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George Colvile’s translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*

Ian Cornelius

Abstract

The *Consolatio philosophiae* of the Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius (fifth/sixth century) was read and studied intensely in medieval western Europe and repeatedly translated into vernacular languages. Medieval commentaries on this text and translations of it claim attention today as case studies in a history of reading, for they exemplify the practices of medieval literary scholasticism. In an English context, the final flowering of this reading tradition may be placed in the year 1556, when John Cawoode printed a new translation of the *Consolatio* by a ‘George Coluile, alias Coldewel’. The translator remains unidentified. The translation is a medieval throwback in its treatment of Boethius’s text. Whereas subsequent English translators of the *Consolatio* separate text from commentary, Colvile permitted these categories to interpenetrate. He transmitted a wealth of exegetical material traceable to a commentary on the *Consolatio* attributed falsely to Thomas Aquinas. Pseudo-Thomas’s commentary and Boethius’s *Consolatio* were often printed together after their *editio princeps* in 1473. Colvile probably worked from a book printed in Lyon between 1486 and 1498.

**keywords:** Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Early Modern English, George Colvile, Latin commentary, printed books, sixteenth century, source study, translation

‘A totally exceptional quantity of effort was spent in bringing this work nearer to general knowledge’.1 So Max Manitius, surveying the medieval commentaries on and translations of Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae*. He estimated that only the grammatical treatises of Donatus and certain books of the Bible received more attention from medieval scholars. As a mixed-genre work read and studied over a long period and wide geographical area, the *Consolatio* affords especially rich testimony to dispensations of textuality and experiences of reading in premodern Europe. Modern understanding of the *Consolatio*’s medieval reception has advanced prodigiously in recent decades, and one of the salient research areas has concerned the techniques of medieval translators.2 Whereas modern literary translation has been shaped by the norms of novelistic reading — in which the text is often presumed

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1 Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur*, I, 34.

to stand on its own, its meaning accessible without recourse to an apparatus of other texts — ‘late medieval academic translation’, as it is termed, was modeled on the norms of the medieval schools, where meaning was normatively construed through and by means of glosses and commentaries. Modern translators may benefit from scholarly commentary on their texts, but they are not expected to intrude commentary-material into the text itself. Yet this is what one finds in many medieval translations. Much like reading itself, translation is an activity that differs in expression from one culture to another. Medieval translation was often conceived — and practiced — as the extension of an ongoing exegetical endeavour into a new language.

Among the English translations of the Consolatio philosophiae, Geoffrey Chaucer’s Boece has served as a paradigmatic illustration of the late medieval academic style. The Old English Boethius, though influenced at times by glosses, is a different kind of endeavour — less a translation of the Consolatio than an adaptation of it. John Walton’s versified Boethius, dated 1410, responds to the exigencies of verse form, but also exhibits characteristic features of the academic style, for Walton incorporates exegetical material via the Boece (his principal source) and independently, through direct consultation of Nicholas Trevet’s commentary on Boethius’s text. Throughout the fifteenth century and well into the following one, the translations of Chaucer and Walton evidently satisfied demand, for there were no new complete translations of the Consolatio into English until 1556, when John Cawoode printed a translation by an otherwise unknown George Colvile.

The 1556 print states on its title page that Colvile employed a ‘prynte’ of Boethius’s text, not a manuscript. In a prologue, Colvile dedicates his work to Queen Mary (r. 1553–58). These two features anchor Colvile’s activity in a postmedieval world, yet the translation is a medieval throwback in other respects. There are marginal explanatory notes, the content of which is traceable to medieval commentaries, while Boethius’s poems are intercalated with material likewise derived from a medieval commentary. Finally, Colvile’s wording occasionally suggests that he knew Chaucer’s Boece. Evidence for this last point is equivocal. What is clear is that Colvile’s procedures are closer to those of Chaucer than to subsequent English translators of this text. Whereas most subsequent translators adopt the principle of sola scriptura, separating text from commentary, Colvile permitted these categories to interpenetrate. He transmitted literary scholasticism into the vernacular language of the mid sixteenth century.

[figure 1. caption: The title page of George Colvile’s translation of Boethius’s De consolatione philosophiae, printed by John Cawoode in 1556. Newberry Library, Chicago, Case Y 672 .B204.]

to Boethius; Kaylor and Phillips, Vernacular Traditions of Boethius’s ‘De Consolatione Philosophiae’; and McMullen and Weaver, The Legacy of Boethius in Medieval England. The key statements on translation style are Minnis and Machan, ‘Boece as Late-Medieval Translation’; and Copeland, Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation, chaps. 4 and 5.

3See Minnis and Machan, ‘Boece as Late-Medieval Translation’; Machan, Techniques of Translation; and Machan, Sources of the ‘Boece’. The text is edited in Benson, Riverside Chaucer; and Machan, Chaucer’s ‘Boece’.

4See Godden and Irvine, The Old English Boethius, I, 50–72.


Author, print, and reputation

The ‘George Coluile, alias Coldewel’ who produced this translation has not been identified. The 1556 print is a quarto, quired in fours, unpaginated, and signed B–Z, Aa–Ff after an unsigned quire of preliminaries. Pages are divided vertically into three columns, with the translation printed in blackletter type in the widest, central column, and bordered on the inside by the Latin text of the Consolatio, printed in italic. A narrow outer column is reserved for explanatory notes in English; these are printed in a blackletter type smaller than that used for the main text. Preliminaries consist in the dedication to Queen Mary (sig. [A]1v–2r), an ‘argumente or summe of thyss booke and whereof it treatyth’ (sig. [A]2v–3r), and ‘The Prologe of George Coluile, Alias Coldewell to the reader’ (sig. [A]3v–4v). The contents of the ‘argument or summe’ and ‘prologe’ will be discussed below. In the dedication Colvile recommends, as the supreme philosophical wisdom, the prayer ‘that a hole reasonable body, may haue an hole and perfyt mind or wytte’ (sig. [A]1v). This theme — mens sana in corpore sano — has been taken as slight support for identifying our author with a Cambridge physician of the same name.

Colvile’s reputation has always been slight, and the ‘state of knowledge’ may be summarized briefly. In 1897 the Tudor Library series reprinted Colvile’s English text, including the marginal notes. In 1933 Henry Burrowes Lathrop offered a brief appreciation:

Colvile knew his Latin grammatically, and was able to follow unhesitatingly the scholastic subtleties of Boethius’s reasoning. He can also express himself in English clearly and vigorously without apparent effort. He is free from affectation and pedantry of style, and makes no attempt to give a spurious interest to his writing by colloquialism or ingenuity. His version, therefore, gives a just and adequate view of Boethius’s thought.

This commendation pertains to Colvile’s rendering of the prosae. Lathrop also remarked on the metra, of which he held a lower opinion: ‘Colvile’, he wrote, ‘feels it his duty to “open” the numerous metaphors, thus producing an incongruous mingling of the imaginative and the flatly prosaic, and destroying the emotional effect which simple accuracy would have communicated’. Lathrop’s char-

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8See Botley, ‘Colvile [Coldewel], George’, and references there.
9STC (2nd ed.) 3201. The online Universal Short Title Catalogue (accessed January 2019) lists 14 copies but omits copies held by the Boston Athenaeum, Newberry Library, and the libraries of Princeton University and the University of Minnesota (all recorded in Worldcat). Thomas Warton, Philip Bliss, and other early scholars reported later editions of Colvile’s text, dated 1561 and 1566, but their reports remain uncorroborated. See Warton, The History of English Poetry, II, 35n; and Wood and Bliss, Athenae Oxonienses, I, col. 48. Bliss is presumably the source for subsequent references, by Bax and others, to a 1561 edition.
10Wakelin, ‘Possibilities for Reading’, places this page layout in the context of other bilingual printing in England in this period.
11Bax, Boethius ‘Consolation of Philosophy’.
12Lathrop, Translations from the Classics, pp. 54–56 (p. 54).
13Lathrop, Translations from the Classics, pp. 54–55.
acterization remains unsurpassed in subsequent work by literary historians.\textsuperscript{14} but the \textit{Helsinki Corpus of English Texts} has brought welcome attention to Colvile from linguists.\textsuperscript{15} In the course of lexical studies, Matti Rissanen and Päivi Koivisto-Alanko have observed that Colvile’s text is often similar to that of Chaucer, and they accordingly raise the question of source dependency. Koivisto-Alanko holds that Colvile’s ‘translation is an independent work’ but acknowledges that Colvile was probably ‘familiar with Chaucer’ and that his translation ‘sometimes looks like a modernization of Chaucer’.\textsuperscript{16} By contrast, Rissanen affirms that ‘Even a superficial comparison between Chaucer’s translation [and] George Colville’s (1556) clearly indicates Colville’s dependence on his predecessor’.\textsuperscript{17}

