of contemplative irony, is a pure anatomy, a fact of considerable importance for the understanding of its vast influence” (qtd. in Means 5). Means later details how the work offers “the consolatory arguments in the form of a master-pupil dialogue in which the pupil, at first skeptical, full of his own grievances, and argumentative, is brought through the give-and-take of pedagogical dialectic to his final education” (18). However, as Seth Lerer notes in *Boethius and Dialogue*, this process of dialogic instruction turns outward in the end:

By narrating the prisoner’s education, the *Consolation* has been educating the reader, but by the final prose all that has changed. The prisoner has moved from participant to audience, and his silent accession to Philosophy’s authority matches the reader’s experience of silently absorbing her doctrine. . . . Her concluding sentences go past the prisoner to the audience, demonstrating an awareness of a public readership for her words. (231)

Indeed, the instructive nature of the text is evidenced not only in its own literary structure but also in how it has been appropriated by those who have sought to promote its teachings and proffer its consolations through the act of translation. Moreover, since the pedagogical aims of the text culminate in the final passages on the nature of the divine mind, it is the consolation of eternity that Boethius’s treatise appears to have been intentionally and purposefully constructed to deliver to its audience. Thus, those who

have taken it up so that it might be rendered into their own language have engaged in a similar effort of educating their readers about the comfort available to those who would accept the Boethian vision of eternity, to those who would consider, grasp, and appreciate the eternal nature of God and the implications of his unique and immutable position as the sole possessor of an all-encompassing vision with which to know and oversee all things.

II. THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN OLD ENGLISH

King Alfred's Prosimetric and Prose Translations

King Alfred the Great's translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is unique among English versions of Boethius in that it exists in two distinct forms: the 10th-century manuscript (London, British Library, Cotton Otho A.vi) contains the oldest extant copy of Alfred's translation that, like the Latin original, features a 5-book, prosimetric structure; the 12th-century manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 180) preserves a 42-chapter, all-prose text. Since the manuscript context of King Alfred's verse translations of the *Consolation's* meters has been either ignored or obscured every time the Alfredian *Boethius* has been edited, Otho A.vi is currently the only text that preserves Alfred's prosimetric translation. Only now is the Cottonian manuscript being edited so that its prose and verse structure is maintained: Malcolm Godden's print edition and Kevin S. Kiernan's electronic edition are currently in production and are based upon Kiernan's high-quality digital images of the relevant manuscripts, especially Otho A.vi, the severely damaged condition of which has not facilitated ready or convenient access to the source material.¹³ Such efforts will surely revive the principal controversies surrounding Alfred's *Boethius*—the authorship of the verses and the priority of the prose version. These debates have been shaped by various degrees of uncertainty regarding the king's role in the translation process and by an insistence upon the derivative nature of the poems themselves. However, the scholarly discussion has not been held in view of a prosimetric edition of the text. What exactly we may have in the prose and verse passages of Otho A.vi is the question at the heart of both the authorship and priority issues, and yet whatever efforts have been made to work toward an answer have been influenced by the under- and mis-representation of Alfred's prosimetrum.

¹³ For the more on these efforts, see the following official sites: Malcolm Godden, *The Alfredian Boethius Project*, <http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/boethius/>; Kevin Kiernan, *The Electronic Boethius Project*, <http://beowulf.engl.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBoethius/inlad.htm>.

The 17th-century Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 12 holds Francis Junius' transcription of Bodley 180 and his collations of that all-prose text with the prosimetric version from Cotton Otho A.vi, the poems having been pasted into the book on separate sheets of paper. Junius appears to have been the first editor of the Alfredian *Boethius*, and since he first set out to transcribe the 12th-century, all-prose version, his provision of the *metra* is in a sense secondary, ancillary to the preservation of the Bodleian text—though they do appear alongside their prose counterparts from Bodley 180. Upon Junius's death, his work was taken up by Christopher Rawlinson, whose 1698 edition of Alfred's *Boethius* presented what was, in effect, an edition of Junius 12. However, unwilling to insert the poems where they would have belonged in a prosimetric text, and opting not to offer them in extensive footnotes throughout, Rawlinson included the Cottonian meters as a separate section in the back.

Since Otho A.vi was later severely damaged in the Cotton Library fire of 1731, Junius' sheets of paper and Rawlinson's 1698 edition eventually contained the most accessible sources for Alfred's meters. As a result, the Cottonian manuscript and its prosimetric structure were subsequently misrepresented or ignored entirely. J.S. Cardale's (1829) edition and translation of the prose text presented only a single metrical "specimen" in an appendix, though Samuel Fox (1835) later produced an edition and translation of just the Alfredian poems. He was followed in this by Martin Tupper (1850), whose *King Alfred's Poems: Now First Turned into English Metres* offered translations of the Anglo-Saxon verses into rhymed lines of modern English stanzas. Fox (1864) later appended his own edition of the meters and Tupper's poems to his own edition and translation of the all-prose text, claiming to have relied upon Otho A.vi but not actually following its prosimetric structure. While producing their versions of the Alfredian *Boethius*, some editors and translators have operated under the once-popular assumption that Alfred had not actually authored the poems found in Otho A.vi. However, such positions have probably been influenced as much or more by previous editions and by

Junius' transcriptions than by the primary source for the meters—the damaged manuscript, Otho A.vi.¹⁴

The most authoritative scholarly versions of Alfred's *Boethius* have not only kept the meters apart from the prose version they were delivering, but they have also removed them from the Cottonian manuscript context itself. Walter Sedgefield's edition (1899) and translation (1900) both provided the meters in a section separate from the prose version. Isolating the poetry for an authoritative collection of verse, George Krapp (1932) contributed *King Alfred's Meters of Boethius* to the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*. Likewise, Bill Griffiths (1991) edited *Alfred's Metres of Boethius*, while Fred C. Robinson and E. G. Stanley (1991) reproduced only the folios from Cotton MS Otho A.vi that contain Alfred's poems for a contribution to the Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile project, *Old English Verse Texts from Many Sources: A Comprehensive Collection*. Ironically, this special interest in the poetic portions corresponds with the sentiment expressed in the verse preface to Alfred's prosimetrum, as it describes the king's particular enthusiasm for delivering poetry to his people: "*him was lust micel / ðæt he ðiossum leodum leoð spellode*" (Sedgefield, Proem 3-4) [he greatly desired that he should teach songs to these people] (my translation).¹⁵ By extracting the poems from the prosimetrum, these editors have fulfilled the spirit of that metrical preface's statement, while at the same time distancing the resulting texts from the manuscript to which the preface had been attached.

This separation of the verse portions from the prose has resulted in a kind of text that Alfred had not constructed—either a prose edition with a verse appendix or a collection of excised poems. Perhaps the isolation of the metrical sections has occurred in part because Old English poetry is so very different from Old English prose. Indeed, although Ælfric developed a rhythmical prose, Alfred's prose was easily distinguishable from his poetry, and alliterative Anglo-Saxon poetry in general was unlike anything in

¹⁴ See Kiernan, "Alfred the Great's Burnt *Boethius*." *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*. 7-32.

¹⁵ My own translations are offered only occasionally, so unless otherwise noted (as in this instance), both the Old English edition and the Modern English translation of the Alfredian *Boethius* will come from Sedgefield's edition (1899) and translation (1900).

Latin poetry or even in later verse forms of Middle and Early Modern English: “[n]ever since the end of the Old English period . . . has the language of English poetry differed so greatly from the language of prose as it did in Alfred’s time; nor has the form of poetry ever again been so uniform as it was before the Conquest” (Metcalf 3). Often dubbed the *Meters of Boethius*, these verse sections of Alfred’s prosimetrum have been regarded as so distinct from the prose portions that they often have been published as a single text: Fox (1835), Krapp (1932), Griffiths (1991), and Robinson and Stanley (1991). Griffiths admits that “[t]he poems have suffered from being edited in isolation from the accompanying prose (something I am doing also, but hopefully as an initial step in a larger project) – and a final assessment of the literary value of *Meters* should really await an edition of the whole Boethius text of MS.C (with the verse in place in the OE prose setting)” (49). Until the most recent and ongoing projects by Godden and Kiernan, no edition or translation has yet presented the Anglo-Saxon verse translations of the *Consolation*’s meters in their prosimetric context, the poems having been removed and isolated, even though we have no evidence that Alfred ever presented them as anything but the poetic component of his prosimetrum.

In one of the more strange and unfounded characterizations of the Alfredian *Boethius*, Henry Morley and William H. Griffin’s 1888 volume *English Writers: An Attempt Towards a History of English Literature* asserts that the Cotton and Bodleian MSS “both contain the verse translations added to the prose translations of the *Metra*” (281). A footnote adds that after the restoration work of Joseph Stevenson and John Holmes, the Cottonian MS has been rendered remarkably legible: “nearly all of it can now be read with ease” (n. 281). This comment is echoed in the 1895 translation of Alfred’s work by Samuel Fox, who says that the text “is now rendered so perfect that most of it can be read with the greatest ease!” (iii). Yet, if this description of the Cottonian MS were accurate, and if Morley and Griffin had in fact attempted such a unhindered reading, they would have found that it does not really contain both prose and verse renderings of the *metra*. Moreover, if they had seen the Bodleian MS, they would have found that it does not either. The Cottonian text is prose and verse, and the Bodleian is all-prose.

Although Cotton Otho A.vi predates Bodley 180, the prose preface found in both manuscripts has led most to believe that the prose and verse version came only after an all-prose rendering. This proem states plainly that when he had learned the book of Boethius, Alfred “*of laedene to engliscu[m] spelle gewende, 7 geworhte hi eft to leoðe, swa swa heo nu gedon is*” (Sedgefield 1) [turned the story from Latin to English, and worked it again/afterwards into verse, just as it is now done] (my translation). This makes it clear, then, that the text to which the original preface belonged contained verse passages. One wonders, though, why a preface intended for a version containing meters would be passed on with a manuscript containing an all-prose version. In the apparatus for his 1899 edition, Sedgefield cites Leicht’s contention “that the prose preface could not have been prefixed to the original version containing the prose translation of the *Metra*, but must have accompanied C [Otho A.vi] only, or its archetype, and was afterwards added to later copies of the first edition, such as B [Bodley 180]” (xxxix-xl). However, even if it is to be believed, Leicht’s explanation details *how* this preface anticipating a prosimetrum may have found its way into the Bodleian MS, but it still does not address the puzzling problem of *why* it did.

Nevertheless, the prose version of Alfred’s translation has usually been regarded as a late descendant of the original Alfredian work, so that the prosimetric rendering has been considered an early copy of the king’s later labor, editors operating from the premise that the Boethian meters were turned into prose first and that the poetic sections in Otho A.vi were derived from their prosaic counterparts. Such a view is based in part on the missing poems in both versions: some *metra* are entirely absent, not translated into either prose or verse (Book I, meters 3 and 4; Book II, meter 1; Book V, meters 1, 3, and 4), an observation that could be interpreted to support either view on the priority issue; however, others appear in the prose at locations that do not happen to include an explicit indication that the narrative is transitioning from prose into poetry (or vice-versa), and these exist as prose passages in the prosimetrum, not as poems (Book I, meter 6; Book II, meter 2; Book IV, meter 7), indicating to some that the versifier must not have noticed the move to poetry when rendering these portions of the prose text into a prosimetrum. However, if one does not presume the priority of 12th-century prose MS and assumes

instead that the 10th-century prosimetrum attests to the earliest version, then these prose sections in the prosimetrum would have remained such in the effort to translate the entire document into prose.

Sedgefield states unequivocally, though, that “[i]t is established beyond doubt that the Cotton Metra are based directly on the corresponding prose version found in [Bodley 180]” (1899, xxxviii), and he notes with some condescension that the poetic portions simply

reproduce in metrical dress the prose version, omitting little, and adding few thoughts of any importance ; and they seem to have been composed by rearranging the words of the prose version, and inserting poetical commonplaces or ‘tags,’ to bring the lines into an alliterating form, much as a schoolboy might use a Gradus in making Latin verses. (1899, xxxviii)

Alfred’s meters have not been enthusiastically received, then, as excellent examples of Anglo-Saxon verse, and it is their perceived lack of quality that has been taken up as an argument against the king’s authorship of these portions of the Old English *Consolation*. Leicht asserts, as he denies Alfredian authorship of the meters, that the verse passages “offer nothing fresh, such as we should expect of Alfred, but only a weak dilution of the terse and vigorous prose” (qtd. in Sedgefield, 1899, xxxix). Leicht’s assumption here, then, is that the king could not possibly have been a second-rate poet—or even one who simply had meant (as the argument for the priority of the prose version goes) to versify his own prose and not to create entirely new, uniquely designed passages.

Challenging the prevailing opinion on the priority matter, Kevin Kiernan posits that the prosimetric version preserved in Otho A.vi is a copy of (some descendant of) the original Alfredian text and that the all-prose rendering from Bodley 180 contains the work of those who converted the Anglo-Saxon alliterative poetry into prose for a 12th-century audience that would not have appreciated the old verse style (“Alfred the Great’s Burnt *Boethius*” 26).¹⁶ In fact, regardless of one’s view of the priority issue, the

¹⁶ Consider also Kiernan’s assessment in “The Source of the Napier Fragment” (available: <http://www.digitalmedievalist.org/article.cfm?RecID=5>): “A more likely possibility, it seems to me, is that

prosimetric version could be seen as the one most worthy of our attention and interest: the prose version could be evidence that others (like those 12-century adaptors described by Kiernan) worked Alfred's original prosimetrum into another form, or it could be evidence that the king's own plan for producing a prose and verse version was as yet unfulfilled. For the verse preface to Alfred's prosimetrum speaks to King Alfred's interest in providing England with a poetic treatment of Boethius: "*him was lust micel / ðæt he ðiossum leodum leoð spellode*" (Sedgefield, Proem 3-4) [he greatly desired that he should teach songs to these people] (my translation). Thus, even if one accepts that the prose translation did come first, the prose version, the prose preface, the verse preface, and the prosimetric version all suggest that Alfred saw the poetical renderings of the *metra* as a necessary part of his effort to bring Boethius to the English, for if it were satisfactorily accomplished by the all-prose version, he would not have turned the prose translations of the meters into the Anglo-Saxon verse found in his prosimetrum.

The arguments about the priority of the all-prose translation and about the authorship of the metrical renderings have an impact, of course, upon those studying what may have been Alfred's poetry, especially as the poems are approached and analyzed as mere rearrangements of the prose passages. How else could analyses like those by Collette Stevanovitch and Allan Metcalf exist? Stevanovitch's "Envelope Patterns in Translation: the Old English *Metres of Boethius*" notes that a number of such patterns appear not only in the prosimetric version but also in the prose translation, and since she enters her study presupposing the priority of the prose text, she wonders, "Did the translator of the prose use these envelope patterns as a stylistic feature appropriate to poetry, stretching the notion of poetry to include prose translations of Latin poems, or was he already preparing the way for the subsequent verse rendering?" (112). Metcalf presents "a study of the words an Old English poet added as he changed prose into verse – words that were not to be found in the prose text before him" (*Poetic Diction in the Old English Meters of Boethius* v). While Metcalf is cautious here about making too strong a statement on Alfredian authorship, most other studies assume it, perhaps because it

the twelfth-century version is a later revision that replaced the Alfredian verse passages, after they had lost their appeal as poetry, with prose paraphrases of them" (par. 3).

allows critics to reference other works known to have been written by Alfred, and perhaps because such an assumption makes an analysis of the translation's presentation of Boethian thought more simple when one can compare the stances of Boethius to those of a specific person named King Alfred.

On the other hand, many scholarly discussions of the work do not engage the Old English verse portions at all, focusing instead upon the all-prose version, treating it as the standard source for studies of the king's translation project: F. Anne Payne's *King Alfred and Boethius: An Analysis of the Old English Version of the Consolation of Philosophy*, Katherine Proppe's "King Alfred's *Consolation of Philosophy*," W.F. Bolton's "How Boethian is Alfred's Boethius?," David Lopez's "Translation and Tradition: Reading the *Consolation of Philosophy* through King Alfred's *Boethius*," and Nicole Discenza's *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* respond primarily to the prose Alfredian text as they consider the king's understanding, adaptation, and (mis)representation of the Latin source. Discenza explains that "[t]he prose, not the Meters, form the basis of this study. The Meters represent a separate project of translation or transformation. The prose text is a translation from Latin into Old English; the Meters appear to transform Old English prose into Old English poetry" (10). Discenza notes, however, that Kevin Kiernan ("Alfred the Great's Burnt *Boethius*") and Paul Szarmach ("Meter 20: Context Bereft") both reconsider the long-held assumption that the prose version served as a source text for the prosimetric one. While admitting that this dissenting view "deserves separate study" (n. 146), Discenza accepts the prevailing opinion regarding the priority of the all-prose version and uses the Sedgefield edition as her chief source for discerning Alfred's translation techniques.

However, relying upon the prose text alone prescribes boundaries for one's analysis, limits that may or may not be practically useful, rhetorically strategic, or even logically sound. For instance, Katherine Proppe suggests that "dark chaotic *poetry* keeps breaking out" (639, emphasis mine) in Alfred's translation of Boethian order, even as she cites both a prose passage and a prose version of a verse passage from Chapters VIII and IX, rather than referring readers to the poetry found in Book II, meter 3:

Oþþe wenst þu þ<æt>te on ænigu<m> menniscu<m> mæge auht
fæstrædlices bion buton hearfunga? . . . Eala þ<æt> nanwuht nis fæste
stondendes weorces a wuniende on worulde.

[Or did you think that any constant thing except changefulness could be in
any man. . . . Alas that nothing fast-standing is ever in this world.] (Proppe
639)

Ullamne humanis rebus inesse constantiam reris

[Do you think that there is some constancy in human affairs?] (Loeb
2p3.46-7)

.....

Constat aeterna positumque lege est

Ut constet genitum nihil.

[It is decreed by firm, eternal law

Nothing that comes to be can firm remain.] (Loeb 2m3.17-8)

These excerpts from Chapters VIII and IX come in response to F. Anne Payne's contentions in *King Alfred and Boethius*, as Proppe asserts that Alfred does in fact "progress toward order, eternity and love" but that his efforts are interrupted by "dark chaotic poetry . . . as if a pattern of reason and understanding were being forced unsuccessfully into the mutable, opaque Anglo-Saxon world" (639). However, the textual evidence she presents does not stand out as uniquely Alfredian or Anglo-Saxon when compared to the expressions of inexorable mutability found in Boethius's Book II, prose 3, and Book II, meter 3. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the Old English version is any more dark or chaotic than what is found in the Latin, much less how a fairly successful translation of these lines is somehow representative of how "a pattern of reason and understanding [is] being forced unsuccessfully onto the mutable, opaque Anglo-Saxon world" (639).

Proppe later does the same thing, relying only upon the prose version of a verse passage from Chapter XXI (rather than upon its corollary from Book II, meter 8) to support her argument that Alfred could not "quite believe" that God "is to be understood as an effortless, indwelling spirit freely guiding creation" (644):

Ac þonne ær þe he þ<æt> gewealdleðer forlæt þara bridla þe he ða
gesceafta nu mid gebridlode hæfð: þis seo wiðerweardnes þe we ær ymbe
spræcon: gif he þa læt toslupan, þon<ne> forlætað hi þa sibbe ðe hi nu

healdað, 7 winð heora ælc on oðer æfret his agenu<m> willan, 7 forlætað heora geferrædenne, 7 fordoð ealne ðysne middangeard, 7 woerðað him selfe to nauhte.

[But whenever he lets go of the reins of the bridle with which he has now bridled the creation, that is, the contraries which we spoke of before ; if he lets the reins slip, then they forsake the kinship which they now hold and struggle each with the other after his own will, and they forsake their companionship and destroy all of this middle earth and they become nothing.] (Proppe 644-5)

She posits that this passage “seems to represent a lapse into paganism . . . the Germanic vision keeps breaking out . . . These dark passages are not successfully amalgamated into the Alfredian philosophy under construction, but simply remain as vivid intrusions of the reality of an Anglo-Saxon sensibility not easily given up” (645).

However, whatever Latin source Alfred had at his disposal contained some version of the corresponding lines from Book II, meter 8, the king’s own poetic rendering of which warrants consideration:

Hic si frena remiserit
Quidquid nunc amat invicem
Bellum continuo geret
Et quam nunc socia fide
Pulchris motibus incitant,
Certent solvere machinam.
[If love’s rein slackened
All things now held by mutual love
At once would fall to warring with each other
Striving to wreck that engine of the world
Which now they drive
In mutual trust with motion beautiful.] (2m8.16-21)

ac þonne [*se eca 7*] *se ælmihtiga*
þa gewealdleðeru wile onlætan,
efne þara bridla þe he gebætte mid
his agen weorc eall æt frymðe,
þ<æt> is wiðerweardnes wuhte gehwelcre
þe we mid þæm bridle becnan tiliað :
gif se ðioden læt þa toslupan,
sona hi forlætað lufan 7 sibbe,
ðæs geferscipes freondrædenne ;
tilaþ anra gehwilc agnes willan ;

woruldgesceafta winnað betweox him,
oðþæt *ðios* eorðe eall *forweorðeð*,
7 eac swa sama oðra gesceafta
[*weor*]það him selfe siððan to *nauhte*.
[But when the Eternal and the Almighty
Looseth the reins that rule all creatures,
Even the bridle wherewith He bound
All that He fashioned at the first creation
(By bridle we speak of we seek to betoken
The case where things are all conflicting):
If the Lord letteth the bridle loosen,
Forthwith they all leave love and peace,
The friendly union of their fellowship.
All things whatever their own will follow,
All world-creatures shall war together,
Till this our earth utterly perish,
And so also other things, in the same fashion,
By their own nature become as nought.] (Sedgefield 168, 197)

While certainly an elaboration upon the Boethian source, Alfred's rendering of this *metrum* does little to advance a particularly pagan or Germanic sensibility, though one may wonder whether terms like "sibbe," "geferrædenne," and "geferscipes" would have come across as loaded terms to an Anglo-Saxon audience for whom the reins of government were kept steady through successful peace-weaving and faithful companionship. However, the vision itself does not seem particularly pagan or Germanic, since the hypothetical situation wherein God would choose to loosen his grip on the universe and allow it to fall into self-destructive chaos is not original to the king. Moreover, Alfred's interpolations referring to "ða gesceafta" (prose) and "his agen weorc eall *æt frymðe*" (verse) characterize the components of the universe as the Creator's work, a depiction that does not suggest pagan coloring or even appear to "represent a lapse into paganism."

Proppe sets up this argument with a passage from the prose Alfredian *Boethius*, her analysis of which does not take into account the Latin source or the Old English verse corollary. While discussing the worldview of Boethius/Mod, she cites his song from Chapter IV but introduces the complaint as though it had come from Wisdom: "Wisdom

acknowledges this Germanic melancholy and tries gradually to sketch out an explanation” (638).

Hwæt, þe ealle gesceafta heorsumiað, 7 þa gesetnessa þinra beboda
healdað, butan men anu<m>; se þe oferheorð.
[lo! all creatures do Thy will, and keep the ordinances of Thy
commandments, save man only ; he setteth Thee at naught.] (638)

Again, this selection does not represent a markedly Germanic departure from the Boethian original:

Nihil antiqua lege solutum
Liquit propriae stationis opus.
Omnia certo fine gubernans
Hominum solos respuis actus
Merito rector cohibere modo.
[Nothing escapes your ancient ordering
Or fails its proper office to fulfil.
With a sure purpose ruling and guiding all,
Man’s acts alone
You will not, though you rightly could, constrain.] (Loeb 1m5.23-7)

In fact, the Alfredian passage is demonstrably more Judeo-Christian, especially as translated by Sedgefield (“Thy will, Thy commandments”). Its verse counterpart in Book I, meter 5 features even more explicitly Christian content:

*eala hwæt, on eorðan ealla gesceafta
hyrað ðinre hæse ; doð on heofonum swa some
mode 7 mægne, butan men anum ;
se wið ðinum willan wyrceð oftost.*
[Behold, all creatures in the earth’s compass
Obey Thy hests ; the same do they in heaven
With mind and main, save man only ;
He oftenest worketh in despite of Thy will.] (Sedgefield 155-6, 182-3)

The passage resonates with echoes of the Lord’s Prayer here, especially since only 7 lines earlier, the creator of heaven and earth is addressed as “fæder.” Boethius/Mod complains here that God’s will is not done here on earth as it is in heaven, that man alone stands in opposition to the will of the Creator, and yet nothing is done.

Proppe follows her mistaken identification of this passage as having come from Wisdom rather than from Boethius/Mod with a reference to a selection that is in fact spoken by Wisdom; however, she fails to note that in the original this portion of Book II, prose 2 is delivered by Boethius's Lady Philosophy, who pretends to speak from the perspective of Fortune. This change stands out as one of King Alfred's chief alterations to his source material, and it places him in rhetorically challenging territory. Since the speech expresses what Fortune herself would say to the suffering Boethius, its contents do not fit comfortably in the mouth of Alfred's Wisdom. Yet, by not acknowledging that the passage comes from this context, Proppe elides the background that would help readers approach "Wisdom himself unexpectedly crying out in frustration" (639).

Eala, hu yfele me doð mænige weoruldmenn mid þæ<m> þ<æt> ic ne mot wealdan minra agenra þeawa. Se heofen mot bringan leohte dagas 7 eft þ<æt> leoht mid þeostrum behelian; þ<æt> gear mot bringan blostman 7 þy ilcan geare eft geniman. Seo sæ mot brucan smyltra yþa 7 ealle gesceafta motan hiora gewunan 7 heora willan bewitigan butan me anum. Ic ana eom benuman minra þeawa 7 eom getogen to fremdu<m> þeawu<m> þurh þa ungefylledan gitsunge woruldmonna. Ðurh þa gidsunga hi me habbað benumen mines naman þe ic mid rihte habban sceolde.

[Alas, in what evil ways many worldly men act toward me that I may not govern my own servants. Heaven may bring light days, and afterwards obscure them with darkness; the year might bring forth blossoms, and the same year take them away. The sea might enjoy calm waves and all creation might keep their customs except me alone. I alone am deprived of my servants and am doomed to foreign customs through the insatiable greed of worldly men. Through greed they have taken away my name which I ought by right to have.] (639)

Proppe characterizes this as "a slip backwards into the chaos of present time" (639), not pointing out how Alfred has turned Philosophy-as-Fortune's rhetorical questions into Wisdom's emphatic statements:

An ego sola meum ius exercere prohibebor? Licet caelo proferre lucidos dies eosdemoque tenebrosis noctibus condere. Licet anno terrae vultum nunc floribus frugibusque redimire, nunc nimbis frigoribusque confundere. Ius est mari nunc strato aequore blandiri, nunc procellis ac fluctibus inhorrescere. Nos ad constantiam nostris moribus alienam inexplata hominum cupiditas alligabit?

[Or will I alone be not allowed to exercise my rights? The sky may bring forth clear days, and then hide them in the darkness of night ; the year may weave a crown of flowers and fruits for the face of the earth, and then confuse and obscure her features with rain and frost ; the sea has a right to smile with a smooth stillness, and then shudder and rise with storms and great waves. But I, shall I be bound by the insatiable desire of men to a constancy quite foreign to my nature?] (Loeb 2p2.21-8)

Boethius's *Philosophy-as-Fortune* presents a defense of her nature: just as all things change and move in cyclical fashion, so must I, and so do you dare continue to suggest through your complaints against me that I should change and somehow be immutable—for your profit and benefit? Alfred's *Wisdom* has been accused of unwisely distributing his “servants”—skill, knowledge, true blessings, true honors—and such charges disrespect his authority and question his judgment. Since Alfred's translation features *Wisdom* as himself here rather than *Wisdom* taking on the persona of *Fortune*, the passage pits the complaining *Mod* against a *Wisdom* who defends himself and his management of earthly goods, rather than against a *Wisdom* whose sarcastic send up of *Fortune* reveals her unreliable and untrustworthy ways.

Moreover, *Wisdom* speaks not of Boethius being invited to ascend the wheel of *Fortune*, as long as he does not feel mistreated when he later (and inevitably) descends, but rather of *Mod* being urged to soar above the storms of life, as long as he later returns to earth to meet the needs of good men: “þu eft mid us þa eorðan secan wille for godra manna þearfe” (Sedgefield 18). Alfred's *Wisdom* is a benevolent force for the virtuous, his work in the world hindered by the greed of evil men who would confuse true blessings with false ones—and thus frustrate his servants. Proppe pulls this passage from its context without accounting for its unusual narratorial situation, using her characterization of it as “a slip backwards into the chaos of present time” as a springboard for her inadequately supported argument suggesting that Alfred could not move “toward order, eternity and love” without being diverted by his own outbursts of “dark chaotic poetry” (639). She even draws her imagery from the passage's context, asserting that the king's expressions of a dark, Germanic ethos “alternat[e] with the vision from above the storm” (639). Fortunately, Proppe's mishandling of these passages

in the service of her over-arching argument does not entirely obscure her excellent use of textual evidence to refute Payne's claims regarding Alfred's view of eternity and natural order.

Proppe rightfully points out that Payne's insistence on Alfred's "substitution of a theory which is based on the idea of freedom for one which is based on the idea of order" (Payne 16) leaves important passages and concepts unconsidered. She also refutes Payne's remarkable position "that Alfred never uses the natural world as a symbol of order, that for Alfred only present time exists and never a vision of eternity as a contrasting state of being" (Proppe 636). However, as Proppe sets out her own argument that the king opens his translation with "an Anglo-Saxon view of the world in terms of chance, exile, mutability, despair, and melancholy" (635), she reads her own conception of "the shape of the Anglo-Saxon world where man despairs as an exile in the outer darkness without the heavenly light of Reason" (637) into her analysis of the text:

Ða ongan se Wisdom hreowsian for þæs Modes tydernesse, 7 ongan þa giddian 7 þus cwæð: Eala on hu grundleasum seaðe þ<æt> mod drigð, þon<ne> hit bestyrmað þisse worulde ungeþwærnessa. Gif hit þon<ne> forget his ahgen leoht, þ<æt> is ece gefea, dringð on þa fre<m>dan þistro, þ<æt> sind woruldsorga, swa swa ðis Mod nu deð, nu hit nauht elles nat butan gnornunga . . . Sittað manfulle on heahsetlu<m>, 7 halige under heora fotu<m> þrycað; sticiað gehyde beorhte cræftas, 7 þa unrihtwisan tælað þa rihtwisan. Nauht ne deregað monnu<m> mane aþas, ne þ<æt> lease lot þe beoð mid þa<m> wrencu<m> bewrigen. Forþa<m> went nu fulneah eall moncyn on tweonunga, gif seo wyrd swa hweorfan mot on yfelra manna gewill, 7 þu [God] heore nelt stiran. (*italics mine*)
[Then began Wisdom to sorrow for Mind's frailty and began to sing and spoke in this way: Alas! How the Mind rushes into a bottomless pit when this world's discord agitates it. If it forgets its own light, that is, eternal joy, and rushes into the outer darkness, that is, the sorrow of the world, as this Mind now does, there is nothing else except lamentation . . . Wicked men sit on the throne and holy men are trampled under their feet; bright skills lie hidden and the unrighteous deride the righteous. Wicked oaths do not injure men at all, nor the false lots which are concealed with fraud. Therefore all mankind goes in doubt if Wyrd may change according to the will of evil men, and You [God] will not control her.] (Proppe 637-8)

The passage preceding Proppe's ellipses comes from Chapters III and IV of Alfred's abbreviated, prose translation of Boethius's Book I, meter 2, while the passage following her ellipses comes from his prose, expanded version of Boethius's Book I, meter 5. However, an examination of the corresponding passages in the *Consolation* do not reveal a major shift on Alfred's part:

Heu quam preacipiti mersa profundo
Mens hebet et propria luce relicta
Tendit in externas ire tenebras,
Terrenis quotiens flatibus aucta
Crescit in immensum noxia cura.
[Ah ! How steep the seas that drown him !
His mind, all dulled, its own light fled,
Moves into outer dark, while noxious care
Swollen by earthbound winds
Grows beyond measure.] (Loeb 1m2.1-5)

At perversi resident celso
Mores solio sanctaque calcant
Iniusta vice colla nocentes.
Latet obscuris condita virtus
Clara tenebris iustusque tulit
Crimen iniqui.
Nil periuria, nil nocet ipsis
Fraus mendaci compta colore.
[And evil ways sit in the thrones of kings,
And wicked men in unjust recompense
Trample beneath their heels the necks of the good.
Virtue's clear brightness lies obscured
In darkness hidden, and the just man bears
The unjust's calumnies.
Their perjuries hurt them not, nor their deceit,
Decked in false colours] (Loeb 1m5.31-8)

There appears to be little that is particularly illustrative of Proppe's Anglo-Saxon world in this fairly straight rendering of the Latin original, although Alfred does provide parenthetical, exegetical commentary ("þ<æt> is ece gefea" [that is, eternal joy] and "þ<æt> sind woruldsorga" [that is, the sorrow of the world]).

However, in the prose account of Book I, meter 5, Alfred also inserts a passage about how terribly unjust circumstances make people wonder whether or not the wills of evil men can affect fate: “*Forþa<m> went nu fulneah eall moncyn on tweonunga, gif seo wyrd swa hweorfan mot on yfelra manna gewill*” (Sedgefield 10). Though without an emphasis on the influence of wicked men, the verse version of this interpolation expresses the theological-apologetic aspect even more forcefully:

*gif ðu nu, waldend, ne wilt wirde steoran,
ac on selfwille sigan lætest,
þonne ic wat þætte wile woruldmæn tveogan
geond foldan sceat buton fea ane.*
[If Thou, O Chieftain, wilt not check Fate,
But sufferest her in self-will to remain,
Then this do I know, that nations will doubt
Far o’er earth’s fields, all but a few.] (Sedgefield 155, 183)

Here, Fate itself has a will and has been allowed by the Wielder to work in the world, and if this cosmological laxity continues, the faith of many will be shaken. However, this verse passage and the prose line that Proppe highlights with italics (*7 þu [God] heore nelt stiran*) would strike one as significantly unique were it not for a preceding passage in Boethius’s *metrum* that Alfred did not fully translate in its context. “*Hominum solos respuis actus / Merito rector cohibere modo*” [Man’s acts alone / You will not, though you rightly could, constrain.] (Loeb 1m5.26-7). The bulk of this original passage has apparently been moved to and expanded within the location that is the subject of Proppe’s analysis. This reference to the actions of men is applied to Wyrd, as is the concluding portion of the *metrum*: “*Rapidos rector comprime fluctus / Et quo caelum regis immensum / Firma stabiles / foedere terras* [Ruler, restrain their rushing waves and make the earth / Steady with that stability of law / By which you rule the vastness of the heavens] (1m5.46-8). These selections illustrate how Alfred has re-cast his source material so that the statement about the Wielder’s rightful power over men and the request for him to exercise that authority are combined into an expression of concern over what people will think of Him if they perceive that He is not proactively ruling over and controlling all that He is capable of ruling, including Fate itself.

King Alfred considered *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* a book most necessary for men to know and, according to the verse preface to his prosimetric rendering, “he greatly desired that he should teach songs to these people.” While this prefatory comment may not in fact have been authorial, it clearly characterizes Alfred’s prose and verse version of the *Consolation* as a functional component within the king’s program of educational reforms. The texts for this project included Pope Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Orosius’s *History*, Augustine’s *Soliloquies*, and Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*. However, the *Consolation* is the least Christian of all the works he intended for his people to know and read in their language. Though Christian, Boethius does not mention Christ or salvation through him or the church, and yet Alfred took up that work and delivered it to the English, re-casting it as he did so from his own perspective—that of a Christian king ruling what he considered (or wanted to be) a Christian realm. Nicole Discenza suggests that Alfred’s *Boethius* presented his England with “cultural capital” with which to trade in new knowledge of old ideas:

readers at any level of learning stood to gain something, whether knowledge of particular names and facts or further mastery of difficult modes of thought, by working their way through the *Boethius*. The text provided a new kind of education for Anglo-Saxons. The training would be useful for those who read further in Alfred’s program, especially readers who encountered the *Soliloquies*, a philosophical dialogue even denser than the *Boethius*. It was an important step for those few who would proceed further to reading Latin texts in the original language and perhaps commenting on or translating those texts themselves. (28)

Thus, Alfred’s translation of Boethius is seen as more than itself, as an important work in its own right that supplied Anglo-Saxon England not only with philosophical consolation but also with intellectual preparation. Similarly, Howard Patch holds that the king’s frequent alterations to and elaborations upon his source were ultimately beneficial to an audience needing culturally relevant associations and linguistically comprehensible explanations: “every touch of originality shows its author’s concern to make the meaning entirely plain to his subjects” (50). Speaking to more specific motives on the king’s part, Discenza posits that Alfred’s “*Boethius* employs Christian modes of interpretation and

authority” and “offers readers a work that could inculcate and reinforce Christian ideas in a less-educated Anglo-Saxon audience” (56). For example, his translations refer to such notable figures and topics as Noah, Nimrod, Jerusalem, the heavenly city, angels, holy martyrs, Christ, Christians, and the devil.¹⁷ In his “How Boethian is Alfred’s *Boethius*,” however, W.F. Bolton warns against seeing such insertions in isolation, since the king also interpolates material on Jove, Saturn, Virgil, and Tarquin (154).

Paul Szarmach and Janet Bately both argue that Alfred’s *Boethius* played an important part in his educational reforms and that the project of spreading literacy and knowledge throughout the kingdom was surpassed only by the king’s efforts to foster Christian wisdom.¹⁸ In fact, as Bately explains in “The Literary Prose of King Alfred’s Reign: Translation or Transformation?”, the dramatic shift from a dialogue between the persona of Boethius and Lady Philosophy to a dialogue between Mod (Mind) and Wisdom was not merely a linguistic necessity for lack of a term for Philosophy, but rather a purposeful re-casting of the principal figures in the text (12-13).¹⁹ Bately also suggests that another major revision in Alfred’s *Boethius* is his presentation of earthly goods through the filter of Augustine and Gregory, so that “[t]emporal things such as wealth, honor, power, and glory, which in Boethius’ eyes could not be good, Alfred views as things that God himself has given to men to bring about good” (20). Katherine Proppe points out, though, how conflicted Alfred appears to have been on the matter of temporal blessing, power, and fame, noting that he “must constantly be swinging from despising them as ends of themselves and needing them as means, to despising them altogether because they interfere with the pursuit of wisdom and God” (647). She concludes that “[t]he desire for glory in the world persists even while humility and the

¹⁷ For an account of these biblical references, see the introduction to Sedgefield’s translation, xxv and xxxi.

¹⁸ For a discussion of Alfred’s educational program and its aim to promote Christian wisdom, consider Paul Szarmach, “The Meaning of Alfred’s *Preface to the Pastoral Care*,” especially 75-81, and Janet Bately, “The Literary Prose of King Alfred’s Reign: Translation or Transformation?”, 9-13.

¹⁹ For more on the debate regarding whether the Mod-Wisdom alteration reflects a conflict between Alfred and his source or some deficiency in the king or in his Old English lexicon, see the following: Anne Payne, *King Alfred and Boethius*, especially 16-21, 31-8, 78-91; W.F. Bolton, “How Boethian is Alfred’s *Boethius*?”, especially 155-56; Kimberly Cook, “Philosophy’s Metamorphosis into Wisdom: An Exploration of King Alfred’s Re-Creation of the Central Symbol in *The Consolation of Philosophy*,” especially 178, 180, 184. Consider also Olga Fischer, “Philosophical Terms in the Alfredian and Chaucerian Boethius,” in which she concludes that “[i]t is clear that the lexical resources of O.E. were more than adequate to deal with the Latin philosophical terms” (637).

life of the mind are being urged” (648). However, W.F. Bolton’s approach to this issue includes the distinction that Boethius would not have repudiated such “false goods” but rather would have considered them “not complete in themselves” and capable of delivering “only partial happiness” (156).

Whatever the king’s educational purposes, then, they were infused with what the Christian tradition brought to bear upon Boethius’s text and upon his project as a whole. For example, Alfred’s handling of mythological materials betrays an anxiety about the moral and theological impact of the text. As Chapter XXXV depicts the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, it concludes with a lesson to be gleaned from the tale:

Ðas leasan (*spell*) læraðgehwylcne mon ðara ðe wilna ð helle ðiostro to flionne 7 to ðæs soðan godes liohte to cumanne, þ<æt> he hine ne besio to his ealdan yflum, swa ðæt he hi eft swa fullice fullfremme swa he hi ær dyde. Forðæm swa hwa swa mid fulle willan his mod went to ðæ<m> ylfum ðe he ær forlet, 7 hi ðonne fullfremeð, 7 hi him þonne fullice liciað, 7 he hi næfre forlætan ne þenceð, ðonne forlyst he eall his ærran good, buton he hit eft gebete.

[These fables teach every man that *would flee from the darkness of hell and come to the light of the True Goodness that he should not look towards his old sins, so as again to commit them as fully as he once did. For whosoever with entire will turneth his mind back to the sins he hath left, and then doeth them and taketh full pleasure in them, and never after thinketh of forsaking them, that man shall lose all his former goodness, unless he repent.*] (Sedgefield 103, 118)

Not looking back toward hell is consistent with Boethius’s version, though the idea is more metaphorical in the myth and not as explicitly theological and doctrinal as it is here in Alfred’s translation, where the emphasis is on leaving sins behind and repenting of them once and for all.

Moreover, in his rendering of the Circe myth in Chapter XXXVIII and in Book IV, meter 3, Alfred considers the stories of her magical powers “leasungu<m>“ [false fables] (Sedgefield, prose, 116, 135) and those who believed in them “dyse[gan]” [foolish ones] (Sedgefield, meter, 196, 230). Alfred also describes Jove as having duped a foolish people into revering him:

se Iob was hiora cyning, 7 licette þ<æt> he sceolde bion se hehsta god ; 7 þ<æt> dysige folc him gelyfde
[Job [Jove] was their king, and feigned that he was the highest god, and the silly folk believed him.] (Sedgefield 115, 133-4)

se wæs gio cyning.
Se licette litlum 7 miclum
gumena gehwylcum þ<æt> he god wære,
hehst and halgost; swa se hlaford þa
þ<æt> dysige folc on gedwolan lædde,
oððæt him gelyfde leoda unrim
[This Jove was a king
Who to great and little lying feigned,
To every good man, that he was a god
Most high and holy. Thus this hero
The silly people pleased with error,
Till countless folk his feigning trusted ;] (Sedgefield 194, 228)

Thus, figures from Greek mythology and the myths themselves are characterized as foolish lies and silly stories. Klaus Grinda's "The Myth of Circe in King Alfred's *Boethius*" concludes that the king tells this story "with the Christian-didactic purpose of rendering it factually and morally less ambiguous to an audience lacking a secular-classical education" (252).

Another instance of the king's effort to cast his own version of the *Consolation* comes in the prefatory passages on Boethius's demise, an account that stands as a notable exception to the general rule and tradition that Boethius is to be portrayed as an innocent victim of political intrigue or even as a martyr who opposed the Arian emperor. In fact, both the prose and prosimetric versions of the Alfredian *Boethius* depict him as having attempted to depose Theodoric:

þa ongan he smeagan 7 leornigan on him selfu<m> hu he þ<æt> rice þa<m>unrihtwisian cyninge aferran mighte, 7 on ryhtgeleaffulra 7 on rihtwisra anwealde gebringan
[he began to muse and cast about within himself how he might wrest the sovereignty from the unrighteous king and restore it to them of the true faith and of righteous life] (Sedgefield 7, 2)

*angan þa listum ymbe
ðencean þearflice, hu he ðider meahste*

*Crecaſ oncerran, þæt ſe caſere eft
anwald ofer hi agan moſte.*

He planned and brooded [Then with cunning
The Greeks to his country, how he might bring
Might have full power that once more the Caesar
 o'er his people.] (Sedgfield 153, 179)

However, the emphasis in the context of the prose version is upon restoring right rule and ridding the land of apostasy, so that any sense of betrayal or stigma that one might associate with Boethius's actions is mitigated. Likewise, in the context of the poetic translation here, we find Boethius and his countrymen suffering under the dominion of usurping foreigners, and they face a political situation wherein they have had to yield their father's treasures: "*wæs gehwæðeres waa*" [hard was the loss!] (Sedgfield 152, 178), or more literally, woe was to each of them. Moreover, "*þeod wæs gewunnen / wintra mænigo*" [the folk was stressed / Many a winter] (Sedgfield 152, 178). Consequently, the time is ripe for some kind of action, and Boethius is the one who takes it, not as a treacherous rebel but as a cunning leader, hoping to drive an oath-breaking heretic from his land. Thus, although Alfred's translations do not exalt Boethius as an innocent martyr, they do present him as a rebel with a just cause, as a hero who acted against Theodoric out of faithfulness and fealty to his own people, eager to right the unrighteous king's wrongs.

The passages discussed above appear to support W. F. Bolton's assertion that while the "Alfredian alterations betray no deficit of Anglo-Saxon culture" ("How Boethian is Alfred's *Boethius*?" 163), they are not evidence of philosophical opposition or repudiation: "Even less are they the outcome of any disagreement of Alfred's with Boethius, a 'personal statement' by the English king. Alfred's translation program was not concerned with speculative philosophy as 'one man's view' but as a subject for study" (163). In contrast, Szilvia Malaczkov suggests that the king's version "is an excellent example of culture *interfering* with translation" (34, emphasis mine), a characterization that appears to have been based on her view of "equivalence" as an ideal to which Alfred does not aspire, much less adhere. However, what one considers interference another may see as intersection, a convergence of culture and language and a

meeting of idea and idiom. Moreover, it does not seem fitting to emphasize here how the all-prose and prosimetric versions illustrate some kind of conflict between (extrapolated constructions of) the Boethian and Anglo-Saxon worldviews, but rather how the king's translations demonstrate his political, exegetical, and pedagogical interests, even as they are presented in the language and within the literary forms and conventions of Old English prose and poetry. Bolton, however, hesitates to read Alfred's *Boethius* against some Latin version, since "no such original was available to him. For us to compare his version with the Boethian text is, naturally, to remark on the differences between them, but direct comparison is misleading" (163). Yet, some useful comparisons can also reveal what the king's translation may share in common with what is believed to have been available to him in a Latin source. Such analysis may serve as a necessary corrective against scholars and students isolating passages that (by themselves) appear particularly Germanic or Anglo-Saxon and framing them as illustrative of Alfred's inability or unwillingness to render various tenets of Boethian philosophy.

King Alfred and the Consolation of Eternity

Book I, meter 5

One of the striking differences between the prose and verse renderings of this *metrum* is how often the poem emphasizes the creator's sheer strength, a characteristic not explicitly mentioned at all in Alfred's prose translation. Mod exclaims that "*ðurh ðine halige miht*" [through Thy holy might] (Sedgefield 155, 182) God makes the swiftly moving heavens hear him. Through alliteration, this phrase from a second half-line is linked by the overtly Judeo-Christian modifier "halige" to its preceding half-line, "*hefon ymbhwearfest*" [the round heaven] (155, 182). Poetic concerns may also have influenced the use of "*ðurh ðine meht*" [through Thy strong power] (155, 182) in an off-verse that follows "*ðiostro adwæsceð*" [darkness scattereth] (155, 182), as this is the only instance among these four references to divine might where the "*ðurh ðine*" portion of the prepositional phrase carries alliterative stress. The last two examples of this "*ðurh ðinra*"

construction feature alliteration with the term itself (“*meahta*,” “*mehta*”): “*mona gemetgað; ðurh ðinra meahta sped*” [The moon doth humble, through Thy might’s moving] (Sedgefield 155, 182) and “*monna cynne, ðurh ðinra mehta sped*” [Even this race of men, through Thy mighty power] (Sedgefield 156, 183). In the context of this *metrum*’s argument and plea for greater divine intervention, Alfred’s purposeful repetition of the prepositional phrase “*ðurh ðine*” or “*ðurh ðinra*” suggests that just as the creator’s strength sustains the movement and controls the forces of the universe, it may also be exerted on behalf of men. The swift heavens, the rising sun, the waxing moon—all move through His power, and so also may His pity move Him to act mightily for the sake of mankind.

In accordance with Mod’s prefatory aim to “*geornlice to Gode cleopian*” [call earnestly upon God] (Sedgefield 9, 4), Alfred inserts into his prose text an additional call for divine intervention, introducing the complaint against fate with a version of the later “*O iam miseras respice terras / . . . Operis tanti pars non vilis / Homines . . .*” [Look on this wretched earth . . . Of that great work far from the meanest part / We men . . .] (Loeb 1m5.42-5) passage: “*Eala þu almihtiga scieppend 7 rihtend eallra gesceafta, help nu þinu<m> earmum moncynne*” [‘O Almighty Creator and Ruler of all things, help now Thy poor people!'] (Sedgefield 10, 5). This apparent use of one of the concluding sections here in the middle of Book I, meter 5 seems even more evident in Alfred’s verse translation of the *metrum*:

*wella, ðu eca 7 ðu ælmihtiga
ealra gesceafta sceppend 7 reccend ;
ara ðinum earmum eorðan tudre,
monna cynne, ðurh ðinra mehta sped.*
[Ah! Thou Eternal and Thou Almighty
Author and Ruler of all creation,
Pity the offspring of Thy poor world,
Even this race of men, through Thy mighty power.] (Sedgefield 156,
183)

The alliterating elements here are the fundamental components of this prayer: *eca-ælmihtiga*, *gesceafta-sceppend*, *earmum-eorðan*, *monna-mehta* [eternal-Almighty,

creation-Creator, poor-earth, men-might]. Moreover, by characterizing the creator as “*eca*” [eternal], the prosimetrum reiterates what both the prose and verse translations of Book I, meter 5 establish at the outset: like the Latin original, these renderings portray the maker of all creation as one whose reign over the universe is everlasting: “perpetuo nixus solio” [Seated on your eternal throne] (Loeb 1m5.2); “*ecan setle*” [eternal throne] (Sedgefield, prose, 10, 5), “*heahsetle / ecum*” [high-seat / Eternal] (Sedgefield, verse, 155, 182). It is from this perspective of eternity that he overlooks all that has been made and all that rises or falls, goes out or returns.

Bookended by such pleas for divine intervention, the prose version of the subsequent complaint against Fortune reflects what is found in Boethius, except that its phrasing directs the frustration not at the world generally nor even at Fortune in particular, but at God himself: “*Nam cur tantas lubrica versat / Fortuna vices ?*” [Why else does slippery fortune change so much ?] (Loeb 1m5.28-9); “*Hwy þu la Drihten æfre woldest þ<æt> seo wyrd swa hwyrfan sceolde?*” [Wherefore, O Lord, hast Thou ever suffered that Fate should change as she doth?] (Sedgefield 10, 5). Here, the Lord is more explicitly identified as the one who rules over fate, allowing it freedom to operate in the world according to her nature.²⁰ The metrical rendering, however, suggests that evil men have been allowed to affect the workings of fate, willing her to move and turn at the impulse of their wicked wills:

hwi ðu, ece god, æfre wolde
þ<æt> sio wyrd on gewill wendan sceolde
yflum monnum ealles swa swiðe?
 [Why, O God Eternal, grantest Thou ever
 That Fate at the will of wicked mortals
 Should turn herself on earth so swiftly?] (Sedgefield 156, 183)

Again, God is described as “*ece*” [eternal], indicating that his position in relation to fate and to evil men is one that is defined by the difference between eternity and time, infinite and finite—thus foreshadowing the discussion of fate and providence in Book IV, prose 6

²⁰ For further discussion of the subordinate role of *wyrd* in Alfred’s *Boethius*, see Jerold C. Frakes, “The Ancient Concept of Casus and its Early Medieval Interpretations,” 15-23.

and the discourse on eternity in Book V, prose 6. Note, though, that Sedgefield's translation of "wicked mortals" rather than "evil men" for "*yflum monnum*" emphasizes mortality more explicitly and thus draws the distinction between the eternal and the finite even more sharply. That God would not intervene and exert more control over the temporal elements and forces under his rule practically amazes Mod.

Like the addresses to the creator that bookend this complaint, concerns about the unrestrained actions of fate surround the examples of what happens when the wicked ride the upward turn of Fortune's wheel with impunity. In the prose version, the initial question about fate's freedom to operate does not address the idea that she might be moved by evil men's wills, while the concluding statement does: "*Forþa<m> went nu fulneah eall moncyn on tweonunga, gif seo wyrd swa hweorfan mot on yfelra manna gewill*" [Wherefore well-nigh all men shall turn to doubt, if Fate shall change according to the will of wicked men, and Thou wilt not check her.] (10, 5-6). The verse rendering, however, mentions the concern about evil men in the initial question but not in the concluding passage, where it characterizes fate's actions as her own, independent movements:

*gif ðu nu, waldend, ne wilt wirde steoran,
ac on selfwille sigan lætest,
þonne ic wat þætte wile woruldmæn tweogan
geond foldan sceat buton fea ane.*
[If Thou, O Chieftain, wilt not check Fate,
But sufferest her in self-will to remain,
Then this do I know, that nations will doubt
Far o'er earth's fields, all but a few.] (Sedgefield 156, 183)

Mod is as much an apologist or an evangelist as he is a plaintiff, here, worried that many of the world's men will not place their faith in the Wielder if one under his rule, *wyrd*, continues to exert her will throughout the earth. However, Alfred's *metrum* also seems intensely interested in the epistemological problem when "*fírum uncuð / hwi sio wyrd swa wo wendan sceolde*" [no man may find out / Why Fate falleth so foully awry] (156, 183).

In his prose translation, Alfred omits the potentially disturbing lines about what happens when wicked men achieve authority: “Sed cum libuit viribus uti, / Quos innumeri metuunt populi / Summos gaudent subdure reges [And when they please to use their power, / Then they delight to overcome great kings / Whom countless people fear] (Loeb 1m5.39-41). The king’s verse rendering, however, does offer a version of this passage:

unrihtwise eallum tidum
habbað on hospe ða þe him sindon
rihtes wisran, rices wyrðran. (Sedgefield 156)
 [Whereas the sinful in every season
 Treat most evilly all those others
 That are more righteous, to rule more worthy.] (Sedgefield 183)

Here, the adverbial phrase “*eallum tidum*” [in all seasons] emphasizes the continual threat posed by evil men, suggesting that, unlike the more predictable rising and setting of the sun or waxing and waning of the moon, the ambitions of the wicked are an ever-present concern for the righteous ruler. This translation also heightens the moral aspect of the troubling problem: a pronoun with a distant antecedent in the Latin becomes an explicit subject in the Old English (“*unrihtwise*” [unrighteous ones]); consequently, those who take pleasure in the conquering of great, fearful kings become those who deal evilly with those whose wisdom, righteousness, and worthiness make them more fit to hold power over others.

The attention here to those who are more righteous and more worthy to rule may usefully be read alongside Alfred’s prefatory historical-biographical sketch on Boethius, where he depicts Boethius’s attempts to undermine the rule of Theodoric as motivated by a desire for orthodoxy and righteousness. Interestingly, it is not the king’s verse version of this introductory material that presents the righteous rule defense more directly and with greater relevance to the verse translation of Book I, meter 5 passage, but rather his prose translation:

Pa ongan he smeagan 7 leornigan on him selfu<m> hu he þ<æt> rice
þa<m>unrihtwisan cyninge aferran mighte, 7 on ryhtgeleaffulra 7 on

rihtwisra anwealde gebringan
[he began to muse and cast about within himself how he might wrest the
sovereignty from the unrighteous king and restore it to them of the true
faith and of righteous life.] (Sedgefield 7, 2)

The variations here between the prose and verse texts serves as an interesting example not only for the Alfredian authorship issue but also for the priority controversy, as a key passage on royal power and righteous rule is attested only in the poetic version of this *metrum*, which some consider the later of Alfred's two translations. Yet, similar sentiments on righteous rule are expressed not in the verse account of Boethius's demise but rather in its prose counterpart.

As Alfred renders both the prose and verse translations of the conclusion to Book I, meter 5, he emotionalizes the address, shaping the language of his prayer according to the personality he ascribes to the creator.

Eala min Drihten, þu þe ealle gesceafta ofersihst, hawa nu mildelice on þas earman eorþan, 7 eac on eall moncyn, forþa<m> hit nu eall winð on þa<m> yðum þisse worulde.
[O my Lord, Thou that beholdest all that Thou has made, look now in Thy lovingkindness upon this miserable earth, and also upon all mankind, for that at this present it is all struggling with the waves of this world.]
(Sedgefield 10, 6)

Mod offers his supplication as a servant of the Lord, placing his hope in one he believes to be merciful, expressing, then, a more Judeo-Christian than Neoplatonic vision of God. This is expressed in more personal, anthropomorphic terms in the verse translation:

*eala, min Dryhten, ðu þe ealle ofersihst
worulde gesceafta, wlit nu on moncyn
mildum eagum, nu hi on monegum her
worulde yðum wynnad 7 swincað,
earme eorðwaran ; ara him nu ða.*
[O my Sovereign, Thou that seest
All worldly creatures, with eyes of kindness
Look on mortals, for they are moiling,
Battling here in the world's billows,
Poor folk of the earth ; pity them therefore.] (Sedgefield 156, 183)

Here, the Lord does not oversee his handiwork with cold objectivity, impersonal detachment, or even efficient management; his are mild, kind eyes. However, the complaint of Boethius does not place as much emphasis on the personality of the creator and does not directly appeal for divine pity as much as it requests equal treatment under the law:

O iam miseras respice terras
Quisquis rerum foedera nectis.
Operis tanti pars non vilis
Homines quatimur fortunae salo.
Rapidos rector comprime fluctus
Et quo caelum regis immensum
Firma stabiles foedere terras.
[Look on this wretched earth,
Whoever you are who bind the world with law!
Of that great work far from the meanest part
We men are buffeted by fortune's seas.
Ruler, restrain their rushing waves and make the earth
Steady with that stability of law
By which you rule the vastness of the heavens.] (Loeb 1m5.42-8)

Boethius the character expects greater consistency in a universe ruled by this single, mysterious, law-giving entity. As impressive as the regular movements of the heavens may be, the injustices suffered upon the earth prompt him to seek the attention of his maker and to suggest that the same kind of orderly regulation can and should be applied to the lives of men, who are not so insignificant to the cosmos that their struggle within it should go unnoticed. Alfred's verse rendering in particular emphasizes the personality of an eternal *Dryhten* who is expected to act not out of fairness or equality but out of mercy and pity, lovingly helping mankind overcome life's storms.

Book II, meter 3

This poem re-casts the comments from Book II, prose 2, as the narrative voice of Philosophy-as-Fortune (Alfred's Wisdom) uses examples from nature to argue that she should also be allowed to vary and change: sunny days turn to dark nights, blooms and fruits are driven to the ground by storms, and the ocean's calm surface rises up with the

wind and the waves. However, the concluding lines of Alfred's prose and verse renderings do not take a directly challenging, pedagogically-motivated stance, since both texts omit the last four lines of the *metrum*:

Crede fortunis hominum caducis,
Bonis crede fugacibus
Constat aeterna positumque lege est
Ut constet genitum nihil.
[Go on, then : trust in the passing fortunes,
The fleeting pleasures of men !
It is decreed by firm, eternal law
Nothing that comes to be can firm remain.] (2m3.15-8)

The king's translation does not place such a sarcastic (and potentially confusing) suggestion in the mouth of Wisdom, and it does not proclaim the universal law of mutability that applies to the world of becoming. Instead, each of his versions ends with an elegiac lament for the unstable earth and its transitory nature:

Rara si constat sua forma mundo,
Si tantas variat vices
[Earth's beauty seldom stays, but ever changes.] (2m3.13-4)

Eala þ<æt> nanwuht nis fæste stondendes weorces a wuniende on worulde
[Alas! there is nothing in the world that endureth firmly for ever!]
(Sedgefield 21, 19)

eala, þ<æt> on eorðan auht [fæstlices
weorces on] worulde ne wunað æfre
[Alas, that in the world nothing weareth
Firm and lasting long on this earth !'] (Sedgefield 158, 186)

Both Old English versions deliver this last statement as a complaint against the problem of mutability, rather than as an overtly didactic proclamation that sums up the preceding observations. The basic point is the same, but the principle is not explicitly described as an eternal rule. Instead, both the prose and the verse translations place the emphasis on the conditions of the world, focusing on the earth and its inherently ephemeral qualities. Whereas Boethius's *metrum* makes a more general statement about the law governing mutable, temporal life and generated, finite matter, Alfred's versions specifically mention

terrestrial existence, drawing an implicit parallel between what is “*on worulde*” or “*on eorðan*” and whatever else may exist outside of and beyond the world that does in fact endure firmly. Even though the king omits the *aeterna lege* phrase, he follows the spirit of the passage, allowing for the possibility that something may exist that is not generated, that is untouched by the eternal law that all earthly matter must obey.

Book II, prose 7

As he renders Wisdom’s lecture on the futility of earthly fame, Alfred offers not a general depiction of famous men for whom a written record does not exist, but rather a more pointed castigation of the historians and authors who would have been responsible for creating and maintaining such accounts:

Sed quam multos clarissimos suis temporibus viros scriptorum inops
delevit oblivio !

[But how many men famous in their own time are now completely
forgotten, for want of written record ?] (Loeb 2p7.46-7)

hit oft swiðe sarlice gebyrede þurh þa] heard[*sælþa þara writera*] ðæt hi
for [*heora slæwðe 7 for gi*]meleste 7 eac [*for recceleste for*]leton unwrite
[*þara monna ðeawas*] 7 hiora dæda, þe o[*n hiora dagum*] formæroste [7
weorðgeornuste] wæron.

[it hath often cruelly happened, through the sloth and neglect and
carelessness of unlucky historians, that the character and deeds of the
foremost and most ambitious men of their day have been left unwrite.]
(Sedgfield 43-4, 45)

Highlighting the pervasiveness of this problem, the king’s Wisdom does not mention the amount of men it has affected (“*multos viros*”), but refers instead to the frequency (“*oft*”) and nature (“*swiðe sarlice*”) of its occurrence. Famous men are lost to history far too often, and this loss is painful and grievous, for through no fault of their own, such renowned figures leave no lasting record of their lives, and their fame fades with time. Boethius’s Lady Philosophy points out that even in a man’s own country the national memory cannot preserve the fame of those who have fallen into the shadow of the past, that even at home (where written accounts could be read and understood) some texts just do not get written. Alfred’s Wisdom, however, accuses the writers of laziness and

reckless neglect. They should have paid better attention and worked harder (if they possibly could have), thus proving their own abilities and worth as they memorialize the worthy: “swa swa hi sceoldon [*gif hi dohton*]” [as they would have done if good for anything] (Sedgfield 44, 45).

Lady Philosophy questions her patient, urging him to place his concept of worldly fame in perspective, to regard it in view of eternity: “Quod si aeternitatis infinita spatia pertractes, quid habes quod de nominis tui diurnitate laeteris ?” [But if you really consider the infinite space of eternity, have you any reason to rejoice in the long life of your own name ?] (Loeb 2p7.51-3). Alfred’s translation of this passage focuses upon the general nature of what Wisdom sees as a transitory existence, asking Mod to consider eternity, not as a concept or an abstraction, but as life that never ends:

[7 *eow þincð*] þeah þ<æt> ge hæbben ece [*are gif ge mæ*]gen on ealre eowerre [*worulde ge*]earnigan þ<æt> ge hæbben [*godne hlisan*] æfter eowrum *dagum*.*Gif þu nu* getelest þa hwila þisses [*andweardan*] lifes 7 þisses hwilendlican [*wið þæs*] ungeendodan lifes hwila, [*hwæt*] bið hit þonne?

[And yet ye men think to have eternal honour, if ye can by lifelong effort earn glory after your days! If thou wilt compare the moments of this present fleeting life with those of the life unending, what do they come to?] (Sedgfield 44, 45)

Here, the comparison is not exactly between relatively short-lived renown and the vastness of eternity, but rather between time passing within a temporal existence and time passing in an existence wherein nothing ceases to live. The consolation such a consideration could give someone like Mod would extend beyond the concerns about fame, popularity, or longevity, and it would apply to anything that occurs within a world where nothing lasts and everything changes and eventually passes away. Seen in view of unending life, whatever has been lost to history already, and whatever will be forgotten tomorrow should cause Mod little worry.

