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Literary *Anamnesis*: Boethius Remembers Ovid

JO-MARIE CLAASSEN

Manlius Anicius Severinus Boethius composed the *Consolatio philosophiae* in the first quarter of the sixth century C.E., while the ex-consul was exiled from Rome, probably imprisoned at Pavia and awaiting execution. Boethius was a victim of the complex politics of his time that set the Orthodox East against the Arian West.¹

Both classicists and medievalists find the polymath Boethius of interest.² He was not a great original thinker but, along with Cicero, is considered the purveyor of Greek philosophy to the Latin West. Boethius's writings on philosophy, mathematics, music, and theology stretch over a wide spectrum of disciplines, culminating in the *Consolatio*.³ The work comprises a mélange not only of philosophical views but also of allusions to virtually the whole of the classical canon, including the major poets of the Augustan era. In the main it reflects Platonic thought on the nature of God and the relative merits of Free Will versus Providence,⁴ and portrays the fall from grace and the recovery of its author in the guise of reminiscences about the visitation of the allegorical figure of Philosophy herself, who, as mentor and physician, brings her lapsed adherent back to full recollection (*anamnesis*) of her healing and sustaining precepts in an extended dialectic. We may assume that throughout the text "Dame Philosophy" and her "pupil" are both mouthpieces for the philosopher's own inner struggle to come to terms with his lot. That is, the creative author reports in the words of the prisoner what he himself as historical personage feels or has felt and, in the words of Philosophy, what he knows he should be thinking.⁵

In his political fall and banishment from Rome, Boethius may appear to resemble the famous exiles of an earlier era, Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca, but in circumstances and general mindset he seems a world removed from all three, Ovid in particular. Yet it is my intention here to consider possible Ovidian influence in the manner in which Boethius treats the topic of *amor*. Specifically I try to answer the question as to what degree Boethius's concept of *amor* in various key poems agrees with, or opposes,

Ovid's. Such intertextual comparison may playfully be termed an exploration of "literary *anamnesis*."

Various problems of interpreting the *Consolatio* need no more than a rapid review.⁶ The five books of the work are Menippean in format,⁷ that is, we have prose passages of varying length alternating with thirty-nine poems in a variety of meters, most purportedly sung by *Philosophia*, with only four in the prisoner's mouth.⁸ Generic considerations are a matter of debate, such as the nonsatirical content of what essentially is Menippean satire, and its prosimetric format.⁹ Critics disagree on the importance and degree of integration of the verse sections with the prose: Are the poems integral to the philosophical prose, or mere ornament, perhaps even the insertion by the performative idle consular of previously composed *nugae*? Do they offer contrast or counterpoint to the prose? Or do they carry a supporting or even a secondary philosophical message?¹⁰ Contents vary considerably.¹¹ The workings of the cosmos and extraterrestrial signs are perhaps the most frequent topic; but various myths are told, and the central hexameter (3.m.9) is a hymn to the cosmic Creator-Deity.¹² On how to judge the poems, Walsh (1999, xliii) suggests that Boethius is "more of a versifier than a true poet," denoting him a "prisoner of his models, assembling a medley of borrowings without ordering them into a unique vision." For Walsh, this versifier's chief skill lies in his adaptation of his verses "to the contexts of the philosophical arguments." This assertion needs exploration.

Philosophical Content

Critics are unsure if the *Consolatio* was meant as an *apologia pro vita sua*. Its conversational format is deceptively simple, veering between first-person reminiscence and second-person address. Its clearly non-Christian, generally Platonic content is a frequently cited problem,¹³ as is the breadth of the philosophical eclecticism.¹⁴ Plato's *Timaeus* is generally deemed the basis of *Philosophia*'s cosmology, while the "cave"-concept from *Republic* 7 is an intertextual presence in the work's argument. Moreover, Crabbe (1981a) shows that 3.m.12 and 4.m.1 reflect the two main sections of the *Phaedrus* myth in reverse, while the *Phaedo* myth largely informs the poems that we shall presently consider.

For the sake of later arguments in this paper, let me briefly review Boethius's concept of the Divine.¹⁵ His solution to the problem of Fate versus Free Will is based on drawing distinctions between an ordering Providence and Fate,¹⁶ and between Eternity and Time. In this (so

argued in Tester 1989), Boethius the Christian is solving a problem that did not exist for pagan philosophers, who did not admit of an omnipotent, omniscient god.¹⁷ The workings of the divinely prescient Being are extensively treated in the last book of the *Consolatio*. For Boethius, not God in the Trinity but God and his *Providentia* order history. In 5.pr.4, Philosophy spells out the means whereby humanity may perceive of the Divine. In an “increasingly lofty series of disquisitions on the universe” (so Curley 1986, 214), we are presented with four stages: *sensus*, which is sense-perception; *imaginatio*, the proselyte’s power of inner visualization; *ratio*, the rational ability to understand the workings of God within creation; finally, intellection (Curley’s term), or the intuitive grasp that may be gained of the whole of the ordered universe as guided by the Divine.¹⁸

The Concept of *Anamnesis* and Its Application in the Tracing of Literary Allusion

Part of the *Consolatio*’s rhetorical convention is the portrayal of the prisoner as an exile from the truth, from the discipline that formerly had formed the central object of his studies. Coming into play is the Platonic concept of *anamnesis*, namely the idea that everything of eternal value is known to one’s soul before birth but is lost after it. All education is aimed at a gradual recall of such timeless knowledge.¹⁹ The imprisoned philosopher has lost, for a second time, his grasp on eternal values, forgetting his own identity; thus, Philosophy says, *sui paulisper oblitus est* (He forgot himself a little, 1.pr.2.6) and *quid ipse sis, nosse desisti* (You stopped knowing what you are, 1.pr.6.17). With loss of a sense of self has come loss of the philosophical knowledge that Boethius had spent a lifetime gaining, and so he is guided by Dame Philosophy to practice *anamnesis* for a second time. The *Consolatio* reflects progression in his reactions during the course of the work. At the end, he no longer questions Philosophy but falls silent after 5.m.3, a song in praise of *anamnesis* and the gradual unfolding of divine truths that it brings. *Philosophia* continues to lay before him the full breadth and depth of his regained knowledge. Hereafter he is required only to confirm her statements (5.pr.4.8; 5.pr.4.16).²⁰

The concept of *anamnesis* will assume a specialized meaning in the context of my discussion below, as I intend to show that *intertextuality* as a manner of rereading and rewriting literature from Boethius’s own past readings serves as a form of “literary *anamnesis*,” jogging his readers’ memories of a similar intellectual history into new interpretations of the

whole literary spectrum involved. There is a difference between merely noting intertextual references (old-fashioned *Quellenforschung*), and reading implications from intertextual allusions, which frequently transcend cultures and eras, as Thomas (1986) and Barchiesi (2001) have amply demonstrated. A later author's take on an earlier work influences the reception of both works by his readers, with echoes and reminiscences of earlier works enriching the new context with an underlay of additional meaning and also refashioning the impact of the earlier work.²¹ This counterpoint becomes apparent only if author and reader share a common cultural history, through which the author can coax the reader into remembering earlier texts.

Boethius, at the virtual end of the "classical" era, brought to his works a tremendous range of scholarship. The *Consolatio* was the culmination of a lifetime of study of virtually the complete ancient canon, both Greek and Latin.²² Classical influences within its various poems have been well documented.²³ Poetic allusions abound even in the prose sections, and show a scholar deeply immersed in the culture of both Greece and Rome. We may assume that Boethius expects his readers to recall the original contexts of a vast array of literary allusion for the sake of nuancing within his text. Where the imprisoned exile Boethius as character is led toward practice of *anamnesis*, the creative author Boethius uses intertextual allusion as a form of display of his vast literary memory, as well as a means of eliciting textured response from his readership.

Richard Thomas (1986, 171) gives a concise overview of the kinds of allusion ("as an artistic phenomenon") available to any author who wishes to incorporate either homage or opposition to the words or thoughts of a literary predecessor. Such allusions include "correction," that is, conscious *oppositio in imitando*, and "conflation" or "multiple reference," where different versions or a number of antecedents are subsumed. That Boethius employed these, and more, is not to be doubted, but I would argue that an ancient author was not always, nor of necessity, conscious of his imitation of particular models: often he had simply developed a cast of thought that was colored by his own past reading. This assumption runs counter to traditional classical scholarship, but it can serve partly to explain some aspects of authorial *arte allusiva* (Pasquali's term, quoted in Thomas), which simply loomed into a particular author's consciousness by literary *anamnesis*.

It is not possible to trace and discuss the ramifications of Boethius's vast network of literary allusion within a single paper. But his method of allusion, and the degree to which he adapts what he has borrowed, can be

amply illustrated by recourse to reminiscences of a single author, Ovid, and by the treatment of a single concept, *amor*, as the force that binds men and women in mutual passion, whether conjugal or otherwise.²⁴

“Love” in the Two Authors’ Lives and Works

The word *amor* is not frequent in the Boethian philosophical oeuvre.²⁵ *Amor* and its inflections, together with its cognate *amare*, occur only in the *Consolatio*.²⁶ Crabbe (1981a) sees Boethian *amor*; divine love, as the equivalent of the Greek *erôs*, bringing with it the Platonic reminiscence from *Phaedrus* 249D4 on Eros and the lover, and on love as being the “best kind of madness.” Boethian *amor* as divine ordering-principle seems a far cry from the Ovidian world of divine philandering, where the gods are only too human and *amor* has a vastly different semantic field. Yet, since a search for some degree of overlap is the major theme of this paper, the intertextual lines that seem to link the creative author Ovid (and his alter ego the exiled Ovid) with the creative author Boethius (and his serial personae—the narrator-philosopher Boethius, the abject prisoner Boethius, and his alter ego, Dame Philosophy) need to be traced.

