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Abstract

Often referred to as the last Roman and first medieval, Boethius, author of *The Consolation of Philosophy, has* been widely received as an unoriginal philosopher who sought to preserve Platonic thought as the Western Roman Empire fell. However, this essay features an investigation into the literary originality of Boethius who initiates a line of Christian and Platonic literatures to follow in the medieval European tradition. Boethius demonstrates himself to be a poet who makes great use of philosophy rather than as a philosopher writing poetry. Boethius' poetic influence is felt most strongly in major aspects of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and in *The Knight's Tale* of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*

Key terms: Poetics, Platonism, Boethius, Dante, Chaucer, Medieval, Philosophy, Theology.

Boethius gives the West anxiety. I do not mean this to say that he agitates the minds of men and women living in Europe and America, but that he has yoked future Western poets beneath his influence and is driving them to outdo him in some way. Indeed, Boethius has weighed heavily on the minds of medieval and renaissance poets. Harold Bloom even suggests that poetic history "is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves" (5). If we put aside the idea of the poet misreading his or her predecessors, such an anxiety of influence is not unique to Boethius' recipients as Boethius himself also gathered the minds of those that influenced him into *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In this cycle of input and output, we see that Boethius has made himself the point of reference for the transition of the Western world from the classical to the medieval and early modern. Nevertheless, it is the metra of *The Consolation of Philosophy* that this paper shall focus on. Boethius' metra provide a filtered mythology for later Western authors, principally for Dante and Chaucer, who make abundant use of *The Consolation of Philosophy.* Throughout the metra, Boethius illustrates his dialogue with Lady Philosophy. Boethius marches in line with Plato, who, in *The Republic,* offers a new mythology that teaches his own philosophical ideas (e.g., the allegory of the cave, the myth of Er, etc.). Boethius pulls all things that preceded him into himself renew them into the emergent medieval world.

Scholarship addressing *The Consolation of Philosophy* has dealt with Boethius' philosophical influence on Western literature or focused on how Boethius united all post-Platonic thinkers into himself in order to influence later Western thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. Stephen Gersch's piece, *The First Principles of Latin Neoplatonism: Augustine, Macrobius,*

Boethius most effectively illustrates how Boethius' *Consolatio* is a synthesis of Neoplatonic thought. Gersch argues that through the works of the Latin Neoplatonists, we can come to define what Neoplatonism truly is to understand how it has influenced medieval and renaissance thinkers: "Historians of philosophy normally consider Neoplatonism as a variety of Greek philosophy, although there is also a parallel tradition of Latin Neoplatonism that exercised an enormous influence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance" (114). The amalgamation of many Greek schools is unified through the systematic philosophical works of Augustine, Macrobius and, finally, Boethius. Gersch suggests that the writings of Boethius and the other Latin Neoplatonists serve to create a philosophical "doctrine of first principles [that] consists of various ideas regarding the hierarchy hypostases in general, of certain ideas concerning specific hypostases, and various ideas regarding the causal relations between hypostases" (114). The hierarchal influence of thought is easily followed from Boethius' *Consolatio* into the monumental writings of Aquinas.

Robert Hollander redirects our attention, however, to illustrate Boethius' presence throughout Dante's *Divine Comedy.* In his article, "Dante's Virgil: A Light that Failed," Hollander examines the poetic composition of Dante's Virgil as a character that is representative of secular prophecy in contrast to and in conjunction, with the plethora of biblical prophets (3). While Hollander does not directly reference Boethius, Lady Philosophy, or the *Consolatio* in his work, he demonstrates Dante's Virgil as being a Neoplatonic figure whose existence relies on past poetic examples such as we see in the figure of Lady Philosophy within Boethius' Menippean satire. Angelo Gualtieri elevates Hollander's conversation in his essay "Lady Philosophy in Boethius and Dante" since he, working with the same raw materials for understanding the itinerant course of man as portrayed in the *Commedia,* and in constructing

Beatrice from Dante's *Convivio,* addresses Boethius as being a literary influence rather than a purely philosophical one: "The enormous influence of the *Consolatio* upon the *Convivio* is also shown by the title which Dante chose for his work. Just as Lady Philosophy consoles the unfortunate Boethius, or anyone who may find himself in similar circumstances, so through a banquet of knowledge in which Philosophy occupies the most importance place, Dante wishes to satisfy the hunger of those who may be desirous of intellectual food" (Gualtieri 143). Although Gualtieri does not directly argue that Lady Philosophy is the poetic archetype upon which Dante crafted Beatrice, we can see how he understands Boethius' influence on Dante as being one that is poetic and philosophical, rather than merely philosophical.

F. Anne Payne confronts Boethius's poetry more so than any other scholar in the past century in her book, *Chaucer and the Menippean Satire.* As the title of her work suggests, Boethius' *Consolatio,* having been written in the form of the Menippean satire, has influenced Chaucer's various works as literature crafted to fit into a poetic form: "The failure to recognize that work belongs to a particular literary genre causes universal difficulties to critics…Menippean satire, a genre common in antiquity and the Middle Ages still written today, but ignored by literary history and criticism, is frequently involved in such a failure" (3). Payne's thesis begins by compelling the reader to consider the Menippean satire as being the essential conduit through which Boethius' *Consolatio* has come into Chaucerian poetry. Payne's emphasis on the Menippean satire of Boethius' work rather than on the philosophical thought of it has set the foundation for further critics to dive into Boethius' poetics. Payne dedicates a chapter of her book to demonstrating Boethius' poetics in *The Knight's Tale.* In this chapter Payne argues that "the *Knight's Tale,* a philosophical parody with the *Consolation* and the romance as its models, belongs to the serio-comic tradition of the Menippean satire is abundantly evident in much of the

critical literature that surrounds the poem" (207). She continues by evaluating how Chaucer imitates Boethius' narrative and plot through the thoughts and conversations of his own characters (Payne 208).

Many other sources are consulted and cited throughout this article, but these are the texts that deal directly, and indirectly, with Boethius' poetics. The greatest sources to illustrate the Boethian poetics, which extends beyond the Menippean form, are the works of Boethius, Dante, and Chaucer themselves. It is my hope that a serious investigation into the primary texts with an appropriate treatment of secondary literature will allow me to convince the reader of Boethius' importance as an original poet as well as a brilliant philosopher, who has placed himself firmly into the minds of some of the West's greatest poets.

Collecting the thought of Athens, the religion of Jerusalem, and the myths of the Mediterranean world, Boethius asserts himself as the most successful of Platonists, even outdoing Plato himself, as C.S. Lewis recollects in noting how he "cannot help thinking that Boethius has here expounded a Platonic conception more luminously than Plato ever did himself," by circumventing the millennium since Athens introduced philosophy into the world to give a new wisdom to the West (90). Boethius receives the highest praises from the Florentine Dante and the English Chaucer. Indeed, Dante's entire *Commedia* can be read as an extended metrum from the *Consolatio.* Dante reimagines Lady Philosophy as dually represented by reason (Virgil) and faith (Beatrice). Through these two spirits of the mind, Dante embarks on a Boethian dialogue with words: he becomes the subject of the Neoplatonic metrum. Chaucer similarly extends the *Consolatio* in his cyclical *Knight's Tale,* which reflects the Neoplatonic urge to truth through suffering for a reunion with an enigmatic "one," as we shall see in the prayers and exhortations of the Boethian Lovers, Arcite, Palamon, and Emilye. Both Dante and Chaucer use

Boethius for the itinerant plots of their poems. They are on a journey, like Boethius, to death. While this death may be literal, as it is for our philosopher, or spiritual and metaphysical, as it is for our pilgrims, the journey to death that all three traverse is one of a quest to find peace and understanding in mortality through a return to the origins of humankind. Boethius does this by dying a martyr's death; Chaucer by visiting a martyr's tomb; Dante by arriving at the destination of the martyrs in Paradise.