My own conclusions are nearer to those of Koivisto-Alanko than to Rissanen: consultation of the \textit{Boece} is objectively probable, but Colvile’s text derives from an independent engagement with Boethius’s Latin. Agreements between the translations may sometimes be attributed to agreements in the Latin commentaries employed by the two translators. That Koivisto-Alanko and Rissanen did not notice Colvile’s use of a Latin commentary is an oversight attributable to the limitations of the \textit{Helsinki Corpus}, which lacks selections from the \textit{metra}, where intrusions of commentary material are obvious and frequent. Colvile’s differentiated uses of commentary in the \textit{metra} and \textit{prosa} also account for the differences in translation style observed by Lathrop. To appreciate Colvile’s approach to his task and assess the historical significance of his text, we need a better understanding of the sources he used.

\section*{The \textit{Consolatio} in print}

Source study must begin where Colvile evidently did, with the Latin \textit{Consolatio} in print. The title page of the 1556 edition states that the Latin text printed therein was set from ‘the boke of the translatour, whiche was a very olde prynte’. It ought to be possible to identify this source.

By 1556 the \textit{Consolatio} had been in print for over 80 years. The standard enumerative bibliographies record some 126 editions of this text prior to 1556.\textsuperscript{18} I have examined, \textit{in situ} or in digital facsimile, 71 editions from this period, or slightly over half the total recorded in the bibliographies.\textsuperscript{19} This search has failed in its primary objective of identifying the edition used by Colvile (I supply detail at the end of this essay), yet the corpus of editions assembled in the service of variant-hunting has broader interest, for it permits some general remarks on the early print history of Boethius’s text.\textsuperscript{20} This history has


\textsuperscript{17}Rissanen, ‘In Search of Happiness’, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{18}These are entry numbers 4513–74 in the \textit{Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke}, vol. IV, and the editions of the \textit{Consolatio} listed at \textit{Index Aureliensis}, part 1, IV, 428–42. I will abbreviate these works as \textit{GW} and \textit{IA}, respectively. Future researchers will want to employ the online Incunabula Short Title Catalogue, Datenbank Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke, and Universal Short Title Catalogue, and can probably ignore Luca Obertello’s \textit{bibliografia boeziana}, for this bibliography omits items recorded in \textit{GW} and \textit{IA} and is not governed by standard disciplinary principles. See Obertello, \textit{Severino Boezio}, II, 8, explaining idiosyncratic use of the terms \textit{ristampa} and \textit{nuova edizione}. For the standard bibliographic usage, defining an edition as ‘those copies printed from a single setting of type’, see Tanselle, ‘The Bibliographical Concepts’, pp. 18–21, and references there.

\textsuperscript{19}For source repositories and editions consulted, see the appendix to this essay.

\textsuperscript{20}Compare the sketch at Donaghey, ‘Post-Medieval Translation’, pp. 315–16.
direct implications for our assessment of Colvile’s work.

Uncertainties in dating preclude identification of an *editio princeps* of the *Consolatio*, but one contender for that designation is a folio printed by Anton Koberger in Nuremberg in 1473 (GW 4573).21 The 1473 print presents the *Consolatio* itself, an anonymous all-prose translation of the *Consolatio* into German, and a Latin commentary falsely ascribed to Thomas Aquinas. The commentary (I shall refer to its author as ‘Ps-Thomas’), will play an important role in my argument. Ps-Thomas drew from the *Consolatio*-commentary of Nicholas Trevis (c. 1300), and his commentary was evidently available in Italy in the third decade of the fifteenth century, yet the few surviving manuscript copies post-date the 1473 Nuremberg print.22 The commentary by Ps-Thomas was the first *Consolatio*-commentary to appear in print and was printed more often than any other. My 71-edition sample includes 36 in which Ps-Thomas accompanies the *Consolatio* as the sole commentary. Publication of this particular conjunction of texts was concentrated in the later 1480s and 1490s; the latest edition I have seen is dated 1502, printed in Cologne by Henry Quentell (IA *121.019). Yet Ps-Thomas continued to be printed in a different typology for another quarter century.

In 1498 Jean de Vingle printed an edition of Ps-Thomas accompanied by a new commentary on the *Consolatio* by the humanist Jodocus Badius Ascensius (GW 4569).23 Badius’s commentary was designed as an update and supplement to Ps-Thomas, and this configuration of texts — *Commentum duplex in Boetium de Consolatione philosophie*, as it was styled — was printed frequently in Lyon and Rouen over a period of about two decades. Philippe Renouard records 29 editions.24 My study sample contains sixteen, of which only two postdate 1515: an edition from Venice in 1524 (IA *121.083*) and one from Caen c. 1529 (IA *121.088*).25 The 1529 edition from Caen was evidently the last.

The print history of Badius’s commentary mirrored that of the *Consolatio* itself, for, after several decades of robust growth, printing of Boethius’s text fell off a cliff. Of the 126 pre-1556 editions recorded in standard bibliographies, just eighteen were printed after 1515. It seems that the market had become saturated, or else that demand evaporated. Paul Gerhard Schmidt has suggested that Badius’s commentaries on medieval school-texts may have hastened their removal from school curricula, by exposing their non–classical Latinities.26 Whatever the cause of decline in printing of the *Consolatio*, the humanist commentary of Johannis Murmellius was ill-timed. The first edition was printed in 1514 in Deventer (IA *121.056*).27 There were only two subsequent editions, printed in Cologne in

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21 On this print see Bastert, ‘Boethius unter Druck’ and Palmer, ‘The German Boethius Translation’.
25 The Venetian edition, printed by Octavianus Scotus, is recorded by neither Renouard nor Obertello.
1516 (IA *121.066) and 1535 (IA *121.097).28

Murmellius’s commentary was the first new autonomous commentary on the Consolatio in the print era: it was designed to replace, not supplement, Ps-Thomas. At least two other commentaries and a variety of other adjuncts to the Consolatio appeared in print before 1556. In 1521 or earlier, Simon Vincent printed a Boetius cum triplici commento (IA *121.077).29 Tranches of commentary by Raymundus Palasinus intervene between those of Ps-Thomas and Badius throughout the text. Among the other items printed in this complex book and attributed to or signed by Raymund are a life of Boethius, verse arguments to each of the five books, and a collection of quaestiones on the problems of divine providence and free will in book 5. The arguments, life of Boethius, and the quaestiones, but not the commentary, appear in another print by Simon Vincent, perhaps dateable to 1515 and evidently unrecorded in standard bibliographies.30 In place of commentary, the edition of 1515 has brief marginal notes contributed by Humbert de Montmoret. Some gloss hard words or identify proper names; most function as finding aids, picking out key phrases and important points from Boethius’s text. In 1522 Thomas Wolff printed an independent life of Boethius at the head of an edition without commentary (Basil; IA *121.080). In 1540 the commentary of Denys the Carthusian (composed c. 1465) was printed in Cologne with other works by the same author.31

This hasty review of print history permits two general remarks in connection with Colvile’s translation. First, the 1556 title page is likely correct in describing Colvile’s Latin text as ‘olde’: very few new editions of the Consolatio were printed during the forty years prior to publication of the English translation. Second, Colvile’s source text is likely to have included a commentary. My study sample of 71 editions contains just thirteen editions sans commentaire. Of the commentaries, the one by Ps-Thomas is the most frequent, and there can be no question that Colvile used Ps-Thomas, as the next sections will demonstrate.

