New Medieval Literatures

24

Edited by
Wendy Scase, Laura Ashe and
Philip Knox

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Editors
Prof. Laura Ashe, University of Oxford
Dr Philip Knox, University of Cambridge
Prof. Wendy Scase, University of Birmingham

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Submissions are invited for future issues. Please write to the editors:

Laura Ashe (laura.ashe@ell.ox.ac.uk)
Philip Knox (pk453@cam.ac.uk)
Wendy Scase (w.l.scase@bham.ac.uk)

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**Books, Translation, and Multilingualism in Late Medieval Calais,
J.R. Mattison**

Editors' Note

This volume includes the second of two joint winners of the inaugural *New Medieval Literatures* (*NML*) Scholars of Colour Essay Prize: 'Obscured by Smoke: Occluded Sight as Epistemological Crisis in Eyewitness Narratives of the 1241–2 Mongol Invasions', by Misho Ishikawa. The other winning essay, by Bernardo S. Hinojosa, was published in *NML* 23. The Prize is designed to recognise work that contributes to a more inclusive discipline of Medieval Studies and is specifically intended to highlight the work of early career scholars of colour who are working in the fields of premodern literature, history, art, and culture. The Prize will be awarded biennially. The closing date for the second iteration of the Prize was 6 January 2024.

Entries are now welcomed for the third iteration of the Prize, for which the closing date is 6 January 2026. The Prize-winner will receive either £150 in cash or £300 of Boydell & Brewer books, in addition to publication in *NML* 27 or a subsequent volume, as appropriate. It is a condition of the Prize that the essay be submitted for exclusive publication in *NML*.

Entrants should submit their essays to the editors in the usual way, by email to the current volume editor, with an accompanying statement that they wish to be considered for the *NML* Scholars of Colour Essay Prize and agree to the terms of the Prize competition. All entries will be considered for publication in *NML*, whether or not they win the Prize. The entries will be judged by a selection committee composed of members of the *NML* editorial board and with external review as necessary; their decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into. The board reserves the right not to make an award should no essay of sufficient quality be entered in a given year.

All submissions will undergo the usual *NML* peer-review process, and all successful submissions will be published, whatever the outcome of the Prize.

Abbreviations

AND	*Anglo-Norman Dictionary (AND2 Online Edition)* <https://anglo-norman.net>
BL	British Library, London
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BodL	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CCCC	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DOE	*Dictionary of Old English: A to I Online* <https://doe.utoronto.ca>
EETS	Early English Text Society (e.s. – Extra Series; o.s. – Original Series; s.s. – Supplementary Series)
MED	*Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>
NML	*New Medieval Literatures*
STC	*Short-Title Catalogue*: A.W. Pollard and G.W. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad: 1475–1640* (2nd edn, rev. W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer (1976–86)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew

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Feeling Thinking in the Old English *Boethius*[1]

JENNIFER A. LORDEN

In book III of Boethius's Latin *Consolatio philosophiae* (*Consolation of Philosophy*), Philosophia tells Boethius that her remaining teaching will cause pain when first tasted yet grow sweet when ingested.[2] When the Old English *Boethius* translates this section, however, Wisdom (Philosophia's vernacular counterpart) adds the further specification that this medicine will be 'swiðe swete to belcettan' – very sweet to belch.[3] The metaphor of digestion extends a consideration of affective apprehension and contemplation that the text develops at some length, acknowledging that her previous, simpler teaching had been ingested *swa lustlice* (so eagerly) when her pupil wanted 'mid inneweardan mode hi ongiton and smeagean' (to perceive and examine it with the inward

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1   I am grateful to Nicole Guenther Discenza, Spencer Strub, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, and Emily Thornbury for comments on earlier drafts of this essay, and to the organizers of the conference 'Between the Lines: Discerning Affect and Emotion in Pre-Modern Texts' at Columbia University, where I presented part of this work.

2   *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii* Philosophiae Consolatio, ed. Ludwig Bieler, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 94 (Turnhout, 1957), book III, prose 1, section 3. Hereafter cited as *Consolatio* by book, prose or meter, and line or section number. The text reverses a biblical image from the book of Revelation, when John is told to eat a book that will be sweet to taste but grow bitter in his stomach (Rev. 10:9–10). The text puns on *mordeant* – the image is of being bitten by the very thing that one eats.