Boethius, having contained an encyclopedia of the classical world in his *Consolatio,* reflects the itinerant mind of the Athenians and Romans. Therefore, we may agree with F. Anne Payne that "the stated ideas of the *Consolation* are frequently not original" but "the way of combining them is" (55). Pulling greatly from Plato and Virgil, Boethius composes a work of encyclopedic magnitude in a compact volume. From Virgil, Boethius borrows the many references to mythology and to divinity, but from Plato he crafts the entire focus of his narrative: the journey through the theories and propositions of the Western mind (Payne 58). Boethius merely maintains the nature of the Menippean satire by blending his literary references into a hodgepodge text, as the Menippean satire is meant to critique a problem through the cloud of a plethora of literary allusions (Payne 55). That thing which Boethius is critiquing is quite abstract and will be the subject of a later discussion; however, Boethius' poetical skills are greatly displayed by his ability to condense past knowledge and ideas and to remake them within the limits of this precise and complex genre of poetry. In this way, Boethius' satire has been the true appeal, leading to his longevity.

But what are we to make of this Menippean satire? Since this specific genre appears to be the only vessel aboard which Boethius could have crafted his masterpiece, an exploration into it is necessary to reveal the poetic influence that Boethius has produced. Certainly, there is no

equivalent of the genre to be found among the great books written from the late Middle Ages until our own day. This is a strange Roman genre of poetry that follows a specific rubric for its composition. Stylistically, the Menippean satire is composed of a series of poems and prose passages, as we see in Boethius' work. These poetic stanzas, or metra, typically complement the prose ones by illustrating a concept of the prose in a mythical way, or emphasize a philosophical perspective through song or prayer. In terms of genre and theme separated from style, Payne tells us,

> The *Consolation* employs three major concerns of Menippean satire which we were examining in the preceding chapters. There are the search for a Utopian life, the contrast between views from an eternal present and a series of transitory moments, represented in the stances of two stock characters whose colloquy establishes the parameters of the dialogue, and the comic and ironic assessment of the views of both these characters, an assessment leaving the issues we may designate as 'content' without resolution (62).

While the comic and ironic assessment that Payne refers to seems to end in prose I of book I, the search for the utopian life and for the transitory nature of the mind to God is the driving force behind the colloquy of the text:

> Naturae varias reddere causas
> Nunc iacet effeto lumine mentis
> Et pressus gravibus colla catenis
> Declivemque gerens pondere vultum
> Cogitur, heu, stolidam cernere terram
> [Nature returns various reasons
> Now it throws exhausted light of the mind

And the neck oppressed by heavy chains

And sloped, to hang a worn face

Alas, it is gathered together, to discern the dull earth][1] (Boethius 136-38).

Lady Philosophy, looking upon Boethius in sorrow, recalls the beauty of Boethius' heretofore clouded ambition and the strength of his mind to understand (reddere) the various causes of nature, and to ponder the way of life on the earth. Through Lady Philosophy, Boethius defines the innate impulse of the philosopher. So, for the *Consolatio* Payne's first two aspects of the Menippean satire are elided together as a Neoplatonic and Christian recognition that the transitory essence of being is unequivocally bound to the utopia of the mind first, then the spirit. Indeed, Boethius and Philosophy do not blueprint the streets of utopia together, they dialogue to discuss the utopia as the origin of all things, that is, the eternally transcendent deity. By the end of this philosophical dialogue, the reader is left wanting a content resolution, as Payne references, but is left unsatisfied.

If we proceed with our analysis and accept Payne's definition of the Menippean satire and its aspects, we may view the *Consolatio,* not just as a unique work of imaginative and poetic expression, but also as a milestone within a tradition of transcendental Platonic and Christian literature that reaches its fullest form in the works of Dante and Chaucer. Now, in explaining the Menippean satire, Payne reviews the history of the genre as being one that was popularly used by Lucian and the Cynics because it gives such writers the ability to express their pessimism with humor (60). Since the Menippean satire is a genre fit for philosophers, it is startling to see that Boethius is the first from a joyful philosophical school (the Academy of Plato) to use it.

[1] All translations of *The Consolation of Philosophy* are the author's own.

Certainly, we must save this genre from those people who passively accept reality with a dark pallor rather than pursue something transcendent that loves them! The Cynics, and their children, the Stoics lacked such a hope and belief in love, while Plato and Socrates have made a philosophy that is fit for transcendent thought and to be expressed in a transcendent poetic style. Some attention must be given to Platonism as a puzzle which the Menippean satire helps to complete.

All of Platonism deals with the necessity of a hierarchy, which fits perfectly into the Menippean framework. Upon first seeing Philosophy before him, Boethius describes her dress in the following way:

> Harum in extreme margine Π Graecum, in supremo vero Θ, legebatur intextum. Atque inter utrasque litteras in scalarum modum gradus quidam insigniti videbantur quibus ab inferior ad superius elementum esset ascensus [Of these, on the farthest margin, the Greek Pi, on the higher truly the Theta, having been weaved it was legible. And between either of the letters on a scale in the manner of a step certain signs were seen; indeed from the lower to the superior element was an ascension] (132).

Philosophy garnishes herself in the hierarchal makeup of her discipline. The symbolism of the Greek letters is simply discernable (i.e., Π is the lower, practical, philosophies while Θ is the advanced theoretical philosophies). Henry Chadwick explains the simplicity of the practical philosophies, being the quadrivium of mathematics and music that Boethius himself developed; but more relevant to us is the way that Chadwick identifies the theoretical philosophies as dependent on the quadrivium as the constitution "in Neoplatonic epistemology a ladder of ascent between the physical sciences and metaphysics or theology" (176). Although the genre of Menippean satire is obscure enough, we can understand the theoretical fields of philosophy,

principally metaphysics and theology, as the ultimate goal of all philosophical contemplation since they lead to an understanding of God, the transcendent deity, from whom all things, including Philosophy, come and to whom they return.

