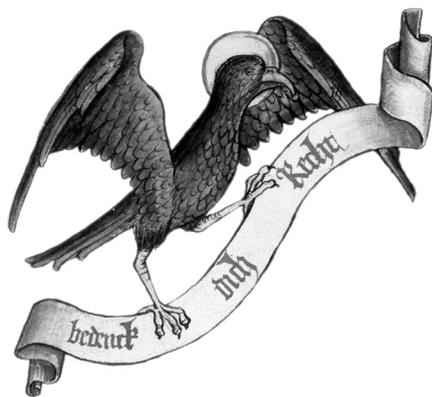


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A CURIOUS HARPOUR IN HELLE

An Edition of the Commentary on the Orpheus Metre of
De consolatione philosophiae in Manuscript Thott 304 2°

BY

AAPO TAKALA

Manuscript Thott 304 2°, which is located at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, contains an English translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* and a commentary on the text. The translation was composed by John Walton and was finished in 1410. It is completely in verse whereas the Latin original contains alternating prose and verse passages. The manuscript can be dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and most likely this copy was made specifically for the patron of the translation, the noblewoman Elizabeth Berkeley. Later, in the early sixteenth century, printer Thomas Richard used Ms. Thott 304 2° as his exemplar when preparing an edition of Walton's translation.

That a late medieval English manuscript contains a commentary is nothing out of the ordinary. The practice of writing explanations, notes, comments, and paraphrases in between lines and in the margins of manuscripts was very common in Europe in the Middle Ages. However, the commentary written in the margins of Ms. Thott 304 2° is noteworthy because it is the most comprehensive English commentary on *De consolatione philosophiae* from the Middle Ages. Ms. Thott 304 2° is the only extant manuscript containing this particular commentary.

Medieval translations were typically commissioned or at least sponsored by wealthy patrons. That the patron of Ms. Thott 304 2° was a lay person rather than a clergyman was somewhat uncommon. That it was a woman is extraordinary since there are extremely few contemporary examples of women sponsoring translations. Also her choice of text is unusual. Typically, a lay patron of the period would have sponsored alliterative poetry or religious treatises and translations, not philosophical works.

When printing became more widespread, it was fairly common to use old manuscripts as exemplars for printed editions. Nevertheless, there are few surviving printers' exemplars, and therefore Ms. Thott 304 2°,

on which the markings of the printer still can be seen, is valuable material for research. For these reasons Ms. Thott 304 2° comprises unique evidence of the literary culture in late medieval England and deserves to be edited and thus made available for research.

This article is based on my Master's thesis for the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Helsinki,¹ and here my purpose is to present the edition I prepared for my thesis of the commentary on the so-called Orpheus Metre, or Book III, Metre 12, of *De consolacione philosophiae* in Ms. Thott 304 2°. In addition to presenting the edition and the editorial principles applied to it, I will describe the manuscript, discuss its background, the history of the texts it contains, and introduce the translator and his patron. I chose this particular passage of the commentary because its length is suitable for a Master's thesis and because it forms a coherent whole. In the near future, my aim is to edit the remaining commentary.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 John Walton

The translation of *De consolacione philosophiae* contained in Ms. Thott 304 2° was made in 1410 by John Walton, a canon at Oseney Abbey, Oxford. This is confirmed in ten of the over twenty surviving manuscript copies of the translation.² Seven of them name the author “Capellanum Johannem”, Ms. Phillipps 1099 gives “Capellanum Johannem Tebaud alias Watyrbeche”, and two copies, Balliol College Ms. 316 A and Christ Church Ms. 151, name him “Johannem Waltoun.”³ Moreover, in the first printed edition of the translation, which is from 1525, there are acrostics that give the names of the patron and the translator: “Elisabet Berkeley” and “Iohannes Waltwnem,” respectively.⁴

¹ Aapo Takala: *A Curious Harpoun in Helle: an Edition of the Commentary on the Orpheus Metre of De consolacione philosophiae in Ms. Thott 304 2°*, 2010. It is available online at <<http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201103031301>>.

² Mark Science: *Boethius: De Consolacione Philosophiae. Translated by John Walton*, London 1927, p. xlii.

³ The whole *explicit* in these two manuscripts reads: “Explicit liber Boecij de consolacione philosophie de Latino in Anglicum translatus per Johannem Waltoun nuper canonicum de Oseneye anno domini millesimo cccmo decimo” (Science 1927, p. xlii).

⁴ The acrostics are included in Science's edition (1927, pp. xliii–xliv).

By this evidence alone it seems very likely that the verse translation was composed by Johannes Capellanus or John Walton. The reference to Johannes Tebaud is still a mystery, despite an attempt to solve it.⁵ However, Ian Johnson has found further substantial evidence to support the claim that the translation was indeed made by John Walton.⁶ In two stanzas there are acrostic anagrams, which spell out Walton's name. The first of these stanzas begins the first book and the second is the next to the last stanza of the whole work. They spell, respectively, NWLOTA and WTALVN, which become Walton and Waltvn. It is also significant, and an indication that these anagrams are no coincidence, that they appear at the beginning and the end of the translation. Walton was far from being the only writer to use acrostics, for medieval authors were in the habit of presenting themselves to their audience by such riddles.⁷ Miller argues that all the different names given to the translator in the manuscript tradition actually refer to the same person, and even speculates that Johannes Tebaud could refer to John Walton, too. He concludes, however, that there is not enough evidence to support this last claim.⁸

Not much is known about John Walton. He lived at the turn of the fourteenth century, but his exact birth and death dates are not known. The only other documents besides the manuscript copies of his translation of *De consolacione philosophiae* in which John Walton is mentioned are two Papal letters.⁹ The first is from 1398, and it includes a list of persons receiving the dignity of papal chaplain, among whom is John Walton, an Augustinian canon of Oseney. The second is from 1399, and it grants John Walton dispensation to hold one other benefice in addition to his canonry. Thus there is evidence for John Walton having been a canon at the Oseney Abbey in Oxford, a papal chaplain, and a translator.

He also seems to have translated Vegetius's *De re militari* for Thomas Berkeley, Elizabeth's father, in 1408. It is disputable, however, whether Walton actually is the author of this translation, which has been

⁵ Erik Miller: Thott 304 2°: *A Manuscript Copy of John Walton's Translation of Boethius' De Consolacione Philosophiae*. An unpublished Master's thesis for the Department of English at the University of Helsinki, 1996, pp. 32–33.

⁶ Ian Johnson: *New Evidence for the Authorship of Walton's Boethius*. *Notes and Queries*, 1996, vol. 43, number 1, pp. 19–21.

⁷ Johnson 1996, p. 21.

⁸ Miller 1996, pp. 32–33.

⁹ Science 1927, p. xlvi.

preserved in Bodleian Library Ms. Digby 233. The name of the translator is given in a riddle, to which there is no unambiguous solution.¹⁰ Hanna argues that Walton had no ties with Thomas, and thus was Elizabeth's own and independent choice as a translator.¹¹ Nevertheless, Thomas Berkeley did employ at least one translator, John Trevisa, to produce translations of texts he found suitable for the enlightenment of a lay baron. Among these are Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* and Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum*, a chronicle and an encyclopedic work.¹² Trevisa died in or before 1402, so Thomas had to employ another translator for *De re militari*.

1.2 Elizabeth Berkeley

Elizabeth Berkeley was born around 1386 and died in 1422.¹³ She was the only daughter of Thomas, Lord Berkeley, and Margaret, heir of Lord de Lisle. Thomas was the most important landowner in Gloucestershire and in all likelihood a rather active merchant, which ensured him an income that was both steady and substantial. He belonged to "that class of intelligent literate laymen who became prominent literary consumers in the later fourteenth century."¹⁴

However, Thomas differed from other contemporary patrons of literature in that he commissioned mainly translations and, more exceptionally still, only prose translations. His main protégé was the prolific translator John Trevisa, who under Thomas's patronage translated some encyclopedic works from Latin into English. As Hanna argues, his example as patron of vernacular translations inspired not only his daughter Elizabeth, but probably also some others in the Berkeley retinue. Moreover, it seems likely that Thomas distributed some of the works he

¹⁰ See Science 1927, pp. xlvi–xlvi; Miller 1996, pp. 34–35.