**Colvile’s Prologue and ‘Argument’**

Colvile’s prologue is syncretic, freely mixing the philosophical language of the Consolatio with the language of pastoral Christianity. ‘[T]he gyftes of fortune, and chaunce’ are recast as ‘the worlde, the deuyll and the fleshe’ then converted back to Boethian idiom, as ‘ryches, possessions, honors, dignities, power, auuthoritie, fame, & suche other’ (sig. [A]3v). Soon after, Colvile anticipates Philosophia’s argument that ‘euyll fortune is better then good fortune’ (sig. [A]3r). In Colvile’s account, these arguments from book 2 join Philosophia’s identification, in book 3, of ‘perfy felicyte or sufferaygne good’ (sig. [A]3v) as Boethius’s central message. The last two books withdraw into the background.

Disproportionate attention to Consolatio 2 is consistent with medieval reading traditions, for which the dialogue of Fortune and subsequent analysis of false goods were among the most frequent and productive points of engagement with Boethius’s work. Harmonization of the moral teachings of

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28 The 1516 edition is not recorded by Obertello.
29 Obertello records an earlier print of the Ps-Thomas-Badius-Palasinus trifecta (I.14.39), dated ‘1510?’. This is not in IA but see USTC 143555 and 143904 (the later dated 1512 in USTC metadata).
30 I refer to Newberry Library Case Y 672 .B066. See appendix.
31 On this commentary see Nauta, ‘The Consolation’, pp. 268–69; and Macken, Denys the Carthusian, pp. 41–69. The commentary appears in D. Dionysii Carthusani operum minorum tomus tertius (Cologne, 1540). I do not find this book in IA, but see USTC 626378.
philosophy, the poets, and Christianity is no less conventional. Despite these general correspondences, the translator’s prologue may well be Colvile’s composition, entirely derivative of the reading tradition, yet independent of any single source.

By contrast, the content of the ‘argument or summe’ strongly suggests a prior source. Each of its components — potted history, conflation of narrative setting and compositional circumstance, exposition of the title, observations on genre and form, book-by-book summary — is a standard offering in the exegetical tradition. The source was probably Ps-Thomas. Colvile lacks Ps-Thomas’s external prologue in praise of philosophy, and his English text is much shorter and simpler than Ps-Thomas’s prologue, but it often reads as a free translation of the medieval commentator. Dependency may be illustrated by the first sentences of Ps-Thomas’s internal prologue and Colvile’s ‘argument’, respectively:

Boëtius uir eximius consul Romanus fide catholicus extitit. qui disputans de fide catholica contra duos hereticos scilicet contra Nestorium & Eutiten. cum nullus esset qui eis resisteret Boëtius ipsos in communi concilio deuicit. sicut patet in libro suo de duabus naturis in christo.\(^3^3\)

There was a noble man, a consul of Rome named Boecius, this man was a catholike man and disputed for the faith in the comon counsayle agaynste the herytykes Nestoryus and Euticen, and confuted them, as it appeareth by a booke that he made, wherein he proueth two natures in Chryste. (sig. \[A\]2\(^v\))

Verbal parallels must be evaluated with caution, given the tralatitious character of this genre. The phrase *communi consilio*, for example, (English *comon counsayle*) may go back to *Contra Eutychen* itself.\(^3^4\) Yet the correspondences are persistent. Although Colvile employs neither Ps-Thomas’s schema of Aristotelian causes, nor his interpretation of Boethius’s names, he transmits little without a counterpart in Ps-Thomas’s prologue, and retains nearly the same order of materials. (Whereas Ps-Thomas treats the prosimetrical form of the *Consolatio* before its dialogic form, Colvile treats dialogue first.) Only at the end of the argument, in the book-by-book summary, does Colvile seem to be following another source. These book-summaries were widespread in the commentary tradition.

**The commentary**

The prefatory material in the 1556 print makes no mention of the notes printed in the outer margins. These are less frequent than the brief Latin marginalia of Humbert de Montmoret (printed in Simon Vincent’s ?1515 edition) and do not resemble them in content. Most are undistinguished, yet some can be sourced with confidence. The most egregious is perhaps a note to 3p8.10, stating that Alcibiades was a very beautiful woman:

Alcibiades was the fayrest woman, that coulde be seen, in Aristotelles tyme, in so moche that his scolers broughte her to Arystotell, to loke vpon, & beholde. (sig. \[O\]1\(^v\))

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\(^3^2\)Murmellius and Badius treat many of the same topics in their prologues, but the content is not close. Nor does Colvile’s brief life of Boethius resemble the essays on this subject by Raymundus Palasinus or Thomas Wolff.

\(^3^3\)I quote from the 1473 Nuremberg edition. Citations are to the folio numbers entered in an early hand in Newberry Library oversize Inc. 1966, here fols 94\(^\text{vb}\)–95\(^\text{ra}\).

\(^3^4\)See Boethius’s prologue to that work: Moreschini, *Boethius*, pp. 206–08. Boethius writes of listening quietly to debate *in consilio*, not of refuting the heresies in that public setting.
This exegetical blooper may be traced all the way back to the early medieval glosses associated with Remigius of Auxerre. The note is recorded in one copy of William of Conches's commentary, and may have been in the copy employed by Nicholas Trevet, for Trevet reported the following at this location:

Dicit autem commentator hic quod Alcibiades meretrix quedam pulcherrima erat quam videntes discipuli quidam Aristotelis ut eam videret ad illum eam adduxerunt.\[^{36}\]

*Commentator* is Trevet’s usual way of referring to William of Conches in this work.\[^{37}\] Completed about 1300, Trevet’s commentary was employed as a source by several later practitioners, among them Ps-Thomas, who supplied the following note at the end of his treatment of 3p8:

Nota quod alcibiades mulier fuit pulcerrima quam videntes quidam discipuli Arestotilis duxerunt eam ad Arestotilem vt ipsum videret. (fol. 145\[^{va}\])

The error was loudly corrected by Badius, as previous researchers have noted.\[^{38}\] Johannis Murmel-lius also identifies Alcibiades correctly, citing works of Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, Thucydides, and Marsilio Ficino.\[^{39}\]

Colvile’s moralizing gloss on 1m5 (sig. C2') and his historical gloss on *proscriptio* in 1p4 (sig. D2') similarly agree with Ps-Thomas against Badius and Murmellius. The ‘olde prynte’ from which Colvile translated surely contained the commentary of Ps-Thomas and perhaps lacked Badius. Such a selection would have been old-fashioned in the middle of the sixteenth century, neglecting the new humanist scholarship. Yet ‘neglect’ may not be the right word: as my bibliographical survey has shown, the new humanist scholarship remained in a marginal position in the middle of the sixteenth century. The book market was presumably still flooded with old copies of Ps-Thomas.