The Platonic insistence on hierarchy fuels the dialogue between Boethius and Philosophy since, as Philosophy argues, Boethius must return to understanding man's place in creation, and his place in relation to God in order to be consoled. In one of the greatest (and clearest) philosophical exchanges in all literature, Philosophy diagnoses Boethius' illness of mind (i.e., despair) as taking root in his misunderstanding of the nature of God and all things He created:

> 'Sed dic mihi, meministine, quis sit rerum finis, quove totius naturae tendat intentio?' 'Audieram,' inquam, 'sed memoriam maeror habetavit.' 'Atqui scis unde cuncta processerint?' 'Novi,' inquam. Deumque esse respondi. 'Et qui fieri potest, ut principio cognito quis sit rerum finis ignores?' ['But say to me, have you remembered, what is the end of things, or what does the totality of nature tend toward by intention?' 'I had heard' I said, 'but sorrow held my memory.' 'And what do you know about where all things will have advanced?' 'I know' I said. And I responded that it is God. 'And who is able to be, as that principle is understood, that does not know what is the end of things?] (Boethius 169).

Platonically reached, Boethius is on the Jacob's ladder of thought which, upon reaching the Θ (indeed, he is stuck in the quadrivium of thought), he will finally have consolation. This moment in the *Consolatio* is pivotal for the work itself and for the Western mind. In recognizing that he has forgotten his own nature as a mortal man, along with the nature of all created things as veering toward God, Boethius will be reminded by Lady Philosophy that the pinnacle of philosophy is theology and inquiry into divine matters. Indeed, metaphysics is the theoretical

tool of the philosopher who, when using it correctly and without prejudice, will stumble upon God as the end and origin of all things, as the *actus essendi* whose being is eternal. We must understand that this is a radical turn from the major philosophies of the Patristic age (ca. 100-430 AD), especially that of the Epicureans and Stoics (who seem to differ only in their beliefs on the immortality of the soul).

Boethius is consciously aware of his objection when he accuses the Stoics as tearing apart the cloak of Philosophy, thinking that they have the whole of her when they have only stolen a part: "cum deinceps Epicureum vulgus ac Stoicum ceterique pro sua quisque parte raptum ire molirentur meque reclamantem renitentemque velut in partem praedae traherent, vestem quam meis texueram manibus, disciderunt abreptisque ab ea panniculis [Hereafter, when the crowd of the Epicureans and of the other Stoics, for their own part whatsoever, have struggled over the taken part of the robe with anger, with me crying out in protest and resisting, just as they dragged away a part of the spoil, the garment, which I had woven with my hands, they have divided, taken the little garments from me…] " (142). Zeno and Epicurus are historical and philosophical foils to each other. I mean that not as a literary foil, being identical oppositions to each other, but as having the same mind with a different justification for their fatalistic theories. Zeno's Stoicism is based on the notion of *apatheia,* or the resignation of emotions to the sad state of reality. The Stoic *apathy* presupposes victory in human life to be unattainable, and as such "if victory is quite impossible it should be scorned. The secret of peace is not to make our achievements equal to our desires, but to lower our desires to the level of our achievements" (Durant 76). Likewise, Epicurus addresses the problem of winning happiness as the acquisition of tranquility, or *ataraxia,* which is only possible when one does not seek pleasure, since all pleasures are fleeting, but happiness through repose of the mind (Durant 77). Such fatalistic

philosophies have stripped Philosophy of her cloak and used their inkling of truth to poison the Greek mind. Boethius, coming strongly out of the Christian tradition, uses Platonism as the true philosophy and the school that is most friendly to the idea of the transcendent God and for man's apotheosis or beatification. Metaphysics can only be possible in a hopeful philosophy like that expressed by the Academy. Theology, then, being the vertex of metaphysics, must make use of Platonism as a carpenter makes use of hammer and nails.

To conclude on the poetics of Boethius, we must first present ourselves with one of the metra from the *Consolatio* that transform the poetic mind of the West. The first of these metra (I.VII) concludes book 1 of the *Consolatio,* and it is a lamentation from Philosophy about the mind of the lost soul that seems to directly precede Dante's descent into the dark wood:

Nubibus atris
Condita nullum
Fundere possunt
Sidera lumen
Si mare volvens
Turbidus Auster
Misceat aestum
Vitrea dudum
Parque serenis
Unda diebus
Mox resoluto
Sordida caeno
Visibus obstat.

Quique vagatur

Montibus altis

Defluus amnis,

Saepe resistit

Rupe soluti

Obice saxi.

Tu quoque si vis

Lumine claro

Cernere verum,

Tramite recto

Carpere callem,

Gaudia pelle,

Pelle timorem

Spemque fugato [with black clouds, nothing built, the stars can pour out light, if the impatient Auster overturns the sea, it may mix the spray, formerly glazed and part of the calm, the waves during the days, soon sorrow hinders the vision with resolute filth. Wherever he wanders, in the high mountains. The flowing river often resists, unbound from the cliff, cast upon the rock. Also, if you will, by the clear light, that truly indicates, the straight path to pluck the mountain path, drive out joy, drive out fear, and put hope to flight] (Boethius 170-72).

These words are the first glimpse down into the *Inferno* as they seem to describe a metaphorical dark wood that Dante crafts, along with the entrance sign of Hell itself. The words of Lady Philosophy here are chilling: “Pelle timorem/ Spemque fugato” (I.VII 26-7). Bound up in the

words of her song, Boethius does not need to descend into Hell to find purpose again since he is already at Hell's lowest pit. His fall from fortune denotates a disgraced mind that, as we illustrated earlier, has forgotten the purpose of man's life on earth. In his typically Platonic style, Boethius necessitates reason as the tool which will bring him to salvation (so heavy is the weight of Philosophy's incarnation). This use of reason to ascend the mind is the illustrative path to theoretical thought and divine contemplation that the Menippean satire enabled Boethius to express. Furthermore, Philosophy's description of Boethius' current state is cynical in the Menippean tradition. A review of the seventh metrum of the first book of the *Consolatio* reveals that the philosopher is stranded beneath a cliff where darkness and obscurity take root. While this place may sound like the ship of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, it is in fact the dens of the fatalistic descendants of Zeno and Epicurus.

Unfortunately, Boethius seems to reach the limits of the Menippean satire by concluding his journey to God (i.e., theology as the highest form of philosophical inquiry) is the essential ascent he must take without being able to reach God in the text of the *Consolatio*. Dante, using all the teachings and beauties held in the Menippean form of the *Consolatio,* begins his *Commedia* where Boethius' first book ends. Dante places himself into the world that Lady Philosophy just described as the place of the destitute mind and soul. Let us compare:

> Nell mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> Mi ritrovai per una sleva oscura,
> Che la diritta via era smarrita.
> Ahi quanto a dir qual era e cosa dura
> Esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
> Che nel pensier rinova la paura!

Tant' e amara che poco e piu morte;

[Midway upon the journey of our life

I found myself in a dark wilderness,

For I had wandered from the straight and true.

How hard a thing it is to tell about,

That wilderness so savage, dense, and harsh,

Even to think of it renews my fear!

It is so bitter, death is hardly more[2]] (Inf I.1-7).

Although Dante wrote his poem in Italian, Boethius in Latin, we see much of the same descriptive language being used to illustrate the place of irrationality; however, in order to understand Boethius' true purpose in having Philosophy visualize the loss of rationality in this way, as well as his influence on Dante, we must equate the loss of reason as being in a state of sin.