¹¹ Ralph Hanna: Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage. *Speculum*, 1989, 64, Number 4, pp. 900–901.

¹² David Fowler: *The Life and Times of John Trevisa, Medieval Scholar*, Seattle 1995, pp. 84–85, 118–119.

¹³ See for example George Cokayne: *The Complete Peerage, or a History of the House of Lords and All Its Members from the Earliest Times*, XII, Part II, ed. Geoffrey H. White, London 1959, pp. 381–382; Jennifer Ward: Berkeley, Elizabeth, Countess of Warwick (c. 1386–1422). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101056573/Elizabeth-Berkeley>>.

¹⁴ Hanna 1989, pp. 895, 879–881, 906–909.

had sponsored to a larger readership by arousing his acquaintances' curiosity about them and borrowing them for copying.¹⁵

Elizabeth married Richard Beauchamp, son of the Earl of Warwick and with him she had three daughters before she died in 1422 in the middle of a dispute over the ownership of the Berkeley estates (Thomas had died in 1417). A great deal is known about the daily affairs of Elizabeth's household because her household accounts from 1420–21 have been preserved.

Considering Elizabeth's father's activities in supporting and promoting vernacular literature and the ample resources and free time available to her, it is not surprising that she, too, should patronise a translation. In the early fifteenth century, however, female patrons of literature were few and far between; the occasion is even more exceptional because of her choice of text, a philosophical rather than a religious work. The verse form of Walton's translation and the accompanying, thorough commentary in Ms. Thott 304 2° indicate that the work was prepared for a lay audience. As Blake¹⁶ and Taavitsainen¹⁷ argue, verse was the more popular form of literature at the time and thought suitable for laity and lesser clergy. Prose, by contrast, was mainly aimed at more sophisticated audiences and thus used in didactic, philosophical, and religious works. *De consolatione philosophiae*, which is both didactic and philosophical, had indeed earlier been translated into prose by Geoffrey Chaucer. The verse form could, then, explain why Walton's version became much more popular than Chaucer's in the late Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that while Trevisa provided Thomas with, among other texts, "a complete analysis of the created world" (*De proprietatibus rerum*) and "a complete depiction of human activity" (*Polychronicon*),¹⁸ Elizabeth chose to concentrate on the philosophical discussion. These translations seem to reflect Thomas's wish to know more about the world and perhaps to gain advice on how to be a successful nobleman whereas Elizabeth's choice of text implies a desire to find spiritual enlightenment.

¹⁵ Hanna 1989, pp. 899, 903–906, 909–911.

¹⁶ N.F. Blake: The Form of Living in Prose and Poetry. *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 211, 1974, p. 308.

¹⁷ Irma Taavitsainen: The Relation of Verse and Prose in the Fifteenth Century – Some Examples. Graham Caie et al. (eds.): *Proceedings from the fourth Nordic Conference for English Studies, Helsingør, May 11–13, 1989*, 1990, p. 525.

¹⁸ Hanna 1989, p. 898.

1.3 *The Manuscript Tradition of Walton's Translation*

In addition to the over twenty extant manuscript copies of Walton's translation there survive three copies of the printed version.¹⁹ Science has studied the filiation of the manuscripts, but he has not included Ms. Thott 304 2° in the discussion.²⁰ By comparing passages from Books I and IV in the manuscripts and the printed edition Science has been able to divide them into two groups, A and B. In the first are included the printed edition (Ms. Thott 304 2° would of course also belong to this group) and Ms. Harleian 43, British Museum, and Ms. 21, Trinity College, Oxford. All other manuscripts belong to the B group.

The general condition of the extant manuscripts is good, even though there are losses in many of them. Science describes several of the manuscripts as being beautifully written or illuminated, which testifies to the status of *De consolazione philosophiae* in late medieval England.²¹

Among the extant manuscript copies of Walton's translation Ms. Thott 304 2° is unique, not only because it seems highly probable that it was the copy prepared specifically for Elizabeth Berkeley, but also because it contains the commentary, which is only present in it and in the printed edition of 1525. While the printer modernised the language for the 1525 edition, Ms. Thott 304 2° contains the commentary as it was composed for Elizabeth.

1.4 *Ms. Thott 304 2°*

Unfortunately, Ms. Thott 304 2° is incomplete. This is already indicated on its first leaf, which was added in the eighteenth century. It begins with this description: "Part of an ancient Manuscript-Translation of Boethius de Consolat: Philos: in old English." Apart from the torn leaves, there are several folia missing from both the beginning and the end of the manuscript. Large parts of Book I and the whole of Book V have disappeared. Additionally, there are also some folia missing from the middle of Books I, II, III, and IV. The text begins at stanza 15 in prose 4 of Book I, and it ends in the middle of stanza 56 in Book IV, Prose 6. Miller considers it possible that the folia were separated in 1525 when

¹⁹ Science 1927, p. vii; Ian Johnson: Placing Walton's Boethius. Maarten Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (eds.): *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio philosophiae*, Leiden 1997, p. 217.

²⁰ Science 1927, pp. xxi–xlii.

²¹ Science 1927, pp. vii–xxi.

the manuscript was prepared for printing.²² If this is the case, at least some of the losses would have occurred sometime between 1525 and 1737, the year mentioned on the first leaf of the manuscript, where it is described as being incomplete.

The 75 separate leaves and the one paper leaf of the manuscript have been attached to paper guards and gathered in quires of six folia when it was restored and rebound in 1968. The last quire, though, has only four folia. This is not, however, the original quiring, as is proven by the running letter and number (from 'c' to 'm' and 1 to 4) that are found in the lower right corner of four consecutive recto leaves, after which there are four leaves without marking before the next series begins. Also the catchwords at the end of the quires, which give the first few words of the next quire, occur at an eight-leaf interval. Thus the original quires were made up of eight folia, or four sheets. When arranging the separate leaves for binding one folio has been inserted in the wrong place. Fol. 65, which does not match the catchword on fol. 64v, is in fact fol. 74.

Ms. Thott 304 2^o still bears the marks of the printing process since, in 1525, it was used as exemplar by the printer Thomas Richard of Tavistock Abbey. Most of the markings he made indicate where the printed pages start and end and consist of impressions, lines, and dots, barely visible on most of the leaves. A full list of the leaves on which the markings can be found is in Donaghey et al.²³

Miller estimates that in its complete form the manuscript would have had space for the whole translation, an *explicit*, and the acrostics. He has also noticed that of all the missing folia the other half of the same sheet has been preserved.²⁴ This confirms that it is likely that the folia became lost after the separation of the sheets into loose leaves. Since the 1525 edition is complete, it is probable that the sheets were separated in the printing process and at least some of the losses occurred between 1525 and 1737 when Borlase remarks that the manuscript is incomplete.²⁵

Not much is known about the whereabouts of Ms. Thott 304 2^o in the time between Elizabeth Berkeley's death in the early fifteenth century and its acquisition by Otto Thott in the eighteenth century. The only evidence is afforded by the manuscript itself. On its first leaf, which

²² Miller 1996, pp. 62, 97.

²³ Brian Donaghey, Erik Miller & Irma Taavitsainen: Walton's Boethius: From Manuscript to Print. *English Studies*, 80, Issue 5, 1999, p. 406, footnote 10.

²⁴ Miller 1996, pp. 60, 62.