In fact, Alfred renders Lady Philosophy’s moment as “þa lengu þ[*ære hwile*] þe þu þin eage on beprewan mæge” [the length of time in which thine eye can wink] (44,

45), hardly worth considering in the context of ten thousand years, much less in light of an immeasurable infinity. Alfred returns to the prospect of unending life as he translates “interminabilem diurnitatem” [the infinite length of time] (Loeb 2p7.58): “*Tele nu þon þ<æt> ten þusend geara, ge þeah þu ma wille, wið þ<æt> ece 7 þæt ungeendode lif*” [Now compare ten thousand years, or more if thou wilt, with everlasting and eternal life] (Sedgefield 44, 45). Again, he cannot seem to describe the idea of immeasurable time without alluding to the Judeo-Christian concept of eternal, unending life itself, of conscious existence outside of time. Furthermore, when the king does discuss infinity without mentioning life that never ends, he supplies an illustration of the concept he translates, using the end of this middle-earth as its basis:

infiniti vero atque finiti nulla umquam poterit esse collatio.
[but there can never be any proportion between the finite and the infinite.]
(Loeb 2p7.60-1)

Forþæ]m hit nis no to [*metanne þ<æt> gee*]ndodlice wið ðæt [*ungeendodlice. Þe*]ah þu nu telle [*from þises m*]iddangeardes fru[*man oð ðone*] ende, 7 mete þonne [*þa gear wið*] þ<æt> ðe nænne ende næfð, [*þonne*] ne bið þær nauht anlices.
[Thus then the finite and the infinite cannot be measured together. If thou wert to count from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, and set all those years against infinity, there would still be no comparison.]
(Sedgefield 44, 45-6)

Apparently not content to offer only a declaration about the impossibility of comparing what can end to what cannot, Alfred’s Wisdom hypothetically suggests that Mod go ahead and try to gather up all the years within time and line them up against that which can never have an end.

As he concludes this portion of Wisdom’s discourse, Alfred emphasizes the mental aspects of Mod’s struggle to renounce concern for earthly fame. Whereas Lady Philosophy accuses her patient (and, by extension, mankind in general) of “nescitis et relictæ conscientiæ virtutisque” [ignoring the excellence of the knowledge of your own virtue] (Loeb 2p7.65), Wisdom rebukes Mind for “7 forsioð þa cræftas eoweres ingeðonces 7 eowres andgietes 7 eowre gescead wisnesse” [neglecting the powers of your

reason, of your understanding, and of your judgement] (Sedgefield 44-5, 46). The suffering Boethius should have been able to rely upon mental strength—trusting the dictates of his own conscience, content with the measure of his own virtue (against what he knows to be virtuous), and unconcerned with the opinions of others. Wisdom exhorts Mod to marshal his wits, to work out in his thoughts and his understanding what a reasonable way to live may be, regardless of how men choose to reward good deeds: “godena *weorca* mede” (Sedgefield 45). The focus is not so much on virtue as it is on discernment, on weighing what he sees against what he knows and reasoning his way toward desire for and faith in God’s provision: “*Wilnigað þærto þære mede þe ge to Gode sceolden*” [*a reward which ye should seek from God alone*] (45, 46). This interpolation alludes to various New Testament texts, among them Christ’s claim that he does not accept praise from men and his rebuke for those who desire praise from one another but not from God (John 5:41-44). The Apostle Paul suggests that one’s work ethic ought to come from willingness to serve Christ and not men, as well as from trust in the Lord’s reward for those who do good (Colossians 3:23-24). Between the emphasis upon unending life and the exhortation to seek God’s eternal *mede*, Alfred’s translation of this passage takes on a decidedly Christian tone.

Book III, meter 9

Addressing the creator directly, Alfred’s opening lines offer psalm-like praise to a lord, a ruler whose wisdom holds his realm together:

*Eala, Dryhten, hu micel 7 hu wu<n>derlic þu eart, þu ðe ealle þine
gesceafta gesewenlice 7 eac ungesewenlice wunderlice gesceope 7
gesceadwislice heora weltst*

[O Lord, how great and how wonderful Thou art, Thou that didst
wonderfully fashion all Thy creatures, visible and invisible, and rulest
them wisely.] (Sedgefield 79, 87)

[*hwæt, ðu*] ece God, ealra gesceafta
wun[*dorlice w*]el gesceope
ungesewenlica, [*7 eac swa s*]ame
gesewenlicra softe wealdest,

scirra gesceafta, mid gesceadwisum
 mægne 7 cræfte.
 [O Thou God Eternal of all creation,
 Thou hast wondrously well created
 Unseen creatures, and also those
 That are seen of men! Softly Thou rulest
 The bright creation with Thy craft
 And power of wisdom.] (Sedgefield 177, 208)

Responding to the metrical translation, Paul Szarmach's "The *Timaeus* in Old English" asserts that Alfred's rendering of this passage includes a version of "the Nicene Creed's "Creator of all things visible and invisible" (259). Both the prose and verse renderings highlight God's ability not only to form seen and unseen creatures but also to rule them wisely, so that the power celebrated here includes not only the creative origination of matter and substance but also the skillful organization of such wonderful creatures. The metrical translation, though, elaborates upon the depiction of God, describing him as eternal and his rule as soft or gentle, thus noting qualities both of his nature and of his character. However, whereas the prose version begins with this direct, unqualified praise of the wonder-working lord, the verse rendering reserves this reverent awe for only those who recognize it, for those who have the wisdom to know it:

*Eala, min Drihten, þ<æt> þu eart ælmih[tig,
 m]icel, modilic, mærpum gefræ[ge,]
 7 wundorlic witena gehwylcum.
 [O my Master, Thou art Almighty,
 Great and noble, in glory famous ;
 And Thou art wonderful to all with wisdom!]* (Sedgefield 177, 208)

The fame of this almighty *Drihten* has gone before him but has fallen only on the wise, his achievements and exploits not readily obvious to all.

Moreover, the Lord's orderly rule has directed the movements of time itself, the periods and moments occurring under his watch, for as Alfred suggests (and as Sedgefield translates), even the seasons of the year are on a course that brings them near for a while and then takes them far away for a time:

*ðu ðe tida fra<m> middaneardes fruman oð ðone ende endebyrdlice
gesettest, swa þ<æt>te hi ægþer ge forð farað ge eft cumað*
[O Thou that hast appointed the seasons in due order from the beginning
of the world to the end thereof, so that they fare forth and again return]
(Sedgfield 79, 87).

Du þysne middangear[d]
from fruman ærest forð oð ende
tidum totældes, swa hit getæsos[t] wæs,
endebyrdes, þ<æt> hi æghwæðer
ge ær faraðge eft cumað.
[Thou to this world
From first beginning forth to the ending
Hast dealt out seasons, as it most suited,
In regular order, such that they ever
Are faring out, or else returning.] (Sedgfield 177-78, 208)

In this interpolated passage, Alfred alludes to the core concept developed later in the narrative—that God exists outside of time and, from the perspective of eternity, manages the movements that make time possible and mark its passage. The seasons come and go for those in the finite world, each period defined by a beginning and an end, and middle-earth itself set in place by the infinite creator.

Alfred then presents God’s stability among all other moving and movable things as a matter not only of his nature but also of his unique strength:

forþa<m> ðe nan mihtigra þe nis, ne nan þin gelica
[For none is mightier than Thou, none like unto Thee.] (Sedgfield 79, 87)

nis nan mihtigra ne nan mærra,
ne geond ealle þa gesceaft efnlica þin
[None is mightier, none more famous,
Nor midst all creatures is Thy match to be found.] (178, 208)

It is as though God stands against the shifting and swirling universe, resisting the flow of its current and the force of its momentum. He has also brought forth his creation without help and without outside influence, not needing to be schooled in the art of making:

ne þe nan neodþearf ne lærde to wyrctanne þ<æt> þ<æt> ðu worhtest; ac mid þinu<m> agenu<m> willan 7 mid þinu<m> agenu<m> anwealde þu ealle þing geworhtest, ðeah ðu heora nanes ne beþorfte [nor did any necessity teach Thee to make that which Thou hast made ; but by Thine own will and with Thine own power Thou hast made all things, needing none] (Sedgefield 79, 87)

ne þe ænig nedþearf næs æfre giet
ealra þara weorca þe þu geworht hafast ;
ac mid þinum willan þu hit worhtes eall,
7 mid anwalde þinum agenum
weorulde geworhtest 7 wuhta gehwæt,
þeah ðe nænegu nedðearf wære
eallra þara mærþa.
[And as yet never hast Thou felt need
Of all the works which Thou hast wrought,
But by Thy will all Thou hast worked,
And with the power that Thou possessest
Thou hast made the world and every wight ;
Yet no need hadst Thou, none whatever,
Of all this grandeur.] (Sedgefield 178, 208)

Necessity (as some force from without, bearing down upon an object) did not coerce creation from him, nor did he have within himself any need (a lack to fill or an incomplete part to perfect) that compelled him to form all that has been made. Everything that exists has come to be because he has wished it and designed it, using only his abilities and strength to accomplish his purposes. The implication here is that nothing else can claim such primacy and preeminence, that everything else can be traced back to a cause of some kind.

Moreover, this prime mover does not only hold goodness within himself but is in fact one with the good which originated with him:

*hit is eall an, þu 7 þin godnes
[Thou and Thy goodness are one] (Sedgefield 79, 87)*

forðon hit is eall an ælces þingces,
þu 7 þ<æt> ðin good
[For they are one only in every wise,
Thou and Thy goodness.] (Sedgefield 178, 209).

In contrast, any good that men possess is something beyond and outside of their selves—a gift from its source:

*Ac eall þ<æt> we godes habbað on þisse worulde, þ<æt> us is uton
cumen; þ<æt> is from þe
[But all the good that we have in this world came to us from without, even
from Thee] (Sedgefield 79, 87).*

us is utan cymen eall þa we habbað
gooda on grundu<m> from Gode selfum
[From outside cometh all we contain
Of good in the world, from God Himself.] (Sedgefield 178, 209)

This emphasis on the all-sufficiency of God and on man's complete dependence upon him for any good at all sounds as much Augustinian as it does Boethian, and it foregrounds the interpolation in Book III, prose 10, where Alfred expands upon Philosophy's image of a divine fountain of goodness:

*Sed quin existat sitque hoc veluti quidam omnium fons bonorum negaru
nequit.
[But that there exists this thing, as it were a kind of fount of all goods,
cannot be denied.] (Loeb 3p10.7-9)*

*Forðy [n]an [mon] ne mæg oðsacan þ<æt> sum good ne sie þ<æt> hehste,
swa swa sum micel æwel 7 diop, 7 irnen mænege brocas 7 riða of
swa cymð ælc good of Gode 7 eft to him.
[No man can deny that there is a certain Good, the highest, like a *great
and deep* spring, whence many brooks and streamlets flow and so
every form of good comes from God and again returns to him.]
(Sedgefield 82, 92)*

This expansion also addresses the concept and metaphor of a circuit, a path upon which souls go out from God and eventually turn homeward—a theme developed more fully later in this *metrum*.

Boethius's Lady Philosophy describes the creative act as having been accomplished *livore carens* (without jealousy, ungrudgingly), distinguishing the *summum bonum* from his counterparts in the Greek pantheon, whose envy and strife often motivated their actions against and on behalf of men. In fact, this idea can be traced back

to Plato's *Timaeus*: "He was good, and what is good has no particle of envy in it; being therefore without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible" (42).

Alfred's *Wisdom* explains why God is able to think and work without anger or jealousy, implying that such emotions arise when one makes unflattering comparisons:

Næfst þu nanne andan to nanum þinge, forþa <m>þe nan cræftigra nis þonne þu, ne nan þin gelica; forþam ðu ealle god mid ðines anes geþeahthe gepohtest 7 geworhtest. Ne bisnode þe nan man, forþa <m>þe nan ær þe næs þara þe auht oððe nauht worhte.

[No enmity hast Thou towards any thing, for none is more capable than Thou, none like unto Thee ; all good things Thou didst plan and bring to pass, of Thy sole contriving. No man set Thee the example, for before Thee none was, either to do aught or to leave undone.] (Sedgefield 79, 87-8)

If none is more crafty, more powerful, or more able, if none shares a likeness with God, then he has no reason to feel envious of another, no cause for petty competition or rivalry. He alone orchestrated creation, for no one else existed who could have given him ideas or assisted in the work. Alfred's metrical version of this passage expresses much the same thing, except that it indicates that no example whatsoever was available (not just that one could not have been offered by some non-yet-created being):

ac ðu butan bysne, brego moncynnes,
æلميhtig God, eall geworhtest
þing þearle good
[But without pattern, Prince of mankind,
God Almighty, all Thou wroughtest,
All very good.] (Sedgefield 178, 209)

The verses also attribute this work to *æلميhtig God*, using a standard Christian epithet to identify the eternal *qui*.

However, while these prose and verse translations of Book III, meter 9 emphasize the *ex nihilo* component of creation, asserting that God formed the universe without having any precedent or pattern, the Boethian text states that it was accomplished according to a heavenly example: "tu cuncta superno / Ducis ab exemplo" (Loeb 3m9.6-7). Lady Philosophy seems to suggest that the *summum bonum* is its own pattern, that

anything that has been made bears the likeness of its source—possessing a beauty, goodness, or perfection that reflects the most fair, good, and perfect maker. Alfred does in fact connect the presence of a good creation to a good creator: “*Ac þu ealle þing geworhtest swiðe gode 7 swiðe fægere, 7 þu self eart þ<æt> hehste god 7 þ<æt> fægereste*” [But Thou hast made all very good and very fair, and Thou art Thyself the highest good and the fairest] (Sedgfield 79, 88). However, since the Old English translations alter the idea of a prime mover drawing from a heavenly pattern to a depiction of a peerless God Almighty standing alone in his creative work, they present the nature of creation as a result of his power and pre-eminence more than as an embodiment of the forms inherent in the eternal Good.

Boethius’s Lady Philosophy extols the creator for having bound the earth, air, fire, and water together by law, keeping them in balance so that none of them escapes from or subsumes any of the others. Alfred’s Wisdom relates this principle in more explicitly social and political terms, describing the elements as faithful citizens and good neighbors: “*sibsu<m>lice gebunden mid þinu<m> bebode, swa þ<æt> heora nan oðres mearce ne ofereode*” [and yet held in bonds of peace by Thine ordinance, so that none of them should overstep the other’s bounds] (Sedgfield 80, 88). Thus, the command has gone out and the subjects obey, dutifully remaining in their place, keeping to their territory, minding the borders established by the king. The verse translation of this passage spells such an arrangement out even more clearly:

þeah anra hwilc wið oðer sie
miclum gemenged, 7 mid mægne eac
fæder ælmihtiges fæste gebunden
gesiblice softe togædre
mid bebode þine, bilewit fæder,
þ<æt>te heora ænig oðres ne dorste
mearce ofergangan for metodes ege.
ac geþweorod sint ðegnas togædre,
cyninges ce<m>pan
[Though each of them be with the other
Much commingled, and with the might also
Of the Father Almighty firmly united,
In harmony single, smoothly together,
By Thy command, O kindly Father,

So that none of them o'er another's bounds
 Dareth trespass, for dread of the Lord,
 But these servants together suffer union,
 The King's champions] (Sedgfield 179, 210)

The powerful parent exerts royal authority, drawing all servants together and keeping the peace. His people fear him, and so they endure the arrangement, uniting under a common cause.

In fact, while Alfred presents the four elements as complementary and mutually beneficial here in this *metrum*, he also suggests that these thanes of the Creator are potential opponents that would strive and contend with one another, his verse translation explicitly stating what is only implied in the prose version: “winn[*að*] hwæðre” [yet are they warring] (verse, 179, 210). As Paul Szarmach suggests, Alfred may have been influenced here by his own diplomatic situation as king, for such a characterization “may bring cosmology close to home, especially if home is a politicized court” (“The *Timaeus* in Old English” 261). Yet, while the Almighty allows this balanced struggle, he regulates the elements (especially fire), so that any one may not dominate the others or harm any other part of creation:

*7 þeah ne mæg nane þara gesceafta eallunga forcuman, forþamþe hit
 næfð leafe þæs ælmihtigan*
 [no creature, however, can it utterly destroy, for it hath not the leave of
 the Almighty] (Sedgfield 80, 89)

þeah hit wiðealla sie eft gemenged
 weoruldgesceafta þeah waldan ne mot
 þ<æt> hit ænig[e] eallunga fordo
 butan þæs leafe þe us þis lif tiode,
 þ<æt> is se eca 7 se ælmihtga
 [Though it is mingled with every member
 Of world-creatures, it cannot avail
 To deal to one of them deadly damage
 Save by the leave of our Life-Giver,
 Even the Eternal Almighty God] (Sedgfield 181, 212)

Though *yfemest* in all creation, far higher than the earth, fire does not have the permission (prose version) or the ability without the permission (metrical rendering) to inflict harm

upon the other, lesser elements. Even here, in the *metrum* on cosmic harmony, the idea of balance is expressed in terms of power, control, and subservience.

Alfred's extended account of the Creator's control over the elements credits the maker with having fashioned a life-sustaining universe, an ideal union of earth, air, fire, and water:

Ne mihte nanwuht libbendes þære eorþan brucan ne þæs wæteres, ne on nauðru<m> eardigan for cile, gif þu hi hwæthwegununga wið fir ne gemengdest
[No living things could enjoy the land or the water, nor dwell in either for the cold, if Thou hadst not in some measure mingled them with fire.]
(Sedgefield 80, 89)

ne meahte on ðære eorðan [aw]uht libban,
ne wuhte [þ]on ma [wa]etre[s brucan,
on e]ardian ænige cræfte
for cele anum, gif þu, cyning engla,
wiðfyre hwæthwugu foldan 7 lagustream
mengdest togædre, 7 gemetgode
cele 7 hæto cræf[te] þine
[On earth nothing were able to live,
Nor would it any more enjoy the water,
Nor dwell in it ever by any device,
For mere coldness, if Thou, King of angels,
Somewhat with fire the land and sea-stream
Had not mingled, and meetly measured
Cold with heat by Thy cunning power] (Sedgefield 180, 211)

Creation has been specially designed to foster and satisfy living things. As the prose translation continues this thought, it explains that God maintains this delicate balance between fire, earth, and water “*Wundorlice cræfte*” [With marvellous skill] (80, 89). The verse rendering says much the same thing, emphasizing to an even greater extent, though, the power/craft/skill of God as it describes how the earth and sea cannot be destroyed by fire, even though both elements contain it: this is “*fæder ealdgeweorc*” [the Father's old work] (180, 211) that was done by “*mid frean cr[æfte]*” [by the Lord's power] (181, 212). Moreover, the earth does not sway or move more than it ought because the glorious King

of warriors has established it so firmly through his “strongan meahht” [strong might] (182, 213).

Alfred’s metrical version concludes this interpolation on the qualities of the earth’s unique balance with a comparison that does not exist in his prose account:

þæm anlicost þe on æge b[ið
g]ioleca onmiddan, glideð hwæðre
æg [ymbut]an ; swa stent eall weoruld
stille on til[le, stream]as ymbutan,
lagufloða gel[ac, lyfte] 7 tungla,
7 sio scire scell scriðeð [ymbut]an
dogora gehwilce ; dyde lange swa.
[This is most like to an egg, where lieth
The yolk in the middle, yet the shell moveth
Around outside ; so standeth the world
Still in its station ; with the streams round it,
The stirring floods, the air and stars,
While the gleaming shell round all glideth
Every day, and long hath done so.] (Sedgefield 182, 213)

Though not original to Alfred,²¹ this unusual image illustrates how the earth is preserved in its position in the universe, unbroken by the surrounding elements; moreover, by taking an example from nature, it suggests a kind of uniformity and consistency of design on the part of the Maker. God’s power and craft are demonstrated not only in the precise orchestration of the stars and the planets, but also in the delicate balance of a single egg. Since this passage appears only in Alfred’s verse translation of Book III, meter 9, those who assume that Alfred’s prosimetrum came before his all-prose rendering must confront the question of why this image did not get translated into prose, while those who take the more traditional position on the priority issue must address the fact that this interpolation is evidence that Otho A.vi contains more than has been estimated by scholars such as Leicht, who has posited that the Cottonian meters “offer nothing fresh, such as we should expect of Alfred, but only a weak dilution of the terse and vigorous prose” (qtd. in Sedgefield, 1899, xxxix).

²¹ See Bill Griffiths, *Alfred’s Metres of Boethius*, 35-6; also Walter Sedgefield, *King Alfred’s Old English Version of Boethius’ De consolatione philosophiæ*, xxxiii.

In the next section of Alfred's translation, the passage on the soul's journey out from and back to God takes on a decidedly pedagogical quality, as the Neoplatonic hymn is infused with material on the nature of the human soul: God has stirred the three-fold soul in the limbs "swa þ<æt> ðære sawle þy læsse ne bið on ðam læstan fingre ðe on eallu<m> þa<m> lichoman" [so that there is not less of the soul in the little finger than in the whole body] (81, 90). Suffused with the soul, then, each member of the body contains the same measure of an immeasurable quantity. Szarmach suggests that "particularly for this part of the metre the commentary tradition offers the poet the explanatory material he thinks he needs to effect the *translatio studii* for his vernacular audience" ("The *Timaeus* in Old English" 263). Alfred even acknowledges the support of the sages as he explains the three components of the soul—will, emotion, and reason—and the ways in which these aspects must be managed by those who possess them in full measure:

Forþi ic cwæð þæt sio sawul wære þreofeald, forþa<m>þe uðwitan secgað þ<æt> hio hæbbe þrio gecynd. An ðara gecynda is þ<æt> heo bið wilnigende, oðer þ<æt> hio bið irsiende, þridde þ<æt> hio bið gesceadwis. Twa þara gecynda habbað netenu swa same swa men; oðer þara is wilnung, oðer is irsung. Ac se mon ana hæfð gesceadwisnesse, nalles nan oðru gesceaft; forði he hæfð oferþungen ealle þa eorðlican gesceafta mid geðeahte 7 mid andgite. Forþa<m> seo gesceadwisnes sceal wealdan ægðer ge þære wilnunga ge þæs yrres, forþa<m> hio is synderlic cræft þære saule.

[I said the soul was threefold because philosophers affirm that it hath three natures. One of these natures is to be subject to desire, the second to be subject to passion, and the third that it is rational. Two of these qualities are possessed by beasts in the same way as by men, namely, desire and passion ; no creature, save man alone, hath reason, and therefore he hath excelled all earthly creatures in forethought and sense. Reason must control both desire and passion, for it is a special virtue of the soul.] (Sedgefield 81, 90)

Animals cannot be expected to act according to anything but their desires and instincts, those innate emotional qualities that drive them to eat, sleep, multiply, and fight for survival. However, man alone has reason and is therefore responsible for ruling his will and his passion with the power of this unique feature of the human soul. The verse

rendering delivers the same kind of instruction on the soul, but it also includes a statement about how reason operates within the body and mind of a man:

hio sceal mid geþeahte þegnes mode,
mid *andgite*, ealles waldan.
hio is þ<æt> mæste mægen monnes saule,
7 se selesta sun[*dor*]cræfta.
[She with thought the mind of a thane,
And with reflection shall rule in all things.
She hath most might in man's spirit,
And is most perfect of all his powers.] (Sedgefield 183, 214)

Reason works within a man's mind, using thought and understanding to control everything, and so it is the most powerful force in a man's soul and the best special skill he possesses.

Once again elaborating upon the Neoplatonic hymn in order to further educate and exhort, Alfred's translations imagine various levels or degrees of the soul's turning:

swa swa eall þes rodor hwerfð, oððe swa swa hweol onhwerfð, smeagende ymb hire sceoppend, oððe ymbe hi selfe, oððe ymbe þas eorðlican gesceafta. Þon<ne> hio þon<ne> ymbe hire scippend smeað, þon<ne> bið hio ofer hire selfre; ac þonne hio ymbe hi selfe smeað, þon<ne> bið hio on hire selfre; 7 under hire selfre hio bið þon<ne> ðon<ne> hio lufað þas eorðlican þing, 7 þara wundrað.
[or as a wheel turneth, reflecting on its Creator, on itself, or on these earthly things. When it thinketh on its Creator it is above itself; when it reflecteth on itself it is in itself; and it is beneath itself when it loveth these earthly things and admireth them.] (Sedgefield 81, 90)

Each stage in the turning reveals the soul's ambitions and affections, whether one is wrapped up in worship, self-absorption, or materialism. The phases reflect the attitude of the soul as it turns its attention from contemplating the divine to satisfying the self or loving the world. The metrical rendering reverses the order of the stages and suggests more strongly that the mutability of the soul's affections reveals human weakness:

hweole gelicost ; hwærfeð ymbe hy selfe,
 oft smeagende ymb ðas eorðlican
 drihtnes gesceafta dagum 7 nihtum ;
 [Like to a wheel she whirleth round herself,
 Ofttimes thinking of that which is earthly,
 The Lord's creatures daily and nightly ;] (Sedgefield 183, 215)

The Christian sense of *eorðlican* comes through clearly here, especially since the soul is depicted as constantly meditating on the created things, rather than on the Creator himself. Moreover, as the verse translation closes out this section on the soul's turning, it portrays this materialistic phase as symptomatic of misplaced love, offering a more pointed exhortation than what is found in the prose version:

hio bið swiðe fior hire selfre beneoðan,
 þonne hio þæs lænan lufað 7 wundrað
 eorðlicu þing ofer ecne ræd.
 [Lastly she falleth beneath herself far
 When she admireth these frail things earthly,
 And loveth them all more than law eternal.] (Sedgefield 184, 215)

It is far beneath the soul to set her affections on transitory, earthly things, rather than upon the eternal, firm counsel that would guide her and direct her path.

As Alfred's prose and verse renderings describe the Neoplatonic flight of the soul down from God and back up again, they present the journey in particularly Christian terms:

*Hwæt þu, Drihten, forgeafe þa<m> sawlum eard on hiofonu<m>, 7 him
 þær gifst weorðlice gifa, ælcere be hire geearnunge*
 [O Lord, Thou gavest to souls a home in heaven, and there givest them
 honourable gifts, to each according to its deserving] (Sedgefield 81, 90).

hwæt þu, ece God, eard forgeafe
 sawlum on heofonum, selest weorðlica
 ginfæsta gifa, God ælmihtig,
 be geearnunga anra gehwelcre.
 [O God of ages, Thou gavest a home
 In heaven to souls ; Thou sendest them freely
 Glorious gifts, God Almighty,
 In measure fitting and merits of each!] (Sedgefield 184, 215)

Thus, the journey to the divine is described not so much as a Neoplatonic return but rather as the reward of the righteous, the path taken by the most worthy ones, who have earned a spiritual home for the soul. Standing outside of time and space, beyond the temporal, physical, earthly existence of mortal man, the eternal, almighty God has provided this heaven as he has dispensed all his many gifts—according to the merits of the souls receiving them.

Furthermore, when describing how God also brings forth the souls and lesser lives, the Old English versions compare the spiritual bodies to stars, both of which shine according to the glory they have earned:

*7 gedest þ<æt> hi scinað swiðe beorhte, 7 þeah swiðe mistlice birhtu,
sume beorhtor, sume unbyrhtor, swa swa steorran, ælc be his gearnunga.
[and Thou makest them to shine exceeding bright, and yet with very
various brightness, some more brightly, some less, like the stars, each
according to its merits.] (Sedgfield 81-2, 90-1)*

*[ealle hi scinað ðurh þa sciran neaht]
hadre on heofonum, na hwæðre þeah
e[alle] efenbeorhte. hwæt, we oft gesioð
hadrum nihtum þ<æt>te heofonsteorran
ealle efenbeorhte æfre ne scinað.
[These all are beaming bright in the heavens
In the clear night, but nevertheless
Not equal in light ; lo! we see often,
When serene is the night, the stars in heaven,
Not all beaming with equal brightness.] (Sedgfield 184, 215)*

As Victor Watts points out in a note for his version of this passage, these souls and lesser lives are probably “either souls enclosed in earthly bodies, or lesser souls compared with the world soul” (n. 68). Alfred appears to view them as the souls of men who have been freed from their bodies and who have merited one degree of glory or another, for he continues this interpolation by commenting on the divine hand in the workings of the human soul: “*Hwæt þu, Drihten, gegæderast þa hiofonlican sawla 7 þa eorðlican lichoman, 7 hi on ðisse worulde gemengest*” [*Thou, O Lord, bringest together heavenly souls and earthly bodies, and minglest them in this world*] (82, 91). The verse rendering describes God’s union of body and soul in terms of his eternal nature:

[hwæt] þu, ece God, eac gemengest
 [þa] heofoncundan hider wið eorðan,
 saula wiðlice ; siððan wuniað
 þis eorðlice 7 þ<æt> ece samod,
 saul in flæsce.
 [O God Everlasting! Thou didst also unite
 A thing of heaven to the earthly here,
 Soul to body ; ever since they abide,
 Both the eternal and earthly together,
 The soul in the flesh.] (Sedgefield 184, 215-16)

God himself is eternal, and he has joined the eternal stuff of heaven with the temporal stuff of earth. Though no mention is made of what will later be defined in Book V, prose 6, Alfred's idea of God as the *hehste ecnes* correlates with this passage, where an eternal God directs the course of the eternal soul, since only the Highest Eternity could encompass and control another everlasting thing.

In the subsequent interpolation, Alfred's Wisdom explains that the temporal body must always remain bound by time and space, limited by its corporeal essence:

sceal se lichama last weardigan
 eft on eorðan, forðæm he ær of hire
 weox on weorulde. wunedon ætsomne
 efen swa lange swa him lyfed wæs
 from þæm ælmihtigan þe hi æror gio
 gesomnade ; þ<æt> is soð cining,
 [But the body of man must ever abide
 Here on the earth, for coming from here
 He grew in the world. Together they were
 No longer nor less than to them was allowed
 By the Almighty, who ages aforetime
 Made them comrades ; the true King is He.] (Sedgefield 184, 216)

The soul must depart from the body when the Almighty King determines its time has come, for even the everlasting soul must yield to the rule of the one who stands outside of all temporal existence and judges from the perspective of eternity when earthly life must end for the soul's body.

In his translations of the concluding prayer, Alfred includes a request that appears to be an analogical interpretation of the passage on the soul's journey: "*Forgif nu, Drihten, uru<m> modu<m> þ<æt> hi moton to þe astigan þurh þas earfoðu þisse worulde, 7 of þissu<m> bisegu<m> to þe cuman*" [Grant unto our minds, O Lord, that they may rise up to Thee through the hardships of this world, and from these troubles come to Thee] (Sedgefield 82, 91). Just as souls pass through this earthly life and return to God, so also may human minds endure worldly misery and persevere along the path to the Lord. Though the verse rendering offers the same basic appeal, its appositive phrases for God enhance the potential impact of the text:

forgif nu, ece god, urum modum
 þæt hi moten to þe, metod alwuhta,
 þurg þas earfoðu up astigan,
 7 of þisum bysegum, bilewit fæder,
 þeoda waldend, to ðe cuman
 [Grant to our minds, God Eternal,
 That they may to Thee, Master of all things,
 Through these miseries mount to heaven,
 And from these cares, kindly Father,
 Ruler of nations, may rise to Thee.] (Sedgefield 184, 216)

From his unique standpoint, the "ece god" measures all things, gently overseeing his family and wielding power over the peoples of the earth. The enhanced characterization of God as a "þeoda waldend" who is also a "bilewit fæder" personalizes its treatment of the Neoplatonic reflections on the soul's journey, so that the final prayer in the verse translation appeals more directly not only to the Ruler's great power but also to his paternal care. Thus, the petition calls upon God to help his children rise above their hardships and follow the path that leads to him.

Taking 281 lines of Old English poetry to render 28 lines of Latin verse, King Alfred has certainly expanded upon his original, often employing standard features of his native style to characterize the divine mind: appositive phrases and alliterating half-lines fill out the verse translation, describing and modifying God, the universe and its elements, and the journey of men's souls. Thus, the verse rendering does more than the prose to develop a view of the Almighty and his rule over creation that rests not only

upon the nature of God but also upon his character. The one who has ordered the heavens and earth and created men's souls is not only eternal, immutable, and eminently good, but also wonderful, kind, holy, and powerful, sustaining the universe as its true lord, chief, king, and father. Alfred especially emphasizes the *cræft* of the mighty *Drihten*, whose will and skill wield all things with complete, unassailable wisdom.²²

However, among the qualities of God's nature that are noted in Alfred's verse translation of Book III, meter 9, it is the idea that he is eternal that appears most often. While the prose version (like the Latin source) never specifically attributes the quality of eternity to the immovable creator who controls time, the prosimetrum describes God as *ece* six times: the eternal God over all creation, who has wonderfully well created both seen and unseen creatures; the Eternal and the Almighty who gives life to men and prevents fire from harming the other elements of creation; the eternal God to whom the soul of man sometimes submits when it is not seeking itself; the eternal God who gave a home in heaven to souls; the eternal God who has joined together the eternal soul and the earthly body; the eternal God and Ruler of all things to whom a prayer is offered that men's minds might ascend to where he is, beyond the hardships of life. Choosing the adjective *ece* to alliterate in each of the above instances, the versifier apparently felt that this quality of God's nature was not only useful poetically but also important philosophically and theologically. It is God's eternal nature that allows him to create, to give life, to control the elements, to provide a home for human souls, to join mortal bodies and immortal souls, to rule over everything, and to receive and answer prayers from men.

Book IV, prose 6

As Alfred opens the discussion of providence and fate, he inserts a passage that characterizes God as one who not only oversees the form and order of all things but who

²² For a detailed discussion of Alfred's use of "craft" (in the prose translation), see Discenza's "Power, Skill, and Virtue in the Old English *Boethius*" and *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius*, especially 105-122.

also has given them a reason to exist: “[7 *forþæm hit swa*] *gesceapen wæs, forðæm he wat hwy he gesceop eall þ<æt> he gesceop. Nis him nanwiht unnyt þæs þe he gesceop*” [and, inasmuch as it was so created, He knoweth why He made all that He hath made. Nothing of what He hath made is without use to Him.] (Sedgefield 128, 149). Thus, each created thing has a cause and a purpose, perhaps known only to God, and nothing escapes his providential intent. Moreover, no divine product sits useless or idle, unprofitable to its Maker. Since all creation exists because of him and for him, everything is ultimately available and at his disposal. This passage amplifies the control God exerts over the universe, setting up King Alfred’s comment on the royal power of the Creator over his creatures: “he welt eallra” [He ruleth them all] (128, 149).

After he defines providence and fate and distinguishes between them, Alfred ensures that his readers do not conceive of this treatise as merely a semantic or philosophical quibble over what to call something: “Be þy mæg ælc mon witan þ<æt> hit sint ægþer ge twegen naman ge twa þincg, foreþonc 7 wyrd” [From this every man may know that Providence and Fate are not only two names, but two things.] (128, 149-50). He asserts that *foreþonc* and *wyrd* are not separate terms for the same kind of activity or process, that they refer to two different understandings of how to interpret action beneath the gaze of an eternal God. The king’s translation here also includes an idea that will be developed more fully toward the conclusion of this *prosa*—that God directs all things toward good:

Deah hit us manigfaldlic ðince, sum good, sum yfel, hit is ðeah him anfeald good; forðæm he hit eall to godum ende brengð, 7 for goode deð eall þ<æt> þ<æt> he deð. Siððan we hit hatað wyrd siððan hit geworht bið; ær hit wæs Godes foreþanc 7 his foretiohhung.
[Though it seem to us manifold, partly good, partly evil, yet it is to Him good, pure and simple, for He bringeth it all to a goodly conclusion, and doeth for good all that He doeth. When it is done, we call it Fate ; before, it was God’s forethought and His purpose.] (Sedgefield 128-9, 150).

The pronoun *hit* apparently refers back to the *wyrd* in the previous sentence—to the fate that goes according to the foresight of God, that is just as he has determined it should be. As fate unfolds before us in the temporal universe, sometimes it seems good, and

sometimes it seems evil (or some portion of it appears beneficial to us while another portion seems harmful), but to God fate is not manifold (“manigfaldic”) in nature but singular (“anfeald”), for it always ultimately leads to the good that he purposes and has in mind from his perspective in the eternal present. Thus, if all he does is for good, then nothing that happens can be evil in the cosmic sense, because it serves the greater good of providence.

The most significant alteration to this passage on fate and providence is Alfred’s move from Boethius’s image of rotating concentric circles to a description of a wagon wheel turning on an axle. Wisdom offers Mod this example to teach him which men are under the power of fate and which are not:

Swa swa on wænes eaxe hwearfiað þa hweol 7 sio eax stint stille 7 byrð
 þeah ealne þone wæn, (&) welt ealles þæs færeltes; þ<æt> hw[eo]l hwerfð
 ymbutan 7 sio nafu nex[t þæ]re eaxe sio færð micle fæ[stlicor] 7
 orsorglicor þonne ða fe[lgan don], swelce sio eax sie þ<æt> hehste g[od
 þe we] nemnað God, 7 [þa selestan men fa]ren nehste Gode, swa swa sio
 nafu færð neahst þære eaxe,
 [The wheels of a waggon turn upon its axle, *while the axle stands still and
 yet bears all the waggon and guides all its movement. The wheel turns
 round, and the nave next the wheel moves more firmly and securely than
 the felly does. Now the axle is as it were the highest good we call God, and
 the best men move next unto God just as the nave moves nearest the axle.*]
 (Sedgefield 129, 151)

Though drawing on a different image altogether, this illustration communicates the same basic message—that the immutable stability of God cannot be turned by the workings of fate or the power of man, and that the closer one moves to the *summum bonum*, the less one is affected by the events marked by time and change in a transitory world. For Alfred, the best men draw near to the nave and thus to God, while the average men are divided because they are out away from the nave, over on the spokes and near the fellies—actually in contact with the basest men:

Swa bið þæm midlestan monnum; oðre hwile he smeað on his mode
 y<m>b þis eorðlice (*lif*), oðre hwile ymb ðæt godcundlice, swilce he locie
 mid oðre eagan to heofonum, mid oðre to eorþan.

[and so it is with the midmost man, at one time thinking in his mind upon this earthly life, at another upon the divine life, as if he looked with one eye heavenwards, and with the other earthwards.] (Sedgefield 129, 151).

Thus, the temporal world, where everything turns, changes, and moves, is no place for the mind of man when an infinite and eternal divine reality exists in perfect stability and immutability. However, the mind is divided and the eye distracted by earthly things, so that some are bound by the effects of fate.

Indeed, those most subject to fate find themselves at the greatest distance from God and most affected by fortune's turning wheel—or vice-versa, where those who live at the farthest remove from the divine mind find themselves most subject to fate:

Pa felgea bioð fyrrest ðære eaxe; forðæm hi farað ungeredelicost. Sio nafu færð neaxst þære eaxe; forðy hio færð gesundlicost. Swa doð ða selestan men; swa hi hiora lufe near Gode lætað, (7 swiðor þas eorðlicon þing forsioð), swa hi beoð orsorgan, 7 læs reccað hu sio wyrd wandrige, oððe hwæt hio brenge.

[The fellies are farthest from the axle, and therefore move least steadily. The nave moves nearest the axle, therefore is its motion the most sure. So do the best men ; the nearer to God they set their love, and the more they despise earthly things, the less care is theirs, and the less they reckon how Fate veers, or what she brings.] (Sedgefield 130, 152)

These carefree ones enjoy such freedom because they do not invest themselves in earthly things or in what they can achieve or receive; instead, they fix themselves and their affections on God: “ac swa hi swiður bioð asyndrede fro<m> Gode, swa hi swiður bioð gedrefde 7 geswencte, ægþer ge on mode ge on lichoman” [But the farther they are sundered from God, the more sorely are they confounded and afflicted both in mind and in body] (130, 152). Thus, mental and physical hardship come to those who separate themselves and distance themselves from God and from the perspective of the divine mind that views all things from the perspective of eternity:

Swylc is þæt þ<æt> we wyrd hatað be þæm godcundan foreþonce, swylce (sio) smeaug 7 sio gesceadwisnes is to metanne wið þone gearowitan, 7 swylce þas lænan þing bioð to metanne wið ða ecan, 7 swilce þ<æt> hweol bið to metanne wið ða eaxe; forðæm sio eax welt ealles þæs wænes.

[That which we call Fate is, compared to divine Providence, what reflexion and reason are when measured against perfect knowledge, and as things temporal compared with things eternal, or, again, like the wheel compared with the axle, the axle governing all the waggon.] (Sedgefield 130-31, 152)

Measured and understood in terms of time and space, then, fate resembles the turning wheel that is held by the fixed and stable axle of providence. Likewise, human thought and reason are finite and epistemologically limited when compared to complete understanding of all things simultaneously. Consequently, the closer one draws to the axle, the nearer one is to the immovable God himself in his eternal present, far away from the concerns of a temporal universe marked by change and confusion.

Addressing what was certainly a culturally vital topic, Alfred concludes this passage on fate by challenging the prevailing (pagan) notion that an inexorable fate controls all of life:

Sume uðwiotan [*pe*]ah secgað þ<æt> sio wyrd wealde ægþer ge gesælða ge ungesælða ælces monnes. Ic þonne secge, swa swa ealle [*cris*]tene men secgað, þ<æt> sio godcunde foretiohhung his walde, næs sio wyrd; 7 ic wat þ<æt> hio demð eall þing swiðe rihte, þeah ungesceadwisum men [*swa*] ne þince. Hi wenað þ<æt> þa[*ra*] æl[*c*] sie go[*d þe hiora will*]an fulgæð; nis hit nan wundor, forðæm hi beoð ablende mid ðæm þiostrum heora scylda.

[*Some sages, however, say that Fate rules both weal and woe of every man. But I say, as do all Christian men, that it is the divine purpose that rules them, not Fate ; and I know that it judges all things very rightly, though unthinking men may not think so. They hold that all are good that work their will, and no wonder, for they are blinded by the darkness of their sins.*] (Sedgefield 131, 153)

He offers an explicitly Christian perspective on what for Anglo-Saxons was a commonly expressed cosmological theory and literary motif, laying out the official doctrinal position on the matter for all believers: *wyrd* is subject to divine destiny, and God determines the path of fate, judging rightly how all things should be ordered. Unreasoning men do not think this way, but that is because their sins obscure what they see and cause them to judge as good only those things that accomplish their will and purpose. Again, Alfred's

approach to man's epistemological problem includes a view of human fallenness. It is not just that men are limited by what they are capable of seeing and knowing, but that they are also confused and deceived by their own sinfulness, selfishness, and impurity of thought and motive.

Accordingly, the king's version asserts that men are foolish and incapable of understanding what is right, judging God, providence, and fate with compromised intellects and incomplete knowledge:

Ac se godcunda foreþonc hit understent eall swiðe rihte, þeah us þince for
urum dysige þ<æt> hit on woh fare; forðæm we ne cunnon þ<æt> riht
understandan. He demð þeah eall swiðe rihte, þeah us hwilum swa ne
ðince.

[But divine Providence understandeth it all most rightly, though we in our
folly think it goes awry, being unable to discern what is right. He,
however, judgeth all aright, though at times it seems to us otherwise.]
(Sedgefield 131, 153)

The very fact that humans' conflicting conclusions come *hwilum* demonstrates that their discernment depends upon their identities as creatures bound by time. Thus, God alone is wise, pure, and able, judging from his unique perspective, outside of time and thus unaffected by what has happened in the past or by what he wants to happen in the future.

Alfred certainly re-makes this passage on fate and providence, but his alterations and additions are not at odds with the Boethian explanation. Rather, the king's interpolations bring in ideas from elsewhere in this same *prosa* (e.g., that God works all things for man's ultimate good) and reinforce the concepts being translated (e.g., that drawing near to the divine mind that is immutable and eternal prevents one from feeling the dramatic and potentially destructive forces of fate). Admittedly, Alfred does present the proposition that God alone is able to judge rightly from a distinctly Christian standpoint (e.g., that man's false perception that fate and not providence rules comes not only as a result of his epistemological problem but also as a consequence of his moral deficiency). In fact, Alfred suggests that all Christian men perceive providence rightly, perhaps because they have acknowledged God's rule over the universe in a personal way,

taking some measure of individual responsibility for their situation by addressing it theologically. However, the Boethian approach is still intact, for in both versions, man's confusion at the apparent disorder in the universe comes because he is unable to even perceive the providential order that sustains all things and directs them toward the good. It is just that the Old English translation also suggests that man is blinded by the darkness of his sins and by his own foolishness—qualities that are attributable not only to the nature of human existence in the universe but also to the fallen nature of man on the earth.

Book IV, meter 6

In this *metrum*, Boethius depicts the heavens as having been ordered, sustained, and preserved through divine love: “Sic aeternos reficit cursus / Alternus amor, sic astrigeris / Bellum discors exulat oris” [So mutual love renews eternal motions, / So from those star-strewn regions / Discordant war is banished] (Loeb 4m6.16-18). However, King Alfred's rendering does not explain the unity with which the universe is bound so much in terms of a divine love that acts as an abstract, ordering force governing creation, as it does in terms of a bond of love that exists between the elements and the honored lord whom they serve willingly. Alfred's prose describes the sun and moon as operating in a balance that has been struck through the foresight of God, as potentially volatile elements whose every motion has been anticipated and prescribed:

Sio sunne 7 se mona habbað todæled betwuhþ him þone dæg 7 þa niht swiðe emne, 7 swiðe geþwærlice ricsiað þurh godcundan foresceawunga, 7 unaprotenlice þiowiað þa<m> ælmihtigan Gode oð domes dæg. Forþi hi ne læt God on ane healfe þæs heofones bion, þy læs hi fordon oðra gesceafta.

[The sun and the moon have parted between them day and night in even degree, and reign most peacefully through the divine foresight, and will serve Almighty God unweariedly till the day of doom. God suffereth them not to be both in one quarter of the heavens, lest they destroy other creatures.] (Sedgefield 136, 159)

These lights have been granted authority of their own and are powerful in their own right, and so God in his foreknowledge has woven lasting peace between these subjects,

mapping out their respective paths and motions. Their courses set by the Almighty, the sun and moon follow their lord until doomsday, serving him without fail—not just so that they will not war with one another, but that they may not harm other creatures in their conflict. Alfred’s verse rendering phrases this passage as though Mod were particularly anxious about some cosmic calamity:

ne þearft þu no wenan þ<æt> ða wlitegan tungl
 ðæs þeowdomes aþroten weorðe
 ær domes dæg[e]. deð siððan y<m>be
 moncynnes fruma swa him gemet þinceð
 [Thou needest not fear that these fair ones
 Will ever be sated with this their service
 Ere doomsday come. Therein He dealeth,
 Mankind’s Maker, as Him meet seemeth ;] (Sedgefield 201, 234)

Thus, Wisdom assuages such anxiety by reminding Mod that he who governs the motions of the heavens is also the Maker of Mankind, that the elements serve the Creator’s purposes for men, doing whatever seems best to him.

Alfred continues to emphasize direct action on the part of God, who governs the universe with personal attention. His prosimetrum includes half-line phrases that emphasize by their alliterating epithets the nature and character of the Ruler who acts in time and space on behalf of man: “Drihtnes meahtum” [By the Lord’s power], “moncynnes fruma” [Mankind’s Maker], “æلميhtig God” [the Sovran God], “ac se eca god” [But God Eternal], “metodes cræfte” [by the Master’s craft], “haliges meahtu<m>” [by the might of the Holy], “be þæs cyninges gebode” [By the King’s commandment], “ac se milda metod” [But the kind Master], “nergende God” [mankind’s Savior], “þ<æt> hehste good” [The Highest Good], “siteð self cyning” [Sole King sitteth], “he is weroda God” [He is God of multitudes], “fæder wa[ld]eð” [that the Father ruleth] (201-3, 236-8). Thus, he exerts his dominion over nature and over its movements and processes for the sake of humans. This sentiment is expressed not only by epithets such as “moncynnes fruma” [Mankind’s Maker], “milda metod” [kind Master], and “nergende God” [mankind’s Savior], but also in phrases that explain the rationale or motivation for his divine rule over the natural world. He directs the seasons, the weather, and the

fruitfulness of crops “hæleða bearnum” [for the sons of men], “monna bearnu<m>” [for mankind’s children] (202, 237).

In King Alfred’s prose version, it is “*Be þæs cyninges gebode*” [*By the King’s command*] (136, 159) that the earth produces its fruit, and the Ruler himself works the soil and nourishes all things that grow:

Ac se metod eallra gesceafta fet on eorðan ealle growende westmas 7 ealle forðbrengeð; 7 gehyt þonne he wyle, 7 eowað þonne he wile, 7 nimð þon<ne> he wile.

[*But the Lord of all things feedeth in the earth all growing crops and bringeth them all forth, hiding them when it pleaseth Him, making them to appear when He will, and taking them away when He will.*] (Sedgefield 136, 159)

He personally gives life to the plants and brings them to fruition, determining according to his will how long they live and when they vanish from the earth. Other references to God’s identity as a cosmic Ruler demonstrate how creation depends upon his stability and serves him happily: “*Pa hwile þe ða gesceafta þiowiað*” [*While creatures are ministering unto Him*] (136, 159), the Creator sits on high and controls everything with his reins; it is “*se an gestæþþega cyning*” [the one unchanging King] (136, 159) who has established the order that prevents the universe from collapsing in its complexity. King Alfred’s characterization of this uniquely immutable *cyning* contrasts God, then, not only with someone like Boethius’s nemesis Theodoric, but also with any other changeable, human ruler, possibly even Alfred himself.

Most interesting perhaps, is that rather than being bound by a common love in general, the elements of creation are united by “*þa ane lufe þ<æt> hi þeowian swilcu<m> hlaforde, 7 fægnað þæs þæt he hiora wealt*” [their single love in the serving of such a Master; and they rejoice that He ruleth them] (136, 160). Again, the love is not an abstract force that goes out from God and acts upon all things generally and perhaps even somewhat impersonally, but rather an anthropomorphic affection expressed by the elements of creation for a personal God in whose service the universe somehow

experiences emotional fulfillment. In the verse rendering, this idea is sharpened by what precedes the passage on love for the *þiodfruman* [leader of the nation]:

gif he swa gestæððig ne staðolade
ealla gesceafta, æghwylc hiora
wraðe tostencte weorðan sceolden,
æghwylc hiora ealle to nauhte ;
weorðan sceoldon wraðe toslopena,
[Had He not stablish'd each so steady,
All His creatures, every one of them,
Breaking away had burst asunder,
In deadly hate had come to naught ;
Yes, like foes they had fallen apart,] (Sedgefield 203, 238)

The chaos and turmoil would not be merely the product of physics, for the elements would separate from one another, clashing and colliding like enemies on a battlefield, fueled by hate and driven by violence. Creation would come to nothing without the steadfast structure and order of the Maker holding it all together. However, the one thing they share is that “ane lufe” [one love] “þæt hi þiowien swilcu þiodfruman” [That such a Leader they serve together] (203, 238). The contrast between the hate that would destroy the elements and the love that binds them strengthens the emphasis in Alfred’s renderings upon the personal relationship that exists and that is perpetually sustained between the Ruler and each creature in his ordered universe. Moreover, it is in the verse rendering from the prosimetrum, with added phrases that fill out its alliterative, appositive style, that the Maker is more fully characterized as a ruling force with a personal stake and an interest in his creation and in his creatures—not only as the “hehste good” [highest good], but also as the “nergende God” [saving God].

Book V, meter 2

Alfred adds a brief biographical sketch of Homer to both his prose and verse translations of this *metrum*, identifying him as a famous and talented Greek poet who taught (and befriended) Virgil, the great *scop* of the Latin people:

*se goda sceop, þe mid Crecu<m> selest was: se was Firgilies lareow; se
Frigilius wæs mid Lædenwarum rum selest*
[the good poet, that was best among Greeks, and Firgilius' (Virgil's)
teacher-Firgilius was the best among the Laedenwara (Latins)-]
(Sedgefield 141, 165)

Omerus wæs east mid Crecum
on ðæm leodscipe leoða cræftgast,
Firgilies freond 7 lareow,
þæm mæran scope magistra betst.
[In the East Omerus among the Greeks
Was in that country in songs most cunning,
Of Firgilius also friend and teacher,
Of that famed maker, best of masters.] (Sedgefield 203, 238)

Whether the king has contracted history accidentally or drawn a purposeful connection between the intellectual and literary traditions of the Greek and Latin poets, his commentary offers his readers a context into which this *metrum*'s introductory lines can be placed. The best maker from among the Greeks—one so great he taught the greatest from among the Latins—has sung of the sun's omnipotence, but even the awesome Phoebus has limits:

Qui tamen intima viscera terrae
Non valet aut pelagi radiorum
Infirma perrumpere luce.
[Yet even he, with the light of his rays, too weak,
Cannot burst through
To the inmost depths of earth or ocean.] (5m2.4-6)

The sun's beams are bound by their nature, shining outward from a single location and blocked by anything that crosses their path throughout the universe. Alfred takes the issue of transcendence (or the lack of it) and turns it into a consideration of equality: while Boethius draws a contrast between the sun's finite, restricted distribution of light and heat and God's sentient, persistent, and pervasive gaze upon all things simultaneously, the king addresses the problem of parity—whether or not all of the elements are exposed to the sun and whether or not all created things are within God's view and receive the same amount of attention. It is not just that the sun cannot penetrate the ground or the sea, but also that as its rays fall to the earth, the coverage is neither complete nor equitable:

*ne mæg heo þeah ealle gesceafta gescinan, ne þa gesceafta þe heo
gescinan mæg ne mæg hio ealle endemest gescinan, ne ealle innan
geondscinan*

[yet the sun cannot shine upon all things, nor even, in those things that it
can shine upon, is he able to shine upon them all alike, nor to shine
through them within.] (Sedgefield 141, 165-6)

*ne mæg hio þeah gescinan, þeah hio sie scir 7 beorht,
ahwærgen neah ealla gesceafta ;
ne furðum þa gesceafta ðe hio gescinan mæg,
endemes ne mæg ealla geondlihtan
innan 7 utan.*

[Yet the sun cannot beam, for all his brightness,
O'er all creation nor anywhere near it ;
And even those creatures on which he can shine
He cannot illumine with equal light
Inside and out.] (Sedgefield 203-4, 238-9)

Whereas Lady Philosophy reflects upon the concept of transcendence and epistemology,
as God alone penetrates, sees, and knows all things, Wisdom considers not just the
physical limitations of the sun's rays but the geographical ones as well. Philosophy's
Phoebus faces impenetrable physical obstacles, limited by its own nature and the nature
of the objects upon which it shines. In contrast, Wisdom's sun sends her rays into an
impossibly immense and uneven creation, bound by space itself and by the various
distances and terrains that must be spanned.

God, however, sees everything at once and cannot be hindered or confined:

*Huic ex alto cuncta tuenti
Nulla terrae mole resistunt,
Non nox atris nubibus obstat.
Quae sint, quae fuerint veniantque
Uno mentis cernit in ictu ;
[Him, viewing all things from his height,
No mass of earth obstructs,
No night with black clouds thwarts.
What is, what has been, and what is to come,
In one swift mental stab he sees] (Loeb 5m2.8-12)*

Philosophy assures her patient that there is no time during which the creator's ability to gaze upon creation is limited, no cycle that he must follow or force of nature to which he must (by nature) submit. Even time itself cannot constrain God's ability to see and know, and so he stands above even the sun, powerfully existing as one who lives in eternity, outside of the temporal universe. Alfred, however, once again places the emphasis not on God's transcendence but on the idea that his sight is directed toward all creation in the same way:

he geseohð 7 þurhseohð ealle his gesceafta ændemest
 [He seeth and gazeth into all His creatures equally.] (Sedgefield 141, 166)

his agen weorc eall geondwliteð,
 endemes þurhsyhð ealla gesceafta.
 [His own work overlooketh ;
 All creatures alike He looketh over.] (Sedgefield 204, 239)

Wisdom asserts here that since God is not the sun, which cannot shine upon all creation (either simultaneously or in the same way), he can give himself to one part of creation and not *ipso facto* deprive the rest of the universe of his attention. It is not that his gaze is unhindered by the elements or by the physical properties of land and sea, but that it is impartial, overseeing the universe without prejudice.

The key term in both the prose and verse versions of this *metrum* is “endemes(t)” (equally, at the same time, together, entirely), which Sedgefield translates as “all alike” and “with equal light.” Samuel Fox (1835, 1864) and Martin Tupper (1850) consistently render it as “equally”: “equally / All enlighten”; “equally sees through / All creatures” (Fox, verse, 1835); “upon all equally”; “sees through all his creatures equally” (Fox, prose, 1864); “an equal light”; “round all flings / An equal blaze” (Tupper, verse, 1850). It may be that Alfred had in mind something like what is found in the dialogue “Solomon and Saturn,” as the god's question about the inequitable distribution of sunlight prompts the king's discourse on the providentially ordained disparity between the rich and the poor:

Saturnus cwæð:

“Ac forhwon ne mot seo sunne side gesceafte
scire geondscinan? Forhwam besceadeð heo
muntas and moras and monige ec
weste stowa? Hu geweorðeð ðæt?”

Salomon cuæð:

“Ac forhwam næron eorðwelan ealle gedæled
leodum gelice? Sum to lyt hafað,
godes grædig; hine god seteð
ðurh gearnunga eadgum to ræste.” (lines 365-74)

[Saturn said:

“But why is the sun not able upon the wide creation
to shine brightly? Why does she shade
mountains and moors and also many
places in the west? How does that happen?

Solomon said:

“But why is wealth not dealt out to all
people equally? One man has too little,
greedy for goods; God will set him
according to merits to rest in prosperity.”] (my translation)

At issue here is the perception that God shows favoritism, unfairly directing his favor and blessing so that some dwell in bright warmth while others remain in distant shadows. King Alfred may have had such a concept in mind as he turned Book V, meter 2 into his prose and verse renderings, both of which emphasize the consistency and equity of God’s oversight, rather than the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of an eternal God who, as the true sun, sees all things at once, whether past, present, or future.

Book V, prose 6

As he renders the concluding prose section of the *Consolation*, Alfred truncates Lady Philosophy’s explanation of eternity, omitting her specific definition of the term, her clarifications regarding whether or not Plato had believed that creation shares co-eternity with God, her distinction between prevision and providence, and her illustrations describing the difference between simple and conditional necessity. The king inserts, however, his own explanation of eternity and of God’s eternal present, including a description of God’s all-sufficiency. Alfred begins with an interpolation that specifies the source of the knowledge with which humans understand anything, exhorting his audience

to engage in the struggle to explore the deep mysteries of the divine substance: “Ðeah hit ure mæð ne sie þ<æt> we witen hwylc he sie, we sculon þeah be þæs andgites mæðe þe he us gifð fandian” [Though it be beyond our power to know what He is, yet we must try to know, according to the measure of the understanding He giveth us] (Sedgefield 147, 173). Thus, although God is not known according to his own nature but according to the nature of those who know him, it is God who has himself determined the nature of those who would know him, who has himself provided whatever knowledge humans would rely upon in their search to understand him. Alfred’s version offers, then, a slightly more Judeo-Christian view of man’s epistemological position—that we are not just creatures of a certain nature bound by the limits of our knowledge and by our (in)ability to discover new knowledge, but we are actually granted a particular measure of understanding by God, who reveals himself to whomever he will and who does so in varying degrees of fullness and clarity. Furthermore, the king’s rendering phrases it so that this search for the divine substance is presented not merely as a suggestion by the narrative voice of Wisdom but rather as a general requirement for all people: instead of a “let us now consider” transition to a new topic, he bluntly states that we must search God out with the strength of understanding we have been given.

That God is eternal seems evident to King Alfred; in fact, he suggests that all creation recognizes this idea, and not just those who are reasonable folk:

Deum igitur aeternum esse cunctorum ratione degentium commune iudicium est.

[Now that God is eternal is the common judgement of all who live by reason.] (Loeb 5p6.5-7)

Ælc gesceaft ðeah ægðer ge gesceadwis ge ungesceadwis þ<æt> sweotolað þ<æt> God ece is

[Every creature, however, both reasoning and unreasoning, declares that God is eternal.] (Sedgefield 147, 173)

Alfred thus acknowledges the submission of creation to the will and power of the Creator: “forðæm næfre swa manega gesceafta 7 swa micla 7 sw[a] fægra hi ne underðiodden læssan g[e]sceafta 7 læssan [an]walde þonne (*hi*) ea[*lle*] sindon, ne furðum

emnmiclum” [for never would so many creatures and so mighty and so fair have bowed themselves to a lesser creature and a lesser power than themselves, nor even to one equally great.] (147, 173). Here, those who submit to God’s reign may not do so only or explicitly because He is eternal, but such dominion over so vast a kingdom could not have been won had the Ruler not demonstrated his superiority over his subjects. Moreover, that quality of excellence that sets God apart is his eternal nature, for all others lack the power to stand outside of time. For Alfred, all creatures, wonderful and distinguished though they may be, cannot compare to the great God who alone transcends the temporal universe. Perhaps, just as a renowned warrior in a lord’s retinue distinguishes not only himself but also his war-leader, so also the awesome creatures who serve God glorify him, showing by their allegiance to another the quantitative and qualitative differences between themselves and that Ruler.

When Mod asks the direct question, “Hwæt is ecnes?”, Wisdom’s answer avoids the kind of direct definition that Boethius’s Lady Philosophy provides: “Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio” [Eternity, then, is the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life] (Loeb 5p6.9-11). Instead, Wisdom explains that the request will be difficult to fulfill but that he must reveal what he understands of the matter:

þu me ahsast micles (7) earfoðes to ongitanne; gif þu hit witan wilt, ðu scealt habban ær þines modes eagan clæne 7 hlutor. Ne mæg ic ðe nauht helan ðæs ðe ic wat.

[Thou askest me a thing that is great and hard to understand ; if thou wilt know it, thou must first have thine eyes clean and bright. I cannot hide from thee aught that I know.] (Sedgefield 147, 173-4).

If Mod’s vision must not be obscured by anything that would confuse an already complicated exchange, then his ability to know is not dependent solely upon his nature but also upon his ability to purify his intellect and the lens(es) through which he views the world and its natural and supernatural forces. This metaphorical clarity of vision is a prerequisite for the potential knower, for the thing to be known is so difficult to know that the searcher must make special preparations. Alfred introduces here in this comment

the idea that man's epistemological problem is complicated not only by his distance from and difference from God but also by the earthly influences and elements that potentially obscure who and what God is, blurring the vision of the seeker and keeping him from knowing the divine mind as fully as it might otherwise be known.

As Wisdom summarizes the explanation of God's eternal nature, he breaks the universe down into three simple categories:

Wast þu þ<æt> þreo ðing sindon on þis middangearde? An is hwilendlic, ðæt hæfð ægðer ge fruman ge ende; 7 (*ic*) nat ðeah nanwuht ðæs ðe hwilendlic is, nauðer ne his fruman ne his ende. Oðer ðing is ece, þ<æt> hæfð fruman 7 næfð nænne ende; 7 (*ic*) wat hwonne hit onginð, 7 wat þ<æt> hit næfre ne geendað; þ<æt> sint englas 7 monna saula. Þridde ðing is ece buton ende 7 buton anginne; þ<æt> is God.

[Dost thou know that there are three things on this earth? The first lasts for a time only, and has both beginning and end ; yet I know nothing of that which lasts for a time, neither its beginning nor its end. The second thing is eternal, and has beginning but no end ; of this I know when it begins, and I know that it never ends ; such are angels and men's souls. The third thing is eternal, without end and without beginning, even God.]
(Sedgefield 147-8, 174)

Alfred easily distinguishes between those things that are finite, with a clear beginning and ending, and those that are to one degree or another infinite—angels, human souls, and God. Using the same word, *ece*, to describe angels, human souls, and God, however, the king does not draw as clear a distinction, suggesting that these share an eternal nature. Yet, the clarification comes in the modifying phrases: angels and humans souls begin to be but do not cease to be, whereas God never began to exist nor will he ever cease to exist. With no point of origin and no one else to bring him into being, God possesses a nature entirely his own—eternal, without any measure of finitude. Anne Payne's assertion, then, that "Alfred did not postulate Boethius' two separate and completely different states of existence, man's and God's" (21) does not find support here.²³

²³ For more on Alfred's distinction between time and eternity, see W.F. Bolton, "How Boethian is Alfred's *Boethius*?", 161-62; also Nicole Discenza, *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius*, 25-28.

Perhaps either wary or weary of exploring this highly complex subject, Wisdom declines to elaborate further, constrained by time to wrap the discussion up: “Betweoh þæm þrim is swiðe micel toscead. Gif wit þ<æt> eall sculon tosmegan, þonne cume wit late to ende þisse bec, oððe næfre” [*Between these three there is a great difference, but if we are to note every point thereof we shall come late to the end of this book, or never at all*] (148, 173). The fiction breaks down here, as the discussion within the mind of Boethius (or between Mod and Wisdom) is explicitly described as a literary project and not as a philosophical exercise or revelatory discourse. The king’s translation effort stops short of detailing the intricacies of this concluding prose section, offering instead a summative statement that pinpoints the concept most worthy of attention (and space): “Ac an þing ðu scealt nede þæran witan: forhwy God is gehaten sio hehste ecnes” [*One thing thereof, however, thou has need to know, and that is, why God is called the Highest Eternity*] (148, 174). Alfred clarifies here what might have been confusing above, when *ece* was used to describe angels, human souls, and God. Wisdom definitively ascribes the most complete and exalted form of eternity to the nature of God alone, asserting that this understanding is the most essential fact for Mod to grasp in his pursuit of divine knowledge. Thus, assessing this quality of the divine nature is integral to any inquiry into the divine knowledge, for if he cannot comprehend God’s eternal nature, his understanding of foreknowledge, free will, fate, and providence will never proceed from the proper perspective and will thus always fail him as he seeks to perceive rightly the nature of human suffering.