Lyne (2002, 289) emphasizes the pervasive association by later centuries of Ovid’s two “key *personae*, the lover and the exile.”²⁷ In exile, Ovid composes his own “epitaph,” epitomizing his career as *lusor amorum* (love’s playboy, *Tr.* 3.3.73). With Ovid “love” can mean different things at different times—or even at the same time. The apparently cynical lover of the *Amores* and worldly wise teacher of the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*²⁸ was also the author of the *Heroides*, a book of “letters” sympathetically portraying the hopes and fears of mythical women, both married and famously unmarried, who had been deserted in their love. He was also the author of the endless tales of lust and rapine of the *Metamorphoses*, although a central section of the latter (6.401–11.795) depicts conjugal love in various straits.²⁹ Finally, during his exile Ovid proved the constant husband, single-mindedly longing for his faithful wife, whose fame he promises to eternalize through his songs.³⁰ For Boethius, awareness of this poet’s victimization by an unjust prince must have struck a chord, but he seems to have known at least some of Ovid’s other works too, and to have noted the progression of Ovidian *amor* from the illicit love of the amatory poetry and the greater part of the *Metamorphoses* to a celebration of conjugal love in the exilic poetry.

Celebration of conjugal love in straitened circumstances, therefore, offers a connection between the exile Ovid and the prisoner Boethius.

Boethius had been an orphan, brought up in the household of Symmachus, whose daughter Rusticiana he later married. *Philosophia* reminds him that he was “dear to the family even before he became related to them” (*prius carus [eras] quam proximus esse coepisti*, 2.pr.3.5); that is, familial love preceded conjugal love. Boethius’s subsequent marriage was very happy, producing two fine sons who reached consular status simultaneously and at an early age. His wife, sons, and father-in-law were apparently initially unharmed when Boethius was arrested, but not unaffected by it: *Symmachus... tuis ingemescit iniuriis* (Symmachus mourned the wrongs done to you, 2.pr.4.5). The prisoner was conscious that his wife was pining away from longing for him, a circumstance that *Philosophia* is willing to concede would cause him great unhappiness (2.pr.4.6). To attach importance to conjugal ties is undoubtedly the one aspect in which *Philosophia* is willing to allow the prisoner some leeway, or to put it less metaphorically, the creative author as historical personage continues to regard his attachment to his family as important. In the next book *Philosophia* will reiterate that “a wife and children are sought for the delight they bring” (3.pr.2.9; trans. Walsh), along with friendship.³¹ Although Philosophy’s argument will eventually lead to a denial of the value of such mundane goods as set against the celestial, it is not to be doubted that conjugal love and familial friendship remain prominent in the mind of Boethius.

The Elegiac Presence

Only two poems in the *Consolatio* are in elegiacs.³² The first, 1.m.1, opens the work and, in a vocabulary reminiscent of Ovid in exile, bewails the altered state of its singer-author.³³ After this poem, the first prose section recounts the appearance of *Philosophia* and her summary dismissal of the elegiac Muses as “false strumpets” who are leading the poor patient astray. In an earlier publication (1999a, 246–51), I discussed Ovidian reminiscences within 1.m.1 as the programmatic poem that sets the scene and shows the prisoner resorting to *flebile carmen*. I there compared Ovidian exilic *topoi* with the four main themes of Boethius’s elegy in 1.m.1: the contrast with his former happy state, specifically as happy poet (1, 4);³⁴ consequent change in the nature of his poetry (2–3); unwanted life as slow and cruel death (13–14, 19–20); and Fortune as fickle (17–18). These themes, common in exilic writings, appear also in consolations offered both to bereaved and to those in exile. Like Cicero and Ovid, Boethius sees tardy death as hateful because it will not relieve

him of his misery, and like Ovid in exile, Boethius has grown suddenly old and feeble, but still finds comfort in a youthful pursuit of poetry.³⁵ Yet he accepts that he is in fact a victim of his own *laceratae* . . . *Camenae* (tattered Muses, l.m.1.3) which force him to write.

The four topics alternate in l.m.1 in eleven couplets, versified more densely than in Ovid. Concepts in l.m.1 also frequent in Ovid's exilic poetry are: *heu* . . . *ehu* (alas!, 2, 15); *flebilis* (tearful, 2), alliteratively contrasted with *florente* (flourishing, 1);³⁶ *fatum* (his sad fate, 8) which needs to be comforted by his poetry;³⁷ *male fida* . . . *Fortuna* (treacherous Fortune, 17). In verse 18, the words *tristis* (sad) and *merserat* (drowned: as in Ovid's frequent shipwreck metaphor) are strongly Ovidian. The poem ends with the gnomic "Whoever fell, was never on a stable plane," perhaps the most common consolatory topic in the whole of the tradition.³⁸ This is true elegy, a mournful song, suited to the sad circumstances of the prisoner as they next unfold.³⁹

Dronke (1994, 35–39) cites a series of allegorical prototypes for *Philosophia*, the imposing female figure that appears to our victim to redirect his thoughts. These prototypes include the words of *Satura* in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*; the appearance of *Parthenia* in the *Symposium* of Methodius, a third-century Greek patristic writer; and the epiphany of *Calliope* in Fulgentius's *Mitologiae*.⁴⁰ But earlier than these texts, we have Ovid's depiction of the epiphany of two impressive female figures: personified *Elegeia* and *Tragoedia*, who appear to his poet-persona at the beginning of the third book of *Amores* (*Am.* 3.1.39–60). Dame Tragedy, in her trailing gown and Lydian buskins, berates the poet for his choice of subject matter. Ovid is almost persuaded to leave love poetry for tragedy, but blithe young Elegy, in her diaphanous gown, one foot longer than the other, wins back her votary with a sidelong glance and a catalogue of the typical subjects of elegy and with the importance of elegy for the *mater Amoris*. As Ovid describes them here, the two figures together appear as forerunners of the imposing figure of *Philosophia*. Like *Elegeia*, *Philosophia* wears a gown of finely spun cloth, and like *Tragoedia*, she carries a scepter in her left hand.⁴¹ As with these predecessors, aspects of Philosophy's raiment reflect her nature: a ladder connects two Greek symbols, *pi* at the hem and *theta* at the neck of a robe that is, however, tattered from the rude assaults of men who have tried to snatch fragments from it.⁴²

The description of Dame Philosophy's outward appearance, therefore, may possibly be traced to Ovid.⁴³ Given the Ovidian context of the first poem and the conclusion of the first prose section (where Philosophy dis-

misses the Muses of Elegy), the Ovidian connotation seems unmistakable. I have noted that Ovid was viewed by late antiquity as the prototypical exile, but that his role as love poet seems not to have been wholly forgotten by Boethius.⁴⁴ This is clearly *oppositio in imitando*. Whereas *Elegia* had won the contest with *Tragoedia* for the earlier author's attention, Boethius's elegiac Muses retreat in confusion and the graver personage wins his full attention.

Philosophy's Poetics: Platonic Influence in the Rejection of Poetry

After the first sad song has been sung, Dame Philosophy appears, the prisoner's "tattered Muses" and the Ovidian elegiac meter are dismissed with contumely, and Philosophy begins her cure of the poisoned soul. Philosophy's rejection of the Muses could be taken as a Platonic rejection of poetry as "harmful and untruthful," but she then proceeds to sweeten her philosophical medicine with a judicious intermix of verse, indicating that to her poetry still has power.⁴⁵ But Philosophy redirects its thrust. Whereas Ovid's *Elegia* in *Am.* 3.1 had taunted *Tragoedia* for borrowing her rival's (that is, elegiac) meter as the medium for berating the poet, *Philosophia* appropriates the mournful victim's own words, but inserts them into a different metrical form.⁴⁶ In 1.m.2, a series of verbal echoes from 1.m.1 emphasizes the crucial contrast between *corpus* and *mens* (*effeto corpore*, 1.m.1.12; *effeto lumine mentis*, 1.m.2.24). Philosophy's *oppositio in imitando* further entails repetition of the contrast *quondam* . . . *nunc* (1.m.1.1, 19) at 1.m.2.6, 24; the lament *heu* . . . *heu* from 1.m.1.2 and 1.m.1.15 becomes the first word of Dame Philosophy's poem (1.m.2.1) and is repeated at 1.m.2.27, where *cogor* from 1.m.1.2 becomes *cogitur*. The despairing victim finds his own poetic devices being used against him. T. F. Curley (1986, 246) astutely notes that Dame Philosophy removes verse (which may be either useful or pernicious, depending upon its application) from the prisoner's hands in order to appropriate it for her own, therapeutic use. Indeed, after 1.m.5 the prisoner does not speak again in verse until 5.m.3.

We should not take rejection of poetry by the character *Philosophia* as a reflection of the empirical author's true attitude, nor even of that of his narrator-persona. Dame Philosophy's own renditions teem with reminiscences of classical poets.⁴⁷ The creative author has set a particular, "un-Platonic" scene that would explain the virtual marriage of Philosophy and poetry within the work, a ploy potentially acceptable to Roman

readers familiar with Lucretius. In this way the author can both expound Platonic doctrine and infuse the work with poetry as a form of “light relief.” That an authority on music would use this art in what was to be the culmination of his literary output is not surprising.⁴⁸ As R. F. Gleason (1985) points out, for Boethius *poesis* is *poiesis* and Poet and Philosopher are one.

An Ovidian persona may be recognized in the figure of Dame Philosophy, but the meters and content of her poems do not follow the precedents set by Ovid. Although the two authors shared a vaguely similar fate, Boethius the creative author appears, after Philosophy’s rejection of the Muses of elegy, to have taken an actively anti-Ovidian stance. Yet careful rereading demonstrates continued Ovidian influence in several key passages, starting with 2.m.8; a narrative verse reprise of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice ensues in 3.m.12, with its Ovidian echoes continuing to reverberate through the rest of book 3 and into books 4 and 5.