Louis Markos helps us identify the specific type of sin that Boethius and Dante are both suffering from by explaining that it is not the typical deadly sins, which are the inversions of the seven virtues, that are causing our philosopher-poets to fall into obscurity. Rather it is a wasting of blessings: "Yet sin is: a sullen, lethargic wasting away of our gifts that will cause us in the end to drift away from God and ultimately, to lose all sense of ourselves as creatures created with a. purpose and equipped with gifts to pursue that purpose" (234). Boethius is the first philosopher in the West to depict this purpose as a dialectical journey. Boethius shows himself to be like Saint Augustine, who was indirectly exposed to Plato's thought, and came up with a notion of the

[2] All translations of Dante are from Dante, *Inferno; Purgatory; Paradise.* Translated by Anthony Esolen. The Modern Library, 2003.

Everyman's journey back to God; but, unlike Augustine, Boethius expresses this poetically. Markos believes that Boethius continues Plato's war against poetry with Philosophy's expulsion of the Muses at the very start of the *Consolatio* (231); however, it appears that Boethius is reshaping poetry into a platonic form.

Boethius must understand poetry to be a supplement to philosophy since he has Lady Philosophy compose poems to him. Nevertheless, Boethius' poetry is a latent admission that the epic poetry of pagan antiquity has espoused a bad philosophy of *aristoi* that presupposes a cynical social Darwinism. But for Boethius, whose philosophical power outweighs his poetical pen, he could only reshape the poetic mind of the West by filtering it through Platonism. Dante, who came out of Boethius, is *the* Platonic poet, continuing the tradition begun by Boethius.

Dante begins his Christian-Platonic epic where Boethius ends the first book of his, in a dark forest. He arrives in this forest, far from the light of heaven, because of an abuse of his blessings (i.e. a fall into sin). But here Dante begins to move away from Boethius, as if the philosopher is a stone tossed in the water, and the poet is the first ripple away from the splash. Dante does this by placing himself in the tangible Christian Hell with two guides instead of one. The first of these guides, Virgil, embodies philosophy and poetry to create a deeper manifestation of reason. The second, Beatrice, is the transcendent version of Lady Philosophy.

Dante's Virgil is a part and parcel of Philosophy. The trouble with Dante's Virgil is how we allegorically interpret him. Robert Hollander identifies this issue of analyzing Dante's Virgil as having to do with viewing him as an allegorical manifestation of reason and separating him from the historical author of the *Aeneid* (3). Hollander concisely poses that Dante and Virgil must be viewed as a "related pair of poet-prophets" where Dante is the winning poetic prophet and Virgil is the losing one since Dante is blessed with a journey destined to the beatific vision,

while Virgil must return to his place in Limbo (Hollander 3;8). Hollander presents Virgil as the most influential of prophets on Dante, alongside David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, St. Paul, and John of Patmos; however, Virgil is viewed in reference to the biblical prophets only in his poetic style and genius of mind, not in the truth of his prophetic vision (3). Indeed, if the listed biblical prophets all predict the coming of the Christ, Virgil merely predicts the coming of Caesar Augustus. And yet, Hollander ponders on why Dante, as theologus-poeta, venerates Virgil, the failed prophet, over the biblical *vates* (3;7). This is where the importance of the historical Virgil matters and is essential to understanding Virgil as an allegory. If readers of the *Commedia* join the monolithic perspective that Dante's Virgil is merely an allegory, then "it rids them of the need to encounter a complex and disturbing issue, with all its ramifications. For if Virgil stands for something else [i.e., other than reason alone], the problem represented by his presence in the Christian poem simply disappears" (Hollander 4). If we consider the times of the historical Virgil, as Dante does, we begin to view him as a foil to the other great prophet of his age, John the Baptist: "Dante's Virgil first appears as a figure of John the Baptist, his near contemporary…Dante's Virgil, like John, appears 'nel mezzo gran diserto,' but we do not hear his voice 'crying in the wilderness,' but see someone who is 'weak from long silence'" (Hollander 7). Hollander's historically emphatic reading of Virgil enlightens Dante's vision regarding the *Commedia's* basis on Classical and Ecclesiastical history. Such a reading is greatly profitable, but we cannot forgo the obvious allegorical figure that is Dante's Virgil.

Hollander simplifies the allegorical view of Virgil in favor for his heavily historical one, by proposing that:

> the allegorized Virgil, as personification of 'Reason,' in whatever form and with whatever intermittency…helps a convinced reader to deal with Dante's poem as though it

> were to be conceived as a conventional fable (that is, it helps avoid the patently 'historical' claims made by the text itself, through which Dante claims to be a poet only on condition that we take him as historian, one who actually saw what he sets down), and it makes Dante's Virgil a mere appurtenance of this larger fiction (6).

But Dante is more a philosopher than he is a historian, and the *Commedia* is far more than a theological-historical poem, it is a cosmological epic that looks back to all of Western thought and offers a dialectical response. Dante's epic is both classical and biblical, and these two worlds are divided most precisely into the two cities of Athens and Jerusalem. While matters of rational inquisition arise out of the streets of Athens, Jerusalem, on the other hand, offers the world divine revelation through the prophets of the Bible. While the Bible is canonically organized with some discrepancies between sects as to what is truly canon, the product of Athens is expansive and all encompassing, surpassing, and inventing genre and generating a multitude of voices in philosophy, poetry, and history. Our discussion of Dante and Jerusalem will take place in an investigation of Beatrice, but for Virgil we must consider that Dante needed to synthesize the offspring of Athens. Virgil, although a Roman, is representative to Dante of the excellence of Athens. In the *Aeneid,* Virgil brought together all of Athens: Greek epic history, Greek philosophy, Greek tragedy, and Greek mythological figures. Virgil becomes Homer, Plato, and Sophocles in his act of gifting the *Aeneid* to the world. In this way, we must view Dante's Virgil as historical *and* allegorical to understand how Dante brought together the biblical and the classical in the *Commedia.*

As a representative of the mind, Dante's Virgil is inadequate. Such inadequacy of Dante's own character relates to the degree of influence that Dante pulled from Boethius. Dante's Virgil is the undivine aspect of Lady Philosophy. Virgil understands his own inadequacy and presents

that to Dante in referring to Dante's future union with Beatrice: "quando che sia a le beate gent./ A le quai poi se tu vorrai salire,/ anima fia a cio piu di me degna: [Should you then wish to rise and go to them,/ another soul will come, worthier than I -/ with her I'll leave you when I go my way]" (Inf I.121-23). It would be too simplistic to merely toss Virgil up as the equivalent of Lady Philosophy since Boethius' Lady encapsulates Dante's Virgil and then some. In Lady Philosophy,

> Boethius anticipates by more than six centuries the reconciliation, which was to be made by Aquinas, between Greek philosophy and Judeo-Christian thought, between philosophy and theology. Such a fusion is so strongly implied in the *Consolatio* that Dante, using the scenic presentation of Boethius' Lady Philosophy, will decompose it into two parts in the *Commedia*. Dante the pilgrim is led to God first through the help of Virgil who represents philosophy, or human wisdom, and then through Beatrice, who represents theology (Gualtieri 145).

