

The Latin Commentary Tradition and the Old English Boethius: the present state of the question

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The possible relationship between the commentary tradition which developed around the Latin Boethius and the Old English versions is an issue that has been repeatedly discussed but is still clearly a minefield.¹ There is still much uncertainty as to whether Alfred used commentary material at all.² There is even more uncertainty and disagreement about the origins, date and history of the commentary material which survives in early manuscripts, and almost none of that material has yet been printed. We on the Boethius project feel we cannot advance understanding of the OE Boethius without trying again to confront this issue; we are aware that the answer may be negative (that the commentary tradition was not used at all for the Old English versions), but it can only be safely negative after a great deal of work. What we proposed in our plan was that we should present some account of the commentary tradition as at least a context for the Old English versions: how were others in the British Isles and the Continent reading and glossing Boethius in the ninth and tenth centuries, and

¹ The first to suggest the connection seems to have been Georg Schepss, 'Zu König Alfreds Boethius', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 94 (1895), 149-60.

² Joseph Wittig's vitally important article of 1983 was the first to cast serious doubt on the use of commentary material altogether; see his 'King Alfred's Boethius and its Latin Sources: a Reconsideration', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), 157-98. John Brinegar's excellent doctoral thesis of 2000 made the case for extensive use of other sources in preference to commentary material; see his "'Books Most Necessary": The Literary and Cultural Contexts of Alfred's Boethius' (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000). And Nicole Discenza's records for the sources of the Old English Boethius in the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* database suggest only limited use of commentary; see the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, ed. Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> and *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Register of Written Sources Used by Anglo-Saxon Authors [CD-ROM Version 1.1]*, ed. Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project (Oxford: Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project, English Faculty, Oxford University, 2002).

how similar to or different from the Old English paraphrases was this?³ There are perhaps wider implications for the understanding of the cultural resources available to the Alfredian circle, including those that might have been used for the Old English versions of Orosius and Augustine's *Soliloquies*.

The published volumes will therefore contain some account of the commentary tradition as part of the introduction and also - if it proves feasible though it looks a lot of work - more detailed reference to particular interpretations in our notes; this might take the form partly of resumés at the beginning of each metre or section of the prose,⁴ and partly of notes on points of detail. The present paper aims to set down where current scholarship stands on the commentary issue and what might be required.

A. The Latin commentary tradition.

There are altogether about 400 medieval manuscripts of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* extant.⁵ Very few indeed predate King Alfred, but since there is every likelihood that the manuscripts which survive from after his time preserve material which was current earlier we have decided to focus our attention on the sixty or so manuscripts that

³ This is something that Joseph Wittig called for in his article of 1983.

⁴ Cf the studies by Wittig of the Orpheus metre (Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius'), by Susan Irvine of the Ulysses metre ('Ulysses and Circe in King Alfred's Boethius: a Classical Myth Transformed', in *Studies in English Language and Literature. 'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (London and New York, 1996), pp. 387-401), and by Paul E. Szarmach on souls ('Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul', in *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays on Literary and Cultural Transmission in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*, ed. R. Boenig and K. Davis (London, 2000), pp. 127-48).

⁵ The invaluable *Codices Boethiani* series, initiated by Margaret Gibson and Lesley Smith and published by the Warburg Institute, is steadily working through descriptions of the manuscripts of Boethius's works; the volumes for Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland (Vol. I), Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland (Vol. II) and Italy and the Vatican City (Vol. III) have so far been published.

were written in the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries. Most of these contain some commentary material, ranging from a sprinkling of marginal notes in early manuscripts to a packed mass of interlinear and marginal commentary in manuscripts of the eleventh century. There are also a handful of manuscripts from the period containing continuous commentary, without the text of the *Consolatio* itself. Comments in hands from the tenth and eleventh centuries are often supplemented with comments in hands of the twelfth century and later; we do not aim to record these later comments, though we have done at the outset and selectively thereafter.

References to commentary material on the *Consolatio* generally distinguish between: Remigian, that is, commentary attributed to Remigius of Auxerre, or derived from it; St Gall, that is, commentary derived from a St Gall tradition or from a commentary attributed to ‘the Anonymous of St Gall’; and ‘other’, meaning a sprinkling of manuscripts that cannot reliably be attributed to either tradition, though sometimes sharing glosses with them.⁶

Remigian Commentary.