He also offers Mod a very direct and concise summary of Lady Philosophy’s argument: “ac him is eall andweard, ge þ<æt>te ær wæs, ge þ<æt>te nu is, ge þ<æt>te æfter us bið; eall þ<æt> is him andweard” [*But to God all is present, both that which was before and that which is now, yea, and that which shall be after us ; all is present to Him*] (148, 174). What Wisdom omits, however, is any application of this idea to the concepts of prevision versus providence or simple versus conditional necessity. He does not provide an explanation of how God should not be held responsible for causing certain things to happen when he merely views our past, present, and future events from his position in an eternal present. Instead, what he offers is a characterization of God that

appears to have been intended to build up Mod's faith in God as a certain kind of divine person:

Ne wexð his wela na, ne eac næfre ne wanað. Ne ofman he næfre nane wuht, forðæm he næfre nauht ne forgeat. Ne secð he nanwuht, ne ne smeað, forðæmþe he hit wat eall. Ne secð he nanwuht, forðy he nanwuht ne forleas. Ne eht he nanre wuhte, forðy hine nanwuht ne mæg flion; ne ondræt he him nane wuht, forðæm he næfð nænne ricran ne furðum nænne gelican. Simle he bið gifende, 7 ne wanað his næfre nauht. Symle he bið ælmihtig, forðæm he symle wile good 7 næfre nan yfel. Nis him nanes þinges nedþearf. Sy<m>le he bið lociende, ne slæpð he næfre. Sy<m>le he bið gelice manþwære. Sy<m>le he bið ece, forþæm næfre sio tid næs þ<æt> he nære, ne næfre ne wyrð. Simle he bið freoh, ne bið he to nanum weorce geneded. For his godcundlicum anwalde he is æghwær andweard. *[His wealth never waxeth, nor doth it ever wane. He never calleth aught to mind, for He hath never forgotten aught. He looketh for naught, pondereth naught, for He knoweth all. He seeketh nothing, for He hath lost nothing. He pursueth no creature, for none may flee from Him ; nor doth He dread aught, for there is none more mighty, nor even like unto Him. He is ever giving, yet He never waneth in aught. He is ever almighty, for He ever willeth good and never evil. He needeth nothing. He is ever watching, never sleeping. He is ever equally kind. He is ever eternal, for the time never was when He was not, nor ever shall be. He is ever free, and not compelled to do any work. By virtue of His divine power He is everywhere present.]* (Sedgefield 148, 174-5).

Those familiar with earthly power and privilege are thus supposed to be impressed by the all-sufficient nature of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God. Alfred's God does not acquire, inherit, or receive anything from anyone, nor does he search for any kind of fulfillment. Never experiencing any sort of lack whatsoever, he simply is, eternally. However, his interest and inclination turn outward, only insofar as others need what he can offer, and so he gives without losing, looks without missing, and wills only what is good. Such is his power that no idea, thought, creature, or moment is beyond his reach, and nothing can coerce or manipulate him into performing any action.

Any questions about the nature of the universe and the mysteries of time and eternity are to be answered in view of this God, who is all-powerful but good and kind, ever watchful and ever free. Nagging doubts about foreknowledge and necessity are swallowed up in this biographical sketch of the Almighty, as the perplexing question

about whether an all-knowing God may have caused something to happen never really gets asked. The question that gets answered, however, is why God can rightly be called the *hehste ecnes* [highest eternity], and the doctrinal description that follows suggests that the answer has as much to do with his character as it does with his all-sufficient, eternal nature. Wisdom attributes only good and kind purposes to God's almighty will, implying perhaps that those who worry about fate, fortune, free will, and providence ought to simply trust the highest authority in the universe.

In fact, Alfred's Wisdom suggests that the pursuit and acquisition of divine knowledge is a spiritual undertaking, not simply a philosophical quest and certainly not a physical process:

His micelnesse ne mæg nan man ametan; nis þ<æt> ðeah no licumlice to wenanne, ac gastlice, swa swa nu wisdom is 7 rihtwisnes, forðæm he þ<æt> is self.

[His greatness no man can measure ; yet this is to be conceived not as of the body but as touching the spirit, like wisdom and righteousness, which He is Himself.] (Sedgfield 148, 175).

With his finite reach, man is incapable of quantifying the divine, and any attempt to do so must be done spiritually, recognizing that God himself embodies the qualities that men hope to understand, much less possess, in part. It appears, then, that as Wisdom develops the discussion of eternity, he draws attention not only to the nature of God as an eternal being, but also to the character of the Highest Eternity as a personal God.

Furthermore, as Alfred's version moves toward the standard closing comments about hoping in God and praying to the One who sees all, an interpolation depicts men not merely in a state of sincere confusion or guilt-ridden angst but actually in stubborn conflict with the divine: "Ac hwæt ofermodie ge þonne, oððe hwy ahebbe ge eow wið swa heane anwald? forðæm ge nauht wið hine don ne magon" [*But why do ye men show pride, why raise yourselves against so high a power? Ye can do naught against Him*] (148, 175). Wisdom thus sets up an interesting contrast between two of man's basic impulses—to struggle in vain against an omnipotent God and yet also to assume that

prayers for divine help and mercy are in vain. For while it makes no sense to contend with One who is invincible, it makes even less sense not to seek the favor of One who is both immutable and kind:

Forðæ<m> hit nis no unnet þ<æt> we hopien to *Gode*, forðæ<m> he ne went no swa swa we doð. Ac biddað hine eadmodlice, forðæm he is swiðe ru<m>mod 7 *swiðe* mildheort. Hebbað eower mod to him mid eowru<m> hondu<m>, 7 biddað þæs þe riht sie 7 eower þearf sie, forðæm he eow nele wyr[*nan*].

[Therefore it is not in vain that we hope in God, for He changeth not as we do. Pray to Him humbly, for He is very generous, very merciful. *Lift up your hearts to Him when ye raise your hands, and pray for what is right and needful for you, for He will not deny you.*] (Sedgefield 148-9, 175)

Just as Wisdom had used the fact that men are apt to forget and also incapable of knowing the future to develop the concept of God's eternal present, he suggests here that men are prone to change to emphasize the idea of God's immutability. Moreover, Wisdom again forms his argument by noting the *nature* of the divine (immutable) but supports it by focusing on the *character* of the divine (generous and merciful). Ultimately, Wisdom offers characterizations of the divine in an effort to build up Mod's faith in God and thus to calm the doubts and fears regarding the mystery and inscrutability of his ways. The doctrinal description presented here encourages those who worry about fate, fortune, free will, and providence to simply trust the highest authority with the highest eternity.

King Alfred's Translations of *De Consolatione Philosophicæ*

These passages on the consolation of eternity demonstrate the soundness of W. F. Bolton's assertion in "How Boethian is Alfred's *Boethius*?" that while the "Alfredian alterations betray no deficit of Anglo-Saxon culture," they are not evidence of philosophical opposition or repudiation: "Even less are they the outcome of any disagreement of Alfred's with Boethius" (163). Even as his verse translation includes multiple additional epithets and characterizations of God and both of his renderings tend

to Christianize the message they are transmitting, the interpolations do not stand at odds with the Boethian concepts being turned into Old English. As Greenfield and Calder suggest in *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, “[i]t is not that Alfred rejected Boethius’ ideas, but that he often presented them in emotional fashion” (48). Indeed, the principal method that King Alfred appears to employ throughout is that of supporting his various propositions regarding the nature of the *summum bonum* with depictions of his character, amplifying his delivery of the Boethian philosophy by proclaiming the qualities of God’s personality. Such amplification is especially evident in Alfred’s prosimetrum, which offers verse renderings of the *metra* that feature aspects of Old English prosody such as alliteration and the appositive style that tend toward elaboration and expansion. Consequently, the Alfredian poems often develop and dwell upon ideas that may also be presented in the king’s all-prose text but not in as much depth or with as much emphasis.

Moreover, enough differences exist between King Alfred’s prose and verse renderings of the Boethian *metra* to conclude that the poetic versions, which have historically received rather dismissive treatment, should at least be credited for their enhanced characterization of the divine mind as a certain kind of personal, eternal, immutable creator and ruler of the universe. Consequently, his prosimetric translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* demands further study, and perhaps without the traditional presuppositions that have routinely informed scholarly approaches to this prose and verse text. For even if the poetic renderings of the *metra* came after an all-prose translation, their existence would suggest that the work of translating Boethius’s text into Old English was not considered complete until the completion of the prose and verse version. On the other hand, if the 10th-century MS Otho A.vi preserves a version of a prosimetric translation that is not derivative and that does in fact pre-date the all-prose rendering attested in the 12th-century MS Bodley 180, then the absence of a critical edition based on the prosimetric source has allowed the scholarly discussions of the Alfredian *Boethius* to take place outside of the work’s original and essential context. Thus, the forthcoming print (Godden) and electronic (Kiernan) editions based on Otho A.vi will re-open such evaluations of King Alfred’s work and present the *Consolation* in the prose and verse

form that the king's translation project had apparently intended it to take. Indeed, these new editions will facilitate study of what it is we actually have in Otho A.vi, which is the question at the heart of both the priority and the authorship issues for the Alfredian *Boethius*. With the poems set within the context of their prosimetric form, perhaps it will become even more clear how that version in particular features literary techniques and rhetorical strategies that expand upon and develop the nature, the character, and the personality of Boethius's eternal God.

III. THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

Geoffrey Chaucer's Prose Translation

Chaucer's work with Boethius may have been motivated in part by Jean de Meun, whose prose translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ—Li Livres de Confort de Philosophie* (c. 1300)—provided Chaucer with an invaluable resource as he produced his *Boece*. In fact, interest in undertaking such a project could have been generated by Jean de Meun's continuation of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, where he refers readers to clerics familiar with Boethius and then suggests that a vernacular translation of *De Consolatione* would be of great benefit to the laity:

He is a fool who thinks the earth his home:
Not even is the world one's native land,
As you may learn if you will ask the clerks
Who read the statements of Boethius
In *Consolation of Philosophy*.
(Who should translate it would do men much good!) (Robbins 109, 25.37-42).

Without such a translation into the language of the people, common men would have to seek out those schooled in philosophical and theological matters. Chaucer might have been moved by a similar sentiment, placing an intelligible version of Boethius's text before those literate in English but not in either Latin or French. Regarding Chaucer's unusual approach of turning a prosimetric source into prose, John Lowes calls attention to Jean de Meun's all-prose translation, suggesting that the poet wrote his *Boece* in this form because he was influenced by the useful resource (Eckhardt 30), perhaps having found it convenient to have French prose at hand while turning the Latin prosimetrum into English prose.

In their introduction to the *Riverside Chaucer* edition of *Boece*, Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler agree, positing that "[i]t was probably Jean's example that persuaded him to 'degrade' the poetical parts into prose" (396-7). This pejorative

characterization of the translation into prose appears to be an allusion to or an echo of Samuel Johnson's comment that Chaucer "has attempted nothing higher than a version strictly literal, and has degraded the poetical parts to prose, that the constraint of versification might not obstruct his zeal for fidelity" (qtd. in Minnis 187). Even in its implicit criticism of Chaucer's move from alternating prose and verse to all-prose, Johnson's judgment indicates that this approach was part of a deliberate method of translation, that Chaucer had aimed for a faithful rendering of his original text. Literalness is viewed, then, as lower than the more lofty aim of poetic expression, just as versification is seen as incompatible with the goal of fidelity to the translated source. Although Johnson calls this "a version strictly literal," the strictness and "zeal" with which Chaucer's prose has remained true to the original is apparently not as constraining as the limits that would have been placed upon his work had he opted for a poetic rendering. Much of the negative criticism on the *Boece* has chastised the "Prince of Poets" for what is considered an awkward and even inaccurate prose, doubting Chaucer's talent as a Latinist, as a translator, and (by extension) even as a poet. Such assessments imply that if he had been more skilled, perhaps we would have a verse rendering before us.

However, Szilvia Malaczkov concludes that "Chaucer was a poet and might possibly have come up with adequate translations of the literary parts of Boethius. However, he opted for a 'scientific translation'" that would communicate "the **meaning** of Boethius's work which he found he could convey by a literal and close translation" (43, emphasis in the original). Her cautious assessment of his potential to construct a passable rendering does not explicitly claim that this version would necessarily have been an all-verse translation, though the phrase "literary parts" suggests that she refers here specifically to the *metra* and that she surmises that Chaucer could have followed the prosimetric structure of the *Consolation*. To make her defense of Chaucer's choice of form more plain, Malaczkov explains her view more pointedly: "He wanted to make the text understandable rather than go for the niceties of versification" (43). Thus, an author well-acquainted with and skilled in the pleasant delights of poetry found such a medium

insufficient and ill-suited for his task of bringing the ideas of his source into Middle English.

Indeed, since Chaucer's literary reputation rests chiefly upon his contributions to Middle English poetry, his translation of the prosimetric *De Consolatione Philosophiae* into the all-prose *Boece* has proven quite controversial. Even more ironic is that in Chaucer's translation of the first *metrum*, the character Boethius begins "vers of sorwful matere" (Hanna and Lawler I.m1.2) and speaks of the "drery vers of wretchidnesse" (I.m1.5-6), but this version never takes the form of poetry. Moreover, as Christopher Cannon points out (and as Hanna and Lawler's *Riverside Chaucer* edition apparently reflects), the "[d]ivisions between each 'prosa' and 'metrum' are attested in the two manuscripts of the *Boece* that have been fully transcribed and published: Cambridge University Library, Ii.iii.21 . . . and British Library, Additional 10340" (*The Making of Chaucer's English* 25, n. 43). The *mise en page* of these manuscripts (and of the editions which reflect such divisions) thus presents the all-prose translation within the structural boundaries of its prosimetric source. This original form also surfaces

when Philosophy refers to this underlying structure (e.g., 'It liketh me to shewe by subtil soong,' Book 3, m.2, 1). Moreover, as Chaucer's Lady Philosophy makes a distinction between two different kinds of *prose* on the grounds of 'swetnesse' she provides an even more nuanced conceptual framework. (Cannon 25)

Consider also references to "lyghtere medicynes" (I.p5.74) and "esyere touchynge" (I.p5.78) and "swetnesse of songe" (IV.p6.373), which describe the comforting and soothing qualities of Lady Philosophy's poetic interludes, as contrasted with the more weighty and challenging philosophical exchanges found in the prose portions.

Some translators themselves have implied that Chaucer's choice to render the *Consolation* entirely in prose came only after a failed attempt at making poetic versions of Boethius's meters. For example, both I.T. (1609) and Victor Watts (1969) leave one with the impression that Chaucer *did* not render any of his *Boece* in verse (or in more impressive prose) because he *could* not, apparently not allowing for the possibility that

even the “prince of Poets” could have considered his prose form the first and/or best option for his version of the *Consolation*. More recently, Caroline D. Eckhardt’s essay, “The Medieval *Prosimetrum* Genre (from Boethius to *Boece*)” (1983), takes issue with John Lowes’ suggestion that Chaucer wrote his *Boece* in prose because he was influenced by Jean de Meun’s prose translation. She questions the idea that, given the both sources, Chaucer would have necessarily been “bound to follow the form of the French rather than the Latin one” (30). Of course, following the form of another translation is not the same as being bound by or limited to that form, for (as Eckhardt herself later points out) Chaucer could have certainly simply preferred to write the *Boece* in prose, with no particular sense of obligation whatsoever. Eckhardt also cites George Saintsbury’s *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (1922), noting his appreciation for Chaucer’s choice of prose, Saintsbury’s opinion based on a belief that “translations of verse in verse are, very frequently, not worth the paper they are written on” (30). She hesitates to ignore Saintsbury’s condemnation as “antiquated,” finding similar sentiments expressed by those who feel that Chaucer’s decision was motivated by an inability to turn the *Consolation*’s poems into Middle English verses that would represent accurately Boethius’s thought and meaning: in *A Lost Language and Other Essays on Chaucer* (1951), Sister M. Madeleva holds that Chaucer’s main interest was in the philosophy itself and not with its form; in *Geoffrey Chaucer* (1964), Edwin Howard asserts that Chaucer’s prose translation came from “a desire to present Boethius’s meaning with as little distortion as possible” (qtd. in Eckhardt 30).

Eckhardt, on the other hand, believes that Chaucer was perfectly capable of rendering his translation in quality verse but simply unwilling to do so for some reason. She notes the possible influence of Dante’s *Convivio*, as it upholds the sincerity and superiority of prose for serious discourse: “‘la sua vertu’ (the inherent quality or strength or excellence) of language cannot easily be seen in verse, since the rhyme, rhythm, and numbers of poetry, or its ‘accidentali adornezze’ (incidental ornaments), obscure its natural excellence” (29). Of course, prose can be ornamented as well, and this discussion of the natural virtues of prose is in the context of comparing verse or prose as the proper vehicle for some original literary product, not as the mode for presenting a translation of

that pre-existing prose, verse, or prosimetric original. However, the assumption here is that the language of prose is not just unconstrained and free from metrical boundaries but actually unburdened by the stylistic and artistic motivations that give shape to those boundaries. As Eckhardt concludes her essay, she asserts that Chaucer may have made his *Boece* an all-prose version because such a form would have allowed him to attempt a clear version of Boethius's text: "the voices of Chaucer the poet are indeed more indirect, multivalent, subtle, reserved, in sum more masked or 'closed,' than are the voices of Chaucer the prose-writer, which are meant to seem more ostensibly 'open'" (31-2). This position rests upon the reasonable assumption that Chaucer was able to understand the demands of his various writing situations, knowing how to shape his efforts according to the nature and purpose of a given project.

For Chaucer's interest in Boethius is evidenced not only by his translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in *Boece*, but also by his use of Boethian passages in some of his shorter poems such as "The Former Age," "Fortune," "Gentillesse," and "Truth," as well as in longer works such as *Troilus and Criseyde*, "The Knight's Tale," and "The Nun's Priest's Tale," where he turned selected Boethian passages into verse, subordinating their use to his overall rhetorical and literary goals for each text. In fact, texts such as *Troilus and Criseyde* and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" demonstrate Chaucer's ability to subordinate the various characters' appropriations of Boethian philosophy in the service of his narrative purposes, as he deliberately showcases misunderstandings and misapplications of this influential philosophical source. In the context of his other works, then, the *Boece* stands not as a strange aberration or as some misbegotten creation but rather as an important if not pivotal expression of his own philosophical interests and concerns. The mutability of fickle fortune, the problem of foreknowledge and determinism, and the nature of free will were subjects that apparently fascinated Chaucer as an author, and so we find such Boethian topics throughout his corpus.²⁴ Furthermore,

²⁴ Consider the following articles noting Boethian material in Chaucer's work: Martin Camargo, "The Consolation of Pandarus"; Jane Chance, "Chaucerian Irony in the Boethian Short Poems: the Dramatic Tension Between Classical and Christian"; Peter Elbow, "Two Boethian Speeches in *Troilus and Criseyde* and Chaucerian Irony"; Laurence Eldredge, "Boethian Epistemology and Chaucer's *Troilus* in the Light of Fourteenth-Century Thought"; Varda Fish, "The Origin and Original Object of *Troilus and Criseyde*"; Frank Grady, "The Boethian Reader of *Troilus and Criseyde*"; Ronald Hartman, "Boethian Parallels in the

although Chaucer renders his vernacular version of the *Consolation* in prose, his appropriation and adaptation of key Boethian passages within his poetic works demonstrates that he was entirely capable of turning one of his favorite sources into Middle English poetry.

Moreover, harsh evaluations of Chaucer's version of the *Consolation* may be neglecting not only the various Boethian moments found throughout the poetic portions of his corpus, but also his likely sources for the *Boece* and the intertextual nature of his translative work. Tim Machan's "Chaucer as Translator" questions those who "adopt the pedantry of the modern school teacher of Latin" (58) when they assess his work in *Boece* and cites Marchette Chute's opinion from *Geoffrey Chaucer of England* (1946) in particular:

Chaucer was no scholar, and his translation is not a satisfactory one from the scholarly point of view. He was constantly losing his way among Latin prepositions, conjunctions and various other parts of speech, because he did not stop to consider their exact shades of meaning, and his translation is not the work of a good grammarian any more than it is the work of a really good prose writer. (qtd. in Machan 58)

Machan criticizes such a position for not acknowledging "that definitions and standards of translation change, as, in fact, do the texts of the sources which are being translated. Judged by medieval standards and against the appropriate manuscript sources—as near as they can be recovered—the *Boece* is in fact a highly effective translation" (58-9). Elsewhere, Machan also challenges H.F. Stewart's (1891) assertion that "its inaccuracy and infelicity is not that of an inexperienced Latin scholar, but rather of one who was no Latin scholar at all" (qtd. in *Techniques of Translation* 7). Machan shows that Stewart's assessment fails to consider Chaucer's possible source materials, as it labels those passages that actually originate in a French version (Jean de Meun's) or in a Latin

Tale of Melibee"; Noel Kaylor, "Boethian Resonance in Chaucer's *Canticus Troili*"; Thomas L. Martin, "Time and Eternity in *Troilus* and *Criseyde*"; Jharna Sanyal, "Criseyde Through the Boethian Glass"; Zacharias P. Thundy, "The Dreame of Chaucer: Boethian Consolation or Political Celebration?"; Richard J. Utz, "'For all that comth, comth by necessitee': Chaucer's Critique of Fourteenth-Century Boethianism in *Troilus* and *Criseyde* IV, 957-58"; Stephen K. Wright, "Jankyn's Boethian Learning in the Summoner's Tale"; Susan Yager, "Boethius, Philosophy, and Chaucer's 'Marriage Group'."

commentary (Trevet's) as erroneous renderings of what Stewart believed Chaucer's Latin source would have contained ("Editorial Method and Medieval Translations: The Example of Chaucer's *Boece*" 189-90).

In one portion of his essay, however, Stewart prefaces his citation of five errors resulting from what he considers a defective source text with a comment that suggests that he would have possibly been sympathetic to Machan's point, had he a greater knowledge of and appreciation for Chaucer's sources: "It is, of course, not fair to reckon against the translator those passages where he has been led astray by a wrong reading in his text" (225). This passage is not noted, however, when scholars take issue with Stewart and others who have questioned Chaucer's Latin skills. A.J. Minnis and Tim Machan's "The *Boece* as Late-Medieval Translation" seems to allude to Stewart and his ilk ("those early critics") as they defend Chaucer's talent and scholarship, and it even features the same phrase that Stewart employed, "led astray by":

Chaucer's use of the French should not be viewed as an act of desperation on the part of a writer who is sometimes finding his original text too difficult. For a start, Chaucer's Latin text was not identical with that of a modern printed edition, a fact not always recognized by those early critics who gave him low marks for verbal accuracy. After due allowance has been made for the Vulgate text, and for the fact that he is often led astray by Jean de Meun's French rendering, some errors do remain, but the general level of accuracy is high. Moreover, Chaucer's intelligent use of Trevet also bears testimony to his considerable competence (by medieval standards) as a Latinist. (*Chaucer's Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 180)

Minnis thus reminds readers that the translation process did not occur in a vacuum populated only by the lonely scholar, his original source text, and his own work. He feels that Chaucer skillfully managed what he had at his disposal—a version of the Latin source, a vernacular rendering, and commentary materials.

Mark Gleason explains the relationships between the various texts behind *Boece*, suggesting that Chaucer used Trevet's commentary as a tool for providing exact meanings and precise definitions, with Jean de Meun's translation serving as a base text

and the “vulgate” Latin Boethius supplementing his efforts.²⁵ *Riverside Chaucer* editors Hanna and Lawler take a similar approach, emphasizing how helpful the French version would have been to Chaucer, implicitly criticizing his facility with Latin grammar as they acknowledge his attention to both the French and the Latin source materials:

in setting the *Consolation* into French, Jean had, as it were, parsed it for Chaucer, identifying the antecedents of pronouns, arranging Boethius’s artful word order into the analytic syntax of French, clarifying the relationships of clauses in lengthy sentences, resolving absolute phrases. All this Chaucer found of inestimable value. Yet it is evident that he also checked Jean’s work rigorously against the Latin. (397)

Hanna and Lawler attempt, then, to give readers an accurate picture of what has been added during the translation by italicizing the portions of the text that are clearly extratextual and not in the “vulgate” Latin of Boethius or from Jean de Meun, noting that Robinson’s earlier edition rendered in italics readings that were not glosses but rather “simply Chaucer’s effort to provide, parenthetically, the French reading” (1005). They suggest that this combination of sources enabled Chaucer “to render Boethius for English readers with full clarity” (397).

Minnis asserts, however, that Hanna and Lawler’s practice of italicizing Chaucer’s glosses interferes with what he considers the appropriate approach to the text—that the *Boece* represents a skillful and purposeful integration of sources, where “interpretive material . . . is conceptually inseparable from the material which it interprets” (*Chaucer’s Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 181). He concludes, then, that “the integrity of this realization is disrupted by editorial italics which mark a judgment on the relative status of the elements of that ‘composite source’ which Chaucer created in the very act of translation” (181). Indeed, such editorial practices, while helpful for those interested in source study, may obscure the reality that—whatever its sources—Chaucer’s *Boece* contains what he decided to include in his translation project, that he has in fact made such glosses part of his own work, appropriating them for the task he set

²⁵ See Mark J. Gleason, “Clearing the Fields: Towards a Reassessment of Chaucer’s Use of Trevet in the *Boece*.” *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. 89-105.

out to accomplish. Although they are extratextual in one sense (not part of what we consider Boethius's *Consolation*), his inclusion of them in *Boece* has made them (inter)textual.

Chaucer's extensive use of short glosses on the text indicates an interest in clarification ("that is to seyn . . ."), though some of these comments appear to be the work of a textual critic more than that of a commentator ("Some bookes han the texte thus: . . ."). Minnis suggests, however, that Chaucer did not gloss as a textual critic himself: "When Jean de Meun and Trevet differ in their text and/or in their interpretation thereof, Chaucer evinces no anxiety about this divergence but simply incorporates one or more alternatives" (*Chaucer's Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 175). His interest, then, is apparently not in documenting the textual history of his source, its translation, or its interpretive commentary, but rather in elucidating the meaning of Boethius's *Consolation*. Some, however, find Chaucer's translation lacking, believing that both the translation itself and the accompanying explanations demonstrate his weakness as a translator. Pointing out the tendency among some critics to see the glosses as Chaucer's admissions of failure to render the Latin, Minnis notes H.F. Stewart's belief that Chaucer's prose was so literal that the glosses were necessary for the sake of intelligibility. Questioning Chaucer's ability as a Latinist, Stewart sees in some of the *Boece*'s glosses evidence for concluding that "it is open to question whether the translator quite understood some of them himself" (*Boethius: An Essay* 217-8).

Indeed, Chaucer's prose style has not been well-received, both Stewart and R.K. Root (1934) suggesting that prose was not the ideal medium for England's great poet. Stewart claims that "[v]erse, and not prose, is the natural vehicle for the expression of every language in its infancy, and it is certainly not in prose that Chaucer's genius shows to best advantage" (*Boethius: An Essay* 227). Root contrasts Chaucer's *Boece* with his poetic achievements: "[t]he prose style of the translation, cumbersome and at times confused, and for our modern taste much too rhetorical, is in striking contrast with the directness and simplicity, the clearness and grace of Chaucer's verse" (qtd. in Kaylor,

Bibliography 171).²⁶ Yet, Root also finds in *Boece* “a dignity and eloquence that suggest the perfection, three centuries later, of this same tradition of rhetorical prose in the hands of John Milton” (qtd. in Machan, *Techniques of Translation* 8), thus asserting the importance of the work in terms of its larger literary consequences and not necessarily in view of its inherent artistic merit. In his 1907 assessment, George Saintsbury considers Chaucer’s prose translation of Boethius’s prosimetric Latin a profoundly significant textual artifact for England:

we have . . . for the first time in Middle English, distinctly ornate prose, aureate in vocabulary, rhythmical in cadence and setting an example which, considering the popularity both of the author and translator, could not fail to be of the greatest importance in the history of our literature. (qtd. in Machan, *Techniques of Translation* 8)

Evidently, then, whatever artistic success Chaucer was able to achieve in his *Boece* becomes magnified and perhaps even more influential and substantial because of the literary reputation he had built through his other (primarily poetic) works, as well as because of the fame of his *auctore*.

On the other hand, even though B.L. Jefferson (1917) ultimately commends the *Boece* for its poetic insight, he qualifies such praise with a critique of its inaccuracies and stylistic misconstructions:

Chaucer’s translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, although it is diffuse and sometimes inaccurate and blundering, although it contains many awkward and faulty English sentences, yet on the whole is painstaking, faithful, poetic, and spirited. (1)

Chaucer’s prose, then, is marked by a fullness, a sense of measure and proportion. . . . Chauer[sic], gifted with a sensitive ear, feeling the spirit of his original, has reproduced its enthusiasm, its dignity of expression, and, as best he could, its symmetry of style. His translation is the translation of a poet. (46)

Rather than limiting Chaucer’s artistic success to only a few moments scattered throughout his translation, Jefferson finds in the entire project a sense of poetic

²⁶ See also Robert Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, 10.

accomplishment. As he explains this estimation, he uses terms and phrases such as “spirited,” “measure and proportion,” “sensitive ear,” “feeling the spirit,” “enthusiasm,” “dignity,” and “symmetry of style,” distinguishing between the prosaic and the poetic as he emphasizes the aural, spiritual, emotional, and metrical qualities that even Chaucer’s prose writing possesses.

Many later scholars, however, attempt to explain, if not justify, Chaucer’s prose. Howard Patch’s 1935 *The Tradition of Boethius* describes Chaucer as having labored to produce a faithful, comprehensible text for his contemporaries: “Chaucer took great pains to make an accurate rendering for the fourteenth century” (46-7). Patch’s characterization here highlights the time-bound nature of such translation projects, as the source text is brought into a particular moment within the linguistic and cultural environment of the translator, into his generation, for those who read his language. Indeed, he considers the *Boece* “workmanlike and eminently useful” (67), for Chaucer’s literal prose sentences and tedious glosses seem aimed at reproducing exact definitions and precise explanations for those interested in learning the philosophy of Boethius’s treatise in the language of Chaucer’s England. Thus, the *Boece* illustrates and draws attention to how the Latin source can be rendered in the grammar and syntax of late 14th-century English, especially for those who could read neither the original nor the available French translation by Jean de Meun.

In a study that ultimately defends Chaucer’s translation as it considers his reliance upon his French source, Hank Aertsen cites Robinson’s assertion in his 1957 edition that “the use of a French translation, heavily glossed, alongside of a Latin original contributed to looseness of structure and diffuseness of language” (“Chaucer’s *Boece*: a Syntactic and Lexical Analysis” 671):

we have shown that these “flaws” can, and perhaps should, be explained as resulting from either his use of a new translation technique [open translation], from his use of a common narrative prose style, or simply from his desire to be as precise and accurate as possible in his translation. (685)

Aertsen thus proposes a re-evaluation of *Boece*, pointing scholars and critics back to what might have been Chaucer's literary, rhetorical, philosophical, and/or pedagogical goals as he translated and appropriated his source materials. Moving away from source studies and into linguistic analysis, Morton Donner's "Derived Words in Chaucer's *Boece*: The Translator as Wordsmith" details Chaucer's use of loan words and neologisms: "Out of about 2,700 different words that appear in *Boece*, some 200 are new adoptions from French or Latin and more than 150 are new derivations formed on contemporary English patterns" (187). Donner also notes how Chaucer often seemed committed to a linguistic task more than to a literary or philosophical one, choosing at times an awkward construction (e.g., "That I clepe welefulness") for the sake of comprehension. Likewise, Edwin Howard perceives Chaucer trying to present Boethius's meaning with as little distortion as possible" (qtd. in Eckhardt 30). In fact, William Caxton had apparently seen this as the role of Chaucer's work, as the epilogue to his 1478 volume of *Boece* suggests:

And foreasmuch as the style of it is hard and difficult to be understood of simple persons, therefore the worshipful father and first founder and embellisher of ornate eloquence in our English, I mean Master Geoffrey Chaucer, hath translated this said work out of Latin into our usual and mother tongue, following the Latin as nigh as is possible to be understood; wherein in mine opinion he hath deserved a perpetual laud and thank of all this noble royaume of England, and especially of them that shall read and understand it. (qtd. in Pollard 222-3)

Thus, Caxton praises Chaucer for staying close to the language of the original text as he brought the source into another country and another tongue, helping simple persons comprehend Boethius, whose text would otherwise have remained unknown to them.

In view of the literary culture in which Chaucer produced his *Boece*, Minnis usefully points readers to the tradition of translation in medieval Europe, seeing Chaucer's attention to detailed explanations as consistent with the practices of late-medieval translators, where arriving at the meaning of a given text was the aim and where "[t]ranslation and glossing, therefore, were thought of not as different and unrelated things but rather as two aspects of a single activity, *expositio sententiae*" (*Chaucer's Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 173). Machan, however, cautions against a

tendency by some scholars to simply attribute perceived weaknesses in the *Boece* to the “standards of the day” (*Techniques of Translation* 8): he cites F.N. Robinson’s reminder “that literal accuracy rather than stylistic excellence was a recognized ideal of translation in Chaucer’s day,” Krapp’s defense that Chaucer’s prose work “is by no means a literal translation, such not being the standards of the day,” and Gardner’s faint praise that it is “a superb scholarly work by the standards of the day” (qtd. in *Techniques of Translation* 9). Machan challenges the assumptions behind such a phrase, noting that such “standards” would need to have “encompassed everything from the *Troilus*, which is not at all a translation in the modern sense of the word, to the first Wycliffite Bible, which is little more than a literal gloss, to Trevisa’s translation of *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, which is a close translation but decidedly acceptable English at the same time” (9). Indeed, the term “standards” connotes a kind of organization, coordination, or consensus among those producing such works, as though they adhered to particular conventions or imitated certain models.

Regarding Chaucer’s own standards, Tracy Couch discusses Chaucer’s *Retraction*, noting that while he uses the phrase “translacions and enditynges” (Hanna and Lawler 328) to describe the list of texts for which he prays Christ has mercy upon him, “the term translation is applied unambiguously in this passage only to *Boece*” (Couch 263). Couch takes issue, then, with J.D. Burnley, who “suggests that Chaucer lists *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The House of Fame*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament*, some of the *Canterbury Tales*, the lost *Book of the Lion*, *Boece*, and some unspecified saints’ lives (ll. 1085-88) as ‘translaciouns and enditynges’—conflating the two text types” (qtd. in Couch 261-2). In *The Legend of Good Women*, the god of Love refers to *The Romaunt of the Rose* as a translation, characterizing Chaucer’s verse account as a straightforward rendering without the glosses that were apparently necessary in *Boece*: “For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose, / Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose.”²⁷ The god of Love goes on to cite Chaucer’s work in the *Troilus*, though without an explicit use of the term “translate”: “Hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok / How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok, / In shewyne how that

²⁷ “The Legend of Good Women.” *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler. 597, G.255.

wemen han don mis?”²⁸ The implication, however, is that Chaucer’s version had a precursor that was not in English, that his work is something he “mad” but not something that was original.

Later, *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are again mentioned together, as Alceste says that

He may translate a thyng in no malyce,
But for he useth bokes for to make,
And taketh non hed of what matere he take,
Therefore he wrot the Rose and ek Crisseyde
Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde.²⁹

It appears, then, that this passage characterizes both texts as translations. Couch, however, posits an dissenting view, arguing that the passage could “refer to the process of translating passages for further use in adaptations—which Chaucer views differently from translation proper” (264). As she takes an alternative stance here, Couch cites Machan’s position, suggesting that he “reads the *Legend of Good Women* as also referring to *Troilus* as a translation (*Techniques 2*)” (264). However, her characterization of his statements may be a bit over-simplified, since he pointedly asserts that he is interested in the idea of seeing “translation” as “reproduction” and admits his own sense of uncertainty about the matter: “it is not at all clear what Chaucer himself understood by translation, for he uses the term to describe both the *Romaunt* and the *Troilus*” (*Techniques of Translation 2*). Machan follows up on this idea, then, citing the passage above from the *Legend of Good Women* and reiterating his position that “Chaucer, like many of his contemporaries, occasionally did not distinguish between translation and adaptation” (5). In fact, Alceste goes on to argue that “He ne hath not don so greuously amys / To translate that olde clerkes wryte, / As thogh he of maleys wolde endyte.”³⁰ Thus, while these texts are paired here in the context of translation, so are, yet again, the terms “translate” and “endyte.” In both the *Retraction* and the *Legend*, then, Chaucer’s characterizations of his texts are problematically ambiguous, except when it comes to

²⁸ Ibid., 597, G.264-6.

²⁹ Ibid., 598-599, G.341-45.

³⁰ Ibid., 599, G.349-51.

Boece, for Alceste also explains that “[h]e hath in prose translated Boece,”³¹ noting both the form and the genre of Chaucer’s text.

In her essay “Rhetoric and Vernacular Translation in the Middle Ages,” Rita Copeland asserts that Chaucer’s much maligned prose style here is a product of his purposeful effort to remain focused on the content of his translated source: “*Boece* is arguably a translation undertaken to master Boethius’s text by studious attention to a difficult and specialized philosophical vocabulary, and Chaucer’s ‘servile’ literalism thus has its justification in an established rhetorical prescription” (57). In fact, she implies that this text was not an end of itself and that Chaucer had his eye on subsequent projects, or at least that one may follow the influence of his *Boece* throughout his later texts:

Boece is aimed at a future text: within the canon of Chaucer’s writings, from the Boethian lyrics to *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight’s Tale*, we can trace the preparatory value of *Boece* as Chaucer returns not only to the substance of Boethius but also to his own inaugural formulations of that substance in his translation. (57)

Two years before the publication of Copeland’s article, Machan’s *Techniques of Translation* posited that Chaucer may have intended to revise his text, that what we have in *Boece* may be “either a rough draft—i.e. the first version of a translation which Chaucer intended to polish and submit to the public—or a working copy—i.e. a reference tool which Chaucer consulted when incorporating the ideas of the *Consolation* into his poetry” (123). He later repeats the former argument, sharpening it somewhat by suggesting that “there is good reason to believe that the *Boece* is only a penultimate draft” (“Editorial Method” 190-1).

Minnis, however, does not subscribe to the view that *Boece* as a working copy of sorts would have been intended solely for Chaucer’s own use: “Had that been his objective, why should he have equipped the text with glosses which often are *formally* presented as such, with distinctive markers like ‘That is to seyn’ and ‘as who seith’?” (*Chaucer’s Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 184). He also posits that “had

³¹ *Ibid.*, 600, G.413.

he been interested only in ‘trial runs’ for his verse adaptations of Boethian material, he would hardly have translated so difficult a text in its entirety Indeed, he may have thought that it would appeal to an aristocratic audience” (185). Such audience participation is something that Minnis believes Chaucer anticipated with the inclusion of the glosses:

These features reveal the writer’s sense of the needs, and the expectancy, of his audience. And the prestige-value of the glosses should not be ignored: their very presence in the text evince not only the respect with which the translator has treated his authoritative text but also the respect with which this academic translation should be treated by its audience. (185)

Minnis feels, then, that readers of Chaucer’s *Boece* would treat the experience as a time of learning and study, as opposed to a time of reflection or meditation—as an occasion for academic rather than literary, religious, or philosophical pursuits.

While commenting on how editors acknowledge and represent the complexity of the texts they publish, Machan refers to the intertextual nature of the extant manuscripts, noting that “[t]he *Boece* manuscripts are what they are because Chaucer’s concern in the translation was primarily with meaning and language, not with literary artistry, and because for both Chaucer and his readers the *Consolation* was a living text which invited reader involvement” (“Editorial Method” 195). Minnis concurs, concluding his analysis with a reminder that the text as we have it is unfinished:

He never applied the finishing touches and made the final revisions necessary to turn what seems to be a penultimate draft into a finished work. This conclusion is borne in upon us by many features of the text, including its lack of a preface (in contrast with Chaucer’s three other extant prose translations), its alternate translations, and its sometimes awkward deployment of the glosses. (*Chaucer’s Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* 183)

Thus, while Minnis obviously believes that Chaucer’s appropriations of the French source and of the commentary material were purposeful components of his translation

method, he admits that some portions of the text lack the polish and refinement that might otherwise typify a completed project.

Although *Boece* has no prologue, it may be instructive to consider Chaucer's prefatory comments to another of his translations, *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*. Here, Chaucer describes for the young Lowys the work of rendering the text "under full light reules and naked wordes in Englissh, for Latyn canst thou yit but small, my litel sone."³² He speaks generally about how such ideas have been expressed in Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, all in accord with the will of God, who "woot that in alle these langages and in many moo han these conclusions ben suffisantly lerned and taught, and yit by diverse reules."³³ However, the terms Chaucer uses to describe his translating suggests that he also has in mind the prose form which his English text takes. For instance, "light reules" could apply to lines that are not marked by constraints of length, rhyme, rhythm, or stress, while "naked wordes" contrast with their implied opposite, words clothed in poetic style.

Furthermore, as Chaucer prays "to have my rude endityng for excusid, and my superfluite of wordes,"³⁴ one imagines possible meanings for "rude"—crude, ignorant, unlearned, plain, common, rough—none of which are typically used to describe poetry, and one also assumes that the excess verbiage would not be present in the more regulated lines of verse. While it would probably have been strange for him to have translated his *Treatise* into poetry, his explanations suggest that he considers the prose form inartistic, more pragmatic and utilitarian than abstract and speculative. Chaucer offers his own reasons or excuses for his labored style: "The firste cause is for that curious endityng and hard sentence is ful hevy at onys for such a child to lerne. And the secunde cause is this, that sothly me semith better to writen unto a child twyes a god sentence, than he forgete it onys."³⁵ Weighty, abstruse matters take time and space to explain fully and effectively, and when one's audience does not have the maturity or experience to absorb the material

³² "A Treatise on the Astrolabe." *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler, 622.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

easily or quickly, repetition is not only allowable but preferable. Noel Kaylor points to a manuscript fragment that indicates how the readers of *Boece* examined the text for educational purposes and would probably have benefited from its formal and stylistic qualities.³⁶ If, then, Chaucer's anticipated audience for *Boece* lacked the academic training for a straightforward, un-annotated account of his Latin source, then a version replete with explanations, glosses, and repetitive passages should be no surprise.

Moreover, while it may appear unpolished or unfinished, and while many have subjected his text, its form, and its style to considerable criticism and judgment, Chaucer apparently considered it a completed work that could withstand even divine judgment. For in his *Retraction*, the *Boece* is one of the few texts the poet does not want stricken from his literary record. While one could debate the sincerity of the *Retraction*, the fact nevertheless remains that this reflection upon his work preserves regret and contrition for having produced some of his less orthodox poetry, for any of the *Canterbury Tales* that might have encouraged anyone in sinful behavior, and for translations of worldly vanities, while it preserves satisfaction with and even pride in his rendering of Boethius:

But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun,/ that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene,/ bisekyng hem that they from hennes forth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule³⁷

He seems to have approached it as a work that, while not overtly Christian or even basically religious, was not entirely secular either, certainly not immoral, and perhaps at least conducive to a life of devotion.

³⁶ See "Interpolations in *The Boke of Coumfort of Bois*: A Late-Medieval Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*." The short work features textual commentary that seems to be codifying the material for students—the 3 errors of Boethius, the 5 comforts of Philosophy, etc. This little piece suggests that during this time, at least one reader and translator was approaching Boethius' *Consolation* (and perhaps only Chaucer's version of it) as a text to be studied and learned for academic purposes.

³⁷ *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler, "The Canterbury Tales," X.1087-9.

Geoffrey Chaucer and the Consolation of Eternity

Book I, meter 5

As this passage opens, Chaucer refers to the maker as one who rests firmly and immovably on his eternal throne: “that art festnyd to thi perdurable chayer” (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.2-3). Outside of *Boece*, Chaucer’s only uses of “perdurable” occur in *The Tale of Melibee* [“The joye of God,’ he seith, ‘is perdurable’—that is to seyn, everelastyng” (VII.1509)] and *The Parson’s Tale* [“desireth the lif perdurable” (X.124)]. Both instances occur in prose texts, and both refer to distinctly Christian concepts, indicating that in Chaucer’s lexicon this term for “eternal” or “everlasting” is not particularly poetic and is associated with the divine life. In fact, the *OED* records that one may infer “perdurable” from “perdurably,” which comes from “pardurableliche” in an Old English Miscellany sermon dating c. 1250—a textual artifact which attests to the religious connotations and register of this term. Other than this 13th-century sermon, the first known usage of “perdurable” is here in Chaucer’s *Boece*.³⁸ This reign upon the *perpetuo solio* is uninterrupted, a continuous dominion that is not subject to usurpation—even though earthly kingdoms are subject to such reversals, as this *metrum* will discuss further. In Chaucer’s version, however, the ruler is not simply seated on an eternal throne but fastened to it, held in place—secured, one may surmise, by his own will and power, since otherwise an external agent would have to be holding him there. The term “festnyd” could also suggest that Boethius is accusing God of being practically stuck in his seat, unmoved by and perhaps uninterested in the reversals of fortune faced by men—a complaint more fully expressed later in the poem.

Throughout his translation of this *metrum*, Chaucer carefully identifies the constellations and winds, giving context to the proper names that could potentially confuse readers: “the eve sterre, Hesperus” (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.11-2); “is thanne clepid Lucyfer” (I.m5.15-6); “Zephirus, the debonere wynd” (I.m5.22); “the wynd that

³⁸ Consult “perdurable,” *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1991. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 531.

hyghte Boreas” (I.m5.24); “the sterre that highte Arcturus” (I.m5.26-7); “the sterre Syrius” (I.m5.28). He also provides a gloss on his neologism for the fall season: “autumpne (*that is to seie, in the laste ende of somer*)” (I.m5.25-6).³⁹ After a reflection upon the natural universe, Boethius’s poem turns to the human situation, and Chaucer alters a declarative observation to an interrogative complaint: “O thou governour, governynge alle thynges by certein ende, whi refusestow oonly to governe the werkes of men by duwe manere?” (I.m5.31-3). Posing a more provocative question, this prayer of sorts asks God to explain his inactivity, whereas Boethius’s declaration simply builds a case for the ultimate request made at the conclusion of the *metrum*. Moreover, while Boethius merely asks the rhetorical question, “Nam cur tantas lubrica versat / Fortuna vices ?” (Loeb I.m5.28-9), characterizing Fortune as operating under its own power, Chaucer’s rendering again addresses the “governour” directly: “Why suffrestow that slydyng Fortune turneth so grete enterchaungynges of thynges?” (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.34-5). This complaint places Fortune under the authority of the one who rules all things, demanding that the governor account for his mismanagement and/or negligence. Adding the adverb “naturely” (I.m5.41) to modify the way in which clear virtue shines, Chaucer indicates that nature itself is being violated, that the ruler is allowing “derke derkenesses” (I.m5.42) to obscure what virtue would otherwise naturally produce and emanate. The pervasive influence of God’s control over the physical universe should apparently, then, be applied to the moral universe, so that justice and virtue will prevail over oppression and wickedness.

As Chaucer renders these lines, his doublets are poetic and expressive, employing alliteration and assonance: “the rightful man bereth the blame and the peyne of the feloun” (I.m5.42-3); “ne the forswerynge ne the fraude covered and kembd with a false colour” (I.m5.43-5); “withdraughe and restreyne the ravyschyng flodes, and fastne and ferme thise erthes stable” (I.m5.55-7). Thus, the just man is not only in the right, but also on the side of the law; the hypocrisy of the unjust is a complete fabrication, both dressing (“covered”) and grooming (“kembd”); Fortune’s seas must be pulled back (“withdraughe”) and held back (“restreyne”), for they are a powerful and destructive

³⁹ Consult “autumpne,” *COED*, 810. See also Hanna and Lawler, explanatory note to lines 25-26, 1007.

force (“ravysschyngge”); the stability of the earth must be fixed (“fastne”) and undergirded (“ferme”). Such doublets appear to be, then, not strained attempts at arriving at appropriate English counterparts for single Latin words but careful efforts to modify and explain in greater and more vivid detail what the *metrum* means.

Book II, meter 3

In his translation of this brief poem, Chaucer continues his practice of amplifying for the sake of clarification and explanation. After specifying that Phoebus means “the sonne,” Chaucer goes on to detail the process by which its flames “overcometh the sterre lyght”: “(This is to seyn, whan the sonne is rysen, the day-sterre waxeth pale, and leeseth hir lyght for the grete bryghnesse of the sonne)” (Hanna and Lawler II.m3.5-8). Such paraphrases of his own prose translation of a verse original suggests that Chaucer felt that the *metrum* ought to be rendered and then explained, rather than paraphrased loosely throughout. His prose version does attempt to present the content of the Boethian text literally, but then the interpolated gloss removes a layer of literary artistry, flattening the text, boiling it down to its essential elements. The sun does not ride across the sky as in a chariot; it rises. Solar flames do not overcome the starlight, as in some fantastic, astrological battle; the sun’s brilliance simply causes the stars to grow wan as they lose their light. With the personification removed and anthropomorphism avoided, a naturalistic, almost scientific explanation follows. This approach continues as Chaucer identifies various Latinate names, such as Phoebus (“Phebus, the sonne”), Zephirus (“the wynde Zephirus”), Auster (“the cloudy wynd Auster”), and Aquylon (“the horrible wynd Aquylon”), apparently helping those readers who would otherwise be unfamiliar with the proper names. His modifications thus minimize whatever mythological and/or astrological allusions such names could have evoked, consequently eliminating whatever potential confusion these references may have otherwise caused.

Chaucer also simplifies what could potentially have been a disturbing passage toward the end of this *metrum*, as Lady Philosophy urges Boethius to renounce his reliance upon notoriously fickle fortune:

Rara si constat sua forma mundo,
Si tantas variat vices,
Crede fortunis hominum caducis,
Bonis crede fugacibus.
[Earth's beauty seldom stays, but ever changes.
Go on, then : trust in the passing fortunes,
The fleeting pleasures of men !] (Loeb 2m3.13-6)

Chaucer turns a sarcastic rhetorical challenge into a series of straightforward questions: “Yif the forme of this world is so zeeld stable, and yif it torneth by so manye entrechaungynges, wiltow thanne trusten in the tumberge fortunes of men? Wiltow trowen in flyttyng goodes?” (Hanna and Lawler II.m3.16-20). If Boethius can see that the earth is naturally variable, that it cannot help but change all the time, will he still have faith in what is unavoidably unreliable? The seldom stable earth must be governed by the eternal laws that ruled at its creation, one of which states that nothing that is generated can be consistently static or constant: “It is certeyn and establissched by lawe perdurable, that nothyng that is engendred nys stedfast ne stable” (II.m3.21-3). The doublet “certeyn and establissched” reinforces the idea that not only is it a decree that has been issued, but it is also a law that cannot be challenged, overturned, or unenforced. The “stedfast ne stable” doublet calls to mind the opening line of “Lak of Stedfastnesse,” which harkens back to an idealized past, perhaps even to a utopian fantasy (as in another of Chaucer’s Boethian short poems, “The Former Age”), when not just the world generally but folk and neighbors in particular could be relied upon, when virtue overruled the evils of collusion, oppression, covetousness, and dissension: “Somtyme the world was so stedfast and stable.”⁴⁰ The alliterating synonyms go well together, of course, emphasizing that the “lawe perdurable” is both perpetual and unassailable, incapable of being rescinded or overturned. Throughout this brief passage, then, Chaucer continues his efforts to make the meaning plain and the message persuasive.

⁴⁰ “Lak of Stedfastnesse.” *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler. 654, line 1.

The *Boece*'s account of Lady Philosophy's discourse on the limited nature of earthly fame does not elaborate much beyond the Boethian text, except where it offers additional adjectives in doublets that characterize the forgetfulness of authors and the eternity to which the brief lives of famous men are compared. As he depicts the deficiencies of those recording history, Chaucer practically attributes agency to the omission: "But how many a man, that was ful noble in his tyme, hath the wrecchid and nedy foryetyng of writereis put out of mynde and doon away" (Hanna and Lawler II.p7.86-8). Thus, his version of "scriptorum inops delevit oblivio" [completely forgotten, for want of written record] (Loeb 2p7.47) considers the inattention of historians wretched and poor, awful and pitiful, emphasizing and characterizing the forgetfulness itself rather than the lack of writers and/or their records. Chaucer's version suggests, then, that such ignorance on the part of authors has cast their potential subjects into oblivion, since only purposeful recordings of noble actions, deeds, and exploits would have preserved noble men against the ravages of time. These once-famous people have been forcefully removed from the view of those who would look back and remember or delve into and discover. The passive forgetfulness of the writers has acted upon such men, doing away with potentially historic figures, keeping them out of the substrata of memorial and tribute that would have otherwise preserved them for future study.

Perhaps Chaucer identifies here with the same emotions that may have moved him to write a complaint to "Adam sciveyn," whose "negligence and rape [haste]"⁴¹ caused the author to spend much time correcting and rewriting his own work. Passing over material without paying enough attention, whether because of distraction, ignorance, or haste, causes harm to the records and to the authors themselves, some of whom may not have been as thorough as Chaucer when commissioning scribes to copy their writings. As Lady Philosophy points out, however, even those whose lives have been recorded have little hope of achieving lasting fame, much less those whose lives have

⁴¹ "Chaucer's Words Unto Adam, His Owne Sciveyn." *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler. 650, lines 1 and 7.

been spent creating such records: “thilke wrytynges profiten litel, the whiche wrytynges long and dirk eelde doth away, bothe hem and ek hir auctours!” (Hanna and Lawler II.p7.89-92). The light of discovery can hardly reach back far enough to uncover those beneath years of obscurity, leaving these writings buried alongside their authors. Do such records follow the nobles about whom they are written, or do they go down with the writers who penned them? If the latter, how will such authors themselves be preserved, unless they, too, are famous and merit the attention of other writers? This passage surely attracted the attention of someone like Chaucer, who often made reference to his “auctour” and to “auctoritee” in general as he brought old stories into his language and time.

Often opting for phrases like “pedurablete that is endlees,” “thinges that han end,” and “thynges that ben withouten ende” (II.p7.106-9), Chaucer tends here to avoid the words “finite” and “infinite,” opting instead to spell out the substantive adjective in more clear terms. However, he does employ the latter term when offering a doublet to modify his definition of “inexhausta aeternitate” (Loeb 2p7.62): “eternyte, that is unstauncheable and infynyt” (Hanna and Lawler II.p7.112-3), so that eternity is inexhaustible and unstoppable, having no limits or boundaries. Chaucer’s depiction, which continues his method of amplifying for the sake of explanation and clarification, presents eternity almost as an impossible force to reckon with, an indefatigable opponent to all who would challenge its pre-eminence over all temporal matter(s).

Book III, meter 9

Chaucer opens his account of this *metrum* by directly addressing the one who governs everything with eternal reason, allowing Lady Philosophy to call upon a paternal creator: “O thow Fadir, soowere and creatour of hevene and of erthes” (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.1-2). While this same form of address is given later in the poem, as Boethius concludes with a prayer to God (*Da pater*, etc.), Chaucer’s choice to provide it here at the beginning personalizes the entire hymn to a greater degree, so that even the initial lines about eternity, immutability, the harmony of creation, and the journey of the

soul take on a more prayerful tone. His doublet for *sator* (“soowere and creatour”) presents God as the cosmic farmer, planting the seeds, overseeing his garden, tending his crops. He characterizes God as a kind of manager of his creation, a worker who minds it faithfully according to the proper times and methods to bring forth the greatest possible result. While a creator calls matter into being, a sower takes a kernel of potential life and surrounds it with the proper environment for fruition. Chaucer uses a similar image in describing God’s work with souls: “thow sowest hem into hevene and into erthe” (III.m9.35); “In caelum terramque seris” [Broadcast them in the heavens and on earth] (Loeb 3m9.20).

The subsequent passage on how God commands time to go “from syn that age hadde bygynnyng” (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.4-5) sharpens the focus of the line about God controlling time, so that it becomes even more clear that time itself is finite and that the creator stands outside of and beyond it, controlling its passage from beginning to end. While time moves according to the motions granted it by God, the one moving it along stands quite still, immovable and immutable: “thow that duellest thiselwe ay stedefast and stable” (III.m9.5-6). Chaucer again favors the alliterating doublet “stedefast and stable” to establish God as not just still, but unshakable and unassailable. He supplies other doublets in this *metrum* for the purpose of both explanation [“lyghte waynes or cartes” (III.m9.34)] and emphasis [“skatere thow and tobreke” (III.m9.43-4)]. His version of “Tu numeris elementa ligas” (Loeb 3m9.10) [“Thow byndest the elementis by nombres proporcionables” (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.18-9)] characterizes God’s hold on the elements as purposeful, planned, balanced, and almost scientific in its calculated execution. In Book I, meter 2, Chaucer uses a similar phrase when translating Lady Philosophy’s rebuke of Boethius, as she recounts how he had once come to understand the arrangement of the cosmos, for he “hadde comprehendid al this by nombre (*of acontynge in astronomye*)” (I.m2.14-5). The phrase “nombres proporcionables” here in Book III, meter 9, suggests, then, that God himself has run the numbers and has balanced the universe with mathematical precision.

As he renders the passage regarding the journey of the soul, Chaucer provides a version that connotes specifically Judeo-Christian doctrinal concepts: “And whan thei ben convertyd to the by thi benygne lawe, thow makest hem retourne ayen to the by ayen-ledynge fyer” (III.m9.36-7). While this is a fairly straightforward account and a quite literal translation of “*quas lege benigna / Ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti*” (Loeb 3m9.20-1), the idea of being converted by divine law seems imminently more religious than philosophical, more Judeo-Christian than Neoplatonic. Throughout this version of Boethius’s hymn to the Creator, Chaucer consistently uses the third person, so that the Father is twice asked to “graunte hym . . .” (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.40, 42); however, he shifts to the first person plural for the concluding phrase: “to looke on the, that is oure ende” (III.m9.48-9). While some may see Chaucer’s pronoun change as the translator’s possibly unwitting intrusion into the text, it at least includes Boethius the character, whose request for prayer Lady Philosophy fulfills by voicing this *metrum*. This poem in particular marks a shift in Boethius’s narrative, as the suffering character of Boethius begins to express his own interest in the source of true happiness, which he admits must exist beyond the temporal universe.

Book IV, prose 6

As Chaucer renders Lady Philosophy’s assertion that the difference between providence and fate is easily seen when the *vim* of each is examined, his version emphasizes this imbalance of power: “The whiche thinges yif that any wyght loketh wel in his thought the *strenthe* of that oon and of that oother, he schal lyghtly mowen seen that these two thinges ben dyvers” (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.56-60, emphasis mine). This translation effectively conveys the idea that is expressed later in the *prosa* regarding the pre-eminent power of providence:

Quo fit ut omnia quae fato subsunt providentiae quoque subiecta sint cui
 ipsum etiam subiacet fatum
 [So it is that all things that are under fate are also subject to providence, to
 which even fate itself is subordinate] (Loeb 4p6.60-2)

For whiche it is that alle thinges that ben put undir destyne ben certes
subgitz to purveaunce, to whiche purveaunce destyne itself is subgit and
under (IV.p6.108-11)

Again employing a doublet for emphasis and explanation, Chaucer depicts destiny/fate as subject to providence and beneath it—under its authority, power, and control. Fate cannot compete with the designs of the divine mind, then, for it does not possess the strength to overrule or overturn its supervisor.

Chaucer's doublets repeatedly offer additional clarity as he distinguishes between the nature and workings of fate and providence: destiny is called a "disposicioun and ordenaunce" (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.64-5), so that it is also seen in terms of its position within an ordered cosmos; destiny "departeth and ordeyneth alle thinges singulerly" (IV.p6.70-1), so that it obviously breaks from the normal workings of providence, departing from that sort of all-encompassing grasp and involving itself in space and time in particular and selected ways; destiny works as its "assemblynge and oonyng" (IV.p6.76) of the temporal order unfolds within time and according to distinct times; the exercise of destiny is reiterated in the phrase, "the destinal ordenaunce is ywoven and acomplissed" (IV.p6.100-1), so that the long inquiry into its possible influences is reinforced at the end of the surmise, and so that the traditional image of fate being woven for men is accompanied by a more political or economic image of a plan being executed to accomplish certain purposes; the analogy of the concentric spheres refers to their turning around "a same centre or aboute a poynt" and to how this circle "that is innerest or most withinne" serves as "a centre or a poynt" for the other circles (IV.p6.117-21), so that the central sphere is more clearly depicted as the pivotal point, resting within all other spheres and standing firm in a relatively fixed position as the others rotate about; this central sphere thus represents a position of simplicity, where things find indivisibility and immutability as they are "constreyned into simplicitie (*that is to seyn, into unmoeveablete*)" (IV.p6.127-8), so that the middle point offers the prospect of being unmoved in the presence of the divine mind and immune to a changing, transitory universe where fate unfolds within the temporal order; whatever goes further from the principal mind "is unfolde and summittid to grettere bondes of destyne" (IV.p6.132-3),

so that it loses its tight grasp on the center of all things and spreads out, diffusing its potential simplicity and finding itself bound by fate; on the other hand, whatever wishes to be “fre and laus fro destyne” will “axeth and hooldeth hym neer to thilke centre of thinges (*that is to seyn, to God*)” (IV.p6.134-6), so that being loosed from the bonds of destiny is reserved for those who actively seek out and reach for the simplicity of the divine mind, for those who take the initiative to inquire into the things of God himself.

Chaucer’s “(*that is to seyn, to God*)” gloss here cuts through the Neoplatonic imagery with a religious explanation of the analogy. Earlier in the *prosa*, he refers to the divine mind explicitly as “God” (IV.p6.49) and describes the prime divinity as “the first godhede” (IV.p6.114-5), so that the divine mind is characterized as God himself, the first member of the godhead, the Father according to the Christian doctrine of the trinity. Chaucer also depicts those who go furthest from the *prima mente* as those who “departeth ferrest fro the firste thought of God” (IV.p6.131-2), so that what originally called attention to the highest, most primary, most initial source of all causation could now suggest two other possibilities: either the *prima mente* is God’s initial, original idea and not a metaphor for the Prime Mover himself, or the thought is man’s to think, and those who do not think first of God depart far from him and from the simplicity that his immutable nature offers. Overall, Chaucer’s rendering of this passage sharpens the focus on how subordinate fate is to providence and portrays the first person of the trinity as the ultimate, immutable authority over the entirety of this temporal universe, particularly over his own providential order and over the temporal order within which destiny unfolds. He asserts more explicitly, then, that drawing near to the person of God himself is the remedy for those who suffer from the bonds of necessity and the twists of fate.

Book IV, meter 6

Chaucer’s initial doublet in this *metrum* does not offer much in terms of clarity, for while “the ryghtes or the lawes” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.2) renders *iura* adequately in general, the context obviously has more to do with laws than with rights. Here, his broadening of the definition does not clarify, since the poem articulates how the elements

are bound by divine love and are ruled by the laws of that unifying principle. The “ryghtes” of “the heye thondrere (that is to seyn, of God)” (IV.m6.2-3), whatever they may be for the one from whom all things are derived, are not the matter at hand. However, Chaucer does continue his method of clarifying the subject, inserting the above gloss to specify that the one who thunders from on high is God himself, not Jupiter or some other natural force or mythological deity. Moreover, by translating *summa caeli* as “sovereyn hevene” (IV.m6.4) and *summo vertice* as “sovereyne heighte” (IV.m6.10), he infuses the concept of highest with a politically charged religious image expressing God’s dominion over the cosmos. While this calls attention to the one who rules the universe, it may obscure the focus here on the actual workings of material creation, as the poem calls upon the recovering character of Boethius to look to the heavens and observe the peaceful motions of the stars.