²⁵ A thorough description of the manuscript can be found in Miller 1996, pp. 54–78.

was attached to the manuscript in the eighteenth century, the name William Borlase and the year 1737 have been written. Borlase, who was born in 1696 and died in 1772, was a Cornish antiquary and naturalist who also had a keen interest in the history and geology of his home region.²⁶ How or where Borlase acquired the manuscript is not known. At his death his library, including manuscripts, was estimated to be worth approximately £200.²⁷

From Borlase the manuscript found its way to the collection of the Danish Count Otto Thott, who was born in 1703 and died in 1785. He belonged to one of the most prominent families in Denmark and was educated at the universities of Halle, Jena, and Oxford. He held many administrative and juridical posts in the Danish government and courts. At the end of his long career he was appointed a privy counsellor to the monarch. Thott was also one of the most important landowners in Denmark.

Otto Thott was an avid collector of paintings and, most importantly, books and manuscripts. Unfortunately, no documents detailing how and where he acquired new items for his library have been preserved. However, he kept close contact with numerous agents and fellow collectors all over Europe. Thott had already gathered a substantial number of books while travelling in Europe when his whole library burnt in the Copenhagen Fire of 1728. Thott then rebuilt the library, which became the largest private library in Denmark consisting at his death of more than 120,000 printed books, which include over 1600 incunabula, and 4000 manuscripts. The manuscripts were from both Denmark and abroad, included both sacred and secular subjects, and dated from the early Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. Thott bequeathed all his manuscripts, incunabula, and books printed between 1501 and 1531 to the Royal Library in Copenhagen whereas the rest of his library was auctioned after his death; the printed catalogue of the books on auction comprised eleven volumes.²⁸

²⁶ David Haycock: Borlase, William (1696–1772). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101002910/William-Borlase>>.

²⁷ Peter Pool: *William Borlase*, 1986, pp. 270–271, as cited by Haycock 2004.

²⁸ Claus Bjørn: Thott, Otto, 1703–85. Svend Cedergreen Bech (ed.): *Dansk biografisk leksikon*, 14, pp. 558–560; Carl S. Petersen: *Det Kongelige Biblioteks Haandskriftsamling*, 1943, pp. 15–19, <<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/693/dan/>>; Erik Petersen: Otto Thott. Erik Petersen (ed.): *Living Words & Luminous Pictures: Medieval Book Culture in Denmark*, 1999, p. 82.

1.5 The Orpheus Myth

By comparing the commentary in Ms. Thott 304 2^o to the one in the 1525 edition it can be seen that for the most part the commentary has been preserved in the manuscript. Among the intact parts are the two most comprehensive pieces of the commentary, those commenting on Metres 9 and 12 in Book III. The former is generally regarded as the central poem of the whole treatise. It draws primarily on Plato's *Timaeus*, is written in the form of a Platonic hymn, and discusses God's universal control. The latter, the subject of this article, narrates the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In it Boethius presents his version of the narrative that fascinated the antique as well as the medieval imagination. The myth of the poet who charms with his song and descends to the underworld to bring back his dead wife is thought to have its origin in ancient Greece, where Orpheus is first mentioned in poetry around 600 B.C.²⁹ The earliest literary representations of the character are, however, fragmentary, and no early source presents the myth as it is known in later times.³⁰

Friedman specifies eight elements of the myth that occur in the fragmentary pre-Hellenistic representations of Orpheus.³¹ Later retellings usually comprise a mixture of these elements, with each author and period emphasising the aspects suitable for them. Of course, some of them have been utterly forgotten or have lost their significance in the transition from one culture to another. For the Greeks, a person's lineage was of great interest, so the first things ancient Greek authors usually mention about Orpheus are his home region Thrace and his parents. His mother is always Calliope and his father is usually said to be either Oeagrus, the wine god, or Apollo. Second, Orpheus is an Argonaut, a member of the crew of Greek heroes on board the ship Argo. Third, with his music, Orpheus could charm both creatures and inanimate objects such as trees and rocks. Fourth, Orpheus is often depicted as a religious figure, a priest of the cult of Dionysus. Fifth, he is a poet, to whom a collection of poems is attributed. The sixth element on Friedman's list is Orpheus's journey to the underworld to bring back his dead wife Eurydice. This is the element of the myth for which Orpheus

²⁹ C.M. Bowra: Orpheus and Eurydice. *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, vol. 2, Issue 3/4, 1952, p. 113; Charles Segal: *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet*, Baltimore 1989, p. 14.

³⁰ John Friedman: *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA 1970, pp. 5–6.

³¹ Friedman 1970, pp. 6–10.

was best known in the Middle Ages. Seventh, having infuriated Thracian women Orpheus is killed by them. Ancient authors propose several different reasons for the women's rage, ranging from his changing his religion to his rejecting Thracian women because he was mourning for Eurydice or after Eurydice's death his becoming a homosexual. Eighth, after his death Orpheus's severed head becomes a famous oracle, able to bestow his gift of music on others.

Roman authors, most prominently Virgil and Ovid, borrowed the legend from Greek sources, reworked it, and gave it the shape that became very popular in the Middle Ages.³² The elements that both Virgil and Ovid chose to include were Eurydice's death of a snakebite, Orpheus's descent into the underworld, the effect of his music on the gods there and on nature in general, the couple's unsuccessful return from Hades, Orpheus's death, and the later fortunes of his severed head.³³ Virgil reshaped the tale so that in his version Orpheus became the ideal lover with a tragic end, whereas earlier the hold his music had on all nature and the healing and civilising powers of his song had been the focal elements of the myth.³⁴ Ovid's version, while sharing most of the basic components of the myth with Virgil, is a blend of various tones: it is not only serious and sensitive to human suffering but also parodic at the same time.³⁵ A remarkable difference between Virgil's and Ovid's versions is that Ovid reunites the two lovers in the underworld after Orpheus's death.

Due to lack of knowledge of Greek only Latin retellings of the Orpheus myth were known to medieval scholars. The third popular retelling of the myth alongside with Virgil's and Ovid's versions was Boethius's Orpheus Metre in *De consolatione philosophiae*. Because of its Christian connotations and author, this portrayal was probably the most easily digestible of the three for a medieval reader. It was certainly the most widely available version of the myth at the time. Boethius uses the tale as a part of his greater narrative, much in the same manner as Ovid has it as a part of his *Metamorphoses* and Virgil as a part of *Georgicon*. In contrast to them, however, Boethius's story is a morality illustrating a problem and the wrong solution to it.

³² Virgil's *Georgicon* IV 453–527; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* X 1–108, XI 1–84.

³³ Elizabeth Newby: *A Portrait of the Artist: The Legends of Orpheus and Their Use in Medieval and Renaissance Aesthetics*, New York 1987, pp. 65–66.

³⁴ Segal 1989, pp. 155–157.

³⁵ Segal 1989, pp. 81, 84.

In Boethius's poem, which is sung to the character Boethius by Lady Philosophy, Eurydice is already dead, and Orpheus is mourning her death so deeply that not even his own song, which still has magical power over nature, can comfort him. Frustrated at the gods who took Eurydice from him, he descends into hell, and starts to sing there. All the famous inhabitants of the Greek underworld who hear his music are touched by its sadness and forget what they were doing, thus giving a relief to the tormented. Finally, the lord of the dead lets Orpheus have his wife back on one condition: he is not to look back on her until they have left behind them the realm of the dead. As they are approaching the land of the living, Orpheus cannot resist taking a look at his beloved wife, and so loses her permanently.

At the end of the poem Boethius addresses the reader and explains the moral. When striving for the highest good the things already left behind should not be looked back on, for doing so will result in losing everything gained up to that point. Lady Philosophy thus urges her pupil Boethius not to hold on to memories of his past, but instead to aspire towards the ultimate good, which is God. This author's afterword distinguishes Boethius's tale from those of Virgil and Ovid by offering an interpretation. Early medieval Christian readers found this didactic approach especially appealing.³⁶

1.6 De consolatione philosophiae in Medieval England

There are three English translations of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* from the Middle Ages, each of them eminent in their own way. The first is King Alfred's version from the ninth century. It has survived in two forms, one all prose, the other in the same alternating prose and verse passages as the Latin original. Alfred introduced many changes to the text, replacing, for example, the characters Boethius and Lady Philosophy with Mind and Wisdom, respectively. Alfred also used Latin commentaries on *De consolatione philosophiae* to complement his translation. The second medieval translation was made by Chaucer around 1380 and is an all-prose rendering of the work. Chaucer, too, used Latin commentaries as his source and incorporated parts of them in his text.