Some forty manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh centuries have been attributed to the Remigian tradition.⁷ The commentary which they witness (to varying degrees) was first attributed to Remigius of Auxerre by E. K. Rand in 1906, drawing on the presence of a reference to Remigius in the commentary in the manuscript Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 1093 (referred to in early scholarship as MS Trèves 1093).⁸ H. F. Stewart identified what he took

⁶ See esp. Wittig, ‘King Alfred’s Boethius’.

⁷ For the most recent list of these manuscripts, see C. Jeudy, ‘Remigii autissiodorensis opera (Clavis)’, in *L’École carolingienne d’Auxerre: de Murethach à Remi 830-908*, ed. D. Iogna-Prat, C. Jeudy and G. Lobrichon (Paris, 1991), pp. 457-500.

⁸ E. K. Rand, *Johannes Scottus. i. Der Kommentar des Johannes Scottus zu den Opuscula sacra des Boethius. ii. Der Kommentar des Remigius von Auxerre zu den Opuscula sacra des*

to be a more authentic form of that commentary in 1916, in the form of a continuous commentary in what is usually called the Maihingen manuscript, subsequently located in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, lat. 4°, 939) and now Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Berol lat. 4°, 939, and printed extracts from it.⁹ In 1935 E.T. Silk published a full continuous commentary from a twelfth-century manuscript which he attributed to John the Scot, and which overlaps considerably with the commentary attributed to Remigius, and also included in an appendix extensive excerpts from the Remigian commentary in the Maihingen manuscript, collated and partly corrected against the Trèves manuscript and others.¹⁰ Quotations and brief excerpts from the Remigian commentary, taken from Stewart, Silk or from various manuscripts, also appear in various studies, by Schepss, Otten, and others.¹¹

The possible influence of this commentary on the Alfredian version of Boethius, which had been argued or canvassed by a number of scholars, was seriously questioned by Courcelle's article of 1939, expanded in his monumental study of Boethius published in 1967, which reaffirmed in detail the attribution of the commentary to Remigius but argued that it was not written until late in his life, around 906.¹² While most scholars have in general

Boethius, Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters, Vol. I.2 (Munich, 1906).

⁹ H. F. Stewart, 'A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the De Consolatione Philosophiae of Boethius', *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1916), 22-42.

¹⁰ E. T. Silk, *Saeculi Noni Auctoris in Boetii Consolationem Philosophiae Commentarius*, Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome (Rome, 1935).

¹¹ Schepss, 'Zu König Alfreds Boethius'; K. Otten, *König Alfreds Boethius*, Studien zur englischen Philologie, neue Folge no. 3 (Tübingen, 1964); B. S. Donaghey, 'The Sources of King Alfred's Translation of Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae', *Anglia* 82 (1964), 23-57; Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius'.

¹² P. Courcelle, 'Étude critique sur les commentaires de la Consolation de Boèce (IXe - XVe) siècles', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 14 (1939), 5-140, and *La*

accepted this attribution and dating, the implications for possible influence on King Alfred have been questioned by a number of scholars. Otten continued to cite and print parallels from Remigian commentary in his study of Alfred's sources in 1964, arguing rightly that whatever the date the parallels were often striking, and closer than the St Gall commentary even though that appeared to be earlier.¹³ The dating of the work of Remigius has been questioned by Wittig and Marenbon.¹⁴ The possibility that Remigius was drawing in part on earlier traditions, which may have been used by Alfred, was already noted by Courcelle and has been mentioned by others.

Further study of the issue has been hampered by the fact that there is still no full text of the commentary in print. Even the extended extracts of the commentary which were printed by Stewart and Silk represent it not in its usual form, as marginal and interlinear gloss to the Boethian text, but in a much less common form, as a continuous commentary, which seems itself to derive largely from a version in the form of marginal and interlinear gloss. And the Stewart and Silk extracts are from a Continental version, supposedly of the 'original' Remigian text; there is still nothing except brief extracts available from the revised versions, including the one which circulated widely in the British Isles in the tenth century, which have been studied by Diane Bolton.¹⁵ We have therefore begun by transcribing the complete

Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire (Paris, 1967).

¹³ Otten, *König Alfreds Boethius*, esp. pp. 119-57.