Chaucer’s glosses, however, offer useful explanation, since his literal renderings may not have otherwise captured the figurative meanings: “from hir welle (that is to seyn, from hir bygynnyng), and failen (that is to seyn, tornen into noght)” (IV.m6.52-4). While his doublets tend to offer additional potential renderings, these kinds of glosses reduce the ideas expressed in the text to their most basic elements, ensuring that readers grasp the concepts, even if their formulaic presentation seems repetitive. As Chaucer concludes his translation of this *metrum*, he once again inserts a gloss that clarifies the primary subject of the poetic interlude: all things return “to the cause that hath yeven hem beinge (that is to seyn, to God)” (IV.m6.58-60). Thus, he bookends his version with glosses that stipulate that the laws of the universe are stable and secure, enforced by God himself, as he holds everything within the balance of his love and power.

Book V, meter 2

As he introduces this *metrum* with the quotation from the *Iliad* about the sun’s ability to see and hear all things, Chaucer once again uses a gloss to clarify and explain, amplifying “Homer with the hony mouth” with “(that is to seyn, Homer with the swete ditees)” (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.1-2). Thus, the poetic expression about poetic

expression, with its honey metaphor and its oral tradition-based metonymy of the mouth standing for the source of literary creation, becomes a straightforward statement about Homer's sweet songs. Having explained at the conclusion of the previous *prosa* that the quotation comes to his readers as "it is seid in Greke" (V.p2.47-8), Chaucer makes it clear, apparently even for those who have not heard of Homer, that he was a Greek poet, and not just someone who spoke about the sun and ate a good deal of honey.

While rendering the lines that discuss how Phoebus cannot "breken or percen the inward entrayles of the erthe or elles of the see" (V.m2.5), Chaucer's doublet expands on what otherwise may have led some to think of the sun breaking the bowels of the earth up or destroying the depths of the ocean, stating more directly that the idea here relates to piercing or penetrating. Since the sun cannot break through to the center of the earth or reach the bottom of the ocean, it is neither transcendent nor omnipotent. Yet, neither is it omnipresent, for Phoebus leaves half the world's surface, whether soil or sea, immune from its rays.

As he turns the corner in this *metrum*, asserting that the creator is unencumbered by such limitations, Chaucer uses both the verb ("seth") and the proper noun ("God"), establishing more clearly that the subject is the ability of divine sight to perceive all things at once and that the builder of the universe is definitely God himself: "Haud sic magni conditor orbis" [Not thus the Maker of this great universe] (Loeb 5m2.7); "So ne seth nat God, makere of the grete werld" (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.6-7). In addition, he supplements the third-person-singular verb *cernit* ["Thilke God seeth" (V.m2.11)] and replaces the pronoun *quem* ["thilke God" (V.m2.13)], thus repeatedly emphasizing more than Boethius does that the person of God alone is capable of achieving such an esteemed epistemological position from which to rule, judge, and act.

Book V, prose 6

When translating Lady Philosophy's entreaty to move on to the contemplation of the nature of divine knowledge, Chaucer offers parenthetically what is apparently a

reading from another source: “lat us loke now, in as mochil as it is leveful to us (as who seith, lat us loke, now as we mowen)” (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.4-6). Here, a potentially confusing phrase about what may or may not be lawful is tempered by a statement regarding man’s own epistemological situation. Otherwise, “as mochil as it is leveful” would have suggested that such subjects carry with them particular expectations and boundaries of propriety (in terms of delineating between legitimate questions and concerns and those that are perhaps not only beyond our ken but also outside of the appropriate limits of respectful, non-blasphemous inquiry). Chaucer’s addition covers over questions of legitimacy and propriety and makes it a case of capability, so that Lady Philosophy and Boethius will look into divine knowledge as far as they may, as far as they possibly can, not necessarily as far as they are allowed.

Apparently concerned that the discussion of eternity in terms of a grasp on past, present, and future time would befuddle his readers, Chaucer supplies parenthetical glosses and doublets. For instance, as he renders the passage on how eternal things alone possess an all-encompassing grasp on life and on how this concept is more easily grasped when the eternal is compared to the temporal, Chaucer’s doublet (“comparysoun or collacioun”) allows him to render quite literally the term *collatione*, but his phrasing of the prepositional relationship obscures the essence of the assertion: “and that scheweth more cleerly by the comparysoun or collacioun of temporel thinges” (V.p6.15-7). Rather than conveying the idea that the nature of the eternal is more rightly appreciated when compared with the nature of the temporal, this translation seems to recommend the collation of time-bound substances. Establishing that all things live in the present, he says that they “procedith fro preteritz in to futures (that is to seyn, fro tyme passed into tyme comynge)” (V.p6.18-20). For example, the world cannot be eternal because it “hath nat the futuris (*that ne ben nat yit*), ne it ne hath no lengere the preteritz (*that ben idoon or ipassed*)” (V.p6.37-9). Only that which can comprehend and hold all at once everything past, present, and future, then, can rightly be called eternal, for temporal things cannot achieve a grasp on their futures or maintain a grasp on their pasts.

For some, however, “ther nis noight of the preteryt escaped nor ipassed,” and consequently, “thilke same is iwitnessed or iprovid by right to ben eterne” (V.p6.43-5). The first doublet (“escaped or ipassed”) resembles the one above (*that ben idoon or ipassed*) and suggests that what is done will inevitably slip away from all non-eternal substances, almost with a mind of its own, wresting itself from the grip of one who would hold it in far greater measure than memory alone and for an infinite measure of time. Chaucer’s glosses and amplifications spell out this complex argument in more detail and help readers understand especially the term “preteritz.” The second doublet (“iwitnessed or iprovid”) suggests that that which is eternal is in the dock, being judged and questioned, and that the evidence bears sufficient witness to its true nature, so that the case is solidly proven beyond doubt. Thus, applying the right names to things is not the only concern here, as the matter of God’s eternity is brought before Boethius the character and thus before Chaucer’s readers. The connotations of his diction in this passage give the discussion a tone more reflective of formal argument and jurisprudence. As he explains further that what is eternal “be alwey present to hymself and compotent (as who seith, alwey present to hymselfe and so myghty that al be right at his plesaunce)” (V.p6.46-9), Chaucer’s gloss apparently supplies material from a commentary source, specifying what it takes for one to achieve self-possession. Here it is a matter of power as much as nature, so that being eternal requires a particular kind of strength, as the eternal exerts its authority and influence over the temporal in order to achieve its aims and secure conformity to its will.

Chaucer’s version of Plato’s position on the world includes an extratextual gloss that draws upon an explanation of the idea of co-eternity (“that this world be makid coeterne with his makere”): “(As who seith, *thei wene that this world and God ben makid togidre eterne, and that is a wrongful wenyng.*)” (V.p6.55-9). Of course the idea that God was made *anything* appears unorthodox at best, unless he intends to simply explain that some believe God created the earth so that it would possess the same quality of eternity that he himself possesses. He reiterates the concept, asserting once again that it misrepresents Plato’s position entirely, for as he goes on to explain, “interminable” is not the same as eternal. Moreover, his subsequent doublet emphatically assigns Lady

Philosophy's definition of eternity to the *divinae mentis*, as though this is the only, obviously proper perspective: "it is cleer and manyfest that it is prope to the devyne thought" (V.p6.63-4). As the definition of eternity and the description of God's possession of it unfolds here in the final *prosa*, this careful treatment of a popular misconception helps set up not only the idea that much of Boethius's struggle is mental, in that he is not thinking rightly about things, but also the idea that God alone holds perfect eternity. In fact, when explaining that mutable matter cannot duplicate the simplicity and immobility of the eternal, Chaucer's doublet reinforces the notion that such immutability is unique, "as it ne mai nat contrefetin it ne feynen it, ne ben evene lik to it" (V.p6.70-2). Movable things are inherently so, and they cannot fake stability: "[fro] the inmoevablete (that is to sein, that is in the eternite of God) it faileth and fallith into moevynge" (V.p6.72-4). This gloss identifies the person of God with eternity and eternity with immobility, so that movement is portrayed as a sign of weakness and instability, of malleability and subservience to greater forces.

In the passage that explains how that which is in the present bears a resemblance to the eternal present, Chaucer goes beyond offering a doublet ("ymage or liknesse") and provides an interpretation, altering the primary sense of the text: that which is immediately present "bereth a maner ymage or liknesse of the ai duellynge presence of God" (V.p6.85-6). This marks a dramatic shift from the concept of an abiding present, a permanent state in which all things are held to be present, to the notion of a constant presence of a personal God who dwells in all regions of his universe at all times. For while "presence" can simply mean "present," the modifying phrase "ai duellynge" connotes a physical or spiritual manifestation of being—an existence, rather than a temporal unit. Although the point is perhaps ultimately the same, since this idea of God's omni-presence in an eternal present is essentially what Boethius is driving at here at the close of his treatise, this passage comes at an early stage in the development of Lady Philosophy's argument about God's eternity. Here, the issue is limited to the idea of time and how the world does not qualify as officially eternal, but rather as perpetual, only possessing from time to time, in moments of the immediate present, a certain likeness to the eternal present—of which, Lady Philosophy will assert, God alone has full

possession. For that which is perpetual must follow the course of time and move forward, beyond the past, out of the present, and into the future. Chaucer provides a gloss to elucidate what such a journey entails: “it ravysschide and took the infynit wey of tyme (*that is to seyn, by successioun*)” (V.p6.90-2). Thus, successive moments apply only to those things that are bound by time, whether mortal or perpetual, for only what exists in the eternal present can be immune from passage, movement, and transition.

Chaucer employs numerous doublets as he works through the passages on God’s foreknowledge and man’s free will, perhaps hoping to make the dense sentences more clear. For instance, he goes beyond the literal rendering of *comprehendit*, explaining that “every jugement knoweth and comprehendith by his owne nature thinges that ben subject unto hym” (V.p6.99-101), so that the idea of grasping something and understanding it is combined with the idea of relating to it and mastering it intellectually. Similarly, Chaucer’s doublet for *complectens* describes how the divine science holds infinity all at once as it “embraceth and considereth alle the infynit spaces of tymes preteritz and futures” (V.p6.105-7), so that the entire temporal order is within his reach as well as on his mind. In addition, Lady Philosophy’s response to Boethius’s demand that foreknowledge must require necessity points to the interrogative and rhetorical framework for the entire *Consolation*: “Why axestow thanne, or whi desputestow thanne, that thilke thingis ben doon by necessite whiche that ben yseyn and knowen by the devyne sighte . . . ?” (V.p6.121-4). The doublet here (“yseyn and knowen”) simply suggests that divine sight is not disinterested or disconnected, as though it scans creation without concern, for it sees and knows all things. Chaucer later amplifies Lady Philosophy’s concession that what God foreknows cannot not happen: “I wol wel confessen and byknowen a thing of ful sad trouthe” (V.p6.167-8), shifting the concept of admission to the practice of open proclamation and testimony. His phrasing also characterizes what is considered a most firm truth as “ful sad,” as though Lady Philosophy actually feels sorrow as she acknowledges that God’s knowledge is perfect in apprehension, unaffected by time, and thus unchanged by the exercise of man’s free will.

Considered by themselves, those things that are perceived according to divine science “ne forleten nat ne cesen nat of the liberte of hire owne nature” (V.p6.204-5); thus, they do not forsake or abandon the freedom that is theirs by nature, nor can they cause it to cease. Chaucer’s version suggests that free will is theirs whether they accept it, reject it, understand it, or misunderstand it, so that man is depicted as incapable of altering his nature, which is, by design, free to act under the view of divine providence. He supplements his rendering of *libero arbitrio*, explaining that as events occur because of man’s freedom to act, God’s foreknowledge is not ignorant or somehow unprepared: “But some of hem comen and bytiden of fre arbitrie or of fre wil” (V.p6.208-9). This same term appears back in Book V, prose 3, where Chaucer explains it with a parenthetical gloss: “the fredom of oure arbitre (that is to seyn, of our fre wil)” (V.p3.81-2). Yet, when he later glosses the passage where Lady Philosophy concludes the discussion of divine foreknowledge and necessity, Chaucer’s parenthetical statement refers to the larger subject at hand and does not include a gloss on the term “arbitrie”: “(that is to seyn, syn that necessite nis nat in thinges by the devyne prescience), thanne is ther fredom of arbitrie, that duelleth hool and unwemmed to mortal men” (V.p6.286-90). His doublet here emphasizes how man’s free will remains undefiled, for even though divine prescience oversees the choices and actions of men, their ability to make such choices and take such actions stands intact—whole and unscathed. In addition, as Chaucer translates the passage on how the laws of retribution (reward for good and punishment for evil) are not unjust, he renders *solutis* with a doublet that emphasizes a kind of freedom that is not inherent or innate but rather given or achieved, describing “men that ben unbownden and quyrt of alle necessite” (V.p6.292-3). Whatever may have bound them has been removed, and they have been released from all necessity, as though necessity could have, in other circumstances, continued to bind them. Thus, his treatment of “arbitre” and of the arguments related to the nature and implications of free will is evidence of Chaucer’s purposeful use of explanatory interpolations (whether in doublet constructions, in expanded sentences, or in explicit glosses) for the sake of clarity.

Chaucer’s doublet for *dispensans* also suggests that these rewards and punishments are distributed with purpose and a sense of order, as God beholds and

foreknows all things, “dispensynge and ordeynynge medes to gode men and tormentz to wikkide men” (V.p6.296-8). The principle of divine retribution is possible because “the present eternite of his sighte renneth alwey with the diverse qualite of our dedes” (V.p6.294-6), as God’s uniquely eternal perspective affords him a reliable view of the variety of deeds before him, as well as the proper authority by which to ordain and hand out either reward or torment. Moreover, free will allows for the possibility that the future course of events may be affected by answers to prayers, that supplications may be lifted up with some measure of confidence that they could in fact be successful: “Ne in ydel ne in veyn ne ben ther nat put in God hope and preyeris that ne mowen nat ben unspedful ne withouten effect whan they ben ryghtful” (V.p6.298-301). The prayers are not idle, as though they have no purpose or nowhere to go, and they are not in vain, as though they cannot accomplish anything in a predestined existence ruled by necessity. Indeed, if God’s eternity is accepted, and if his foreknowledge of all events does not demand necessity, then what to humans is the future could possibly be influenced by the answers to petitions offered in what to God is an eternal present. For if the future were fixed, then such prayers would be not just ineffectual but worthless, and if God’s every intervention in human affairs were mapped out, then man would be less free. Lady Philosophy’s argument suggests, then, that prayers may be the ultimate expression of free will in a universe governed by an eternal God.

Chaucer’s concluding doublets serve a rhetorical function, accentuating the plea for virtuous living by establishing a more verse-like rhythm: “Withstond thanne and eschue thou vices; worschipe and love thou vertues” (V.p6.302-3). Alliterating two pairs (“Withstond” and “worschipe” and “vices” and “vertues”), balancing the verbal doublets, and repeating the pronoun “thou,” this exhortation flows smoothly and forcefully. He then offers two additional doublets as he explains the burden borne by those who live under the eyes of a judge who sees all things: “Gret necessite of prowesse and vertu is encharged and comaunded to yow” (V.p6.305-6). The goodness expected from Boethius the character here apparently requires skill and ability (“prowesse”), as well as good behavior (“vertu”), and the expectations are based on a martial or political arrangement, where the leader gives responsibilities and orders to his followers. Chaucer’s final

doublets modify the phrase that exhorts Boethius's character to recognize that he acts before an all-seeing God: "syn that ye worken and don (*that is to seyn, your dedes or your werkes*) byforn the eyen of the juge that seeth and demeth alle thinges" (V.p6.307-10). This rendering strikes an overtly religious tone as it identifies the two aspects of pious living—righteous deeds and good works. The one who sees everything and judges everyone will notice the behavior, arrive at a judgment, and mete out either reward or punishment.

As Chaucer presents this dialogue, he offers signals to the reader when the exchanges move from speaker to speaker:

"For addith thi byholdynge any necessite to thilke thinges that thou byholdest present?"

"Nay," quod I.

Philosophie. "Certes, thanne," (V.p6.126-30)

.....

Boece. "What is this to seyn thanne," quod I, "that thinges ne ben nat necessarie by hir propre nature, so as thei comen in alle maneris in the liknesse of necessite by the condicioun of the devyne science?"

Philosophie. "This is the difference," quod she, "that tho thinges that I purposide the a litil herbyforn - that is to seyn, the sonne arysynge and the man walkynge - that ther-whiles that thilke thinges ben idoon, they ne myghte nat ben undoon" (V.p6.214-23)

"No, forsothe, quod she, "for the devyne sighte" (V.p6.266-7)

He provides "quod I" and "quod she," inserts character notations to distinguish between Boethius and Lady Philosophy, and adds the abrupt phrase, "This is the difference," allowing readers to follow the course of the discussion and helping them to pay close attention to the distinctions being made between simple (or absolute) necessity and conditional necessity.

Chaucer also supplements these complex arguments with parenthetical glosses, so that potentially confusing propositions such as, "whan that God knoweth any thing to be, he ne unwot not that thilke thing wantith necessite to be" (V.p6.156-8), are simplified: "(This is to sein that whan that God knoweth any thing to betide, he wot wel that it ne hath no necessite to betyde.)" (V.p6.159-61). God is not unaware of his own policies and

procedures, whereby he does not predestine events under his providential oversight. Whatever God in his eternal present sees happening “ne may nat unbytide (*as who seith, it moot bytide*)” (V.p6.163-4). Indeed, whatever may not *unhappen* must, in fact, happen, since God’s awareness of its happening requires that it necessarily happen. This insertion, “*it moot bytide*” will be challenged as the argument develops, however, and the differences between simple and conditional necessity are elucidated. Chaucer also includes parenthetical notes that are fully consistent with the text itself, since Lady Philosophy has already proposed the examples of the sun rising and the man walking and has reminded Boethius the character of these images: “But some of hem descendith of the nature of thinges (as the sonne arysynge); and some descendith of the power of the doeris (as the man walkynge)” (V.p6.229-31). Chaucer’s glosses here associate the cases being built for the two different types of necessity with the analogies already supplied, thus reinforcing Lady Philosophy’s argument.

He also continues his practice of identifying the subject (divine prescience) when it may have otherwise been an unclear pronoun reference: “And thilke prescience - ne semeth it nat to entrechaunge stoundis of knowynge?” (V.p6.259-61). He follows this with a gloss on what this passage means: “(As who seith, ne schal it nat seme to us that the devyne prescience entrechaungith hise diverse stoundes of knowynge, so that it knowe somtyme o thing, and somtyme the contrarie?)” (V.p6.261-5). Someone has reasoned that it appears as though God’s knowledge changes from moment to moment as free wills exercise their ability to choose various paths and are influenced by the free wills of others doing likewise. This interpolation softens the barrage of rhetorical questions from Lady Philosophy and seems to actually acknowledge (“seme to us”) that this is how the character Boethius (and the anticipated audience of Chaucer’s *Boece*) may be thinking.

This Book V passage on prescience also serves as an example of the kind of attitude that apparently motivated Chaucer’s additions, doublets, and glosses, as he perceived an audience for *Boece* that wanted to read *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* but needed help moving through the metaphors, allusions, and arguments. Indeed, his

approach seems to reflect his rhetorical interests, for as Rita Copeland points out, Chaucer's efforts to practice "*enarratio*, the hermeneutical function of textual commentary, and *exercitatio*, the discovery of one's own literary language through contestation and displacement of the original text" (57), are realized as we "understand Chaucer's use of amplificatory doublets . . . to explicate and arbitrate the verbal ambiguities among his sources" (61). This attention to the lexical and to the linguistic is characterized by Morton Donner as consistent with Chaucer's other authorial efforts:

Time and again in his poetry he worries about defining the relationship between a writer and his materials, voicing his concern about the accuracy, adequacy, and propriety with which words convey meaning, insisting that language be a true reflection of whatever reality it represents—and demonstrating his convictions by the way he writes himself. In *Boece*, his sense of responsibility to Boethius's meaning combines with his appreciation of the semantic properties of linguistic forms to produce a system of derivations and adoptions that will justly, as Dame Philosophy puts it, "unplyten . . . sentence with wordes" (II, pr.8, 10-11). (202)

Chaucer, then, brings to his prose translation the same kinds of curiosities and interests that are played out in his various poetic works, negotiating textual authority, lexical possibility, and literary artistry to produce the *Boece*.

Geoffrey Chaucer's Translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

Chaucer's all-prose translation presents Boethius's text in a style that suggests that his purposes for rendering the work were as much academic and linguistic as they were literary. For while the *Boece* certainly delivers Boethian philosophy on good and evil, fate and free will, determinism and causation, divine foreknowledge and providence, and time and eternity, his effort is not particularly, or at least overtly, artistic. In fact, much of the criticism his translation has received has come from those who find his choice not to render the *metra* into Middle English poetry a great blunder and a huge disappointment. Moreover, Chaucer's use of textual glosses and repetitive parenthetical explanations has led many to consider the work clumsy and unrefined, perhaps even a

rough draft of some kind. However, his frequent inclusion of neologisms, his consistent employment of doublets and reiterations, and his own assertions regarding the pedagogical benefits of prose translations all suggest that Chaucer intended for his text to present the *Consolation* to an audience that wanted to read *De Consolatione Philosophiae* but needed help moving through the metaphors, allusions, and arguments. Moreover, the entirety of the Chaucerian corpus provides plenty of evidence that the “Prince of Poets” was more than capable of rendering the Boethian text and its various philosophical assertions into Middle English poetry. It does not even appear to be some sort of sourcebook for his other works, as though he were using his *Boece* to work out material that could be used in his more overtly literary texts. For even though it may not seem “finished” in terms of polish or packaging, it is complete, with all of the source text translated. Moreover, it is also replete with formal glosses and explanations, a stylistic feature that while not altogether appealing to some readers would have been an unnecessarily exhaustive treatment of Boethius if Chaucer’s source were meant primarily for his own literary development. That it does not seem to have been motivated by particularly ambitious literary designs suggests that Chaucer had hoped to present the text of his author with as little distortion as possible, that the numerous doublets, expansions, annotations, and interpolations were part of a comprehensive effort to arrive at the *Consolation*’s meaning.

His numerous doublets are often poetic and expressive, employing alliteration and assonance, and they appear to be, then, not strained attempts at arriving at appropriate English counterparts for single Latin words but careful efforts to modify and explain in greater and more vivid detail what the text means. His prose version does attempt to present the content of the Boethian source literally, but then the interpolated gloss removes a layer of literary artistry, flattening the text, boiling it down to its essential elements. Chaucer supplements the many complex arguments with parenthetical glosses, so that potentially confusing propositions are simplified. He also includes parenthetical notes that are fully consistent with the text itself, thus reinforcing Lady Philosophy’s argument. The Boethian case for God’s eternity, for instance, is made throughout Chaucer’s *Boece*, often with the aid of supplementary glosses, explanations, and

rephrasings. Chaucer's consistent use of such expansions to more accurately and thoroughly depict God's eternal nature demonstrates his commitment to the meaning of Boethius's treatise, even if his alterations and additions occasionally alter the *Consolation's* description of the divine mind. For although Chaucer's doublets and parenthetical annotations depict God's nature and role more explicitly in terms of his unrivaled power and his unchangeable presence, such characterizations are consistent with the general thrust of Boethius's dialogue, as God alone exists in eternity and orders the universe from that exalted and unique position. Thus, his didactic translation techniques reinforce rather than challenge or distort the source material and deliver, then, an all-prose version whose repetitive explanations and elaborations serve an audience that apparently needed such a guide to the complex arguments, allusions, and assertions found in Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.

John Walton's Verse Translation

While John Walton's verse translation of Boethius exists in multiple manuscripts, it is most accessible to modern readers in Mark Science's 1927 Early English Text Society edition, which offers numerous variant readings (not variant spellings) from relevant manuscripts in footnotes, providing emendations from these MSS, as well as from Chaucer, "from whose prose translation Walton often borrowed slavishly" (Science v). Science also relies upon a 1525 printing at Tavistock Abbey by Thomas Rychard, whose work preserves materials from a manuscript that is no longer extant and that is believed to have been closer to the original of 1410 than any manuscripts currently available (xxx, xlv, xlvii). Rychard also edited the text he printed in 1525, however, substituting contemporary words for those early 15th-century terms no longer recognizable or otherwise obsolete. The prose commentary that exists only in the 1525 printing and not in any of the extant manuscripts may have been compiled by Rychard himself, for as Science points out, he "had to prepare the poem for people who lived more than a hundred years (and at a period when the language was rather unstable) after the original was written" (xx). The Tavistock text's commentary portions appear throughout

in smaller print than Walton's verses, introducing or concluding the passage commented upon—not in the middle of a stanza and not as footnotes or endnotes. In fact, the especially long commentary after Book III.m.9 includes a drawing of concentric circles, suggesting that this volume was intended for those students of the text who would have needed such visual and interpretive aids. The 1525 edition also contains dedicatory stanzas that are assumed to have been contemporary with Walton, if not from the translator himself. Its text concludes with this acrostic poem that honors Christ's crucifixion as its initial letters provide the names "ELISABET BERKELEY" and "IOHANNES WALTWNEM" (xlili).

Science places the extratextual materials from the Tavistock printing in unusual locations within his edition, discussing and providing the concluding dedicatory stanzas from the 1525 text in his introduction, and printing the prose commentary that was interspersed throughout the Tavistock version in an appendix. If these supplementary notes date from a manuscript contemporary with Walton, then they may have been meant to accompany the original for the sake of its benefactor, Elizabeth Berkeley, who apparently commissioned the work from the poet. However, as Ian Johnson points out, "[i]t is not possible to determine with any confidence the extent to which Elizabeth's involvement with Walton's translation may in any way have been independent of her father" ("Placing Walton's *Boethius*" 218). Even accepting that the dedicatory stanzas are Walton's own, the project may have been directed or motivated by Elizabeth's father, Lord Thomas Berkeley, who is reputed to have loved English translations of Latin works and was a patron of John of Trevisa.⁴²

On the other hand, if the commentary included in the Tavistock printing is original to (or at least contemporary with) that 1525 edition, "then it testifies to a high level of pride, confidence and openness to innovation on the part of the abbey"

⁴² See Ian Johnson, "Placing Walton's *Boethius*": "Thomas Berkeley's best-known activities as a literary patron were as sponsor of the substantial output of the learned and celebrated prose translator, John Trevisa, Vicar of Berkeley" (218). Walton's EETS editor Mark Science records that "John of Trevisa . . . [was] a diligent translator of Latin works, [who] became Vicar of Berkeley and chaplain to his patron, for whom he composed English versions of [among other texts] Higden's 'Polychronicon' 1387, [and] Bartholomaeus' 'De Proprietatibus Rerum' 1398" (xlvi).

(Donaghey, et al 402). Moreover, since the expenses associated with such a production would have been met by those who would have purchased the volume, printer (and editor) Thomas Rychard's efforts say something about the anticipated reception of Walton's poetic translation: "In effect, Rychard has confirmed the greater popularity of this version over Chaucer's *Boece* but has then tried to inject a measure of scholarship into the informed lay reader's study of this text by choosing to incorporate a commentary, at an additional cost, of course, of paper, and compositorial and presswork time" (403).

Although Walton prefaces his work with humble and self-deprecating verse, he nevertheless puts himself in the same stanza as two great poets, paying homage to Chaucer, an "excellent poete, / This wot I wel no þing may I do like, / Þogh so þat I of makynge entirmete" (Science 5.2-4), and honoring Gower's "book[es] of moralite ; / Þogh I to þeym in makynge am vnmete, / 3it must I schewe it forth þat is in me" (5.6-8). Walton claims that he merely dabbles in verse and cannot match the poetic genius of these men, and yet his references to Chaucer and Gower invite the very comparison he purports to resist. Furthermore, although Walton dedicates his translation to Lady Berkeley and evidently had written it expressly at her command, his prologue anticipates a wider audience that includes "euery lord or lady what ge be / Or clerk þat likeþ for to rede þis" (31.1-2). Many lords, ladies, and clerks must have been interested in reading Walton's verse translation of the *Consolation*, for some 19 manuscripts and 3 printings of the 1525 edition testify to its apparent popularity.⁴³ Thus, his effort to "schewe it forth þat is in me" (5.8) was evidently successful and his career established through this verse presentation of the *Consolation* that may have found more readers than did one of its chief sources—Chaucer's *Boece*.⁴⁴

While there are no references to Walton's verse translation of Boethius in Middle English literature, the fact that Walton's work survives in so many copies suggests that his translation probably surpassed Chaucer's in terms of circulation and interest. Perhaps

⁴³ Science provides a description of these manuscripts in his introduction, vii-xxi.

⁴⁴ Ian Johnson's "Placing Walton's *Boethius*" asserts that "no Englishing of Boethius was more successful in its circulation than John Walton's 1410 verse translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, which is extant in more than twenty manuscripts, and was much more popular in the later Middle Ages than Chaucer's prose *Boece*" (217).

this consciously literary text found a wide audience because it made the *Consolation* more accessible, for although the translator's preface indicates that the work had been commissioned, Walton's "frequent resort to paraphrase in preference to literal translation and the numerous insertions of explanatory passages bear testimony to the author's attempts to simplify difficult passages and make the work more acceptable" (Science xlv). Referring perhaps to the commissioning by Ms. Berkeley, J. Norton Smith suggests that Walton's translation is ideal as "An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Philosophy," whereas Derek Pearsall sees it as "in every respect superior" to Chaucer's prose version and yet an "illustration of what Chaucer had done for English poetry, for here, in language of perfect fluency, in careful meter and skillfully padded stanzas, an honest craftsman threaded his way through the complexities of the *Consolatio* with accuracy, ease and dignity."⁴⁵ Thus, Pearsall commends Chaucer not for his prose *Boece* but for his poetical works and their influence over the English language in general and English prosody in particular.

Since Walton relied upon Chaucer as a source, most of the discussion of his verse translation has revolved around his predecessor's influence, not the least of which is Walton's use of the "Monk's Tale" 8-line *ottava rima* stanzas for Books I, II, and III and his use of the *Troilus and Criseyde* 7-line *rime royal* stanzas for Books IV and V. In order to demonstrate Walton's use of the *Boece*, Science provides a chart of readings that are similar in Walton and Chaucer, where Walton has followed Chaucer's deviations from the original, and where Walton's rendering of the Latin is more accurate than Chaucer's. Ian Johnson is careful to point out, however, that Walton also used the commentary by Trevet as he translated Boethius and that this reference work served as a check on Chaucer's *Boece* ("Placing Walton's Boethius" 219-20). Like Chaucer, then, Walton relied on a Latin source, a vernacular rendering, and commentary materials, taking them up as he produced something of his own, especially in terms of structure.

⁴⁵ The comment by Norton-Smith appears in his 1976 essay, "Chaucer's Boethius and Fortune," and the statement from Pearsall comes from his 1966 book, *Chaucer and Chaucerians*; both are quoted here from Kaylor's thesis, "John Walton's 1410 Verse Translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in the Context of its Medieval Tradition in England, France, and Germany," 1984. 4.

Walton proclaims that even though some have put it into prose and some into poetry, his version will be different, for “I most use þe wittes þat I haue” and “With help of god þe sentence schal I saue” (4.6, 8). Walton intends to offer his own, poetic treatment of Boethius, but he prays that divine intervention enables him to keep from losing the original’s meaning in the process. Walton had known, of course, that Chaucer had rendered his *Boece* in prose, and one wonders if he had known John of Trevisa’s position on the suitability of prose for his English version of Higden’s *Polychronicon* (1387). Trevisa had served as a translator for Lord Thomas Berkeley, the father of Elizabeth, to whom Walton dedicates his verses. Trevisa prefaces his translation with a dialogue between a lord and a clerk, who debate whether or not English translations should be made. The lord’s position in favor of English versions of classical and biblical sources prevails, and he concludes with the assertion that prose is preferred to poetry, “for comynliche prose is more clere than ryme, more easy and more pleyne to knowe and understand” (Wogan-Browne, et al. 134). This principle demonstrates a concern more for the educational needs of the translation’s anticipated audience than for some sense of obligation to the structure and literary form of the original text to be translated.

In “Method of Translation,” an introductory essay in his EETS edition of Walton’s rendering, Science recalls Sir Thomas North’s quotation of Amyot, a French translator: “The office of a fit translator consisteth not only in the faithful expressing of his author’s meaning, but also in a certain resembling and shadowing forth of the form of his style and manner of his speaking” (l). Likewise, Science himself had proposed that a fit translation of Boethius’s *Consolation* should bring out “the purpose of the Metra in the original” and that a translation that fails to do so “hardly accomplishes its true task” (l). Judging Walton’s efforts in this regard, the editor later complains that his author’s verse translations of the meters do not rise above the artfulness of the poetic versions of the prose sections, that other than occasional “alliterative coloring Walton’s metra are painted in the same drab tones as his renderings of the prosae, and the varying rhythms of the original are reduced to the monotonous beat of the iambus” (lxi). However, while it may seem appropriate to expect more creative and artistic expression in the verse translations of the *metra*, such an expectation does not address the degree to which the

entire *Consolation* has been flattened and re-cast by Walton. Whether using 8-line *ottava rima* or 7-line *rime royal*, the poet has poured his rendering into the form laid out before him. Neither the prose passages nor the verses actually *fit* into the structure neatly, and so his tags, expansions, contractions, and rhymes fill out the lines. Thus, expecting more “artfulness” from the stanzas that render Latin verse rather than Latin prose may be unrealistic, since one might instead simply prefer that Walton had employed a separate verse form (or a variety of them) when translating the *metra*.

Nevertheless, just as some have been critical of Chaucer’s decision to translate the prosimetric *Consolatio* into an all-prose structure, others have wondered at Walton’s all-verse version. For instance, Eleanor Hammond (1927) laments the choice to translate the entire work into verse, considering this decision “a greater tactical error than Chaucer’s reduction of the whole to prose. For thereby is lost the element of variety, the change of key from reflective to lyrical, so definitely sought by Boethius” (39). Likewise, Science hesitates to regard the verse translation as a literary success, in part because the poetic version alters the original prosimetric form of Boethius’s *Consolation*. Walton’s editor sees the poems as “periods of relief between the long proses of philosophical argument . . . clinching the arguments as it were, and showing how comfort can be derived. Moreover they are written in changing rhythms and are specially intended as songs to give pleasure” (l). Commenting on the renderings that precede Walton’s, Science remarks that King Alfred’s prosimetrum shows that the *Consolation*’s first English translator “realised the necessity for the musical metra” (li), and he suggests that “there is something lacking in the spirit of Chaucer’s translation” and that for Chaucer “to have rendered them in prose is a distinct loss to the harmony and spirit of the whole” (li). What Science implies here—that Walton’s work suffers from its structural limitations, since an all-verse translation could hardly achieve such harmony, even if the whole text is “musical”—he states explicitly soon after: “Nor did Walton entirely succeed in attaining perfection of both expression and spirit in his translation” (li). In fact, he considers poetic translation limiting, and yet also potentially (and dangerously) liberating: “[t]he verse translator, bound with the relentless cords of his metre and fettered with the shackles of rhyme, can hardly be expected to be quite literal in his version,” noting also, though, that “unlimited

license in translation cannot but produce at the best anything beyond a paraphrase, and Walton must, on several occasions, be rebuked for passing the limit” (lx). By opting for a poetic translation of the entire *Consolation*, Walton has chosen to be tied to the structure and the packaging of his text, rather than to its content. Consequently, if a given line or stanza called for a certain pattern of stressed syllables or for a particular set of sounds, the words chosen would have been selected according to those criteria, rather than according to whatever would have offered a more literal rendering of the Latin.

Science also believes that Walton’s rhetorical situation, professional obligations, and literary influences must have placed quite a burden on the poet’s work, his effort having been “[w]eighed down under the onus of having been prepared to order” and significantly affected (to the detriment of Walton’s own originality and accuracy) by the phrasing of Chaucer’s version (li). Thus, Science perceives Walton as not only being burdened with the anxiety of influence but also by the expectations of his patroness, his own authorial voice altered by what Chaucer had spoken and by what Elizabeth Berkeley wanted to hear. Science follows this apology, however, with the expectation that readers will (perhaps with a mixture of surprise and reluctance) acknowledge how frequently the poet has managed to arrive at the meaning of his original: “one must admit that the philosophical thoughts, the puzzling arguments and the subtle dialectics are often clearly expressed in the verse rendering” (lxi). This praise of Walton’s achievement betrays the editor’s assumption that his readership would doubt the ability not only of Walton but also of the verse form itself to communicate and to clarify complicated ideas.

Science asserts, though, that Walton achieves greater clarity when he shifts in Books IV and V from his restrictive 8-line *ottava rima* to the more flexible 7-line *rime royal*, adding that Walton’s versified paraphrases and explanations are probably purposeful attempts to clarify and simplify the complex passages for Ms. Berkeley. Derek Pearsall concurs, suggesting that Walton “shows good sense in switching from ballade to rhyme royal (which has one rhyme fewer) for books IV and V, with their more complex programme of philosophical exposition” (239). Walton’s structural choices are not all Pearsall admires, as he judges the translator “a most skilful versifier: his metre, like

Hoccleve's, is careful and regular, and he knows well how to manage the stanza so as to violate neither metre nor sense" (239). Walton apparently felt that he could make the sense clear enough through his lines of English verse, even though he does write at length about the challenges posed by the task of delivering his *Consolation*. The "Prefacio Translatoris" describes his source material as a "subtile matere" (Science 2.1) that is "hye . . . so hard and curious" (2.3), and he prays to God that the *Consolation* will not be "[d]efouled no corrupt" (2.6) by his translation. He does not want to vary from the text "[b]ut kepe þe sentence in hys trewe entent, / And wordes eke als neigh as may be broght / Where lawe of metir is noght resistant" (3.2-4). The poet's understanding of and adherence to the metrical rules govern his art, legislating his options and allowing only so much room for discursive freedom. Consequently, how he chooses to interpret and apply the "lawe of metir" places limits on his choices and prohibitions on certain constructions and arrangements. Walton makes a distinction, though, between the "sentence" and the "wordes," indicating that his primary objective is to maintain the meaning and then, if possible, remain true to the word for word correspondences—when such fidelity is allowed by the rules of poetry. However, since both the "sentence" and the "wordes" are subject to the "lawe of metir," the testimony of Boethius's text (both word and sense) is subordinated to the demands of an ongoing poetic project that has been designed and executed by the translator. Science notes, for example, that Walton's rhyming lines are often filled out with the common "tags": "it is no nay ; soth to seie ; it is no fayle ; it is no drede ; as semeth the ; if it be as I gesse ; it is no questioun, I am certeyn" (n. lxi).

Walton explains that his work will not be like the literal English translations of Boethius that he has seen, but that he will do what he can to preserve the *Consolation's* meaning:

I haue herd speke *and* sumwhat haue i-seyne
 Of diuerse men þat wondir subtillye,
 In metir sum *and* sum in prose pleyne,
 This book translated haue suffyshauntlye
 Into Englysshe tonge, word for word, wel neye ;
 Bot I most use þe wittes þat I haue ;
 Pogh I may noght do so, yit noght-for-thye,
 With help of god þe sentence schal I saue. (4.1-8)

The versions Walton has seen have been in verse or in prose, not prosimetric apparently, though he acknowledges in his prologue that Boethius “wrot þis book of consolacioun / In prose *and* metre enterchaungyngly” (19.8-20.1). One wonders, then, which version at his disposal (or at least to his knowledge) had been written entirely in verse—since Alfred’s were all-prose and prosimetric and Chaucer’s was all-prose. The term “sum” appears to refer to the “diuerse men,” but if “In metir sum *and* sum in prose pleyne” means that Walton has heard discussion about and perhaps even seen texts where some of the *Consolation* has been rendered in meter and some in prose, one wonders whether he has seen a prosimetric version in Middle English. Whatever his exposure to previous translations, Walton places his own poetic efforts in the context of a growing English tradition of literature (and of Boethius) in English, crediting the work of Chaucer and of Gower, but asserting (as he has above) that he must “schewe it forth þat is in me” (5.8).

Walton also wishes to separate himself from those who have gone before by revealing his reluctance to “labour no to muse / Upon þese olde poysees derk” (6.1-2), since dwelling upon the “false goddes” (6.6) is not fitting for those who hold to “Cristes feith” (6.3) and who have “resayved Cristes merk” (6.7). Walton apparently sees his poetic project as a religious one, praying “þat god of hys benignite / My spirit enspire wiþ hys influence” (8.7-8). Thus, he calls not upon Cupid or the pagan muses for inspiration but upon God himself, declaring the Christian perspective from which his poetic project comes. In this way, Walton’s text is similar to Alfred’s: his metrical prologue gives a history of Boethius’s life, and he considers the mythological portions of the *Consolation* to be talk of old, dark things and false gods. Indeed, Walton explicitly states that a Christian man would be untrue to Christ if he were to dwell on such things. Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. contends that in Walton’s prefatory biography, “Boethius becomes ‘medievalized’ in that he is sometimes portrayed . . . as a Christian martyr rather than in the perhaps more valid view as a victim of political intrigue,” noting that Walton takes great pains to portray Theodoric as a heretic damned for oppressing the Christians.⁴⁶ While Alfred’s introductory biography of Boethius does not champion the author as a

⁴⁶ See Kaylor’s thesis, 1984. 14-15.

martyr executed under false pretenses, it does characterize him as a reformer who challenges the rule of a cruel, unrighteous, and heretical king, Theodoric. Likewise, Walton describes the Roman emperor as “full of malice *and* of cursidnesse, / And eek for cause he was an heretyk” (18.2-3) and depicts Boethius as having “Wipstode hym evire” (18.6).

Walton further demonstrates his personal investment in his translation of Boethian philosophy as interrupts the division between Book III and Book IV with a 9-stanza preface to the remainder of the text, shifting from the 8-line *ottava rima* pattern to a 7-line *rime royal* structure and thus freeing himself up from the more rigid arrangement so that he can negotiate the difficult subject matter of Books IV and V. Walton’s first two stanzas in this preface reflect upon the eternal nature of God and his unsearchable judgments as he governs the world as creator and sustainer, thus recapping Book III for the readers, while the third stanza contains an account of his struggle with “so hye a mater” (576.1) and an admission that his “wittes ben vnmete / The sentence for to saue in metre trewe” (576.3-4). Stanzas 4-8 anticipate the issues to be covered in the last two books, as Walton discusses destiny, liberty, human will, divine foreknowledge, epistemology, eternity, and “goddes priuete” (581.6). Then, the final stanza concludes this interpolated preface with a prayer to “þe welle of sapience” (582.1) that he might strengthen Walton’s cunning and wit: “take it lord in-to þi gouernaunce” (582.7). Much of this insertion, then, presents the poet not only as a commentator on the material he is translating but also as a man at a loss for words, someone in his own Boethian position, as he finds himself without the power to know the unknown fully but seeks instruction and guidance from divine wisdom.

John Walton and the Consolation of Eternity

Book I, meter 5

As Walton opens this *metrum*, he attributes the quality of eternity not to the seat from which the Maker rules the heavens (as Chaucer does) but to the Creator himself: “Qui perpetuo nixus solio” (Loeb 1m5.2); “Þat perdurable sittest in thy trone” (Science 116.2). He also offers an explanatory interpolation clarifying the effect that the moon has on the lesser lights: “In hire *presence* to schyne þei haue no myght” (116.8). Such minor stars are thus characterized as weaker than the moon, diminished by her arrival, powerless to overcome her dominion over the night sky. Walton also offers additional description of the vegetation that comes back after winter has passed, placing even more emphasis, then, on the creative might of the one who orders the seasons and brings beauty and life from defilement and depravity:

Ut quas Boreae spiritus aufert
Revehat mites Zephyrus frondes
[So that the leaves the north wind strips away
The west wind brings again in gentleness] (Loeb 1m5.19-20)

bare branches waxen faire *and* grene
Wiche þat were despoyled *and* vnhyght
By styffe stormes of þe wynter kene. (Science 118.6-8)

Here, what otherwise might have been a straightforward account of the contrast between the seasons and of the reversal that comes with changes in weather becomes a vivid depiction of organic vitality, as barren limbs grow ripe with life after having suffered the onslaught of winter’s winds. A depiction of the inevitable, cyclical changes brought about by the shifting seasons becomes a tribute to the restoration possible in the natural world, to the idea that difficult and potentially overwhelming circumstances can be overcome. This passage appears, then, to set up not only the subsequent lines about how the Maker does not constrain the acts of men as he does the forces of nature, but also the concluding lines in the *metrum* that request divine intervention to establish justice and vindicate the righteous. If “bare” and “despoyled” branches can “waxen faire *and* green,” then perhaps

the good folk might, with the Ruler's help, overcome the oppressive powers of the wicked. Thus, Walton's elaboration upon his source(s) produces what becomes his original presentation of Boethius, as lines and rhymes are filled out and struck with his own peculiar, versifying stamp.

Furthermore, in one of many instances of borrowing from Chaucer's *Boece*, Walton's use of "waxen heye cornes" (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.27) and "forleteth" (I.m5.30) affects both his rhyme scheme and his diction, shaping the form and the content of his work and thus affecting its meaning:

Thow makest hem to waxen feyre *and* hye
And when þey ben to cornes full i-growen
Thow makest hem to ripen *and* to drye.
Thyne olde lawe þere may noþing [vn]plie
Ne be no way þaire kyndly course forlete.
Oo god, þat all þing rewlest certanlie,
Now onely mannes werk thow has forgete. (Science 119.2-8)

Especially here at the close of this stanza, Walton's borrowing from Chaucer has had an impact upon his own version's meaning: rhyming with "forlete," "forgete" connotes not that God has chosen not to intervene in human affairs but rather that he has simply overlooked them. The implication, then, is that God's lack of intervention is a product of his negligence or incompetence, rather than of his design wherein humans are free to act as they will. In fact, the suggestion that an all-knowing, eternal God could "forgete" causes one to wonder if Walton has inadvertently left an unorthodox impression or if he is consciously portraying Boethius the character as a plaintiff with weakened vision and a dim view of the divine mind. By comparison, a portion of Chaucer's translation that Walton has not adapted includes the phrase "whi refusestow oonly to governe the werkes of men" (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.32-3), his *Boece* thus clearly considering the lack of divine government a conscious choice and not a consequence of oblivious inattention or weakness of mind or memory.

In addition, Walton's rendering of "Nam cur tantas lubrica versat / Fortuna vices?" (Loeb 1m5.28-9) alludes more directly to the wheel of fortune and asks even

more pointedly than Chaucer's version ["Why suffrestow that slydyng Fortune turneth so grete enterchaungynges of thynges?" (Hanna and Lawler *I.m.5.34-5*)] why it is that God allows fortune to act: "Why schall fortune turnen vp-so-doun / Thing wiche þat is in thy gouernement" (*Science 120.1-2*). Walton's "vp-so-doun" calls to mind the kind of inversion and reversal those on Fortune's wheel experience when change up-ends them, and his assertion that fortune has its hands upon those things which God has authority over makes even more explicit Boethius's complaint that God will not constrain the acts of men—an observation reinforced by the fickleness of fortune. Here, God's government has allowed an intrusion, an usurpation, so that fortune is permitted to ransack territory and property that rightfully belongs to God. Such an affront cannot go unnoticed and certainly not unchallenged, and so Walton's account of Boethius's complaint here is less observational and more personal, more pointed.

In the passage that follows, Walton includes a line that reinforces what has already been established—that the innocent suffer what the guilty deserve: "Lo feithfull folk ben schamed now and schent / And wicked folk ben set in worthinesse" (*120.7-8*). Thus, the balance between "feithfull folk" and "wicked folk" in these two lines helps emphasize the imbalance in justice. As he opens the next stanza, Walton keeps his image of imbalance intact by continuing his alliterative method of identifying the players in this conflict: "Thus fals[e] folk þe faipfull haue oppresed" (*121.1*). He then finds a rhyme for "oppresed" that makes explicit an idea that is implicit in this *metrum*—that virtue/justice itself ought to be vindicated: "And vertu þat so worþy is of name / Now lyth in derknesse til hit be redressed" (*121.2-3*). Walton pictures "vertu" hiding prone and impotent, waiting in apparent shame or dishonor until some advocate arrives to take up its cause and redress the wrongs committed against it. He also intensifies the sense of pathos in this passage with his inclusion of a line that fills out the stanza by depicting the frauds as "Disceyuung hem þat most vpon hem trist" (*121.8*). Sadly, such deception is perpetrated upon those who, up until the point of deceit, had trusted in and relied upon those who, as it turns out, had only pretended loyalty. This line thus reflects upon what is implied by the previous lines about vice wrapped in the robes of virtue, since such fraud would necessarily require that the costumes were at one time considered clothes.

In his expanded translation of the passage regarding the triumph of the unjust over royal authority, Walton shifts the focus somewhat, away from the troubling notions of revolt and regicide and toward the less overt but more sinister practice of subversion and manipulation:

Sed cum libuit viribus uti,
Quos innumeri metuunt populi
Summos gaudent subdere reges.
[And when they please to use their power,
Then they delight to overcome great kings
Whom countless peoples fear.] (Loeb 1m5.39-41)

And after þeym þei drawn to consent
Gret kynges þat many a man must drede,
And maken hem *performe* þaire entent,
And þaym a-combreth wiþ þaire cursed-hede,
And as þaym lust right so þei will þaym lede. (Science 122.1-5)

Here, these false frauds have gained access to the kings and won their permission and submission, so that the unjust ones control the reins of government and direct the course of royal power according to their own intentions. Thus, they encumber right rule with evil desires and lead it astray, along damnable paths. This portrayal of Boethius's complaint speaks more to the covert political machinations that overcome legitimate authorities, than to any overt military maneuvers—referencing, then, the same kind of intrigue that allegedly surrounded the arrest and imprisonment of Boethius himself.

Walton concludes this stanza by offering what reads like a Christian prayer that petitions the creator for relief: “Sume tyme sende vs socour of þy grace” (122.8). The request continues, however, as the next and final stanza of the *metrum* opens with an explanation for why humans are deserving of the maker's attention: “For of þy werk we ben a porcioun, / Noght foule bot faire after þe forme of þe” (123.1-2). This rationale for divine intervention makes the argument of Boethius's complaint even more explicit than what Walton found in Chaucer's *Boece*: “We men, that ben noght a foul partie, but a fair partie of so greet a werk” (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.52-3). Moreover, Walton's interpolated phrase “after þe forme of þe” offers a rationale for the defense—that the

Creator ought to show grace to his creatures because the fairness that distinguishes them from what is foul is a quality that they possess because they were formed in their Maker's own image. While the basis for this argument can be found throughout Christian tradition, it also appears prominently in the hymn to the creator in Book III, meter 9, which describes how God made all things without any outside influence or cause and relied instead upon "þe forme of soueryn good in the" (Science 460.6). Thus, Walton again adds material to his rendering of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, and while he has certainly re-cast his source in a very different form and borrowed heavily from Chaucer, his innovations and adaptations are neither entirely unfaithful nor completely unoriginal.

Book II, meter 3

After one and a half stanzas of a fairly direct translation of this *metrum*, Walton interpolates a line that reflects upon the preceding lines and applies the principles of change and transition to the lives of men: "Thus alle youre lustes passen in a þrowe" (202.4). The movement of the sun, the dimming of the stars, the flowering of the forests—all of these illustrate the passing nature of human desire and the ephemeral qualities of earthly pleasures. While this point appears with some sarcasm toward the end of the poem, inserting it here not only fills out the *ottava rima*, but also usefully sums up the argument being developed and built—offering readers a chance to reflect upon the idea of mutability before arriving at the case for divine stability.

As he concludes Lady Philosophy's exhortation to the suffering character of Boethius, Walton's diction includes particular terms from *Boece*, but his rendering's poetic aims exert even more control over how the *metrum* turns out and over what it suggests:

Wiltow trowen in flyttynge goodes? It is certeyn and establissched by
lawe perdurable, that nothyng that is engendred nys stedfast ne stable.
(Hanna and Lawler II.m3.20-3)

Than wilt þou triste to goodes deceyuable?
This is a lawe wiþoute chaungementes :

Pere may noþing be kyndly *perdurable*
Pat is engendred of these elementes. (Science 203.5-8)

Words like “triste” (trowen), “goodes” (goodes), “lawe” (lawe), “*perdurable*” (*perdurable*), “noþing” (noþyng), and “engendred” (engendred) show clear reliance upon Chaucer’s prose, but the “-able” and “-mentes” rhymes result in a number of important distinctions: Walton’s “deceyuable” goods are characterized differently than Chaucer’s “flyttinge” ones, even though what is deceptive about them is the notion that they are permanent rather than fleeting; Walton’s “lawe wipoute chaungementes” may be fixed and immutable, but it is not explicitly eternal like the “lawe *perdurable*” that governs Chaucer’s “certeyn and establissched” principle; Walton’s specification that what is “engendred” is “engendred of these elementes” sharpens the focus on the mutability of anything made or derived from the material world. This poem thus retains even as it slightly alters the implicit argument about the Maker’s exclusive possession of eternity, for while Chaucer characterizes the law or principle itself as “*perdurable*” (by extension the ordainer/enforcer of that law must be himself eternal), Walton asserts that nothing that is made from the elements can be “*perdurable*” (by extension only what is un-made can be eternal).

Book II, prose 7

Drawing from Chaucer’s prose but not reproducing its approach wholesale, Walton attributes the lack of written record for once famous men not only to the authors’ lack of effort but also to their lack of time:

hath the wrecchid and nedy foryetyng of writeris put out of mynde
(Hanna and Lawler II.p7.87-8)

Defaute of writyng *and* of besynesse
Haþ out of mynde h[y]m vtterly forgete.” (Science 297.7-8)

The “-esse” and “-ete” rhymes alter Walton’s rendering here, and if the “Defaute” applies to both the “writyng” and the “besynesse,” then it is not that they have not written because they were too busy, but that the writers have not been on the job at all—not

busying themselves with the recording of noble men's lives. For Walton, the forgetting has resulted not necessarily from the absentmindedness or inattention of the writers themselves but from the "defaute of wrytyng *and* of besynesse" that have characterized these authors' ineffectual careers. Moreover, although Walton appears to import Chaucer's "profiten" and "auctours" as he continues this passage, he fills out the subsequent stanza with his own phrasing and commentary:

Quamquam quid ipsa scripta proficiant, quae cum suis auctoribus premit
longior atque obscura vetustas ?
[Though what is the value of such records themselves when they and their
writers are lost in the obscurity of long ages ?] (Loeb 2p7.47-9)

certes, thilke wrytynges profiten litel, the whiche wrytynges long and dirk
eelde doth away, bothe hem and ek hir auctours! (Hanna and Lawler
II.p7.89-92)

I ne woot of *scripture* what it schal *profite*
Sith *euery* mortale thing schal over-passe,
And theym, right as þe auctours þat hem write
Grete age schal destroyen *and* deface. (Science 298.1-4)

The first line follows the practice of turning from interrogative to declarative, but the "I ne woot of *scripture*" (298.1) interpolation involves Lady Philosophy more subjectively in the argument, and the "Sith *euery* mortale thing schal over-passe" (298.2) insertion lends additional philosophical and rhetorical support to the ongoing argument, emphasizing as it does the limitations of mortality.

Walton complicates his rendering of Lady Philosophy's challenge to the suffering Boethius as he considers the long life of his name in relation to limitless eternity, mixing temporal and spatial metaphors in an attempt to depict the relatively short-lived nature of fame:

But if þou woldest weie or counterpayse
The tyme of all þi fame and þi renoun,
Thogh þat þou woldest abouen heuen it rayse
Yit schuldest þou fynde no *proporcioun*
Ayenst the eternall *perduracioun*
þat euer haþ be *and* neuer schal [haue] ende. (299.1-6).

His “-ayse” rhymes result here in images of balance and of measure, as “weie or counterpayse” (299.1) is rhymed with “abouen heuen it rayse” (299.3). Apparently even the distance between earth and “abouen heuen” is finite and measurable, but it is perhaps the greatest possible height that Lady Philosophy believes one like Boethius could imagine, and so she asserts that the highest possible fame cannot begin to compare with eternity. He continues this attempt to depict the complete difference between the finite and the infinite as he renders the passage on how any multiple of years cannot be measured against eternity, adding a line about the mind’s inability to even attempt such a feat: “For thogh þou wouldest they noumbre multeplie / Als fer as wit haþ possibilite” (301.1-2). Walton asserts here that the wits of man lack the capacity to grasp such calculations, for the mind itself is finite and has only so much possibility for thinking out the innumerable multiples that would approach infinity.

Developing such ideas further, Walton depicts fame, rumor, and literary acclaim as essentially limited:

Wherefore I say if þat ye wolde devise
Thi fame to be dilated *and* i-sprad
Als fer as any myndes mowe suffice,
Or any book be writen or be rad,
Yit may þere no comparisoun be made
Vnto þe tyme þat stant eternally. (302.1-6)

He once again fills out a line with a subjective, first-person introductory clause for Lady Philosophy, and then he uses the compound verb phrase “dilated *and* i-sprad” to describe how Boethius’s fame might conceivably grow as far as anyone could possibly imagine. He also uses this phrase to characterize how men act only for an audience and hope always for a glowing report: “Pat vayne rumour for to delate *and* sprede” (303.3). Neither fame nor rumor, however, can enlarge infinitely or spread eternally. Walton also harkens back to the previous discussion of written records, stating that even if one’s notoriety were more concrete than abstractions like fame and intangibles like rumor, that even if it were recorded and read, such books could not endure throughout eternity. Perhaps

reflecting and perpetuating Boethius's own authorial anxiety, Walton expresses doubt that written records will last far beyond the respective lifetimes of their writers.

As he concludes his last stanza in this section, Walton's Lady Philosophy complains that men leave knowledge of virtue behind when they place so much credence in "folkes tales" (303.6) and "veyne rumours, litell of credence, / Of foreyn folkes, all nocht worþ a bene (303.7-8), dismissively devaluing such interests with a contemporary idiom that happens to rhyme with "clene" from line 6 of the stanza. His alliterative reference to foreign folks could simply be suggesting that men pay too much attention to those outside their particular sphere of influence and interaction, or it could actually imply that famous men also worry about their reputations throughout the world and not only within their own country and among their own countrymen. After all, Lady Philosophy has already made a point to remind Boethius that his fame, renown, and worthiness are confined "Wiþ-ynne þe litel space of oo cuntre" (297.3). Thus, as Walton attempts to "kepe þe sentence in hys trewe entent / And wordes eke als neigh as may be broght / Where lawe of metir is nocht resistant" (3.2-4), his adherence to his own laws causes him to add words, but they are brought near to the true intent of the passage and remain faithful to its meaning.

Book III, meter 9

Throughout this hymn to the creator, Walton repeatedly characterizes the maker in distinctively Christian terms. His Lady Philosophy follows Chaucer's, opening the *metrum* by addressing the entire poem to "O fader" (459.1), so that the concept of the creator as a father appears up front and not just in the concluding petition, "Thow fairest fadire" (465.6). Then, in the last lines of the poem, Walton ends the characterization of the creator as the beginner, leader, and way by calling him "all þe blisse of heuen" (467.8), evoking thoughts not only of philosophical or even spiritual guidance but also of joyful reward in the afterlife. Moreover, God is often depicted in explicitly theocratic terms, as a powerful royal authority: "oure prince souereyn" (460.1), "Thow althire fairest lord in heuene" (461.3), "Pat souereyn see to serchen and atteyne" (465.7).

Walton's rhyme scheme here also produces interesting readings, as the adverbs "wondirly" (459.1) and "myghtily" (459.3) modify the ways in which the creator miraculously and powerfully sustains all he has made. He also rhymes "vniuersite" (459.2) with "tymes of þe hole eternite" (459.5), as though the entirety of eternity is comprised of multiple, infinite moments. However, other manuscript readings suggest that some readers understood this line differently: "hole eternite] holy trinite N T H; holy eternite D h" (Science n. 171). Some contain, then, a completely Christianized reading (the creator commands the movement and passing of the "tymes of þe holy trinity"), while others preserve a reading that has somehow deified or at least sanctified eternity itself ("tymes of þe holy eternite"). The likely sense, here, however, is that Walton merely meant to emphasize that all of time is under the control and authority of the creator.

He continues to modify the maker as he praises the originality of one "[s]o pleyn in power *and* perfeccioun" (460.2), since no one rivals his ability to create—whether in terms of sheer strength or in terms of ideal quality. In fact, for Walton, the "souerryn good" (460.6) from which the perfect pattern of creation was formed is something that the maker "evire hath ben in full possessioun" (460.7), so that, as a part of his nature and identity, the *summum bonum* can hardly be improved upon or enhanced and thus exists only in perfection. He also characterizes not only the creator's work as, in the words of Chaucer, "without envye" (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.10), but also the creator's personality, as though such a quality is inconsistent with the nature and character of one "In whom envye ne malyce may not be" (Science 460.8). Here, however, Walton adds "ne malyce" to the depiction, so that the maker is declared free not only from jealousy but also from any ill will or harmful intentions.

As he characterizes the manner in which the creator formed the earth, Walton expresses the idea that God followed a pattern by depicting the plan itself as an instance of his eternal intelligence: "þe faire worlde þat was eternally / Conceyued in thy mynde formally / Thow schippest forth in forme of lyklyhede" (461.4-6). The world was fashioned after the qualities of beauty and perfection that the maker himself possesses,

and his plan for doing so is, like his own divine intelligence and perception, eternal. Thus, the thoughts of God are like his foreknowledge (as will be discussed in Book V), and whatever he conceives in his mind shares that same quality of eternity and is not bound by time in a way that would make his creative ideas older than the earth. As the argument for God's eternity goes in Book V, "And nocht-forþy ge schull not demen here / Pat god is elder as in tyme of spas / Than creatures made of his powere" (959.1-3). Walton also describes what he calls the "depe intelligence" (464.1) as "þe hye exsaumpler of þe eternyte" (464.2). Here, divine thought is itself an example or image of eternity, so that his intelligence reflects and demonstrates his nature.

Walton's rendering of the passage on the path of the soul and the distribution of souls throughout the universe appears to reinforce a kind of divine right: "Thow sendest hem in erthe to lyuen here, / Be lyke causes, eche in his degre, / Lyke for to perteyne vnto heuene clere" (464.6-8). God's placement of the souls follows the pattern of authority and station found in heaven, and whatever "degre" a man may possess, it is divinely ordained. One is reminded of Chaucer's General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, where he explains that each of the pilgrims has been described according to "[t]h'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause" and that he has "set folk in hir degre / Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde."⁴⁷ Walton's depiction of the souls of men, "lesser living souls" (Loeb III m9.18), suggests that God's rule over the universe extends to the micromanagement of the social order, so that souls are divinely arranged to occupy particular stations in life (here and in heaven, apparently).

As he transitions to the concluding prayer of this *metrum*, Walton's pronouns indicate that he reads this passage as coming from Lady Philosophy not just in the presence of but actually on behalf of the suffering Boethius. While some renderings deliver this prayer to the Father from a first person, subjective point of view, this translation refers to "[t]his mannys mynde, þat perced is wiþ payne" (Science 465.5). Alliterating nicely and rhyming with the previous line about how souls "retorne agayne" (465.4), this line remains consistent with the narrative flow of the entire work,

⁴⁷ *Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Hanna and Lawler. *GP* 716, 744-45.

maintaining the rhetorical dynamic between Lady Philosophy and her patient. Then, as the prayer comes to a close, Walton's use of Chaucer affects his translation, but his own commitment to the poetic rendering shapes it even further, for while he may have been influenced by Chaucer's phrase "to debonayre folk" (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.47), his efforts to fill out his lines and stanza necessitate greater elaboration:

Atque tuo splendore mica ! Tu namque serenum,
 Tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,
 Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.
 [And flash forth in your brightness. For, to the blessed, *you*
 Are clear serenity, and quiet rest: to see *you* is their goal,
 And you, alone and same,
 Are their beginning, driver, leader, pathway, end.] (Loeb III.m9.26-8)

Thow art cleernesse, þere may none be so faire ;
 Thow art pesible rest of mannys mynde ;
 To hertes þat ben meke *and* debonaire,
 The to beholde it is þaire *perfit* ende ;
 Thow *principal* begynner of þaire kynde,
 Pow berist all, þow ledest hem ful even ;
 Pow art the wey in wiche þat man schal wende,
 And þou þi-self art all þe blisse of heuen. (Science 467.1-7)

Rhyming his use of "debonaire" with "faire" from the declaration of praise in line 1, Walton modifies the men to whom he refers in line 2, characterizing the pious ones as meek and gracious, not just religious. He keeps the focus on this sort of person as he fills out line 5, specifying that the creator is the originator "of þaire kynde"—of these debonaire folk who find rest and peace in contemplation of the divine. Walton also further characterizes the manner in which God leads, asserting that he "berist all" (carrying and upholding all things, perhaps taking on burdens) and that he leads them "ful even" (along even paths, perhaps fairly and justly). This last phrase sets up and rhymes with the final line of the stanza, as he depicts the way God leads such men, how he is himself "the wey in wiche þat man schal wende" (467.6) as well as "all þe blisse of heuen" (467.7). Inserting a description of the creator as the source of happiness in the hereafter, Walton continues his practice of infusing the translation with Christian allusions and ideas, as those blessed ones who behold God in his "cleernesse" are led by

him and through him (as Boethius suggests), but they are specifically heading toward heavenly bliss.