3   *Consolatio*, IIIp1.3; Boethius, *The Old English* Boethius: *An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's* De Consolatione Philosophiae, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, 2 vols (Oxford, 2009), B-Text, cap. 22, line 26. Hereafter cited as *OEB* by text version, section, and line number. All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.

mind).[4] But where the Latin warns, strikingly, that he will not be able to perceive the true felicity while his sight remains 'occupato ad imagines' (occupied with images), the Old English names the problem not as images themselves but only 'ansine ðissa *leasena* gesælða' (the likeness of these *false* felicities).[5] In both the Latin text and the Old English translation, we meet metaphors for the affective reception of instruction as well as instruction by means of such metaphors and images, and in both, sweetness is more than a mere coating on a bitter pill – rather, bitter experience must first be borne in order for lasting sweetness to come about. Elaborate, affectively engaged metaphors and narrative exempla can thus guide the weak from error, yet as Wisdom warns, their influence over the emotions has the power to lead one astray. The digestive metaphor anticipates later figures of belching that will appear in, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux. But in context, the Old English elaboration of the image suggests that both the sweetness, and certain kinds of similitude, must persist, as the Latin text increasingly leaves both of these things behind in favor of increasingly abstract philosophy. As Mary Carruthers has argued, *sweetness* as a medieval aesthetic category denotes not an abstract concept of beauty but a 'definable sensory phenomenon', a bodily one, and one that did not necessarily entail a preconceived moral judgment.[6] This characteristic of embodied sensory experience and not abstracted, conceptual goodness made such sweetness particularly salient for the English translator of the *Boethius*. In the context of early English understanding of embodied psychology and affective apprehension, such sweetness, and the bodily metaphors that evoke it, cannot be so readily abandoned in favor of abstract philosophical attainment as in the Latin *Consolatio*. The Old English *Boethius* adds both a bodily specificity to the metaphor and a further step: the bitter will not only sweeten but transform by means of digestion, producing further sweetness.

In this essay, I seek to demonstrate that the Old English translation of Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae* negotiates two historically specific phenomena as it adapts and extends the material of its source text: first, early English understandings of the embodied mind, and second, the role of embodied affect in devotion. The figure of belching, found nowhere in the Latin *Consolatio*, furnishes one example of the

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4   *OEB*, B-Text, cap. 22, lines 18–19.
5   *Consolatio*, IIIp1.3; *OEB*, B-Text, cap. 22, lines 35–6; emphasis added.
6   Mary Carruthers, 'Sweetness', *Speculum* 81.4 (2006), 999–1013 (999–1000).

commitments of the Old English translation more broadly: the Old English *Boethius* brings Late Antique philosophy into conversation with concepts of theological and devotional thought closer to home in late ninth- to tenth-century England. Extrapolating on a digestive metaphor, it actually continues an even earlier one: when Wisdom first approaches the lamenting Boethius, she asks, 'Hu ne eart ðu se mon þe on minre scole wære afed and gelæred?' (How are you not the man who was fed and taught in my school?)[7] What he supposedly has digested defines whom he should have become and should now be. And even in this early moment, Wisdom expects what he produces from his mouth to reflect that digestion, and the song of bitter grief he has sung instead lets Wisdom down.

The figure of belching as affective response to devotional understanding itself reflects the broader devotional trope of rumination, recalling sentiments like that found in Psalm 44, 'Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum', glossed in Old English: 'Belcette heorte min word god' (My heart belches [or, simply, utters] a good word).[8] In this psalter gloss and elsewhere, the verb *bealcettan* should be understood to mean not strictly to belch, but to utter, as its secondary definition in the *Dictionary of Old English* indicates.[9] But the framing metaphor of digestion in the *Consolatio*, taken to its logical bodily conclusion in the Old English *Boethius*, makes perfectly clear that the figure of belching and not mere utterance is intended there. Rumination upon the Psalms themselves was a central practice in Benedictine monasticism: '[T]he monk was called on to feel what the psalmist felt, to learn to fear, desire, and love God in and through the words of the Psalms.'[10] While the term *ruminatio* already evokes associations with chewing and eating, the connection between its cultivated devotional affect and the very digestively specific metaphor of belching

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7   *OEB*, B-Text, cap. 3, lines 3–4.
8   Psalms 44:2, quoted from the Vulgate; for the Old English gloss, see Fred Harsley, ed., *Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter*, EETS, o.s. 92 (Oxford, 1889), 77.
9   *DOE*, *s.v. bealcettan*, 2.
10   Amy Hollywood, 'Song, Experience, and Book', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge, UK, 2012), 59–79 (66). For the importance of this practice in pre-Conquest England specifically, see George Hardin Brown, 'The Psalms as the Foundation of Anglo-Saxon Learning', in *The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages*, ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Albany, 1999), 1–24.