Amor as Guiding Force in the Universe: 2.m.8

Two poems on love, 2.m.8 and 3.m.12, both composed in glyconics, frame book 3. In 2.m.8, the final poem of book 2, *Philosophia* returns to a concept adumbrated by the prisoner himself in his own last song in the first book (1.m.5), namely the Creator as ordering-principle. In 1.m.5, after bemoaning the perfidy of his compatriots, he had turned to the Creator as the one who brings order to the universe, controlling all things except the human will, which is subject to the vicissitudes of Fortune. Yet in the end the Creator will take control and subjugate even great kings (*summos . . . reges*, 1.m.5.41). The poem then becomes an invocation to the deity who binds together the different parts of the natural world (*rerum foedera nectis*, 43). It concludes with a reference to the power of this *rector* (46) to stem the tides (*rapidos . . . fluctus*, 46) which engulf the prisoner, and with a request that the same rules that obtain in heaven should be applied on earth (a clear reminiscence of the Lord’s Prayer). It is this theme that Dame Philosophy takes up in 2.m.8.⁴⁹

At first glance, 2.m.8 seems concerned only with cosmic Love as the guiding force of the universe.⁵⁰ Here Dame Philosophy extends the prisoner’s concept of an ordering ruler of the cosmos, postulating a natural *amor* as the ordering principle that rules the workings of nature, e.g., controlling the courses of the sun (*Phoebus . . . / curru . . . aureo*, 5–6) and moon (*Phoebe noctibus imperet*, 8) and limiting the tides (*fluctus . . . / certo fine*, 9–10). These would presumably be the same tides that in the prisoner’s

complaint threaten to engulf him. This *amor* also controls the workings of human relationships, including conjugal ties:

et caelo imperitans *amor*:
 hic si *frena* remisericit,
 quicquid nunc *amat* invicem
 bellum continuo geret . . .
 hic et coniugii sacrum
 castis nectit *amoribus*,
 hic fidis etiam sua
 dictat *iura* sodalibus.
 o felix hominum genus,
 si vestros animos *amor*
 quo caelum regitur regat! (15–18, 24–30)⁵¹

And if this *Love* that rules in heaven were to let go of the *reins*, then whatever now *is* mutually *fond*, would immediately take up battle. . . . It binds solemn wedlock in chaste *affection* and even prescribes its own *laws* of fidelity to friends. O happy race of men, if the *Love* by which heaven is ruled also rules your minds!

Here Love is the force that rules and guides the universe, holding its reins (*frena*) firmly and dictating the laws (*iura*) of friendly human intercourse, thus preventing discord (19).⁵² This seems close to Plato's *erôs* from the *Phaedrus*, as noted by Crabbe (1981a). C. J. De Vogel (1981) asks the question, "Boethius' *Consolatio* 2.m.8: Greek love or Christian love?," and comes to the conclusion that the love in this poem is largely Greek, that is, Pythagorean-Neoplatonic (a cosmic love descending from heaven to earth), with a judicious admix of the Christian concept (God as Love, searching for the Other). Yet the opening lines are seen by Walsh (1999, 131) as "evok[ing] the invocation to Hymenaeus, god of marriage, at the beginning of Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*." The words of the poem's conclusion cannot be ignored, for conjugal, even passionate, love seems also implied here.⁵³ When Philosophy extols the love that binds people, whether in marriage or in the political sphere, the prisoner's own chaste fidelity in marriage is as great a reality to the creative author as his own political purity.

The next book opens with the prisoner's praise of Philosophy's poetry, which has served to whet his appetite for her remedies, and he beseeches her to discuss the nature of true happiness (3.pr.1.2). Her second poem in

this book reverts to the force that guides the universe, here Nature, and she promises to explain *quantas rerum flectat habenas / natura potens* (How powerful Nature twists the reins of things, 3.m.2.1–2),⁵⁴ a concept to which I shall return later. In the following lines, the things to which men aspire for happiness (including, as we have seen, a wife and children: 3.pr.2.9) are in turn treated and dismissed as inadequate. By the end of the ninth prose passage, the prisoner is fully persuaded that true happiness can be sought only from *rerum omnium patrem* (the father of all things, 3.pr.9.33). He is ready to absorb the lesson so gloriously spelled out in her central poem, 3.m.9, Philosophy’s “Hymn to the Creator” with its strongly Platonic impact. The next prose passage spells out the concept of God as the source of all good (*omnium fons honorum*, 3.pr.10.3) and hence of perfect happiness. Humanity can attain divinity through a search for this good.

Dame Philosophy’s Use of Myth

The tale of Orpheus follows soon after in 3.m.12.⁵⁵ Dame Philosophy occasionally uses myth as a further sweetener in her poetry to illustrate various points,⁵⁶ with the context of each poem important for understanding its allegorical message. The prose passages that follow the “Hymn to the Creator” (3.pr.11–12) continue the argument for the equation of the highest good with God. Prose 11 extends this with an argument for the essential unity of the good. When the prisoner protests that he cannot follow the convoluted argument, 3.pr.12 recaps its thread.⁵⁷ The intervening verses exhort the one seeking after good to abandon a search for earthly treasures in favor of the eternal light (m.10)⁵⁸ and to pursue, by means of the process of *anamnesis*, the true treasure (*semen . . . veri* [the seed of truth]) within his own soul, where it has long lain forgotten (3.m.11.11). Prose 12 begins with the prisoner’s admission that, oppressed by the burden of his woe, he has indeed forgotten what he formerly knew. First, “normal” contamination of the body dulled this knowledge and then, as his woes increased, all memory of divine ordering was lost.⁵⁹ An allusion to Plato’s *Timaeus* (29B) admonishes the imprisoned exile to suit his words to the subject matter. In this context the first words of 3.m.12 call the exile to keep his eyes raised on high:

felix, qui potuit boni
fontem visere lucidum,
felix, qui potuit gravis
terrae solvere vincula.

Happy he who could continuously view [contemplate] the clear fount of Good; *happy* he who could shake off the shackles of the heavy earth.

The Vergilian words (echoing *Geor.* 2.490, for which see below) that introduce the Orpheus myth suit Philosophy's argument, recapping what went before and making the final point. Boethius the creative author retells a tale with a rich intertextual accretion of interpretations relating to Orpheus as the prototypical singer-poet, son of the Muse Calliope, but also as the exemplar of a passionate conjugal love that is faithful past death but is finally helpless in the face of death.⁶⁰ Boethius's description of the descent of Orpheus here evokes Plato's cave,⁶¹ where truth can be found only by upward travel, by ascent from darkness to light. Orpheus and Eurydice were on the way to the light, but by looking back, they fell back into darkness. Here Boethius (through his mouthpiece Dame Philosophy) seems to be rejecting the ideal of conjugal—or, perhaps rather, passionate—love. It is his love for Eurydice that brings about all of Orpheus's miseries, as we shall see.

Remembering Ovid—via Seneca

The primary model of 3.m.12 is Seneca's version of the tale in *Hercules Furens*, but aspects of the manner of presentation may be traced, via Seneca, directly to Ovid.⁶² Other major Latin sources that would have been available to Boethius were Vergil, *Georg.* 4.453–527; Ovid, *Met.* 10.1–147;⁶³ Seneca, *HF* 561–91, 750–59; possibly [Seneca], *Hercules Oetaeus* 1031–99;⁶⁴ and perhaps [Vergil], *Culex* 268–95.⁶⁵ The influence of all these texts (except, perhaps, the last) seems to be discernible, Seneca's *Furens* most obviously, for the two versions share the same lyric meter. Yet intertextual layering here is extremely complex and may retrospectively have worked to influence later readers in their reading of the models. Boethius's version became the standard for medieval reprises of the tale. Intertextuality, when recognized by means of a process of literary *anamnesis*, would have served to enrich his readers' appreciation of earlier versions.

Narrative details differ from version to version. Anna Crabbe (1981b) argues that for Boethius (the creative author, presumably, and not the doleful victim) lapse of memory is only the "final mistake" in a series of flaws in the victim's thought. For Orpheus, love for a woman, overwhelming grief, the fostering of elegies, and the attempt to descend into Hades are all failures; his whole career is a failure, not just one moment.

Crabbe postulates that from 4.m.1 onward *Philosophia* acts as a more effective “Orpheus,” drawing Boethius, as another “Eurydice,” out of the pit of hell into which he has descended.⁶⁶ Specifically, Crabbe, in a careful comparison of the sources, has shown in an *argumentum ex silentio* how much Boethius is indebted to Ovid, for both omit a critical word, *immemor*, which occurs in Vergil (*Geor.* 4.491) and in pseudo-Seneca (*Herc. Oet.* 1066, 1085): Orpheus, “forgetful” of the injunction of Hades, looks back and loses his prize. Crabbe further shows that *immemor*, the key perhaps to the need for *anamnesis*, occurs in the two metric sections adjacent to 3.m.12, namely at 3.m.11.16 and 4.m.1.24, where it firmly places the Platonic concept of memory into context.

Let us take this further and explore positive reminiscences of Ovid to see whether or not the creative author Boethius and his alter ego, *Philosophia*, do seem to echo Ovid’s poetry. After the introductory injunction, the scene in 3.m.12 is briefly set in terms reminiscent of 1.m.1, that is, with intertextual reference by *Philosophia* to the prisoner’s lament:

quondam funera coniugis
vates Threicius gemens
postquam flebilibus modis
silvas currere mobiles,
amnes stare coegerat. (3.m.12.5–9)

Once upon a time, the Thracian singer, mourning the death of his wife *with tearful lays*,
 induced woods to run fleetly and rivers to stand still.