¹⁴ Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius', 159; J. Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford, 2003, p. 171) questions Courcelle's attribution of the commentary on *the Opuscula* of Boethius to Remigius, which is a key factor in Courcelle's dating of the commentary on the *Consolatio*.

¹⁵ Courcelle had posited the existence of a 'revised Remigius' with one or two significant differences from the original, but Diane Bolton demonstrated that there were several distinct and substantial revisions and expansions preserved among tenth and eleventh century manuscripts; see D. K. Bolton, 'The Study of the *Consolation of Philosophy* in Anglo-Saxon England', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 44 (1977), 33-78.

corpus of interlinear and marginal glosses from an eleventh-century manuscript, Cambridge University Library Kk.3.21, identified by Bolton as representing a distinctively English revision of Remigius, which has a remarkably full set of comments, written in several stages and by several scribes. We plan to use this as a basis for collating other manuscripts. Preliminary comparisons and collations of other manuscripts, including Maihingen and several Paris manuscripts, suggest that there is an enormous amount of variation in commentary on the text, from one manuscript to another, and that we need to think of highly fluid collections or compilations of glosses and scholia rather than ‘a commentary’. Whether it is possible to identify among them a manuscript or a corpus of scholia which can be attributed to Remigius must at present be doubtful; as must the very notion of a single commentary composed *ab initio* by a single author at one time. Any manuscript of the tenth or eleventh century could in principle preserve comments that go back to the time of Alfred.

St Gall Commentary.

The Maihingen manuscript contains two commentaries, the ‘Remigian’ one in the form of a continuous commentary and another in the form of glosses surrounding the text of Boethius. Hans Naumann traced parallels to the latter in several other manuscripts,¹⁶ and Courcelle identified what he saw as the pure form of this commentary in Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, 179 and St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 845.¹⁷ He called it the St Gall commentary, or the commentary of ‘the anonymous of St Gall’. There seem in fact to be four forms of this tradition or commentary:¹⁸

¹⁶ H. Naumann, *Notkers Boethius: Untersuchungen über Quellen und Stil* (Strassburg, 1913).

¹⁷ Courcelle, ‘Étude critique’, 34.

¹⁸ I draw here on the views and publications of Petrus Tax, both in his article ‘Das

- (a) a corpus of marginal and interlinear glosses surrounding the Boethius text, extant in two manuscripts, Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, IV G. 68 (originally from St Gall) and St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 844;
- (b) a more expansive version in the form of a single continuous commentary, in Einsiedeln 179 and St Gall 845, both of the late tenth century or early eleventh century;
- (c) a shorter version of this continuous commentary (an abridgement?), in a tenth-century manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 13953;
- (d) stray glosses mixed with Remigian commentary in other manuscripts.

The St Gall commentary has not yet been published in full but Grant Roti produced an edition of Book I as a doctoral dissertation in 1979, based on St Gall 845.¹⁹ Petrus Tax has been preparing an edition for many years, and has kindly lent to the project his transcription of the shorter version, based on Naples and St Gall 844. And Dr Paolo Vaciago of Rome University 3 has been working on the St Gall tradition as well and has generously lent to the project a copy of his transcription of Einsiedeln 179. There are also many quotations and excerpts in studies by Courcelle, Otten, and others.

This has traditionally been supposed to be a ninth-century text and became prominent in Alfredian scholarship once Courcelle had redated Remigius to make him too late for Alfred to have used. But its parallels with the OE Boethius are not that persuasive, and there must now be some question of its date too. Tax's view is that the longer version as seen in Einsiedeln 179, which was the one Courcelle knew and which Otten cited from extensively in

Längezeichen e im Fränkischen und Alemannischen schon um 1000? Eine neue Hypothese', *Sprachwissenschaft* 27, no. 2 (2002), 129-42, and in correspondence. I very gratefully acknowledge his invaluable help in this area.