may be more readily associated with Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, whose Sermon 67 on the Song of Songs declares:

> DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO ILLI. Nil consequentiae habet, deest orationi. Quid inde? Ructus est. Quid in ructu quaeris orationum iuncturas, solemnia dictionum? Quas tu tuo ructui leges imponis vel regulas? Non recipit tuam moderationem, non a te compositionem exspectat, non commoditatem, non opportunitatem requirit. Per se ex intimis, non modo cum non vis, sed et cum nescis, erumpit, evulsus potius quam emissus. Tamen odorem portat ructus, quandoque bonum, quandoque malum, pro vasorum, e quibus ascendit, contrariis qualitatibus. Denique BONUS HOMO DE BONO THESAURO SUO PROFERT BONUM, ET MALUS MALUM. Bonum vas sponsa Domini mei, et bonus mihi odor ex illa.[11]

> (My beloved is mine, and I am his. This has no consequence, there is no prayer. What comes of it? It is a belch. Why do you seek associated prayers or solemn speech in a belch? What laws or rules do you impose upon your own belch? It does not accept your moderation, nor does it await your composition, nor convenience, nor does it seek opportuneness. They burst forth themselves from within, without your will but when you do not know it, powerfully torn out and not uttered. Nevertheless the belch bears an odor, sometimes good and sometimes bad, according to the qualities of the vessels from which it arises. Finally a good man from his good treasure brings forth good things, and a bad man bad things. The bride of my lord is a good vessel, and a good odor comes from her.)

From there, Bernard goes on to describe the sweet belches of biblical figures: Moses, Isaiah, David, Jeremiah.[12] The Latin verb *eructare*, meaning both to belch and to utter, invites some of this play on words. In his sermons, Bernard 'undertakes to recover the *experientia* – the immediacy of God – in the reading of Scripture'.[13] Belching, for him,

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11   Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Sermon 67, section III, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. Jean LeClercq, C.H. Talbot, and H.M. Rochais, 7 vols (Rome, 1957–74), 2:190–1. Philip Liston-Kraft discusses the figure of belching in this sermon at length; see Liston-Kraft, 'Bernard's Belching Bride: The *Affectus* that Words Cannot Express', *Medieval Mystical Theology* 26.1 (2017), 54–72 (58–67).

12   Bernard, *Sermons*, 191.

13   Duncan Robertson, 'The Experience of Reading: Bernard of Clairvaux's "Sermons on the Song of Songs", I', *Religion & Literature* 19.1 (1987), 1–20 (2).

evokes just the sort of immediacy as this affective experience of God. Yet much the same concern with the affective experience of philosophical and devotional teaching guides the Old English *Boethius*.

But Bernard wrote in the twelfth century; the Old English translation of the *Boethius* was made in the late ninth or early tenth. Moreover, the Old English *Boethius* would be read and studied in later centuries, becoming a source for Nicholas Trevet's Latin commentary on the *Consolatio* in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.[14] Monastic tradition in England well before Bernard already drew upon the *ruminatio* tradition, reaching back to the desert fathers and particularly to the *Institutes* of Cassian: English writers translated and versified the Psalms in the vernacular, and monks were enjoined not only to memorize the Psalms but to reflect upon them affectively.[15] Medieval writers long after Bernard, drawing upon the desert fathers, further embraced metaphors of belching and regurgitation.[16] As Carruthers observes, even Latin *sapientia*, knowledge or intelligence, comes from *sapio*, *sapere*, to taste – *tasting* figuratively standing in for *perceiving* in general, when perceiving is the necessary means of all knowing.[17] But Carruthers further distinguishes 'the cerebral senses – vision, hearing, and smell, all of which operate out of the brain' from 'touch and taste [which] both connect directly to the heart […] or somewhere close to it'.[18] But for the *Boethius* translator, the mind and heart are not so clearly distinguished. Situated between the desert fathers on the one hand and Bernard and his belching successors on the other, the Old English

14   On the provenance and influence of the Old English *Boethius*, see Rohini Jayatilaka, 'Old English Manuscripts and Readers', in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford, 2010), 51–64 (56–7); Ian Cornelius, 'Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I: 800–1558,* ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford, 2016), 269–98.

15   M. Jane Toswell, 'Psalters', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume I: c. 400–1100*, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge, UK, 2012), 468–81 (468–70); Brown, 'The Psalms', 1–24; Francis Leneghan, 'Making the Psalter Sing: The Old English Metrical Psalms, Rhythm, and *Ruminatio*', in *The Psalms and Medieval English Literature: From Conversion to the Reformation*, ed. Tamara Atkin and Francis Leneghan (Cambridge, UK, 2017), 173–97 (193–7).