Here *quondam* and *flebilibus modis* recall the alliterative *felix*, the leitmotiv of the first poem, which we have seen recurring in the first three verses of this poem. Further alliteration on *f* recurs, playing on the obvious in the context of bereavement, in variations on *flere* (to weep), also frequent in Vergil’s *Georgics* 4: *flerunt* (461), *fletu* (505), *flesse* (509), and *flet* (514). Boethius’s variant, *deflet* (mourn to the end, 26), echoes the double use of the word *deflent* from Seneca, *HF* 576–77: *deflent Eumenides Threiciam nurum / deflent et lacrimis difficiles dei* (The Furies greatly mourned the Thracian bride, the hard-hearted gods even mourned her with tears); the latter, in turn, echoes Ovid, *Met.* 10.11–12: *satis . . . deflevit vates* (The singer of divine truth sufficiently mourned).

All this is fairly obvious; after all, alliteration is common in poetry and, in the context of mourning, alliteration with *fl-* would have been

unavoidable. But with the use of the root **flec-*, the sound combination carries over the connotation of weeping into a new context. We see this already in Vergil's *Georgics* 4.515, where the bereaved singer describes how, after the second loss of his wife, no other marriage could tempt him: *nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei* (No love, no marriages whatsoever *turned aside* his mind). The root recurs in Ovid, who relates the word *flectere* to Dis's prohibition on looking back: *hanc simul et legem Rhodopeius accipit Orpheus / ne flectat retro sua lumina* (And at the same time the Thracian Orpheus accepted the injunction not to *turn back* his gaze, *Met.* 10.50–51). A few verses on, we see him disobey: *flexit amans oculos* (The loving husband *turned* his eyes, 10.57). In Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, *flectere* has a different connotation. The passage begins with Orpheus's power to change the resolution of the gods of the Underworld:

immites potuit *flectere* cantibus
umbrarum dominos et prece supplici
Orpheus, Eurydicen dum repetit suam. (569–71)

Orpheus had the power, by his songs and suppliant prayer, to *turn* the unkind lords of the shades when he sought his darling Eurydice.

In all our Latin versions of the tale, an interesting and complex web of allusion relates **flec-* to other key terms: the word *amor* (the central focus of our search), as well as to *lex*, the root **vi(n)c-*, and *perdere*. The use of **flec-* by Vergil, Ovid, and Seneca in varying contexts may be fortuitous, but it would appear that Boethius, in two dense passages that evoke a complex of Ovidian echoes, returns the word to its Ovidian connotation from *Met.* 10:

... sed *lex* dona coerceat,
ne dum Tartara liquerit
fas sit lumina *flectere*. (3.m.12.44–46)

But this *condition* must be attached to the gift: not until he left Tartarus would he be allowed to *turn* his eyes.

Let us consider the words *lex* and *amor* (*amans*), the first of which refers to the injunction that Orpheus should not look back before reaching the upper regions of the earth. *Lex* occurs in a parallel context in *Met.* 10.50: *hanc simul et legem Rhodopeius accipit heros* (The Thracian hero received this

precept). Boethius, apparently following the Senecan *sententia*, *odit verus amor nec patitur moras* (True love hates and does not brook delay, *HF* 588), combines the two concepts in a *sententia* in the next two lines (47–48): *quis legem det amantibus? / maior lex amor est sibi* (Who would impose a law on lovers? Love is a greater law unto itself). This sounds, metrics apart, like a typical elegiac sentiment, particularly “Ovidian” in its wordplay. Yet an exhaustive computer search I conducted produced nothing close to it as precedent,⁶⁷ and so it would appear that Boethius here has created his own “elegiac” aphorism in a strong statement on the power of passionate love.⁶⁸ While such an *argumentum ex silentio* is not proof of Boethius’s Ovidianism, it does seem to indicate the author’s interest in the most common subject matter of romantic elegy, of which Ovid was a major proponent.

That Boethius knew Ovid’s elegiacs has been sufficiently established, and it seems likely that he also was familiar with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Hence, we need, via Seneca, to go back to Ovid’s version of the Orpheus story to examine another aphorism on the power of love, which itself is a link in a chain of allusion going back to Vergil and, perhaps, Gallus. Elsewhere I have discussed (1999a, 40) Ovid’s description of Orpheus’s descent into the Underworld, emphasizing the brevity of the widower’s mourning (*Met.* 10.11–12), the even more brief portrayal of his rapid descent into the Underworld (10.10–14), and his patronizing and casuistic address of the deities of the netherworld. The singer assumes a vatic stance and asserts the presence of *amor* in the face of his own skepticism: *vicit Amor! supera deus hic bene notus in ora est: / an sit et hic, dubito. sed et hic tamen auguror esse . . . / . . . vos quoque iunxit Amor* (Love won through! This god is well known on the shores above: whether he also is here, I doubt. But I declare as divine truth that he is here too; . . . Love joined the two of you, *Met.* 10.26–27, 29). Ovid here has given a new twist to the Vergilian aphorism from *Eclogue* 10.69: *omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori* (Love conquers all; let us too give way to love!).⁶⁹ Ovid’s Orpheus uses the perfect *vicit* (has conquered, 10.26) to turn aphorism into established fact.⁷⁰ Seneca and Boethius after him take up the theme of Love’s temporary victory, turning active into passive in a logical corollary of the Ovidian *sententia*, and putting it into the mouth of the lord of the Underworld. *Vincimur* (we are being beaten/we yield) he acknowledges majestically in both versions (Seneca, *HF* 582; *Cons.* 3.m.12.40),⁷¹ but as we know from all versions, in the end Love is defeated, and in Boethius it defeats its protagonist.

Each retelling of the myth plays in some way on the paradox of victo-

rious love being in its turn vanquished.⁷² Let us examine this defeat. The Senecan passage has worked as an illustration that it would be possible for Hercules to brave the Underworld successfully. It concludes: *quae vinci potuit regia carmine, / haec vinci poterit regia viribus* ('The kingdom that could be vanquished through song / this same kingdom could be beaten by strength, *HF* 590–91). Boethius's final *sententia* also relates to the Underworld, but underscores its power to destroy whoever has been overcome by desire for what it contains:

nam qui Tartareum in specus
victus lumina *flexerit*,
 quicquid praecipuum trahit
perdit dum videt inferos. (3.m.12.55–58)

For whoever is *overcome* and *turns* his eyes to look at the cave of Tartarus, *loses* whatever he holds dear while he looks at the dead.

For Boethius, it is the singer who is *victus*. Terms common to the Senecan web of allusion (*victus*, *flexerit*, *perdit/perdidit*) echo words familiar from Ovid and Vergil. Boethius's gnomic present *perdit* picks up the Senecan and Vergilian perfect *perdidit* that he echoes in verses 50–51: *Orpheus Eurydicen suam / vidit, perdidit, occidit*⁷³ (Orpheus saw his dear wife; he lost her; he perished).⁷⁴ In Boethius's adaptation of Seneca, I have suggested above some intertextual echoes of Ovid's version (e.g., his use of *legem . . . lex* [47, 48] and *lumina flexerit* [56]).⁷⁵ Orpheus here is the illustration of the lasting truth of Boethius's *sententia*, the *victus* man who turns back his eyes and loses the object of his love as he gazes at the Underworld. For Boethius (or rather, for *Philosophia*), such defeat lies in the fact that Orpheus gave way to overweening passion. Not his loss of Eurydice, but Orpheus's love for Eurydice was his real defeat. For Boethius, the fact that Orpheus turned to look back is an indication of this. If love did win through, its victory results in the final defeat of its votary. So Boethius the author appears to remember the grand claim of Ovid's hero that "love had won through" and his brief triumph, but here his defeated hero more emphatically shows up the hollowness of this victory.

This brings us back to the interpretation of the myth and the use to which Dame Philosophy puts it in her argument about seeking divine truth from on high. The reader is perhaps meant to remember that the defeat of the singer *is also a defeat of the power of Orpheus's music*. Critics disagree on whether to take the narrative in Boethius as parable or not: is it

merely ornamental use of a well-known myth, an indictment of music and poetry as finally inefficacious, a metaphorical portrayal of the importance of avoiding the mundane and the danger of giving way to earthly passions, or a call to look heavenward, in search of true light?⁷⁶ It is probably all these things, yet as Walsh (1999, 144) puts it, “Boethius here succumbs to the pathos of the story, and undercuts the philosophical message with which the poem ends.” Love holds sway in the imagination of the creative author, and that means either that Ovid as *lusor amorum* has retained a part in Boethius’s imagination, or that Boethius, while acknowledging the power of the tender emotion over an individual, is attempting to correct his predecessor about the lasting importance of passionate love.

Taking the poems we have so far dealt with in chronological reading order, we may perhaps assume that Boethius’s rejection of the overweening power of passionate love in 3.m.12 is correcting and adapting the stance of 2.m.8.⁷⁷ The empirical author may still be desperately trying to overcome his own longing for his own wife, trying to remind himself that conjugal felicity is also part of the mundane that Philosophy has taught him to relinquish willingly. That topic needs further exploration.

Boethian *Amor* in 4.m.6

Curley (1986, 256–57) ignores all the sensual implications that we have explored in 2.m.8, as she argues that Boethius’s thesis of Love as the guiding and controlling force in that poem is not static, but supplants the paradox of “change as the ordering principle of *Fortuna*” with Love as a new ordering principle, which, in the course of book 3, is in *its* turn supplanted by the transcendental Deity, who is finally shown to rule the cosmos—but outside of nature.⁷⁸ However, Curley omits reference to a crucial poem that also celebrates *Amor* as a divine principle, still very much within nature; that is, she does not consider the implications of 4.m.6. This poem continues the concept of God as Creator and as the guiding force of the universe (as it was set out in 3.m.9), but here the concept of “God as Love” is spelled out most clearly. Here Divine Love is paternal, benevolent, and permanently in control—a far cry, one would say, from Ovidian passion. Yet as we shall see below, there are some interesting undertones that can lead to speculation about whether Boethius was not still influenced by Ovid, consciously or unconsciously, on this topic so central to the earlier poet’s art.