¹⁹ G. C. Roti, 'Anonymus in Boetii Consolationem Philosophiae Commentarius ex

his study of the Alfredian Boethius, was composed in the last quarter of the tenth century. It seems to derive in part from the glossed version. The earliest substantial witness to this is Naples, whose gloss is in hands dated late-ninth or early-tenth century - Tax prefers the later date. It's in several hands, which might suggest it had no prior existence as a homogenous body of material. The other manuscript of this form, St Gall 844, is tenth century and thought to be a copy of Naples. Tax's view is that this shorter gloss version, as in Naples and St Gall 844, was composed in the first half of the tenth century. The case for the traditional early date, ninth century, in time to be used by Alfred, perhaps depends now on:

- (a) the dating of the hands in the Naples manuscript;
- (b) the hypothesis that it was used by Remigius (as suggested by Courcelle); but that is hard to disentangle from the proposition that both Remigius and the anonymous of St Gall drew on the same lost sources; there certainly are striking parallels between the St Gall commentary and the Remigian commentary, though perhaps of a limited kind;
- (c) The suggestions that various other manuscripts have glosses in ninth-century hands which draw on the St Gall commentary, such as Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 18765. According to Courcelle the glosses in the latter combine material from both the Remigian and St Gall tradition, and some at least of the glosses were apparently dated to the ninth century by Bischoff.²⁰ But whether such parallels are sufficient to continue calling these ninth-century glosses witnesses to the St Gall commentary remains to be seen.

I don't know of any evidence that the St Gall commentary was known in the British Isles, except that Malcolm Parkes suggested that the Einsiedeln 179 manuscript was produced at

Sangallensis Codice Liber Primus' (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1979).

²⁰ B. Bischoff, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1940-80), 2. 227-8; Courcelle, *La Consolation*, 405.

Einsiedeln late in the reign of an Anglo-Saxon abbot called Gregory, and shows signs of being copied from an insular (Wales or southern England) exemplar of the late ninth or tenth century.²¹

Vatican MS 3363.

There are a number of manuscripts containing commentary which have not been confidently ascribed to the Remigian or St Gall tradition, some of them quite early. One of the most important and much discussed in the context of the Alfredian version is Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 3363, and I will concentrate on that one here.

This is an early-ninth-century copy of the *Consolatio* from the Tours region, with glosses added at various periods. The great majority of these are in a hand that has been identified as insular and probably Welsh and dating from the late ninth or perhaps early tenth century; but there are also a few in a hand roughly contemporary with the text and probably Continental, and others, especially on the opening leaves, in hands of the middle of the tenth century which have been attributed to Glastonbury, one of them specifically to St Dunstan. Courcelle drew attention to the importance of the manuscript in 1939²² and suggested a link with the Alfredian translation, but reported that much of the material was illegible. In fact the interlinear glosses and a certain amount of the marginal commentary can be read without difficulty. The glosses have never been printed in full but some examples were printed in an article by Fabio Troncarelli 1973, who indicated that he had a full transcript available.²³ In a

²¹ M. B. Parkes, 'A Note on MS Vatican, Bibl. Apost., lat. 3363', in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1981), pp. 425-7.

²² Courcelle, 'Étude critique', 45-6.

²³ F. Troncarelli, 'Per una ricerca sui commenti altomedievali al De Consolatione di Boezio', in *Miscellanea in Memoria di Giorgio Cencetti* (Turin, 1973), pp. 363-80.

book published in 1981 he included in an appendix a selective edition or transcript of the commentary from this manuscript.²⁴ This excludes most of the interlinear glosses and some of the marginal comments, and does not distinguish the different hands; it can be erratic in its report of the manuscript readings, but includes some valuable material read under ultra-violet light.

Two issues have become crucial in discussion of the Vatican manuscript:

(a) does it provide evidence that the so-called Remigian commentary was largely in existence long before Remigius, and therefore before Alfred?

(b) could the Welsh hand glossing the text at the end of the ninth century be Asser, who was said by William of Malmesbury to have helped Alfred with the translation, or at least does it represent commentary material that could have been available to Alfred?

Courcelle referred to these glosses collectively as a commentary and said it was definitely earlier than Remigius and independent of St Gall.²⁵ He also suggested a link with Asser and King Alfred. Troncarelli followed that up with an article demonstrating that there were many close parallels between the Vatican glosses and the Remigius commentary, which in his view proved that much of the commentary attributed to Remigius had been in existence long before Remigius had been at work in the first decade of the tenth century.²⁶

A proper analysis of this question and the importance of the manuscript depends ultimately on both a full record of all its glosses, which would then need to be compared with a range of 'Remigian' manuscripts, and a careful distinction of the different hands. Our

²⁴ F. Troncarelli, *Tradizioni perdute. La Consolatio Philosophiae nell' alto medioevo* (Padua, 1981).