Book IV, prose 6

As Walton's Lady Philosophy introduces the discussion of providence and fate, she prepares her recovering patient for a dose of strong, prosaic medicine, offering a warning that rings with irony in this all-verse translation: "And þogh so be þat musik þe delite, / And metir is full lusty to þy ere, / As for a tyme þat lust must þou respite" (730.1-3). Walton's Boethius, then, must somehow put aside for a time the metrical pleasures of poetry and engage the rigorous prose of his counselor's reasoning. Continuing her (poetic) discourse, then, Lady Philosophy places the "souereigne þough[t]" (732.1) "in the toure of hyhe simplicite" (732.2), a phrasing that suggests the royal authority of God, even as it echoes Chaucer's *Boece*: "in the tour (that is to seyn, in the heichte) of the simplicite of God" (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.48-9). Chaucer's gloss explains the "tour" metaphor, while Walton's version of this passage incorporates the figure without explanation and thus suggests more explicitly the image of an tower within the high citadel of the divine mind.

As Walton renders the subsequent explanation of the sovereign thought's perspective, he fills out the line with a doublet, "purveaunce or prescience" (Science 732.7), thus foreshadowing the discussion in Book V regarding foreknowledge. He also completes the lines of his *rime royal* stanzas with tags that satisfy the rhyme scheme but do not necessarily contribute positively to his rendering. His "lo wilt þou see" (732.4) rhymes with both "simplicite" and "be" and calls attention to the dialogic nature of the text; however, "as I haue lerned" (733.4) rhymes with "gouerned" and "descerned" but calls into question the development of Lady Philosophy's character, since it seems inconsistent to portray this teacher as one who required schooling on what the men of old called "destene." His "þe verrey soth to seyne" (734.4) rhymes with "prince souereyne" (from Chaucer's "sovereyn prince") and "disposicioun certeyne" (an adjectival form of Chaucer's adverb, "certes"), this latter term, though, making it appear as if the emphasis

is upon the certainty of destiny's arrangement and order and not upon the certainty of the view of destiny being espoused.

In borrowing some of this phrasing from Chaucer, however, Walton personalizes and spiritualizes it, altering “the sovereyne prince of all thinges, the whiche purveaunce dispoñith alle thinges” (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.62-3) to “god over all oure prince souereyne, / Be whiche all he dispoſeth myghtilye” (Science 734.2-3). A fairly general statement about the ruler's dominion over everything becomes a statement of personal faith, a first-person plural identification with and declaration of allegiance to God; moreover, the adverb “myghtilye” rhymes with the first line in the stanza (ending in “hyhe”) and goes beyond merely attributing the authority and responsibility of ruling to the sovereign prince by explicitly characterizing (and praising) the power with which he rules. He also exalts the nature of providence and explains it in greater detail than either Boethius or Chaucer:

This purveaunce hap this excellence :
That all þing at ones he enbraceth.
Fro his *presence* þere is noþing þat paseth ;
Thogh þey be infinit and endeles
Yit all he *comprehendeth* neuerþeles. (735.3-7)

The tribute to the excellence of “purveaunce” in line 3, the explanation that nothing passes from his [God's] presence in line 5, and the concluding remark that he [God] comprehends all that his endless reach embraces—each of these interpolations goes beyond Lady Philosophy's statement, “Providentia namque cuncta pariter quamvis diversa quamvis infinita complectitur” [For providence embraces all things together, though they are different, though they are infinite] (Loeb 4.p6.36-7). Walton appears, then, to be advocating Lady Philosophy's teachings as he translates the passage and fills out his stanza.

Walton also finds help in constructing his *rime royal* stanza with the line “Forseyne of god beforne eternallye” (Science 742.4), which rhymes with “sewynglye” and “sikerlye”—two terms that actually appear to be filler words employed so that he could

retain “eternallye.” Additionally, this construction allows Walton to include the point that the redundant phrase (“Forseyne of god beforne”) makes about how God’s eternity and foreknowledge fit into the Boethian perspective on providence and fate (a point that usefully foregrounds material to be covered later in Book V). The interpolation “And after þis I schal declare to the” (743.4) emphasizes yet again the dialogic structure of the text and allows Walton to complete his stanzaic structure, while “Which þat wipstondeth destyne forsothe” (743.5) expresses the essential sentiment of the original and rhymes with “bothe” (743.2), although the idea of withstanding fate is different from being above its influence, suggesting not avoidance but rather a kind of active resistance. Walton’s penultimate line here, “And som to gode aprocheþ so by loue” (743.6), rhymes effectively with the subsequent “above” (743.7). However, while “above” connotes the kind of elevated plane of existence described here and the sort of escape from fate possible for those who remain near the *primae divinitate*, “love” again personalizes, spiritualizes, and goes beyond the relatively unemotional pragmatism advocated in Boethius—where Lady Philosophy explains the stability available to those who fix themselves to the principal divinity and avoid the potentially devastating effects of fate.

Walton’s phrases “to þi sight” (744.3), “it is no doute” (744.5), “þou schalt see it moue noght a dele” (744.6), “Þat to þi sight” (745.2), and “as semeth the” (745.9) fill out the lines and stanzas according to their rhetorical and illustrative purposes, the frequent references to sight, seeing, and seeming diagnosing the problem as one of vision, perception, and epistemology. Science prints all 9 lines of the unusual stanza 745, offering textual notation in the footnotes for the variant manuscript readings of the disputed lines, “(As for to knowe it be experience)” (745.5) and “(Of þe centre in his trewe compace)” (745.7): “[ll. 3, 4 *om.* Rl Ba N C M h Dc F J Ch Bb (*but put in marg. in other hand*). l. 5 *om.* N, *but* ll. 5, 7 *put in marg. by other hand*. ll. 5, 7 *om.* C T H P ; *retained all other MSS. 9 lines* L R D Bb (*corrected*)” (n. 261). The first of these parenthetical comments encourages the reader to consider how life’s experiences support the illustration being explained, while the second offers an explanation of “þat myddle place” (745.6)—both interpolations apparently having been inserted for the sake of clarification.

Walton's description of those who go far "fro þe souereyn thought of god on hyhe" (746.2) reflects Chaucer's "fro the firste thought of God" (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.131-2), even though Walton uses the royal and political term "souereyn" rather than the unusual ordinal adjective "firste." He also adds the location of God, "on hyhe" (Science 746.2), thus exalting the person of God and not necessarily his thoughts. He continues, then, to render this passage with a more personal and spiritual emphasis than is found in either Boethius or Chaucer, especially with his use of "he" for the implied third person pronoun, rather than the more general "it" or Chaucer's "the thing":

And he þat can *and* will approche nyhe
 This souereigne centre god ententifly,
 Þe more he stondeþ in fredom *and* in ese,
 Þat destyne scall litell hym dise. (746.4-7)

Indeed, the phrase "he þat can *and* will" suggests that the subject is a person with not only the potential ability to draw near to the *supernae mentis*, but also the free will to choose to do so or not, while the adverb "ententifly" suggests that the move toward God must be an expression of sincere interest. While clearly influenced by Chaucer's "neer to thilke centre of thinges (*that is to seyn, to God*)" (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.134-5), Walton also develops his own thoughts here, bringing in more explicitly the earlier idea of being *fato liberum*, as the man near to the sovereign center stands "in fredom *and* in ese" (Science 746.6). He also explains more directly the kind of benefit such a person draws from this close association with the divine mind, as he is spared the "dise" destiny would otherwise bring.

The glossary that Science provides in his edition of Walton's text suggests that the term "dise" would mean "to make wretched"; however, one wonders if the poet does not intend here a simple contrast by way of prefix, since the preceding line ends in "ese," so that "to distress" or "to make uneasy" would apply. The *OED* documents 2 uses of "dise" as a verb meaning "[t]o deprive of ease; make uneasy; to put to discomfort or inconvenience; to trouble, annoy, incommode, molest" and one use (by Chaucer) as a verb meaning "[t]o disturb (from quiet, rest, or sleep)." However, the *OED* does not record a contemporary instance of "dise" as a verb meaning "[t]o bring into a morbid or

unhealthy condition; to cause illness, sickness, or disease in; to infect with disease.”⁴⁸

Furthermore, the context suggests the idea that fate cannot disturb or make uneasy those who draw near to God, not that fate cannot bring sickness or infection. Whatever the meaning here, though, destiny itself is ascribed agency, being presented as at least having the potential capability of troubling a man, but not enough power to do so if the man approaches the divine center.

As he continues to establish the contrasting qualities of those who are near or far from God, Walton appears to have obscured the point being made, reversing some of the phrasing and altering the ideas to suit his rhyme scheme:

Ne þing þat is to þing þat is begete,
Ne a litell stound to tyme wiþouten ende,
They ben not lyk in worthiunesse of kynde
Bot as þe poynt [to] þe circumference,
Bytwene theym ys an huge difference. (747.3-7)

Lady Philosophy is attempting here to draw a clear, Platonic distinction between the world of becoming and the world of being, and Walton maintains this distinction in the first two lines, showing the great difference between “discours” (747.1) and “þe intellecte of mannes mynde” (747.2). However, his re-arrangement of the items under consideration in lines 3-6 muddles Lady Philosophy’s point: he compares what “is” to what “is begete” (747.3), rather than the other way around; he measures a small amount of time against “tyme wiþouten ende” (747.4), rather than time itself against eternity; and he contrasts the center point with the circle’s “circumference” (747.5), rather than the reverse. The unhelpful alterations here appear to have been motivated by poetic constraints, as Walton found near rhymes in “mynde” (747.2), “ende” (747.4), and “kynde” (747.5), and feminine rhyme in “circumference” (747.6) and “difference” (747.7).

⁴⁸ Consult “disease,” *COED*, 763.

As Walton brings this portion of Lady Philosophy's explanation to a close, he expands considerably the material from Boethius, fleshing out an entire stanza in a decidedly moral and religious tone:

Hic vero ordo res mutabiles et alioquin temere fluituras propria
incommutabilitate coerceat.
[and this order constrains with its own immutability things which are
mutable and would otherwise be in random flux.] (Loeb 4p6.92-3)

Thus in a certeyn ordre, soth to seyne,
Pat stedfast is *and* may not fayle neuere ;
And bot þis ordre *gouerne and* refreyne
Thise worldly þinges whiche þat chaungen evire,
Full sone þei schall dissoluen *and* disseuere,
fflittyng right as a thing of no valour,
And wauerynge so with-outen *gouernour*. (Science 751.1-7)

Walton uses the filler “soth to seyne” (751.1) to rhyme with his doublet “*gouerne and refreyne*” (751.3), and he contrasts “neuere” (751.2) with “evire” (751.4), rhyming both terms with his heavily alliterative doublet, “*dissoluen and disseuere*” (751.5). The interpolated lines help reinforce the Lady Philosophy's message, offering further, more detailed explanation: defining the immutable order as that which is “stedfast” and “may not fayle neuere” (751.2), he goes beyond simply noting that the order is unchanging and stable and offers a description of immutability that appears to be aimed at one who might consider placing hope or trust in it, believing that it is dependable and trustworthy; depicting mutable matter as “worldly þinges” (751.4) that will “*dissoluen and disseuere*” (751.5), Walton moralizes the message and delivers it with religious overtones, warning against reliance upon the transitory, earthly, undependable things of this world, and making a value judgment by characterizing such fleeting things as without “valour” (751.6); he also suggests in the end that this kind of chaotic dissolution of an otherwise orderly arrangement is indicative of existence “with-outen *gouernour*” (751.7), reminding readers once again of the divine agent who upholds this order that is intended to “*gouerne*” (751.3) worldly things.

Perhaps following the lead of Chaucer in the following stanza, Walton employs first-person plural pronouns, rather than the second-person plural, *vobis*. Thus, the speech is delivered via a narrative voice of one who apparently identifies with the limitations felt by the suffering Boethius, rather than via the authoritative voice of the physician and counselor, Lady Philosophy:

For whiche it es that alle thingis semen to ben confus and trouble to us
men, for we ne mowen nat considere thilke ordenaunce. Natheles the
propre maner of every thing, dressynge hem to gode, disponith hem
alle . . . (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.166-70)

And þogh so be þat we may not be-holde
þe causes of this disposicioun,
Ne see þe skilful ordire as we scholde,
For-why we ben in *perturbacioun*,
It semeth vs errour *and* confusioun,
Yit is it dressid if we vndirstode,
And wel disposed euerydele to goode. (Science 752.1-7)

The phrases “we may not” (752.1), “as we scholde” (752.3), “we ben” (752.4), “It semeth vs” (752.5), and “if we vnderstode” (752.6) all suggest a kind of narrative slippage, wherein Walton seems to have allowed his own voice to creep into the text, since it expresses an uncertainty and a sense of personal struggle that sounds uncharacteristic of Lady Philosophy. He also adds material about not being able to see the causes of events as they unfold in time (752.1-2), foreshadowing the argument on the respective epistemological positions of man and God found in Book V. Walton has consistently infused his translation not only with his own phrases and metrical fillers but also with his own feelings and spiritual reflections, offering a version of Boethius that has been re-cast in a poetic form and delivered with personal meaning.

Book IV, meter 6

As Walton opens this *metrum*, he points readers not to “*celsi iura tonantis*” [the lofty Thunderer’s laws] (Loeb 4m6.1), but rather to the “lawes of the souereyn god on hye” (Science 787.3), thus echoing part but not all of Chaucer’s version of the passage:

“the heye thondrere (that is to seyn, of God)” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.2-3). He avoids associating the lawmaker with a pagan deity such as Jupiter and opts instead for a less poetic, more direct reference to God as the ruler on high. Walton apparently works the description from the phrase “summi culmina caeli” (Loeb 4m6.3) into his depiction of the Thunderer (“the souereyn god on hye”), rather than into his reference to heaven, “Vp into heuene” (Science 787.4). He adds, however, a line that characterizes the environment in heaven, where God’s laws are routinely enforced: “Pere euery þing doth kepe his cours of keende” (787.5). While he follows Chaucer’s “ryghtful alliaunce” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.5) closely with “rightwys aliaunce” (Science 787.6), Walton deviates slightly from “oolde pees” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.6) with “olde gouernaunce” (Science 787.7), emphasizing then, the idea of God’s oversight and rule rather than the concept of a cosmic truce between otherwise warring elements—an idea developed further later in the *metrum*, as love “Attempereth eke þe fightyng elementes” (790.2). As he describes this concord that produces cosmic balance and earthly bounty, Walton repeats a favorite phrase, capitalizing on the poetic quality of the expression: “Pe swete flowres spryngen lustely” (791.2) rhymes with “sewengly” (791.4) and “hastely” (791.5); “In þe full lusty firste somer sesoun “ (791.7) alliterates, but not as heavily as “Full lusty fruytes folkes for to fede” (791.7). The last line here includes the idea that the balanced seasons yield fruit for a purpose, that their productivity is not impersonal or disinterested, since it happens so that people can be fed.

Walton’s text in the following stanza follows Chaucer’s version quite closely:

and the fletyng reyn bydeweth the wynter. This atempraunce norysscheth
 and bryngeth forth alle thinges that brethith lif in this worlde; and thilke
 same attempraunce Among thise thinges sitteth the heye makere,
 kyng and lord, welle and bygynnyng, lawe and wys juge to don equite . . .
 . (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.33-42)

This same attemperaunce, it is no nay,
 Pe wynter so bedewep wiþ þe reyne.
 All lyuyng þyng it norischeþ soþe to say,
 And eft wiþ deth retorneþ doun ageyne.
 Pere while syt þe maker souereyne,

Well *and* ground, boþe lord *and* kyng is he,
Lawe *and* wise iuge [of] equite. (Science 792.1-7)

Chaucer's material is re-arranged and rounded out with "it is no nay" (792.1) and "soþe to say" (792.3); however, whereas his source here considers God a wise judge who practices equity ("wys juge to don equite"), Walton alters this only slightly by portraying him somewhat more passively as a wise judge of what constitutes equity ("wise iuge [of] equite"). The editor's notation for the disputed reading here shows that "of" is the reading in 4 extant manuscripts, while all others show "and" here (n. 274); Science apparently has concluded, then, that the 4 whose readings make grammatical sense should be followed. Lady Philosophy's attention to the wisdom of the maker's judgment contrasts markedly with Boethius' complaint back in Book I, meter 5 that "fortune turnen vp-so-down / Thing wiche þat is in thy gouvernement" (120.1-2) and that "rightwys iugement" (120.5) is not being exercised. Not that the suffering Boethius has fully assented to such a position, since this very *metrum* is prefaced by the assertion that this recognition and understanding of God's wise rule is not possible, that man faces an insurmountable epistemological problem:

Neque enim fas est homini cunctas divinae operae machinas vel ingenio
comprehendere vel explicare sermone.
[For it is not allowed to a man either to comprehend with his natural
powers or to express in words all the devices of the work of God.] (Loeb
4p6.197-99).

For vnto man it ne longeþ noght
To knowen all his wonderfull engyne,
And of þe werkes whiche þat ben y-wroght
So be þe hyhe purveaunce devyne ;
Ne theym wiþ wordes fully to diffyne,
No creature hath þat abilite. (Science 793.1-6)

Walton expresses this idea with more certitude and rhetorical force than either Boethius or Chaucer, using the term "purveaunce" from the preceding discussion here in Book IV, prose 6, and inserting the "No creature hath þat abilite" line to drive the point home.

As he concludes his version of this poem, Walton offers a unique take on the idea that a “loue commyn to euery creature” (794.2) moves them to return and be held by their end, the good: they “[c]oueiteth for to kepen *and* conseruen / Pe ende of good þat ground is of nature” (794.3-4). Whereas Chaucer says that “alle thinges axen to ben holden by the fyn of good” (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.5-6), Walton suggests that all creatures covet the end of good that grounds all of nature and wish to keep and conserve it, so that creation is responsible for holding onto its maker, rather than the other way around. However, his final couplet remains faithful to the concept that love does the moving, and it also expresses more explicitly the notion that God himself is the end of all things: “Bot loue retorne hem in-to vnite / Of god on hyhe þat causeth þeym to be” (Science 794.6-7). His phrasing here mirrors Chaucer’s translation: “by love returned, to the cause that hath yeven hem beinge (that is to seyn, to God)” (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.59-60). Walton’s verses, though, suggest that the goal is to be brought “in-to vnite / Of god on hyhe” (Science 794.6-7). No variant readings are noted by Science here, even though these lines appear problematic grammatically. Should “Of” be “With” or is the article “the” missing before “vnite”? Are all things to be brought into unity with God or into the mysterious unity of God, as in the union of Father, Son, and Spirit? His attempt at a rhyme here has resulted in some degree of confusion regarding what exactly happens upon returning to God, but his expression “god on hyhe” certainly makes it clear that the journey is an ascent to one who exists above all things and views them from that elevated perspective.

Book V, meter 2

Although Walton’s rendering of this short *metrum* appears to echo aspects of the version in *Boece*, with Chaucer’s terms “cler,” “bemes,” and “percen” showing up here, his stanzas do not include the explicit characterization of the sun’s light as “infirm” (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.3-5):

Qui tamen intima viscera terrae
 Non valet aut pelagi radiorum
 Infirma perrumpere luce.

[Yet even he, with the light of his rays, too weak,
Cannot burst through
To the inmost depths of earth or ocean.] (Loeb 5m2.4-6)

And seith for all his brighte bemes clere,
Pe see *and* lond ne may he noght suffice
To persen thurgh ; (Science 845.3-5)

It seems that Walton's poetic interests here have shaped his depiction of the sun's light, especially as the phrase "brighte bemes" from line 3 also appears the subsequent stanza, although it refers not to the sun but to God: "Sith he allone wiþ his bemes bright / So alle þinges may be-holde *and* see" (846.5-6). Perhaps, then, the contrast between the sun and the creator is drawn even more sharply, even though throughout his entire translation of this poem, Walton does not use the actual term "God." Instead, the pronouns with potentially unclear referents (hym, he, his) point to one for whom the following would in fact be true: "so may we noght [deuise] / Of hym þat haþ þis wyde worlde i-wrought" (845.5-6). However, both Boethius and Chaucer are more direct and clear on this point: "Haud sic magni conditor orbis" [Not thus the Maker of this great universe.] (Loeb 5m2.7); "So ne seth nat God, makere of the grete world" (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.6-7). Chaucer also the phrase "thilke God" twice, so as to make his subject perfectly clear. The pronouns in Walton's subsequent lines, however, refer to God: "Pe heuy erthe wiþstondeth hym right noght / For fer *and* hye all þing he seth anone" (Science 845.7-846.1). In addition, although Walton appears to have lifted Chaucer's description of God as "the verrai sonne" (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.15) for his own "a *verray* sonne" (Science 846.7), his choice of the indefinite article "a" does not make the statement as strongly or with as much exclusivity.

Book V, prose 6

Once Walton has established the opening assertion that everything is known according to the power ("kyndly myghtes") of the one who comprehends and not according to the power of the one being known, he inserts a line that suggests again that Lady Philosophy shares Boethius's epistemological limitations: "Now lat vs þen

beholden *and* entende, / So as oure symple kynde may suffice” (949.1). The self-deprecating stance seems at odds with Lady Philosophy’s roles as Boethius’s comforter and instructor. The result of this contemplation of the divine is not perfect comprehension, however: “Than somewhat may we knowe of his science” (949.4). The knowledge, then, is admittedly incomplete, and so Walton’s version places more emphasis upon and slightly alters the meaning of “quantum fas est” [as far as it is allowable] (Loeb 5p6.3-4). Perhaps Walton was influenced by Chaucer and his gloss on this passage, where he offers an interpretation that focuses upon the degree to which such contemplation of divine knowledge is even possible, rather than upon whether or not it is entirely permissible: “lat us loke now, in as mochil as it is leueful to us (as who seith, lat us loke, now as we mowen)” (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.4-6).

As Walton explains that understanding eternity will help one understand the nature and knowledge of God, he inserts a characterization of God that emphasizes divine rule and authority as much or perhaps more than it does divine perspective: “god þat is oure *prince souereigne*” (Science 950.6). As he then offers the definition of eternity, Walton finds a rhyme for the political term “*prince souereigne*” in the filler phrase, “as clerkes seyne” (950.7). He repeats this kind of filler later in his explanation of the limitations faced by temporal things: “As clerkes han diffyned here biforn” (952.2). Ironically, since the *Consolation* itself is known for articulating its concise definition of eternity, the clerks to whom Walton refers would have been his own contemporaries and not those of Boethius. Conceivably, this could have been a nod either to Walton’s own commentary sources or to the ecclesiastical authorities who probably would have offered similar explanations of God’s eternity.

Walton’s description of temporal things moving from the past to the present and from the present to the future offers a judgment on the reliability of anything that has such a time-bound existence: “For all þat lyueth in tyme it is vnstable” (951.5). This goes beyond merely explaining the transitory nature of the world of becoming and asserts that such temporality is characterized also by instability. By implication, then, what is truly eternal is neither transitory nor unstable but rather fixed and unified, unmoved by the

passage of time and lacking nothing: “For tyme to come he hap it *presently*, / Ne tyme passed fro hym is þere none, / Bot is, *and* was, and schall be, all is one” (955.5-7). The interpolated final line here in this stanza sums up the argument and echoes Book V, meter 2: “For all þat is, or was, or schall be done, / At ones is it all beforne his sight” (846.3-4). Here, though, the idea is not divine perspective specifically that is at issue, but rather the definition of true eternity that would perhaps explain how the divine sight is able to perceive past, present, and future at once. As Walton further describes the unique qualities of divine eternity, he explicitly asserts that eternity is by its very nature exclusive: “Vnto hym-selue *present and* pereles” (956.2). This line appears in the middle of Lady Philosophy’s attempt to demonstrate that the world does not qualify as eternal and that Plato did not assert that the earth and its creator are co-eternal. Thus, the term “pereles” (956.2) not only alliterates nicely with “*present*” and rhymes fittingly with “*endeles*” (956.4), but it also supports Lady Philosophy’s case for attributing sole possession of eternity to God.

Concluding the passage that clarifies what Plato had said about the world and its relationship to time and eternity, Walton inserts five lines that reiterate material from earlier in this prose section and from back in Book V, meter 2, and that assert once more that eternity is not a quality that the divine mind shares with anything in creation:

For all þat is, or was, or evire schall,
 At hym it is *present* and *permanable*.
 He flittep nocht but all-wey stondeþ in stable.
 Lo of devyne þoght þe estat is þis,
 No creature may ben i-lyk i-wys. (958.3-7)

The emphasis here is not only upon the eternally present nature of God and his perspective but also upon the permanence and stability of such an existence; thus, this passage echoes the conclusion to Book II, meter 3:

Constat aeterna positumque lege est
 Ut constet genitum nihil.
 [It is decreed by firm, eternal law
 Nothing that comes to be can firm remain.] (Loeb 2m3.17-18)

The contrast, then, between what is and what comes to be points to uniqueness of the un-created creator and to the stability of his divine thought, as he exists in a never-passing present and is not moved by that which moves what he has made.

Walton then inserts a summative remark regarding the age of God, so that Lady Philosophy calls directly upon Boethius to come to a conclusion about the extra-temporal primacy of the divine mind:

Bot þus lo schall ye iuggen in this cas :
Þat god hym-self alwey is *and* was
Before or any formed creature
In *propre* simple[ne]sse of his nature. (Science 959.4-7)

The final line in this stanza renders the source and reflects Chaucer's "by the proprete of his simple nature" (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.67), but the preceding lines are Walton's didactic addition. His use of both present and past tense here illustrates the idea that God's existence is neither marked nor governed by the passage of time, while the reference to "any formed creature" (Science 959.6) reiterates the point that as creator, God must have preceded in some way those things which he has created, except that this precedence cannot, as the entire stanza suggests, be measured by time.

Walton continues this practice of making explicit references to God as he negotiates these dense passages on the nature of the distinction between what is perpetual and what is eternal, offering relatively concise, didactic messages to his readers. His account of the "vitae immobilis praesentarium statum" [present nature of unmoving life] (Loeb 5p6.41) becomes "Þe *perdurable* lyf of god on hy / Þat changeþ noht but stondesth *presently*" (Science 960.4-5), thus specifically referencing God and depicting him as an exalted figure who possesses not just the quality of eternity but eternal life itself—a decidedly more religious vision. His passage on the inability of non-eternal creatures to possess all of life fully and at once suggests that the problem goes beyond merely a lack of self-sufficiency or self-existence and becomes a matter of self-preservation and perhaps even salvation: "I[t] wilneth þus it-seluen for to saue" (961.7).

In fact, this line alludes to the idea that those creatures who cannot possess all of life at once and who cannot hold on to the present or grasp the future must depend upon another for that quality of existence which they know they do not have but do indeed wish to have.

As Walton discusses how the present experiences of temporal things reflect in some way and only for a given instant the never-passing present, he characterizes this “permanent present” (Loeb 5p6.51) as “*þe souereigne lyf of god omnipotent*” (Science 962.6), so that the abstract concept is personalized and concrete, possessed by a living God who, since he is all-powerful, reigns over everything. When Walton’s Lady Philosophy considers a comparison between the divine present and the human present, she adds, “*All-þogh þere no comparisoun may be, / For-why þe presence of [a] mannes þoght / To goddes presence may be likned noght*” (971.5-7), thus highlighting the issue at stake, since the discussion is not just about eternity but about how an eternal perspective relates to epistemology—what one knows and how one knows it. She asserts that a man’s thought, emerging as it does from a limited, momentary, passing present, cannot have the kind of perspective and knowledge informing it that God possesses in his never-passing present. This interpolation brings back to the forefront, then, the introductory passage in this prose section, where Lady Philosophy posits that things are known not according to their own respective natures but according to the nature of those knowing them, so that readers are reminded of the idea that man cannot fully comprehend God or his ways but that God can fully know all things at once, since his eternal nature allows this capacity to maintain a grasp on anything that would otherwise be considered past or future.

Moreover, the attendant complexities of necessity are so difficult for humans to negotiate that Lady Philosophy regards them as the proper subjects of those in the full-time business of divine speculation. Chaucer’s elaboration upon the original here appears to have influenced Walton’s re-casting of this passage:

sed cui vix aliquis nisi divini speculator accesserit
[but one which scarcely anyone except a theologian could tackle.] (Loeb
5p6.99-100)

But unnethe schal ther any wight mowe seen it or come therto, but yif that he be byholdere of the devyne thought” (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.168-71).

Bot þis vnnethe may felen any wight,
Ne well conseyuen in þis erþely lyf,
Bot if he had a conseit *and* a sight
Of god *and* fully were contemplatyf. (Science 978.1-4)

As Walton renders this stanza that, in effect, refers those persistent, inquiring readers who insist on the word “necessity” elsewhere, he portrays the difficulties such an audience may have as problems of perspective and of commitment: no one can think properly about such things or even conceive of them effectively in this life because such an existence is “erþely” (978.2)—as opposed to heavenly or spiritual. Moreover, only if a man has a conception of God and can arrive at a perspective from which to view him, and only if he dedicates himself fully to contemplation of the divine, will he ever be able to grasp the shades of meaning associated with “necessity.”

Walton also appears to have been led by Chaucer to refer back to the illustration of the sun rising and the man walking, using it to demonstrate once again the difference between simple and conditional necessity:

sed eorum hoc quidem de rerum necessitate descendit, illud vero de potestate facientium.
[but of them the one kind is consequent upon the necessity of things, the other upon the power of those doing them] (Loeb 5p6.132-34)

But some of hem descendith of the nature of thinges (as the sonne arsyng); and some descendith of the power of the doeris (as the man walkynge). (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.229-32)

Bot þat þe sonne riseþ verrayment,
Lo of necessite it hath dissent,
Bot yit þat man to wawen or to goon,
His awne chois it falleþ all vpon. (Science 988.4-7)

Walton takes Chaucer’s glosses and incorporates them into his poetic text, and in doing so, elides the emphasis upon the key distinction between the nature of things and the

power of agents. He simply declares that the sunrise is the product of necessity and that a man's walking is the result of his own choice, so that the two types of necessity are not as clearly explained. The focus instead is upon the difference between something proceeding from necessity (in general) and something proceeding from man's free will, though the phrase "awne chois" (988.7) points as much to a man's capacity to think and make decisions about acting as it does toward his actual power to act.

In the subsequent passage, which establishes the difference between the universal and the singular, Walton's translation presents the ability to discern the difference as a matter of self-awareness and subjective knowledge. Lady Philosophy's assertion, "si ad se ipsa respicias, singulare" [if you look at it by itself, is singular] (Loeb 5p6.138-9) becomes, then, a suggestion that one purposefully examine one's situation (cosmologically, epistemologically) and view things from that perspective, knowing them from that fixed, limited vantage point: "And if þou sette in thyn entencioun / Þe propirte of thy condicioun, / So þ[en] þou felest it as singulere" (Science 990.4-6). Thus, the emphasis is upon how one subjectively views and knows all things, as the opening to this book suggests, according to the power, ability, and position one has within the universe, and not according to the properties of the thing being known.

As he presents Lady Philosophy's explanation that laws rewarding good and punishing evil are not unjust in a world where human acts are free from necessity, Walton inserts the line, "Bot þat he may deserue loue *and* hate" (999.4). The textual note for this line points out an alternate reading from manuscript N: "deserue] discerne" (n. 335), so that one could see this line as suggesting two very different possibilities: human acts merit reward and punishment, blessing and curse, love and hate; or humans possess the ability to tell the difference between love and hate and that this capacity equips them to choose what is good and worthy of reward and reject what is bad and worthy of punishment. Walton also adds a line to Lady Philosophy's exhortation to offer humble prayers to God, explaining why humility is an important trait: "For he refuseth neuere a lowely bone" (1001.7). This interpolation alludes to biblical passages like Proverbs 3:34 (and like its paraphrase in James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5), which asserts that God opposes the

proud and scornful and gives grace to the meek and humble. He places greater emphasis, then, upon the responsibilities of those who live beneath the eye of an all-seeing, all-knowing judge.

As he concludes the book and thus the entire work, Walton includes a reminder for his Boethius, and thus for his audience: “And loke þat þou þi conseil noght forgete” (1002.1). This exhortation comes in addition to the message that warns against self-deception and encourages virtue, so that Walton’s Boethius must not only keep from fooling himself about the necessity of a virtuous life, but he must also keep from forgetting all that he has learned. All that Lady Philosophy has taught ought to be remembered, for as it turns out, what the suffering Boethius needed was a refreshing of the memory through comforting instruction and consoling teaching. Thus, as the narrative frame for Boethius’s text suggests, Lady Philosophy’s counsel is his own, and so Walton’s Boethius is told not to forget “þi conseil.” For even as this translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* is deeply rooted in and influenced by the Christian tradition to which Chaplain John Walton⁴⁹ was heir, it maintains here in this concluding stanza the philosophical doctrine of recollection. The author Boethius has recalled all he could on the consolation available to one who has suffered as he has, and his personification of Philosophy has given comfort and delight. Walton’s last stanza remains faithful to this fiction, calling attention to the narrative framework for the text by reminding the reader that the *Consolation of Philosophy* is Boethius’s to give.

John Walton’s Translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*

Walton apparently approached his task of translating the *Consolation* with a considerable measure of literary ambition, for although he relied upon Chaucer’s *Boece* as a source and borrowed the verse forms used in the “Monk’s Tale” and *Troilus and*

⁴⁹ Editor Mark Science documents 7 manuscripts that contain the concluding attribution, “per capellanum Johannem,” and he finds two others that read “per Johannem Waltoun nuper canonicum de Oseneye” (xlii). Moreover, a document dating from April 1398 declares that the office of Papal Chaplain was bestowed upon one “John Walton, Augustinian canon of Oseneye” (xlvii).

Criseyde, Walton's translation is not entirely derivative and in fact benefited from the same approach that was taken by Chaucer in his day, who also based his work on a Latin source, a vernacular rendering, and commentary materials. Yet, opting for an all-verse translation, rather than an all-prose one, Walton transformed *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* into specific literary structures, producing something entirely his own that was shaped and marked by his own peculiar, versifying stamp. At times, Walton's efforts to bring his own religious interests and his own interpretations of the *Consolation's* philosophy to bear on a given line produce an overtly Christian sentiment. He also brings his understanding of other portions of the text into his translation, adding material to his rendering of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, often opting, though, not only for standard fillers but also for choice characterizations.

He depicts a sovereign God on high who possesses eternal life and a mutable, ephemeral realm below as earthly and worldly—as opposed to heavenly and godly. Moreover, Walton's frequent uses of first-person plural pronouns indicate the degree to which he personally identifies with the stances staked out in his translation, while his references to sight, seeing, and seeming in his metrical fillers show how consistently he diagnoses and portrays the suffering Boethius's problem as one of epistemology. In addition, his numerous marginal glosses and in-text explanations simplify the more complex passages and assert, for instance, that eternal knowledge is perfect knowledge— independent and self-sufficient cognition. Thus, while he has certainly re-cast his source in a very different form and borrowed heavily from Chaucer, his innovations and adaptations are neither entirely unfaithful nor completely unoriginal. On the whole, then, Walton has consistently infused his translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* not only with his own phrases and metrical fillers but also with his own feelings and spiritual reflections, offering a version of Boethius that has been re-cast in a poetic form and delivered with personal meaning.

IV. THE BOETHIAN VISION OF ETERNITY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

George Colville's Prose Translation

Published originally by John Cawood in 1556, George Colville's five-book, all-prose version of the *Consolation* was reprinted in 1561. Colville's Early Modern English text was printed alongside a Latin copy of Boethius and was accompanied by numerous marginal notes updating the reader on the ongoing action and discussion, indicating, perhaps, that this bilingual edition was intended for those wanting or needing to access the original through comparison and careful reading. Strangely, though, while Ernest Bax's 1897 edition of Colville's translation does include the marginal notes, it does not provide the Latin parallel text provided in the 1556 version, thereby eliding the possible pedagogical purposes of the original *mise en page*.⁵⁰ This facing-page version was apparently arranged by the printer John Cawood, in consultation with Colville, for Cawood's preface to the edition (which Bax reproduces verbatim in his 1897 text) explains that the Latin source came from Colville himself: "to the mergentes is added the Latin, to the end that suche as delyghte in the Latin tonge may rede the Latin, accordyng to the boke of the translatour, whiche was a very olde prynte." It seems, then, that this project anticipated a reading audience that may have appreciated the Latin version not as a curious artifact alongside a work of English prose but rather as a source from which they could derive pleasure. So while some may have read Colville's translation and only glanced from time to time at the Latin original, others may have read them both with the same attention and interest, relying upon the parallel texts (as well as upon the marginal notes) to arrive at a solid grounding in the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

In the introduction to his 1931 dissertation on 17th-century translations of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, Walter Houghton suggests that by printing the Latin text

⁵⁰ Consider also Furnivall, F.J. *Chaucer's 'Boece'*. The Chaucer Society. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1886. Furnivall's editorial method resembles Bax's here, for although his base text (Cambridge MS li.3.21) contained the Middle English text, a Latin text, and commentary, he printed only the the translation, reasoning that since a copy of the Latin can be had for 2 shillings, "the Chaucer Society need not issue a fresh edition of it" (v).

alongside his English one, Colville provided the kind of work that the Loeb edition would offer in 1918 and that “made, therefore, a unique and valuable contribution to the influence of Boethius in England” (20). The major difference, though, between what Colville and Cawood published and what the Loeb editions have printed is that it featured an all-prose translation, whereas the Loeb texts (I.T.’s in 1918 but S.J. Tester’s since 1973) have both been prosimetric, offering English prose and verse alongside the Latin prose and verse. Moreover, another unique feature of Colville’s version is that it clearly identifies the Latin text with which he worked as he translated, whereas such clarity simply is not possible with others such as Alfred, Chaucer, Walton, and Elizabeth I.

Cawood’s prefatory remarks describe Boethius’s text in terms that King Alfred would have appreciated, deeming it “moche necessary for all men to read and know” (i). He goes on, however, to suggest what it offers to a fit audience: “wherein suche as be in aduersitie, shall fynde muche consolation and comforte, and suche as be in great worldly prosperitie may knowe the vanitie and frailtie thereof, and consequently fynde eternall felycytie” (i). Cawood considers the ultimate reward of the text, then, to be man’s ultimate reward. Indeed, he depicts the argument of the *Consolation* as one that calls readers away from “worldly, temporall, and transitory thynges” so that they “beholdeth almyghtye GOD, and all heuenlye thynges” (i). Lamenting the moral decline of his culture, Colville’s prologue to the reader directs his doctrinal philosophy at those “folyshe people, that dispyseth vertue and earnestlye foloweth and enbrasythe the blynde vanytyes of thys worlde, and estemeth them as thynges most certaine, most sure, and perfyte sufferaygne good” (vii-vii). Thus, he renders the *Consolation* with both pedagogical and theological aims, educating and indoctrinating those who lack Boethian wisdom.

Moreover, as he concludes his prologue, Colville laments the waywardness of men who follow not just after fortune, but also after the world, the devil, and the flesh—thus adding a distinctively Christian tone to his treatment of the virtues contained in the *Consolation*’s philosophy. He even describes the content of his text as “doctryne” as he reveals his intention “to content the myndes of the wise, and to instructe the ignoraunt

vnlearned people with the holesome doctryne of Philosophie, or wysedome” so that they might pursue “godly lyuyng” and achieve a “lyfe contemplatyfe whych neuer shal fayle, where the elect and blessed soules do raygne wyth god the father, god the son, and god the holye ghoste” (viii). Explicitly Catholic, Christian, and Trinitarian, then, Colville’s prefatory comments introduce an orthodox text, one that for all its philosophical underpinnings, influences, and consolations, aims to draw readers away from carnal, worldly pleasures and toward godliness—even toward God himself in heaven. The religious overtones of Cawood’s remarks harmonize well, however, with what Colville himself says in his introductory comments, as both the editor and the translator see their work (the source text, the translation, and the act of publishing it) from a moral, doctrinal, and spiritual perspective.

In “The Epistle dedicatory,” Colville presents his work to Queen Mary:⁵¹

To the hygh, and myghty prynesse, our Souereigne Ladye, and Quene, Marye by the grace of God, Quene of Englande, Spayne, Fraunce, both Cicilles, Ierusalem, and Ireland, defender of the faith, Archduches of Austrie, Duches of Myllayne, Burgundy, and Branbante, Countesse of Haspurge, Flaunders, and Tyroll. Your humble, and obedient subiecte, George Coluile, alias, Coldewell, wyssheth all health, honoure, and prosperitie. (ii)

He hopes that he and his translation “myghte obtayne more fauour of the readers, vnder the protection and fauour of [her] name” (Cawood iii). He also expresses his concern that the queen “maye longe reyne, rule, and gouerne in hygh felicitie this your realme, and the common wealth of the same, whereof you are our cheife heade, and soueraygne comforte” (iii). This customary praise of her royal highness seems to echo the *Consolation*’s depiction of God’s rule over the universe and even suggests that Queen Mary offers her people comfort. Calling attention to Mary’s religious background and defending the actions of Boethius, “The argmente or summe of thys booke and whereof it treatyth” makes a point of noting that the author of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* “was a

⁵¹ Editor Ernest Bax and commentator Adam Clarke both record that Colville’s text was printed again in 1561, three years into the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. One wonders, then, if the dedication to Mary was retained in that 2nd edition.

catholike man” who challenged a tyrant and a heretic, upholding the orthodox position that “proueth two natures in Chryste” during “the tyrannicall rauyn of Kyng Theodoryke” (iv). Thus, carefully developed compliments to the queen and purposefully crafted explanations of the events that led to Boethius’s demise characterize the apparatus for Colville’s translation.

Although his translation is all in prose, Colville describes how the two forms of the *Consolation* function: “Boecius vseth in thys boke somtyme prose, in the whyche he sheweth reasons of greate comfort, and also he vseth some tyme myter or versys delectable to cause a man to forgette hys heuynes and grefe in heryng of them” (Bax 6). Here, the prose passages supply the rationale for taking comfort even in trying circumstances, while the *metra* offer pleasant distractions from such burdens. Strangely enough, Colville notes the roles played by the component parts of the prosimetrum but chooses not to reproduce that structure in his all-prose translation, even though his 1556 edition features a Latin prosimetrum along the margins. His only expressions of concern regarding the form of his version come in occasional, generic, self-deprecating disclaimers. In his dedication to Queen Mary, he explains how his version of the *Consolation* has arrived before her:

I (of my selfe vnworthy, both for lacke of wytte and eloquence) toke vpon me after my rude maner, to translate the same worke out of Latyn, into the Englysshe tounge, and so to dedicate the same unto youre hyghnes, not thynkyng it a thyng worthy for your grace, beyng so rudelye done. (4)

Colville reiterates this message in his prologue: “I mooste vnworthy baren of eloquence, and very rude haue taken vpon me to translate thys noble boke of Boecius . . . perdon me, if for lacke of wytte by ignoraunce or neglygence I haue omytted any thyng, or haue erred in the tra[n]slation” (8-9). These characterizations of his effort as “rudelye done” and of himself as “very rude” and lacking “eloquence” and “wytte” are as close as Colville comes to apologizing for a prose translation of Boethius’s prosimetric original.

Unfortunately, however, it seems that much more about the person of Colville is beyond the reach of research. Editor Ernest Bax explains that

[h]e is alleged to have been at Oxford University, but no trace of him is discoverable upon the University rolls. . . . The obscurity of the man may be gathered from the fact that in that vast body of research respecting English worthies, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, no new information concerning him has been unearthed. (xix)

Bax goes on to suggest, however, that Colville will continue to be important because of his translation of the *Consolation*, the only thing for which he appears to have been known—in his own day or since. As editor of this volume for the Tudor Library series, Bax justifies, then, the selection of this text for the collection: “His work is one of the finest specimens we could desire of the rugged, terse, vigorous English of the sixteenth century. It is especially free from the euphuism that characterized some of the Elizabethan writers” (xx). The directness of Colville’s speech appears not to be merely a matter of originality, style, or reaction against a particular movement or trend that tended toward ornate constructions; on the contrary, it seems to have been his design as a translator to deliver his source as plainly and as unambiguously as possible. In fact, his approach seems similar to, and perhaps even influenced by, the method employed by Chaucer some 170 years prior.⁵²

George Colville and the Consolation of Eternity

Book I, meter 5

The marginal notes provided in Colville’s translation of this *metrum* indicate his concern that his audience may not be familiar with the various astrological references in the text:

The further the Moone is from the son, the more lyght she geueth, the nere the sonne the lesse lyght, as it appereth in the opposition and coniunction of them. The sterre Hesperus foloweth the Sonne in the euening and in the morning goeth before the Son, and is called Lucifer. (Cawood 23)

⁵² Numerous similarities in word choice and phrasing suggest that Colville had access to some version of Chaucer’s *Boece* as he produced his own all-prose translation of the *Consolation*.

This marginal gloss further elucidates what Colville has already made quite plain in the text, where he elaborates as he translates and even adds a parenthetical explanation of the morning star's appearance:

so that y^e moone somtyme shynynge with her fulle lyght when she is in the full, set dyrectly euyn agaynst her brother the sonne, shyning with his beams obscureth and taketh away the lyght of the starres by reason of the great lyghte of the same. And lykewise thou causist y^e the moone other whyles pale of lyght approchyng nere unto the sonne, doo lose her lyght. And thou causyste the euenynge sterre called Hesperus, that bryngeth in the colde in the begynnyng of the nyght, to change his olde course comynge agayne in the mornynge (at the son rysynge) very pale, and is then called Lucyfer. (22-3)

His description of the moon shining brightest when full, his explanation for why the stars dim (“by reason of the great lyghte of the same”), and his naming of the evening star (“called Hesperus”) and morning star (“then called Lucyfer”) all demonstrate Colville’s interest in making the meaning as unambiguous as possible—the latter two examples also indicating Colville’s awareness of and reliance upon Chaucer’s *Boece*, which offers “Hesperus” and the phrase “and is thanne clepid Lucyfer.” When complemented by the marginal note, his elaboration upon the original *metrum* leaves little room for confusion.

He continues this practice when explaining how the seasonal movements bring orderly and even redemptive changes, as leaves lost by the harsh blasts of one wind sprout once more amid the gentle breezes of another: “Thy myghty powre hathe appoynted diuers partes of the yeare, so that the gentel wynde Zephirus that is to saye : Ver tyme, bryngeth againe the grene leues that the wynde Boreas, that is to saye : the wynter toke away” (23). The marginal gloss for this passage reinforces his identification of a wind with its corresponding season of the year: “There be four partes of the yere, Ver, Somer, Autupne and Wynter” (23). Thus, the names for the winds are redefined—first in the text itself (“that is to saye” inserted each time), then in the note that lists all four seasons. Colville also spells out the names of constellations: “the tyme of the sterre named acturus”; “the hote tyme of the stere named Syrius” (23).

While rendering the complaining Boethius's assertion that sets up his plea for more divine intervention in the lives of men, Colville elaborates upon the original and puts words in Boethius's mouth that more properly belong to the perspective of Lady Philosophy, or at least to the perspective that her patient will begin to grasp toward the end of the treatise: "*Nihil antiqua lege solutum / Linqvit propriæ stationis opus.*"; "Nothyng is free from the old lawe or order of gods purveyance or prouydence nor lewith the worke of hys place appoynted" (23). This reference to the "order of gods purveyance or prouydence" suggests the kind of discussion that Boethius will have with his counselor in Book IV, prose 6, and thus attributes to the suffering plaintiff an appreciation for the providential oversight with which God rules the universe that is too philosophically mature for this passage in Book I, meter 5.

Colville again attempts to make the meaning of his translation as clear as possible, inserting material that identifies the audience for Boethius's lament and clarifies the progression of its argument: "*Omnia certo fine gubernas / Hominum solos respuis actus. / Merito rector cohibere modo.*"; "O Lorde God thou gouernist all these foresayde thynges to a certayne ende, whye refusyste thou to gouerne mans actes or dedes in due order?" (23). The interjection and direct address ("O Lord God") reflects the mood and tone of the *metrum* more fully and presents the argument itself more forcefully, while the phrase "all these foresayde thynges" gathers up the examples of orderly change in nature given so far and applies them by way of contrast to the question that Boethius's complaint poses. These additions also stand out as Colville's intentional changes when one compares this passage to Chaucer's version: "O thou governour, governynge alle thynges by certein ende, whi refusestow oonly to gouerne the werkes of men by duwe manere?" (Hanna and Lawler I.m5.31-3). He even adds phrases that seem needlessly repetitive but offer a slightly different term or a more full definition: "varyete or change"; "Innocentes not giltie"; "knyt fast, or rule"; "knyttest and rulyste" (Cawood 24).

A marginal note complements one of his glosses as he comments on the quality of kings that are being undone by the unjust: "*Summos gaudent subdere reges*"; "they reioyse to subdue myghty kynges, that is to saye : good and wyse men" (24); "Good &

wyse men oughte to rule in a common welthe &, not tyrauntes & wycked persons” (n. 24). The problem, of course, is that those who ought to be ruling are not able to do so when the unjust overcome them, and so Colville elaborates upon the text by adding that these kings are “good and wyse.” His note, however, goes further than this and makes explicit what is implicit in both the original poem and in his prose translation: it is not right that tyrants and wicked people take the thrones that belong to those who would rule justly and wisely, and so the general principle at stake is spelled out for all those concerned about the proper rule of the commonwealth.

Colville’s interest in the suffering of good kings correlates with his interest in the plight of good people. For as he renders the concluding plea in the *metrum*, he asks that God exert his orderly rule not over the earth in general or even over humans at large, but rather more specifically over “the good and stedfast men of the earth” (24), an interpolation that appears consistent with the attitude of Boethius at this stage in the narrative, as he feels unjustly abused in a world fallen apart. The request, then, would limit divine intervention to only those who (in Colville’s view, or in his version of Boethius’s view) merit it. His translation also reiterates the message of the complaint, “that they be not tormentyd wyth fortune, that is never stedfast but euer varyable” (24). Thus the original version (“*Et quo caelum regis immensum / Firma stabiles fædere terras*”) does not mention good men at all or restate the essence of the supplication, but Colville provides his audience with a more pointed complaint on behalf of decent folk everywhere and puts it once again in the context of the ongoing debate between the suffering Boethius and Lady Philosophy regarding the nature of Fortune.

Book II, meter 3

Colville’s approach to this *metrum* resembles his method in Book I, meter 5, as he routinely explains the descriptions of the stars and winds, clarifying through the expansion of and elaboration upon his source. For example, he identifies “the warme wynde named Zephirus” (44), “the cloudye wynde named Auster” (44), and “the stormye wynde Aquilo” (45). Moreover, while these phrases owe much to Chaucer’s translation

[“the wynd Zephirus that waxeth warme, yif the cloudy wynde Auster” (Hanna and Lawler II.m3.10-1)], Colville’s version is more direct and plain in its description. However, even though the effects of the sun upon the other constellations are presented with a certain simplicity, the plainness of speech does not necessarily guarantee that the depiction is clear. Indeed, poetic language does not always find an equivalent counterpart in prose, and the prose is not always literal and unadorned:

Pallet albentes hebitata uultus,

Flammis stella præmentibus.

then the bryghte daye sterre, beyng obscuryd, dymmed, or dullyd in her beautie and countenance, becommeth pale and wan, & loseth her cleare lyght, by the greate bryghtenes of the sonne. (Cawood 44)

His account of how the stars are difficult to see in the day time, outdone as they are by the brilliance of the sun, calls up an unusual image: the lesser lights are somehow darkened by brightness, “obscuryd, dymmed, or dullyd” by the great light. Strangely, then, the stars lose light, as though they are less than what they were before and not just hidden from view when the sun ascends to its position in the sky. In addition, personified with terms such as “beautie and countenance,” the sun comes across like a strikingly attractive guest making a grand entrance at a reception, turning everyone’s head and soaking up all the adoration, and so taking it away from those who had shared it before her arrival.

As Colville treats the sarcastic challenge from Lady Philosophy to the complaining Boethius (who laments the reversal he has suffered as though he should have been able to depend upon his good fortune), he turns it into a more straightforward bit of advice, phrasing it as a series of questions:

Rara si constat sua forma mundo.

Si tantas uariat uices,

Crede fortunis hominum caducis,

Bonis crede fugacibus.

If the forme of thys worlde be so seldom stedefast, and turnythe wyth so many alteracions & chaunges : why then wylte thou put confydence in the vnstedefast fortunes of men? Or wylte thou trust to the goodes of fortune, that be vncertayne and transitorye? (45).

Although this rhetorical move may be a little less playful than Boethius's, it states the conditions under which faith could possibly be placed in Fortune with greater specificity and directness, so that the subsequent questions ask the audience to take these facts into account and make a sound decision. Rather than laying out a disappointing set of circumstances wherein nothing (certainly not Fortune) is reliable and then jokingly urging Boethius to go ahead and have faith in what is incurably transitory and mutable, Colville's Lady Philosophy describes the facts on the ground and then asks him to reconsider his assumptions. The ultimate effect may be the same, but Colville's method—in the mold of Chaucer's ["Yif the forme of this world is so zeeld stable, and yif it torneth by so manye entrechaungynges, wiltow thanne trusten in the tumberge fortunes of men? Wiltow trowen in flyttynge goodes?" (Hanna and Lawler II.m3.16-20)]—is less satirical and more gently delivered, perhaps in view of an audience that could misunderstand if it were not presented plainly and without sarcastic artifice. He also uses doublets such as "alteracions & chaunges" and "vncertayne and transitorye"—the former offering only another term with similar connotations, but the latter modifying with greater detail, suggesting that the goods of fortune are both unreliable and short-lived.

As he concludes his translation of this poem, Colville continues the practice of rendering the original with a series of doublets, amplifying for the sake of clarity and comprehension, elaborating even upon his guide in the *Boece*:

It is certeyn and establissched by lawe perdurable, that nothyng that is engendred nys stedfast ne stable. (Hanna and Lawler II.m3.21-3)

Constat eterna positumque lege est.

Vt constat genitum nihil.

It is manyfest and establyshed by gods law, perdurable, that nothyng gotten or engenred, is alwayes stedefaste and stable. (Cawood 45)

Explicitly characterizing the eternal law (by which all created things suffer from a lack of steadfastness and stability) as "gods law," Colville brings to the surface what is latent throughout the *Consolation*, as the discussion of God's eternity that emerges in Book V, prose 6, is set up by numerous passages such as those discussed here. Since all

engendered matter is born mutable and subject to motion and time, only that which is uncreated can stand unchanged—that is, only the unmoved Mover who alone exists in eternity can live above this eternal law. Moreover, eternal laws govern all non-eternal things, and so only God could make, enforce, and in fact supersede such a law as this.

Book II, prose 7

As Colville sets up Lady Philosophy's discussion of the futility of fame and the inconsequential character of all finite things in comparison with the infinite and the eternal, he delivers her reference to the forgotten greats of old with doublets and alternative translations that aim to explain her point as clearly as possible: "But how many men (that in their time were noble and famous) be nowe clene forgotten and out of memory, for lacke of wryters, or by neglygente wryters" (67). The men were high-born, worthy of the fame they had garnered ("noble and famous"), but now they are beyond the reach of minds that should know them ("forgotten and out of memory"), all because the authors who should have been there to memorialize them were either absent or delinquent ("for lacke of wryters, or by neglygente wryters"). Both problems can be solved, however, as a man of renown may hire historians and keep them on task. The difficulty remains, though, that even if (like Colville) one appreciates the potential value of such records, their material condition and the mortality of their makers continues to jeopardize their future:

*Quamquam quid ipsa scripta proficiunt, quæ cum suis auctoribus præmit
longior atque obscura uetustas.*

And albeit that such wrytinges of mens fame and glorye do sumwhat profytte, yet in processe of tyme beyng olde and longe past, the sayd wrytynges and also the actors and wryters, do consume. (Cawood 67)

He alters, then, the interrogative form, as well as the attitude that it expressed, changing a question about the alleged worth of these transitory documents into a partial defense of their importance and significance, allowing that they "do sumwhat profytte" but not specifying the recipient of such gains (the author or the subject?). Colville's assertion that they somewhat profit differs, then, from Chaucer's version, which concludes somewhat

derisively that “thilke wrytynges profiten litel” (Hanna and Lawler II.p7.89-90). He also notes that the same time that consumes the writings and the writers overtakes the actors as well, so that no thing and no one survives long enough to relish the rewards of the sort of fame generated by some *chanson de gestes* that would preserve and promote the famous men and their deeds.

Colville continues to amplify as he translates, offering the doublet “an immortall and perdurable name” for “*immortalitatem*” (67) and adding a recapitulation of a clause he had already rendered, “or that youre fame shall endure alwayes emongest men” (67). The former emphasizes the impossibility of the quest for a name that will outlast mortality and even time itself, while the latter situates the discussion once again in the realm of men, where memories routinely fade and people always die. He incorporates another gloss when he renders the comparison between finite fame and infinite eternity, asking Boethius to consider that since fame lives “emongest men, whose tyme of continuaunce” gives him little reason to celebrate the possibility of continued fame, especially if he contrasts such renown “with the time infinite, that is eterne, or euerlastynge” (67). While it may seem that “euerlastynge” does not add much to the passage, it may in fact help ease the difficulty involved in comparing the measurable to the immeasurable. Thus, the infinite space of eternity (“*aeternitatis infinita spacia*”) is translated as “time infinite, that is eterne,” so that “euerlastynge” modifies both “eterne” and “infinite” in addition to “time” itself. Consequently, time, which by its very nature is quantifiable, is stretched to its limits, or more precisely, has its limits stretched. The net effect is that Colville’s gloss sets up the passages that immediately follow it by urging a comparison between eternity and any amount time that can be imagined, perhaps in a way that is not dissimilar to the distinction made in Book V, prose 6, between the eternal and the perpetual—between that which is extra-temporal and that which extends as long as time has lasted or will last.

Then, as he renders Lady Philosophy’s accusation against those who seek popularity and praise, Colville offers alternate versions of his source and inserts a biblical allusion to drive the point home with doctrine: “But you thincke that you know nothyng

well done, or that you can do nothyng wel, but yf it be to please the peoples eares, or for the vayne prayse of the worlde” (68). Such folk judge nothing done rightly (by others or by themselves) unless it is popular and well-received by the masses, thus depending upon the reports and opinions of others and basing their actions and their judgments upon the fame associated with them. The “vayne prayse of the worlde” stands in opposition, then, to the effectual praise of God, the church, the kingdom, or some other entity within the religious register suggested by the phrase. Consequently, Colville’s translation reinforces the essential argument of this prose passage, urging those who would pursue and value ephemeral fame (and would thus also mourn and lament its evaporation) to compare the temporal, finite nature of what they care so much about to the very idea of eternity. Yet, his allusion to the division between what is “of the worlde” and what by implication is not of the world calls to mind a specifically religious polemic that would draw a necessary distinction between the praise of God and the praise of men. It resonates, then, with the sentiment in Colville’s prologue to the reader, where he considers “the vanities of the worlde” and how “men forsake the wayes of god” to “foloweth the worlde, the deuyll and the fleshe, that darkenyth the wytte and vnderstandyng with theyr vanyties and pleasures, as with ryches, possessions, honors, dignities, power, auctoritie, fame . . .” (vi).

Book III, meter 9

Like Chaucer, Colville opens the hymn to the creator with “O Father” (105), addressing it directly to the one upon whom Lady Philosophy calls as she concludes the *metrum* with a prayer for enlightenment: “*Da pater . . .*”; “O Father, graunt . . .” (107). He also translates “*ratione*” as “providence” (105), so that the reasonable order with which God governs the universe is characterized, perhaps anachronistically here in Book III, as that oversight from the perspective of eternity with which he alone views creation and the free-willed actions of man (a topic discussed more fully in Book V, prose 6). It fits here, however, as Colville describes the scenario whereby providence is possible, God being one who directs time from the perspective of eternity—or, as Colville says, God makes the time pass from an eternal age (if such a quantification is even possible),

“from thy age perdurable” (105). Moreover, by elaborating as he depicts God as one “whome no outwarde causes haue brought out, to make a worke of flowynge fletynge or wauerynge matter” (105-106), Colville places emphasis on the instability of creation, modifying the one who is not compelled by other, external forces by describing in detail all that is moved by such forces—all that is thus flowing, fleeting, wavering, transitory, and unstable. As the maker of the mutable universe, then, God alone stands unmoved and unshaken by time or its effects.

Colville’s efforts to render the more complex portions of this Neoplatonic poem are aided by his frequent glosses and explanations, some of which are integrated directly into his text through explanations and amplifying doublets, while one is provided in Cawood’s printing as an extensive marginal note. As he describes how the creator has formed everything according to the high example of goodness within his own divine mind, Colville inserts a gloss that clarifies the term in one passage so as to set up the ideas that follow in the next few lines: God has commanded the world “to hold absolutely his perfyte partes, that is to say : the elementes and all thynges made of them” (106). While a portion of this passage resembles Chaucer’s rendering [“have frely and absolut hise parfyte parties” (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.17)], this explicit definition of the perfect parts of the world is Colville’s attempt to prepare his readers for the subsequent description of how the hot, cold, dry, and moist elements are bound together in creation in just the right way so as to maintain its delicate, life-sustaining balance. Perhaps the commentary that he offers here is taking into account not only the lines that follow but also the tradition from which this passage emerges: Plato’s *Timaeus* explains that

[t]he construction of the world used up the whole of each of these four elements. For the creator constructed it of all the fire and water and air and earth available, leaving over no part or property of any of them, his purpose being, firstly, that it should be as complete a living being as possible, a whole of complete parts (44-5)

Colville follows the same glossing procedure as he addresses the complicated matter of the three-fold soul:

*Tu triplicis mediam naturæ cuncta mouentem
Conuectens animam, per consona membra resoluis.
Quæ cum secta duos motum glomerauit in orbes,*

Thou God, deuidest by membres conueniente and consonante the soule of the worlde, that is to saye : the bodyes or planetes aboue, being meane betwene God and mannes soule, that is also of a three folde operacion, mouyng all thinges here in this worlde, by there influence and myghtye power. Which soul or planetes being deuided hath gathered or engendryd a mouing by operacion, into two worldes circles or speres, that is to say. The spere that fyrst moueth, and the spere of the planettes. (Cawood 106)

Integrating commentary and glossing his own explanations as he goes, Colville depicts the component parts of the world soul as bound in perfect accord (“conueniente and consonante”) but separated by God’s design so that the domain of God is still distinct from the province of the heavens (“the bodyes or planetes aboue”), which is itself distinguishable from the soul of man. He also elaborates upon the way in which they operate, crediting them with “influence and myghtye power” (106). Isolating, then, that part of the world soul that inhabits the celestial bodies, Colville offers commentary that identifies the Neoplatonic idea of the Same (the immutable and unmoved heavens) and the Other (the mutable and moveable planets). The first of these two aspects of the world soul, the heavenly Mind or Intelligence, makes movement itself—motion that is manifest in the rotations of the known constellations:

*In semet reditura meat mentemque profundam.
Circuit, et simili conuertit imagine coelum.*

And the same soule or planetes returned agayne, goethe into it selfe by intelligence, whiche is one operacion, and compassethe the profounde and depe thought by knowyng of God, whych is another operacion. And so it moueth the heuen by like ymage or intelligence whyche is the thirde operation. (106; 106-7)

Colville repeats himself here (“And the same soule or planetes”), just as he repeats himself above (“the soule of the worlde, that is to saye : the bodyes or planetes aboue Which soul or planetes being deuided”), making sure that the aspect of the soul that he discusses is clearly presented as representative of the planets within the outer sphere of the motion-generating Mind. The journey of the soul is directed, then, by the Mind, which brings the soul to knowledge of God and gives to the heavens a motion that is like

its own. Colville's extensive commentary interwoven here for the sake of explanation and as an attempt at clarity employs repetition, glosses, and enumeration ("which is one operacion," "whych is another operacion," "whych is the thirde operation") so that the three-fold process is spelled out as plainly as possible.