Metrum 4.6 is a long anapaestic poem that follows on the longest prose passage in the *Consolatio*, in which *Philosophia* spells out the relation between Providence and Fate and the role of humanity's Free Will in a mix of Stoic and Platonic concepts.⁷⁹ Fate is the visible working out in time of timeless Providence. This last poem in our series spells out the "wise and rational rule of the divine Creator who is cosmic Amor" (so Walsh 1999, 152). It repeats and winds up issues raised in 1.m.5 (sung by the prisoner in the same meter), while celebrating the theme of harmony between the elements, as mooted earlier in the central Hymn to the Creator (3.m.9). Its first line picks up the same idea of a divine dictator of laws to the faithful with which 2.m.8 closed: *hic fidis . . . sua / dictat iura sodalibus* (2m.8.26–27). The poem begins, *si vis celsi iura Tonantis / . . . cernere* (if you want to discern the *laws* of Him who thunders on high, 4.m.6.1–2).⁸⁰ The ordering "laws" in both these poems are a far cry from the irrational *maior lex* that passionate love is unto itself in the intervening 3.m.12.48.

Here *Amor* is again shown as ruling natural events, such as the ordered succession of night and day, and the regular course of the sun through the heavens. The creative force sits on high, surrounded by the celestial bodies that regulate the ordered succession of the seasons, guiding their reins and keeping all things on course: *sedet . . . conditor altus / rerumque regens flectit habenas* (Here sits the Founder on high, and the ruler pulls at the reins of things, 4.m.6.34–35). This may be compared with 3.m.2.1–2 (where it is Nature that holds the reins, guiding the world with her laws) and with 4.m.1.19–20 (where the "ruler of kings" guides the reins of the world⁸¹). The concept of a divine ruler sitting on high is familiar from the Augustan poets in general (Horace, *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7; Vergil, *Georg.* 2.319) but also, and for this reader, especially from Ovid, *Met.* 2.1–48, namely the description of the throne room of Sol, surrounded by the Seasons, as he is approached by his son Phaethon.

In Ovid's story, Phaethon, the son of the nymph Clymene and Sol, begs his radiant father to allow him to drive the chariot of the sun for a day to "prove" his legitimacy. The fond father is tricked into agreeing, with disastrous consequences. Sol gives a torrent of driving instructions before placing the reins in his son's inexperienced hands. As Ovid tells the tale, allusions to reins abound.⁸² The outcome is inevitable. The universe is plunged into fiery disarray as the steeds of the sun's chariot bolt, for the cart is unfamiliarly light; the boy loses the reins (*lora remisit*, 2.200) and the horses plunge on, unchecked (*nulloque inhibente*, 2.202) and unguided (*sine lege ruunt*, 2.204). The earth is scorched, the sea boils,

and the firmament is almost torn asunder; sunlight penetrates to the kingdoms of Tartarus, leaving its royal pair terrified (2.260–61). Jupiter has to intervene, stopping the runaway chariot with a thunderbolt, and the boy is killed. The chariot is smashed and the reins lie limp (*illic frenae iacent*, 2.310–28). The aspirant “ruler” of the sun’s chariot is dead because his powerful father gave away his power, albeit temporarily, and it takes intervention from a higher power for cosmic order to be restored.

Boethius’s description in 4.m.6 of a father figure who holds sway over the cusp of heaven, with the full array of times and seasons obeying his command, is reminiscent of Ovid’s portrayal of Sol’s palace.⁸³ Intertextual allusion is subtle, mostly hanging on the descriptive evocation of atmosphere in the two poems and on some similarities of vocabulary. Such similarities may be ascribed to a common meteorological vocabulary, but are nevertheless noteworthy.⁸⁴ In Ovid the seasons are personified; in Boethius they are shown as insensible and under the control of the heavenly bodies, which are, in their turn, guided by *Amor*. Ovid’s “father figure” is not the creator-deity, but one that was set in the sky after the ending of primary chaos by “a god and kind nature” (*Met.* 1.21).⁸⁵ Ovid’s Sol-Phoebus is merely the ruler of all that pertains to meteorology; in Boethius the ruler is also the origin and creator of all things, including the sun. This has already been established before, in 4.m.1, where *Philosophia* proposed to carry her *alumnus* up to the skies, on the way passing the fiery course of Phoebus (10) and reaching the *aether*, where the sublime Lord of all holds his scepter, guiding the reins of the world (*orbisque habenas temperat*, 20).

A line from 4.m.6 that echoes Boethius’s own earlier use of the concept here contributes to the evocation of the Phaethon myth: *rerumque regens flectit habenas* (The ruler *pulls/guides* the reins of things, 35).⁸⁶ Like Ovid’s Sol, and as in his own 2.m.8 and 4.m.1, Boethius’s divine ruler holds the seasons at his beck, guides the sun by day, and provides for the moon to take over at night. He does this in love, and unlike Sol in the Ovidian poem, he never relinquishes control. His paternal role is unquestioned, his guidance supreme. The passage continues: *rex et dominus, fons et origo, / lex et sapiens arbiter aequi* (king and lord, fount and source, *law* and wise arbiter of what is right, 4.m.6.36–37). In contrast with Phaethon’s chaotic steeds that plunge on *sine lege* (*Met.* 2.204) after their young driver has lost the reins (*lora remisit*, 2.200), this ruler both *keeps* the reigns that control the universe, and *is* the law that underlies such control. Unlike Ovid’s Sol-Phoebus who, seated in his cosmic chamber and surrounded by his meteorological underlings, hands over his rule to an unworthy lightweight, this

wise arbiter, also seated on high and also ruling the times and seasons (his own creation), never surrenders the reins of the universe to any other. At the same time he is the love that brings harmony between evening and morning (4.m.6.13–17) and makes sure that wet and dry, heat and cold, each keeps to its allotted place (30–33). This is the opposite of the chaos that ensued when Phaethon's fiery chariot in turn seared all parts of the globe and set the heavens in disarray. Mutual love (*alternus amor*, 17) here controls every part of the universe, a love that is revealed at verse 44 as the cosmic creator-source. Whatever part of the firmament seems to veer off, this Love firmly brings back on course. Again we have play on the root **flec-* and alliteration in *f*:⁸⁷

nam nisi rectos revocans itus
flexos iterum cogat in orbes,
 quae nunc stabilis continet ordo
 dissaepa suo fonte *f*atiscant.
 hic est cunctis communis *amor*. . . (4.m.6.38–44)

For if he did not force their straight motions
 Into *curved* orbits again
 Those things that a stable order now holds in check
 Would fall apart if they were to be separated from their true source.
 This is the *Love* that is common to all.

In Boethius's creator-ruler we have *lex* and *amor* combined, but here it is no longer a passionate love that makes its own irrational, self-seeking laws, the love that binds humans in wedlock, which was adumbrated in 2.m.8 and which predominated in 3.m.12. This law unto itself that gives order to the world is Platonic *erôs*, the Deity that is both God and Love. Boethius's final word on love depicts the reciprocity that binds human and divine: all things in the universe can be maintained only by returning love for love:

. . . non aliter durare queant
 nisi converso rursus *amore*
 refluant causae quae dedit esse. (4.m.6.46–48)

[T]hey cannot last by any other means
 Than that, by reciprocal *love*,
 They flow back to the first cause of their being.

The author seems consciously or unconsciously to have placed his final portrait of overweening Love in a faintly Ovidian setting,⁸⁸ yet finally to have subordinated passionate *amor* to the Platonic concept. In *Met.* 2.85–86, Ovid’s anonymous creator-god gave to humanity alone the gift of standing upright, bidding him to look aloft at the stars (*ad sidera tollere vultus*, 86). Throughout the *Consolatio* this has been the most consistent precept addressed to the abject prisoner. He is to look upward, to the celestial light, overcoming every earthly emotion, even love for his wife. When Orpheus looked down, he lost out to death. Yet in 4.m.1, touched on above, the exiled prisoner is told that the reward of his ascent to heaven with the wings of Philosophy will be an ability to look down on tyrants and to see them as the “real exiles” (*cernes tyrannos exules*, 30). And in the final prose passage, Dame Philosophy sets to rest his doubts about the apparent conflict between God’s omniscience and humanity’s Free Will by reference to the timelessness of a prescient God, who watches everything from on high (*spectator desuper cunctorum prescius deus*, 5.pr.6.45).

The presence of the Orpheus myth in the *Consolation*, and its Ovidian reverberations in the divine realm, suggest that the story of Philosophy and the prisoner to some extent recapitulates the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. For Boethius the prisoner and equally for Boethius the author, it remains hard to divide the universe into two neat parts: the earthly and human that must be abandoned, and the heavenly and divine that offers the sole truth and ultimate reality. If *Philosophia* represents what the creative author is trying to persuade himself to believe, and the prisoner-narrator is used to portray what he feels, right to the end neither persona is able to abandon the earth altogether. As we look back at the poems in which the word *amor* appears, and forward to prose passages that indicate a continued involvement with the world, it would seem that there was place in our author’s creative mind for the kind of passionate love that binds male to female, the kind of love he himself enjoyed in a happy marriage. To misquote Walsh, Boethius *has* “ordered his medley of borrowings into a unique vision,” in which an Ovidian-type *amor* has not totally been lost. Literary *anamnesis* has assisted us in finding some Ovidian traces. Conjugal love was the one earthly emotion that the creative author showed his idealized personae still acknowledging, and Ovidian allusion was the means whereby he effected this.