16   Eric L. Saak, '"Ex vita patrem formatur vita fratrum": The Appropriation of the Desert Fathers in the Augustinian Monasticism of the Later Middle Ages', *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006), 191–228 (213).

17   Carruthers, 'Sweetness', 1003–4.

18   Carruthers, 'Sweetness', 1004.

Boethius heightens the devotional implications of its Latin source by taking part in this broader tradition of conceiving and affectively internalizing the experience of devotional matter, concretizing the figurative tradition in the context of a literal understanding of affect as a bodily state. The metaphor of teaching that only grows sweet in time associatively evokes such topoi of affective digestion for the *Boethius* translator, prompting this elaboration on the digestive metaphor as an eructation all its own.

The elaboration of embodied metaphor in the *Boethius* derives from these older traditions, read into the metaphors of the Latin *Consolatio* itself. The translation negotiates the trajectory of the Latin in light of the vernacular understanding of the embodied mind, and thus the embodied nature of both thinking and feeling. For the late ninth-century translator of the *Boethius*, affect is not, as it is in the Latin *Consolatio*, something that can be improved in order to be finally transcended; it is an ongoing and integral part of both intellectual and devotional apprehension. Many of the major changes to the Old English text can be explained by the confluence of the early English vernacular understandings of embodied psychology and the ongoing development of affective piety, a term I use here for the variously defined practices of deep emotional engagement with devotional objects as a means of more profound devotional understanding and experience. These changes include an increase rather than relinquishing of concrete exempla, extended discussions of the nature of will and the soul, and the abbreviated treatment of book V of the *Consolatio*. As we shall see, concepts drawn from affective piety and the embodied mind shape the Old English *Boethius* as it navigates its Latin source. In making these concerns newly central as they had not been in the Latin *Consolatio*, the translation displays a curious – but explicable – preference for the verse and concrete exempla the Latin leaves behind.[19]

The Old English *Boethius* helps to inform pre-Conquest devotional and philosophical thinking, and in its adaptation of Late Antique Neoplatonist Christian philosophy, it reflects early English forms of affective devotion that are in turn inflected by early English understandings of how mind, body, and soul work together. 'Affective piety' or 'affective devotion' are terms of art that predate most contemporary literary affect theory, yet they do concern the habitual yet spontaneous

19   Amy Faulkner has argued that the meters in particular offer 'a truly original model of the mind, in which introspection is foregrounded'; see, 'Seeking within the Self in *The Metres of Boethius*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 48 (2019), 43–62 (46).

responses to phenomena that contemporary discussions of *affect* might entail.[20] While the Latin text declares that its illustrative exempla must be superseded by higher-level philosophical thinking, the Old English apparently has more trouble with those exempla to begin with. But having struggled to digest them, it also has more trouble giving them up, or thinking they ought to be. In what follows, I consider how the *Boethius* negotiates the turn from things lower to higher across the *Consolatio*, incorporating concepts of the mind and soul current to its English audience to reconcile the different understandings of psychology and corporeality in its source. I further consider how the very figures of rumination and digestion associated with later affective piety already occur in early form in this translation. Finally, I will show how the Old English translator innovates upon the Latin original in supplying further affective figures where the Latin had left them behind, ostensibly to achieve the same philosophical and literary ends. Thus while the Latin text engages in an affective project whose culmination transcends the need for stories and exempla as it ascends to the highest realms of philosophy and knowledge of the divine, the Old English *Boethius* retains a commitment to these figures and their implications for embodied affective experience. Nor is this commitment a turn *away* from intellect – too often modern scholarship assumes dichotomies of body and mind, and of feeling and thought, that would have been unintelligible to premodern thinkers like the translator of the *Boethius*.[21]

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20   The prevalent narrative of the rise of affective devotion in the twelfth century was first advanced by R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953). Other accounts of this shift include Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987); and Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010). For arguments for a pre-Conquest English affective devotion, see, among others, Thomas Bestul, 'St. Anselm and the Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions', *Annuale Mediaevale* 18 (1997), 20–41; Bestul, 'St Anselm, the Monastic Community at Canterbury, and Devotional Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anselm Studies* 1 (1983), 185–98; and Scott DeGregorio, 'Affective Spirituality: Theory and Practice in Bede and Alfred the Great', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 22 (2005), 129–39. For the increasing attention to affect and emotion before the Conquest, see the essays in Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox, eds, *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (Farnham, UK, 2015); and Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge, UK, 2018), 35–51.
21   Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin*

Rather, we see a manifestation of early English conceptions of thought that reflexively integrate, rather than exclude, affective experience as indispensable to intellectual work. This integration of affect and intellect asks us to reconsider a commonplace of religious history, by which affective devotion, evocations of deep feeling in religious experience, only arises in the twelfth century and later. The Old English *Boethius* represents a sophisticated process of adapting Christian philosophy particularly concerned with the workings of the embodied mind – which means, for its author, the workings of the affects as well.