Peculiarly, Nicholas Trevet, an English Dominican friar and classical scholar, is the connecting link between King Alfred's and Chaucer's translations. In the early fourteenth century, after about one hundred

³⁶ Friedman 1970, p. 90.

years of little or no new commenting on *De consolazione philosophiae*,³⁷ Trevet wrote a Latin commentary that became the most influential and widespread medieval commentary on Boethius: about a hundred manuscript copies of it have survived. Trevet used the commentary by William of Conches as his primary source, but there are also passages taken from other Latin commentaries and even from King Alfred's Old English translation.³⁸ In fact it seems that Trevet had more sources to draw upon than any other medieval commentator of *De consolazione philosophiae*.³⁹ Through Trevet's work, some of Alfred's ideas spread to the continent because the commentary became "the most popular and widely influential of all medieval commentaries on Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*": it was especially popular in Italy.⁴⁰

Some thirty years after Chaucer's translation, in 1410, John Walton finished his version, which is the only medieval translation of the work completely in verse. Walton's version can be seen as the culmination of accumulated medieval English scholarship on Boethius since he directly or indirectly used King Alfred's and Chaucer's translations and Trevet's Latin commentary as his source material. It has generally been judged that Walton versified Chaucer's translation, but research into Walton's translation has revealed considerable influence from Trevet.⁴¹ In popularity Walton's version far surpassed Chaucer's in the late Middle Ages, at least judging by the number of extant manuscript copies. Yet there are no references to it in other Middle English literature.⁴²

³⁷ Beryl Smalley: *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Oxford 1960, p. 60.

³⁸ Minnis 1981, p. 314.

³⁹ A full list of Trevet's sources can be found in Alastair Minnis & Lodi Nauta: *More Platonic loquitur: What Nicholas Trevet really did to William of Conches*. Alastair Minnis (ed.): *Chaucer's Boece and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius*, Cambridge 1993, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Minnis & Nauta 1993, p.1; James Clark: Trevet, Nicholas (b. 1257–65, d. in or after 1334). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27744>>.

⁴¹ Alastair Minnis: *Aspects of the Medieval French and English Traditions of the De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Margaret Gibson (ed.): *Boethius: His Life, Thought, and Influence*, Oxford 1981, pp. 343–345, 350–351; Ian Johnson: *Walton's Sapient Orpheus*. Alastair Minnis (ed.): *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 143–164.

⁴² Science 1927, p. xxi.

1.7 The Commentary on the Orpheus Metre

Many of Boethius's references to classical philosophy and ancient myths were opaque to late medieval audiences and therefore needed clarification in the form of comments. Partly because of that, scholarship on Boethius flourished in the Middle Ages: numerous Latin commentaries on *De consolatione philosophiae* and many vernacular translations of the work were composed in the period. The author of the commentary had, therefore, plenty to draw from. Only the number and quality of the manuscripts available to the writer limited the variety of sources. Large libraries were rare, and journeys to faraway repositories were required when a particular manuscript was to be consulted. However, the scarcity of sources was somewhat counterbalanced by the way medieval authors composed their works. Originality was not their prime concern. Instead, a medieval author would select parts and passages from previous writings and use them as they were or reinterpret them and combine them with his own ideas. A typical medieval commentary on *De consolatione philosophiae* would, then, consist of passages taken from various different sources, ranging from classical *auctores* to more or less contemporary commentators of the text, the commentator's own arguments for and against earlier scholars, and, by no means necessarily, some original discussion of the work.

Many medieval commentators of classical literature saw that underneath the surface, or *integumentum*, of the text was the true meaning of the story.⁴³ Moreover, the structure of commentaries often reflects the arrangement of a lecture, or *lectio*, or teacher's discussion of a book. In such a presentation there are three parts: "the *expositio ad litteram*, or explanation of the words; the *expositio ad sensum*, or explanation of the evident or narrative meaning; and the *expositio ad sententiam*, or explanation of the spiritual or philosophical meaning."⁴⁴

In the commentary on the Orpheus Metre in Ms. Thott 304 2° all three components of analysis are present. For example, in paragraph 7, the text informs the reader who the Furies are, which represents the first part, it narrates what they do, which corresponds to the second part, and it explains what vice each of the three Furies stands for, which represents the third part. Naturally, not all the components of the *lectio*

⁴³ Kathryn McKinley: *Reading the Ovidian Heroine – "Metamorphoses" Commentaries 1100–1618*, Leiden 2001, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁴ Friedman 1970, p. 96.

are present in all commentaries. Early glosses typically focus on the first part, explaining difficult words, whereas later commentaries, some of which circulated independent of the text they commented on, usually comprise a combination of the two latter parts, giving interpretations of the narrative and revealing the concealed philosophical or Christian meaning of the story.

Latin remained the language of commentaries as it also remained the language of learning until well into the late Middle Ages. In fact, besides Ms. Thott 304 2^o, there is only one other medieval commentary on *De consolatione philosophiae* in English.⁴⁵

The commentary on the Orpheus Metre in Ms. Thott 304 2^o draws the reader's attention to the cultural, mythological, Christian, and philosophical aspects of the poem. Moreover, the commentary expands on many of the poem's themes, and names the mythological characters who are only alluded to in the poem. The commentary is composed of five distinctive parts. In the first part, the source and the genre of the subsequent narrative is presented. Then Orpheus's profession, home region, mother, and special skills are mentioned. In the second part, a summary of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is given. The third and the fourth part alternate, with the former naming the mythological characters mentioned in the verse and narrating their stories in Greek mythology, and the latter giving an allegorical interpretation of the characters and their actions. Finally, in the fifth part the writer of the commentary shows that the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice corresponds to Boethius's situation while he was imprisoned.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON MS. THOTT 304 2^o

There are very few studies or articles on Ms. Thott 304 2^o. For some reason, researchers have not turned their attention to it. Without Erik Miller's trailblazing work on describing and examining the manuscript, it would have been utterly impossible for me to concentrate on only the small part of the commentary as I now have done.

In the following, I shall present in chronological order the previous studies and articles where the manuscript has been examined. In particular I will concentrate on the passages that discuss the commentary as it can be found in either Ms. Thott 304 2^o or the printed edition of 1525. The layout, language, and some very short passages of the manuscript

⁴⁵ Donaghey et al. 1999, p. 401.

and the printed edition have been compared, but to this day there is no comprehensive analysis of their contents.

There are two modern editions of Walton's translation, the first of which is not aware of the existence of Ms. Thott 304 2°. What is more, this edition, made by Karl Schümmer in 1914, contains only a partial edition of the translation, 358 stanzas in total.⁴⁶ In comparison, there are 1002 stanzas in the complete edition of the translation. Schümmer acknowledges fourteen manuscript and two printed copies of Walton's translation; Ms. Thott 304 2° is not among them. He also discusses in length the filiation of the manuscript copies and the printed edition, and concludes that the printed edition does not derive from any of the manuscripts he has studied. Moreover, Schümmer argues that the printer took some readings from a Latin original and Chaucer's translation instead of his exemplar, which would explain some of the differences between the printed edition and the manuscripts Schümmer studied. Schümmer proves this by comparing readings in the printed edition to those in the manuscripts, the Latin original, and Chaucer's translation.⁴⁷

The second and, to this day, only complete modern edition of Walton's translation, from 1927, does mention Ms. Thott 304 2° and the commentary it contains. However, Mark Science, the editor of the edition, did not study the manuscript itself but rather based his short description on an earlier one by the deputy keeper.⁴⁸ Science does, however, present an edition of the commentary that is based on the 1525 edition.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, though, it has been discovered later that Science's edition is defective. He has omitted some passages of the commentary in the 1525 edition without reporting that he has done so. Nevertheless, Science's edition does contain passages of the commentary that are missing from Ms. Thott 304 2°. These passages are only found in the 1525 printed edition and in Science's edition.