An ironic postscript to the tale of Boethius the imprisoned exile may be read from a six-verse epigram (discovered by Barth and published in 1624), which is ascribed to one of the Symmachi, father or son. It com-

memorates the prisoner's death in Ovidian terms and meter, but in the end it celebrates him in terms of his wife's fame as faithful defender of his cause. Rusticiana had fearlessly opposed Theodoric and had had his statues overturned after Justinian's invasion of Italy in 535. Just as Ovid in exile discarded dalliance and monogamously celebrated his absent wife, so it would seem that Boethius's apparently final subjugation of the Ovidian celebration of love between man and woman was in some sense defeated after his death. *Amor vicit*, after all.⁸⁹

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Notes

¹ This history is well covered in Walsh 1999, xii–xx. Boethius came under suspicion of plotting a Byzantine takeover of power from Theodoric, the Ostrogoth King of Rome. The final standoff was apparently precipitated by Boethius's defense in the Roman Senate of one Albinus, who had, according to a certain Cyprian, written a suspicious letter to Justinian in Constantinople. Magee (1988) explains that "Boethius' theological tracts were forming the 'nucleus' upon which the Roman emperor Justinian's Imperial policy was being built." Glei (1998) gives as sources the *Consolatio* itself, Procopius's *Gothic Wars*, the *Excerpta Valesiana* 2, the *Liber Pontificalis* LV 5,135 (quoting one sentence that terms Theodoric a heretic and associating him with the deaths of Boethius and Symmachus senior), and, for the record of Boethius's death, the *Fasti Ravennates* (ed. Morton), in Cod. Brit. Mus. Addit. 16974, fol. 111^v, lines 37–38.

² Of these, beside Walsh 1999, most important are Gruber's (1978) formidable commentary and his edition of a collection of articles with Fuhrmann (1994), as well as his entry in *Der Neue Pauly* (1997b) and two bibliographies (1997a and 1998), with a complete set of references to further material, neatly arranged in relation to each individual work; Courcelle 1967 and 1981; Curley 1986 and 1987; Obertello's 1981 edited volume; Crabbe 1981a and 1981b; Chadwick 1981; Gibson 1981; Reiss 1982;

Lerer 1985; O'Daly 1991 and 1993; and Cooper 1928, the usefulness of whose concordance has not been totally superseded by CD-ROM publications. I have not yet seen John Marenbon's *Boethius* (Oxford 2003). Edited studies of Boethius include: Gegenschatz and Gigon 1969; Obertello 1979; and Büchner 1977. I have used the following texts: O'Donnell 1984, based on Weinberger's CSEL text; and Stewart and Rand's Loeb (1926), based on Peiper's Teubner edition (1871). Magee (1997) comments on the general quality of these editions. The Penguin translation (1969) is by Watts. (I have not yet seen Relihan's new translation [Indianapolis 2001; reprint 2004.]) Kaylor's (1992) bibliography of medieval translations attests to Boethius's lasting importance in the Middle Ages. The proliferation of medieval translations is variously discussed in Hoenen and Nauta 1997; Troncarelli 1981; Dwyer 1976; Pickering 1967 and 1976; and Patch 1935. The continued importance of the *Consolatio* as a literary paradigm may be read, for example, from a discussion of Boethius's influence on Arthur Koestler by Sutherland (1992) and from Sharma's equation (1988) of the prison writings of the African dissident Ngugi wa Thiong'o with a traditional *consolatio* (literature as *Selbsttrost*).

Abbreviations for quoting from the *Consolatio* are as follows. Poems are denoted by "m"; thus, 1.m.1.9 means book 1, *metrum* 1, line 9. Prose passages are marked by "pr"; thus, 2.pr.6.4 means book 2, *prasa* 6, section 4.

³ Tester (1989) considers that Boethius, following Cicero, created the Latin philosophical language. See Fuhrmann 1994, 136–53 on Boethius's contribution toward satisfying late antiquity's "hunger for the transcendental"; Asztalos 1993 on Boethius as both disciple and teacher of Greek logic; D'Onofrio 1997 on Boethius's teaching about the nature of knowledge.

⁴ The notes to Walsh's introduction (1999, xi–lviii) offer an overview of contemporary scholarship; also Curley 1987, an analysis of its literary components, and 1986, on "how to read the *Consolatio*." See Ranneft 1989 on Boethius's reconciliation of different genres; Crabbe 1981b on literary design; and Lerer's (1985) monograph (reviewed in Gruber 1988) on Boethius's literary method, particularly on variation between dialogue and dialectic.

⁵ Yet the "prisoner Boethius" is probably as much a literary figment as is "Dame Philosophy"; see Kaylor 1992, 14.

⁶ For example, the details of Boethius's last days are somewhat unclear; also unclear is his access to books. In prison, Boethius, like Ovid at Tomis, must have had more books with him than he admits. Glei (1998) considers that he was under "house arrest." Walsh (1999, xix) assumes a meager abode in the Ager Calventianus, "an area near Pavia inhabited by impoverished peasants," and suggests (118) "conditions more Spartan than house arrest, but which permit[ted] him access to books." This would explain the explicit reference to "sitting in his library" at 1.pr.3.3.

⁷ Putting a philosophical tract in Menippean format into the mouth of an allegorical character appears as the most "medieval" characteristic of the work. Boethius was not the first to do this, however. A much more extensive set of allegorical dramatis personae is featured in the *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*) by the Carthaginian Martianus Capella. This work, which gives a concise overview of the liberal arts within the setting of a fantastic wedding feast, influenced medieval science, celebrating, as it does, in allegorical form the Seven Liberal Arts as the "dowry" of Philology in her marriage to Mercury, the patron god of rhetoric. It was

wildly popular in the Middle Ages. Its dating is uncertain, but at the very latest it still predated the *Consolatio*. Stahl et al. (1971, 15) place the *De nuptiis* between 410 and 439, and Grebe (2000) at about 496–523, that is, almost exactly contemporaneously with Boethius. See Grebe *ibid.*, 357, for parallels between the two authors.

⁸ These are 1.m.1, 1.m.3, 1.m.5, and 5.m.3. See Dronke 1994, 1–25 on the scope and often destabilizing effect of the Menippean format. Büchner (1977) lists the variety of verse forms in his introduction. Scheible (1972) discusses each poem in order. O'Daly (1991) gives a more general overview of Boethius's poetic scope, relating the poetry to the philosophical content. Walsh (1999, xli) comments that Boethius avoids the Ambrosian hymnic form, as being specifically "Catholic and anti-Arian." See my discussion elsewhere (1999a, 244–51) relating Boethius's elegiacs to Ovid's. Most (2000) shows that the close relationship between prose and verse is Platonic in the spirit of *Politics* 10, and Duclow (1979) suggests that the interplay between poetry and prose reflects the contrast between imagination and reason, hence two modes of knowledge.

⁹ Discussed in Claassen 1999a, chaps. 1.4–1.5 and 3.2–2.3 (= pp. 19–22, 85–102); also see Walsh 1999, xxxvi–xxxix. Gruber (1978, 16–19) traces the influence of perhaps Varro, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, Petronius's *Satyricon*, and Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis*. Dronke (1994) gives a useful overview.

¹⁰ For instance, Reiss (1982, 94) comments that Dame Philosophy chases away the Muses but her speeches are full of poetry and song. Most (2000) stresses that the poetry diminishes from first to last until the end of book 5 is entirely "poetry-free." Courcelle (1967, 33) argues against the idea of prior composition, citing the unity of the integrated prose and verse sections.

¹¹ The poems (thirty-nine in all) display a wide variety of meters; three are in epic hexameter (3.m.3, 3.m.9, 4.m.4), only two in elegiacs (1.m.1, 5.m.1). For Most (2000), the cosmic content of 5.m.1 "saves elegy from final rejection." The most frequent lyric meter is glyconic (1.m.6, 2.m.3, 2.m.8, 3.m.12, 4.m.3, 5.m.4). Walsh (1999, xxxix and *ad locc.*), O'Daly (1991), Glei (1985), and O'Donnell (1984 *ad locc.*) give the metrical pattern of individual poems; cf. Büchner 1977 and Scheible 1972. Brazouski (2000) argues unconvincingly for a consistent "elegiac" texture to the work, with themes such as the grey-haired lover, a deathbed scene where the poet-lover is accompanied by his mistress, and the generally lugubrious tone of the work.

¹² Alfonsi (1954) typifies the poetry as "moralistic," the poems of the first half of the work being symbolic and about nature, and those of the second half being metaphysical, intellectual, or didactic, celebrating the theme of love as a cosmic ordering principle, inaugurating the eternal golden age in a Paradise to come.

¹³ Glei (1998) points out that even Boethius's Christian writings are rather more scholastic than personally Christian. Mohrmann (1976) considers the abstract "God" of the *Consolatio* to be "vaguely Christian," where Boethius's "piety shows through." Starnes (1981) considers that "for Boethius, the world is so Christian that he does not need to distinguish between Christian and pagan." De Vogel (1981) finds a totally syncretistic Pythagorean-Neoplatonic, yet faintly Christian, conceptualization of God. Claassen (1991) sees Christian adaptation of pagan tradition in the *Consolatio*. Walsh (1999, xx–xxxi, xxxvi) describes the *Consolatio* as close to Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*—self-consolation in the shadow of death (also designated by Duclow 1979 as an "exercise in psychotherapy").

¹⁴ Courcelle (1967, 24) sees Cicero and Seneca as the major influences. Gruber (1978, 27) refers to popular philosophical tracts, but considers the figure of *Fortuna* as a rival to *Philosophia* as originally Boethian. On the nature of the deity, Courcelle (1967, 203ff.) traces the influence of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and *De fato*, Proclus, Plotinus, Plato, and Neoplatonists such as Ariston, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ammonianus, and Simplicius. The importance of Orphic lore is also noted in Obertello 1979, 240.