**The English text**

**Metra**

Colvile’s expansive translation of the *metra* (which so distressed Lathrop) likewise draws from the commentary of Ps-Thomas. I have examined four of Colvile’s prosified *metra* in detail: 1m2, 1m3, 3m1, and 3m11. Exceptionally, Colvile appends an interpretative note to the end of 3m11, Philosophia’s exposition of Platonic *anamnesis*. The note derives from Ps-Thomas and presents the sort of material more often disposed in the margins of the 1556 print. Elsewhere, Colvile retains the general shape and progress of the Latin poems, even as he expands.

\[^{35}\]Nauta, *Glosae super Boetium*, p. 140 var. lect.

\[^{36}\]I quote from the typescript edition that E. T. Silk was working on at the time of his death, available online at [https://sites.trinity.edu/akraebel/trevet-boethius](https://sites.trinity.edu/akraebel/trevet-boethius). Citations are to page numbers in the upper margin of the typescript. This passage is at pp. 367–68. On Trevet’s commentary see Minnis and Nauta, ‘*More Platonico loquitur*’; and Nauta, ‘The Scholastic Context’.


\[^{39}\]I cite the 1514 Deventer edition, which I consult in a digital facsimile of Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 227 E 7. This passage is sig. P2'v.
To illustrate Colvile’s translation style and source dependency, I present ten diagnostic agreements in 1m2. In this meter Badius and Palasinus offer only a few grammatical addenda to Ps-Thomas’s commentary. Their brief remarks contain nothing that may profitably be compared with Colvile’s translation. By contrast, Ps-Thomas, Murmellius, and Denys the Carthusian each present full commentaries; their glosses may be arrayed in parallel with one another and with Colvile’s text. The entries below have the following elements:

1. In bold, passages from Colvile’s translation, identified in parentheses by page signature and page line.40
2. The corresponding reading of the Consolatio, quoted from the 1556 print and identified by line number.
3. Ps-Thomas’s gloss, quoted from the 1473 Nuremberg print and identified in parenthesis by folio number in the Newberry Library copy.
4. Murmellius’s gloss, quoted from the 1514 Deventer print and identified in parenthesis by folio number in this print.
5. Denys the Carthusian’s gloss, quoted from the 1540 Cologne print and identified in parenthesis by folio number in that print.
6. Chaucer’s translation, quoted from the Riverside edition, with notice of variants on one occasion where they are relevant.

in the depe care of worldlye and transitorye thynges (B3r 3–4).
*DCP* 1: præcipiti ... profundo.
Ps-Thomas: præcipiti profundo .i. cura rerum temporalium quo præcipitat hominem (fol. 100va).
Murmellius: præcipiti profundo: profunditate perturbationum: vnde non sit facile emergere (fol. 5r).
Denys the Carthusian: [præcipito quam praecipiti] .i. valde celeri, impetuoso ac præcipitante in undantia ac abundantia adversitatum, afflictionum, dolorum (fol. 14v).
Chaucer: in overthrowynge depnesse.

in outwarde darkenes of ignoraunce (B3r 6–7).
*DCP* 3: in externas ... tenebras.
Ps-Thomas: in tenebras externas .i. in ignorantias exteriores (fol. 100va).
Murmellius: in res terrenas ac corporeas illecebras spiritum sua contagione obtenebrantes (fol. 5v–6r).
Denys the Carthusian: [in tenebras externas] id est, in maximas ignorantiarum, errorum ac vitiorum caligines, nisi sapientialiter reuocetur (fol. 14v).
Chaucer: forayne dirknesses (Caxton, Thynne, and two manuscripts have the singular, derknes).

The care of temporall thinges (B3r 8–9).
*DCP* 5: cura.
Ps-Thomas: cura .i. sollicitudo rerum temporalium (fol. 100va).
Murmellius: cura: cupiditas rerum externarum (fol. 6r).
Denys the Carthusian: [cura noxia] id est, sollicitudo nociua superflua de talibus recuperandis (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: bysynes.

fre from cure of worldlye thinges (B3v 1–2).
*DCP* 6: liber.
Ps-Thomas: liber .i. solutus a cura rerum temporalium (fol. 100vb).

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40I treat the first line of this meter as line 1 and begin again at 1 at the top of each successive page of the print.
Murmellius: liber quondam: cum nondum passionibus animi seruiet (fol. 6r).
Denys the Carthusian: [quondam liber] id est, olim ab exilio, curis, tristitiis, diffortuinijsque immunis (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: fre.

the sterres or constellaciones (B3v 8–9).

DCP 9: sydera.
Ps-Thomas: sidera .i. constellationes (fol. 100vb).
Murmellius: Sydera: lumina (fol. 6r).
Denys the Carthusian: ponitur plurale pro singulari, videlicet sydera pro sydere, vt sit sensus: videbat sydus lunae intransitiue, hoc est lunam quae vocatur sydus … Possunt item per sydera lunae intelligi stellae Pleiades, que cum luna communicant in humido, babentes dominium super aquas … (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: sterres.

a man that with scyence had ouercom ignoraunce (B3v 10–11).

DCP 12: uictor.
Ps-Thomas: ipse Boetius victor ignorantie (fol. 100vb).
Murmellius: victor id est voti compos (fol. 6r).
Denys the Carthusian: [victor] .i. praeualens in sua astronomica inquisitione, inueniendo quod quaerebat, habebat stellam huiusmodi compressam … (fol. 15v).
Chaucer: this man, overcomere.

the stedefaste and hole fyrmament (B3v 22–23).

DCP 15: stabilum … orbem.
Ps-Thomas: stabilum orbem firmamenti (fol. 101vb).
Murmellius: orbem mundem id est celum stabilem (fol. 7r).
Denys the Carthusian: [stabilem orbem] id est, incorruptibilem spheram coelestem … (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: the stable hevene.

the secret causes of naturall thynges (B3v 34–35).

DCP 22–23: latentis / Naturae varias … causas.
Ps-Thomas: varias causas latentis nature .i. rerum naturalium (fol. 101vb); Item Boetius consueuit reddere causas latentes rerum naturalium (fol. 101vs).
Murmellius: no gloss.
Denys the Carthusian: [varias causas naturae latentis,] .i. occultarum naturalium proprietatum ac virium, actionum atque affectuum (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: the diverse causes of nature that weren ybidd.

with heuye chaynes, that is to say: with passions and vexacyons of the mind (B4r 1–3).

DCP 25: grauibus … catenis.
Ps-Thomas: grauidis catenis passionum que mentem grauant (fol. 101vs).
Murmellius: Grauibus catenis: rerum terrenarum cupiditatibus (fol. 7r).
Denys the Carthusian: [catenis grauidis,] .i. grauantisib, quam moris est apud quosdam quod captis mittitur catena in collo, seu alta corporis parte (fol. 15r).
Chaucer: with hevy cheynes.

with great wayte or heuynes, for the losse of temporall goodes (B4r 4–6).

DCP 26: pondere.
Ps-Thomas: *pondere amissionis rerum temporalium* (fol. 101r).
Murmellius: *Pondere. terrestri solicitudine* (fol. 7r).
Denys the Carthusian: *pondere tristitiae, vel ex onere catenae* (fol. 15v).
Chaucer: *for the grete weyghte*.

Colvile’s expansions consistently draw from the commentary of Ps-Thomas. Treatment of 1m2.6 *liber ‘free’* may serve as an example: Colvile’s gloss ‘from cure of worldlye thinges’ corresponds precisely to Ps-Thomas’s ‘a cura rerum temporalium’, lacking reference to either passions, the soul, and servitude (as in Murmellius) or exile and misfortune (as in Denys). Later in the meter, Colvile’s moralization of Boethius’s chains (*catenae* 25–26) agrees with Ps-Thomas against both Murmellius’s alternative moralization and Denys’s literalism. Where Colvile offers a moralizing or explanatory gloss, this gloss agrees with Ps-Thomas against the other two commentators. Chaucer, meanwhile, appears concise and literal by comparison.41

Moreover, though Ps-Thomas was dependent on Trevet (whose glosses I have not reported above), Colvile regularly agrees with Ps-Thomas where Ps-Thomas differs from his precursor. Ps-Thomas’s glosses on *uictor* (12) and *stabilem … orbem* (15), both used by Colvile, are without parallel in Trevet’s commentary, while his gloss on *sydera* (9) simplifies Trevet’s more exact *mansiones sideribus consignatas* (p. 44). In each of these cases, Colvile agrees with Ps-Thomas not only in semantics and phrasing, but also in precise lexical choices: Colvile’s *constellacions* (translating l. 9 *sydera*), *ignoraunce* (expanding l. 12 *victor*), *fyrmament* (translating l. 15 *orbem*), and *passions* (expanding l. 25 *catenis*) are reflexes of Latin words found in Ps-Thomas’s gloss but not in the corresponding glosses of Trevet. Colvile’s surprising translation of 1m3.9 *vibratus as fortifyed* (sig. B4v) should be explained in the same way, as a lexical import from Ps-Thomas’s gloss: Trevet glossed *vibratus as crispatus uel splendidus* (p. 61); Murmellius glossed as *motus and agitatus* (fol. 8v); Ps-Thomas glossed as *fortificatus* (fol. 102vb).