²⁵ Courcelle, 'Étude critique', 45-6.

²⁶ Troncarelli, 'Per una ricerca'.

preliminary work suggests it is a very complex issue:

1. The Carolingian glosses of the first half of the ninth century which Troncarelli noted have not yet been identified and listed. Troncarelli's early work implied they were numerous, but in his most recent study he describes them as 'scattered notes'²⁷ and they do indeed seem to be very occasional. They can probably be ignored for the time being as evidence for or against an early existence of Remigian material.

2. There are certainly many parallels with Remigian commentary in the numerous glosses by the Welsh hand, and Malcolm Parkes confirms to me his view that the hand is probably of the late ninth century (and therefore earlier than the date that Courcelle would assign to Remigius's commentary). The curious fact is that most of these parallels, and all the significant ones that I have so far seen, link the Vatican manuscript more strongly with the English tradition of Remigius, as represented by CUL Kk.3.21, than with manuscripts that are generally seen as representing the 'original' Remigius, such as Maihingen or some Paris manuscripts; they seem often to match a kind of extra layer of glossing in CUL Kk.3.21 not derived from its 'Remigian' sources. Thus on f. 7r of Vatican 3363 we find glossing *hominum solos* in I met. v:

Homines non tenentur ea lege qua conditi sunt, quia cum omnia teneant leges proprias
homines suam ad inventionem efficiunt malum.

This is matched almost exactly by the gloss in CUL Kk.3.21:

Homines non tenentur ea lege qua conditi sunt. quia cum omnia teneant legem
propriam. homines sua ad inuentione efficiunt malum.

But nothing like it appears in the Maihingen manuscript or in the 'Remigian' Paris

²⁷ Troncarelli, *Boethiana Aetas. Modelli grafici e fortuna manoscritta della 'Consolatio Philosophiae' tra IX e XII secolo* (Alessandria, 1987), no. 133, pp. 269-70.

manuscripts that we have so far consulted (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: nouv. acq. lat. 1478, lat. 15090, lat. 17814, lat. 6401A), or in other Vatican and Florence manuscripts that we have examined. If the Welsh glossator indeed got such comments from a version of Remigius this will require a very substantial reconsideration of the date and early development of the Remigian commentary and of CUL Kk.3.21's position in that development. But for the time being it might be safest to adopt Diane Bolton's speculation, that the Remigian revisers in England, or at least those responsible for the tradition represented in CUL Kk.3.21, supplemented what they inherited from the 'original Remigius' with additional layers of material which they took, directly or indirectly, from the Vatican manuscript - or from some otherwise lost tradition of which Vatican is the sole survivor.²⁸ If so, the late ninth-century Welsh glosses in the Vatican manuscript would provide no evidence for the early date of Remigian commentary, but would nevertheless provide a very substantial body of commentary material, distinct from both Remigius and St Gall, that was in existence at the time when King Alfred began his work and in an Insular context.

3. There are however a sprinkling of parallels linking the glosses in the Welsh hand with manuscripts supposedly representing the 'original Remigius'. The Welsh glossator is positively obsessive in his repeated glossing of perfectly ordinary words with synonyms, and a certain amount of coincidental agreement with other manuscripts would be expected. A first sampling suggests however that there is a sufficient proportion of agreement in non-obvious equivalents of this kind to suggest that the glosses in the Welsh hand incorporate a stratum of early glossing, of a very limited word-for-word kind, that was also incorporated into the early Remigius manuscripts.

4. The best parallels with Remigian commentary proper, including several of those cited by

²⁸ Bolton, 'The Study of the *Consolation*', 44.

Troncarelli, are in the Glastonbury hands of the mid-tenth century. Thus on f. 3r of Vatican 3363 we find Boreas (I met. iii) glossed ‘ventus frigidissimus dissipans nubes’, a comment which is also found in the Maihingen manuscript and several others that supposedly represent Remigius (Troncarelli cited it from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 15090). In themselves such parallels might prove only that Dunstan in the 940s or 950s had access to a version of Remigius’s commentary and used it to supplement the glosses provided by the Welsh hand in the Vatican manuscript, which would not be very surprising.