¹⁵ Cf. Walsh 1999, xxix. Magee (1988) postulates that Boethius's description of the "torn gown" of *Philosophia* in 1.pr.3 is a veiled reference to contemporary schisms in the church and increasing religious intolerance in both Italy and Constantinople, with Boethius at first equating himself with the "martyrs" of pagan philosophy, but in prison with the martyrs of the Catholic church. Some critics read a consciously anti-Augustinian (hence, "anti-Christian") stance in Boethius's view of history. Cf. Pickering 1967, 13 on Boethius's "non-epochal," annalistic approach.

¹⁶ Pickering (1967, 20) notes that for Boethius, God as Providence is finally also the "*Fortuna*" that ordains a person's *fatum*. Humanity through *ratio* learns to acknowledge that the changes of Fortune should be ascribed to God's divine foreknowledge. Through Free Will one accepts the decrees of an all-seeing, omniscient, and all-powerful God.

¹⁷ Tester (1989) appears to ignore the concept of a universal God that transcends time as a consistent feature of the consolatory tradition, e.g., Plutarch, *Mor.* 102Aff.; Seneca, *Helv.* 20; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 13 passim; cf. Galen, *On Christians and Jews* 12 (trans. Walzer). My thanks for the latter reference to an anonymous referee.

¹⁸ See Curley 1986, 214–20 on the progression of Boethius's understanding: from a sense of self to a sense of God, from awareness of *Fortuna* to *Fatum* to *Providentia*, and his epistemological progress from physical sensing to imagination, to reason, to *intellectio* (or intuition).

¹⁹ Plato's *Meno* would have been the major source for the concept of *anamnesis*. Crabbe (1981a) shows the debt of the central poem, 3.m.9, to Plato's Timaeus-myth, as well as to the myth from the *Phaedrus*, which continues in 4.m.1; cf. 3.m.11.

²⁰ Occasionally agreement is imputed to him, as at 5.pr.4.10 and 21, 5.pr.6.37 and 39. Lerer (1985, 9) speaks of the "silence of a reader engaging fully with intellectual texts"; Gruber (1988), reviewing Lerer, agrees, stressing the "importance of silences." Relihan (1990) attempts to refute this, arguing that there are some things which Dame Philosophy cannot answer and that the whole is a satirical exposé of her failure. The apparent "silence of the prisoner" in book 5 has been interpreted as signaling total acquiescence in the arguments proffered by Dame Philosophy, hence her "victory," or as a sign of her ultimate defeat. Tränkle (1984/1977) unconvincingly suggests that there would have been a sixth book featuring "the return of the soul to God"; Glei (1998) relates the abrupt ending to an "aesthetics of abruption" current in the "greatest Roman works." The general consensus is stated by Walsh 1999, xl, who argues for the nonsatirical completeness of the work.

²¹ For example, Roberts (2002) considers that Orientius's *Commonitorium* and Prosper's *De providentia Dei* correct Ovid philosophically on his view of chaos as spelled out in *Met.* 1.1–20, explaining that such critical revision represents the fullest form of Christian exegetical engagement with classical poetical texts.

²² For instance, a fragment of the lost parts of Petronius's *Satyricon* exists because it

was quoted towards the end of Boethius's *In Porphyrii isagogen*; so Dronke 1994, 30 with n. 10.

²³ Notably in O'Daly 1991 and Scheible 1972, but also in the various commentaries ad locc.; also Brazouski 2000; Curley 1987; Glei 1985; Reiss 1982, 94; Shanzer 1983; Crabbe 1981b; Reichenberger 1954.

²⁴ These Ovidian reminiscences, as we will see below, are frequently mediated through a Senecan filter.

²⁵ Cooper's concordance (1928) reflects only the five theological tracts and the *Consolatio*. A referee pointed me toward Boethius's *In Porphyrii isagogen* 1, 7.11ff., but the work was unavailable to me.

²⁶ There are thirteen occurrences in total, of which eleven are in the metra. Four appear in 2.m.8 (15, 17, 25, 29), two in 3.m.12 (25, 48), and three in 4.m.6 (17, 44, 47). The remaining two, in 2.m.5 (*ſervens amor... habendi*, 26, in a fairly conventional ode to Golden Age innocence, untainted by greed) and 5.m.3 (*tanto... amore / veri*, 11–12, from the song in praise of *anamnesis*), can better be translated as “lust,” “a craving for.”

²⁷ Wheeler (2002) gives a thorough survey of ancient reception of Ovid and suggests new lines of inquiry. This paper represents an instance of such inquiry.

²⁸ Cf. a recent survey by Sharrock 2002, 150–62, with bibliography.

²⁹ This was typified by Brooks Otis as “the pathos of love.” This concept has recently been neatly summarized and expanded upon in Hardie 2002b, 258–92.

³⁰ Recent treatments of the theme include Hardie 2002b, 285–93; Williams 2002, 238; Claassen 1999a, 121–22, 177, with notes.

³¹ Boethius had been deserted by some friends; others like Symmachus remained true to him.

³² The second elegiac poem, sung by Philosophy at 5.m.1, follows a prose passage in which she, at the prisoner's request, explains away in Aristotelian terms the concept of “chance.” In many ways, book 5 makes a new beginning in the text. Repetition of the meter of the first poem is a way of signaling this. The poem gives as an example the natural causes behind the apparently fortuitous confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, material not often associated with the rising and falling metrics of the elegiac couplet. The exiled Ovid in one poem (*Pont.* 4.10) gives a scientific explanation of the dark coloring of the Black Dark Sea as the result of the influx of fresh water from many rivers; see Claassen 1999a, 193–94.

³³ For Ovid's exilic vocabulary see Claassen 1999b. Recourse to Cooper 1928 gives some interesting statistics. Variants of **fle-*/**fleb-* occur seven times in the *Consolatio*, of which six are in the metra; **flec-*/**flex-* six times, of which five are in the metra; the elegiac concept of “longing” (**desid-*) thirty-three times, all in prose passages. Distribution of key concepts is also significant. *Fatum* and *fortuna* are extremely frequent in Boethius, but again only in the *Consolatio*, the former occurring thirteen times, of which only two are in the metra, the latter concept making up more than a page of quotations, of which all but four are in prose passages, mainly from books 1 and 2, one (a negation of the power of *Fortuna*) in book 3, a few in book 4, and none at all in book 5. All these words are frequent in Roman love elegy, which Ovid has adapted for exilic use.

³⁴ In the first line, Most (2000) considers *quondam* as evocative of the pseudo-Vergilian *incipit* of the *Aeneid* and *studio florente*, of the ending of *Geor.* 4.

³⁵ Heil (2000) sees the use of youth and age in the poem as indication that Boethius wished to portray himself as *senex puer* (a childish old man), not a *puer senex* (a wise youth), which would remind a Christian reader of the *topos* from the *Wisdom of Solomon* (*Lib. Sap.* 4.7–19), an indication that Boethius, too, thought that God saves through death, bringing with it (from Christian theology) the concept of *refrigerium*.

³⁶ I have noted before (1999a, 249) the frequency of alliteration in *f* as binding the parts of the poem together, culminating in the contrast between *felicem* (happy, 21) and *fallacem* (deceitful, 19). Metrics further serve to enhance the lugubrious picture painted by the poet's words.

³⁷ There is a difference between the Ovidian objective *fatum*, most often portrayed as his avenging persecutor, and Boethius's subjective lot as suffering prisoner: Claassen 1999a, 249; cf. Genschatz 1958.

³⁸ This works as a precursor, or programmatic statement, for his later discussion of the precariousness of trusting to the material things of life, which underlies much of Dame Philosophy's argument.

³⁹ Carnochan (1995) cites Boethius with John Bunyan, Oscar Wilde, and Gramsci as prime examples in his discussion of the "literature of confinement."

⁴⁰ Also noted in Courcelle 1967, 20. Although Fulgentius's work is essentially also a late classical prosimetric text in which a narrator tries to redirect Ovidian influence, only to reaffirm the resilience of the Ovidian presence (so Relihan 1984), Dronke (1994, 39) does not seem to consider triangulating a link from Ovid via Fulgentius to Boethius. He further cites personified Wisdom from the Hebrew Bible, *Ecclesia* in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the inspiring goddess appearing to Parmenides, and personified *Philosophia* in Lucian's *Fugitivi*.

⁴¹ Compare *Am.* 3.1.9, [*Elegeiae*] *forma decens, vestis tenuissima, vultus amantis* (attractive form, gauzy dress, a lovely face), with *Cons.* 1.pr.1.1–3, [*Philosophia erat*]... *mulier reuerendi admodum vultus... vestes erant tenuissimis filis subtili artificio* (a woman of impressive mien... Her gown was made of the finest thread woven with cunning art). And again, *Am.* 3.1.13, [*Tragoediae*] *laeva manus sceptrum late regale movebat* (Her left hand waved a royal scepter back and forth), with *Cons.* 1.pr.1.6, [*Philosophiae*]... *sceptrum... sinistra gestabat* (Her left hand carried a scepter).

⁴² *Cons.* 1.pr.1.4–5. Elegy's "longer foot" (*Am.* 3.1.8) represents the alternating hexameter-pentameter pattern of elegiacs; the Lydian buskins of Tragedy (*Am.* 3.1.14) were worn by tragic actors. Study of Philosophy leads through progressive stages to the highest truths, but some people use only those parts that suit their casuistic purposes, rending and distorting what they encounter.

⁴³ Dronke (1994, 45) emphasizes that the "poetic secret" of the *Consolatio* is "the way in which Boethius and *Philosophia* are the same and not the same," a comment that, *mutatis mutandis*, could be applied to Ovid and *Elegeia*.

⁴⁴ Dimmick (2002) discusses the fusion of the various parts of the Ovidian oeuvre in medieval thought.