The Old English Boethius *within the History of Affective Devotion*

The very notion of Christian *consolatio* conveys the Latin text's investment in the affective development of its protagonist. Yet while the Latin source depicts its protagonist moving beyond his emotional suffering into higher philosophical understanding, the Old English *Boethius* maintains a greater interest in the affective psychology of learning itself. The power of the Old English *Boethius* depends upon appealing to the same potentially unruly affects it seeks to direct and control. From its first pages, the Latin *Consolatio* presents a story of affective transformation toward the highest good. Although Boethius has been imprisoned by an external power, his true suffering is described in terms of his mental state: Philosophia recognizes that Boethius has turned from her teaching because of his extreme sadness, which is both cause and symptom of his trouble. The protagonist of the Old English translation similarly bemoans, 'Me þios siccetung hafað / agæled' (This sighing has oppressed me).[22] To this end, the Latin Philosophia and her Old English counterpart, Wisdom, both use concrete exempla, song, and myth as instruments to encourage the mind of the Boethius figure toward contemplation of the *soðe gesælð* (true prosperity) that will offer his only relief from suffering. In this conceit, the protagonist's affective

Traditions (Toronto, 2011), esp. 11–13 and 19–43. Lockett explores further influences that began to change this vernacular understanding in her later essay, 'Prudentius's *Apotheosis* and *Hamartigenia* in Early Medieval England', in *Textual Identities in Early Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe*, ed. Rebecca Stephenson, Jacqueline Fay, and Renée R. Trilling (Cambridge, UK, 2022), 44–71.

22   *OEB*, C-Text, Meter 2, line 5.

state, his despairing response to his circumstance, is both true cause and symptom of his trouble.

The Old English *Boethius* is not novel in its affective investments – indeed, the Scriptures themselves already demanded devotion from the heart, and this strain of devotional thinking was developed through the writings of the desert fathers. The Old English *Boethius* represents, however, a distinctive confluence of early affective devotional tradition, early English vernacular understandings of psychology and epistemology, and a developing medieval understanding of the *Consolatio*. The translation's meditation upon the role of affect in education reveals the importance of affective devotion where we might not have expected it.

Boethius's Latin *Consolatio philosophiae* is an early sixth-century philosophical treatise written as a dialogue between its author, an imprisoned late Roman consul, and the personified Philosophia herself. The late ninth- or early tenth-century Old English translation follows that dialogue, to a point. But it also adds new verses reflexively considering itself as a translated book, introduces new metaphors, replaces much material, and ends abruptly.[23] The Latin *Consolatio* is prosimetrical, alternating prose and verse, but exists in two forms in Old English: an earlier prose text (known as the B-Text), and a second prosimetrical text (the C-Text) whose form mimics that of the original. Yet the two versions remain so similar that they may be thought of as a single project; as Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine observe, '[t]he close verbal correspondence between the prose *metra* and the verse *Metres of Boethius* […] demonstrates that the one is the source of the other'.[24] For this reason, I will consider the translation as a single work in what follows,

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23   The prefaces claim authorship of the translation by Alfred the Great. Nicole Guenther Discenza argues that the explicit claim to Alfredian authorship in both extant versions invokes a specific devotional framework and cultural authority; see *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* (Albany, 2005); and Malcolm Godden, 'Prologues and Epilogues in the Old English *Pastoral Care*, and Their Carolingian Models', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 110.4 (2011), 441–73; Godden has cast doubt upon the notion that the historical Alfred himself translated the Old English *Boethius* or much of anything else; see Godden, 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', *Medium Ævum* 76.1 (2007), 1–23 (12–16); but also Janet Bately, 'Did King Alfred Actually Translate Anything?: The Integrity of the Alfredian Canon Revisited', *Medium Ævum* 78.2 (2009), 189–215 (190–9); and Malcolm Godden, 'Alfredian Prose: Myth and Reality', *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* 5 (2013), 131–58.
24   Godden and Irvine, *OEB*, 1:80.

except when a significant difference arises between them. Godden, Haruko Momma, and Paul Szarmach have considered the ways that the Old English *Boethius* elaborates upon its source and freely develops its own concepts, attempting 'the first English works of philosophy'.[25] In this vein, its philosophy and approach to philosophical teaching are not quite those of the Latin original. Among other departures, the Old English translation moves from the Christian Neoplatonist paradigm of its source to more explicitly announce itself as a devotional meditation.