5. A trickier case is the gloss on *aestum* at I met. iv, which seems to be in the second of the Glastonbury hands (Vatican 3363, f. 4r):

aestus dicitur esse in mari et inde fretum dicitur mare quod exurgit ignis et aestus a fundo

Troncarelli cited the slightly similar gloss from Paris 15090:

aestus ad oceanum pertinet, fretum ad utrumque mare

The reading of CUL Kk.3.21 is much closer however:

aestus dicitur esse in mari et inde dicitur fretum mare quia exurgit ignis et aestus a mare

The same gloss is found in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 17814, an Anglo-Saxon manuscript which according to Bolton is mainly Remigian but shows some agreement with the English revision represented by CUL Kk.3.21.

There are two possible explanations for this pattern:

(a) The Glastonbury commentator took the short gloss as seen in Paris 15090 from his copy of ‘Remigius’ and expanded it when he added it to Vatican 3363, and it was subsequently picked up from there by the English revisers who produced the CUL Kk.3.21 tradition.

(b) The version of the Remigius commentary which Dunstan and his colleague were using to

supplement Vatican 3363 was already a revised one, containing many of the additional glosses later seen in CUL Kk.3.21, and they copied the *aestum* gloss in its fuller form from there.

If the second explanation is right, it testifies to an interestingly early date for the English revision of Remigius. But further collations should throw more light on this question.

B. The case for influence on the Old English Boethius and the kinds of influence.

Much of the interesting work done so far on the possible influence of commentaries on the OE Boethius has focused on the characteristic expansions and explanations that Alfred offers when dealing with allusions to classical legends and history or complex philosophical ideas. But an enormous amount of Boethian commentary in the Latin manuscripts is not of this kind: it is steady, line-by-line and often word-by-word explication of the meaning of the words and the argument. If we are to continue to explore the possible influence of commentaries on the OE Boethius, we need to be thinking about not just the kinds of detail on mythology and science and ancient history that Alfred supplies, which he might have got from other books, but also the details of his translation and interpretation of Boethius, which of course he might have got from his own head but which could alternatively have been influenced by what he found between the lines and in the margins of his copy of Boethius.

Let us take the first sentence of Book II as an example of this kind of glossing.

The Latin text reads as follows:

Post haec paulisper obticuit atque ubi attentionem meam modesta taciturnitate collegit sic exorsa est: si penitus aegritudinis tuae causas habitumque cognoui, fortunae prioris affectu desiderioque tabescis; ea tantum animi tui sicuti tu tibi fingis mutata peruertit.²⁹

²⁹ Quotations and citations are from *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Wilhelm Weinberger, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 67 (Vienna, 1934) [references are to book, prose or

Alfred's paraphrase reads thus:

Ða geswigode se Wisdom ane lytle hwile oð þæt he ongeat þæs Modes ingeþoncas. Ða he hi þa ongieten hæfde, þa cwæð he: Gif ic þine unrotnesse on riht ongieten hæbbe, þonne nis þe noht swiðor þonne þæt þæt þu forloren hæfst þa woruldsælþa ðe ðu ær hæfdest, and geomrast nu forðæm þe hio onhwyrfed is.³⁰

The glosses so far collated from a small selection of manuscripts are given below in an appendix.³¹ The characteristic types of glosses are as follows:

1. Lexical glosses of a mostly trivial kind: **opticuit**: tacuit; **ubi**: postquam; **collegit**: intellexit, deprehendit.

If these are merely synonyms, such that either the lemma or the gloss could give rise to the same Old English rendering (e.g. **ubi**: postquam), they are presumably irrelevant to the question of influence on the OE Boethius (though in our introduction we might wish to characterise the kind of glossing that was entered in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of Boethius, and whether it differed from what was entered in Continental manuscripts of the same or a different period). If they are slightly more explanatory, perhaps suggesting one meaning of a Latin word rather than another distinct one (e.g. **modesta**: tranquilla), they might be reflected in the Old English, though if the gloss points to a real and common meaning of the Latin word one could not prove it affected the Old English rendering. An instance might be **fortunae**: felicitates; since **fortunae** is rendered *woruldsælða* in Old English, this gloss

metre, and section number].

³⁰ *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), pp.14 line 26 to 15 line 7 (I have expanded abbreviations and removed editorial italics and brackets).