Colville amplifies his translation of the passage relating the formation of humans souls, adding that the maker generates the lives of animals and plants as well:

*Tu causis animas paribus uitasque minores
Prouehi, et leuibus sublimes curribus aptans.*

Thou bryngest forth the soules of men, and the lesse lyues, that is to saye, lyuyng brute beastes, and all growyng things by lyke maner and causes. And shapest the reasonable soules of men, to the lyght cartes, that is to say : to the sterris of heuen. (106; 107)

His gloss here offers commentary that appears to reflect upon a Genesis-like account of creation, crediting God for having brought any and all life-bearing entities into existence. Thus, Colville's version does not present as the objects of the maker's action a combination of souls and lesser lives, but rather a contrast between the souls of men in particular and all other living things such as beasts and vegetation. Furthermore, he explicitly contrasts the capacity these beings have for intelligence, depicting the animals as "brute" and human souls as "reasonable," and explaining that only those with reason are joined to the "lyght cartes," which he defines as the constellations. Colville's expansion here integrates his interpretation of the passage into the translation proper, but it is complemented by and developed even further through the marginal note alongside the Latin and English versions:

The lyght Cartis, be the sterres, or reason, or vnderstanding, that shulde guyde the Soule. Beastes trees, or plantes, be of lesse lyfe, then mannes soule, that is immortall, & all the other be mortal. The soule is a dyuine thyng, and had her begynnyng fyrst in heaven of god, from whom all Godly thinges do come. God is oure berer to grace, our leder from erreure, to truethe. (107)

This gloss supplies an allegorical interpretation of the Neoplatonic imagery, suggesting not only that the carts are the stars, but also that the stars are themselves representative of

reason—which is itself glossed as understanding that directs the path of the soul’s journey. Thus, he attempts not just to make the Boethian text more clear for what it had to say about the soul’s progression, but also to ensure that even that explanation holds greater and more immediate significance for his readers. The note explains, then, the meaning of his own textual gloss, identifying immortality as the chief distinction worth making between man and the animal and plant kingdoms. Moreover, using first-person plural pronouns in his marginal gloss, Colville depicts this journey as one that is the province of divinity, as what is godly returns to God, who is “oure berer to grace, our leder from erreure, to truethe.” Thus, he presents this Neoplatonic hymn to the creator in a distinctly Christian context, surrounding its elusive and allusive text with his own interpolations and his editorial explanations.

After explaining how the souls populating heaven and earth belong to angels and men, respectively, Colville turns a phrase that apparently resonated with Christian doctrine into an overtly evangelistic depiction of the soul’s return to its creator, borrowing from Chaucer’s *Boece* but with a tone all his own:

thow sowest hem into hevene and into erthe. And whan thei ben convertyd to the by thi benygne lawe, thow makest hem retourne ayen to the by ayen-ledyng fyer. (Hanna and Lawler III.m9.36-8)

*In coelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna,
Ad te conuersas reduci facis igne reuerti.*

Thou sowest the soules in heuen, and in the earth, that is to say, into aungeles in heuen, and into bodyes of mankind on the erth whyche soules of mankynde, when they be conuertyd vnto the, by thy benygne or gentle law thou causest them so to retourn, by thy turnyng fyer, of charitable loue. (Cawood 106-7)

Colville describes the path of the soul in greater detail (and with the aid of scholarly commentary on this richly Platonic passage), and when his text is read alongside the marginal note on how God brings men to grace and away from error to truth, his translation implies that the turning is an actual religious conversion, especially as the law is depicted as “gentle” and the impetus for such a change is characterized as “charitable loue.”

As he translates the poem's concluding request, Colville continues to infuse his text with a particularly Christian approach, asking the Father to "*Dissice terrenæ nebulas, / et pondera molis*"; "Put away the cloudes, and waytes or burdens of the delyghte of worldely thinges" (107). Thus, he offers an interpretation of what these metaphorical "*terrenæ nebulas*" and "*pondera molis*" may represent—the clouds obscure what ought to be plainly seen, and those who find pleasure in worldly things carry a heavy load. Since "worldely" here modifies the things in which some take delight rather than the nebulous impediments to clear vision, the distinction is not so much between what could be revealed and what remains hidden, as it is between freedom from and indulgence in the trappings of an existence in, of, and for this world ("worldly thinges" standing by implication in opposition to heavenly or godly things). He also situates the search for peace and serenity in the mind: "*Atque tuo splendore mica, tu nanque serenum, / Tu requies tranquilla piis*"; "For thou arte cleare and resplesaunte, and a quyet rest to meke myndes and thoughtes" (107). Thus, thinking meekly is the only way to find or appreciate the tranquil repose anticipated by those cumbered with "cloudes, and waytes or burdens of the delyghte of worldely thinges."

Colville wraps up the *metrum* and his interpretation of its final plea by elaborating upon the meaning of "*terminus*": "the terme or ende, beyonde the whyche, there can be nothinge iustly thought or desyred" (107-8). Arriving not just at a more precise rendering—a transliteration ("terme") followed by a non-Latinate synonym ("ende")—but also at an explanation of it in relation to his re-casting of the images of earthly clouds and heavy burdens, he suggests that God is the proper end of all understanding and impulse. Sounding a good deal like Aristotle and Aquinas, then, he interpolates the poem's last clause, asserting that the highest and therefore most proper object of contemplation is God. Consequently, acts of the intellect that seek to understand or possess anything beyond this *terminus* are in vain, for nothing is greater, and thoughts or desires that pursue anything short of this *terminus* are foolish, for such objects are unworthy of the attention of any mind—much less of the attention of "meke myndes."

Colville's rendering of this difficult section on the nature of fate and providence offers readers marginal signposts alongside the ongoing discourse: "The dyffynicion of prouidence"; "The dyffynicyon of destyne" (163); "Prouydenche ferther dyffyned"; "Destyny ferther diffyned" (164). Since such notes do not themselves provide any definition, they obviously serve different functions than those that give actual explanations and commentary on potentially confusing terms or phrases in the text. The translation, however, is replete with his own insertions that attempt to amplify and/or clarify something he considers ambiguous or partially true. In his presentation of the passage wherein Lady Philosophy asserts that all motion and mutability derive ultimately "*ex diuinæ mentis stabilitate*" (162), Colville identifies the divine as God and divides his mind into its constituent parts, so that such changeable things exist "by the stedfastnes of gods wyll and pleasure" (162). Thus, God's intellectual immutability allows such moved things to exist and holds them together because he wants to do so, because it pleases him to do so. This phrase "wyll and pleasure" was apparently a typical idiom in Colville's day, as attested by John Knox's 1556 printing, *Book of Common Order*, which refers to "the good will and pleasure of Almighty God."⁵³

Elsewhere, Colville continues to seem anxious when it comes to the generic and impersonal adjective "divine": "For prouydenche is the same deuyne or godly reason that is established in the soueraine hygh prynce of al thynges, which godly reson disposeth and apointeth al things" (163). Adding "godly" to both clauses, Colville asserts the supremacy of God's ability to reason, as though it is a power that belongs to a single, personal entity rather than to an amorphous, somewhat vaguely defined higher intelligence. He translates "*diuinæ mentis*" similarly later, calling it "gods thought"; however, he goes further in his efforts to be plainly understood by adding a clause that alerts the reader to the subject at hand and also inserts a few doublets for the sake of clarity:

⁵³ See Joel Garver, "Scottish Baptismal Rite." 03 Feb. 2007. <http://www.joelgarver.com/writ/hist/order.htm>

ut hæc temporalis ordinis explicatio, in diuinæ mentis adunata prospectum, prouidentia sit. Eadem uero adunatio digesta, atque explicata temporibus, fatum uocetur.

Thys explycacion or declaracion of temporall order, that appertayneth vnto destynye, being vnite or knytte together, in the syght of gods thought, is called prouydence or ordynaunce. But the vniting of such ordynaunce temporall, beyng deuyded and shewed in successyon of tymes, may be called destinie. (163)

Following a metaphor of communication and rhetoric, “*explicatio*” becomes transliterated into “explycacion” but also rephrased as “declaracion”—an amplification that actually does not help clarify the idea of time unfolding incrementally. His insertion of “that appertayneth vnto destynye” reiterates and reminds, connecting temporality to destiny even more directly. Colville also supplies “vnite or knytte” (perhaps suggesting that this combination occurs as a result of divine volition, as God actively joins such components within the temporal order) and “prouydence or ordynaunce” (perhaps suggesting—ironically, in view of the ongoing discussion—that the order seen from above is something that is purposefully chosen or arranged).

Colville’s doublets in a subsequent passage offer a more full definition of divine simplicity in one instance and a more complicated depiction of God’s will in another:

Fatum uero, eorum quæ diuina simplicitas gerenda esse disposuit, mobilem nexum atque ordinem temporalem.

But destynye, is a mutable disposition and temporall order of the things that gods simplicitie or puritie hath appointed or suffered to be done. (164)

For those who would misinterpret God’s simple nature as some kind of deficiency or as a lack of depth or ability, Colville glosses it as a matter of purity, so that it becomes an issue of single-mindedness or of unmixed quality. The divine simplicity is what it is, then, because nothing else impinges upon who or what God is—it is an unspoiled and undivided nature. However, his use of “appointed or suffered” for God’s role in the unfolding of destiny implies that it is possible for the divine simplicity to allow destinies that are not according to its own personal interests, to endure what goes against its wishes—for such things are “suffered to be done.”

Colville's account of how one remains free from the bonds of fate gives readers an interpretation as it goes, explaining the point of the concentric circle illustration: "that is to saye nere vnto god"; "yf the thyng doo cleue firmly to the hygh thought of GOD." Following Chaucer yet again ["(that is to seyn, to God); and yif the thing clyveth to the stedfastnesse of the thought of God" (Hanna and Lawler IV.p6.136-8)], he is keen on identifying God wherever he can, and he hesitates to allow a generic term like "*supernæ mentis*" to stand on its own, describing it instead as the high thought of God. Reflecting, then, upon the analogy featured in this extensive passage on the differences between fate and providence, Colville suggests that destiny actually has not just some quality of inevitability but rather actual agency, wielding a power that must be overcome (by dwelling on and drawing near to God) if one wishes to escape the meshes of necessity: "it passeth the necessitie and power, of destinie" (Cawood 166). Colville's amplifying of God's undivided nature continues as he defines it further as "purities, or gods prouidence and ordynaunce" (166), drawing upon and pulling together his other characterizations so that the whole, divine one is pure and so that his unmixed qualities manifest themselves in his ability to see and perhaps even ordain from above how things happen.

As he translates the passage on the possibility of an unalterable fate proceeding from providence, Colville identifies the antecedents of potentially ambiguous pronouns and continues his practice of attributing providence directly to God and providing multiple doublets for clarification:

*Hæc, actus etiam fortunasque hominum indissolubili causarum
connexione constringit, quæ cum ab immobilis prouidentie proficiscatur
exordiis, ipsas quoque immutabiles necesse est esse.*

And thys order of destynye kepeth in and constraineth from liberty al mens actes and fortunes by a band of causes that can not be vndone or losed, which causes when they do procede from the immouable begynnynge of gods prouidence and ordynaunces, it behoueth that they be immutable. (166)

Thus, he specifies the subject (fate's order) and presents two ways of conceiving of the bonds that prevent men's acts and fortunes from being free: kept in and constrained from liberty, they are held back by a connection of causes that cannot be dissolved. His use of

“vndone or losed” implies agency, so that rather than presenting a chain that by its very nature cannot weaken to the point of uselessness, he describes one that cannot be dismantled or unfastened by an outside party—the former would suggest a structure or a composition that is impervious, while the latter would suggest a tight hold that cannot be broken or a level of security that cannot be breached. The marginal note, however, offers clarification: “Ther be two maners of destyne, one consysteth in worldly thinges, that bee mutable, and the other dependeth vpon goddes prouidence, whiche is constaunt, and not mutable” (166). The depiction here speaks to the nature or condition of the two destinies, one being comprised of the changeable stuff of earth and the other not exactly consisting of but rather reliant upon immutable and unwavering providence.

Book IV, meter 6

As Colville’s version of this *metrum* begins, it offers readers an explanation of the unusual natural and astrological imagery in a marginal note: “Phylosophye speaketh after the maner of the Poetes which do fain that the sters and sonne drowneth them selues in the seas” (n. 174). Unlike a narrative signpost that says simply “The dyffynicion of prouidence” (n. 163), and unlike one that delivers a straightforward account of the “two maners of destynye” (n. 166), this one calls attention to the dialogic nature of the text by referencing “Phylosophye” and characterizes the rhetorical artistry as something that the poets “do fain.” Thus, the audience is given a gloss that is rooted in the narrative but that contends with the translated poem’s imagery, even as it contextualizes it. Most of Colville’s other glosses appear within his translation proper, defining and explaining the constellations’ names and astrological operations, just they have done for passages such as those in Book I, meter 5 or Book II, meter 3: “*Ursa*” he renders “the sterre called the beare”; “*Hesperus*” he calls by name but adds, “that is to saye, Venus”; “*Lucifer*” he identifies as “the sterre called Lucifer” (174). Thus, he takes care to ensure that the readers understand which stars are being described and even that they realize that the poem is discussing constellations and not actual beings, such as Lucifer. However, Colville at times goes beyond glossing and explaining and recasts a passage to infuse it with meaning from outside its immediate context: “*Sic aeternos reficit cursus. / Alternus*

amor”; “Euen soo the loue euerlastynge of gods prouidence, makethe the enterchaungeable courses of the sterres” (174). Here, even when compared against a similar reading from Chaucer [“And thus maketh Love entrechaungeable the perdurable courses” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.19-20)], Colville’s treatment stands as a more intimate portrayal of the cosmic order: the eternal courses revived by mutual love become those star-paths formed by the everlasting love of a personal God as expressed within his providential ordering of the universe. He brings in, then, the discussion of providence from the previous prose section and characterizes a somewhat de-personalized love-force that sustains the universe as the eternal affection of God demonstrated through his oversight of the heavens.

As he moves through this *metrum*, Colville provides a marginal note that places the entire arrangement and operation of the heavenly bodies under the dominion of God: “The sterres haue no vertue by theyr selfe, but by god, and be as seruauntes obedyente at goddes wyll, and comaundemente” (Cawood n. 175). Thus, the anthropomorphic depictions of the stars acting, moving, and fulfilling their roles in the universe are put in a more orthodox and less poetic context—they are nothing and have nothing on their own and act only in service to God, faithfully carrying out his will and obeying his commands. This emphasis upon the stars’ subservience to God betrays again Colville’s anxiety regarding his subject matter, as he once more takes time and space to clarify how his audience ought to be receiving the story he is telling and understanding the meaning of its sometimes elusive references. He continues to follow such an approach as he renders the passage exalting the creator as king, lord, font, and origin:

*Sedet interea conditor altus
Rerumque regens flectit habenas
Rex et dominus fons et origo.
Lex et sapiens arbiter æqui*

And whiles these thynges be doing, the hye maker of things that is to saye : almyghty god, sytteth vnmouable hymselfe, and rulethe all thynges and turneth and moderateth the orders of thyngs, being of hymselfe a kynge by his wyse gouernaunce, a lord by power of creatynge all thyngs, the fountayne of all goodnes, the begynnyng of al thynges, the law binding all thynges, and the wise iudge, of equitie and iustyce, rewarding euery man accordyng to his desert. (175)

Expanding upon his source, Colville not only makes sure that the subject is unambiguously presented (“that is to saye : almyghty god”), but he also depicts his immutability (“sytteth vnmouable hymselfe”) and highlights additional aspects of divine rule, as God both moves and manages (“turneth and moderateth”) the flowing work of matter under his control. Moreover, he offers a justification for why God retains the titles ascribed to him here: “his wyse gouernaunce” makes him fit to be a king; his “power of creatynge all thynges” qualifies him to rule as a lord; he is a font of “goodnes” and not of any unworthy thing; he is the origin “of al thynges” and not of only some of them; he is “the law binding all thynges” so that nothing escapes his ordering; he rules as the “wise iudge” who decides cases with “equitie and iustyce”; and, in a complete interpolation rather than a simple expansion of the original passage, he gives reward based on man’s “desert”—an idea that is not fully fleshed out or firmly supported as justifiable until Book V, prose 6, where Lady Philosophy places retribution within the context of God’s eternity and man’s free will.

In his translation of the passage regarding the love that holds all things in stable order lest they come apart in some cataclysmic dissolution of the cosmos, Colville marshals all the options at his disposal—reflecting back upon previously discussed matters, expanding upon his rendering of particular words and phrases, and complementing all of this with a marginal gloss:

*Nam nisi rectos reuocans itus
Flexos iterum cogat in orbis
Quæ nunc stabilis continet ordo
Dissepta suo fonte fatiscant
Hic est cunctis continuum amor,*

And except that god callyng backe the ryght progressions and groundes of thynges, constraineth and reuocateth all thyngs againe into a due compas and course, the thinges that the stedefast order of his prouidence nowe contayneth, being separte from the fountayne of ther begynnyng, shoulde fayle and come to nought. Thys fountayne is a continuall loue of all thyngs that haue life. (175-6; 176)

All thynges be ruled and gouerned by god in compas, so that of seedes, spreyngeth fourth herbes and of the herbes, seedes, and lykewyse of the fyre spryngeth ayre, and of the ayre fyre agayne (n. 176).

Supplying a proper noun (“god”) rather than a personal pronoun for the implied subject, and modifying the *ordo* with a prepositional phrase (“of his prouidence”), Colville continues to keep the attention on the person of God and on the distinction just made between fate and providence, emphasizing the control maintained over a dynamic universe under the oversight of the divine mind. He also draws upon his expansion of “*fonte*” (“fountayne of ther begynnyng”) as he begins the sentence which follows, equating the source of all things to the love that continues to bind them together, playing off the image of a font that does not run dry.

In addition, Colville’s doublets (“progressions and groundes”; “constraineth and reuocateth”; “compas and course”) broaden the potential meanings, opening up more semantic range within which his text can operate. It is not just that all things must be called back from their movements throughout the universe, but also that whatever grounds caused them to follow those paths have also to be reclaimed, so that any force compelling movement or bringing distance between a thing and its rightful origins must be constrained and recalled so that the objects return to their source. Moreover, the boundaries defined by the compass of such objects must allow their respective courses to stay within range and follow a circuit that leads back to where they began. Colville’s gloss explains this further, suggesting that everything in creation follows such a path—whether seeds, plants, fire, or air—for all things are “ruled and gouerened by god” so that by design they generate what gives their kind life. In fact, he concludes his version of this *metrum* by explicitly defining what is intended by the idea that all things “do come agayne to the begynnyng, that is to say : to god that gaue them their being and made them” (176). Thus, while offering a translation of “*Refluant causae quæ dedit esse*” (176) and a version of Chaucer’s rendering [“to the cause that hath yeven hem beinge (that is to seyn, to God)” (Hanna and Lawler IV.m6.58-60)], Colville brings in a term from a previous line (where he used “begynnyng”) as part of his equivalent for “*fonte*”) but then glosses this phrasing by rendering a more direct version of the actual text before him, adding “god” to specify the maker who caused such being.

Book V, meter 2

As Colville contrasts the limitations of the sun's rays with the transcendence of God's sight, he glosses a phrase that he apparently felt was a bit imprecise, and he explains this phenomenon parenthetically: "The maker of the great worlde, whyche is god, is not, nor seith after that sort. For he (by his knowledge) percethe all thynges, lokyng from aboue" (Cawood 188). His version, while reliant upon the *Boece* for its phrasing, is considerably more deliberate than Chaucer's translation: "So ne seth nat God, makere of the grete werld. To hym, that loketh alle thynges from on hey . . ." (Hanna and Lawler V.m2.6-8). Thus, Colville leaves no room for doubt that this *metrum* exalts the person of God for his epistemological preeminence, as the power of the creator includes to ability of divine sight, whereby he knows all things all at once in a single act of comprehension. Colville even offers a doublet to further clarify that this unique power to know is exercised in "the instant or moment of a thought" (188), attempting then to quantify as accurately as possible the infinitely small period of time that it takes, as humans may understand it, for God to commit a single act of seeing.

He concludes by continuing his effort to exalt God without ambiguity, supplying a proper noun in place of a generic pronoun: "*Quemque respicit omnia solus, / Verum possis dicere solem*"; "Whyche god forasmuche as he seith and beholdeth al thyngs, thou alone mayst call hym the verye true sonne" (188). Colville also amplifies his translation of "*respicit*," suggesting that what God sees he also beholds—perhaps implying that the divine sight involves a greater degree of comprehension and possession than does simple visual perception, just as Lady Philosophy's discourse in Book V, prose 6 suggests that eternity involves more than just longevity and is not the same as perpetuity.

Book V, prose 6

In translating this final portion of the *Consolation*, Colville employs the same techniques he has used throughout, expanding single terms into doublets, elaborating and clarifying with internal textual glosses, and supplying marginal notes that call attention to

the topic at hand and offer commentary on a particularly complex idea. His doublets are repetitive in and of themselves at times but also in relation to one another, as he frequently amplifies the same terms and often does so by providing a transliteration and a synonym: “scyence or knowledge” (210), “iudgement or opinion” (211), “condicion or successyon” (211), “infynitelye or time infinite” (211), “myghtye or stronge” (212), “proper, or appertaynyng” (212), “decesyth or dymynysheth” (213), “ymage or similitude” (213), “seyence or knowledge” (214), “symplicitie, or purite” (214), “prescience or fore knowledge” (214), “instaunt or present” (214), “science or knowledge” (214), “necessite or chaunce” (215), “condicion or succession” (215), “beholdeth and seyth” (217), “matter or difference” (217), “science or knowledge” (217), “courses and stedes of knowing” (219), “stedes or courses” (219), “mutacions or chaunges” (219), “simplicitie or pure nature” (219). His intention, then, must be to make the text as plain as possible, often taking a term from the Latin text adjacent to his English one and providing it in a Latinate, transliterated form, and including it alongside a more “native” English word that approximates the other in meaning. The shades of literalness and the concomitant shades of meaning, then, bridge the distance between the source text—so plainly different as presented in a foreign language and in an italic font—and the Early Modern English translation.

As Colville renders the passage describing the limitations of non-eternal beings, he does not refer to the inability of a temporal being to grasp the entire space of his life equally but rather to the impossibility of understanding the end of his life: “*nihilque est in tempore constitutum, quod ultimum uite sue spatium pariter possit amplecti*”; “And nothyng is establyshed in tyme, that may comprehend together the last space of hys lyfe” (211). Thus, instead of supporting the definition an eternity just given (“the possessyon of lyfe interminable, being hole and all together parfytte”), this phrasing anticipates and sets up the reasoning that immediately follows: “for it hath not yet ouerturned the time of tomorrow” (211). The idea that a man may not “comprehend together the last space of hys lyfe,” then, may not be referring to his inability to understand life beyond death but rather to the impossibility of his knowing anything (much less everything) about his final days.

While Colville surrounds his translation with marginal comments, his text also offers additional glosses. However, not all such interpolations are helpful, as when he explains how “euerye iudgement comprehendeth y^e thinges that be subiect to it after its owne nature that is to say, according to the nature of the knowen” (213-4), thus mis-identifying the antecedent of the vague pronoun reference. Boethius’s passage asserts that everything is not known according to its own nature but according to the nature of the one comprehending it; however, Colville’s “the nature of the knowen” refers to the nature of the thing that is being comprehended and so garbles the essence of the message. His other insertions find greater success, though: “but beholdeth such thyngs presente before hym as they shuld hap to you in tyme to come, that is to say, that god seith those thinges that be to come to you, as presently as you do se those thinges that be done before your eyes” (215). Here, Colville again names the pronoun “god” and then restates his point a bit more concisely. He also adds material that is not explicitly announced or formatted as a gloss, incorporating it fully into his ongoing argument: “So than the deuyne beholding all things troubleth not the qualitués of thynges, by necessitie, whych thynges be present with hym by hys eternitie” (215). Thus, Colville’s phrases “by necessitie” and “by hys eternitie” bring in the issues at hand and place them in context, so that the proposition under construction at this point in the dialogue is reinforced, Lady Philosophy demonstrating that such divine knowledge does not require that the act be necessary and that this is all possible because of God’s unique epistemological position.

Colville continues this practice of inserting explanatory glosses as he relates Lady Philosophy’s reminder to the recovering Boethius of their recent discussion of simple and conditional necessity: “*eorum tamen unum prius quoque quam fieret, necesse erat existere, alterum uero minime*”; “Neuertheles the one of them before it was done, it was of necessity to be done, that is to saye : the sonne rysynge : but not the other, that is to say : the manne goyng” (217; 217-8). Appropriating Lady Philosophy’s own examples here, Colville strengthens the point that she has been trying to remind her patient of—that the sunrise and a man’s walking are not bound by the same kind of necessity. He does this yet again in the subsequent passage, echoing Chaucer:

But some of hem descendith of the nature of thinges (as the sonne arysynge); and some descendith of the power of the doeris (as the man walkynge). (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.229-32)

Sed eorum hoc quidem de rerum necessitate descendit, illud uero de potestate facientium

But of them, the one, that is to say the son rysynge, commeth of necessitie of thyngs. The other that is to say the man goyng, commeth of power to do. (218)

Leaving no room for confusion, then, Colville connects Lady Philosophy's earlier illustration directly to the detailed explanations of its implications. Likewise, his version of "*nihil uero posterioribus debet*" unpacks the meaning of this unusual financial metaphor used to describe the nature of God's knowledge, which "oweth nothing to later thinges, that is to sai, hath as much power in thinges to come hereafter, as in thynges present, or is not in dette vnto later thyngs, for any knowledge receyued by them" (219). Thus, Colville interrupts the flow of the narrative to offer a detailed explanation, showing how God's knowledge—situated as it is in the eternal present and possessing all past and even future events—does not rely upon a future event's occurrence for his awareness of it to be complete. Eternal knowledge is therefore perfect knowledge—independent and self-sufficient cognition.

Then, even as he reminds readers of the current subject ("Which thinges before sayde, forasmuche as they be euen so, that is to say : that necessitie is not in thinges by dyuine fore knowledge"), Colville renders the passage in a way that actually confuses the issue: "*Quæ cum ita sint manet intemerata mortalibus arbitrii libertas*"; "libertie of fre wyll remayneth in all mortall men not corrupte nor constraigned by any meanes" (219; 219-20). One could read this last phrase as a suggestion that it is the men who are not corrupt or constrained for whom free will remains true, rather than as a statement that free will is real and viable, not corrupted in the least and not constrained by any means whatsoever, much less by divine foreknowledge. Consequently, the ambiguous reading leaves the impression that those who are corrupt cannot exert their wills freely and that those who are somehow constrained likewise cannot freely choose to implement their wishes. Whether successfully amplifying and clarifying the passages to which they are

added or not, however, Colville's glosses—explicitly signaled by his repeated announcement “that is to say”—demonstrate that the translator makes no effort to pretend that these interpolations are anything but his own attempts to reinforce and expound upon the message of his text.

Even more explicit, however, are his marginal glosses, which routinely comment upon the essence of the passages to which they are adjacent. Colville's marginal notes work much the same way as those integrated within his prose translation, providing extra-textual signposts and commentary, summarizing the lengthy prose discussion by serving as an outline of sorts for readers to follow, but also clarifying the complex passages against which they are placed. While one may read simply, “The dyffynycion eternitie” (n. 211) or “Another diffynicion of eternitie” (n. 212), another may delve into the richest and potentially the most confusing portions of the text:

Somethynge is eterne, and in eternytie, & the very eternytie as god.
Somethynge be eterne, and in eternytie, & be not ye same eternytie, as
Aungelles, whiche be substaunces seperate. Somethynge bee eterne, not in
eternytie, nor be not eternytie, as mouing, time, & the worlde. (n. 211)

This marginal gloss adds a layer to the text as it explains eternity, offering a tripartite definition that includes something that a subject may be, something a subject may dwell within, and a state of being that a subject may possess. The example of angels, while somewhat out of place or beyond the scope of this work of natural theology (although Book IV, prose 6 considers angels one of the many possible means by which fate is made manifest in the universe), supplies an intermediary example, since humans (or more specifically, their souls) may be considered eternal but are not in eternity or in possession of the true eternity of God. All things in motion and thus subject to time, and even the world itself, then, are eternal in only the one sense, not having the opportunity to ever dwell in eternity. The repeated use of “eterne” and “eternytie” without reference to anything being simply infinite or perpetual, when presented with the religious overtones of this note (especially angels and being in eternity) pulls readers out of the discussion

that is drawing one kind of distinction and places them within another effort to delineate and define—one with greater theological (rather than philosophical) implications.

Picking up on a concept that even though Lady Philosophy has attempted to clarify may still have baffled or misled his readers, Colville explains how although God in one sense pre-dates all created things, his age is not measured by time; in fact, all temporal measurements are altogether inadequate: “God is not older (*then* thinges y^l be made) by quantytie of time, but by prosperytie of pure nature alone. And so god is before y^e worlde by his owne pure nature, and not by antiquitie of tyme” (n. 212). The note draws on the doublet’s rendering within the text (“hys symple or pure nature”) and twice refers to the simplicity of God’s nature as “pure.” It even characterizes this purity as a kind of wealth (“prosperytie”), suggesting that even though God does not have an accumulation of countless years by which to measure his antiquity, he does possess a storehouse of his own purity—a oneness that is undivided by and unanswerable to time. Then, as Colville follows Chaucer’s reading [“bereth a maner ymage or liknesse of the ai duellynge presence of God” (Hanna and Lawler V.p6.84-5)] and expounds upon how a given present moment “beareth a maner ymage or similitude of the euerlasting being of god” (213), a marginal gloss suggests that this likeness is notoriously and unavoidably ephemeral:

The infinyte mouing of *temporal* thinges do folowe as much as they may the state of eternytie, but it can not folow it wholly, for temporal stat is successyuelly and beholdeth the tyme past and y^e time to com but the state of eternitie is present alwaies and not successyue. (n. 213)

Since time is successive, a time-bound entity sees each of its present moments pass, and with them, any resemblance it may have had to the eternity of God. For when a temporal substance experiences a present moment, it instantly ceases to have any possession of that moment as a future thing; then, upon that instant’s passing, this time-bound entity loses whatever grasp it had on that formerly present moment and watches it enter the past, which itself becomes increasingly inaccessible. In contrast, however, whatever exists with the eternal state maintains its presence in the never-failing instant and does not see

anything as beyond its grasp; thus, such an eternal state certainly cannot be altered by moments that pass by those who happen to exist in a successive, temporal state.

The nature of the divine perspective prompts Colville's other two marginal glosses for this prose section on the subject of God's eternity: "Prouydence & precience supposeth some thing to come. Prouydence supposeth all thynges present in syghte" (n. 214); "Al thinges to god be present and nothyng to com nor past as it is to men" (n. 214). The contrast, then, is not just theoretically between all the one eternal being and all temporal beings everywhere but between God and men in particular. This supports Lady Philosophy's entire argument here, as the nature of God's knowledge proceeds from the fact of his existing alone in eternity. Consequently, Boethius the character is urged to consider the great difference between his own nature and God's and thus recognize the sharp contrast between their respective epistemological positions.

Some of Colville's additions to his text come not as internal glosses or marginal notes but as fully integrated amplifications upon his source. When offering the explanation of how God's knowledge proceeding from an eternal present cannot be tricked into foreknowing now one thing and then another—based upon the changing mind and actions of a person intent on undermining or contravening the prescience of God—Colville supplies Lady Philosophy's illustration: "thou cannest not fle from the syght of the present eye" (218). However, he adds the modifying phrase, "y^t lokyth on the" (218), calling to mind what comes at the conclusion of the entire *Consolation*: "you do al thinges before the eies of the iudge, that is to saye : before GOD, that seith all thinges" (220). Moreover, Colville's phrasing (especially the definite article in the phrase "the present eye" rather than an indefinite "a present eye") suggests that he means to imply the divine eye and not just hypothetical human sight for the sake of his illustration. Thus, he conflates the explanation of how God's view of human acts does not bind them with necessity with the very idea that the divine sight holds all things in his view but does not constrain them to be as they are. Then, as he explains how God is able to perceive all things in a single act of cognition, Colville seems to include a biblical allusion, depicting God's comprehension as happening "at one twynckelyng of an eye" (219), which seems

too close to the reading in 1 Corinthians 15:52 to be coincidental: “in a moment, in a tvvinkling of an eie.”⁵⁴ Thus, an idiom that suggests how immediate the transformation will be from perishable to imperishable and from mortality to immortality is used here to characterize how instantaneously God commits his acts of divine knowing as he sees from the extra-temporal perspective of eternity the temporal events that unfold within the universe.

Unable to negotiate the convoluted syntax of his source, Colville mistranslates Lady Philosophy’s defense of God’s retributive justice: “*nec iniquae leges, solutis omni necessitate voluntatibus premia, poenasque proponunt*”; “And the wycked lawes do not set fourth rewardes or ponyshmentes, to the wils of men that be fre from al necessitie” (220). This passage should have been an apology for the system of rewards and punishments God has established, as free will (which Lady Philosophy has just proven to her patient, Boethius) allows men to act as they wish and so incur the requisite consequences. For if free will were not possible, then the punishments and rewards would be predestined to those who were required by necessity to act in particular ways. Here, however, rather than laws that are not unjust, we have “wycked lawes,” and the point seems to be that those who are free from necessity are not under the jurisdiction of those who enact unjust laws. A few lines down, however, Colville provides Lady Philosophy’s assertion that God’s foreknowledge proceeding from eternity allows him to offer “rewardes vnto the good folke, and ponyshments to the wycked and euyl folke” (220).

As he concludes his translation, Colville amplifies Lady Philosophy’s defense of prayers, as she declares that they are not in vain, “or as thynges of no force or effecte, whych when they be good, iuste and ryghtful, cannot be vnfruytfull, but meritorius and good” (220). This expansion defines vain more fully, suggesting that such hopes and prayers are potent and effective when not only “*recte*” (“rightful”), but also “good” and “just”—adjectives which simply serve to broaden the definition of “rightful.” Likewise, “vnfruytfull” is opposed to two terms, “meritorius and good”—the former implying that

⁵⁴ See the digital facsimile of the 1582 Rheims New Testament. Gallica. 03 Feb. 2007. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k53352s/f494.chemindefer>

prayers may not only have merit but might also be worthy of praise themselves, that they may actually be something for which one might be rewarded. When paired with the previous description of effective prayers (“good”), this same adjective modifying the happy outcome (“good”) presents a simple equation: good prayers yield good results, or if the prayer is good, the response will be good. This calculus is reflected in the final passage as well:

magna uobis est, si dissimulare non uultis, necessitas indicta probitatis, cum ante oculos agitis iudicis cuncta cernentis.

Greate necessitie of goodnes and rewarde is promysed and appoynted for you, yf you wyll not dyssemble, but contynue faythfyll true and obedient vnto almyghty god, when you do al thinges before the eies of the iudge, that is to saye : before GOD, that seith all thinges. (220)

The doublet employed here for the sake of amplification heightens the irony of Lady Philosophy’s concluding remarks, as the phrase “promysed and appoynted” suggests even more explicitly that the dynamic at work here between the virtues of free humans and the judgment of a providential God exists on some kind of fixed and unalterable level. Indeed, this concluding exhortation sets forth the principle of retribution yet again, as “faythfyll true and obedient” behavior merits “goodnes and rewarde.” Moreover, Colville’s repeated references to “almyghty god” and “GOD” (especially the capitalized version) reinforce his approach throughout the *Consolation*, as he routinely expands upon his original by personalizing the divine mind and directing any attention paid to the *summum bonum* to the person of God. That such elaborations come here in an explicit gloss demonstrates how Colville draws out the potential meaning of a passage by exploring the semantic range of a word or phrase not only within his prose translation proper but also within an additional layer of annotation.

George Colville’s Translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*

Since the 1556 printing of Colville’s translation features the English rendering surrounded by a Latin copy of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* and numerous marginal

explanatory notes, it seems likely that his version was intended for readers engaged in close comparison and careful reading. Moreover, the nature of the annotations and of the sentiments expressed in the various in-text expansions and elaborations reveal Colville's interest in reaching his audience on a moral and spiritual level, as much as on an educational or philosophical one. This approach is shared by Cawood, who prefaces the edition with the hope that the text helps people move through their problems and into ultimate reward, "eternall felycytie" (i). Thus, Colville's rendering of the *Consolation* was shaped by both pedagogical and theological aims, so that the translation might educate and indoctrinate those who lack Boethian wisdom. In fact, his prefatory comments introduce an orthodox text, one that for all its philosophical underpinnings, influences, and consolations, aims to draw readers away from carnal, worldly pleasures and toward godliness—even toward God himself in heaven.

Even as Colville frequently falls back upon a reading from Chaucer's *Boece*, he often reveals through his interpolations and expansions his own particular interests, such as political concerns that correlate to those expressed by the suffering Boethius. More commonly, however, Colville includes messages that speak to his own religious inclinations and purposes, inserting phrases that present the creator and divine mind more explicitly as the Judeo-Christian God. In addition, he crafts his translation in ways that complement the prefatory remarks that introduce the rationale for his text and explain how wayward men may benefit from such a treatise. Additionally, Colville often simply incorporates material fully into his text, such as when he seems anxious about the generic and impersonal adjective "divine" and modifies it with "godly." Colville's expansions and clarifications within the text are complemented throughout by marginal notes that help readers follow and process the arguments under development, whether through simple signposts or detailed explanations. His efforts to make Boethius's philosophy plain are demonstrated and preserved in the *mise en page* of Cawood's 1556 printing, as the Latin source and a variety of annotations surround a rendering that flattens Boethius's prosimetrum into an all-prose text that allows room for expansions, synonyms, modifying phrases, rephrasings, interpretations, interpolations, and glosses—some of which clarify

Boethian philosophy and others of which place that philosophy in the context of Christian theology.

Queen Elizabeth I's Prosimetric Translation

Three sheets of paper accompany the unique manuscript of Queen Elizabeth I's version, each offering a calculation of the time it took her to complete this work of translation. The estimations span from 24-27 total hours, the queen having labored for a short time each day between 10 October and 8 November of 1593 (Pemberton ix, x).⁵⁵ Elizabeth allegedly produced this prosimetric translation from the Latin after having taken up the *Consolation* during a time of personal grief, when Henry of Navarre converted to Catholicism. After Camden records an emotional letter from the queen on this subject, he asserts that

In her grieffe shee sought comfort out of the holy Scriptures, the writings of the holy Fathers, and frequent conferences with the Archbishop, and whether out of the Phylosophers also I know not. Sure I am that at this time shee daily turned over Boetius his bookes *De Consolatione*, and translated them handsomely into the English tongue. (Camden, par. 16)

Following up on Camden's depiction of these events, Lysbeth Benkert suggests that "[i]t can be no coincidence that his conversion came just a few months prior to the queen's translation of Boethius" (par. 6). Walter Houghton, however, notes that the letter to Henry "was written on November 12, 1593" (30)—after she is reported to have completed the translation project. Moreover, even though Houghton admits that the queen could have found out about Henry's conversion some months earlier, he suggests that "however dismayed Elizabeth may have been from a political standpoint, it is hard to believe that she was personally much moved" (30). Houghton also points to a much earlier time of Boethian influence upon Elizabeth, citing Adam Clarke, who contends that she often went to the *Consolation* during her time in the Tower at Woodstock—from

⁵⁵ Of the three calculation records that Pemberton's EETS edition supplies, the one claiming that she finished in only 24 hours indicates that the work stopped on 5 November, 3 days earlier than the other two records report (ix).

May 1554 to May 1555: “Queen Elizabeth, during the time she was confined by her sister Mary, read this work [the *De Consolatione*] frequently” (qtd. in Houghton 28). He then refers readers to Chamberlain’s *Sayings of Queen Elizabeth*, which records that she inscribed the following Boethian lines on a shutter using a piece of charcoal:

O Fortune! how thy restless wavering state
Hath fraught with cares my troubled wit,
Witness this present prison, whither fate
Could bear me, and the joys I quit.
Thou caus’dst the guilty to be loosed
From bands wherein are innocents enclosed,
Causing the guiltless to be strait reserved,
And freeing those that death had well deserved.
But by her envy can be nothing wrought,
So God send to my foes all they have wrought
Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner. (qtd. in Houghton 28)

In view of the accounts provided by Clarke and Chamberlain, then, one might reason that this early exposure to and interest in Boethius’s *Consolation* would have elicited and nurtured in the queen some kind of identification with the sufferings of Boethius, as well as with the complaints made by his persona in Book I, meter 5. Yet, her imprecatory conclusion to this verse, “So God send to my foes all they have wrought,” pleads not for God to play a more active role in righting the wrongs of mankind in general, but for God to smite the queen’s enemies in particular.

In his *Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters*, Felix Pryor looks later in the queen’s life to find reasons for her interest in Boethius, noting that the Orpheus and Eurydice passage from Book III, meter 12 would have held personal significance for Elizabeth, who penned this version at “sixty years old, with the two men she came closest to marrying in the grave” (113). Susan Bassnett’s “Daring to Show Discontent: Queen Elizabeth I as Poet and Translator” offers other possible reasons for her need for consolation in the midst of great success (such as the 1588 victory over the Spanish Armada) but even greater sorrow:

She had been compelled to execute her cousin, Mary Stuart in 1587, an act that had cost her a great deal of anguish; Robert Dudley died in 1588, and in 1589 her close friend Christopher Hatton died, as did Blanche Parry, her waiting woman for fifty years. The situation in Ireland was deteriorating, and open rebellion broke out in 1595, whilst the economic situation at home was disastrous and the plague swept the country so fiercely in the early 1590s that in 1592 the London theatres were closed. (219)

However, Camden's report of her carrying her Latin *Consolation* around and these other possible reasons for emotional and philosophical suffering do not seem to be easily reconciled with the enthusiastic emphasis upon the queen's translation speed. Indeed, in his 1964 volume *The Poems of Queen Elizabeth I*, Leicester Bradner wonders what she had hoped to achieve by such hasty work: "One can only speculate as to why the Queen snatched time from her many pressing governmental and social duties to dash off these hurried English versions" (qtd. in Bassnett 214). Moreover, as Lysbeth Benkert notes, "it seems odd to 'speed translate' a work on patience and forbearance" (par. 1).

While she may have in fact received comfort from Boethius at various times for multiple reasons, the haste which she allegedly rendered the *Consolation* suggests that the process itself may have been some kind of contest involving intellectual, linguistic, and/or literary prowess. However, Bassnett suggests that if it were an experiment of some sort, it was not done with careful seriousness, since the pace of the production and quality of the product indicate that "the translation was undertaken compulsively, rather than as a measured exercise or as a recreation . . ." (214). Elizabeth's *Consolation* was apparently not undertaken as an overtly political project with concrete potential for public display and dissemination, but rather as a private exercise for the educated queen interested in and knowledgeable of Boethius's work. Indeed, as Pemberton notes in her introduction, "the incentive of literary fame was wanting, for her translations, not being printed, were probably read only by the secretaries who copied some of them, so that it is evident that Elizabeth loved learning for its own sake" (xii).

Benkert posits, however, that the queen's own interest in the speed of her labor indicates that she must have been updating others on its status, and that "notes in the

margins indicate that fair copies of her work had been made. This was not, in all probability, meant as a merely private exercise” (par. 5). Yet, since the work was not mass-produced or publicly distributed in any official way, it seems a stretch to suggest, as Benkert does, that the queen’s “translations would have made a strong reinforcement of her image as an intellectual, and another attempt to combat the patronizing voices of those who constantly tried to assert their dominance and influence her policies” (par. 5). Indeed, the strength of the renderings to accomplish anything would certainly be proportional to the publicity they received and the prominence with which they were displayed. When Benkert says that her version would “suggest a paradigm through which she wished her subjects to interpret events” (par. 5), she seems to assume that her work was widely read throughout England. However, as Bassnett rightly points out, “[t]here is no sense of her using translation as a way of extending the range of texts available to English readers, nor does there seem to be much attempt to write in good English style. Rather, translation seems to have been a very personal activity, something deriving from a particular internalized need” (218). Such a conclusion is supported not only by the idea that much of the *Consolation*’s content would have been relevant for the queen, but also by the nature of the textual evidence available in the unique manuscript.

Only one edition of the single manuscript exists, Caroline Pemberton’s EETS edition of 1899.⁵⁶ Since much of the text appears in Elizabeth’s hand, especially the *metra*, with the majority of the prose perhaps having been dictated to a clerk, the poetic aspect of this translation effort appears to have been personally significant for the queen. John Morris Jackson and Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. suggest that the queen may have also been especially invested in rendering the first part of the work:

The opening passages of Book 1 of the *Consolatio* come to us in the queen’s own hand, where, most prose passages are transcribed by the amanuensis. This might indicate particular interest in those lines that convey the political circumstances that precipitated the subsequent philosophical consideration of the work. (“The Early Education”)

⁵⁶ Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. is currently producing an new edition of Elizabeth’s translation.

So, while Elizabeth's translation is not packaged or presented with publicity and mass-production in mind, her attraction to and possible sympathy with its author's political situation (as described in the first part of the work) may have moved her to work directly on the rendering, taking up the pen herself for the introductory material on Boethius's demise.

In the 1899 edition, Pemberton herself places increased emphasis on the metrical sections by printing at the foot of each relevant page a Latin version of the given meter. Pemberton's edition has received some criticism, though, with Geoffrey Riddehough suggesting in his "Queen Elizabeth's Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*" that the editor mistakenly criticizes Elizabeth for mistranslating the Latin without considering the possibility that the queen's Latin source may have differed considerably from the one Pemberton uses (89). Riddehough also notes, however, that Pemberton's emphasis on the literalness of Elizabeth's translation keeps her from finding some of the queen's errors (90-1). In addition, the modern English marginal notes that appear in the 1899 text are not contemporary with the queen's translation, and since Pemberton does not comment on their presence, one may reasonably infer that these are her own editorial contributions to the work. These marginal glosses are simple summaries placed alongside particular passages, offering a guide to the subject at hand or presenting a condensed version of the argument being developed. For example, the very first note describes the content and introduces the poem: "Boethius deplores his misfortunes in the following elegy" (n. 1). Then, the last note in the text pulls the final arguments together into a single admonition: "From the whole of the preceding discussion the inference is drawn, that God sees our actions, hears our prayers, and rewards the righteous" (n. 120).

While not everyone agrees on the quality of the queen's translation, most have not found it a particularly impressive literary achievement. Houghton's criticism of Elizabeth's work includes Nicholas Caussin's comment that she "gave her selfe to such vanity of study, that oftentimes she committed some extravagances; as when she undertook to translate the five Books of the Consolation of Boetius" (qtd. in Houghton 31). Houghton goes on, though, to offer his own critique, suggesting that the queen "was

almost ideally unsuited for the task of writing poetry, so that no matter what one of her metres the reader turns to, he finds crude and often unintelligible verse” (31). After quoting a passage from Book 3, meter 5 to illustrate his point, Houghton asserts that “one would have to search far through English literature to find more unreadable ‘poetry’” (31). Likewise, Susan Bassnett, noting the speed with which the queen is traditionally held to have worked, as well as the reputation Elizabeth had for her rhetorical prowess, concludes that “the translation was made into a fairly dull, inelegant English, line by line” (217). Jackson and Kaylor note, however, that her method was likely a product of her training: “the approach she took in the translation had been firmly fixed by Roger Ascham’s dual translation method: literalness almost to a fault, the use of cognates wherever possible, and fidelity to the logic behind the rhetoric” (“The Early Education of Queen Elizabeth I”). She had been taught to translate from Latin into English and (without the source text) from English back into Latin, so that the original could be compared to her Latin version of it—the similarities then being praised and the differences corrected.

Maria Perry warns, though, that those who point out the weaknesses of the translation do not consider what the queen may have been attempting to achieve: “Derided by some critics as her least impressive ‘Englishing’, it has not been generally realised that she was experimenting with the ‘antique style’ favoured at the time for translating classical authors” (297). Perry notes that Elizabeth’s interest in deliberately antiquated speech is reflected in the manuscript, as she at times has altered her secretary’s diction: “she has occasionally crossed out Windebank’s version of a word, deliberately replacing it with a more archaic form” (298). This approach is not taken throughout, however, as Perry finds Elizabeth particularly carried away with the content and import of passages such as those on providence and prayer: “When she came to a passage that interested her, Elizabeth forgot about the antique style and went straight for the sense” (298). Felix Pryor concurs, perhaps just echoing Perry’s analysis: “In her version Elizabeth opts for a deliberately ‘antique’ style” (113). If Perry and Pryor are correct in their apology for the queen’s work, then perhaps some of the ineffective passages can be understood differently; however, neither critic offers sufficient proof that this was a

thorough, deliberate approach, leaving room for further inquiry and analysis of the unique manuscript.

Queen Elizabeth I and the Consolation of Eternity

Book I, meter 5

Queen Elizabeth's version of this *metrum* identifies the recipient of its request for greater justice by three different names: "*framar*" (Pemberton I.m5.1), "*gidar*" (I.m5.27), "*weldar*" (I.m5.44). Each of these depict God in a way that corresponds to the development of the poem, as he is addressed first as the one who has built the universe as it stands, then as the one who guides all the component parts of the cosmos towards an "*assured end*" (I.m5.25), and finally as the one who wields all creation and can control the earth as he rules the heavens. As she opens this passage, however, Elizabeth's translation works from a faulty reading: it refers to one who is "*lening to the lasting grounstone*" (I.m5.2), which Pemberton notes is "Probably 'groundstone.' Here the Queen has read *solum*, ground, instead of *solium*, throne" (n. 13). Although the line features effective alliteration ("*lening*" and "*lasting*"), "*groundstone*" suggests a kind of milling or grinding implement, as if God stands alongside a tool for crushing and refining plants and stones—unless she intends for it to mean a sort of foundation from which he operates. However, the term "*lening*" connotes a weakness or instability that does not seem appropriate here in this passage on God's complete control over the motions and conditions of the heavens.

Then, as she renders "Hominum solos respuis actus / Merito rector cohibere modo" (Loeb 1m5.26-7), Elizabeth supplies "*Mans workes alone thou dost dispice. / O gidar by right desart from meane to kipe*" (Pemberton I.m5.25-7), the latter line of which Pemberton notes has "No meaning" (n. 14). Yet, this cryptic line could be saying that the "*gidar*" must despise man's works to keep them from experiencing the balanced mean between extremes that they rightfully deserve (and, in the context of this *metrum*, that

characterizes the change and motion inherent in the mutable but balanced course of nature). Nevertheless, the passage is difficult to parse, and its compact structure does not allow room for any elaboration that would clarify or explain its meaning. Similarly, one of the suffering Boethius's arguments against God's self-imposed restraint upon his rule becomes hard to understand since, in her terse rendering, the queen leaves out a key distinction:

Nil periuria, nil nocet ipsis
Fraus mendaci compta colore.
Sed cum libuit viribus uti,
Quos innumeri metuunt populi
Summos gaudent subdere reges.
[Their perjuries hurt them not, nor their deceit,
Decked in false colours ;
And when they please to use their power,
Then they delight to overcome great kings
Whom countless peoples fear.] (Loeb 1m5.37-41)

*fals othe in fraude doth the[m] annoy.
who whan the[y] can use ther forse,
whom many vulgar feare
the mightiest kings the[y] can subdue.* (Pemberton I.m5.36-9, emendations mine)

First of all, the pronouns in this passage are difficult to work with, as Pemberton presents them each time as “thé” but adds a note to the last instance: “A little “y” added at the end, probably put in later” (n.14). However, even if the emendations above are correctly made, Elizabeth's omission of two negations in line 36 causes her version to thereby mischaracterize the wicked and confuse the issue at stake—namely, that the unjust prosper and the innocent suffer, all under the watchful gaze of God. Thus, these who “*can subdue*” (I.m5.39) the most powerful monarchs are somehow bothered by lies and broken promises (“*fals othe in fraude*”) but can still apply their power toward the subjection of the common people.

Book II, meter 3

Although Queen Elizabeth's translation of this *metrum* captures the essential meaning of its content, its approach is more straightforward and less rhetorically challenging than Boethius's. Consequently, it provides the poem's key lesson without the reverse psychology that Lady Philosophy as Fortune may have intended:

Rara si constat sua forma mundo,
Si tantas variat vices,
Crede fortunis hominum caducis,
Bonis crede fugacibus.
[Earth's beauty seldom stays, but ever changes.
Go on, then : trust in the passing fortunes,
The fleeting pleasures of men !] (Loeb 2m3.13-6)

*If rarely stedy be the worldz forme,
If turnes so many hit makes,
Believe slipper mens Luckes,
trust that sliding be ther goodz !* (Pemberton II.m3.13-6)

Thus, basing his conclusion upon two verifiable conditions—the instability and the concomitant variance of the world—the downcast Boethius ought to believe firmly that a man's luck is hard to hold and that his goods will slide right past him.

Elizabeth then concludes the poem by resting upon the secure footing of an eternal law code—one that has somehow become a written document: “Constat aeterna positumque lege est / Ut constet genitum nihil”; “*Certain, and in Eternal Law is writ, / ‘Sure standeth naugh is made’*” (II.m3.17-8). Perhaps her experience with laws and lawmaking draws the queen to this image of a written version of a legal principle; however, such an idea seems to contradict the essence of this decree, which demands that anything made be subject to change—even printed law codes. Elizabeth's imagery here also contrasts markedly with the approach taken throughout the subsequent passages from Book II, which document the transitory nature of all things, even written records. Of course, even if a printed copy of a law is swept up and destroyed by the ravages of change and decay, that does not necessarily mean that the principle the law upholds and

advocates is any less true—especially if the “*Eternal Law*” speaks to the ephemeral nature of all created (and thus mutable) substances.

Book II, prose 7

As Elizabeth I, Queen of England opens this passage on the futility of earthly fame, her translation places much of the responsibility for forgotten men of greatness at the feet of historians: “But how many noble men in their tymes fayling obliuion of writers have dasht ?” (Pemberton II.p7.40-1). Thus, the forgetful, oblivious writers have failed them, and they fade into obscurity, for “what proffites writings ? which *with* the office a long & dark age suppressith ?” (II.p7.41-3). Elizabeth’s rendering of “office” for “auctoribus” may reveal her own preoccupation with the political concerns, as both the office and its occupant’s output are subject to the overwhelming vicissitudes of time.

Then, as she translates Lady Philosophy’s mild rebuke, “Vos vero immortalitatem vobis propagare videmini, cum futuri famam temporis cogitatis” (Loeb 2p7.49-51), Elizabeth presents it directly, offering a terse but balanced version: “But doo yo^u think immortality *with* thought of *comming* tyme ?” (Pemberton II.p7.43-4). Thus, by honing the challenge down to its essential elements, she poses an equation for the suffering Boethius to solve, one that calls into question the apparent equivalence his laments have drawn between immortality and future time, as though the former comes naturally with the latter. Consequently, whereas Boethius’s Lady Philosophy asks her patient to reconsider his assumptions regarding the endurance of even future fame and to be more realistic about the very notion of immortality, Elizabeth’s version simply asks if he has immortality in mind when he imagines the future—the implication being, of course, that such planning is mere fancy. For when immortal fame is measured against eternity, the “Joye of thy lasting name” (II.p7.45) dissipates.

When she transitions, then, to the comparison of finite things, Elizabeth refers to them in a way that suggests she has in mind those things which are not spiritual: “Somtyme so outward thinges ther be, *compar*d among themselves, haue ende” (II.p7.50-

1). Thus, the term “outward” connotes the physical, material, visible, external universe and stands in contrast to its implied opposite—the inward, the spiritual. Whatever then has a measurable, quantifiable existence also has a certain finitude in relation to time and cannot last long enough to approach anything like infinity or immortality, much less eternity. This inward focus connects usefully to the emphasis in the final accusation in this passage, as Lady Philosophy criticizes men in general and the suffering Boethius in particular for being so intensely interested in the praise and report of other people and not so concerned about the inner matters of “conscience & vertue.” Moreover, her phrase “other mens frute” suggests that Boethius and his ilk are accused of having sought out the validation derived from others’ opinions about them and thus of living off of what is produced by others: “For *without* you be ignorant, how rightly to please popular eares & vayne rumors, & leaving care of conscience & vertue, ask rewarde of other mens frute” (II.p7.54-6). In doing so, they have neglected the part of themselves that would allow them to rightfully judge their own behavior, their own consciences and virtues serving as fit guides—if only they would adhere to the dictates of conscience and the standards of virtue without caring about popular trends and values.

Book III, meter 9

Although the first nine lines of the queen’s translation of this central *metrum* are delivered with quite a high degree of literal exactness, her treatment of the union of cold and hot elements draws on and is perhaps overcome by (of all things) a poetic metaphor: “Tu numeris elementa ligas ut frigora flammis / Arida convenient liquidis” (Loeb 3m9.10-1); “*In number thou Elementz ties, as ryming Cold / to melting flames be ioingned . . .*” (Pemberton III.m9.10-1). Elizabeth’s translation here does not account for the phrase about the dry combining with the liquid, but it expands the depiction of fire and ice, where the description of the cold as “*ryming*” could be taken not only as a reference to the accumulation of frost or ice but also perhaps as a play off the “number” image to develop an allusion to prosody. Such a reading would find the two elements not just joined but actually balanced out against one another, holding their compact together like rhymes hold the lines of a stanza firmly in place.

Elizabeth also omits a line when presenting the concluding prayer of the poem:

Da pater augustam menti conscendere sedem,
Da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta
In te conspicuos animi defigere visus.
[Grant, Father, to my mind to rise to your majestic seat,
Grant me to wander by the source of good, grant light to see,
To fix the clear sight of my mind on you.] (Loeb 3m9.22-4)

*Graunt that the mynd, O father ! Clime to thy hiest Seat,
And On thy vew the clirest Sigh[t] may Set.* (Pemberton III.m9.25-6)

Without reference to the font of good or to the light given with which the narrator may behold it, this version presents its request with fewer Platonic overtones. Moreover, Boethius's text seems to suggest that the object of this journey of the mind is a vision of God, a theophany wherein one comes to a divine place to meet and experience the presence of the divine. However, Elizabeth's translation emphasizes instead the necessity of adopting the perspective of God, of reaching the highest seat so that one might see clearly enough to look at things from his viewpoint: "*And On thy vew the clirest Sigh[t] may Set*" (III.m9.26). While this slight twist on the final prayer is perfectly consistent with the later discussion of man's limited epistemological position and of his need to contemplate the nature of the divine knowledge, it shifts the focus away from the immediate object of the supplication—God.

The final lines, though, bring the attention back to the highest object of contemplation:

Tu namque serenum,
Tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,
Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.
[For, to the blessed, *you*
Are clear serenity, and quiet rest: to see *you* is their goal,
And you, alone and same,
Are their beginning, driver, leader, pathway, end.] (Loeb 3m9.26-8)

*Thou art the Cleare and quiet rest for best folke,
The to admire is first last helpe Gide
Pathe and stedy Last.* (Pemberton III.m9.29-31)

Elizabeth's translation here suggests that the actual act of admiring God is the "first" and "last" thing to do (rather than that the person of God himself is the beginning and end of all things). Moreover, she declares the practice of admiring God to be the "helpe" with which and the "Gide" by which one is directed, the "Pathe" along which one travels, and also the reliable ("stedy") and final ("Last") course of action to be taken. Thus, the act of dwelling upon the primacy and preeminence of God becomes the end of man, so that the highest *form* of contemplation is emphasized more so than the highest *object* of contemplation.

Book IV, prose 6

Queen Elizabeth's definition of *providentia* here removes it from the province of the divine mind and makes it a minion or servant of God and his will:

Nam providentia est ipsa illa divina ratio in summo omnium principe
constituta quae cuncta disponit
[for providence is the divine reason itself, established in the highest ruler
of all things, the reason which disposes all things that exist] (Loeb 4p6.32-
3)

For *Providence* is Godes pleasure, appoyntyd by him that all rulith & all
disposith. (Pemberton IV.p6.28-9)

Thus, providence as *divina ratio* becomes providence as divine pleasure, and rather than being a faculty possessed by God or process engaged in by him (reason or reasoning), it is something commissioned by God to bring about the fulfillment of his rule by disposing all things as it pleases him. She expresses this in a similar fashion when explaining the supremacy of providence to fate:

ut haec temporalis ordinis explicatio in divinae mentis adunata prospectum
providentia sit
[so that this unfolding of temporal order being united in the foresight of
the divine mind is providence] (Loeb 4p6.39-40);

that this deviding of temporall order joynd to the diuine pleasure may be
made *Providence* (Pemberton IV.p6.34-6)

The queen's version makes no explicit mention here of the prospective view of God or the foresight of the *divinae mentis*; instead, it characterizes providence as that state wherein the temporal order is in line with what pleases God. Thus, this appears to be not a matter of foresight or of vision from above and beyond the unfolding of events in time, but rather a matter of whether or not those events conform to the wishes of God.

In the subsequent depiction of the concentric circles that illustrate the freedom from or subjection to the courses of fate, Queen Elizabeth makes the point more personal and adds to it a characterization of God that may not be entirely consistent with its immediate context:

ac tanto aliquid fato liberum est quanto illum rerum cardinem vicinius
petit.

[and a thing is the more free from fate the more closely it moves towards
that centre of all things.] (Loeb 4p6.75-6)

And so much the freer is any man from the same, as nearest he doth drawe
to the orderers wheele. (Pemberton IV.p6.67-8)

Elizabeth describes the circles in terms of a "wheele," just as King Alfred happens to do in his translation; however, since this wheel image is not (like Alfred's) fleshed out further as the primary metaphor, it may simply remind readers of Fortune's wheel from Book II. Yet, by depicting God as one who gives and maintains order, she recalls a point made earlier in this same prose section: "For fatall order *proceedith* of Prouidence purenes" (IV.p6.38-9).

As she brings this discourse to a conclusion, Queen Elizabeth alters a few phrases in such a way as to exalt and promote more fully the nature and role of God. Calling the *simplicitas* in the divine mind the "euerlasting purenes of Godes mynde" (IV.p6.82), she chooses a word ("purenes") that might communicate the unmixed nature of his mind more clearly and more admiringly than "simplicity" would. Moreover, her use of "euerlasting" brings in the concept from a preceding passage that asserts the supremacy of providence by comparing it to fate in terms of other, related binary oppositions: "as tyme to Eternity, & Circle is to the middest poynte : so is the order of fate changeable,

compared to the stable purenes of Providence” (IV.p6.72-4). Thus, she is able to assert more effectively and more forcefully that this eternal purity of thought is the best and highest source of order in the universe.

Book IV, meter 6

As Queen Elizabeth translates the central portion of this *metrum* and its depiction of the cause that orders and directs the origins and destinations of all living things, bringing forth life and ushering in death, her rendering characterizes the end of life as particularly quick and perhaps even as arbitrary, impersonal, and petty:

Eadem rapiens condit et aufert
Obitu mergens orta supremo.
[And the same order seizing them, bears and hides them away,
Burying all that was born in its final end.] (Loeb 4m6.32-3)

*The same snatching makes & plucks away
By the last gasp ending Spring.* (Pemberton IV.m6.32-3)

Her use of “*snatching*” nominalizes a verb that connotes anything but rightful and just (re)possession, and her phrase “*plucks away*” likewise depicts the transition from life to death as something directed and perpetrated by one who takes without asking and leaves behind destruction and disappointment. Moreover, the “*last gasp*” described here creates an image of one passing who is unwilling to go, who gives every bit of effort to retain what will eventually be a final breath. Furthermore, Elizabeth’s repeated use of “*Spring*” for beginning could leave the impression that the line speaks of the vernal season coming to an end, whereas she speaks instead of life’s beginning being ended, of birth being swallowed up by death, so that what once had only a beginning and no ending now has a finality from which no beginning will ever spring. The source of life has thus been capped, cut off by the “*snatching*.”

This portrayal of death is echoed again at the end of the poem, as a vision of chaos features the destruction that would ensue if God were to ever remove his hands from the reins that harness the ever-charging universe. Elizabeth’s Lady Philosophy tells

Boethius that the created order “*Disseuerd all from Spring wold faynte*” (IV.m6.43), relying once more on “*Spring*” to convey an image of a life-giving source, of a place of origin. In fact, the idea that the order “*wold faynte*” apart from this “*Spring*” calls to mind an actual fountain that provides refreshing, life-saving water. Then, as she concludes her version of the *metrum*, the queen draws upon the material already presented in the poem, depicting the Prime Mover as the one to whom all things in motion must return, “*Back to the cause them made bend*” (IV.m6.48). Rather than referring to what caused being, Elizabeth speaks of what caused bending—calling attention to the mutability of all created things and to the courses along which they were directed by the First Cause.

Book V, meter 2

When explaining how nothing keeps the “*framar*” (Pemberton V.m2.5) of the world from seeing all things at once, Elizabeth’s translation mixes metaphors and creates conflicting images:

Huic ex alto cuncta tuenti
 Nulla terrae mole resistunt,
 Non nox atris nubibus obstat.
 [Him, viewing all things from his height,
 No mass of earth obstructs,
 No night with black clouds thwarts.] (Loeb 5m2.8-10)

*Gainst him that al from hy doth view
 No waight of erthe may resist,
 Not night with darkist Clouds Ganesays.* (Pemberton V.m2.6-8)

Her combination of “*Gainst him*,” “*waight*,” and “*resist*” suggests that God is strong enough to withstand the force of a heavy earth, rather than that his vision is non-directional and thus not blocked by any mass of soil or rock. Moreover, the queen’s depiction of a night whose darkest clouds are incapable of gainsaying God seems to ask too much of a term that connotes a kind of opposition that manifests itself in argumentation and verbal disputation rather than in confrontation and physical resistance.