First, the translation recasts Boethius himself as a Christian martyr, offering a history that the Latin text itself could not have anticipated in which Boethius suffers, and will eventually die, at the hands of Theodric. While the Latin begins in the middle of Boethius's sorrow, the first chapter of the Old English B-Text explains how the Goths overcame Rome, and how their leader Theodric, a Christian but a heretical one, promised peace to the Romans only to deliver hostility culminating in his execution of Pope John I.[26] Boethius, *se rihtwisesta* (the most righteous), perceives Theodric's actions as 'þa manigfealdan yfel þe se cyning Ðeodric wið þam cristenandome and wið þam Romaniscum witum dyde' (the manifold evils that the king Theodric did against Christianity and against the Roman counsellors).[27] The metrical version of this passage in the C-Text dials up the holy drama considerably, casting Theodric's dedication to Christianity and baptism as a more recent event, at which 'Fægnodon ealle / Romwara bearn' (All the children of the Romans rejoiced).[28] He promises peace to the Romans, but 'He þæt eall aleag. / Wæs þæm æþelinge Arrianes / gedwola leofre þonne drihtnes æ' (He lied about all of that. The heresy of Arian was dearer to that nobleman than God's law).[29] The C-Text verses go so far as to assert, without basis in

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25   Malcolm Godden, 'The Alfredian Project and Its Aftermath: Rethinking the Literary History of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 162 (2009), 93–122 (122); Haruko Momma, '*Purgatoria clementia*: Philosophy and Principles of Pain in the Old English *Boethius*', in *The Legacy of Boethius in Medieval England*, ed. A. Joseph McMullen and Erica Weaver (Tempe, AZ, 2018), 53–69 (esp. 65–9); and Paul E. Szarmach, 'The Old English *Boethius* and Speculative Thought', in *The Legacy of Boethius in Medieval England*, ed. McMullen and Weaver, 35–52.

26   *OEB*, B-Text, cap. 1, lines 6–11.

27   *OEB*, B-Text, cap. 1, lines 13–15.

28   *OEB*, C-Text, Meter 1, lines 33–4.

29   *OEB*, C-Text, Meter 1, lines 39–41.

the prose version, that Theodric in fact had the pope decapitated.[30] Both versions of the Old English *Boethius* cast Boethius's struggle against and imprisonment by Theodric as a righteous, Christian cause, in a way never expressed by the Latin. The C-Text takes this further, suggesting even more overtly that Theodric's Christianity was not just heretical but recent and possibly deceptive, as his promise of peace was, with his loyalty to Arianism explicitly opposed to God's law. The added material casts Boethius, or the *mod* who suffers as a result of these events, as not merely one wise in philosophy but in Christian faith. His ongoing grief is the grief of an orthodox and devout Christian, one with proper as opposed to heretical understanding, but one whose inner thoughts have nonetheless not fully aligned with the implications of that Christian understanding. Furthermore, while both the Latin and the Old English conclude with a brief exhortation to prayer, the B-Text of the Old English in fact continues with an original prayer, representing the affective devotional assent of at least one early English reader, whether translator or scribe.[31] As Wisdom teaches, intellectual understanding alone does not suffice; only affective apprehension of teaching can lead the mind to the highest good it should have had all along.

The affective apprehension so crucial to the *Boethius*, and the *Consolatio* before it, nonetheless sits awkwardly with the lingering influence of narratives of the rise of affective piety. Mid-twentieth-century scholars like R.W. Southern and Frederic Raby located an emphasis on affect in the era after Anselm, after the rise of Franciscan and Cistercian monasticism, or after the advent of mandatory confession.[32] And although that narrative was challenged by studies of earlier devotional affect as early as the 1970s in the work of Thomas Bestul,[33] in the decades since, scholars

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30   *OEB*, C-Text, Meter 1, line 43.

31   The prayer is included in Sedgefield's edition but not that of Godden and Irvine; see *King Alfred's Version of Boethius:* De consolatione philosophiae, ed. Walter John Sedgefield (Darmstadt, 1968), 149. I am grateful to Nicole Guenther Discenza for this observation.

32   R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953), esp. 223. See also F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry* (Oxford, 1953), 419, discussed in Carruthers, 'Sweetness', 1007.