Ms. Thott 304 2° is next mentioned in research literature in *The Index of Middle English Verse*, where Walton's translation is no. 1597.⁵⁰ However, the commentary on Ms. Thott 304 2° was not discovered until the

⁴⁶ Karl Schümmer: John Waltons metrische Übersetzung der Consolatio Philosophiae. *Bonner Studien zur englischen Philologie*, Issue VI, 1914.

⁴⁷ Schümmer 1914, pp. lii–liv.

⁴⁸ Science 1927, p. xxi.

⁴⁹ Science 1927, pp. 364–379.

⁵⁰ Carleton Brown & Rossell Robbins: *The Index of Middle English Verse*, New York 1943, pp. 252–253.

mid-1990s when it was listed and described by Taavitsainen in *The Index of Middle English Prose*, in the handlist of manuscripts in Scandinavian repositories.⁵¹ The description includes the *incipit* and the *explicit* of the commentary and a list of the folia on which the commentary is written. Taavitsainen also mentions which stanzas of the translation of *De consolatione philosophiae* have been commented on in the manuscript.

The only thorough study of Ms. Thott 304 2° is that of Miller's Master's thesis from 1996. He has made a comprehensive description of the manuscript, established a date for it, and suggested that the version of Walton's translation in Ms. Thott 304 2° is a revised one. What is more, he also proposed that the revision was made specifically for the patron, Elizabeth Berkeley. This would imply either that Walton had already translated *De consolatione philosophiae* before he took the commission from Elizabeth, or that he prepared two versions of the text: one for the patron and another for a larger audience. To my knowledge, however, there is no evidence as yet for either supposition.

Miller also found out that the extensive commentary in Ms. Thott 304 2° resembles the commentary in the 1525 edition. He was able to prove that they were indeed the same commentary and, moreover, that the printer Thomas Richard had used Ms. Thott 304 2° as his exemplar when preparing his edition of Walton's translation. Miller compared the manuscript to Richard's edition and found that he had somewhat modernised the language of the poem and the commentary. In their joint article, Donaghey, Miller, and Taavitsainen presented their findings and established the link between Ms. Thott 304 2° and the printed edition of 1525.⁵²

In an article discussing the relative lack of commentaries on Middle English texts Minnis presents the commentary in Ms. Thott 304 2° and in the printed edition of 1525 as the "most substantial piece of (non-religious) commentary on any Middle English text."⁵³ He argues that Sir Thomas Berkeley and Elizabeth Berkeley were the only English patrons of translations of secular Latin texts. On the continent, where there was a more consistent effort to translate classics into vernaculars, the task was usually assumed by kings and princes.

⁵¹ Irma Taavitsainen: *The Index of Middle English Prose. Handlist 10, Manuscripts in Scandinavian Collections*, Cambridge 1994, p. 18.

⁵² Donaghey et al. 1999, pp. 398–407.

⁵³ Alastair Minnis: Absent Glosses: A Crisis of Vernacular Commentary in Late-Medieval England? *Essays in Medieval Studies*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, 2003, p. 6.

Taavitsainen mentions Walton's translation as a continuation of the classical commentary tradition in a vernacular.⁵⁴ Her article treats the transfer of classical discourse conventions into the vernacular. She also commends Ms. Thott 304 2° as an example of the refinement of visual presentation in vernacular manuscripts and of philosophical dialogue with a commentary in a vernacular.

Lewis discusses Richard's 1525 edition.⁵⁵ She points out that it is one of the earliest productions in English provincial presses and thus indicates the prosperity and ambition of Tavistock Abbey, where it was printed. Moreover, the way the printer Thomas Richard has executed the edition shows that he was a rather skilled printer. The commentary in Ms. Thott 304 2° and in Richard's edition is, according to Lewis, especially interesting since it is one of the first commentaries on *The Consolation of Philosophy* in English.⁵⁶ Lewis claims that it is likely that Walton himself produced the commentary. Moreover, Walton's choice of keeping the verse and its commentary separate can, in Lewis's view, be considered "somewhat novel, even forward-looking." Medieval writers tended to fuse all their source material into one composition, so such conduct was indeed uncommon.

The latest study in which Ms. Thott 304 2° is discussed is Taavitsainen's forthcoming article in which she compares three commentaries from the late Middle English period to determine the extent to which the genre features of earlier Latin commentaries are retained in the vernacular.⁵⁷ At the same time one can see how the genre becomes established. Taavitsainen presents Ms. Thott 304 2° as her earliest example of Middle English commentaries. She illustrates the central characteristics of the commentary by quoting selected passages from the verses and their comments.

⁵⁴ Irma Taavitsainen: Transferring classical discourse conventions into the vernacular. Irma Taavitsainen & Päivi Pahta (eds.): *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 40, 45.

⁵⁵ Lucy Lewis: The Tavistock Boethius: One of the Earliest Examples of Provincial Printing. John Hinks & Catherine Armstrong (eds.): *Printing Places*, 2005, pp. 1–14.

⁵⁶ Lewis 2005, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Irma Taavitsainen: Vernacular glosses and the commentary tradition in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English. Anna Alberni, Lola Badia & Lluís Cifuentes i Alexander Fidora (eds.): *Congrés internacional Icrea. Ciència i societat a la Corona d'Aragó a l'època de Lluís i Eiximenis* (Barcelona, 20–22 d'octubre de 2009), forthcoming.

3. THE EDITION

3.1 Description of the Commentary

The commentary is written on the margins of the manuscript's folios. On all of them, there is space reserved for the commentary, yet only 16 of the 150 folios contain commentary. Of these, only a few are written in full. There are three folios on which the commentary takes up some of the space reserved for the verse, and one folio on which the commentary takes up not only the margins but also most of the space of the verse, so that there are only 8 lines of the poem as opposed to the standard 32 lines.

The commentary is written in the same ink and in the same, though smaller, hand as the verse. It is a careful *textura* with features from both *semiquadrata* and *rotunda*. Of course, some of the details are lost in the commentary because of the script's small size, and the minims are at times difficult to distinguish. The commentary is, however, highly readable throughout, and there is no major damage on the folia containing the commentary.

The ink in the commentary is in some places rather pale. Red and blue have been used, in some cases alternately, for paraphs that indicate the beginning of a comment. Some comments do not have the paraph mark. Punctuation is usually in black. Underlining and most of the punctuation are in red ink on the following folios: 46r, 46v, 47r, 51v, 58v, and 59r. On many of these folios there is abundant commentary. Maybe in these instances the red ink has been used in punctuation to make reading of the small script easier on the eye. Of course, they could have been made by a reader trying to separate units of text from each other. They could also have been added for emphasis or to confirm the scribe's punctuation because in some cases there is black ink visible beneath the red markings. Either way, the punctuation seems rather coherent and logical.

Book III, Metre 12 is one of the most commented on passages in the manuscript. It begins in the middle of fol. 58r and ends in 59r, which only has 24 lines of verse. From the first line of this metre it is surrounded on the right side and below by the commentary.

On fol. 58v the commentary surrounds the verse on all sides and on fol. 59r it takes up the space above, to the right, and below the verse. On fol. 58r the commentary runs in one column that widens below the verse to cover the whole lineated space. There are two columns on fol. 58v.

One begins wide at the top of the page above the verse and continues narrower on the right margin to the bottom of the page. The other begins in the left margin at the first line of the verse and widens at the bottom of the page, below the verse. On fol. 59r there are also two columns, both of which begin at the top of the page. The left commentary column begins wide at the top of the page, taking approximately three fourths of the width, and runs narrower for the height of the verse. It widens again below the verse and stops nine lines before the bottom of the lineated space. The right column is narrow from the top of the page until five of the eight bottom-most lines, where it takes up the whole width of the lineated space. Three lines at the bottom of the lineated space are empty on this folio.