On occasion, Colvile’s translations show him reading somewhat more widely in Ps-Thomas’s commentary, drawing from the prose paraphrases and discursive notes that precede and follow *ad litteram* glosses. In comments on 1m2, Ps-Thomas divides the poem into parts and states that Philosophy first commends Boethius ‘ab astronomia’ (fol. 100vb) then praises his achievement in other sciences. That remark may stand behind Colvile’s translation of line 7, where he expands ‘Suetus in aethereos ire meatus’ to ‘was wonte to goo into the heuenly wayes by science of astronomy’ (B3v). (There is no mention of astronomy in Ps-Thomas’s glosses to line 7 itself.) Similar cases may be found in Colvile’s 3m1. The implication is that Colvile read Ps-Thomas with some care; when an expansion does not correspond to Ps-Thomas’s word glosses or running paraphrase, its source should be sought in introductory remarks on the meter in question, or in the more digressive notes that follow *ad litteram* glosses in Ps-Thomas’s commentary.

This methodological directive bears on a few difficult cases in which one may be tempted to posit a second source. Colvile’s gloss on spring as the season ‘when all growyng thinges springeth forthe’ (1m2.18; B3v) corresponds to nothing in Ps-Thomas’s running glosses, but agrees closely with Trevet’s comment at this location: ‘tunc omnia vegetabilia pululant et germinant’ (p. 49). The correspondence is exact, yet Colvile’s addition could derive from Ps-Thomas’s subsequent discursive note, explaining

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41Minnis and Machan, ‘*Boece as Late-Medieval Translation*’, p. 175, similarly remark that ‘Chaucer’s use of the commentary tradition is restrained’ by comparison with some of the medieval French translations of Boethius’s work. Cummings describes 1m2 (in fact he refers to 3m11) as ‘overtranslated, perhaps following Chaucer’: Cummings, ‘Classical Moralists and Philosophers’, p. 387. The translations are not alike.

11
why flowers are brought forth in springtime (‘illo tempore producuntur flores’; fol. 101va). In the next meter, Colvile marks the beginning of Boethius’s elaborate simile of the evening sunburst with a parenthetical addition ‘by example thus’ (sig. B4v), in agreement with Chaucer (‘And ryht by ensaumple’) and Trevet (‘Deinde subiungit similitudinem diciens ’; p. 60). Ps-Thomas has no analogous comment at this location, but he lays the *similitudo* out in detail at the beginning of his commentary on this meter.

A few other translation choices in 1m2, 1m3, 3m1, and 3m11 require comment. In rendering *sonora / Flamina* as *greate wyndes* (1m2.13–14; B3v), Colvile takes noise as metonymy for magnitude. Several lines below, where Philosophia proclaims Boethius’s former understanding of the rotation of the heavens –

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vel cur hesperias sydus in undas} \\
\text{Casurum rutilio surgat ab ortu (1m2.16–17)}
\end{align*}
\]

– Colvile translates *hesperias* twice: ‘And whye the ster called hesperus risyth in the resplendent est, and goeth downe in the occydent sea’ (B3v). *Occydent sea* renders *hesperias … undas* correctly, in agreement with the commentators. Yet, as Ps-Thomas subsequently remarks, the epithet *hesparius* derives from Hesperus, the star that follows the westerning sun into the sea (fol. 101va). By juxtaposing an unnamed star or heavenly body (*sydus*) and waves named for a particular star, Boethius’s line does invite confusion. That construction is perhaps sufficient to explain Colvile’s ‘ster called hesperus’, a meaning nevertheless ruled out by grammatical concord. At 3m11.14 Chaucer and Colvile agree in rendering *fomes* *‘kindling-wood’* as *noryshynge(s)* (Colvile as *the noryshynge and grounde*; sig. R2v), a mistranslation that evidently had some currency in English schools. As Tim William Machan notes, *noryssyng* is listed as a translation of *fomes* in the *Medulla Grammatice*, a fifteenth-century Latin–English glossary.42 Finally, Colvile neglects to translate 1m3.2 *luminibus* ‘lights [> eyes]’ and 1m3.5 *nondum ‘not yet’, words duly glossed by Ps-Thomas. There is no reason to doubt that they stood in Colvile’s copy of the *Consolatio*.

Omission of *nondum* is a trivial error, but Chaucer omits this word too, and it may be instructive to compare the two translations of this passage. The passage in question is the elaborate simile of an afternoon storm followed by sunburst — or, rather, the first half of this simile, before the dramatic re-appearance of the sun. Here is Boethius:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ut cum praecipiti glomerantur sidera Coro} \\
\text{nimbosisque polus stetit imbris} \\
\text{sol latet ac nondum caelo uenientibus astris} \\
\text{desuper in terram nox funditur (1m3.3–6)}
\end{align*}
\]

Here is Chaucer:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And ryght by ensaumple as the sonne is hydd whan the sterres ben clustred (that is to seyn, whan sterres ben covered with cloudes) by a swyft wynd that hyghte Chorus, and that the firmament stant dirked with wete plowngy cloudes; and that the sterres nat apeeren upon hevene, so that the nyght semeth sprad upon erthe (Riverside, p. 399)}
\end{align*}
\]

And here is Colvile:

\[
\begin{align*}
42 \text{Machan, } Sources of the ‘Boece’, p. 291
\end{align*}
\]
euyn so as (by example thus) the sonne lyethe hydde when the sterres be couered wyth wynde named chorus, and the fyrmament standeth closyd and coueryd with thicke showers, so that the nyght spredeth from aboue ouer all the earthe when that the sterres cannot be seene in the firmament. (sig. B4v)

Colvile’s vocabulary is more pedestrian than Chaucer’s: note, for instance, Colvile’s closyd and coueryd in place of Chaucer’s dirked, and his thicke showers in place of Chaucer’s wete plowngy cloudes. (MED records plowngy only from the Boece, s.v. ‘ploungi, adj.’) The translations also share several distinctive features, which is my reason for quoting them here: both mark Boethius’s word-picture as an ‘example’; both fail to register the specific force of the phrase nondum caelo uenientibus astris (to whit, the meteorological event seems to bring night prematurely, before the stars appear in the sky); both re-order Boethius’s sentence, promoting the first branch of the main clause (i.e. sol latet) to initial position; and both render glomerantur as ‘ben covered with cloudes’ (in Boece this appears within a doublet translation). These agreements may appear to have considerable weight.

The first two agreements have been noticed already above and may be explained without positing Chaucer as source. To reiterate, Colvile’s ‘example’ may reflect Ps-Thomas’s introductory exposition of the similitudo, while Colvile’s omission of nondum finds precedent in small lapses elsewhere in the translation. The remaining agreements supply no stronger evidence of Chaucerian dependency. Colvile’s re-ordering of sentence elements is guided by Ps-Thomas, whose prose paraphrase takes precisely the same path through Boethius’s syntax; where Colvile and Chaucer diverge at the end of the passage, Colvile follows Ps-Thomas. Turning now to the final agreement, Colvile’s when the sterres be couered wyth cloudes may appear as an intelligent improvement on Chaucer’s whan the sterres ben clustred (that is to seyn, whan sterres ben covered with cloudes), rendering Chaucer’s gloss rather than his literal translation. Yet what at first appears to be a borrowing from Chaucer probably derives instead from Ps-Thomas. Ps-Thomas glossed the difficult word glomerantur as inuoluantur (sic, fol. 102vb), probably borrowing from Trevet, whose gloss nubibus inuoluuntur (p. 60) stands behind the parallel passage in Chaucer’s translation. Colvile might have taken be couered wyth cloudes from Chaucer, but Ps-Thomas’s gloss would have directed him to that same translation.