33   On affect in devotion before the twelfth century, see Bestul, 'St. Anselm and the Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions' and 'St Anselm, the Monastic Community at Canterbury, and Devotional Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England'; DeGregorio, 'Affective Spirituality'; James M. Palmer, '*Compunctio* and the Heart in the Old English Poem *The Wanderer*',

have differed on just how much affect characterizes earlier devotional literature – Frances McCormack argues that poems like *The Dream of the Rood* evince deep sadness over the crucifixion, while Daniel Anlezark argues that the emotion of Middle English devotional lyrics is 'alien to the Anglo-Saxon elegy', and Helen Foxhall Forbes acknowledges a 'developing' strand of affective writing in eleventh-century penitentials.[34] Yet contemporary histories of compassion tend to begin with the shifts of the twelfth century. These studies document crucial changes in the audiences and aims of devotional literature, and the new devotional contexts to which it answered.[35] Yet in tracking the influence of figures like Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm, or the institution of mandatory confession and the taking of the Eucharist for all Christians after the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council, such work has given less attention not only to the ways that these phenomena carried on monastic traditions of managing devotional affect and digestive figures for conceiving of devotional affect, but how those figures operated dynamically in earlier contexts. In the Old English *Boethius*, such figures of thought take on additional duties as they both concretize the abstract philosophical

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Neophilologus 88 (2004), 447–60; Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'Affective Piety and the Practice of Penance in Late-Eleventh-Century Worcester: The Address to the Penitent in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121', *Anglo-Saxon England* 44 (2015), 309–45; Frances McCormack, 'Those Bloody Trees: The Affectivity of Christ', in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture*, ed. Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox (London, 2016), 143–61; Daria Izdebska, 'Repenting in Their Own Words: Old English Vocabulary for Compunction, Contrition, and Penitence', in *Cultures of Compunction in the Medieval World*, ed. Graham Williams and Charlotte Steenbrugge (London, 2021), 27–59; and Jennifer A. Lorden, *Forms of Devotion in Early English Poetry: The Poetics of Feeling* (Cambridge, UK, 2023), among others.

34   McCormack, 'Those Bloody Trees', 160; Daniel Anlezark, 'From Elegy to Lyric: Changing Emotion in Early English Poetry', in *Understanding Emotions in Early Europe*, ed. Michael Champion and Andrew Lynch (Turnhout, 2015), 73–98 (96); Forbes, 'Affective Piety', 330.

35   See among others Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), esp. 50–69; Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010); and Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London, 1993). On the importance of new orders of monasticism, see Lauren Mancia, *Emotional Monasticism: Affective Piety in the Eleventh-Century Monastery of John of Fécamp* (Manchester, 2019).

and metaphysical discourse of the Latin source, and help the translator negotiate an understanding of psychology, affect, and will foreign to the English vernacular understanding.

The text's goals are set forth in a verse preface added to the later, prosimetrical Old English *Boethius*. Emily Thornbury has argued that by rendering Wisdom's 'singing' into actual verse, the prosimetrical C-Text avoids marking itself as translation in the way that the prose had and provides for the vernacular audience an experience like that of reading a real Latin text.[36] The translator curates this experience of affectively engaged reading, offering, in the verse prologue, a justification for the verses to follow. This verse prologue explains that the verse sections of this translation will help the 'selflic secg' (self-interested man), who would otherwise be too bored or overwhelmed to attend to lengthy prose filled with abstract philosophical dialogue.[37] In other words, lack of proper affective response would hinder perception of truth, while the deployment of moving verse would make one receptive. However fictive or conventional this purported audience may be, the portrayal introduces a parallel with the conceit of the Latin *Consolatio*: that of a hopelessly terrestrial learner whose mind will be better able to tackle more abstract philosophical lessons if they are dressed up in affectively appealing verse. In this way, the verse preface emphasizes the parallel between the translation's audience and its protagonist. The preface's final half-line, 'Hliste se þe wille' (let him hear who will), echoes the biblical injunction frequently appended to Christ's parables: he who

36   Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, UK, 2014), 233–4. Erica Weaver suggests the two versions of the *Boethius* were received as an *opus geminatum*, or a work comprising a prose and a metrical form of the same material; see 'Hybrid Forms: Translating Boethius in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 45 (2016), 213–38; see also Susan Irvine, 'The Protean Form of the Old English *Boethius*', in *The Legacy of Boethius in Medieval England: The* Consolation *and Its Afterlives*, ed. McMullen and Weaver, 1–18.