In most cases, the scribe has reserved space for the paraps at the beginning of each individual comment, but in a few places they seem to have been added in a narrow space between words or outside commentary columns, as an afterthought. The scribe has marked most of the places where a paraps was to be drawn with a ‘//’ mark, which is visible beneath some of the coloured paraps. As Parkes explains, this was standard practice among scribes.⁵⁸

There is underlining in red ink on fols. 58v and 59r. On both folios there is also one strikethrough which deletes an extra phrase and an extra word, respectively. On fol. 59r, there is a mark in red ink in the shape of an elongated letter ‘s’ at the end of the left commentary column. There is a similar mark at the beginning of the right column, where the text of this particular comment continues.

3.2 Editorial Principles

The editorial principles of the transcription and the edition have been formulated with the most probable users of my work in mind. I used Petti’s advice on making a semi-diplomatic transcription as a starting point,⁵⁹ and revised them to better suit this particular manuscript and my intentions. In the end the edition came to resemble what Petti calls a diplomatic transcription. The edition could find its users among literary, philosophical, and historical scholars, as well as among those interested in commentaries or the treatment of classical myths in the

⁵⁸ Malcolm Parkes: *Pause and Effect : an Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, Berkeley 1992, p. 305.

⁵⁹ Anthony Petti: *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden*, London 1977, pp. 34–35.

Middle Ages. It presents the language and content of the commentary in an accessible way, yet retaining the word forms and punctuation of the original manuscript.

Thus, the edition is a slightly normalised version of the commentary. The language is intact, as is the spelling for the most part. The characters *thorn* and *yogh* have been preserved. The two different *s*-letters are both represented by *s* and superscript letters have been lowered to the baseline. The layout has been made more regular. I have, however, kept the scribe's grouping of the paragraphs, because it is part of the commentary's structure. Also spacing and capitalisation are intact in the edition. Punctuation has been preserved, and the *virgulae suspensivae* that mark a pause and not the end of a line have been marked with slashes (/). A double slash (//) marks page change. The commentary has been organised into paragraphs by the paraphs that appear in the manuscript and they have been numbered for easier reference. I have expanded and italicised all abbreviations. No emendations have been introduced into the text.

When preparing my edition, I have greatly benefited from the generous help from the Manuscript Department at the Royal Library. They kindly gave me access to the collection of digital images of the manuscript even though they were not yet made public.⁶⁰ The layout of the pages makes browsing smooth and, more importantly, the images themselves are clear and available in three different sizes.

3.3 The Edition of the Commentary

*Philosophia*⁶¹: *Centum xxiiii et vltor liber terci*⁶²

(1) ¶ *Metrum xiim . Felix qui potuit / fontem*

Aas Ouide in his bok of Methamorphoseos maketh mencion . and feyning a maner fable . Orpheus was a curious harpou⁶³ dwelling in trace þat was sometime a prouince in þe north side of grece, which Or-

⁶⁰ They now can be accessed on the Manuscript Department's website, <www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/627/eng/>.

⁶¹ The manuscript reads *Phia* with a brevirgraph resembling a vertically inverted question mark above *h* and *i*.

⁶² I thank Mr. Alpo Honkapohja for helping me expand these abbreviations.

⁶³ Both *harpor* and *harpour* were possible spellings in late Middle English. I expand the abbreviation as *-ur* because the scribe has used the *-our*-ending in every occurrence of the word *labour*, and because this abbreviation mark is also used in the word *naturel*.

lib. m.

is quimelli named on a whet in helle, for he p' is zeue to tempal businece, on
saelly most enchaigen y' tou. noli ubel noli tho. noli. met. noli. noli. noli. noli
i profire, noli i aduine. bute p'is whet cellich, wha a ma bi mofur maon of

Pe grip p' eet ye walbe of nauis
and tured on hit louge p' bifore
p'is song to hum was so deliaous
he left hit of. tured hit uomoze
and when p' opheus had mozind fore
yo seyd ye iuge of helle peyn' througe
Dire me hith quere. whil restore
p'is ma' hith k'it y' th'ouen whith his song

But whith a talbe p'is rit. whil restreyn
par vum he p'is tound' haue forsake
zif he behald opn his whif azeyn
his k'it fro hum est'ou' whil be take
Dire ho w loue' may a talbe make
For loue is rap to hum self a talbe
When he was ner our of pe t'uid' blake
He tured hum t' Crudis he talb

Allas he lost t' left his whif bihynde
p'is fable lo to zolb p'revunt rit
for ze p' wolden listen y' to wynde
int'ro pe heye blifid' coneyn hit
zif ze et'fou' w'ne tou' zour s'it
int'ro p'is soule w'reathid' erd'it t'elle
lo at p' eu' zour lab' h'ach zolb d'it
ze lesith whien ze loketh i to helle

Cerphar lib. sans voce. de owlaco

ereth own his malbe, p' grip is a noli leit i fur
dummanon. po; he fynde hit falls neu' so ofie t'it. z'it whil he non tene hit. wher
fore he zemb al to ydelnece euerding to his craft p' is but weyn t' uel. and so
fozletch p' r'elbe ofidraaon of p'uidenat. for p'is v'nerap'it of dummanon, and
so pe gryp eath his malbe. wherth a w'rethc. ned of al his necc'larics. for cause
of p'is p'at' occupat'ion. **T**he iuge of helle is allid' r'at'umans. p' whith con
p'eluth men i helle. to w'olbech peyr w'elpas. t' he zeu' hem peyn' a'f' peyr d'eler
sig. aye k'emuth y' p'is. iuge. may be called pe' th'om of confaenat. whith d'ewth
ama' i his o'lbue here. t' he w'oth non ubel. fozlet'ing his goath occupat'ion. t' pe
t'ane of p'is. for p'is w'reathid' mant'ing' l'ust'is. and so louge p'is th'om of gl'icid'

butch i ye h'err. ni am
lathe he p'nteth hi i cel
peyr. t' o' p'ent' y' he
may uen' amend his

Cauralus as p'et' sevant
Noli his o'lbue loue. t' af' hi
to ye godd' f'oz' etc. wher fore
he was dampned into helle.
t' stou' wat' op to his thym.
t' an ap'el bifore his moach.
t' z'it he is w'ymd for hung'
t' for p'ur'it. for wh' he w'old
etc. of ye ap'el or d'umke of
pe wh'ar. p'et' flesh al'p'et' fro
h'ing' t'ant'at' brok'ent' an
u'ato' man. p' for conuenc
of w'ord'it' m'it' be fo'let'ch' al
his u'ar'it' aff'ic'ion. t' d'eth his
o'lbue soule. t' z'it hit to ye
dent. foz' l'ib'ring' hum self. t'
when hum ned' ar to exp'ent'
op' hum self. he hath leuer f'oz'
h'ing' t' p'ur'it. pan am'ent'ic
pe'p'et' of his neid'. and leuer
h'ach he de pey'nd' t' endles' p'a
to. p' wh'et'it' al'mes. or zeue hit
to ye uedi' **C**aus. as hit
is f'ey'nd' w'old' hanc' opp'el'id'
t'ac'ona. d'ip'ollo' w'ach' wher
fore d'ip'ollo' noli hum t' cast
him into helle. wher' d'om'well
a gripe t'reth' on his malbe.