In sum, the relationship between these two translators is confounded by the relationship between their respective commentators. To give one more example, I thought that I could identify a sure borrowing from Chaucer in Colvile’s rendering of the very first word of the entire work, carmina. This is rendered by Chaucer as ‘delitable ditees’ and by Colvile as ‘pleasaunte and delectable dities’ (sig. B1r). Yet inspection of the surrounding text shows that Colvile is here translating Ps-Thomas’s prose paraphrase, in which the prisoner’s past carmina are qualified as delectabilia & iocunda (fol. 96v). Chaucer’s adjective derives from Trevet’s gloss (cantus delectabiles; p. 15), while the Middle English Dictionary records numerous instances of dite translating Latin carmen. Hence a juicy phrase — one that appeared initially as good evidence of filiation between the two English translations — turns out, on closer inspection, to have been programmed by the Latin texts and pedagogies that subtend both translations.

Colvile would not have been alone in improving Chaucer’s translation at this point. Two manuscript copies of Boece and the editions of Caxton and Thynne omit clustred ... ben.
Prosae

In Colville's prosae there is less interference from Ps-Thomas, and this fact ought to simplify comparison with Chaucer. My study of the prosae is based in 3p9 and 4p4, selected because these segments are available in digital form in the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts.\(^{44}\) Colville's independence is demonstrated in the first instance by passages in which his translation agrees with the Consolatio against Chaucer. Colville is indebted to Boethius's lexis at points where Chaucer is not.\(^{45}\) His translation reflects Latin grammatical gender where Chaucer does not.\(^{46}\) He translates minor words omitted by Chaucer,\(^{47}\) and he preserves the phrasal and clausal structure of Boethius's text at points where Chaucer departs from it.\(^{48}\) At other points where Chaucer errs, follows Jean de Meun, or offers an idiosyncratic translation, Colville agrees with Boethius's Latin.\(^{49}\)

Chaucer and Colville may also translate different aspects of the same text. At 4p4.16, Philosophy asks Boethius to imagine misery pura ac solitaria unmixed with any goodness. Chaucer translates only the second adjective, Colville only the first. Colville also errs at points where Chaucer would have set him right.\(^{50}\)

In each of the cases discussed thus far, the Latin text that accompanies Colville's translation in the 1556 print is unexceptional. At several other points in 3p9 and 4p4, the 1556 Latin text varies from the text printed in modern editions. In these instances Colville's English agrees with the Latin text printed beside it, while Chaucer's translation reflects the standard Latin reading, thus demonstrating

\(^{44}\)Quotations in this section are from Rissanen and others, 'The Helsinki Corpus', which in turn derives its text of Chaucer from Benson, Riverside Chaucer, and of Colville from Bax, Boethius 'Consolation of Philosophy'.

\(^{45}\)I print the reading of the Consolatio before the bracket, followed after the bracket by the corresponding readings of Chaucer's and Colville's translations. 3p1.3 perfecti hadde maked Ch; perfyted Col. 3p9.1 felicitatis welfulnesse Ch; felcye or blessednes Col. 3p9.8 iudicemus I demen Ch; iudge Col (also 4p4.42). 3p9.8 conferti graunten Ch; confese Col (also 3p9.11). 3p9.9 obscurnum dirk Ch; obscure Col. 3p9.10 parte side Ch; parte Col. 3p9.24 promisimus have bebyght Ch; haue promised Col. 4p4.9 extrema owtreste Ch; extreme Col. 4p4.9 aeternam perdurable Ch; eternall or euer contynuyng Col. 4p4.11 efficacem spedful Ch; effectuall Col. 4p4.25 consequens est folueth Ch; is a consequence Col. 4p4.26 indicia[ ] studies Ch; iudgementes Col. 4p4.27 affectus lustes and talentz Ch; affectes and desyres Col. 4p4.40 defensorum.advocattz Ch; orators and defendarz Col.

\(^{46}\)At the beginning of 1m2, Colville's feminine pronoun her reflects the grammatical gender of Latin mens. Chaucer has the pronoun his, which should be construed as neuter (the antecedent is thought). Chaucer's pronoun is consistent with English usage; Colville's is a reflex of the source language.

\(^{47}\)Chaucer omits 3p9.9 omni, 4p4.23 nunc, and 4p4.40 toto. Witnesses to the Boece likewise omit 4p4.22 consequentia sunt. Colville translates these words. For notice of Chaucer's errors and idiosyncrasies, reported in this note and the next two, I am indebted to the editions of Boece cited above in n. 3.

\(^{48}\)At 3p9.10 Chaucer misplaces consequam est. At 4p4.20 Chaucer shifts the position of iniquitatis merito. Colville retains the order of the Latin text.

\(^{49}\)At 3p9.4 Chaucer follows Jean de Meun. Colville's remayne is preferable to Chaucer's ben as a rendering of 3p9.14 manebunt. Colville retains the superlative degree of 4p4.24 indignissima, whereas Chaucer does not. In the same section of the Latin text, Chaucer construes the subjunctive videre as optative, whereas Colville recognizes that it pertains to a clause of result. Soon thereafter, Chaucer's translation of 4p4.27 ita est reflects Jean de Meun's French; Colville translates the Latin. At 5p6.33 Chaucer introduces a change of speakers without precedent in the Latin textual tradition; in Colville's translation the speaker remains Philosophy. At 5p6.35 Chaucer reads de rerum natura, whereas manuscripts of the Latin text have de rerum necessitate, the reading translated by Colville.

\(^{50}\)Examples may be found in Colville's renditions of 3p9.2 nec celebritatem gloria, 4p4.2 releuetur, 4p4.24 misieriores esse improbos, and 4p4.37–38. Colville's translation of 4p4.38 gets Boethius's point exactly backwards. For 4p6.33 Catboni Colville's translation reads Plato. The error is difficult to explain and may have been introduced by the compositor. The Latin text of the 1556 print is correct in each of these cases.
again Colvile’s independence from the earlier translator. These readings will receive full discussion later in this essay.

Commentaries add another layer of differentiation between the two translations. Colvile occasionally follows Ps-Thomas at points where Chaucer follows the *Consolatio* or another source. An example is 1p2.3, where Philosophy tells Boethius that she endowed him with *arma* (Chaucer: *armures*) sufficient to preserve himself, had he not abandoned them. Colvile renders *arma* as *knowledge and instructions* (sig. B4v), apparently reflecting Ps-Thomas’s gloss *documenta* (fol. 101vb). As in his translations of the *metra*, though much more rarely, Colvile imports explanatory glosses from Ps-Thomas’s commentary and follows Ps-Thomas’s guidance in construing syntax (e.g., at 4p4.40).

Where Chaucer and Colvile introduce similar expansions and glosses, their agreement can usually be attributed to their respective commentators, Trevet and Ps-Thomas. An example is supplied by Philosophy’s praise of Boethius at 3p9.28: ‘O te, alumne, hac opinione felicem, si quidem hoc, inquit, adieceris!’ Chaucer expands *si quidem hoc ... adieceris* to ‘yif thow putte this therto that I schal seyn’ and Colvile’s translation is nearly identical. The explanatory clause ‘that I schal seyn’ agrees verbatim with Trevet and Ps-Thomas, both of whom add ‘quod modo dicam’ to emphasize continuity of argument. Agreements in expansion of 3p9.7 *buisusmodi* and *ne dubitari quidem potest*, 3p9.9 *hoc*, 3p9.30 *Haec*, 4p4.12 *necessarium*, 5p6.7 *transacta*, and 5p6.13 *arripuit* are likewise traceable to agreements between the commentators.51 As we saw already in the *metra*, Ps-Thomas’s dependence on Trevet is a confounding variable.

Once one takes account of the relation between Trevet and Ps-Thomas, the case for Colvile’s dependence on Chaucer becomes correspondingly weak. I find no reason to posit Chaucer as a source in 3p9. The evidence of 4p4 is equivocal. In their explanatory glosses to 4p4.39, Colvile and Chaucer are closer to one another than to their respective commentators. Translations of 4p4.8 are instructive because they present a cluster of agreements:

Quorum magna spes et excelsa facinorum machina repentino atque insperato saepe fine destruitur. Quod quidem illis miseriae modum statuit: nam si nequitia miserum facit, miserior sit necesse est diuturnior nequam.