37   C-Text, prose 1, lines 5–9. On the narrative voice of this preface, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Listening to the Scenes of Reading: King Alfred's Talking Prefaces', in *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction of Consequences in Honour of D.H. Green*, ed. Mark Chinca and Christopher Young (Turnhout, 2005), 17–36. On the prefaces to the translations more generally, see Susan Irvine, 'The Alfredian Prefaces and Epilogues', in *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. Nicole Guenther Discenza and Paul E. Szarmach (Leiden, 2014), 143–70.

has ears to hear, let him hear.[38] For the English author, for whom the mind itself was understood as embodied rather than part of an incorporeal soul, the added bodily metaphor of hearing takes on particular resonance. The uncultivated minds in which the seeds of wisdom must be sown invoke the devotional associations of the biblical allusion and offer a devotional framework for Wisdom's work with the mind itself – the protagonist must be prepared through prerequisite exempla and exhortation before tackling more difficult philosophical questions. He must learn what he is, even though by this process he will necessarily become something else.

Yet this preface belies the subsequent text. Initially, of course, the protagonist himself appears as a *selflic secg*, too caught up in his suffering to remember lessons he already knows. Moreover, the use of poetry is not an innovation of the C-Text but a feature of the Latin source itself. Most importantly, however, throughout the translation, the Old English interlocutor, Wisdom, often departs sharply from this view of verse as bearing largely instrumental value. Throughout, the text develops an argument for the enduring value of his songs and tales in instruction, and the bodily affective state of those who receive this instruction is a constant concern. Poetry and affecting exempla seem to persist in the English adaptation because their associated affect is just as important as their effect, so to speak. At the same time, their very affective quality makes their effects unpredictable and requires they be presented to a listener who has been appropriately prepared. Such conventions are thus introduced with varying degrees of caution or ambivalence over the course of the work, yet through its increased emphasis on the devotional framework of *consolatio* and its different, vernacular understanding of embodied psychology, the translation never follows its source in fully renouncing such textual strategies or their affective power.

Thinking about the Mind in the Old English Boethius

The Old English *Boethius*, in fact, rarely refers to its protagonist as *Boetius* (sic) at all; more often, the character is referred to simply as *þæt mod*, the mind, itself.[39] Since the protagonist is usually not identified

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38   *OEB*, C-Text, Verse Preface, line 10b. Compare Matt. 11:15, 13:9, 13:43; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8, 14:35; and Rev. 2:29.

39   The meaning of *mod* is far more capacious than Modern English *mind*; see Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. T. Northcote Toller (Oxford,

as Boethius but as a speaking abstraction, not unlike Wisdom himself, their dialogue becomes one between Wisdom and the mind.[40] The dramatic conflict of the text, then, is one for control of this *mod*. As Wisdom puts it in the Old English,

> Ac forþon þe þe is swa micel unrotnes nu get getenge ge of þinum irre ge of þinre gnornunga, ic þe ne mæg nu giet geandwyrdan ær þon ðæs tiid wyrð, forðon eall þæt mon untiidlice ongynð næfð hit no æltæwne ende.[41]

> (But because you have such a great sadness now troubling you both from your anger and from your mourning, I may not yet answer you now before the time comes, because all that is begun at the wrong time has no perfect ending.)

Wisdom first recognizes that the mind has departed from his teaching because of the latter's *unrotnes*, his extreme sadness. The mind will only be returned to proper understanding when his affective state is improved. Thus the mind's problem is not merely intellectual, and its restoration will have to proceed by stages as it is gradually prepared for increasingly difficult doctrine. For this reason, the Old English *Boethius* cannot restrict itself to explications of knowledge or tests of logic; it is deeply invested in affective persuasion as a means to higher understanding. At the same time, the ways that the text enjoins higher understanding never fully transcend the sweet stories, songs, allusions, and illustrations the Latin had considered only means to a better end, including those with no basis in its Latin source. Although in Old English *bealcettan* may mean 'to utter' as well as 'to belch', the elaboration of the affective metaphor remains clear: the image of the sweet belch envisions affective excess as productive; its sweetness is the point.[42]

1898; repr., 1972), *s.v. mod*; and see discussion of this and other terms for 'mind' in Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, esp. 33, 38–9; and Malcolm Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge, UK, 1985), 271–98.

40   Britton Brooks argues that the abstraction of the *mod* takes part in the translation's shift from a 'Socratic' dialogue to an interior one; see Brooks, 'Intimacy, Interdependence, and Interiority in the Old English Prose *Boethius*', *Neophilologus* 102 (2018), 525–42.

41   *OEB*, C-Text, prose 4, lines 33–6.

42   *DOE, s.v. bealcettan*, 2.