Caus was a phaloloke. par
z'at' hum to w'at' of dummanon
for lawna is allid' god'el'ic of
dummanon. bute v'io'it' d'aw'it'
t' f'oy'ing' of his iug'ement'.
he was in hum self' conf'used.
t' as hit were ded' for f'oz'el'ic.
t' to cast in helle. of such v'n
p'is' bus'ness'it'. wher' p' grip
such a kol' p' v'ic'it' w'at' of
w'rechid'nece of p'is p'leat'
t'it'. for y'ane har'ped' hez'
i helle. ca'ol'ing' d'ier
p'ient'. par he ne n'ur'
u'ag' t' a'w'it'c' non' a'w'it'c'
i t'ime of his p'is'it'. wh'it'
par he har'pid' in be'ic'ue
t'er' f'oz' t'ent' be. bl'iss'
wh' p' t'it'. p' n'at' a w'ant'
form'it' t' d'ihal'it' op'ou'

Caus. as hit
is f'ey'nd' w'old' hanc' opp'el'id'
t'ac'ona. d'ip'ollo' w'ach' wher
fore d'ip'ollo' noli hum t' cast
him into helle. wher' d'om'well
a gripe t'reth' on his malbe.
Caus was a phaloloke. par
z'at' hum to w'at' of dummanon
for lawna is allid' god'el'ic of
dummanon. bute v'io'it' d'aw'it'
t' f'oy'ing' of his iug'ement'.
he was in hum self' conf'used.
t' as hit were ded' for f'oz'el'ic.
t' to cast in helle. of such v'n
p'is' bus'ness'it'. wher' p' grip
such a kol' p' v'ic'it' w'at' of
w'rechid'nece of p'is p'leat'
t'it'. for y'ane har'ped' hez'
i helle. ca'ol'ing' d'ier
p'ient'. par he ne n'ur'
u'ag' t' a'w'it'c' non' a'w'it'c'
i t'ime of his p'is'it'. wh'it'
par he har'pid' in be'ic'ue
t'er' f'oz' t'ent' be. bl'iss'
wh' p' t'it'. p' n'at' a w'ant'
form'it' t' d'ihal'it' op'ou'

such a kol' p' v'ic'it' w'at' of
w'rechid'nece of p'is p'leat'
t'it'. for y'ane har'ped' hez'
i helle. ca'ol'ing' d'ier
p'ient'. par he ne n'ur'
u'ag' t' a'w'it'c' non' a'w'it'c'
i t'ime of his p'is'it'. wh'it'
par he har'pid' in be'ic'ue
t'er' f'oz' t'ent' be. bl'iss'
wh' p' t'it'. p' n'at' a w'ant'
form'it' t' d'ihal'it' op'ou'

Thott 304 2°, fol. 59r. The Royal Library.

pheus was þe sone of Calliope . He harped so lustily þat no3t onli men wer drawn bi his melodye but also wilde bestis for uerrey delit / for3eten þeyr kindly corage of fersnesse And no3t onli þis but made ryueres forto stonde *and* forestes forto meuen *and* to renne . Þis Orpheus had a wif þat hi3t Erudis . whych a scheparde þat hi3t / Aristeus . wowed *and* desired But / Erudis reffusing / his loue fledte þor3 a mede . *and* treding opou a serpent / sche was enuenuymed *and* ded . *and* wente to helle Orpheus sorwing for his wif *and* willing forto draw hir out / of helle purposid forto plese þe heye goddes with his melodi þat þey schold restore him his wif but hit auayled no3t / . þanne went he to helle *and* as þis processe schewet in þe lettir . So miche he plesid þe goddes of helle *with* his melodye þat attelaste opou a condicion his wif was grauntid him . So þat he loked no3t / opou her til þat he were passid þe boundis of helle . But / when he was ney þe boundes so miche he desired forto se his wif þat he torned him *and* loked opou And anon . sche was gon a3en to helle þer sche was bifore (2) ¶ þis fable ffulgense expoweneth moralli ri3t in þis wise (3) ¶ Bi Orpheus is undirstande þe heyer parte of þe soule þat is þis resonabilte . enformid with wisdom *and* eloquence . wher for is he callid þe sone of Phebus *and* of Calliope . Phebus of þe grekes was callid god of wisdom . þe same is Apollo . Calliope . is as miche to seyn as good soun *and* is bitokenid Eloquence . so euerich wis man *and* eloquent / in þis maner of speking / may be callid þe sone of phebus *and* Calliope . (4) ¶ þis Orpheus þat in þe swetnesse of his harpe . þat is to seyn bi his eloquence . bestili men *and* sauage bro3t in to þe rewle of resoun . (5) ¶ his wif Erudis bitokenith þe neþer parte of þe soule þat is <>⁶⁴ hos⁶⁵ loue desireth . Aristeus . þat bitokenith uertu . ffor in such a man þat is wis *and* eloquent / . uertu kendli coueytith to abide Bute þis <>⁶⁶ reffuseth uertu *and* fleth þor3 þe mede of lustis of þis lif . which precith more busili opou such a man þat hath such abilite . þan opou eni oþur þat is more symple *and* unlernid . So þis Erudys þat

⁶⁴ Because there are no signs of erasure, the scribe must have left an empty slot on purpose, perhaps in order to later write the word in a different ink colour. As it appears below, Eurydice represents affection, therefore the missing word probably is *affection*.

⁶⁵ ‘Whose’ in modern English. This is a possible spelling in Middle English, though a somewhat peculiar occurrence in this manuscript because elsewhere the scribe has always spelled wh-words with *wh*.

⁶⁶ Here, too, the missing word seems to be *affection*. From this passage on, the scribe has written the word in the normal black ink.

// þe⁶⁷ affeccion fleth *and* reffuseth (uertu)⁶⁸ drawing to lustes of þis lif sche trdith⁶⁹ on þe serpent . þat is sensualite . which bitith so sore þe affeccion , þat sche is cause of deth *and* so þis affeccioun descendith to helle , submitting hit self to noyous busesse of þis erdly þinges . (6) ¶ Bute þanne . Orpheus . þat is Intellecte of þe soule , willing / forto drawe his affeccion fro such þingiis he casteth to plesen with his melodi þe souereyn goddes . þat is with his eloquence ioy ned to his wisdom . bothe with word and with writing tretith *and* commendith heuenli þingiis so þat he mi3te bi þe si3t þer of drawe his affeccion fro þis wordli uanite . But þis reysing of þe mynde . is ful hard for cause [for cause]⁷⁰ þat hit withdrawith mani delis þat lettin uertu wher bi a man most be reysid . And for cause he ne may no3t li3tli leue þese delites he letith þat labour And goth to helle . þat is to bihalding of þese erdli þinges . seyng with what sorewis *and* mescheues þey ben implied . And in þis bihalding he felith his affeccion reledid fro þis wordly lustes . bi þis couenant . þat he lok no3t opon his wif . þat is to sey . þat tretim of þis wordli wrecchidnesse he caste no3t þe eye of ymaginacioun to þe lustiis þer of . for 3if he do þe affeccioun 3it tendir *and* no3t fulli fre fro þese lustes . li3tli wile resorten a3en to þe same delites . And so lesith al his labour þat he hath ben aboute .

(7) ¶ Þese þre furies after feyning of poetis ben þre godesiis of helle *and* ben þre sistres þat ben callid . Allecco . Megner *and* Tessiphone . *And* al þe her of þeir hed is serpentis . And þey bitokenith þre vices . Ire þat desireth vengeance . Covetise þat desireth richesse . And . lechorye . þat desireth lust . þese ben called vengeresses for continually þey peyneth þo þat useth þeym . *and* maketh þeym euer in drede and heuinesse . (8) ¶ Þese furies so tormentid with such foule affeccioun . bi informacoun of wisdom . sorweth *and* wepith for þeyr synnes . And so forletith þe affeccion .

(9) ¶ Hit fallith ofte þat such connyng men *and* eloquent when þey ben encombred with vice *and* foule venemous desires in so miche þat þeym loþen þeir owne wicked lyuyng . þo3 þey comne make ryueres stande þat . is . þo3 þey comne with sotil suasion of elequence make vnstable men flowing in vice . forto ben sad and stedfast in vertu . And

⁶⁷ The scribe has omitted the finite verb *is*, probably due to page change. The passage should read *So þis Erudys þat is þe affeccion*.

⁶⁸ The scribe has added the word *vertu* afterwards above the line as an interlineation.