And so, we are reminded of Lady Philosophy's dress. To understand the poetic influence that Boethius has had on the West, we must advance from the mere symbolism of practical with theoretical thought (i.e., the trivium to metaphysics), but it is in fact symbolic of the dialectical conclusion of philosophy being unified with theology. We sense the transcendent nature of Philosophy's dialogue with Boethius in guiding him to the Deity through Platonic metaphysics. Dante appears to be the first poet to truly understand what Boethius is doing here in the *Consolatio.* Boethius is prophesying the future union between the Greco-Roman world with the Judeo-Christian one. Dante fulfills this prophetic invocation as a poet, and he does so by initially coming out of Boethius with his philosophical Virgil, and he proceeds from Boethius by metaphorically mending Philosophy's garment in the form of Beatrice, the high symbolism of philosophy fulfilled.

Dante's Beatrice may have more in common with Boethius' Lady Philosophy than Virgil does. Beatrice is the lady who, unlike Philosophy, has gone unharmed by the Stoics and Epicureans. Perhaps this is because of her divine nature, which proves her inaccessible to those who champion the use of reason alone. Let us first investigate the nature of Beatrice, and how she comes from Philosophy, and then we will see how she, as the representative of theology, subsumes philosophy into herself, completing and concluding its inquiry.

Charles Williams encourages readers of the *Commedia* to understand Beatrice as being identical to the mountain of Purgatory: "Beatrice and the Mountain are one" (145). This reading is initially problematic as it may suggest that Beatrice is herself a purgatorial figure; however, Williams focuses our attention on Beatrice as purgatory in relation to other divine, and literary, women: "She is, as so many of her sisters have been to their lovers, the means by which purification takes place…Beatrice is 'dead'; it is by a process of purgation that she may re-appear, here or hereafter, or even the Beatriceness in some further theophany" (147). The first of Beatrice's sisters must be Lady Philosophy, who seems to refer to a purgatorial system (perhaps the one that Beatrice belongs to or that is Beatrice, the higher divinity) in her explanation of the man's position in the order of the cosmos: "Respicite Caeli spatium firmitudinem celeritatem et aliquando desinite vilia mirari. Quod quidem caelum non his potius est quam sua qua regitur ratione mirandum [Consider the stable speed of the heavenly space and stop to marvel at (your) cheapness sometime. Because indeed, heavenly wonder is not preferable to that (one) who is ruled by his own reason]" (Boethius 260). Now, at first glance, there is nothing purgatorial about this cosmology in the penal sense. The mind conjures up thoughts of speedily rotating planets that circulate around the *Primum Mobile* that created them. Boethius is shown the stars by Philosophy to prepare him for an investigation into the true nature of happiness. But to what

purpose are these things revealed to Boethius if not to illustrate the disorder of man's desires towards misapplied loves to set him on the straight path to the divine:

> Eheu quae miseros tramite devios
> abducit ignorantia!
> Non aurum in viridi quaeritis arbore
> Nec vite gemmas carpitis
> Non altis laqueos montibus abditis
> Ut pisce ditetis dapes…
> Et cum falsa gravi mole paraverint,
> Tum vera cognoscant bona [Alas, he carries off on an ignorant path which leads away to devious miseries! You do not seek for gold on the green tree, nor do you pluck gems from the vine, nor do you set aside snares in the high mountains, that you may enrich feasts with fish…And when they will have prepared a false heavy mound, then they may know true goods] (Boethius 261-62).

This then is the nature of Purgatory given to Dante by Boethius, and in turn is Beatrice according to Lady Philosophy. Because of the inability, or the blindness, to use a Boethian motif, of man's soul to identify the proper path of the good, the universe is designed to remind man of his place within it. The philosopher *must* gaze into the cosmos to contemplate the proper path of his life's intentions so that he does not cast fishing nets on to mountain tops to look for jewels on vines. Although his verse is satirical, Boethius is encapsulating a key element of human nature and its inclination to defy the natural law of the universe that binds all men and women regardless of their position and place in life. Such a universal calling implies a bound nature of the soul to

God; such a nature is what requires Lady Philosophy to sing Beatrice into existence as the purgatorial cosmos, the woman that God made from human reason and divine revelation.

Dante, being anxious to use and outdo Boethius, understands the Platonic Christian view of the universe that Boethius supplies him, and does something interesting with it:

> Lo bel pianeto che d'amar conforta
> faceva tutto rider l'orïente,
> velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta.
> I' mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente
> a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
> non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente.
> Goder pareva 'l ciel di lor fiammelle:
> [The radiant planet fostering love like rain
> Made all the orient heavens laugh with light,
> Veiling the starry Fishes in her train.
> I turned to the right hand, and set my mind
> To scan the southern pole, and saw four stars
> No one has looked on since the first mankind.
> The heavens seemed delighted in their flame!] (Purg I.19-25).

The pre-lapsarian pastoralism in these verses is staggering. Is Dante not landing on the shores of the mount of fire and penance? Why then do we sense an Edenic relief as though Adam has been reunited with Eve? On the one hand, Dante has just entered into the verses posited by Boethius through Lady Philosophy; on the other hand, he has begun his quest out of misplaced love to discover how love ought to be placed in human relations to his fellow man and to his God. In this prayer, Dante is now seeing what Boethius discovered in Philosophy. Man's transcendence must

not only be to understand that the spheres rotate around the *Primum Mobile,* but must unite himself with it. Only by an ascent through fire, by seeing examples of sin turned into virtue, can the poet-philosopher return to the origin of all things.

So, what then is Beatrice? If Williams is correct in his assertion, and if Boethius' description of the cosmos, which has the *Primum Mobile* at its center, is acceptable, then Beatrice is the full revelation of truth and beauty as it appears after its union with the *Primum Mobile.* Charles Williams implies this when he notes that "truth is the thing existing; intellect is the thing known. What joins these? Not now the verse and voice of Virgil, but experience. Beatrice, laughing and happy, is truth experienced in all ways" (153). Although he does not refer to the *Consolatio,* one must consider Williams' word in relation to Lady Philosophy's suggestion for pursuing truth: "'ut illius summi boni sedem reperire mereamur?' 'Invocandumn,' inquam, 'rerum omnium patrem, quo praetermisso nullum rite fundatur exordiumn.' [that we may be merited to approach the seat of that highest good?' I said 'Call upon the father of all things, which, overlooked, no beginning may be begun well.']"(Boethius 270).

Philosophy proceeds to break out into a magnificent prayer which superficially proclaims the greatness of God as the *Primum Mobile,* but philosophy outlines the sole philosophical path toward reaching the true and beautiful. A selection of these lines will demonstrate the effect of Philosophy's words:

Da pater augustam menti conscendere sedem,

Da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta

In te conspicuous animi defigere visus.

Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis

Atque tuo requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,

> Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem [Father, grant that we may ascend the revered seat of reason, grant that we may cleanse the fount of the good, grant that we may discover the light on you, to focus the vision of the soul. Divide the clouds of the earth and the weights of the rock and you may rest the pious in your peace, (those who) discern you as the end, the beginning, the transport, the leader, the origin, the very same limit] (Boethius 274)

Philosophy's prayer asserts the end goal of philosophy and a necessary metaphysics that generates Beatrice *in toto*. Let us consider the arguments of Charles Williams: Beatrice is one with Purgatory, and she is the one to have experienced the truth with the intellect, *id est*, the thing known and the thing existing (145; 153). Lady Philosophy's prayer in book III of the *Consolatio* declares that philosophy is meant to bring the created souls through a fire that they may come to *know* the Father of all things, and that the experiential purgation will uncloud man's mind that he may use his intellect, or the thing known and used to know other things, to come to know the highest form of intellectual metaphysics, which is the truth and beauty of the origin of all things, of the divine *Primum Mobile*. Therefore, Dante's illustration of Beatrice as this divinity that transcends the intellect by descending to him with love to bring him to the true and the beautiful is sprung from these Boethian verses. Beatrice is not just purgatorial as Williams implies, she is the one who perfected philosophy, she is the philosopher consoled.

For Dante, however, she is more than that. Beatrice, having perfected philosophy by coming into full union with the Divine, has become a vessel of divinity greater even than Lady Philosophy in Boethius' imagination. Beatrice has become for Dante the representation not just of his erotic desire, but of charitable love. Triumphant over philosophy (the manifestation of the intellect's ability to know things) Beatrice has become an object of truth and beauty to be known

in and of itself. As such, she has become a part and parcel of the *Primum Mobile* as per her return to the empyrean of heaven, and drives Dante, who we can now view as a sort of limpid Everyman, to uncloud his intellect with worldly things through purgatorial fire that he may be purified to view the true things of creation.

Boethius' poetic expression acted as a half-painted canvas for Dante's Beatrice and *Purgatorio* that the Florentine had to finish. That is not to suggest that Dante is to be viewed lesser than Boethius, nor is it to suggest that we diminish the influence that Catholic theology has on Dante and Boethius alike. But as readers we must come to view the *Purgatorio* as the product of Boethius' unique Menippean model paired with his Platonic-Christianity. Dante's *Purgatorio* is the locality that Philosophy sings about as the foundation of philosophical inquiry. Without a faithful belief in the necessity of a metaphysic that must be climbed (like that depicted on Philosophy's cloak), then the intellect can only know half truths. Beatrice then is the result of Dante's anxiety of writing in the shadow of Lady Philosophy. Beatrice is the compulsory matron of the *Purgatorio* since she is the only one to have perfected Philosophy's prayer. Beatrice is not meant to be the copy or improvised edition of Philosophy, like a Lady Philosophy 2.0; rather, she is the metaphysical ideal that Lady Philosophy tries to make Boethius into. While we clearly see Beatrice' genesis in the IX metrum of book III of the *Consolatio,* we must come to understand how she is present throughout the satire, hanging on each verse sung by Philosophy as the idealized human that all philosophers should identify themselves with.

While there is no debate over the philosophical influence that Boethius had on Chaucer, a comparative poetic analysis may be a difficult task to undertake. We shall do so by examining the nature of *The Canterbury Tales* as professed by the author himself in *The Knight's Tale* to reveal its underlying similarities to myths told in the metra of the *Consolatio.*

To understand the humanist influence of Boethius on Chaucer, along with how *The Canterbury Tales* offers a humanist version of Dante's *Commedia,* we must understand the Boethian poetics that dispense a human centered ethic. The inspiratory poem is Boethius' song of Orpheus and Eurydice and how Chaucer reworks it in *The Knight's Tale.* The Orpheus metrum, though narrative, sets a metrical standard for Western Christian poetry that Dante overlooks in *The Divine Comedy.* Dante focuses on the charitable love that Christians (and Platonists) understand as being the only means of ascent, like that of the Passion of Jesus Christ. The Orpheus myth, however, is promethean in that romantic love is the predicate that leads into a deeper charitable love. Boethius sings about how "Felix qui potuit gravis/Terrae solver vincula./Quondam funera coniugis/ Vates Threicius gemens/Postquam flebilibus modis [Seriously happy is he who can be lossend form the chains of the earth. Once the burials of the spouse, the Thracian prophet groaning, afterwards in the way of weeping]" (Boethius 306). Firstly, we notice that Philosophy's recollection of Orpheus takes a turn toward the Stoic, away from the Platonic. Stoicism is certainly a more human centered philosophy that, unlike Platonism, which is itinerant toward the One, focuses on the human capacity to work within one's means. Orpheus embodies this human urge towards self-sufficiency while always implying a communal dependency on others to return to God. Therefore, Orpheus represents the power of the will against order. As Orpheus embarks on his katabasis, traversing the abyss of the will to power, his song of persuasion of love lost too soon brings "Ultrices scelerum deae/Iam maestae lacrimis madent. [the avenging goddesses of crime now weep with tears of sorrow]" (Boethius 308). Boethius the Christian philosopher does not let us forget the tragic end of the Orpheus myth, but leaves us with a criticism of the divine and with allegorical material with which

Chaucer constructed his *Knight's Tale:* "Quis legem det amantibus?/Maior lex amor est sibi. [Who may give a law to lovers? The greater law is love for itself]" (310).

The poetics of Boethius' Orpheus metrum are presented by Ann Astell as the most important song of the *Consolatio* in establishing its theme as a sort of love story (128). Indeed, the Boethian love story contrasts distinctly with the Joban sort in that the hero of the story becomes himself Christlike, and unlike Job who, despite his restoration by the Lord, remains mortal and limp before evil (Astell127). The allegorical structure of the Orpheus and Eurydice metrum creates an iconographic and mythical metaphor which allows for a love story only possible, perhaps, within the boundaries of the Menippean genre (Astell 128). Astell, using the Orpheus metrum, argues that the motif of "Boethian Lovers" is not clearly evident when reading the *Consolatio,* and can best be identified through an analysis of the text's metra which assert a blend of loves (i.e. eros and agape) by "the lover's fidelity to a single beloved woman [that] enables him to reach his final goal" (129). While Beatrice seems to fit this motif, there is no initial erotic impulse that propels the lover toward the true object to be loved. Chaucer, in contrast to Dante, finds this poetic motif in the verses of Boethius and, focusing on the human capacity to honor the divine and to love, both comically and tragically, uses the Boethian Lovers as a poetics to fuel the verse and plot of *The Knight's Tale.*

Between the cousins, Arcite and Palamon, we are left to determine which is a Boethian philosopher consoled, and which is a tragic Orphean figure. While the answer is clear that Palamon, the first to set his eyes on the desired Emilye, is the consoled philosopher and lover, the reasons as to why and how he fills this role are shrouded by a veil of human symbols, not divine ones. Dinah Hazell reminds us of this when she notes the irony of the Boethian thematic influence in *The Knight's Tale:* "The progress of the two knights Palamon and Arcite, toward the

Good may not be a successful as the fictive Boethius' journey, but they do not have Lady Philosophy as a guide" (44). Indeed, they have as their sole guide the edicts of Theseus, the character who is central to the plot of the tale and the most philosophical figure in relation to his ability to guide the knights towards a Neoplatonic conclusion. To best understand the human comedy of *The Knight's Tale* and how it is influenced by Boethius' poetics, let us compare the characters of Emilye, Arcite, and Palamon to the archetypal figures that Boethius creates in his Orpehus and Eurydice.