Book V, prose 6

As Elizabeth translates this dense and complex passage on eternity, foreknowledge, and necessity, her management of pronouns and her syntactical arrangements sometimes result in renderings that do not always accurately reproduce the original on a word to word or phrase to phrase basis. However, some such examples demonstrate how she has made the text her own without altering its essential meaning. Her explanation of something that does not possess the fullness of eternity becomes personal, as the general statements about a thing become the particular claims of a person who relates these concepts to fellow humans:

Non enim totum simul infinitae licet vitae spatium comprehendit atque complectitur, sed futura nondum, transacta iam non habet.

[For it does not simultaneously comprehend and embrace the whole space of its life, though it be infinite, but it possesses the future not yet, the past no longer.] (Loeb 5p6.22-5)

For albeit he could at once *comprehend* wel the whole *compasse* of our lyfe, yet that that shall & hath not yet chaunced, can he *neuer* attayne. (Pemberton V.p6.21-3)

What in the original is a discussion of the earth as Aristotle understood it to be (and as Lady Philosophy now asserts it to be) becomes a reflection upon a “he” who can possess the whole of “our lyfe” but cannot possess the future, suggesting that the queen has transitioned to a consideration of how these ideas are related to man and his ability to comprehend and in fact possess some aspect of eternity.

Elizabeth does the same thing in a passage that follows, taking a discussion of what Plato said about the world and altering it into a reflection upon “*our wholle lyfe*”:

Aliud est enim per interminabilem duei vitam, quod mundo Plato tribuit, aliud interminabilis vitae totam pariter complexum esse praesentiam, quod divinae mentis proprium esse manifestum est.

[For it is one thing to be drawn out through a life without bounds, which is what Plato attributes to the world, but it is a different thing to have embraced at once the whole presence of boundless life, which it is clear is the property of the divine mind.] (Loeb 5p6.35-8)

For it is an other thing that Plato meanes to attribute to the world, meaning of a lyfe that might guide him to be eternall. And other thing it is that *our* wholle lyfe *present* should *comprehend* the *presence* of the vnending lyfe, *which* is manifest to be the *property* of *Godes* mynde. (Pemberton V.p6.32-7)

In addition, her reference to “a lyfe that might guide him to be eternall” indicates that the discussion of the degree to which the world possesses some measure of eternity has become (because of the syntactical arrangement) a consideration of the measure possessed by either Plato or the world—depending on how one interprets the antecedent of “him” here. Elizabeth clearly personalizes the last portion of this passage, though, dwelling on how “*our* wholle lyfe” may understand and possess the infinite life that God’s mind rightfully possesses.

In a passage that attempts to summarize the points covered so far, Elizabeth presents a translation that seems to get it exactly backwards:

Quoniam igitur omne iudicium secundum sui naturam quae sibi subiecta sunt comprehendit, est autem deo semper aeternus ac praesentarius status [Since then every judgement comprehends those things subject to it according to its own nature, and God has an always eternal and present nature] (Loeb 5p6.59-61)

Because therefore all judgement *comprehendith* according to the nature of such thinges to *which* he is subiecte, to God therefore all is eternall, and a lyke is *euer* his state (Pemberton V.p6.56-9)

Boethius’s text posits that the knower knows according to his or her own nature and knowledge, not according to the nature and knowledge of those people or things which are being known; however, the queen’s version asserts that the mind judges according to the nature of those things to which it is subject. In other words, since God is subject to no one, his judgment comprehends without limits and is thus formed from an eternal perspective. However, although the phrase “to God therefore all is eternall” appears to mean that he views all things from the vantage point of eternity, it could be (mis)construed as suggesting that all things possess an eternal nature, when the point here is obviously meant to be the opposite—that God alone possesses a nature that allows for

an eternal perspective. Yet, the rest of this passage proceeds as if the point were well made, suggesting, then, that all things subject to God are known by him by virtue of his eternal nature.

Likewise, when the queen translates the passage that explains the difference between simple and conditional necessity and that then applies this distinction to God's knowledge of events in the universe beneath his providential oversight, she actually fails to present it as a distinction:

cum exstaturum quid esse cognoscit quod idem existendi necessitate carere non nesciat.

[when he knows that something is going to happen, something which he is also aware lacks all necessity of happening.] (Loeb 5p6.93-4)

when he knowes any thing that shall be, then he is sure that of necessity it must be. (Pemberton V.p6.88-9)

Her version, then, does not assert that some of what God knows does not necessarily have to happen as it does, that he can know things will happen without causing them to happen. Consequently, this rendering merely reinforces the idea of simple necessity, whereby something must happen because God has designed it to happen that way; however, it could also be seen as setting up a point made a few lines later—"if thou knowest a man doth walke, it must needes follow that he goes" (V.p6.99-100). Thus, it seems to anticipate such a point without actually making it clearly, without ever saying explicitly that not everything God sees from his eternally present perspective is bound to happen in exactly the way that it comes to pass.

Queen Elizabeth's final statement in her translation of the *Consolation* is truncated here in Pemberton's edition, an ellipsis indicating that a portion of the manuscript has been subject to the kind of decay spoken of in Book II, prose 7. However, the text that remains legible demonstrates how the queen has expanded upon the image of a judge:

Magna vobis est, si dissimulare non vultis, necessitas indicta probitatis,
cum ante oculos agitis iudicis cuncta cernentis.

[A great necessity is solemnly ordained for you if you do not want to deceive yourselves, to do good, when you act before the eyes of a judge who sees all things.] (Loeb 5p6.174-6)

For yo^u . . . necessitie, yf you will not *your* self beguyle, when yo^u doo plead afore the eyes of that iudge that all discernes (Pemberton V.p6.162-4)

Thus, Elizabeth's Boethius is reminded that he does not simply act beneath the sight of an all-seeing judge, but that he is actually on trial at the moment, pleading his case before one who knows all the evidence at hand. The queen's image here contributes to what is perhaps a slightly more challenging exhortation than what is found in her source, as God hears the case now (in his eternal present) and not in some distant future time.

Queen Elizabeth I's Translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

While the queen may have in fact received comfort from Boethius at various times for multiple reasons, the haste which she allegedly rendered the *Consolation* suggests that the process itself may have been some kind of personal challenge rather than some sort of personal catharsis. Elizabeth's translation was apparently not undertaken, then, as an overtly political project with concrete potential for public display and dissemination, but rather as a private exercise for the educated queen interested in and knowledgeable of Boethius's work. Her work is not particularly ambitious, politically or intellectually, existing in its original form as a single manuscript, a good deal of which having been recorded by Elizabeth herself. In fact, the manuscript evidence suggests that her greatest interest was in the biographical portions at the beginning of the text and in the *metra*, most of which are in her own hand. Indeed, Elizabeth's version of Boethius's *Consolation*, coming along as it does some 700 years after the translation project that resulted in King Alfred's *Boethius*, stands as evidence that the queen did not have the same literary, educational, and cultural goals in mind. Moreover, even as one

admits that it has not been received well by critics, scholars, or students of her reign and influence, one wonders if it had been meant to be received by anyone at all.

However, while not everyone agrees on the quality of the queen's translation, most have not found it a particularly impressive literary achievement, scholars often excusing Elizabeth's performance by emphasizing the almost reckless pace at which she completed the project or the likely constraints upon its production. Since she apparently did not intend for this translation to reach the public, the queen's efforts are not supplemented with repetitive parenthetical interpolations or marginal notes (though Pemberton provides such extratextual annotations in her edition). The translation style encouraged by Roger Ascham would have required a somewhat mechanical reproduction, even at the expense of poetic expression. Indeed, while much of her translation is quite literal and straightforward, it often tends toward terse and dense, so compact, in fact, that certain passages defy interpretation. Her spare text does not expand upon the original or elaborate extensively; indeed, the verse lines in particular are often so compact that such clarification is not possible. Sometimes her affinity for terse and unadorned translations results in abstruse phrasings and impenetrable idioms, and at other times, her literal lines lack poetic depth and design. Occasionally, her rendering seems to emerge entirely from her own invention, as she arrives at constructions that differ completely from what is believed to have been in her source.

At times, the queen's influence upon the content and meaning of a given passage results in an almost unorthodox characterization of God and his work in the universe. Sometimes, however, her presentation of Boethius's *Consolation* delivers viewpoints that are not entirely consistent with what he advocates in the text, though not always with unfortunate results. In fact, her depictions of God present a more personally engaged ruler of the universe, one who orchestrates everything not only in an orderly fashion but also in a way that makes him happy and accomplishes his will. Her management of pronouns and her syntactical arrangements sometimes result in renderings that do not always accurately reproduce the original on a word to word or phrase to phrase basis, and yet such examples demonstrate how she has made the text her own without altering its

essential meaning. Thus, while the weaknesses of Queen Elizabeth I's translation are many, they are not necessarily substantial, for they appear consistent with what one would expect from a text that is reported to have been produced in a matter of days. Moreover, these flaws do not seem to have compromised the essential qualities of Boethian *Consolation*. Indeed, though some of her renderings are not entirely comprehensible or easily explained, the most fundamental aspects of Lady Philosophy's arguments are intact, especially her case for the supremacy of the divine mind and of God's providential ordering of the universe from his unique, eternal perspective.

CONCLUSION

De Consolatione Philosophiæ in Old, Middle, and Early Modern English

Of these Old, Middle, and Early Modern English translations, Elizabeth's has perhaps been judged the most harshly, even though her rendering appears to have been undertaken without the same kinds of spiritual, pedagogical, and literary aims that variously shaped the versions by Alfred, Chaucer, Walton, and Colville, each of whom presented Boethius's text to an audience that could then be instructed or even inspired by *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Aesthetically, the queen's version does not measure up to these others, but perhaps the comparison is unfair, since these other renderings more consistently reflect the expectations and demands of their particular projects, while her translation may not have been intended for such wide distribution but rather for personal, intellectual, or devotional purposes. However, all of these versions could be (and have been) criticized for disappointing those who require a strictly literal translation that can also be regarded as fine literature, overlooking the essential question, then, of what is required of a translation of Boethius's text. It seems as though all but Alfred and Elizabeth have been held in suspicion for not having rendered *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* as a prosimetrum. However, when Alfred's prose-and-verse translation has not been ignored altogether, its meters have often been judged either as having been falsely attributed to the king or as unworthy of him even if he had participated in their creation, and when Elizabeth I's translation has received attention, its terse style has often been criticized for having resulted in impenetrable sentences and uninspired verses. It may be useful, then, to focus instead upon what each of these translators was able to accomplish even with what may be considered the limitations of their respective approaches.

As the translations of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* examined here have transmitted Boethius's text, they have done so according to the particular goals, interests, preferences, motivations, constraints, and literary and linguistic forms that have

influenced their creation. For example, while King Alfred the Great and Queen Elizabeth I were both English monarchs when they produced their translations, their versions are very different, separated not only by time and the centuries of cultural and political change between them but also by the kind of project that each of them undertook. The king's educational program for a nation struggling with literacy and learning varies significantly from the apparently private exercise of speed translation to which the queen dedicated herself. Moreover, the two completely different versions attributed to Alfred speak at least to the comprehensive treatment that his project gave to the translation of what was obviously considered one of the most important texts of its day, if not also to how such a text was appropriated and transformed into the literary forms and style of the king's Anglo-Saxon culture. On the other hand, Elizabeth's single manuscript of an unpublished and undistributed text seems evidence that she did not feel particularly moved to direct the educational interests and pursuits of her people with her translation of Boethius's *Consolation*. In addition, although they both rendered the text as a prosimetrum, the king's expansive, appositive style, especially when engaged in an effort to elaborate upon and explain Boethius's text from an explicitly Christian perspective, has yielded a translation that is considerably longer and more expressly didactic than its source, whereas the queen's terse, literal style, engaged without overt pedagogical, political, or literary ambitions, has yielded a version that often struggles to communicate the essence of its source, much less offer any further commentary or explanation.

Since it survives in both a prosimetric and an all-prose version, King Alfred's *Boethius* shares characteristics not only with the prose translations by Geoffrey Chaucer and George Colville, but also with the all-verse rendering by John Walton. All of these versions emerged from a Christian context and were all produced in view of some measure of pedagogical interest and purpose, but they are also related in terms of structure and form. Alfred, Chaucer, and Colville all presented the *Consolation* entirely in prose, and although Walton transformed the prosimetrum into verse, in doing so he ventured, like Alfred, to render the Boethian *metra* in poetic form. Lacking a preface that may have specified Chaucer's aims and expectations in producing it, the *Boece* is not presented with explicit literary designs, moral purposes, or spiritual applications, its fairly

literal and often didactic prose apparently intended primarily to present a clear and unambiguous account of the text and its meaning and only occasionally offering particularly Christian allusions, references, or explanations. On the other hand, the prose translations by Alfred and Colville and the all-verse version by Walton routinely comment upon and encourage consideration of explicitly religious and moral applications of the text. The spiritual, historical, and philosophical learning program initiated by the king places his *Boethius* within that educational context, whereas the prefatory materials for and dedicatory stanzas of the versions by Colville and Walton, respectively, didactically promote the moral and spiritual implications of the text. Moreover, while Walton's was commissioned by Elizabeth Berkeley and Colville's was dedicated to Queen Mary, those by Alfred, Chaucer, and Elizabeth I were apparently undertaken independently, though the king's should perhaps be seen in the context of its having been produced as a part of his larger project, just as Chaucer's ought to be viewed in the context of his quite Boethian corpus. Those that were made to order, then, were crafted under the particular constraints of the arrangement agreed upon, or perhaps with certain goals in mind, Walton's, for example, having been written for Elizabeth Berkeley but with a larger audience in view—one full of lords, ladies, and clerks.

Other connections between the texts pertain, then, to the method by which they were made available and the degree to which they were accessible to the public. Although the king's translations were part of a public education program, the two surviving manuscripts do not yield much evidence of its dissemination; likewise, Queen Elizabeth's version exists in only the single manuscript, and no evidence exists that points to its circulation or promotion anywhere beyond her own rooms. Chaucer's, Walton's, and Colville's, however, undertaken with more explicit intentions to produce them for public consumption, were copied multiple times and also published for distribution. Caxton's printing of Chaucer's translation in 1478 and Thomas Rychard's printing of Walton's in 1525 demonstrate not only the perceived demand for and interest in English versions of the *Consolation* but also the enduring reputation of these particular efforts, published so long after the deaths of the authors. For since both Caxton and Rychard edited the texts they printed, the work and expense of such ventures suggest that

these printers considered the translations both important and profitable. Moreover, Rychard often emended Walton's text, Caxton routinely altered Chaucer's translation, and Colville tended to rephrase what he borrowed from the *Boece*, each one bringing the text they worked with into the language and idiom of his day—in effect, using the *Boece* in ways not entirely dissimilar from how Chaucer himself relied upon Jean de Meun's prose version in French, borrowing and adapting as necessary when a source other than the Latin helped bring the *Consolation* into contemporary English.

Furthermore, that the Tavistock Abbey took up Walton's work and produced it on a large scale shows how compatible Chaplain John Walton's rendering of Boethian consolation was not only with Rychard's own particular interests and ideals but also with those of his religious order. Colville's 1556 and 1561 printings, coming as they did with notes and a Latin text for students and scholars, suggest how receptive his contemporaries may have been to his project, especially as it is presented as a translation of an orthodox Catholic author's work for the purpose of cultivating godly living and sharing in eternal felicity. In addition, the copying of Chaucer's work made it available to Walton, while the printing of it made it available to Colville, both translators relying to one degree or another upon the *Boece* as they worked also with commentary materials and the Latin text. However, both Walton and Colville were able to achieve something entirely their own in their respective versions, Walton obviously showcasing his poetic craft with his verse translation and Colville carefully supplementing whatever he borrowed with his own explanations, annotations, and characterizations of the Boethian source material. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Queen Elizabeth consulted any of the English translations as she worked in virtual isolation on her version, and the apparently private nature of her project and the relative obscurity in which it has remained even after the 1899 edition by Pemberton have kept her rendering from having any influence over subsequent efforts to translate the *Consolation*.

The Boethian Vision of Eternity in Translation

Given the diverse forms of attention and interest that these English translations of the *Consolation* have received since the time of King Alfred, one wonders what the attraction has been—that is, what it is that has proven consolatory in Boethius’s philosophy, meeting as it apparently has the needs of so many different kinds of people in so many different contexts.⁵⁷ What comforts has his most famous and well-regarded work afforded its long list of readers? The widespread popularity of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, not only in English but also in French, German, Italian, and other vernacular languages, and not only in the Medieval and Renaissance periods but also in the centuries that followed, suggests that something in the text has resonated with those who have taken it up. Ironically, though, Boethius’s greatest literary and philosophical achievement features arguments asserting the futility of earthly fame and the near impossibility of being known outside one’s own nation, culture, language, and people—not anticipating, perhaps, the vast and diverse audiences from various times and places who would come to know his *Consolation* in their vernaculars. Whether such readers have been able to relate to Boethius’s downcast state or have been able to identify with his recovering character, whether they have turned to Boethius’s text out of philosophical agreement, personal devotion, educational interest, or some combination of these motivations, many have been led to ask some of the same questions and have worked through, then, many of the same answers. The dialogic, instructive nature of Boethius’s *Consolation* has brought its interested and even sympathetic readers along on the journey toward deeper knowledge and greater comfort. For many of Boethius’s readers and translators have sympathized not only with his devastating downfall and with the demoralizing upheaval that he endured, but also with the inner disputations and conflicts that brought about the consolation of philosophy. Indeed, they have been drawn along the ascent with Lady Philosophy, beyond the pleasures of the senses, the fancies of the imagination, the calculations of reason, and the perceptions of intelligence, into the highest heaven, from which the eternal divine mind moves all that is mutable and where the path of growing and becoming culminates in the simplicity and unity of being.

⁵⁷ See the Appendix, which provides an overview of translations from 1602 to 2001.

For even though the text has been understood, accepted, and appropriated in such divergent ways over the centuries, one key element of Boethius's *Consolation* has held its philosophical stances together and undergirded all of its most pivotal arguments, without disturbing or compromising the philosophical, secular, academic, or religious approaches to the work, as readers from across the ideological, theological, doctrinal, and political spectra have appreciated and endorsed its nature and its implications—namely, divine eternity. As different as the translations are, they all render the consolation of eternity as they bring *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* into English. For instance, even though Alfred omits, alters, and expands throughout both the prosimetric and all-prose versions, he establishes clearly the nature of the highest eternity, and even though Elizabeth misreads, compresses, and contracts throughout, she makes a case for the supremacy of the divine mind and of God's providential ordering of the universe from his unique, eternal perspective. Moreover, although King Alfred does so to a greater extent and with more of an emphasis on the character and personality of the divine mind, he and Queen Elizabeth both depict a transcendent God—Alfred portraying one who is not only eternal, immutable, and eminently good, but also wonderful, kind, holy, and powerful, sustaining the universe as its true lord, chief, king, and father, and Elizabeth portraying an eternal ruler who personally orchestrates the cosmos and is pleased to work his will within it. Alfred's more extended and detailed depiction of God comes not only from his own particular interests in characterizing the divine in explicitly Christian terms for his kingdom, but also from the literary style employed in his translation, especially in the poetic portions of the prosimetrum, where he repeatedly exalts the great power, attractive personality, and unique eternity possessed by God.

Chaucer's presentation of the Boethian vision of eternity in the *Boece* conforms to his didactic designs, since the glosses, annotations, and parenthetical explanations that appear throughout his prose translation demonstrate the degree to which he was apparently committed to a straightforward account of Boethius's text, one that arrived as closely as possible to the meaning of its consolation. For although Chaucer's numerous doublets and repetitive phrases occasionally alter the *Consolation*'s depiction of the nature of the divine mind, his efforts tend to emphasize the great power and immutable

presence of an eternal God—characterizations that are perfectly consistent with Boethius’s presentation of the highest intelligence. Thus, his didacticism often reinforces and promotes the kinds of lessons his source was apparently intended to teach. Likewise, Walton’s verse version and Colville’s prose rendering, influenced as they are by Chaucer’s text, also aim for clarity and comprehension, filling out the lines of stanzas (Walton) and filling up the margins of a dual-language edition (Colville) so that readers receive an instructive translation of the *Consolation*. Walton’s prefatory and dedicatory stanzas make it clear that he approaches his translation project as a spiritual one, praying for inspiration and committing himself to Christ. His translation proper, however, approaches the effort with similar piety but with greater subtlety, routinely clarifying and expanding upon what he apparently considered relatively generic references to God—often commenting upon his nature and status as the eternal, sovereign power in the universe. Similarly, Colville’s pedagogical interests tend toward the doctrinal, as he aims to exhort as much as to educate, explaining and defining divine eternity in ways that urge his audience not only up from the mutable and transitory world of the senses and into the purity and unchanging stability of the divine mind, but also away from worldliness and into godliness, even toward a personal encounter with God himself in heaven.

Thus, it is the Boethian vision of eternity that has been cast so consistently and so faithfully throughout the many years during which *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* has been translated into English, regardless of form and irrespective of situation or background. Whether in prose and verse, all-prose, or all-verse, and whether by a devout churchman, a layman, a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jesuit, a king, a queen, an author, a scholar, a political prisoner, a religious zealot, or a secular enthusiast, each translation has presented the text’s central narrative: the character Boethius is educated by the figure of Lady Philosophy, as his eyes are turned away from the earth and into the heavens, moving him and his mind from confusion to clarity, from forgetfulness to remembrance, from reason to intelligence, and thus from time to eternity. Indeed, all of these renderings testify that the consolation comes only insofar as he is able to understand, appreciate, and accept knowledge of the divine mind, which alone operates from eternity. From such a promontory, ambition for earthly fame and popular report, jealousy at the apparent

prosperity of the unjust, despondency at the mutability of fickle fortune, fatalism in the face of overwhelming circumstances, despair that necessity and foreknowledge are incompatible and that free will is an illusion—all of these concerns are placed in proper perspective as Boethius the character makes the journey from sensing, thinking, and imagining to knowing something of divine eternity.

**APPENDIX. MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS
OF *DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ***

Translations of Boethius

Boethius's translators have been motivated in their work by a variety of educational, religious, political, personal, and literary impulses. A few (e.g., Coningsby, Lord Viscount Preston) rendered Boethius's treatise into English so that those suffering under tyranny and injustice might find some kind of relief, these writers—having actually endured personal hardship and loss—seeking to find and to share whatever reassuring consolation the text could bring. Such translators seem to have taken up Boethius's *Consolation* because they too had experienced hardship at the hands of political enemies and had personally benefited from its message to those who have suffered great loss, mistreatment, and injustice. Each of these efforts to bring the *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* into English was undertaken with an appreciation for and an identification with the struggles of the fallen Boethius, as the translators—to one degree or another—found the kind of comfort that their author had once experienced while working out the original in Latin. In addition, translators wishing to sharpen their literary craft found an ideal scenario for such development as they penned the entirety of Boethius's prosimetric work in English verse. Turning the entire work into verse, John Walton (1410), John Bracegirdle (1602), and Sir Harry Coningsby (1664) have ventured to do what many before and after them have declined to do, each poet thus assuming the role of mediator with an unusual level of subjectivity—though not all with the same sense of literary ambition. These versifiers, as much as, or perhaps even more than, any of the true believers (e.g., Colville) or genuine sufferers (e.g., Preston), have made the rendering of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* a personal literary project. Whatever artistic motivations some of these translators may have had, however, many of these literary efforts were often also shaped by economic concerns: Walton (1410), Colville (1556), Bracegirdle (1602), I.T. (1609), Causton (1730), and Ridpath (1785) all dedicate their versions to a patron.

Moreover, with the rise of large publishing houses catering to colleges and private booksellers, some versions have been mass-marketed, re-packaged, and re-printed to serve economic as well as academic purposes. In addition, one could also argue that many of the scholarly editions of and critical essays on Boethius and his *Consolation* have also been produced in part out of professional interests, as graduate students and professors have sought teaching positions, research fellowships, tenure, rank advancement, promotions, invitations to present, and grant funding. Some of Boethius's translators (e.g., Colville, Duncan) mediated the text as a means of instruction, allowing those illiterate in Latin to be schooled by *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. Such students of the *Consolation* have taken up their task for the purpose of spreading knowledge of his work among the masses, stating explicitly that they have turned the text into English so that those who have not known Boethius may be educated. Likewise, the Dover (Green, 1962, 2002), Penguin (Watts, 1969, 1999), Loeb Classical Library (Tester, 1973), and Oxford (Walsh, 1999, 2000) editions are primarily intended to give students access to ancient texts, as are the modern English translations of Alfred's work. These modern editions of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* tend to expect that readers will find the volume fit for study, and that this culturally significant text would otherwise be inaccessible to such audiences. However, not all of these efforts were born of the same kind of pedagogical impulse that moved someone like Colville, who hoped "to instructe the ignoraunt vnlearned people with the holesome doctryne of Philosophie, or wysedome, that is conteyned in this boke" (9). Such missionary zeal apparently did not motivate those who planned for their work to keep schoolboys busy.

However, many early editions of the *Consolation* appear to have been undertaken not only for various academic purposes, but also for the moral and religious applications of Boethius's philosophy. Some translators (e.g., Elys, Causton), viewing the *Consolation* as a work of both philosophy and theology, offered their translations as a way to encourage and exhort those struggling to believe in the God of Boethius's universe. Historically, the majority of the early translators have been both mediators and advocates, believing that Boethius had been right about the world and its transitory nature, that human happiness could only be found within the eternity of God's goodness. Therefore,

such writers have turned Latin into English for those who otherwise would not have known the remedies of Philosophy's consolation, actively promoting the Boethian positions as they have introduced, interpreted, translated, and annotated them. These translators have attempted to clarify and explain the *Consolation* within their lines of prose and/or verse, not only in view of various scholarly goals or standards, but also as a means of presenting Boethius's work as a viable philosophy to be followed. Of course, some translators have identified with Boethius himself, or at least with the positions staked out in his philosophy. In addition, this belief in and identification with Boethian concepts has usually accompanied faith not only in the trustworthiness of the autobiographical material surrounding and within the *Consolation*, but also therefore in the orthodoxy and righteousness of its author's cause. Most of these sympathetic translations, for instance, contain some sort of biographical-hagiographical review of Boethius, his family, his career, and his eventual imprisonment and death, presenting him as a martyr persecuted by the Arian Theodoric, rather than as an active participant in or an innocent victim of some political intrigue.

While some of the *Consolation*'s translators have defended Boethius against challenges to his orthodoxy and others have openly praised his virtuous life and honorable martyrdom, scholars from the close of the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth have tended to focus instead on his great literary achievement and its historical significance. For example, in his *Founders of the Middle Ages* (1928), E.K. Rand reflects on the *Consolation*'s influence and suggests that the period in which the text held great philosophical and intellectual currency has passed: “[o]nce upon a time, Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* was one of the hundred best books—one of those books that no educated man left unread. That was still the case in the eighteenth century, and had been so since the Middle Ages, in which period his influence was sovereign” (136). Thus, these most recent efforts to bring *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* into English illustrate how traditional expressions of faith in Boethius and in his philosophy have generally given way to modern interests in scholarship on the author and on the importance and meaning of his most famous work. This shift developed not only with the ascendancy of the Copernican model of the universe, with the Neoclassical period's emphasis on reason,

and with the Enlightenment era's scientific determinism, but also with the growth in and expansions of educational institutions and publishing houses. Students of medieval and renaissance philosophy, history, and literature have needed to study Boethius's *Consolation*, not necessarily for moral education or spiritual instruction, but for scholarly advancement.

Picking up the *Consolation* after years of relative neglect, these nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century translators are even further removed from the period when Boethian thought held prominence as a cosmologically and scientifically sound explanation of the universe. These writers are located instead in a position where the *Consolation* looms as an important and influential philosophical compilation that students of Latin, Philosophy, Literature, and the Middle Ages should know. As Henry Chadwick explains in *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*, man's understanding of the mutable material universe has changed dramatically since 6th-century Italy, especially since the demise of the Ptolemaic system:

Since the Renaissance, and especially since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century altered our understanding of the nature and structure of our environment, Boethius has come to seem a rather lonely and forgotten foreigner in a world grown strange. (223)

Ironically, the problems of incomplete knowledge and imperfect epistemology that Boethius documents in such detail in his *Consolation* have over the years become difficulties for his own work. Thus, a text founded upon the Ptolemaic system finds fewer and fewer adherents, and whatever appreciation the academy now has for such a source is shaped more by the work's historical significance than by its philosophical currency.

Consider also Helen Barrett's *Boethius: Some Aspects of His Times and Work* (1965), which is prefaced with a statement of the author's motivation(s):

This study has been written as an attempt to rescue Boethius from being generally forgotten. It seems to me that because of the circumstances of his life and death he is too interesting and because of the influence of what he wrote too significant to be known only by the few. (vii)

Even here, however, the emphasis is upon the tragic course of Boethius's final days and upon the impact that his writings have had upon subsequent generations, not necessarily upon potential contemporary applications of his ideas. In 1984, the National Endowment for the Humanities issued its *Resource Book for the Teaching of Medieval Civilization*, in which Karin Youngberg's "Reclaiming Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*" laments that "Boethius is presently in danger of being lost in the modern college curriculum precisely because he belongs in so many places and yet really has a home nowhere" (232). Youngberg suggests, then, various approaches for including the *Consolation* in teaching and learning across a range of disciplines within the university. She would likely be encouraged by the many editions, articles, and books that have been published since the mid-1980s, all indicative of a resurgence of attention being paid to Boethius and his most influential text.

The increasingly important work done around the text—in scholarly introductions, in textual and explanatory notes, and in published essays and monographs—has occasioned new versions. Helping interested readers understand the ideas and the history of the ideas at stake in Boethius's prosimetric treatise has become the focus and the aim, but not because the philosophy itself is being championed or promulgated. Instead, the twentieth-century scholarly versions by Green, Watts, Tester, and Walsh offer students and the general reading public translations of this essential piece of intellectual history that, in the words of H.R. James, "ought not to be forgotten" (vi). When, at the close of the nineteenth century, James assumed that his work would preserve Boethius for the next century, he apparently had not considered the future of college education in the English-speaking world, nor the growth of publishing houses that would allow the *Consolation* so many ways in which to be read and remembered.

17th-Century Translations

John Bracegirdle's Verse Translation (1602)

Before it was edited in 1999 by Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr., Bracegirdle's all-verse translation from 1602 existed only in a single extant manuscript, BL Additional 11401. Subtitled "*The Mindes Medicine or the Phisicke of Philosophie, contained in five bookes, called the Consolation of Philosophie, compiled by Anicius, Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius, in the Time of His Exile and Proscription,*" this version is dedicated to Thomas Sackville, an occasional poet and a royal diplomat for Queen Elizabeth. In this poetical rendering, Bracegirdle turns the prose portions of the *Consolation* into blank verse translations and the metrical portions into a wide variety of verse forms: "among the work's thirty-nine meters are twenty-seven distinct stanzaic and metrical variations, and the most common stanza, the sestet, appears in seven different forms" (Kaylor 5). In his dedication to Sackville, however, the poet defends himself against critics of his work: "Yf any object, I ought not imploye myself so much in *Philosophie*, [and] *Poetrie*: I answere this booke contayneth excellent grounds of Divinitie. But I write this privately, to signifie my obedience [and] thanckfullnes, not to satisfie y^e Curious" (18). Here he distinguishes between the ideas and the form into which he is casting them, even as he defends his occupation with such arts. Signing off on this dedication page as a "Bachelor of Divinity," Bracegirdle apparently does not wish to be seen as encroaching upon the territory of philosophers and poets and would rather keep his version of the "*Divine Boecius*" between himself and his patron.

Bracegirdle crafted this personal gift to his benefactor out of both "obedience [and] thanckfullnes" (18) probably because he had served as a priest and rector until Sackville helped him become vicar of Rye in 1602. He may have even been influenced by the poetic achievements of Sackville himself, for Bracegirdle's rendering of the central *metrum* in Book III, meter 9 follows the *rime royal* scheme. While this form had been used by Chaucer for his *Troilus and Criseyde*, by Walton for Books IV and V in his

version, and by King James I of Scotland for his Boethian *The Kingis Quair*,⁵⁸ it was also employed in “The Induction,” a poem contributed to *Mirror for Magistrates* by this same Thomas Sackville, earl of Dorset.⁵⁹ Whatever its influences and achievements in regard to prosody, however, Bracegirdle’s verse translation is delivered not as a debut by a professional poet but as a personal tribute to a patron. It has lived up to this description by the author, existing in a unique manuscript and edited for the first time in 1999 by Noel Kaylor.

Bracegirdle makes a clear distinction between those stanzas that are verse translations of prose and those that are verse translations of poetry, using blank verse for the renderings of the prose sections and a variety of other metrical forms for the renderings of the poems. The unique manuscript testifies to this separation between the two components of his translation: Noel Kaylor notes in his edition of the text that one scribe penned the blank verse translations and another wrote the other verse forms in italics (3). Another feature of the manuscript’s layout suggests that Bracegirdle and/or the scribes considered the verse translations of the *metra* to be of special importance, as these portions are not usually interrupted by a page break. Furthermore, when a new recto or verso must begin in the middle of a poem, the division comes at the end of a stanza or after a couplet—the only exception being at Book II, meter 8, where it falls in the center of a sestet (this also happens to be the only location where, for some reason, a new book does not begin on its own fresh page). While the verse translations of the prose portions of the *Consolation* are routinely and unavoidably broken by the start of a new page, it appears that particular care was taken to ensure that the translations of the *metra* were displayed prominently.

Bracegirdle’s versification of the entire *Consolation* caught the attention of one reader, whose note was affixed to the manuscript: “The interest and curiosity of the

⁵⁸ For more on *The Kingis Quair*, see the following: Vincent Carretta, “*The Kingis Quair* and *The Consolation of Philosophy*”; Lois A. Ebin, “Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*”; Karin E. C. Foug, “Placing Earth at the Center of the Cosmos: *The Kingis Quair* as Boethian Revision.”

⁵⁹ See Thomas Sackville, “The Mirror for Magistrates: The Induction.” *Representative Poetry Online*. Ed. Ian Lancashire, Department of English, University of Toronto. 2005. 12 Dec. 2006. <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/1786.html>

manuscript consists in the whole of the prose of Boethius being rendered into blank verse, exhibiting the longest specimen of that kind then existing in the English language The performance is evidently that of a poet of no mean ability, and is done with great spirit and easy flow of versification” (qtd. in Kaylor 5). However, as Houghton cites a verse version of a prose passage as an example of Bracegirdle’s ability to render the meaning without significant omissions or insertions, he notes that even though it exhibits “the same lack of poetic feeling that is apparent in the metres, the rendering of the prose has been in genral satisfactorily accomplished. Had Bracegirdle only been content to translate the metres into simple verse forms, his would have been on the whole, a dull but acceptable version” (48). Thus, though Houghton finds the verse renderings of the prose passages uninteresting but serviceable, he feels that Bracegirdle’s apparent experimentation with poetic forms has hampered the project’s literary achievement. He concludes his remarks on this translation by noting that it “can be of interest only to students of Boethius, not to lovers of poetry” (49). Perhaps the variety of his verse forms does suggest that Bracegirdle had attempted to demonstrate his mastery of poetic form, for even though he describes his version as having been written “privately” (18), Bracegirdle’s use of blank verse for his translations of the *Consolation*’s prose sections and his display of dozens of different metrical patterns for his poetic renderings of the *metra* indicate that the bachelor of divinity, for all his humble interest in privacy, may have been indulging in and pushing the boundaries of his literary art.

I.T.’s Prosimetric Translation (1609)

Dedicated “TO THE MOST vertuous Lady, the Countesse of Dorset, Dowager” (the widow of Thomas Sackville, the patron of John Bracegirdle), this prosimetric translation was authored in 1609 by the mysterious I.T. As editor William Anderson explains in his introduction, I.T. may be the initials for “John Thorpe (fl. 1570-1610) who was architect to Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset. . . . [or] John Thorie, a Fleming who was born in London in 1568. . . . [or] a Jesuit called Michael Walpole” who may have passed the work through the London press either by pseudonymous initials or via a surrogate (15). Regarding the latter candidate, Houghton references a catalog of

“‘English writers of the Society of Jesus’, dated 1632. Here under the account of Michael Walpole, is the entry: ‘Also from the Latin, of the books of Boetius upon the Consolation of Philosophy. London, 1609’” (53). He notes that published bibliographies from 1643 and 1676 support this attribution (53-4). While these sources could be documenting an entirely separate translation of Boethius’s text, Houghton finds such a possibility “very unlikely” (54). Whoever this mysterious author may have been, though, the title page of the work indicates that it was penned with both philosophical and spiritual aims in mind:

FIVE BOOKES
OF PHILOSOPHICAL
COMFORT, FULL
of Christian consolation,
written a 1000 yeeres
since.
By Anitius, Manlius, Torquatus, Severinus,
BOETIUS; a Christian Consul
of ROME
Newly Translated out of Latine, together
with Marginall Notes, explaining the
obscurest places (17)

Whether false advertisement or careful packaging, this proclamation asserts that a work that does not explicitly mention Christ, the gospel, or salvation is nearly overflowing with Christian comfort; moreover, it expressly bills Boethius as a Christian political figure, highlighting that aspect of the original author’s biography. The subtitle also points out how helpful the apparatus of this volume will be to its reader(s) who find the work intellectually challenging.

In his preface, I.T. asserts that the *Consolation* proves “the vanitie of all other goods; the veritie of man’s onely good to consist in solely setting his soule on God the soveraigne, yea sole Good” and that though the book “as Philosophicall for the speculative points, may be above [the Countess’] understanding,” it is “as truly Theological for the practicall partes” (19). I.T. then encourages the countess to live circumspectly and to “[w]eigh if in all things and at all times, you have truly preferred the veritie of goodness of God, afore the vanitie of vice of the world” (19). Thus, the

translation is presented in a distinctively Christian package, with particular moral aims in mind. Moreover, such introductory comments reveal not only how the translators were able to reconcile the relatively secular content of the *Consolation* with their religious inclinations, but also how they were careful to anticipate potential objections from those of their faith who may have hesitated to embrace Boethius's philosophical treatment of natural theology.

I.T. reveals his awareness of and attention to what his effort represents with respect to its literary heritage and cultural significance, noting in his dedication that since the *Consolation* has "proved profitable to all almost neighbour Nations, as turned into their tongues; I presume to present unto our Countrie also for our common good" (19), thus serving as translator laureate for England. I.T. also places himself alongside literary royalty when he illustrates the difficulty of rendering the meters by reminding readers that the "prince of Poets, Chaucer turned it only into prose" (21). It was also apparent to him that the countess had a "peculiar interest" in the book, also "much esteemed" by her late husband (19). Perhaps he had knowledge of the 1602 verse rendering that John Bracegirdle had presented to Thomas Sackville; yet, as his comments about presenting his version to England for its common good suggest, he may not have known of a widely popular translation being circulated at the time. In fact, even if he had known of Bracegirdle's private presentation to Sackville, I.T. may have still seen a need for an English version that would be more widely distributed, as his happens to have been.

Apparently not writing for just his immediate audience and perhaps in view of the previous English versions by Chaucer (all-prose), Walton (all-verse), Colville (all-prose) and Bracegirdle (all-verse), I.T. suggests that "our Countrey may the better enjoy . . . [it] in English verse and prose" (21). One wonders, then, not only if he knew of Bracegirdle's poetic rendering, but also if he ever knew of the queen's prosimetric translation of 1593—the only prosimetric English version since Alfred's. The readership he anticipates, though, extends beyond the countess and her circle, as he affixes yet another prefatory note (in the form of a sonnet) and addresses it "TO THE YONG Gentlemen Readers" (23). He expects that this volume will reach a generation that needs to go beyond "fading

pleasure” to pursue “learned Arts” and the “sacred Treasure” (23), and thus his hopes are high for what this resource may offer to the young men of England.

Since many of the translators value the prosimetric arrangement of Boethius’s work as its key, distinctive feature, they struggle to emulate this structure. I.T. considers prose and verse the ideal form and implies by his explicit endorsement of the prosimetrum that some in his literary circle or in his library might have held a different opinion: “least anything should be wanting, the Poetical Muses are not excluded” (21). The term “excluded” suggests that I.T. may have once seen a version of the *Consolation* that had not simply been a prose version but that had not contained a translation of the poetic sections at all. If, however, he alludes here only to some prose version, he apparently feels that rendering Boethius’s prosimetrum entirely in prose does not fulfill a translator’s full responsibilities to the source, does not account for all that the original possesses, and thus does not offer vernacular readers what they should receive in a translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. Perhaps sensing that readers may be either anticipating or in some way concerned about the difficulty involved in producing a poetic rendering of the Latin *metra*, I.T. explains here that he has not retreated from the challenge. The combination of these verse passages with the “Rhetoricall & Philosophical discourses” (21) offers an audience variety: “Thus are all dispositions satisfied, and profite ioined with delight” (21). The prose sections bring readers the hard-won rewards of intellectual exercise, while the verses give the happy benefits of poetic indulgence. Even as he draws a clear distinction between the nature and purpose of the prose and verse forms, I.T. describes their union as the work’s great success.

Walter Houghton praises the literary achievement of this prosimetric version, one which was chosen as the English text to face the Latin source in the Loeb Classical Library edition of 1918. Citing 8 lines from Book I, meter 1, Houghton calls attention to the excellence of I.T.’s translation: “A more exact translation might be made, but surely not one which could more justly claim to be poetry” (72). This comment implies that a mutually exclusive relationship exists between exact translation and poetry, or at least that a verse translation need not be criticized too much for its inexact rendering if that

rendering is quality verse. Then, reflecting upon a passage from Book I, meter 2, Houghton holds up I.T.'s work as an admirable model of a great translation: "If we grant that this passage is exceptional and that much of its power must be credited to Boethius, it still remains, I think, English poetry of a high order. . . . it transmits the spirit of the poem as well as its sense, and what greater praise can be given a translation?" (73). I.T. thus becomes a conduit, carrying the power of his source in the lines of his verse, poetry that in Houghton's view stands in its own right as an excellent English literary achievement. In this way, the translation transcends its role as a mediator of a foreign cultural artifact and becomes a cultural artifact for England, thus reflecting not only the classical and medieval Latin roots within the English cultural heritage but also the potential of its contemporary literary apparatus to produce work worthy of critical appreciation and study.

Harry Coningsby's Verse Translation (1664)

Only 3 copies of Sir Harry Coningsby's 1664 work are extant, and the poet has inscribed the one owned by the British Library, noting that his rendering of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* comes in response to the sufferings and humiliations of his father and of his family:

finding my selfe lost as to the splendour of my family, I thought my selfe bound in vindication of my selfe to derive for posterity the tru cause of its fatal ruine, and having for my owne alleviation pleased my selfe with englishing this Consolatory, I have prefixed the tru, sad, yet glorious & honest deperiment of my most deare father, and for that your house was once his, and his forefathers, I earnestly beg that you would please to allow this little booke, a little roome in it, that it may there remaine as a record of the honest mind of S^r. (inscription)

By his son's account printed in the preface, Thomas Coningsby died after having been unjustly arrested and ruined by Oliver Cromwell. Thomas had served as high-Sheriff of Hartford (1638, 1642) and had been sent by the king's commission from Redding as a person of "greatest Integrity and known Affections to Us, and the good of Our Kingdom" (iii). However, the Sheriff of Essex had been bribed and flattered, so that when Thomas

Coningsby, “according to his trust and place, execute[d] his Writ” against the Earl, he risked his life and was subsequently imprisoned by Cromwell in London (iv). Sir Harry laments, then, that anyone would so “punish Duty by a law” (iv). Thomas was accused of enlisting “one of his sons into the King’s army”—a charge son Harry regards as “true but not proved” (iv). The poet’s father was held captive and his estate was taken, but after 7 years in the Tower, Thomas returned, “broken and languishing in Body through Restraint, and Sickness contracted by it”; thus, “in this seeming Liberty he did but behold his own and his Familie’s Ruine at a nearer view” (v). After another brief turn in prison, Thomas died in 1654. Harry affirms his father as a “severely and superlatively just” person who had harmed none but guarded many, as one who had “pardoned all personal Injuries” (vii). However, the son also reports that his father had been confident that those who had done wrong would not escape unscathed, “saying, as a well-built Christian might, That it was impossible that the righteous God should permit them to go unpunished alwaies” (vii-viii). Ultimately, then, the son notes with some measure of Boethian perspective that though the estate has been sold, “he yet inherits his Father’s Mind, though not his Possessions” (ix).⁶⁰

A memorial to his father and a tribute to the honor of his family name, Coningsby’s all-verse translation presents the prose passages in rhymed couplets and the metrical portions in a range of verse forms. He apparently considers poetry the ideal literary form for his personal expression of honorary tribute and loving memorial—and not just for his rendering of Boethius’s work, since he also includes an original Latin poem and its English translation, “PARENTALIA: in memoriam nobilissimi T.C.” In his *English Translations of Boethius’s De Consolatione Philosophiæ in the Seventeenth Century* (1931), Walter Houghton characterizes Coningsby’s *Consolation* as a noble but generally ill-conceived attempt to render the prosimetrum: “He was the last to make the fundamental error which Walton and Bracegirdle had previously committed — namely, of forcing the whole work into verse” (116-7). Yet, Houghton still feels that the effort

⁶⁰ Consider here Lady Philosophy’s wonder at how “man, a living and rational—and therefore godlike—animal, can only appear splendid to himself by the possession of lifeless stuff? Other things are content with what is their own ; but you men, like God in your minds, seek to bedeck your nature, excellent that it is, with lower things, and do not see how greatly you injure your maker” (Loeb 2p5.73-78).

does not wholly fail to communicate: “in spite of this initial handicap, his work is in general a fairly accurate and readable translation” (117).

Coningsby’s translations of the prose passages are cast into octosyllabic lines of rhyming couplets, and these verses are often, as Houghton points out, contractions rather than expansions of the original (118). Like Bracegirdle’s poetic renderings of the meters in *Psychopharmacon* (1602), Coningsby’s are italicized, though they are not numbered or otherwise identified. These verses, however, do not showcase the kind of complexity found in Bracegirdle’s poems. Houghton notes that Coningsby rarely ventures to use “pentameter or even tetrameter lines, most being in alternate lines of two and three feet. The rhyme scheme is generally aa - bb - cc, or abab - cdcd, and there is no blank verse” (120). These shorter verse forms restrict Coningsby, often not providing enough space for a faithful reproduction of the prosimetrum’s content: “The result is a contraction greater and more serious than in the rendering of the prose sections, and without the compensatory excuse . . . that in place of accuracy we have poetry” (120). Thus, whatever the limitations and shortcomings of Coningsby’s metrical rendering, such weaknesses result not just from his decision to turn the entire work into a poetic version, but also from his apparently limited skills in choosing and crafting particular verse forms during its production.

In his prefatory remarks, Coningsby speaks in the third person about the circumstances surrounding the translation and about his own state of mind after having completed it, knowing that his work can hardly compensate for the devastating losses suffered by his family:

retiring to recreate himself, he (as you see) put the brave and stout *BOETHIUS* into an English dress, which though ruder and courser then it should have been, is so much the more like his own Condition, and gives himself satisfaction, though not others : a poor satisfaction and pitiful comfort to a lost Family; yet he leaves it as a Relique of his Honest Mind, reposing his trust in Almighty God, who when he pleases can raise up those are cast down lowest : at least by this Posterity will know how, and in what unhappy Times, and for what cause it was the Storm came upon

him and ruined him, and learn to decline the fondness of this mutable World, and seek the never-fading Treasure. (ix)

His efforts to “recreate himself” have resulted in his all-verse rendering of the *Consolation*, which appears to have been a relatively personal poetic creation framed as a tribute, one that he does not seem to expect will find a broad, appreciative audience. However, he offers it as a souvenir of himself, a “Relique of his Honest Mind” that others may one day find and hold valuable. Thus, Coningsby expects some sort of readership, for he suggests that “Posterity” itself will come to know not only his own personal story but also a lesson from Boethius—“to decline the fondness of this mutable World.” Unlike Walton or I.T.’s work, then, Coningsby’s memorial to his father was probably not produced with the expectation that it would receive very wide circulation or very much, if any, critical acclaim.

Edmund Elys’s Prosimetric Translation (1674)

Directly addressing anticipated objections to Boethius’s non-Christian *Consolation*, Edmund Elys dedicates his incomplete prosimetric translation to the nobility and gentry of England, titling it *Summum Bonum, or an explication of Divine Goodness, in the Words of the Most Renowned Boetivs*, “Translated By a Lover of Truth, and Virtue” (ii). Elys echoes Pauline epistles in his dedication, exhorting his readers to

ever Follow the High Example of His [Boethius’s] *Heroik Virtues* : which Virtues whosoever shall Attein unto, he certainly will be *More than Conquerour* in All the Changes and Chances of this Moral Life, which both in *Sacred* and *Prophane* Writt is term’d a WARFARE” (iv-v).

The “*More than Conquerour*” phrase alludes to a passage from Romans 8, which suggests that God works in everything for the good of those who love him, even for those who face fire, danger, famine, nakedness, or sword, while the reference to “WARFARE” brings to mind the Ephesians 6 message that God’s spiritual armor protects those who take it up in battle against the unseen world of dark and dangerous forces. Elys apparently

considers the *Consolation* a fit text for instruction in both life and doctrine, approaching it not just as a philosophical work, but also as a sacred weapon.⁶¹

This overtly Christian approach to the *Consolation* is even more directly expressed when in his prefatory dedication Elys defends Boethius against those who would question the orthodoxy of his most famous work:

Though He does not make any Express mention of JESUS CHRIST in this *Philosophical* Discourse; yet 'tis well known, how Zealously He Contended for the Truth, Against those Execrable Hæreticks that Deny HIM to be GOD, Whom the *Universal Church* (According to the Scriptures) Acknowledgeth to be “*GOD OF GOD, LIGHT of LIGHT, Very GOD of very GOD, Begotten, Not Made, Being of one Substance with the FATHER, By Whom All things were Made.*” I Pray GOD we may All Hold the *Mystery of the Faith in a Pure Conscience* : As did this Excellent Man.
(v-vi)

Citing the Nicene Creed to establish the doctrinal purity of his author, Elys considers Boethius an exemplification of 1 Timothy 3:9, someone who maintained the deep truths of the faith according to his clear conscience—even in the midst of challenges to that faith. Houghton notes what a number of these particular challenges may have been: serving time in jail for standing against the Commonwealth, contracting smallpox, losing his father and oldest sister in 1666, enduring long bouts with intermittent ague throughout much of the 1660s, enjoying a brief respite from all such sufferings in the early 1670s, then becoming sequestered in 1677, serving time in prison again in 1680, mourning the death of his spouse in 1684, and losing his living upon resisting the requirements related to oath-taking during the reign of William and Mary (Houghton 128-30).

Elys also features Henry Hallywel’s summary treatment of the themes and ideas in Boethius’s *Consolation*, namely how man enjoyed living in union with the Universal Good until sin darkened and obscured the path back, but that the way was opened up by the gracious bounty of God for those who pursue the eternal good and patiently endure

⁶¹ Dolson and Houghton’s investigation into the authorship of this text concludes that Edmund Elys is in fact responsible for it and that he was a “Royalist and Anglican author of many seventeenth-century theological tracts” (72), a fact which may account for the explicitly Christian assertions in the preface.

the world and its injustices until he will set things aright (viii-xii). Then, as he concludes his introductory remarks, Elys includes a prayer that appears to have very little to do with the work of editing, translating, or reading Boethius, except that God is clearly described as being infinitely good:

O RIGHTEOUS FATHER, Shine upon Us *in the Face of* JESUS
CHRIST, *the Brightness of thy Glory! Shed abroad thy Love in our Hearts*
By the HOLY GHOST, that we may Meditate Day, and Night on the
INFINITE GOODNESS of Our CREATOR, REDEEMER, And
SANCTIFIER, *In whose Presence is Fullness of Joy, at whose Right Hand*
there are Pleasures Forevermore. (xii)

He prays here for lasting happiness rooted not so much in contemplation of the divine but in the knowledge, love, and presence of the person of Christ himself and in the salvation Elys claims through him. Indeed, his note to the reader characterizes Boethius's "Notions of the SOVERAIGN GOOD" as ideas that are not the sole domain of Boethius himself or of his translators and commentators but rather are "Common to Us with All those that LOVE the LORD JESUS in *Sincerity*" (viii). Thus, Elys defines the philosophical underpinnings of Boethian consolation as essentially Christian and, in fact, innately so.

Hxxxxx, Duke of Xxxxxxxxx's Prosimetric Translation (1693)

Donated to the British museum by More Adey in 1922, two volumes now known as Additional Manuscripts 40693A and 40693B preserve a prosimetric translation by one whose identity is known only by the cryptic note on the title page, "now Translated into English by His Grace / Hxxxxx Duke of Xxxxxxxxx." Dated 1693, the first book holds prefatory comments by the translator and an English version of Peter Berty's Latin preface, while the other book holds the version by this otherwise anonymous duke. Expressing a desire to make Boethius's great work available to an English-reading audience, the mysterious Hxxxxx Duke of Xxxxxxxxx offers a prosimetric version of the *Consolation*. The duke explains, though, that he seeks nothing for himself in this—as his anonymous status suggests. Instead, Duke H. claims he has translated his author out of respect, as well as out of a sense of responsibility to an intellectual heritage that the

uneducated might otherwise not understand or appreciate: “That is one great Reason of the Translator’s publishing it to do Justice to this great man, & shew to those, that are not Masters of y^e Latin Tongue, to whom it is they owe what is deliver’d to them by others” (3). He apparently felt obligated as a mediator and educator to connect his English audience back to the originator of the *Consolation*, for he also offers readers a translation of Peter Berty’s Latin preface—a highly complimentary, biographical essay on Boethius that had been published multiple times between 1620 and 1668.

The virtually anonymous Hxxxxx Duke of Xxxxxxxx (1693) asserts in the preface to his translation that though *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* does not present an explicitly Christian approach, it does point toward one and perhaps even was meant to have included such a perspective: “Orthodox Christians go higher for a certain Remedy against y^e Evils of this Life, in the doctrine & example of Christ & his Apostles, But those that read & mind these Books will find by several Expressions in them, that He intended in y^e Conclusion something of that Kind” (3). The duke alludes here to the possibility that Boethius’s work was left unfinished and that his plans for offering the consolations of Christianity were never realized.

Richard Preston’s Prosimetric Translation (1695)

Discussing his own work turning the *Consolation* into English, Richard Lord Viscount Preston points out that a contemporary version is needed, since Chaucer’s translation is “*now almost as unintelligible to the English Reader as the Original is*” (iii). Preston’s volume appears in 1695, over 300 years after the appearance of Chaucer’s *Boece* and over 200 years since its publication by Caxton. He mentions having seen other translations of the *Consolation*—one in 1609 (I.T.’s) and another in 1674 (Elys’s), but he apparently feels these versions, while more recent than Chaucer’s, do not accomplish what he hopes his translation will. While Preston declines to censure these efforts to translate Boethius explicitly, he happens to see “*nothing in them which may hinder [him] from offering one to the Publick which may be more correct*” (iv). However, Preston must have found something in the edition by Elys that he felt was worth offering to the public

once more, for he provides an uncredited paraphrase of Henry Hallywel's prefatory letter printed in Edmund Elys' 1674 version, *Summum Bonum* (Houghton 155-56). He does acknowledge, though, that he has followed the editions of Vallinus (1656) and Cally (1680), using their notes because he has "*found them very learned and exact*" (xii).

Preston explains in an introductory note to the reader how he came to produce his prosimetric translation: "*A Long Retirement in the Country having afforded me many Hours of leisure, I considered that I could not employ them better than in giving an English Dress to this Part of the Works of Boetius, intituled, Of the Consolation of Philosophy*" (iii). This period of leisure likely came either between 1664 and 1680 (before his years of public office) or between 1691 and 1695, when his fortunes had been reversed and his career had been ruined. Houghton cites Douglas' *Peerage of Scotland* as he explains that under the favor of James II, "Graham was raised in 1681 to the Scottish peerage with the title of 'Viscount of Preston, in the county of Haddington, and Lord Graham of Esk'" (148). He later advanced to the position of "Envoy Extraordinary at the court of Louis XIV" from 1682-1685, and eventually to the office of Secretary of State in 1688 (148). All of this changed when in December of 1688 James II abdicated and Preston left London and public life altogether. The next year, however, he stirred up royalist sentiments in the north and found "that by May he was in the Tower of London, where he spent nearly all the remainder of the year" (148). He was later captured at sea with treasonous documents and was condemned to die. However, his complete confession was exchanged for "his release and official pardon in June, 1691" (149). Preston ultimately moved to the north and died alone in December of 1695.

Some passages from his preface suggest that they were written only after his great downfall and that the Lord Viscount found a fellow-sufferer in Boethius:

In the worst of times, this good Man endeavoured to maintain the Rights of his Country, and was the great Supporter of that small Part of the Roman Liberty which remained, desiring nothing more than to see it one day restored : but it was not the Pleasure of Heaven to grant His desire; it rather thought fit to permit him to fall into the Hands of his Tormentors, whose Persecutions and Cruelties only ended with his Life, . . . and who,

by stabbing his Fame and Reputation, became more criminal than those partial Judges who condemned him to Death. (v-vi)

He from whom Fortune hath withdrawn her kinder Influences, and upon whom those who, under God, govern the World do not think fit to shine, whatever his Merits may have been before, will find himself exposed to all the Injuries which his Superiours, Equals or Inferiours shall think good to heap upon him. (vii)

He notes that this mistreatment of good men has been the way of the world since before the time of Boethius and will be until the world itself comes to an end (vii), and yet “*these are the ordinary Turns of Providence, to which all Men ought to submit ; as those who are endowed with Piety and good Sense do with Willingness, ever making the right Use of them, without being surprized at them*” (viii). Thus, with everything in proper perspective, Preston’s appropriation of Boethian consolation “*makes the worst of Evils, Banishment or Death, to be endured with Chearfulness by Men of great Souls, they knowing that the Persecution of this World is to be the last Proof of their Patience and Fidelity ; and that when that is at an end, their Vertue shall be rewarded and crowned*” (ix). However, since a paper was found in the family documents asserting that Preston had “finished Boethius this year, 1680” (qtd. in Houghton 151), Houghton concludes “that between 1691 and his death Preston revised his manuscript” (152, emphasis in the original), so that, as the prefatory comments suggest, what may have been at first an academic pursuit eventually became a personal project, replete with connections to the circumstances he faced later in life.

As he supplies introductory background on the content of the *Consolation*, Preston feels particularly compelled to defend his own annotations on stories from poets and mythologists, provided even though they are commonly known, because he “*did not make this Translation for the Learned*”; the supplemental materials are added, then, so that “*they might be instructive to the English Reader, and might make the Sense of the Book more plain and pleasant to him, for whose Use alone both the one and the other were designed*” (xiii). Moreover, like many who have translated Boethius’s *Consolation* into the prosimetric form of the original, Preston expresses considerable anxiety about the poetic portions of his text, responding perhaps to those who may be expecting a literal

rendering. He senses that educated readers may discover his amplifications of the metrical portions: “*I know that Fault will also be found with the Liberty which I have taken in rendring of the Verse, and with my own Additions which are in some Places made*” (xiii). However, he defends these insertions as necessary to the task of versifying without omitting “*any part of the Author’s sense*” and without rendering Boethius’s text so slavishly that the result would be a “*flat and insipid*” version (xiii), asserting that whether the passage was prose or verse, he has tried “*not to omit any part of the Author’s Sense*” (xiii). Preston also suggests that such interpolations are necessary to prevent a slavish rendering that turns out “*flat and insipid*” and “*where the Words of the Author are too closely followed*” (xiii). Thus, distinguishing between word and sense and approaching the verses more holistically, he concerns himself with how he interprets Boethius’s meaning, rather than with how a particular word, phrase, or line may be converted into English. He has aimed, then, “*to give them a more grateful Taste, which is all I have pretended to do : But I must leave it to others to judg how well or how ill I have performed this*” (xiv). Preston apparently means that he has intended to improve not upon the original Latin *metra* but rather upon the verses that are typically generated by inartistic, literal renderings. He presents his poetic efforts, then, in view of previous translations that he has found inadequate, contributing his literary performance to the tradition of Boethius in English—with the expectation that his lines will add depth and flavor to what has thus far been uninterestingly plain and bland.

In yet another defensive remark, Preston explains his use of blank verse for some meters, “*which may seem to some Readers to be an Effect of Laziness: But let the Censurers consult the Original, and they will find where-ever I have done it, the Subject and the Nature of the Metre is such, that the Author’s Sense could not be clearly expressed in the more confin’d way of Rithme*” (xiv). Houghton asserts, however, “that Preston expands not because he has to, but because he aims to; and not being a poet, he succeeds at best only in giving Boethius’s metres ‘a more grateful Taste’ to his own age. He reproduces neither the exact sense nor the spirit of the original” (161). Yet, Preston’s blank verse accomplishes for him what some translators have determined is possible only in prose, as the difficult poetic passages are rendered more intelligible when the translator

has the freedom to add and rearrange his words without being constrained by the demands of a particular metrical scheme. He appears to sympathize with, and perhaps even to have read, a printing of *Paradise Lost* that included Milton's 1668 preface in defense of blank verse—an apology rejecting a definition of poetry that demands rhyme and proposing instead that poetry “*consists only in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings*” (*Riverside Milton* 352).

As Houghton notes, Preston's translation was released again in 1712, having received positive comments from the press upon its initial release. One such glowing review comes from an issue of *Miscellaneous Letters* published for the week of 21-28 November, 1694:

They must be altogether Strangers in the Commonwealth of Learning, who are not acquainted with this Immortal Work of Boetius; and I cannot wonder enough that so useful a Book has been so long slighted, and that since Chaucer's time no Body has been invited to give it an English Dress. The noble Author of this Translation has therefore mightily oblig'd the World in presenting us with this Version; nay he has put a great Obligation upon Boetius himself; for this is an excellent Proof that this Work is answerable to its Title, and that it affords Consolations in the most sad Circumstances. (qtd. in Houghton 165)

This passage suggests that the importance of Boethius's *Consolation* was felt in England even without, apparently, any knowledge of the translations by Walton (1410), Colville (1556), Queen Elizabeth (1593), Bracegirdle (1602), I.T. (1609), Coningsby (1664), Elys (1674), or Fanshawe (c. 1626-31). Houghton himself wonders at the fact that the reviewer does not mention five intervening translations, by which he probably means the other five he covers in his thesis: John Bracegirdle, Michael Walpole [I.T.], Richard Fanshawe, Sir Harry Congingsby, and Edmund Elys. Houghton surmises that “[t]his shows, I think, that those who read Boethius read him in Latin, rather than that the five translations were too poor to survive” (165). However, while his initial remark seems reasonable—that those who knew Boethius in the late 17th-century knew him in Latin—the source for the comment, of course, is this reviewer, whose alleged knowledge of Latin and apparent

ignorance of other translations may not necessarily serve as useful barometers for assessing the knowledge possessed by others in England at the time. Moreover, some of these versions, as well as a few not mentioned here even by Houghton (though he does refer to them elsewhere in his work), existed only in manuscript form for some time: Queen Elizabeth's version, "not discovered until May, 1826, (though Camden had testified to the Queen's Work)" (Houghton 26), was not printed until Pemberton's EETS edition in 1899; Bracegirdle's was apparently a private gift and probably only ever existed in a single manuscript until Kaylor published his edition in 1999. Even Fanshawe's translations of most of the Boethian *metra*, to which Houghton devotes a chapter, were not published until Houghton's own dissertation and then later in Davidson's edition in 1997. It may not have been an issue of whether the translations were "too poor to survive," since whether or not the versions were ever printed for mass consumption had also to do with the circumstances of their production, the wishes of their authors, and even the political and personal ramifications at stake.