⁶⁹ The medial *e* that would come after *tr* has been omitted.

⁷⁰ The scribe has written the phrase *for cause* twice, and the latter one has been cancelled by striking through the phrase with one straight line in red ink.

dul men bestial . forto 3euen hem þeym to gostli businesse . 3it ne con þey no3t / drawen þey owne affeccion . out of þeyr lustiis ne refreyne þe foule passions þat regneth withine þeym seluen

(10) ¶ Cerberus is feynid porter of helle . and is ymagined a hound with þre hedis

(11) ¶ Ixion coueytid Iuno to his loue . And wold haue oppressid hir . Iuno putte a cloude bytween þeym bothe . And Ixion wening to haue had Iuno . dide his lechery in þe forseyd cloude , and þerof were engendred Centaures . And for þis surfet he was demid to helle . wher he is contynuelli torned in a whel . (12) ¶ Iuno bitokneth actif lif . þat stont in businesse of temporal þinges . wher fore is sche clepid stepmodiir of herutes . for þat lif is enemi to a vertuous man . wich⁷¹ þis Iuno coueytith to surfeten þat . in⁷² suche þinges seketh delites of blisfulnesse þanne . bi such lif / he fallith in to derknesse of his resoun . þat is þe cloude . wher of ben engendred Centaures . þat ben half men and half hors . ffor such men ben in parte resonable and in parte unresonable . such on // is continuelli torned on a whel in helle . for he þat is 3euen to temporal businesse , contynually most enterchaungen up and doun . now wel now wo . now meri . now sori , now in prosperite now in aduersite . bute . þis whel cessith . whan a man bi informacion of wisdom þis wordli loue forleteth . (13) ¶ Tantalus as poetes feynith slow his owne sone and 3af him to þe goddes forto ete . wher fore he was dampned into helle and stond in water up to his chyn . and an appel bifore his mouth . and 3it / he is peynid for hunger and for þurst . for when he wold ete of þe appel or drinke of þe watir . þey fleth away fro him (14) ¶ Tantalus bitokenith an Auarous man . þat for couetise of wordli muk he forletith al his naturel affecciones and sleth his owne soule . and 3yueth hit to þe deuil . forswering him self . and when him nedeth o3t to expende opon him self he hath leuer suffren hunger and þurst þan amenuse þe hep of his tresour . And leuer hath he be peynid in endles þan do þer with eni almes or 3eue hit to þe nedi (15) ¶ Ticius as hit is feyned wold haue oppressid Latona . Appollo modir . wher fore Appollo slow him and cast him in to helle . wher continuelli a gripe tireth on his mawe . Ticius was a filosofre . þat 3af him to craft / of diuinacioun for latona is called godesse of diuinacion . But bi ofte deceytes and fayling / of his Iugementes . he was in him self confused and as hit were ded for sorewe , and so cast in helle , of such vnþifti businesse . wher þe grip tireth

⁷¹ The scribe has omitted an *h* after *w*.

⁷² The scribe has written mistakenly *n* instead of *s*; the word is part of the phrase *þat is*.

upon his mawe . þe grip is a slow best in fli3t / . Such a fool þat vseth craft of diuinacion . þo3 he fynde hit fals neuer so often times . 3it wil he no3t leue hit . wher fore he 3euith al to ydelnesse entending to his craft þat is but veyn *and* idel . And so forletith þe trewe *consideracion* of prudence . for þis vncerteunte of diuinacion . And so þe gryp etith his mawe . werith a wrecche nedi of al his necessities for cause of þis ydel occupacioun . (16) ¶ Þe Iuge of helle is callid radamantis . þe which compellith men in helle to cnowlech þeyr trespass *and* he 3eueth hem peynes after þeyr deser[.]⁷³ing . Me semith þat þis . Iuge may be called þe worm of conscience . which demith a man in his owne herte . þat he doth no3t wel . forleting his gostli occupacioun and þe loue of vertu for þis wrecchid transitori lustis . And so longe þis worm of *conscience* biteth in þe herte . til atte laste he putteth him in despeyr *and* so demith þat he may neuer amend his vnþrifti lif ne neuere resorten to þe loue of vertu *and* so he demith him in to endles meschef . And til þis Iuge 3iue a man leue he may neuer retorne his affecciou fro þis vicious lif . for withouten no man may acheuen þat he wold (17) ¶ Bute atte laste bi good *enformacioun* . þis Iuge of despeyr relecith his sentence *and* þanne laboreth a man busili hoping to haue his desir . bute þis hope is restreynid bi a *condicioun* . þat he retorne no3t his si3t to his foul affecciou in to þe tyme þat hit be wel purged . for so longe is he with in þe boundes of helle . And 3if so be þat he return to his affeccion anon recording upon his foul delites he is caw3t a3en þer he was bifore . And þanne as *cris*⁷⁴ seith . sunt nouissima hominis illius peiora prioribus⁷⁵ . for he þat after despeyr is tordned eftsones in to þe same vices he falleth wors in despeyr þan he was bifore .

(18) ¶ Þis fable in special is her remenid to Boecius ffor beyng in prisoun out of alle wordli lustiis he had cler si3t / *and* conceyt of þe vnstabilnesse and þe wrecchidnesse of þis *present* lif / . for þanne harped he in helle . cnowing bi *experience* . þat he ne mi3t no3t *and* couthe no3t cnowe in tyme of his *prospite* . whil þat he harpid in heuene (19) ¶

⁷³ The line ends after *deser*, and the beginning of the next line is defective. There is one perceivable minim before *i*, but it is impossible to say for sure what was written before the minim. Most probably it was another minim for the letter *u*, so that the word would have been *deseruing*.

⁷⁴ I thank docent Matti Kilpiö for expanding this abbreviation.

⁷⁵ This passage can be found in several instances in the Vulgate's New Testament. It is verbatim in Luc. 11:26. In the English 1611 Bible Luke 11:26 reads: "the last state of that man is worse than the first." Slightly different wordings of the same idea can be found in Matt. 12:45 and II Pet. 2:20.

perfore seith he . blisful is þat lif þat maketh a man forto se *and* bihalde
 opon þe welle of li3t / þe which vnbyndeth *and* lousith þe affeccion feo⁷⁶
 þe heui burþin of wordli wrechidnesse . þe which li3t he ne mi3te no3t
 se . standing in prosperite . Bute for cause þat he complayneth him of
 his rap^{er} fortune . Filosofye conseylith him forto leue þe complayntes
 . And þat he retorne no3t his gostli si3t to his rap^{er} lustes . for al þo3
 Boecius ne were no3t vicious . 3it as hit semith he had ou^{er}miche delited
 him his prosperite þe which li3tly *and* esili had fallen to him . And tellith
 him þe peyne bi exsample of þis pr^{es}ent fable

⁷⁶ Here the correct word would probably be *fro*.

SUMMARY

AAPO TAKALA: *A Curious Harpou in Helle. An Edition of the Commentary on the Orpheus Metre of De consolacione philosophiae in Manuscript Thott 304 2°*

The article presents an edition of the commentary on the Orpheus Metre in Ms. Thott 304 2°. The manuscript is located at the Royal Library in Copenhagen and it contains an English verse translation of Boethius's *De consolacione philosophiae* and an accompanying prose commentary. The manuscript, the translation, and the commentary are rare examples of literary culture in late medieval England. The manuscript can be dated to the early fifteenth century and it probably is the copy made specifically for the patron of the translation, the noblewoman Elizabeth Berkeley. In the sixteenth century it was used as exemplar for a printed edition of the translation: the printer's markings can still be seen in the manuscript. The commentary is the most comprehensive medieval English commentary on *De consolacione philosophiae*, and only extant in this manuscript and in the sixteenth-century printed edition.

The manuscript has previously been studied in a handful of articles and one Master's thesis. Thus far, there has been no extensive research on the commentary. In addition to the edition, the article includes a discussion of the manuscript's background and an overview of previous research on it.