Before the duel between the cousin knights for Emilye's hand, there is a famous trifecta of poetic supplications that each of our persons of interest offer to their particular deity. Each prayer is exemplary as to the philosophical perspectives that lead to the Good, if we understand the Good to be that Good which Neoplatonism and Christianity seem to both search for. Additionally, the poetic supplications reveal deep psychological information about Emilye, Arcite, and Palamon. The prime mover of each of these three is love; however, the type of love they hold and to what they direct it are subject to judgement against Boethius' ethics. Let us first observe the poetical influence of these prayers.

The first of these figures whose supplication we must hear is the pious Palamon who, singing out his desire to Venus, implores her with Boethian emotion for the acquisition of the Emilye he appears to love:

> For though so be that Mars is god of armes,
> Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
> That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
> Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,
> And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,

I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.

And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,

Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere

That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere (Chaucer 2248-2256).

Palamon's prayer should force the reader to recall Boethius' invocation of the Muses of poetry. It is passionate and based in emotion that Palamon falls, perhaps unintentionally, into philosophic contemplation and religious piety.

Palamon's attention is focused on his supposed end and arrival at the highest good, which is represented in Emilye. In this way, and through his prayer, we truly understand how Palamon differs from Arcite: "Palamon, we remember, desires only Emily. Whether or not he wins the combat is a matter of negligible importance. Arcite, on the other hand, prays so hard for victory that he forgets even to mention Emily" (Fairchild 285). What then is the Good in Chaucer's poetry borrowed from Boethius'? Emilye is not the ideal end; she is Eurydice, a fallen creature bound for death who cannot provide salvation. Emilye's importance lies not in her equivalence to Lady Philosophy, but by her symbolism of the philosophical objective as a woman who desires not to be a wife. Her prayer is telling:

Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I

Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,

Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.

I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,

A mayde, an love huntynge and venerye,

And for to walken in the wodes wilde,

And noght to ben wyf and be with childe (Chaucer 2304-2310).

Emilye's invocation of Diana is her invocation of idealistic virtue that she cannot fulfill. She elevates chastity and the pastoral life as that which is most fit for her, as it ought to be, from her philosophical outlook, the ideal lifestyle for all people. In a way, we can consider the garden of Eden as Emilye's *locus vivenda.* Emilye's desired life in pursuing Diana is a life of integration with the divine by being forced into a passive role with the natural world. As such we cannot be surprised by Emilye's perpetually passive role in Chaucer's work, since she reflects the passivity of Boethius's briefly mentioned Eurydice. Emily continues to invoke the chaste huntress by referring to her subjects:

> And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
>
> And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,
>
> This grace I preye thee withoute moore,
>
> As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
>
> And fro me turne awey hir hertes so (Chaucer 2314-18).

Emilye prays to make her lovers passive, like herself. Such a desire reflects a will to companionship in pure friendship and charity, not of eros. Philosophy appears here yet again, but as an abstract figure, as an idea which is manifested in the desire of the female object of the tale. That Arcite and Palamon would be the passive objects of the natural law of the One is Emilye's desperate desire, as it is not in keeping in the itinerant nature of the philosophy that moves men to reunion with the divine.

The passivity of the female mythical object places her as the end for each heroes' goal. Both Eurydice and Emilye are pastoral figures, nymphs in their own way who, through the death of the former and life of the latter, direct their lovers' desires to the place where they reside. Eurydice's pastoral nature is chthonic, related to the death and triumph of life in a sort of

maternal life cycle that only manifests itself in mythological darkness; Emilye's pastoral nature imitates the Dantean striving to the top of Purgatory, to the place where Beatrice is able to manifest herself at the peak of her mountain. William Woods suggests that Emilye's prayer to Diana is the pivotal moment of *The Knight's Tale:* "her prayer to Diana is a crucial act of will in a narrative where love and will undergo sustained analysis" (277). While Woods is correct in his initial analysis, he proceeds to suggest that "Emilye's straightforward acceptance of the fated conditions of life in this tale – love and change (i.e., mortality) – is precisely what makes possible her free participation in the course of events, confirming the 'divisioun' between Palamon and Arcita and pointing to their marriage and death" (295). While thought provoking, Chaucer does not give Emilye the power to determine or alter the outcomes of Palamon and Arcita's duel. Emilye is not a Beatricean figure who can set journeys and penance into motion. Her ongoing passivity, broken momentarily by her prayer to Diana, is not pivotal because she decided to pray (certainly, her prayer may have had no effect on the divine order of things). Emilye's prayer matters in so much as it enlightens the reader as to what she believes in and how she can be viewed by either knight. We must maintain a Boethian perspective when reading *The Knight's Tale* because of its philosophical and poetic influence on Chaucer. As such, Emilye is a Boethian representative of a metaphysical order; Emilye is the metaphysical Pi at the bottom of Lady Philosophy's cloak for Palamon, the philosophical and heavy-hearted knight. And so, Palamon deviates from Orpheus, who is portrayed by the narcissistic Arcita, the emboldened and self-reliant Orphean figure.

Arcita prays before Mars for the act of victory instead of the fruits of it, referring to his youth and strength as the honors due to the victor: "Now, lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;/ Yif me victorie; I ask thee namoore" (Chaucer 2419-20). Indeed, Mars himself responds

to Arcita's prayer by inferring that he will merely overcome his cousin: "The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,/ And with that soun he herde a murmurynge/ Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus 'Victorie!'" (Chaucer 2431-33). Of these three deities prayed to, Mars is the most human one. Since he is the most human of the Olympian gods, Mars, who as "the false god of worldly success to whom men offer their prayers may seem all-powerful; but his real impotence is shown when death draws near" (Fairchild 291). The falseness that is professed by Arcita in his supplication and action reflects an Orphean self-reliance in which the hero may, by his aristoi, surpass the dictates of Fate and nature to gain his own will. As the Promethean figures of these poems, Orpheus and Arcita are conjoined by their confidence and desperation to acquire what they desire; their desires are only gained through the elevation of their skills (i.e., Orpheus' power of poetry, and Arcita's will to power as a warrior). The shared tragedy that Arcita experiences with his poetic influence, Orpheus, relates the philosophy of Boethius applied to a mythical moment. Men often believe they are pursuing what is good when they are truly mistaken. Arcita, like Boethius' Orpheus, may seem to be driven by love to reclaim their women when they are driven by a narcissistic lust for themselves, idolizing themselves as the vessel through which the will can triumph over the nature of things. This behavior is reflected in Mars as he is the archetype of the unphilosophical and unvirtuous traits of humanity, which are violence and lust.

The gods that Palamon and Emilye invoke are the furthest from being human in terms of Boethian metaphysics. Venus, although classically understood as being the goddess of sexual desire, and Diana of the hunt and nature, are filtered through a Christian and Platonic lens to represent the true ideals of a philosopher's soul. Venus then becomes the manifestation of charitable love, the most divine form of the Greek loves. Diana, in her role as the chaste

huntress, comes to represent the pre-Lapsarian nature of humanity. Through the two goddesses we see Beatrice and Purgatory brought together. Chaucer, unlike Dante, presents the necessity of an earthly woman to direct the Boethian Lover's attention to these metaphysical forms. We must then think of Emilye as the glasses through which the visually impaired may see rather than be the object that should be seen. Emilye must be understood as an intersectional figure whose substance is determined by the lens with which we view her. In Arcita's eyes she is Eurydice, bound to be lost; in Palamon's eyes she is Philosophy and the promise of a fruitful and divine union.