*Chaucer:* Of whiche schrewes the grete hope and the heye compassynges of schrewednesse is ofte destroyed by a sodeyn ende, or thei ben war; and that thing establisseth to schrewes the ende of hir schrewednesse. For yf that schrewednesse makith wrecches, than mot he nedes ben moost wrecchide that lengest is a schrew. (Riverside, pp. 446–47)

*Colvile:* Of whyche foresayde wycked the gret hope and the gret compassing power of wyckednes, is oft distroyed with sodayne ende, and er they beware thereof: which foresayde sodden destructyon, truelye hathe appoynted them an ende of theyr wretchednes. For yf wyckednes makethe wycked folke then must he nedes be most wycked that longest is wycked. (sig. V4v–X1r)

There are three notable points of convergence here. Chaucer renders *facinorum machina* ‘scheme of

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51 At 3p9.29 *nibil ut amplius desideretur* and at 4p4.23 *alia*, Trevet glosses correctly while Ps-Thomas, Chaucer, and Colvile err together. Colvile’s translation presumably derives from Ps-Thomas.
crimes’ as compasynges of schrewednesses, Colvile as compassing power of wyckednes;\textsuperscript{52} Chaucer and Colvile both resolve the participle insperato into a new clause; and the two translators agree in rendering the Latin comparatives (miserior, diuturnior) as superlatives. Agreements are not attributable to the commentators, yet each could be a chance convergences, and the passages are marked by differences that cannot be attributed to lexical and grammatical modernization. If Colvile consulted Chaucer at this point, why did he not follow Chaucer’s lead in differentiating miseros and nequam? By translating both as wycked, Colvile misses the point of Philosophia’s argument.

Relations between Colvile and Chaucer deserve further study. What is clear is that Colvile’s translation did not originate as a redaction or modernization of the Boece; nor did he employ the Boece in any systematic or consistent way.

**Colvile’s Latin edition**

Where the 1556 Latin text differs from modern critical editions, the variants may serve to identify the edition from which Colvile worked. My study has identified four Latin readings of diagnostic value. The variants do not permit Colvile’s ‘very olde prynte’ to be identified with any of the 71 editions I have seen, but they do narrow the field.

At 4p4.14 in the standard text, Philosophia reasons that the wicked are unhappier when they go unpunished: ‘alio quodam modo infeliciores esse improbos arbitror impunitos’. The Latin text of the 1556 print here reads felitiores and punitos in place of the corresponding negative adjectives. Colvile follows this reading: ‘wycked folke that be iustlye ponyshed be more blessed’ (sig. X1v). Ps-Thomas’s paraphrase likewise replaces negative adjectives with their positive counterparts (‘arbitror improbos esse felitiores punitos’; fol. 169ra), which suggests that the variant reading may have originated in commentary, subsequently transmitted to the main text. Read in context, the negative adjectives at 4p4.14 are an elegant variation on Philosophia’s plainer statement just a few lines above: ‘Feliciores, inquit, esse improbos supplicia luentes quam si eos nulla iustitiae poena coherceat’ (4p4.13). Perhaps this passage induced the commentator to simplify 4p4.14.

Whatever the source of the felitiores/punitos variant, it is distinctive of French prints. The earliest edition in which I have found this variant was printed in Lyon by Jean Du Pré, dated 1487/8 (GW 4541).\textsuperscript{53} It was then transmitted to subsequent editions. All Lyon editions between 1487 and 1514 have the felitiores/punitos variant at this location. Beyond the Lyon products, I have encountered this variant only in a group of editions from Caen and Rouen, printed between 1503 and 1515, and in the edition printed by Thomas Wolff (Basil, 1522). The standard reading was restored in the Lyon editions with contributions by Raymundus Palasinus, and in the 1529 edition from Caen.

Wolff’s 1522 edition lacks Ps-Thomas’s commentary, so it is prima fácie unlikely to have been Colvile’s source, and this judgment receives support from a variant reading later in 4p4. Near the end of this prose section, Philosophia affirms that, if the wicked only saw how they will rid themselves

\textsuperscript{52}The editions of Caxton and Thynne have the singular number, compasyng of shrewedness, thus somewhat closer to Colvile. Colvile’s power derives from Ps-Thomas, who glosses machina as magna potentia (fol. 169ra).

\textsuperscript{53}See the analytic description at Scholderer and Sheppard, Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century, VIII, 282. GW records three earlier editions from Lyon: 4535 (dated 1484/5), 4536, and 4539. All three were printed by Guillaume Le Roy. I have seen only the first of these, GW 4535.
of the pollution of their sins by undergoing the torments of punishments (poenarum cruciatibus), they would not consider those things (hos) to be torments (4p4.40). The masculine plural hos is the minority reading in early prints, but it is the reading of Wolff’s edition. Several editions from Cologne and Strasbourg have the feminine plural has (the 1501 Strasbourg edition names poenarum as the antecedent), but most early prints have the singular pronoun hoc. Hoc is the reading of the 1556 Latin text, and it is the reading translated by Colvile, who writes that the wicked ‘woulde not esteme thys for ponyshments’ (emphasis added; sig. X4'). Among the French editions I have seen, hos appears only in the Lyon editions with contributions by Palasinus and in the Caen edition of 1529, the same two copies that restore the standard reading at 4p4.14.

A reading in 3m1 may permit the field of possible source editions to be narrowed. The opening of this poem reads, in Colvile’s translation, ‘He that wyll sowe a goodly felde wyth corne, fyrst he must ryd the same felde of shrubes and thorns’ (sig. L2'). Colvile’s ‘shrubes and thorns’ translates ‘fruticibus’, the reading of the 1556 Latin text, the best manuscript witnesses, and about two thirds of editions in my pre-1556 sample. Yet fruticus was vulnerable to corruption: other editions read frutibus, frutibus, or fructicibus. To judge from the distribution of variants, the word was a perennial frustration to compositors: it is corrupted and set right again within subsequent editions by the same printer. Among the editions with the felicios/panitos variant, only six have the correct reading at 3m1.

Two considerations prevent us from identifying Colvile’s source with any of these editions. First, the evidence supplied by fruticibus is weaker than that supplied by variants at 4p4.14 and 4p4.40. In those cases, Colvile translated a corrupt source text. In this case, he translated the correct reading, and corruptions could be put right. In his commentary on this passage, Badius affirmed fruticibus to be the correct reading, and several copies in my sample have been corrected by hand, perhaps guided by the commentator. A corruption of fruticibus may have been corrected by hand in Colvile’s copy.

Second, a variant not yet considered in my argument indicates that Colvile’s source text probably cannot be identified with any of the 71 editions I have seen. This final variant occurs near the end of Philosophia’s analysis of false goods in 3p9. The passage reads as follows in Morechini’s critical edition (I place key words in bold):

\[
\text{dum rei quae partibus caret partem conatur adipisci, nec portionem, quae nulla est, nec ipsum, quam minime affectat, assequitur. (3p9.16)}
\]

The vulgate Latin text edited by Machan has no substantive variants in this passage, and Chaucer’s translation is accurate enough:

and whanne thei enforcen hem to gete partie of a thyng that ne hath no part, thei ne geten hem neyther thilke partie that nis noon, ne the thyng al hool that thei ne desire nat. (Riverside, p. 429)

The Latin text printed beside Colvile’s translation reads as follows:

\[\text{54} \text{For example, successive editions printed in Deventer by Jacob de Breda (Obertello I.14.14) read fruticus (1485), fructibus (1490), and fructicibus again (1491, 1497). Jean Du Pré’s edition of 1487 reads fruticibus, but the editions of 1490 and 1493 read frutibus.}
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\[\text{55} \text{These six are Jean Du Pré’s 1487/8 edition, Jean de Vingle’s first two editions of the Commentum duplex (GW 4569, 4570) and three sixteenth-century editions of the Commentum duplex (IA *121.021, *121.033, and *121.060).} \]
dum rei, quae partibus caret, partem conatur adipisci, nec portionem ullam nec ipsam quam affectat assequitur. (sig. O3v)