³¹ The collations were made by the project co-ordinator and research associate, Dr Rohini Jayatilaka.

would certainly need to be noted in our commentary.

2. Additional words or phrases that help construe the sentence: **taciturnitate**: sua an mea;
atque: sapientia.

The first suggests that the silence can be understood as Philosophy's or Boethius's (though the latter seems unlikely). The second shows that the subject of the clause is Philosophia or *sapientia* as she is often glossed (though the choice of *sapientia* is itself relevant to the OE Boethius, which consistently identifies the second speaker as *Wisdom*) and not Boethius.

These could well be relevant to the OE Boethius, though it would be impossible to prove that Alfred had not independently read the Latin sentence that way. We would perhaps only want to mention such a gloss if we thought the Old English reading was odd or unexpected, or perhaps at odds with the usual modern interpretation. This would mean that a reader who was interested in a particular rendering, and who perhaps did think it odd though we didn't, would not have access to the gloss unless we provided a full record of all the glosses in some other form.

3. Commentary on the meaning or significance of the text that is not directly related to construing or translating. Some of these are quite short and between the lines, e.g.:

post haec: uidelicet quae superius cecinit (expanding *haec*)

aegritudinis tuae: aegritudo est animi, aegrotatio corpus (distinguishing the mental aspect of *aegritudo*, which might have prompted the Old English *unrottesse*, though its sense is clear from context anyway).

Others are longer and in the margins, e.g.:

obticuit: uidelicet ut daret illi spatium recordandi quae dixit siue ut intentionem eius uideret

(that is, she was silent for a while to give him space for pondering what she had said, or so that she could see his inner thought).

The latter could well have prompted the Old English: ‘*Ða geswigode se wisdom ane lytle hwile oð þæt he ongeat þæs modes ingeþoncas*’ (assuming that the Latin *intentio* could prompt *ingeþoncas*).

Rather more convincing perhaps is the case of III metre 6, on the illusory nature of high birth and aristocratic snobbery. There is nothing in the Old English rendering of this that one could not imagine Alfred producing out of his own head, but there are aspects of the phrasing which seem strikingly like that of the Remigian commentary, marked in bold below:

(a) Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III metre vi:

omne hominum genus in terris simili surgit ab ortu;
unus enim rerum pater est, unus cuncta ministrat.
ille dedit Phoebos radios, dedit et cornua lunae,
ille homines etiam terris dedit ut sidera caelo;
hic clausit membris animos celsa sede petitos;
mortales igitur cunctos edit nobile germen.
quid genus et proavos strepitis? si primordia uestra
auctoremque deum spectes, nullus degener exstat,
ni uitii peiora fouens proprium deserat ortum.

(b) Gloss:

Ad maiorem uero conciliationem humani generis **unum tantum hominem creauit de quo mulierem produxit. de quibus omnes sumus nati equaliter . omnes igitur nobiles similiter.**

[From CUL Kk 3.21, but also in the Maihingen manuscript and Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1581]

(c) OE Boethius, c. XXX:

Hwæt, ealle men hæfdon gelicne fruman, **forþam hi ealle coman of anum fæder and of anre meder, and ealle hi beoð git gelice acennede** . Nis þæt nan wundor, forþamþe an God is fæder eallra gesceafta, forþam he hi ealle gesceop and ealra welt . Se selð þære sunnan leoht, and þam monan, and ealle tungl a geset. He gesceop men on eorþan; gegaderode þa saula and þone lichoman mid his þam anwealde, and ealle menn gesceop emnæpele on þære fruman gecynde. Hwi ofermodige ge þonne ofer oðre men for eowrum gebyrdum buton anweorce, nu ge nanne ne magon metan unæpelne? **ac ealle sint emnæpele**, gif ge willað þone fruman sceaft geþencan, and þone scippend, and siððan eowres ælces acennednesse. Ac þa ryht-æpelo bið on þam mode, næs on þam flæsce, swa swa we ær sædon. Ac ælc mon þe allunga underþeoded bið unþeawum forlæt his sceppend and his fruman sceaft and his æðelo, and þonan wyrð anæpelad oð ðæt he wyrð unæpele.