And so, Chaucer has taken Boethius' Orphic metrum and expanded it into a work of greater depth, both intellectually and poetically, while maintaining the philosophical backing of the original and adapting his own verse to that which influenced him. While Boethius' poetical influence on Dante may be more easily measured, his impact on Chaucer is evidently more clear in Chaucer's use of his ideas and his skill in transforming his metaphysics into plot points. Only through a myth can one finds Boethius the poet in Chaucer's work, and the myth of Orpheus is a sort of Euclidian line to that of Palamon: both men are archetypes of the Boethian Lover who loves the desired poetical object. Orpheus, as an example of the tragic life, offers a drama of woe and sorrow to teach Boethius (and his reader), while Palamon, traveling along the same course as that of Orpheus, is the comic inversion where the object of love, Emilye, surpassing in loving the subject, Palamon, guides him into a state of closer approximation to the divine origin. While Palamon's conclusion is certainly happier than that of Orpheus', he is not in a literal celestial state like that of Dante due to his intercessor. Nevertheless, the love that Emilye symbolized for Palamon is what he achieved, allowing him to be Orpheus (and to some extent, poetry) fulfilled in his journey back to the origin of all things.

The apotheosis of Beatrice and Purgatory as the product of Boethius' Lady Philosophy and her ingenious collection of verses that have spawned Dante's mountain and lady into existence; we have investigated the rhetorical power of Boethius' Orphic myth and its tragic impact on the comic *Knight's Tale* of Chaucer and how it led into a modern form of exhibiting the life well lived (i.e., not the one sought after through the pursuit of kleos and aristoi*,* but of Platonic investigation). The capstone of the *Knight's Tale,* however, is a compilation of Boethian Platonism that concludes the story and illustrates a consolation to the characters of the tale, and to the reader, as to the events which played out.

Chaucer's Theseus is also a Philosophy-type of figure. Although not in the symbolic manner of Emilye, Theseus projects platonic ideas about Providence and the progress of humanity to the warring knights in imitation of Philosophy teaching Boethius (Hazell 44). Theseus' speech on the First Moevere and the faire Cheyne of love is the pinnacle of Boethian-Platonism in the *Knight's Tale,* and, in further imitation of the *Consolatio,* concludes the tale with a hanging reflection of the major concern of happiness in a world of suffering:

> The First Moevere of the cause above,
> Whan he first made the faire Cheyne of love,
> Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
> Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,
> For with that faire Cheyne of love he bond
> The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
> In certeyne boundes, that they may nat flee. (Chaucer 2987-2993).

Theseus' explication of this metaphysical love should cause the reader to consider the loves aforementioned by Arcite, Emilye, and Palamon. Theseus uses this same love that the three

characters in conflict feel, and he takes it from them, pointing up to the ultimate origin, and purpose, of love: to keep the created universe in order as the First Moevere ordained.

As Theseus continues his speech on the love of the *Primum Mobile,* he draws our attention to the order of progress to which humanity is subject, along with the elements:

> Than may men by this ordre wel discerne
> That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
> Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool.
> That every part deryveth from his hool.
> For nature hath nat taken his beginning
> Of no partye or cantel of a thing.
> But of a thing that parfit is and stable,
> Descendinge so til it be corrumpable.
> And therefore, of his wyse purveyance,
> He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce
> That speces of things and progressiouns
> Shullen enduren by successiouns
> And nat eterne, withouten any lye (Chaucer 3004-3015).

The order of creation, according to Chaucer's Theseus, invites humanity to partake in it. Dinah Hazell takes a comparative look at Theseus and Philosophy and, analyzing the similarities between their speeches, suggests that "Lady Philosophy counsels Boethius on how to live in a world in which idealism often fails, not by tempering one's ideals but by using them to transcend reality, an approach that does not work for a ruler responsible for his subjects. Her guidance is for a condemned man, and while her consolation offers values that can guide the living towards a

moral life, it is not clear how her advice would have assisted Boethius in his political career," (68). Apart from Boethius' political career, which is evidently over, as the composition of the *Consolatio* implies, Hazell does present us with a thought-provoking inquiry into the purpose of Philosophy's words. Indeed, Philosophy's words are meant to console by reminding Boethius where he stands in the cosmic order; however, at times Philosophy does not fully drive home the human benefit to dying, she focuses entirely on the divine reunion that lies in death. Theseus' speech on the faire cheyne of love offers a realism that is started in the last metrum of the *Consolatio:*

> unica gens hominum celsum leuat altius cacumen
> atque leuis recto stat corpore despicitque terras.
> Haec, nisi terrenus male desipis, ammonet figura:
> Qui recto caelum uultu petis exserisque frontem,
> in sublime feras animum quoque, ne grauata pessum
> inferior sidat mens corpore leuius leuato.
> [only the race of men profoundly raises its lofty head
> And stands plainly with a straight body, and looks down on the lands
> This figure, unless, earthly man, you are badly insane, should remind us
> That you, who beholds the heavens with an upright face, you who stretches out your forehead
> you should also highly bear in mind that, unless it has been weighted all the way down,
> the mind may sink lower than the body, which has been raised highly above]
> (Boethius 420)

Philosophy's final consolation is held here, in her emphasis on the divine aspect of humanity's nature to physically look up and behold the *Primum Mobile.* Philosophy even suggests that the human physiognomy is designed to transcend the metaphysical ladder up to God, while other creatures are perpetually downcast (Boethius 420). Chaucer expands upon this by linking the metric theme of all the songs of the *Consolatio* when Theseus consoles not by means of metaphysics, but by using metaphysics to assert a tangible realism. Theseus' explanation on the necessity of death is overshadowed by his joyful reminder of the human obligation to set forth future generations as is declared by Providence (Chaucer 3011-15). Thereby Chaucer, through Theseus' speech, allows his philosopher king to blend the human with the metaphysical into the tangible notion of transcendence through the proliferation of future generations. Chaucer's Theseus does not, however, negate the divine notions of Boethius' Philosophy and of Christian Platonism. He simply provides consolation to those who have finished their rotation on Fortune's wheel.

The Boethian allegory of Lady Philosophy's dress, derived from Plato's philosophic vision, has been the persistent image that Western literature has turned to. Poetic minds from Dante, Chaucer, and beyond have gazed upon her gown, seeking both to defend her from those philosophers who have torn it, and to reweave it with works worthy of her adornment. They have done so, and continue to do so, by working in the Boethian framework. Boethius' poetics, exemplified in his re-writing of myths and introduction of a new poetic-philosophy, has consciously influenced the minds of Dante and Chaucer, and unconsciously influenced the minds of all men and women who pursue truth and knowledge. In this way Boethius has provoked a great psychological strain on the West's posterity. We feel this strain as an anxiety, as a standard which we must meet and a tradition that we must continue.

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