There are two variants: *portionem ullam* appears in place of *portionem quae nulla est* and *minime* has been dropped. Together these variants yield a grammatical sentence, though without the precision of Philosophia’s statement. Colvile translates this corrupt text:

and when they labour to get part of a thyng that hath no partes, they nether gette anye porcion of the thyng, nor yet the selfe same thyng that they desyre. (sig. O3v)

Agreement between Colvile’s translation and the 1556 Latin text suggests strongly that the variants stood in Colvile’s ‘very olde prynte’, yet I have thus far found the variants only in Ps-Thomas’s paraphrase, which reads ‘dum homines conantur .i. laborant adipisci partem rei que partibus caret homo non assequitur vllam portionem .i. partem nec ipsam rem integrar quam affectat & querit’ (fol. 146vb). This paraphrase was surely the source of the variant reading translated by Colvile and transmitted in the 1556 Latin text. Perhaps the variant reading will be found in one of the early editions I have not seen, or in a variant state of an edition surveyed in this study. It is also possible that Colvile’s ‘olde prynte’ was corrected by hand to agree with Ps-Thomas’s paraphrase in this instance.

Taken together, the evidence presented here suggests that Colvile’s source text was printed in Lyon, Caen, or Rouen, sometime between about 1486 and 1515. If we assume that Colvile lacked Badius’s commentary — and I have found no evidence to the contrary — the search area may be restricted to editions printed in Lyon between about 1486 and 1498. Provenance notes in *A Catalogue of Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century Now in the Bodleian Library* include Lyon books in English ownership in the sixteenth century, including copies of the *Consolatio*.

Colvile at the end of the Middle Ages

The sources and working methods identified in this study were not unique to Colvile and may be paralleled in other sixteenth-century translations. Anselmo Tanso and Benedetto Varchi each intercalated material from Ps-Thomas into their Italian versions of the *Consolatio*, first printed in 1520 and 1551, respectively. Dario Brancato remarks that Tanso’s sources and procedures express a ‘conceptual grid similar to that used almost two centuries earlier’, and this assessment may be applied with equal validity to Colvile. Though positive identification of Colvile’s source text remains a task for future investigators, his place in literary history is clear even at the present state of knowledge. He was a medieval epigone, his translation a late fruit of literary scholasticism.

Another way of getting at Colvile’s historical significance is to look ahead, to subsequent translations

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56A further variant, though distributed more widely than the others, is consistent with the placement deduced on the basis of them. At 4p4.20, in the context of an archetypal dislocation (see Moreschini ad loc.), *respondi* survives only in certain prints from Cologne, Deventer, Hagenau, Leipzig, Louvain, and Strasbourg. Elsewhere — that is, in Nuremberg and in all French (Strasbourg excepted), Swiss and Italian prints in my corpus — the corresponding reading is ‘... quod iniustum est malum liquet esse. [B] Tum ego’. This reading is present already in some early manuscripts and it is the reading glossed by Ps-Thomas. It is also the reading of the 1556 Latin text, and the reading translated by Colvile (sig. X2v).


59Brancato, ‘Readers and Interpreters’, p. 394
of Boethius’s text into English. The most famous of these is certainly Queen Elizabeth I’s hasty private exercise, undertaken in late 1593, but a more apt comparandum is the translation printed in 1609 under the pseudonymous initials ‘I.T.’, for this was the first new English translation to appear in print after that of Colvile. The translator was probably the English Jesuit Michael Walpole. His translation style differs sharply from that of Colvile, as may be seen from the opening lines of the entire work:

I That with youthfull heate did verses write,
Must now my woes in dolefull tunes endite,
My worke is fram’d by Muses torne and rude,
And my sad cheeks are with true teares bedew’d,

Here, for comparison, is Colvile’s version of the same passage (see fig. 1 for an image of the page):

I That in tyme of prosperite, & floryshing studye, made pleasaunte and delectable dities,
or verses: alas now beyng heauy and sad ouerthrowen in aduersitie, am compelled to fele
and tast heuines and greif. Beholde the muses Poecicall, that is to saye: the pleasure that
is in poetes verses, do appoynt me, and compel me to writ these verses in meter, and ye
sorowfull verses do wet my wretched face with very waterye teares, yssuinge out of my
eyes for sorowe. (sig. B1r)

The translators’ divergent formal decisions (I.T.’s translation retains Boethius’s prosimetrical form) express a deeper, perhaps epistemic, shift in self-understanding and purpose. Colvile’s doublet translations and incorporated glosses channel the school-room practice of construing Latin. Readers are persistently reminded that this English text is a translation — that is, a representation whose truth resides elsewhere. By his fractured voice, Colvile invites readers to turn (back) to the Latin original and see for themselves what it says. I.T.’s version, by contrast, holds the reader’s attention on itself. The lines quoted from I.T.’s version contain just one doublet, and it is here metri gratia. The single word torne would have been sufficient to render the sense of Latin lacerae, but I.T. needed a rhyme; Muses torne and rude is a stylistic compromise justified because the devices of meter and rhyme bind the text into a self-referential literary artifact. The animating force in I.T.’s translation is no longer the medieval schools, but rather the new English-language poetry of the Elizabethan period. The diction is that of recent literary English (bedew’d is used by Spenser). The expression with youthfull heate (Lat. studio florente) and the notion of framing in line 3 are fine inventions, untethered from the Latin and confident of their own power. Though the 1609 print retains some marginal notes, the rhetoric of I.T.’s translation is one of autonomy, not deferral to an exterior or anterior authority. The two translations are separated by a distance much greater than the 50 years that intervened between them. Colvile continues the medieval reading tradition. If I.T.’s translation appears modern by comparison, it is certifiably so, for his translation was still acceptable in 1918, when reprinted in the Loeb Classical Library.

See n. 7 above. On the 1609 translation see Houghton, ‘Michael Walpole’.

See Stewart and Rand, Boethius. The translation was revised by Stewart. In the 1973 edition a new translation by S.J. Tester replaces that of I.T. — I thank members of the Midwest Middle English Reading Group for discussion of an earlier version of this essay and volume editors for helpful commentary and suggestions. I thank the Newberry Library and the libraries of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Chicago for access to their collections, and the library of Loyola University Chicago for arranging access to the ProQuest collection Early European Books.
Appendix

My study sample of pre-1556 prints of the *Consolatio* contains the following editions, cited by the numbers assigned to them in the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (pre-1500) and the *Index Aureliensis* (post-1500): GW 4511, 4512, 4516, 4520, 4526, 4529, 4530, 4533, 4534, 4535, 4537, 4538, 4540, 4541, 4544, 4545, 4546, 4548, 4549, 4550, 4551, 4552, 4555, 4556, 4557, 4559, 4560, 4561, 4562, 4563, 4565, 4566, 4567, 4568, 4569, 4570, 4571, 4573, IA 121.015, 121.016, 121.017, 121.019, 121.021, 121.022, 121.030, 121.033, 121.034, 121.036, 121.037, 121.039, 121.041, 121.044, 121.045, 121.049, 121.053, 121.055, 121.056, 121.057, 121.060, 121.062, 121.066, 121.076, 121.077, 121.078, 121.107, 121.080, 121.083, 121.088, 121.097, 121.112.

The study sample also contains two sixteenth-century prints that I do not find in the *Index Aureliensis*: *D. Dionysii Cartbusani operum minorum tomus tertius* (Cologne, 1540), recorded as 626378 in the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC); and Newberry Library Case Y 672. B066, the title page of which reads as follows:


The Munich Digitization Center, a huge online collection, is the single largest source of books in my study sample. Other sources are the Newberry Library and the libraries of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Chicago, and digital facsimiles available via Gallica, e-rara, Biblissima, HathiTrust, the Internet Archive, and the ProQuest collection Early European Books. Online repositories were consulted between July 2018 and January 2019.

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