The first question about such parallels is, do we think them significant, or are they just the inevitable similarities that would arise when various individuals, working in the same period but in different languages, tried to interpret the same Latin text? Secondly, if we do think them even occasionally or partially significant, how should we present the evidence to scholars and how much of the evidence should we present? Our plans for the printed volume made provision for relevant glosses to be noted in the course of our commentary on the text, but that inevitably involves the editors making judgements about what is relevant, and others might take different views. Can we and should we try to make these commentaries available more widely - for those who wish to test and explore our eventual conclusions about their relationship to the OE Boethius, but also for those who are interested in the dissemination of Boethius and his ideas? Editing the commentaries has proved very difficult, especially those (by far the majority) which are preserved in gloss format rather than continuous form, and the evidence of wide variations among the manuscripts suggested by our initial sampling makes the task still more formidable. Questions of the ideal format and the appropriate medium (print, web, CD-ROM) remain to be explored and resolved.

Appendix

Glosses to the first sentence of Book II of Boethius's *Consolatio* in the following manuscripts:

C4: Cambridge, University Library, Kk.3.21

P: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6401A

M1: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 19452

Ma: Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Berol lat. 4°, 939 [Berlin, Staatsbibliothek der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, lat 4°, 939 (*olim* Maihingen, Bibliotheca Wallersteiniana, I, 2, lat. 4°, 3)]

V1: Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 3363

Post haec paulisper obticuit atque ubi attentionem meam modesta taciturnitate collegit sic exorsa est: si penitus aegritudinis tuae causas habitumque cognoui, fortunae prioris affectu desiderioque tabescis; ea tantum animi tui sicuti tu tibi fingis mutata peruertit.

post haec: uidelicet quae superius cecinit C4; uidelicet quae superius dicta sunt P Ma; quae superius dicta sunt M1; dicta V1

obticuit: tacuit C4 P Ma; conticuit V1

uidelicet ut daret illi spatium recordandi quae dixit siue ut intentionem eius uideret C4; ut spiritum quem (quae Ma) diu loquendo fatigarat (fatigauerat Ma) recrearet. loquendique uires tacendo reciperet uel ideo obticuit ut intentionem eius animaduerneret (auerteret Ma) M1 Ma

atque: sapientia C4 V1

ubi: postquam C4 P M1 Ma V1

attentionem meam: dolorem meam auuditatem C4; .i. dolorem meum auuditatem uotum P; audiendi M1; auuditatem audiendi Ma; dolorem V1

meam: meum V1

modesta: tranquilla C4 P V1

taciturnitate: sua an mea C4 P; aut mea aut sua M1 Ma

collegit: intellexit. deprehendit C4; .i. deprehendit P M1 Ma V1; deprendit M1

sic exorsa est: sic inchoauit C4; sic coepit loqui C4 V1; locuta P; inchoauit M1 Ma

si penitus: intima (intimae P) ex toto C4 P; ex toto V1; si reuera cognoui M1

aegritudinis tuae: aegritudo est animi aegrotatio corporis C4; proprie dixit aegritudinis quia aegritudo est animi. aegrotatio corporis Ma; aegritudo animi P; quia aegritudo animi aegritudo est corporis M1

causas: origines C4 V1; .i. origines corporis P

habitudinemque: qualitatem C4 P M1 Ma V1

fortuna: felicitatis C4 P V1

absolute posuit mutata pluralem accusatiuum neutri generis fortuna prior peruertendo ea quae in animo tuo erant mutauit illa sicut tu tibi fingis C4 P [gl. **mutata**]

affectu: pro cupiditate C4 P; uoluntate M1 Ma; pro V1

affectus est animus pronus ad cupiditatem C4 P

tabescis: languescis C4 P V1; deficis M1 Ma

ea tantum (ea statum C4 V1) : prior fortuna C4 P V1; prospera uel mutata fortuna Ma; ea mutata animi tui peruertit tantum sicut tu fingis tibi. quantum tu peruertis animum tuum tantum et peruertit illa (peruerteris illius V1) C4 V1; ex animo tuo commutauit quantum nunc sentis te habere M1 Ma

animi tui: sc. intellectum statum C4; intellectum P; statum M1 Ma; penetralia mestitia luctuque V1

fingis: imaginariis C4 P Ma; componis M1 Ma; sicut ... seditis V1

mutata: in aduersitate C4 P V1

peruertit: perturbat C4 P M1 Ma; inclinat V1