While one does wonder, however, why Houghton does not refer to Walton's 1410 translation here, since he lists it in his introduction and in his bibliography, the question remains whether Preston's reviewer would have known of this version. Perhaps Preston's own comments about Chaucer's *Boece* may shed light not only on the reviewer's apparent ignorance of Walton's version but also on Houghton's assessment of the reviewer's knowledge of Latin: "Chaucer, *the antient Poet of our Nation, was the first whom I find to have attempted a Translation of this Book into our Tongue : but that is now almost as unintelligible to the English Reader as the Original is*" (iii). This suggests not only that a reading knowledge of Latin is rare in England, but also that he finds few who have studied the history and development of English itself as a language. In fact, Preston has apparently not learned of King Alfred's Old English translation, which would not be published until 3 years later, in Christopher Rawlinson's 1698 edition. Moreover, Preston finds that England's knowledge of Middle English is as weak as its grasp upon Latin. Thus, the reviewer may not have had the ability or the inclination to pursue an academic, much less a casual, interest in Walton's Middle English verse rendering.

Moreover, Houghton's suggestion that the reviewer and others like him must have known Boethius in the Latin may have been too hastily made, or perhaps he was referring mainly to the English literati, whereas Preston may have been lamenting the lack of education among the populace in general. Nevertheless, these allusions to the awareness (or lack thereof) of various English translations of Boethius's *Consolation* raise intriguing questions regarding their various levels of popularity and readability. Moreover, the *Miscellaneous Letters* review asserting the indispensability of Boethius's work to "the Commonwealth of Learning" suggests that the text still held considerable sway among at least the educational centers and intellectual circles of late 17th-century England, perhaps so much so that someone like Preston, who "*did not make this Translation for the Learned*" (xiii), would find it necessary and beneficial to provide it for those who would otherwise not know its philosophical propositions or personal consolations.

18th - and 19th -Century Translations

William Causton's Prosimetric Translation (1730)

A firm believer in the *Consolation* he translates, William Causton admits to his work's shortcomings but trusts that it does not contain outright distortions, perhaps in view of an audience already familiar with Boethius, since an uninformed audience would not have been able to notice where he has not accurately represented his source: "I hope the reader will find that where I have not been able fully to express, I have not perverted the sense" (xxxv). Causton also qualifies his efforts by explaining that the original features content and complexity that actually stretch the capacity of the English language to express adequately, asking that readers "consider that several of these pieces are so abstruse and *Philosophical*, that it is very difficult to bestow the same graces on them in *English*, which they were in *Latin*" (xxxv). Nevertheless, Causton's five-book, prosimetric translation attempts to "translate not only the words, but meaning" of the

Latin source, conveying “his obscurest passages” in the version itself and not in extended annotations. Causton explains in his preface that Boethius’s

manner of writing is dialogical, not a naked representation (into which some translators have converted it [Preston uses P. and B.]) of two distinct persons present, and discoursing together ; but parabolically relating in his own person, the manner wherein Philosophy had appear'd to him, and the occasion and substance of a conference suppos'd to have already past between them. (xxiv)

Impressed with the *Consolation*’s prosimetric form, and conscious of three other prose and verse translations (I.T.’s from 1609, Elys’s from 1674, and Preston’s from 1695), Causton laments that Chaucer did not “translate into *English* verse the poetic part, which is so divinely charming in the original; which if he had done, I had doubtless been effectually discourage’d from modernizing that which I could not have improv’d, and altering that which I must have despair’d of mending” (xxix). Causton implies, then, that his work must be an improvement upon Chaucer’s prose. Moreover, he apparently does not feel that the poems by I.T., Elys, and Preston have done justice to the Latin original, or at least that he could improve and mend their attempts as well. He has in fact altered the original in that he has “here and there suppress’d a few short sentences, which chiefly serve to testify the author’s assent to the propositions of PHILOSOPHY, of such like, and no otherwise interfere with the course of the arguments” (xxxiv). Causton also notes that Boethius’s “diction is various, being chiefly prose, but most agreeably interspers’d with several different kinds of metre, to the latter of which his genius seems to have been particularly inclin’d, I had almost said divinely inspir’d” (xxiv). In the end, he reiterates his worshipful appreciation of the Boethian meters, concluding his introductory remarks with the hope that if he has “fallen too short of the divine beauties of the original” that he has not in fact “perverted the sense” (xxxv). As he assumes his role as a translator of the *Consolation*’s metrical portions, Causton sees his position in spiritual terms: thus, whatever his poetic failures may be, they are practically sinful in the sense that they do not perfectly embody or even adequately reflect the pre-lapsarian glory of their untranslated source.

Reflecting upon material gleaned from Peter Berty's 17th-century biography of Boethius, Causton employs overtly Christian language as he summarizes the conclusion of the *Consolation* and suggests that, given time, Boethius would have written a Book VI:

The *fifth* and *last book* treats of chance and free-will, and by a chain of solid reasoning reconciles the doctrine of the latter with the divine prescience, thereby fully justifying the equity and wisdom of a providence in the distribution of rewards and punishments, and most effectually tending to redeem despairing minds from the terrors of being predestin'd to sin and misery by an unavoidable necessity. To which had a *sixth* been added concerning that eternal life of never-ceasing joy, which will be the sure reward of such as persevere in righteousness ; and to shew the manifold adversities and variety of sufferings, which (by the example of the antient *prophets* as well as *Christ* and his *Apostles*) attend their course towards that glorious goal ; we should here have found an inexhaustible fund of *Consolation* under all temporal afflictions, and an invincible support against all the difficulties and dangers of this our mortal warfare. And this doubtless *Boetius* had design'd, had not his barbarous persecutors interpos'd, and death compell'd him to lay down his pen and leave his work unfinished. (xxv-xxvi)

Explaining his reasons for such a claim, Causton points out that Boethius had in fact written about the Trinity, so it seems odd to him that this orthodox Christian did not search for consolation in the “precepts of reveal'd religion, and the doctrines of faith and hope so graciously deliver'd, so clearly explain'd, and so worthily exemplify'd to us by *Christ* and his *Apostles*” (xxvi).

However, Causton's hope for more on “eternal life of never-ceasing joy, which will be the sure reward of such as persevere in righteousness” appears to overlook a key passage in this regard, as in Book II, prose 7, Lady Philosophy reminds her charge that release and reward await virtuous men whom death takes from this life:

Sin vero bene sibi mens conscia terreno carcere resoluta caelum libera petit, nonne omne terrenum negotium spernat quae se caelo fruens terrenis gaudet exemptam?

[If however a mind fully aware of its own nature, loosed from its earthly prison, is free to seek its heavenly home, will it not despise all earthly affairs, and in the joy of heaven rejoice to be freed from earthly things?]

(2p7.83-6)

This passage on heaven does not offer readers with such theological interests enough, however, leading those such as Edmund Reiss to speculate that “[h]ad Boethius lived longer, he might well have followed his *Consolation of Philosophy* with a *Consolation of Theology*” (154). Indeed, this great literary and philosophical achievement by the Christian Boethius surely made devout readers such as Causton nervous, since its message does not rely directly upon revealed truth, prophetic witness, or scriptural testimony, but rather upon natural theology and reason. Nevertheless, he points out that the *Consolation* is even still “founded on the basis of truth, and agreeable to the inspir’d writings” (xxviii).

Causton also suggests that the reference in Book IV to Philosophy as a “*Harbinger* of true and perfect light” (xxvi) clearly meant that the course of the dialogue would lead to the perfect light and true native home of God in heaven with the angels. However, even without the sixth book and an direct discussion of Christ and his salvation, “the *Consolation* here given is far from being ineffectual ; since it is founded on the basis of truth, and agreeable to the inspir’d writings” (xxviii). Causton then establishes that even when removed from its religious context altogether, the *Consolation* finds reasonable readers who consider it useful and persuasive, quoting John of Salisbury’s assertion that “tho’ no mention is there made of *reveal’d religion*, yet to those who are guided by reason, it is of no small authority” (xxviii). Causton acknowledges, though, that he is not in agreement with all that Boethius’s text contains, finding himself at odds with Neoplatonic doctrine related to the soul, as expressed in Book III, meter 9. In his introduction he asks to “be excus’d, if I have in this place chosen rather to deviate from, than express my author’s sense ; that it might appear more conformable to the tenets of the *Christian Religion*, in a point especially that has past the examination, and receiv’d the decision of a Christian council” (xxxiii). His allegiance to the meaning of his source is trumped, then, by his allegiance to orthodoxy.

Philip Ridpath's Prosimetric Translation (1785)

Dedicated to Henry Dundas, the Treasurer of the Navy and member of the Privy Council, Philip Ridpath's 1785 prosimetric translation is offered in part because *Philosophy and the Muses* "have served to soothe the anxieties naturally attendant on high station, and to relieve the spirits during the intervals of business (i). He expects, perhaps, that this volume will ease the mind of his powerful patron as he negotiates the stressful demands of his office. As Ridpath dedicates his prosimetrum, his descriptions of the *Consolation* suggest that he also sees two distinct kinds of discourse being joined therein: "Philosophy and the Muses" (i); "this beautiful and philosophical Dialogue" (ii); "Letters and the Muses" (iii). His version is in prose and verse, the latter consisting mainly of blank verse, rhymed couplets, and quatrains (ABAB).

Noting that the *Consolation* had previously been translated "into most of the language of Europe, and into the Saxon and our own by our most illustrious princes, Alfred and Elizabeth" (ii), Ridpath suggests that the time has come for a new rendering, for the "[l]ength of time, and the mutability of language, have deprived us of the fruits of their leisure" (ii). By situating his work within its noble English tradition, he associates himself and his rendering with the royal translators themselves, King Alfred and Queen Elizabeth I, hinting at the national interest at stake here in this version.⁶² Ridpath addresses his benefactor directly, claiming that the work "has cost me much pains and labour ; and, indeed, I should never have presumed, under your protection and patronage, to offer it to the Publick, had I not endeavoured to make it as perfect as I possibly could" (ii). Thus, his valiant effort ought to be rewarded with just compensation, especially since his attempt at perfection has been in the service of Dundas's own name and reputation.

Apparently having read a number of previous versions and perhaps some account, then, of Peter Berty's Latin preface (published often and in various forms since 1620), Ridpath reports that a number of "commentators upon Boethius suppose that he was

⁶² Ridpath's reference to Queen Elizabeth I's translation causes one to wonder if he had known of it by report (from Camden, for instance), or if he had come across it himself, even though Houghton says that the single manuscript was "not discovered until May, 1826" (26).

interrupted, by death, in the execution of this work” (xxcii). If, in fact, Boethius was working up to the very end, dipping his quill one last time before being led from his chamber, then perhaps such an approach could be entertained:

Their conjecture is not improbable ; as our author, though a zealous Catholick, takes no notice of the comforts arising from the Christian religion to persons in calamitous circumstances ; which are far more certain and satisfactory than those derived from Philosophy. (xxcii)

Without perhaps considering that what appears to have been a glaring omission or unfulfilled plan may have actually been a purposeful design, Ridpath goes on to assert that Boethius would have written Book VI to show “how much superior the topicks of consolation, delivered to us in the New Testament, are to all others” (xxcii), suggesting that if this is accurate, then “it is much to be regretted” (xxvii) that he died before completing his work.

Robert Duncan’s Prosimetric Translation (1789)

In the last full translation of the eighteenth century, Robert Duncan acknowledges the academic nature of his project and the overarching pedagogical purposes to which it may be applied. First, though, he demonstrates his own appreciation for Boethius and his philosophy by arguing that the *Consolation* is essentially Christian, calling Lady Philosophy “Christian Philosophy” and considering it “a pity that the author did not live to add another book, or more, on the consolation that may be drawn from doctrines of Christianity, which would have made his Treatise quite complete” (5). However, Duncan concludes his prefatory remarks by recommending his work as an exercise resource to students of Latin schools and as a literature anthology to students of English schools:

Such a book is well worth the perusal of all ; and the smallness of the volume and price will render the purchase easy to all. But it is chiefly intended as a schoolbook, both in Latin and English schools. In the former it will be an useful exercise for the boys to render passages of it back into Latin ; and in English schools it may serve for a Collection in prose and verse. (7)

Interestingly, Duncan sees his work not only as a secondary tool for use in exercises that aid in the primary goal of learning Latin but also as an English textbook for study in its own right.

Duncan seems to have read remarks like those of Ridpath, who held that the theory regarding a possible sixth book was “not improbable” (xxcii), for he notes that the idea that Boethius died before finishing his final work is “very probable” (4). Duncan mentions Boethius’s calling “Philosophy the harbinger who ushers in the true light, namely, that of divine revelation, which alone affords the true consolation, and can conduct men to their native home, that is, Heaven” (4-5). He claims that “[t]his Philosophy promised to do (whence she is understood to be Christian Philosophy), and was preparing” (4-5) to do so when Boethius interrupted with questions. Strangely, then, Duncan seems to suggest that Boethius the character prevented Boethius the author from getting to his ultimate point and so deprived his future readers from the full benefits of “the consolation that may be drawn from the doctrines of Christianity” (5). Duncan’s surmise here makes a more explicit case for the *Consolation*’s Christianity, as it asserts the exclusive nature of Christian comfort and reward and identifies the personification of Greco-Roman philosophy as a Christian figure.

As he introduces his translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, Duncan explains that Boethius’s dialogical “method is diversified by Verse and Prose alternately, which renders it both instructive and entertaining” (3), thus apparently agreeing with his predecessors that the two forms combined in the *Consolation* serve different purposes. In fact, Duncan seems to believe that a translation that does not reflect the original’s combined form fails to live up to its obligations. He prefaces his version with statements testifying to its completeness, assuring readers of his fidelity to Boethius on all points:

I have attended solely to the letter and spirit of the original, having made no use of Commentators or Interpreters whatever ; and have as he has studied to render both the verse and prose as literally as possible, as I think every just translation ought to be. (6-7)

However, this claim to such individuality is difficult to accept when his preface resembles so much Peter Berty's 17th-century biography, a version of which appears in Causton's 1730 translation.⁶³ Duncan apparently feels, though, that it is only right to reproduce both the meaning and the form of the original, perhaps in disagreement, then, with Preston's approach, which places the emphasis on sense rather than on form, on the spirit rather than on the letter. In doing so, he seems to consider the prosimetric form the only option for his attempt at literal translation, suggesting that Duncan has some awareness of English renderings that have not, in his view, accurately represented Boethius's original, or that he at least approaches his work believing that his audience expects translations to be literal. Moreover, his specifying that he has labored to present "both the verse and prose as literally as possible" implies that others before him have held different standards for translating prose and poetry, that some may have allowed themselves too much freedom during the process of turning the Latin *metra* into English verse.

Anonymous Poet's Rendering of the Metra (1792)

A complete English version of the *Consolation's metra* was not offered until the work of an anonymous poet was published in 1792, with the poems organized according to the five book structure and cast in a variety of verse forms, the most common of which are iambic tetrameter quatrains (ABAB) and rhyming couplets. Adam Clarke sums up this translation as a "pitiful performance" (35). As a preface to his work, the translator supplies a facing-page (Latin-English) version of Peter Berty's 17th-century laudatory biography and commentary, *Life of Boethius*. He also provides facing-page presentation of the poems; however, in both the preface and the text proper, the Latin versions run along the left-hand side until they are finished, and they are not aligned with the English texts to which they correspond. Thus, once the Latin source ends, the English translation takes over both sides of the remaining page openings until it too comes to an end. This

⁶³ See Duncan, pp. 4-5, where phrases such as "in the Fourth Book, he calls Philosophy the harbinger who ushers in the true light," "conduct men to their native home," and "she was interrupted by some questions" reflect readings found in Causton, pp. xxvi-xxvii: "in the beginning of the 4th book calls PHILOSOPHY the *Harbinger* of true and perfect light," "reconduct you to your native home," and "he interrupted her, with some questions."

sort of arrangement, then, does not facilitate side by side comparisons. In addition, the anonymous poet's inclusion of Berty's work and its claims regarding the unfulfilled purposes of Boethius and his *Consolation* creates an interesting irony: a version of only the Boethian *metra* is packaged with a preface that emphasizes the original text's alleged literary and theological designs and that characterizes it as incomplete.

As Berty's Latin preface introduces readers to the life and work of Boethius, its overview turns to speculation as it suggests that Boethius had meant to supply a Christian consolation but was executed before completing the task: "Neither did he finish the whole work as he intended, for I have the strongest arguments to prove that Boethius proposed, from the doctrine of Christianity, to add another book also to the former, by which the mind of man might be exalted to contemplation on eternal life" (xciii-xciv). Such interest in receiving specific counsel on the Christian view of the afterlife, and indeed, on salvation through Christ and in heaven, suggests that Berty is not satisfied by the many references in the text to reward for virtue and the extensive passages on drawing near to the eternal, divine mind. He reasons that a Christian facing death probably would have sought "comfort from the ordinances of Christ" found in scripture—"the sacred volumes" (xciv). While this may be true, it does not require that Boethius, having sought some form of consolation from the Bible, necessarily include such doctrines in his *Consolation of Philosophy*.

Furthermore, Berty believes that Philosophy's promise that she ultimately "shall thoroughly probe your wounds" (xciv) indicates that the Boethius had wished to move to the exalted truths of Christianity. He asserts that references to a true, greater light, and to the native home pertain to Christ and heaven and were cut short by questions about chance, foreknowledge, and free will—as though Boethius the author had allowed his plans for the *Consolation* to be altered by a character within it. Berty posits that "all he had designed to teach was not accomplished, and which should be sought for in the doctrine of Christ alone, is left unfinished" (xcvii), claiming that the ultimate consolation is found exclusively in Christianity. In fact, he says that the country toward which men may hope to tend is "the peculiar province of Christianity" (xcviii) and that had Boethius

the author finished his work, Philosophy would have led Boethius the character “to eternal life, and united him to the holy company of Christ our Saviour, the Prophets and Apostles” (xcviii). Berty concludes, however, that even though Christ and his Apostles are not found in the *Consolation*, “the things which are spoken are true, and agreeable to Scripture” (xcviii), citing also the statement by John of Salsbury that “[a]lthough you do not find in the whole book, that he speaks of the Word made flesh, nevertheless among those who reason justly, we are authorized to assert the rectitude of his disposition, when we see that he applies proper remedies to soften the pain of his distempered mind” (xcviii-xcix).

In fact, the unknown translator himself suggests that Boethius’s work does not go the whole way:

To which if he had added a sixth upon eternal life ; and in it shewn that many adverse things are to be borne by those who strive to obtain that life, strengthened by the example of Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles, we should have had a full and entire consolation against all the various miseries of life. (cviii)

As he concludes his own remarks, however, this poet reasons that philosophy and truth are not mutually exclusive and that the practice of philosophy has been hallowed by the holy men of the Bible “[n]o subject that has truth for its object is foreign to Philosophy, none is properly excluded. Paul philosophizes, the Prophets philosophize; even our Lord himself philosophizes in his divine and salutary discourses” (cix). Perhaps, then, although Paul, the prophets, and even Jesus himself had been vessels or mediators of revealed religion, the truths they had hoped to communicate had not been self-evident, and so they were required to use reasoned judgments and philosophical arguments as they taught knowledge of the divine to the people. For Berty (and for this anonymous translator of the *Consolation*’s poems), such authoritative precedents should validate the work of Boethius and of any who render his philosophy for others. Thus, the poet has justified the work as a whole as well as his own renderings of its *metra*.

Paul Preston's Prosimetric Translation (1808)

One of the contributions to the afterlife of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* that was not published during its author's lifetime, Paul Preston's incomplete version appeared in 1808, after his passing. The title page for his unfinished work explains its origins: "Translated from the Latin—by / PAUL PRESTON, / a self-taught genius of the county of Bucks. / Published by his Friends as a Tribute to his Memory." Thus, like those who somehow brought Boethius's own work to the public following his death at the hands of Theodoric, Preston's companions honored his life by offering this text to their readers.

Although his work was never finished, Preston reproduced the prosimetric structure of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* in his version, which runs only through Book III, meter 2. Since Preston's text was printed posthumously by his friends, it is difficult to know whether his copy of the translation contained headings for the various sub-sections. As it stands, each of the three books begin with a heading, but none of the prose and verse passages are titled or numbered. His most common verse forms for the *metra* are the quatrain (ABAB) and the couplet, though he also employs the sestet twice (AABCCB both times) and the octet once (AAABCCCB). Only two of his meters appear to have an irregular scheme, suggesting, then, that these portions may not have even been finished at the time of his death. Since he did not select passages for translation or isolate *metra* for versification, and since his work follows the prose and verse structure of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, it seems reasonable to conclude that Preston's intent was to translate the entire work but that his passing prevented it.

H.R. James's Prosimetric Translation (1897)

On behalf of the New Universal Library's collection of classic texts, H.R. James published the only full translation of the nineteenth century, claiming to have translated the *Consolation* because "what once pleased so widely must still have some charm" (v). Perhaps less inclined to believe in Boethius himself or in the finer points of his worldview, James does not explicitly define or defend the orthodoxy of his author at the

outset of his translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. Apparently uninterested in considering the latent or potential Christianity of the text, James simply describes the source of his pedagogically-oriented version as “the scholar’s familiar companion” (v). Thus, the *Consolation* that had for so long served its readers’ philosophical and religious needs had by James’ time apparently become regarded as a standard academic text, suitable for inclusion in a series featuring English versions of classic works.

James seems to have prepared his volume with students in mind, subtitling each of the books (I. The Sorrows of Boethius II. The Vanity of Fortune’s Gifts III. True Happiness and False IV. Good and Ill Fortune V. Free Will and God’s Foreknowledge), numbering each “Song” with a Roman numeral and titling it according to its topic or theme, labeling each prose section with a Roman numeral, and prefacing each book with a summary list of its contents. James would agree with Duncan’s assessment of the original work’s structure, considering the combined form its most characteristic feature: “The great work of Boethius, with its alternate prose and verse, skilfully fitted together like dialogue and chorus in a Greek play, is unique in literature” (v-vi). However, he gives additional prominence to the verse passages, providing readers with an “Index of Verse Interludes” that lists the page numbers for the “Songs”—which he has subtitled with labels such as “The Perturbations of Passion” and (borrowing the title of Chaucer’s poem based on Book II, meter 8) “The Former Age.”

Ironically, although he seems to consider his rendering sufficient for any English readers of the subsequent century, suggesting that some may need “a new translation in English after an interval of close on a hundred years (vi), many more versions have been published since 1897. Indeed, James could scarcely have considered that his own work would be re-printed 108 years after his somewhat presumptuous suggestion. In 2005, Barnes & Noble Books published his 1897 translation as a part of its Library of Essential Reading Series. Obviously not prompted by linguistic change (like Preston) or scholarly interest (like Walsh), the publisher has simply reproduced James’s translation. Curiously, however, no credit is given to James for the translation in the apparatus or on the cover. A simple comparison of the texts makes it plain that it is in fact his 1897 work, wrapped

in a Barnes & Noble edition and packaged with a new introduction by Professor Michael V. Dougherty of Ohio Dominican University. James's Preface, Proem, Index of Verse Interludes, and Epilogue are not included in this new printing, while his References to Quotations in the Text is retained but moved to the back of the volume. The footnotes he had placed throughout have been gathered into a single Endnotes section, and a current Suggested Reading list has been appended.

Interestingly, the publishing information page provided in this 2005 volume claims an ancient heritage for this text, "Written circa AD 525, published circa 7th century AD" (iv). To the completely uninitiated, it could appear that the words contained within the book's pages have been around for almost 1500 years and that this edition is somehow related to an unidentified edition from the 7th century. This irresponsible and inexplicable documentation hinders readers from understanding what exactly they have in their hands when they sit down with this volume. Apparently, the motivation for using this version is at least in part financial, since the pre-1923 work is in the public domain here in the United States and thus a prime candidate for a publishing house like Barnes and Noble needing an inexpensive work to produce and market "in-house." The back cover characterizes the Boethian original as "arguably the most famous work of early medieval philosophy and literature" and promotes it as a literary achievement: "*The Consolation of Philosophy* has survived as a brilliant work of Latin literature, and early English translations written by King Alfred the Great, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth I are still extant." Thus, these versions by significant people make the original significant, and so the Barnes & Noble Library of Essential Reading offers this 108 year-old translation by a relatively unknown and officially uncredited H.R. James.

20th - and 21st-Century Translations

W. V. Cooper's Prose Translation (1902)

Only five years after James, W.V. Cooper translated the entire *Consolation* into prose for the Temple Classics series, taking up his project upon the millennial celebration of King Alfred's version. While it may appear that Cooper's volume and Alfred's translation thus bookend the 1000 year period during which Boethius's work has been translated into English, and that perhaps the matter is considered closed, the prefatory note is careful to call this 1902 rendering "*this first of twentieth-century versions*" (169). This expectation that other volumes would follow suggests that the editor senses the potential of the *Consolation* to find future translators, publishers, and readers.

The alleged orthodoxy of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, even as it presents only natural and not revealed theology, seems to have preoccupied more than only a number of Boethius's early translators, since Cooper expresses similar concerns at the opening of the twentieth century. He discusses the issues raised by the *Consolation* in terms of their biblical precedent, especially in Job, in the other poetic books from the Old Testament, and in the teachings of the New Testament. Moreover, he asserts that Boethius's text "appealed to Pagan and Christian alike" but that while "no Christian doctrine [is] relied upon," there is also nothing which could be in conflict with Christianity" (171). He also notes that Philosophy resembles both Solomon's "Wisdom" and John's "Word" (171).

Richard Green's Prose Translation (1962)

Modern versions of the *Consolation*, published and then re-printed for wider distribution, include in their cover advertisements, prefaces, and introductions some mention of the text's content and its purpose. For instance, The Library of Liberal Arts published Richard Green's 1962 prose translation, an effort meant "to provide students and the general reader with an accurate version of this famous medieval book in modern, idiomatic English" (v). Green offers his best prose rendition of the source material's

concepts, defending his efforts in light of the obvious distance between Boethius's Latin of the sixth century and his own English of the twentieth: "I have tried to represent his ideas as nearly as I could in the language at my disposal" (v). In addition, Green's text offers his readers footnotes where appropriate, commenting on difficult and allusive passages, and he often subtitles a given prose or meter with an explanatory sentence. He also provides a thorough summary of the *Consolation* and an index for key terms and names.

Citing concerns about the constraints of versification, Green presents the *Consolation* in an all-prose text, since translators of the *metra* "have inevitably been forced by the demands of their art rather far from the meaning of the original" (v). He believes he should maintain "fidelity to the author's ideas" (iii) and not to his form, aiming, then, for a literal prose rendering of the metrical sections of Boethius's work. Motivated by pedagogical rather than literary interests, Green keeps "the student of late medieval literature" in mind, hoping "that what is gained in fidelity to the historical language of the metrical passages will compensate for the loss of poetic reach and elegance which a good verse translation can provide" (vi). The terms "poetic reach" and "elegance" suggest that Green sees the poetic act as somehow more lofty, ambitious, and/or refined than the apparently egalitarian, grounded, and/or common process of prose writing. While he admits that poetry has qualities that prose cannot duplicate, Green explains that opting for a verse translation of the meters would have led him to "force" the ideas of the original into a predetermined form, whereas his choice of a prose version allows his representation of those ideas to flow out in the translating language, unconstrained by poetic form.

Later re-printed by Dover (2002), Green's translation of the classic text has become widely available and inexpensive for students and the public at large. However, it represents a unique deviation from the recent trend toward approaching Boethius's *Consolation* with a great deal of interest in its historical and cultural significance but with little concern for its contemporary personal, moral, or philosophical applicability. Green's introduction assures readers that the text

can still be read with interest in the twentieth century [ironically, not emended in this 21st-century printing], not only because it is a landmark in the history of Western thought, but because its subject is of no less concern now than it was then. And, since the problem and its solution are presented poetically as well as doctrinally, succeeding ages have found in Boethius' work a remedy against desolation of the spirit which has never lost its curative power. (vii)

While not an explicit endorsement of the *Consolation's* solution, this recommendation at least confirms that the issues that were at stake for Boethius are still at stake for modern readers. However, his discussion of poetic treatments for the downtrodden spirit distinguishes between the healing powers of the *metra* and those of the prose arguments. Apparently, Green expects that those who are not comforted by the so-called doctrinal elements in the prose portions will find some consolation in the form of the rest of Boethius' text—whether or not they find any remedy in the actual content of those poems. He implies that the act of reading poetry is what provides the consolation to some, perhaps unwittingly calling into question, then, his decision to render the prosimetrum entirely in prose. In a more explicit endorsement, however, Dover's 2002 printing packages Green's volume as "a superbly accessible edition that still exercises a powerful influence on contemporary thinkers and theologians, and represents a source of comfort and solace for the general reader" (back cover). Of course, publishers would be interested in promoting both the generic usefulness and the particular relevance of a text being packaged and marketed for sale.

Victor Watts's Prosimetric Translation (1969)

In 1999, Penguin re-printed the prosimetric 1969 translation by Victor Watts, the back cover declaring the importance of the text and the usefulness of the translation:

The clarity of Boethius' thought and his breadth of vision made *The Consolation of Philosophy* hugely popular throughout medieval Europe and his ideas suffused the thought of Chaucer and Dante. This translation makes it accessible to the modern reader while losing nothing of Boethius' poetic artistry and philosophical brilliance.

Thus, one finds that the purpose of the Penguin text is to bring the *Consolation* to an audience interested not necessarily in the ideas themselves but rather in the impact these ideas once had upon the key literary figures from the distant historical period during which Boethian thought gained wide acceptance and thus exerted great influence. Furthermore, even if one accepts the publisher's claim that Watts was able to preserve all of what was poetically and philosophically impressive within the *Consolation*, nowhere in this version is Boethius's work explicitly presented as having contemporary moral or philosophical applicability, or even some kind of actual consolation to offer its readers. In fact, Watts' introductory remarks suggest that "Boethius cannot be held to blame for not answering the kind of difficulty which might be raised today" (xxx). Furthermore, he suggests, readers who find Boethian explanations "not entirely satisfactory" should recall Philosophy's statement in Book IV, prose 6, that "it is not allowed to man to comprehend in thought all the ways of the divine work" (xxx). Watts offers not so much an apologetic defense of the actual ideas themselves, as much as a disclaimer based upon the sincerity of Boethius's efforts: "[f]ew have grappled more honestly with the problems of good and evil, fate and free will" (xxx).

Watts introduces his prosimetric rendering with short articles that provide readers with biographical information on the author, a summary of the *Consolation* itself, a discussion of a critical crux, and a textual note: "Boethius's Life and Writings," "*The Consolation of Philosophy*," "The Christianity of Boethius," and "The Text." He also aids students of Boethius by appending a bibliography and a glossary of proper names. Watts acknowledges the great difficulty of translating the *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, noting the technical vocabulary and the numerous verse forms, and explaining that while he does provide a verse translation of the meters, he does not attempt to imitate the various individual verse forms themselves. Reflecting on his source's arrangement of prose and poetry, Watts pays tribute to the *Consolation*'s "skilled fusion of more than one genre" (xxiii), a sacred dialogue in a form similar in structure to the tradition of Menippean Satire and featuring a combination of monologue with the "dialectic of the Platonic dialogue" (xxiii). He also refers to the meters that "intersperse and enliven the discourse" as "integral" elements of the work that are inserted for various purposes:

“[t]hey act as a relief from the concentration of the argument” and appear less often as the infirm character of Boethius improves; “they are used to summarize or even advance the discussion . . . [S]ometimes their function is not unlike that of the chorus in a Greek tragedy, offering a gnomic comment and lending distance and perspective to the intense and personal progress of the dialogue” (xxiv). However, Watts, like I.T. before him, apologizes for his own poetic efforts by mentioning Chaucer’s prose version: “[e]ven our ‘prince of poets’, Chaucer, turned it only into prose which was sometimes awkward. I cannot hope to have had better success” (xxxvi). Watt implies, then, that Chaucer was incapable of translating its meters into verse, or that he had tried it, failed, and thus resorted to prose. Thus, with such a high opinion of the metrical portions and their importance to the nature and literary success of the *Consolation*, it is little wonder that Watts shapes his translation into a prosimetrum.

S.J. Tester’s Prosimetric Translation (1973)

Harvard’s Loeb Classical Library edition first appeared in 1918, using I.T.’s version from 1609; however, in 1973, Loeb printed S.J. Tester’s prosimetric version alongside its Latin edition of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, replacing the more literary and less literal version by I.T. The 1609 translation was termed “too far removed from the purposes of the Loeb series” (vii). Tester’s “aim was, in addition to correction, to produce throughout the volume a homogeneous rendering, reasonably literal, which would make philosophical sense” (vii). Loeb thus offers Tester’s work as a standard translation, a reliable representation of the original text as preserved by its editors, allowing this edition a place, then, alongside other great works within the distinctive collection.

Peter Glassgold’s Rendering of the Metra (1994)

Offering perhaps the most unusual of all the English versions of the *Consolation*, Peter Glassgold assembled what is only the second complete rendering of just the Boethian *metra*, the poems being interspersed with short prose summaries of the

intervening passages. A facing page (Latin-English) version, his 1994 *Boethius, The Poems from On the Consolation of Philosophy: Translated Out of the Original Latin into Diverse Historical Englishings* delivers a collage of previous translations, as its English lines are comprised of a mixture of Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern English—all gathered and/or derived from various editions of Alfred’s poems (Fox, Krapp), Chaucer (Morris, Hanna and Lawler), Walton (Science), and Queen Elizabeth (Pemberton). Glassgold characterizes his selections as those that have contributed to the great legacy of Boethius’s *Consolation*: “Gibbon notes that Boethius’ work gains in honor by Alfred’s attention to it—and one should add by extension, Chaucer’s and Elizabeth’s as well” (14). He asserts that “the underlying purpose of translation is most commonly to re-create the original in the language of one’s own time. Thus due respect is paid to the efforts of translators of the historical past” (14). Yet, the focus of linguistic and poetic inquiry has been trained on only those versions which stand out to Glassgold as significant, including Chaucer’s, which is actually a prose translation.

Glassgold’s work does not present his poems devoid of all context, however, since he narrates the action and discusses the import of the intervening prose passages, inserting these summaries as parts of a frame for the poetry. He has striven to maintain the integrity of Boethius’ line divisions in terms of stops and run-ons, and he has often followed the metrical design of the Latin poems. His interests, then, are in both the aural and the visual aspects of the presentation:

I have allowed historical resonance full play. . . . I have drawn freely from this music, composing phrases or whole lines in mixed varieties of English, borrowing words if need be from translators of earlier eras. . . . I have kept most ancient spellings as I found them, as visual counterparts to the translations’ historical—or in linguistic terms, diachronic—sound-collage. (15)

His “diachronic-sound-collage” must be intended for oral delivery then, even as the ancient words are woven into lines along with modern forms and present a visual collage, with Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern English all pasted in together.

The project Glassgold undertakes is thus linguistic and poetic, a tribute to the literary history of the *Consolation* in English that conflates and combines quotations from familiar texts, specimens of language, and evidence of the concept of change itself.

Consider a passage from Glassgold's version of Book V, meter 2:

Not so of the great world its scieppend
scanning gesceafta from on heye
gainst whom no waights of earth wipstonap
ne niht mid hire miercum wolcnum.
What is, what was, and what shal bifall
in oo strook of mode he ongiett;
who solwyn þurhsiehþ ealle þing
him soþely þou maist clepe sol. (159)

This creative version of the *Consolation*'s poems thus demonstrates that not only has the time passed when the Boethian source would be translated for those who would genuinely benefit from its philosophical comforts, but so also has the time come when one may turn an eye backwards and survey the presence of specifically the poetic portions of this work in English.

Glassgold offers, then, neither an eulogy for nor an autopsy of the selected parts of the Frankensteinian creature he has constructed from the versions at hand, but rather a tribute to the long and ongoing life that these translations by such notable figures have allowed Boethius's *Consolation*. In fact, he advocates Walter Benjamin's assessment that translation is a "part of the 'afterlife' of" a literary work, in which the original attains an 'ever-renewed and most abundant flowering'" (qtd. in Glassgold 14). With each translation, then, the *Consolation*'s life has been extended and its influence expanded to include not only those who have read it in their own language, but also any whose linguistic and literary interests have drawn them to the rich tradition of Boethius in English.

P.G. Walsh's Prosimetric Translation (1999)

Aiming at a more popular audience, Oxford University Press recently distributed the 1999 prosimetric translation by P.G. Walsh, who prefaces his version by explaining how the contemporary scholarly climate has provided an opportune moment for his work:

This is an appropriate time to launch a new translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In the past few years there has been a significant revival of interest in Boethius: this has been marked by several studies which have partially restored him to the prominence which he enjoyed for over a millennium from the Carolingian age onwards. My rendering, with its accompanying introduction and annotation, has sought to exploit these important researches. (v)

Walsh's volume does not necessarily come, then, from a desire to make the text itself more accessible through a more literal or a more contemporary translation, or for that matter, from any particularly literary impulse at all.

When Walsh's 1999 translation was re-packaged in 2000 by Oxford University Press for its World's Classics Series, it became part of a larger campaign to deliver important texts to the masses. In fact, a reviewer from *Classical Outlook* had already praised Walsh's 1999 edition for making the work more accessible for the general reader:

This volume fills a significant void in Boethian scholarship by providing the only thorough commentary on the *Consolatio* available in English Both the notes and the thorough introduction to the work display Walsh's wide reading, erudition, and ease at addressing non-specialists.⁶⁴

The effort to bring Boethius's *Consolation* to those who do not know him in the original involves, then, more than a translation that renders the prose and verse in a readable style. Walsh's volume brings together a significant body of extra-textual work in his apparatus, offering (as the back cover advertises) an introduction, a textual note, a bibliography, a chronology, and explanatory notes.

⁶⁴ This review is posted both on the Oxford University Press site for the 1999 edition and on that edition's Amazon.com page: <http://www.amazon.com/Consolation-Philosophy-Boethius/dp/0198152280>.

Joel C. Relihan's Prosimetric Translation (2001)

In 2001, Hackett Publishing Company printed Joel C. Relihan's version of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, a translation that might at first seem to appeal primarily to the specialist, for it offers the only prosimetric rendering where the Latin rhythms are reflected in the English versions of the *metra*—with accent marks identifying the stressed syllables within each line of the poems. Relihan believes that “[t]he poetic nature of the text cannot be ignored” (xxviii), and so his prosimetric translation actually attempts to “reproduce through English accents the rhythms and meters of the original poems”; he does this to “make the reader stop and take the poems seriously” (xxviii). Relihan confesses, however, that “[n]o English translation of a Latin poem can hope to mirror the music of these Latin originals” (xxviii), and that “[i]t is possible for other English accents to be heard against this background, and I flatter myself in thinking that the resulting synthesis of these two competing rhythms, while not the equivalent of the Latin complexity, makes a worthy music of its own” (xxix). He also argues for the importance of the metrical portions of the text, suggesting that they do not merely repeat the sense of the prosaic sections but actually “shift the focus of the arguments, or redirect them in surprising ways” (xxviii). Furthermore, in an article explaining his translation process and rationale, Relihan asserts that the “poems are integral to the texture of the text (if you will pardon the expression)” (“Translating Boethius”).

His translations of the poems even include accent marks to guide readers and help them appreciate the rhythms of the lines as they would have been stressed in Latin. Consequently, Relihan offers an English translation of Boethius's prosimetrum that has been shaped less by the particular concerns, ideals, and rules of English prosody than by the structure and form of the original *metra*. While a work like Relihan's may hold significant interest for an academically advanced audience, Hackett Publishing casts a wider net for this text, promoting it on the back cover with a review by Paul Spade (Indiana University) that touts the translation as “invaluable both to the beginning student and to the seasoned scholar with the original Latin in hand.” Thus, it may also give the

uninitiated a usable translation of the *Consolation* that also happens to offer a proper and more informed introduction to the literary qualities of Boethius's prosimetric text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Alfred the Great. *Alfred's Metres of Boethius*. Ed. Bill Griffiths. Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1991.
- . *Consolationis Philosophiæ, Libri V. Anglo-Saxonice Redditi ab Alfredo, Inclyto Angolo-Saxonum Rege*. Ed. Christopher Rawlinson. E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1698.
- . *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius' Consolatione Philosophiæ, with a Literal English Translation*. 1864. Ed. and Trans. Samuel Fox (prose). Trans. Martin Tupper (verse). London: George Bell and Sons, 1895.
- . *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiæ, with an English Translation*. Ed. and Trans. J.S. Cardale. London: William Pickering, 1829.
- . *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of The Meters of Boethius, with an English Translation*. Ed. and Trans. Samuel Fox. London: William Pickering, 1835.
- . *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius' De consolatione philosophiæ*. Ed. Walter J. Sedgefield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899.
- . *King Alfred's Poems: Now First Turned into English Metres*. Trans. Martin F. Tupper. London: A. Hall, Virtue, &c., 1850.
- . *King Alfred's Version of the 'Consolations' of Boethius, Done into Modern English, with an Introduction*. Trans. Walter J. Sedgefield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900.
- . *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius*. ASPR 5. Ed. George P. Krapp. New York: 1932. 153-203.
- Anonymous. *The Metres of Boethius, on the Consolation of Philosophy*. London: J. Crowder, 1792.
- Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. 1973. 2nd ed. Loeb Classical Library. Ed. and Trans. S.J. Tester. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Bracegirdle, John. *Psychoparmacon. 1602. A Translation of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiæ (MS BL Additional 11401)*. Ed. Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. and Jason Edward Streed. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999.

- Causton, William. *Consolation of Philosophy, in Five Books, Translated into English*. London: 1730.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. "Boece." c. 1385. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987. 395-469.
- . *Chaucer's Translation of Boethius's "De Consolatione Philosophiæ"*. Ed. Richard Morris. Early English Text Society. Extra Series, No. 5. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Colville, George. *Consolation of Philosophy*. London: John Cawood, 1556.
- . *Consolation of Philosophy*. 1556. Ed. Ernest Belfort Bax. The Tudor Library V. London: David Nutt in the Strand, 1897.
- Coningsby, Harry. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. London: James Flesher, 1664.
- Cooper, W.V. *The Consolation of Philosophy: an English Translation*. The Temple Classics. Ed. Israel Golancz. London: Dent, 1902.
- Duncan, Robert. *The Five Books of Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius, on the Consolation of Philosophy, Translated into English*. Edinburgh: William Creech, 1789.
- Elizabeth I. *Consolation of Philosophy*. Ed. Caroline Pemberton. Early English Text Society 113. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1899.
- Elys, Edmund. *Summum Bonum, or an Explication of the Divine Goodness, in the Words of the Most Renowned Boetius*. Oxford, H. Hall, 1674.
- Fanshawe, Sir Richard. *The Poems and Translations of Sir Richard Fanshawe*. 2 vols. Ed. Peter Davidson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Fletcher, Phineas. *Giles and Phineas Fletcher: Poetical Works*. 2 vols. Ed. Frederick S. Boas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- . "A Translation of Boethius, the third book and last verse"; "A Translation of Boethius, book 2, verse 7" *Poeticall Miscellanies* (1633). Boas. vol. 2. 243-45.
- . "Chorus." Act IV, scene 6. *Sicelides* (1631). Boas. vol. 2. 246.
- . "Translations of Metra in Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiæ": "Boetius. Libr. 2. Metr. 2."; "Boetius. Libr. 4. Metr. 2."; "Boetius. Libr. 3. Metr. 7."; "Boetius. Libr. 3. Metr. 8."; "Boetius. Libr. 3. Metr. 10."; "Boetius. Libr. 3. Metr. 12."; "Boetius. Libr. 2. Metr. 4."; "Boetius. Libr. 3. Metr. 6."; "Boetius. Libr. 5. Metr. 5." *A Father's Testament* (1670) Boas. vol. 2. 333-39.

---. V, st. 61-68. *The Purple Island* (1633). Boas. vol. 2. 66-8.

Glassgold, Peter. *Boethius, The Poems from On the Consolation of Philosophy: Translated Out of the Original Latin into Diverse Historical Englishings*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1994.

Green, Richard H. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1962.

Hxxxxx, Duke of xxxxxxxx. *A Translation of Flav. Annicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius's Comforts and Consolations of Philosophy*. BL MS Additional 40693A+B. Microfilm. 1693.

I.T. *Five Books of Philosophical Comfort, Full of Christian Consolation*. 1609. Ed. William Anderson. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963.

James, H.R. *The Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius: Translated into English Prose and Verse*. London: Elliot Stock, 1897.

---. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. The Barnes & Noble Library of Essential Reading. Introduction by Michael V. Dougherty. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2005.

de Lorris, Guillaume, and Jean de Meun. *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. Harry W. Robbins. Ed. Charles W. Dunn. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Milton, John. *The Riverside Milton*. Ed. Roy Flannagan. Boston: Houghton/Mifflin, 1998.

Piozzi, Hester. *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. to which are added some poems never before printed*. vol. 2. 2 vols. Dublin, 1788.

Plato. "Timaeus." *Timaeus and Critias*. Desmond Lee, trans. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

Pope, Alexander. "From *BOETIUS, de cons. Philos.*" *Alexander Pope: Minor Poems*. Ed. Norman Ault and John Butt. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1954. 73.

Preston, Paul. *The Works of Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius, Concerning the Consolation of Philosophy*. Doylestown: Asher Miner, 1808.

Preston, Richard Lord Viscount. *Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, of the Consolation of Philosophy*. London: F.D., 1695.

Ridpath, Philip. *Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, Translated from the Latin*. London: for C. Dilly, in the Poultry, 1785.

- Robinson, Fred C. and E. G. Stanley, eds. *Old English Verse Texts from Many Sources: A Comprehensive Collection*. Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile. vol. 23, 1991.
- “Solomon and Saturn.” Labyrinth Library: Old English Literature. Ed. Tony Jebson. 19 Oct. 1994. 02 Jan. 2007.
<http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/library/oe/texts/a13.html>
- Spencer, Sir Edward. *Boethius: de Consolatione, Anglo-Latine, Expressus*. London, 1654.
- Vaughan, Henry. *Henry Vaughan: The Complete Poems*. Ed. Alan Rudrum. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976.
- . “Translation of Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy*.” *Olor Iscanus*. 1651. I.i, I.ii, I.iv, I.v, I.vi, I.vii. II.1, II.ii, II.iii, II.iv, II.v, II.vii, II.viii. Rudrum. 111-122.
- . “Translation of Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy*.” *Translations*. 1678. III.ii, III.vi, III.xii, IV.iii, IV.vi. Rudrum 353-360.
- Walton, John. *Consolation of Philosophy*. 1410. Ed. Mark Science. Early English Text Society no. 170. London: Oxford University Press, 1927.
- . *Boke of Comfort*. Ed. Thomas Rychard. Tavistock Abbey, 1525.
- Walsh, P.G. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. 1999. Oxford World’s Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Watts, Victor. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Penguin Books, 1969. Revised, 1999.
- Wyatt, Sir Thomas. “195.” *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*. Ed. Kenneth Muir. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963. 180-81.

Secondary Sources

- Astell, Ann W. *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- . “Visualizing Boethius’s *Consolation* as Romance.” *Carmina Philosophiæ* 3 (1994): 23-36.
- Barrett, Helen M. *Boethius: Some Aspects of His Times and Work*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965.

- Bately, Janet. "The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign: Translation or Transformation?" *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*. Ed. Paul Szarmach. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000. 3-27.
- Beer, Jeanette, ed. *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997.
- Benison, Liam. "Translation During King Alfred's Reign: the Politics of Conversion and Truth." *The Medieval Translator*. Vol. 6. Ed. Roger Ellis, Rene Tixier, and Bernd Weitemeier. Proceedings of the International Conference of Göttingen. 22-25 Jul. Brussels, Belgium: Brepols, 1996. 82-99.
- Benkert, Lysbeth. "Translation as Image-Making: Elizabeth I's Translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (Jan. 2001): 2.1-20. 25 Nov. 2006. <http://chass.utoronto.ca/emls/06-3/benkboet.htm>
- Bolton, Diane K. "The Study of the Consolation of Philosophy in Anglo-Saxon England." *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du moyen age* 64 (1977): 33-78.
- Bolton, W.F. "How Boethian is Alfred's *Boethius*?" *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*. Ed. Paul E. Szarmach. 1986. 153-68.
- Camargo, Martin. "The Consolation of Pandarus." *The Chaucer Review* 25.3 (1991): 214-28.
- Camden, William. *Annales Rerum Gestarum Angliae et Hiberniae Regnante Elizabetha (1615 and 1625)*. Ed. Dana F. Sutton. The Philological Museum, University of Birmingham. 1 Feb. 2001. 25 Nov. 2006. <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/camden/1592e.html#boetius>
- Cannon, Christopher. *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Carretta, Vincent. "*The Kingis Quair* and *The Consolation of Philosophy*." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 16 (1981): 14-28.
- Chadwick, Henry. *The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981.
- Chance, Jane. "Chaucerian Irony in the Boethian Short Poems: the Dramatic Tension Between Classical and Christian." *The Chaucer Review* 20.3 (1986): 235-45.
- Clarke, Adam. *An Account of the English Translations of All the Greek and Roman Classics*. London, 1806.

- Cline, James M. "Chaucer and Jean de Meun: *de Consolatione Philosophiæ*." *Journal of English Literary History* 3 (1936): 170-81.
- Conlee, John W. "A Note on Verse Composition in the *Meters of Boethius*." *Neophilologische Mitteilungen* 71 (1970): 576-85.
- Cook, Kimberly K. "Philosophy's Metamorphosis into Wisdom: An Exploration of King Alfred's Re-Creation of the Central Symbol in *The Consolation of Philosophy*." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 17.3-4 (1996): 177-85.
- Copeland, Rita. "Rhetoric and Vernacular Translation in the Middle Ages." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1987): 41-75.
- Couch, Tracy Annette. "Translation and Linguistic Theory in the English Middle Ages." Diss. Purdue University, 1993.
- Curley, Thomas F., III. "How to Read the *Consolation of Philosophy*." *Interpretation* 14.2-3 (1986): 211-63.
- Davis, Kathleen. "The Performance of Translation Theory in King Alfred's National Literary Program." *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays on Literary and Cultural Transmission in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*. Ed. Robert Boenig and Kathleen Davis. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 2000. 149-170.
- Discenza, Nicole Guenther. *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005.
- . "Power, Skill, and Virtue in the Old English *Boethius*." *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 81-108.
- Dolson, Guy B. "Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in English Literature During the Eighteenth Century." *Classical Weekly* 15 (1922): 124-6.
- . "The Sources of King Alfred's Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*." *Anglia* 82 (1964): 23-57.
- , and W. E. Houghton, Jr. "A Note on the 1674 Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*." *The Review of English Studies* 10.37 (1934): 71-76.
- Donaghey, Brian, et al. "Walton's Boethius: From Manuscript to Print." *English Studies* 5 (1999): 398-407.
- Donner, Morton. "Derived Words in Chaucer's *Boece*: the Translator as Wordsmith." *Chaucer Review* 18 (1984): 187-203.

- Donogue, Daniel. "Word Order and Poetic Style: Auxiliary and Verbal in *The Meters of Boethius*." *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986): 167-96.
- Dunleavy, Gareth W. "The Wound and the Comforter: the Consolations of Geoffrey Chaucer." *Papers on Language and Literature* 3 (1967): 14-27.
- Ebin, Lois A. "Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*." *Philological Quarterly* 53.3 (1974): 321-341.
- Eckhardt, Caroline D. "The Medieval Prosimetrum Genre (from Boethius to *Boece*)." *Genre* 16 (1983): 21- 38.
- Elbow, Peter. "Two Boethian Speeches in *Troilus and Criseyde* and Chaucerian Irony." *Literary Criticism and Historical Understanding*. Ed. Philip Damon. Columbia University Press, 1967. 85-107.
- Eldredge, Laurence. "Boethian Epistemology and Chaucer's *Troilus* in the Light of Fourteenth-Century Thought." *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976): 49-75.
- Evans, Gillian R. "Time and Eternity: Boethian and Augustinian Sources of the Thought of the Late Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries." *Classical Folia* 31 (1977): 105-18.
- Fischer, Olga. "A Comparative Study of Philosophical Terms in the Alfredian and Chaucerian Boethius." *Neophilologus* 63 (1979): 622-39.
- Fish, Varda. "The Origin and Original Object of *Troilus and Criseyde*." *The Chaucer Review* 18.4 (1984): 304-15.
- Foug, Karin E. "Placing Earth at the Center of the Cosmos: *The Kingis Quair* as Boethian Revision." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 32 (2001): 140-149.
- Frakes, Jerold C. "The Ancient Concept of Casus and its Early Medieval Interpretations." *Vivarium* 22.1 (1984): 1-34.
- France, Peter, ed. *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Frantzen, Allen J. *King Alfred*. Twayne's English Authors Series. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- Gersh, Stephen, and Marriten Hoenen, eds. *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages*. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002.

- Gleason, Mark J. "Clearing the Fields: Towards a Reassessment of Chaucer's Use of Trevet in the *Boece*." *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. Ed. Alistair Minnis. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1987. 89-105.
- Godden, Malcolm, ed. *The Alfredian Boethius Project*. 16 Nov. 2006. 02 Jan. 2007.
<http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/boethius/>
- Grady, Frank. "The Boethian Reader of *Troilus and Criseyde*." *The Chaucer Review* 33.3 (1999): 230-51.
- Gray, D. "Books of Comfort." *Medieval English Religious Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*. Ed. G. Kratzman and J. Simpson. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1986. 209-21.
- Greenfield, Stanley, and Daniel Calder, eds. *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*. New York: NYU Press, 1996.
- Grinda, Klaus. "The Myth of Circe in King Alfred's *Boethius*." *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*. Ed. Paul Szarmach. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000. 237-265.
- Hammond, Eleanor Prescott. *English Verse Between Chaucer and Surrey*. 1927. New York: Octagon Books, 1969.
- Hartman, Ronald. "Boethian Parallels in the Tale of Melibee." *English Studies* 79.2 (1998): 166-70.
- Herold, Christine. "Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiæ* as a Bridge Between Classical and Christian Conceptions of Tragedy." *Carmina Philosophiæ* 3 (1994): 37-52.
- Houghton, Walter Edwards, Jr. *English Translations of Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiæ in the Seventeenth Century*. Diss. Yale University Press, 1931.
- Inglis, John. *On Medieval Philosophy*. Wadsworth Philosophical Topics Series. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004.
- Jackson, John Morris, and Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. "The Early Education of Queen Elizabeth I and Her Later Translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*." *Medieval English Studies* 10.2 (2002): 183-198.
<http://hompi.sogang.ac.kr/anthony/mesak/mes102/Kaylor.htm>
- Jefferson, Bernard L. *Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius*. 1917. New York: Gordian Press, 1968.
- Jessup, S.S.M. *Remembrance in Good Works: A Study of the Prose Translations of King Alfred*. Folkstone, Kent: Engliscan Gesipas, 1979.

- Johnson, Ian. "New Evidence for the Authorship of Walton's Boethius." *Notes and Queries* 43 (1996): 19-21.
- . "Placing Walton's Boethius." *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio Philosophiae*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 58. Ed. Maarten Hoenen and Lodi Nauta. New York: Brill, 1997. 217-242.
- . "This Brigous Questioun: Translating Free Will and Predestination in Walton's *Boethius* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*." *Carmina Philisophiae* 3 (1994): 1-21.
- Kaylor, Noel. H., Jr. "Boethian Resonance in Chaucer's *Canticus Troili*." *The Chaucer Review* 27.3 (1993): 219-27.
- . "Interpolations in *The Boke of Coumfort of Bois*: A Late-Medieval Translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*." *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 23 (1996): 74-80.
- . "John Walton's 1410 Verse Translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in the Context of Its Medieval Tradition." *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 6 (1983): 121-48.
- . "John Walton's 1410 Verse Translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in the Context of its Medieval Tradition in England, France, and Germany." MA Thesis. Vanderbilt University, 1984.
- . *The Medieval Consolation of Philosophy: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992.
- . "The Medieval Translations of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in England, France, and Germany: an Analysis and Annotated Bibliography." Diss. Vanderbilt University, 1985.
- Kiernan, Kevin. "Alfred the Great's Burnt Boethius." *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*. Ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998. 7-32.
- . "Deor: the Consolations of an Anglo-Saxon Boethius." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 79 (1978): 333-340.
- . "Old Manuscripts/New Technologies." *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*. Ed. Mary P. Richards. New York: Garland, 1994. New York: Routledge, 2001. 37-54.
- . "The Source of the Napier Fragment." *Digital Medievalist* 1.1 (2005). 20 Apr. 2005. 02 Jan. 2007. <http://www.digitalmedievalist.org/article.cfm?RecID=5>

- , ed. *The Electronic Boethius Project*. 27 Nov. 2005. 02 Jan. 2007.
<http://beowulf.engl.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBoethius/inlad.htm>
- Langdale, Abram B. *Phineas Fletcher: Man of Letters, Science and Divinity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1937.
- Leigh, Oliver H.G., ed. *English Belles-lettres from A.D. 907 to 1834*. Universal Classics Library. London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901.
- Lerer, Seth. "Boethian Silence." *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* 12 (1984): 97-125.
- . *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in The Consolation of Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Discarded Image*. 1964. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Lopez, David A. "Translation and Tradition: Reading the *Consolation of Philosophy* Through King Alfred's *Boethius*." *The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Luise von Flotow, and Daniel Russell. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2001. 69-84.
- Lynch, Kathryn L. *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*. Chaucer Studies XXVII. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000.
- Machan, Tim W. "Chaucer as Translator." *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Roger Ellis. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989.
- . "Editorial Method and Medieval Translations: The Example of Chaucer's *Boece*." *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988): 188-196.
- . *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece*. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1985.
- Malaczkov, Szilvia. "Geoffrey Chaucer's Translation Strategies." *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 9.1 (2001): 33-43.
- Marenbon, John. *Boethius*. Great Medieval Thinkers Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Martin, Thomas L. "Time and Eternity in Troilus and Criseyde." *Renascence* 51.3 (1999): 167-79.
- Means, Michael H. *The Consolatio Genre in Medieval English Literature*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1972.

- Metcalf, Allan A. "On the Authorship and Originality of the Meters of Boethius." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 71 (1970): 185-7.
- . *Poetic Diction in the Old English Meters of Boethius*. The Hague: Mouton, 1973.
- Minnis, A.J. *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982.
- , ed. *Chaucer's Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius*. Chaucer Studies XVIII. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993.
- Minnis, A.J., and Tim W. Machan. "The *Boece* as Late-Medieval Translation." *Minnis* 167-88.
- , ed. *The Medieval Boethius*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987.
- Morley, Henry, and William H. Griffin. *English Writers: An Attempt Towards a History of English Literature*. Vol. 2. London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1888. 10 vols.
- Nash-Marshall, Siobhan. *Participation and the Good: A Study in Boethian Metaphysics*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000.
- O'Daly, Gerard. *The Poetry of Boethius: Studies in the Consolation of Philosophy*. University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Patch, Howard R. *The Tradition of Boethius: A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture*. 1935. New York: Russell and Russell, 1970.
- Payne, F.A. *King Alfred and Boethius: An Analysis of the Old English Version of the Consolation of Philosophy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.
- Pearsall, Derek. *Old English and Middle English Poetry*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1977.
- Perry, Maria. *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 1990.
- Pollard, Alfred W. *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1964.
- Proppe, Katherine. "King Alfred's *Consolation of Philosophy*." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 74 (1973): 635-48.
- Pryor, Felix. *Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Rand, Edward Kennard. *Founders of the Middle Ages*. New York: Dover, 1928.

- Reiss, Edmund. *Boethius*. Twayne's World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Relihan, Joel C. *The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's Consolation*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- . "Translating Boethius." *Wheaton Quarterly* Fall 2002. 13 Dec. 2006. 01 Jan. 2007. <http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/Quarterly/q2002fall/translating.html>
- Sanyal, Jharna. "Criseyde Through the Boethian Glass." *Journal of the Department of English (University of Calcutta)* 22 (1986-87): 72-89.
- Stanton, Robert. "King Alfred and Early English Translation." *The Culture of Transmission in Anglo-Saxon England*. Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2002. 55-100.
- Stevanovitch, Collette. "Envelope Patterns in Translation: the Old English *Metres of Boethius*." *Medieval Translator* 6 (1998): 101-13.
- Stierle, Karlheinz. "Translatio Studii and Renaissance: From Vertical to Horizontal Translation." *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*. Ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996. 55-67.
- Sweeney, Eileen C. *Logic, Theology, and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille*. The New Middle Ages Series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Szarmach, Paul. "Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul." *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays on Literary and Cultural Transmission in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*. Ed. Robert Boenig and Kathleen Davis. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 2000. 127-148.
- . "The Meaning of Alfred's *Preface to the Pastoral Care*." *Mediaevalia* 6 (1980): 57-86.
- . "Meter 20: Context Bereft." *ANQ* 15.2 (2002): 28-34.
- . "The *Timaeus* in Old English." *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Roberts*. Costerus New Series, no. 133. Ed. Christian J. Kay and Louise M. Sylvester. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2001. 255-267.
- Thundy, Zacharias P. "The Dreame of Chaucer: Boethian Consolation or Political Celebration?" *Carmina Philosophiæ* 4 (1995): 91-109.
- Utz, Richard J. "'For all that comth, comth by necessitee': Chaucer's Critique of Fourteenth-Century Boethianism in *Troilus and Criseyde* IV, 957-58." *AAA* 21 (1996): 29-32.

- Varvis, Stephen. "The 'Consolation' of Boethius: An Analytical Inquiry into His Intellectual Processes and Goals." Diss. Mellen Research University, 1991.
- de Vogel, C.J. "The Problem of Philosophy and the Christian Faith in Boethius' Consolatio." *Romanitas et Christianitas*. W. den Boer, et al, eds. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1973. 357-70.
- Wilcher, Robert. "'Feathering Some Slower Hours': Henry Vaughan's Verse Translations." *Scintilla* 4 (2000): 142-61.
- Wittig, Joseph S. "King Alfred's Boethius and its Latin Sources: A Reconsideration." *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983): 157-98.
- Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn, et al. *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999.
- Wright, Stephen K. "Jankyn's Boethian Learning in the Summoner's Tale." *English Language Notes* 26 (1988): 4-7.
- Yager, Susan. "Boethius, Philosophy, and Chaucer's 'Marriage Group'." *Carmina Philosophiæ* 4 (1995): 77-89.
- Youngberg, Karin. "Reclaiming Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*." 1983 *NEH Resource Book for the Teaching of Medieval Civilization*. NEH, 1984. 232-237.

VITA

Kenneth Carr Hawley

Birth Data:

- August 30, 1972
- Houston, TX

Education:

University of Kentucky

- Graduate Certificate, Humanities Computing (Dec. 2002)

Texas Tech University

- MA, English (May 1998)

University of Houston at Clear Lake

- BA, English (May 1994)
- BA, History (May 1994)

Positions:

Lubbock Christian University

- Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities (Fall 2004-present)

University of Kentucky

- Teaching Assistant, Department of English (Fall 1999-Spring 2003)
- Research Assistant, The Digital Atheneum (Summer 2000, Spring-Summer 2001)
- Research Assistant, Electronic Boethius (Spring 2002, Fall 2002-Spring 2004)
- Computer Coordinator, Writing Program (Summer 2002-Spring 2004)

Texas Tech University

- Teaching Assistant, Department of English (Fall 1995-Spring 1999)

Honors:

Lubbock Christian University

- Who's Who Among America's Teachers & Educators, 11th Edition (2007)

University of Kentucky

- Fellowship, Graduate School (Fall 1999-Spring 2000)
- T. Marshall Hahn, Sr. Award for Professional Travel, ACH-ALLC Joint International Conference (2003)

Texas Tech University

- Vice President, Graduate English Society (Fall 1998-Spring 1999)
- Michael K. Schoenecke Award for Best Graduate Student Presentation on American Culture, Southwest/Texas PCA/ACA Regional Meeting (1999)

Publications:

Editing

- Co-editor, *Business Writing: A Guide to ENG 203 at the University of Kentucky*. Companion Site: <http://www.uky.edu/AS/English/writprog/business/>. UK Writing Program: Fall 2003. Spring 2004.
- Co-editor, *Writing in Place, Writing On Place*. Essay Collection for ENG 101. UK Writing Program: Fall 2003.

Humanities Computing

- Kevin Kiernan, Jerzy W. Jaromczyk, Alex Dekhtyar, Dorothy Carr Porter, Kenneth Hawley, Sandeep Bodapati, and Ionut Emil Iacob, "The ARCHway Project: Architecture for Research in Computing for Humanities through Research, Teaching, and Learning." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (2005): 1-20.
- Kevin S. Kiernan and Kenneth Carr Hawley, "An Image-Based Electronic Edition of Alfred the Great's Old English Version of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*." Joint International Conference of the Association for Computers and the Humanities and the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing. Abstract in Proceedings (2003): 13.

Poetry

- "Upon Reflection." *Limestone a Journal of Art and Literature*. 2004: 53-54.
- "Still—His Hands." *Limestone a Journal of Art and Literature*. 2002: 55-56.

Kenneth Carr Hawley

10/15/07