⁴⁵ Medieval illustrations of the rejection scene, usefully collected in Courcelle 1981, sometimes portray two fleeing Muses, but more often show a set of either seven or four inspiring female figures standing with Dame Philosophy around the exiled prisoner's bed. These are usually taken to represent either the seven liberal arts or merely the *quadrivium*. One may conjecture that familiarity with Martianus Capella's allegorical portrayal of the seven liberal arts as "bridesmaids" at the marriage of Philology and

Mercury could have influenced later readers of both authors to favor such a depiction. See Uhlfelder 1981 on the role of the liberal arts (*Trivium: Grammatica, Rhetorica, Dialectica*; and the *Quadrivium: Arithmetica, Geometrica*—and *Musica* as its concomitant—and *Astronomica*) in the *Consolatio*.

⁴⁶ O'Donnell 1984, ad loc.: “hemiepes + adonic with diaeresis.”

⁴⁷ Walsh (1999, 118) comments on the irony of repeated echoes of, inter alios, Vergil and Horace in Philosophy's verse, explaining that this works “to bolster the prisoner's courage instead of inciting him to self-pity.”

⁴⁸ Chamberlain (1970) compares the principles of Boethius's own philosophical works on music and mathematics with the poetry of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*. Music serves Philosophy, offering a pattern of love and order, leading humankind to a belief in God. For Chamberlain, music permeates the work and is not confined merely to poetic passages. The sure hand of the creative artist is applying his own tenets in a practical way.

⁴⁹ It follows soon after her attempts to put into perspective the blessings that the prisoner had formerly enjoyed, and her grudging concession that he may mourn over the loss of his family, discussed above.

⁵⁰ Dronke (1994, 43) says in the context of this poem that Boethius uses poetry to express ideas that “cannot be expressed in prose.” The implication is that the highest truth needs a poetic vehicle. Dronke's further discussion of this poem in his *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome 1984) 439–75 was unavailable to me.

⁵¹ This is reminiscent of both Boethius's own 1.m.5.47 (*et quo caelum regis immensum* [and (the pact) whereby you rule immeasurable heaven]) and of the invocation in the Lord's Prayer.

⁵² Cf. 4.m.6 17–18 on the reconciliation Love brings about between warring factors, which includes (19–20) the binding of the elements, in a quasi-“Empedoclean” conceit. The contrast *amor/bellum* is of course stock literary fare, also common in the Roman elegists, e.g., Ovid, *Am.* 1.9; Tibullus.1.1.53–56, 1.10.65–68.

⁵³ Readers may object that romantic love was not necessarily the basis of Roman marriage, and hence may reject any interpretation of this love as “passionate,” but in the conventions of marriage hymns a sensual love that leads to ardent physical embraces would in most cases have been assumed; cf. Catullus 61.31–32.

⁵⁴ Walsh (1999, ad loc.) notes that *natura* is identical to the *amor* of 2.m.8.

⁵⁵ The singer famously sought his wife in the Underworld after her premature death. He was allowed to take her back to the world, on condition that he not look back at her. Just as they were about to reach the light of day, she stumbled and he looked back to catch her hand. At this she fell back into the shadows; afterwards he wandered alone. In Ovid's version (*Met.* 10.83–84), Orpheus established pederasty on earth until he was killed by a band of Ciconian women for rejecting their overtures.

⁵⁶ Squillante (1997) puts these into context. Mythical themes also occur in 2.m.5 (the Golden Age), 4.m.3 (Odysseus's escape from the toils of Circe), and 4.m.7 (the saga of the Atræides, Odysseus and Polyphemus, and the tasks of Hercules).

⁵⁷ The rather cold logic that “as God cannot do evil, evil is nothing” may be a bitter pill to swallow by an exile in extremis who is experiencing the hardship of imprisonment, but it is perfectly rational in context. See Walsh 1999, 143 on Augustine's use of this Neoplatonic argument to solve the problem of evil in the world.

⁵⁸ Cf. Crabbe 1981a and Watts 1969, 97–104 on the theme of “seeking the light.”

⁵⁹ The passage ends with a quotation from Parmenides via Plato’s *Sophist* (244E) on the self-sufficiency of the Deity.

⁶⁰ See Gruber 1978, 315 on the Orpheus myth as common in philosophical discussion, e.g., Plato, *Symp.* 179D. The Neoplatonists also used Orphic texts. Cf. Obertello 1979, 237–40 on the Platonic *iter*, or travel from darkness to light. In both Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, such an *iter* implied the achievement of immortality by avoidance of the mundane.

⁶¹ On Plato see Crabbe 1981a; also Gruber 1978, 315. On the descent into Hades, Pausanias 9.30.6; Vergil, *Geor.* 4.454; Ovid, *Met.* 10.8ff.

⁶² Lerer (1985, 246) considers that Boethius associates himself with the exiled Seneca as a “failed courtier” but that he ultimately rejects Seneca as source material for his philosophical poetry. Scheible (1972, 118–25) shows that Ovidian contributions to the myth (the types of sinners listed, Mount Taenarus as entrance to the Underworld) are assimilated and conflated by Boethius, with other contributions from a variety of sources. For example, on Orpheus’s ability to move rocks and trees by his singing, sources include: Euripides, *Bacch.* 561ff.; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.26ff.; also Ovid, *Met.* 11.1ff., 44ff., *Ars Am.* 3.321, *Am.* 3.9.21–22. Thomas (1986, 188) uses the term *window reference* for double-layered allusion, where “adaptation of [a] model [is] noticeably interrupted . . . to allow reference back to the source of that model.” This results in the “immediate . . . model [being] in some fashion ‘corrected.’”

⁶³ Orpheus as the prototypical poet is frequent in Ovid’s exilic poems (cf. also *Am.* 3.9.21–22). On the heart’s ease that Music brings:

cum traheret silvas Orpheus et dura canendo
 saxa, bis amissa coniuge maestus erat.
 me quoque Musa levat Ponti loca iussa petentem:
 sola comes nostrae perstitit illa fugae
 (*Tr.* 4.1.17–20)

About Cotys, King of Thrace, Ovid writes: *nec sub hoc tractu vates foret unicus Orpheus, / Bistonis ingenio terra superba tuo est* (*Pont.* 2.9.53–54). Or this curse from the *Ibis*: *diripiantque tuos insanis unguibus artus / Strymoniae matres Orpheos esse ratae* (597–98). About punishment for his *Ars amatoria* Ovid writes: *at non Chionides Eumolpus in Orphea talis / in Phryga nec Satyrum talis Olympus erat* (*Pont.* 3.41–42).

⁶⁴ Walsh (1999, 144) doubts the authenticity, and thus the influence, of the pseudo-Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus*, but his argument is irrelevant to mine. The phrase *flebilibus modis* in connection with Orpheus occurs only here and at *Herc. Oet.* 1091, whence we may deduce that Boethius knew the work, whoever its author. Its original coining may have been prompted by a reminiscence of the thrice-repeated *fleBILE* in Ovid, *Met.* 11.53–54, recounting the sad end to Orpheus’s songs, as his bodiless head floated down the Hebrus, whose banks echoed his dying murmur. See Most 2000 on the frequency of *flebilis* in Ovid, and Claassen 1999b for statistics.

⁶⁵ Zarini (1999) also suggests Seneca’s *Medea* 625ff. and versions of the death of Alcestis.

⁶⁶ Lerer (1985, 253) equates Orpheus with the prisoner himself.

⁶⁷ A search in PHI 5.3 CD-ROM revealed as the closest verbal prototype Propertius

3.20.16–18: *foedera sunt ponenda prius signandaque iura / et scribenda mihi lex in amore novo. / haec Amor ipse suo constringet pignora signo* (Treaties should first be fixed and rules laid down, and I must write a law for my new love. These tokens Love himself enforces through his own standard). Here *lex* is coupled with its approximate synonym *iura*, as in Ovid, *Ars am.* 3.57–58: *petite hinc praecepta, puellae, / quas pudor et leges et sua iura sinunt* (Find here the precepts, ladies, that modesty and its rules and laws allow). Cf. Tibullus 2.4.52–53: *vera quidem moneo, sed prosunt quid mihi vera? / illius est nobis lege colendus Amor* (Of course I warn you of the truth, but what does truth help me? We must serve Love through keeping his law). Line 47 on its own is vaguely reminiscent of Ovid’s *minimum est, quod amantibus obstat* (It is a only a slight thing that keeps lovers apart, *Met.* 3.453).

⁶⁸ I have noted above that the leitmotiv of the second edition (and version) of Brooks Otis’s *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge 1966) argued for the *Metamorphoses* as essentially an epic of conjugal love. Passionate love in Roman elegiac context more often than not was extramarital. Hence it is perhaps dangerous to equate conjugal love with passionate love, but most, if not all, retellings of the Orpheus myth equate the two emotions. See note 54 above.

⁶⁹ *Eclogue* 10 features Gallus “dying of love,” and verse 69 is sometimes considered a direct quotation from his lost works.

⁷⁰ No one is meant here to remember Ovid’s own laconic description of the dubious manner in which Persephone became queen from *Met.* 5.385–95: *paene simul visa est, dilectaque raptaque Diti* (She was almost simultaneously seen, loved, and raped by Dis, 395). The statement here is fraught with irony, as love does not finally win through. It takes another forty lines for the vanity of this statement to become apparent to the overeager husband when Orpheus loses his beloved. Her second death then leaves him stunned (*stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus*, *Met.* 10.64) and the horror he should have felt at the sight of the typical characters peopling the Underworld now enfolds him at the thought of her loss (10.64–71). Cf. Scheible 1972, 40–51.

⁷¹ *Tandem vincimur’ arbor / umbrarum miserans ait* (“At last, *I yield*,” the Lord of the shades said in pity). Crabbe (1981a) points out that in l.m.2.12 the prisoner is described as having formerly been a *victor* in his command of cosmic truth.

⁷² With Ovid, Love has defeated its own purpose: *quid enim nisi se querebatur amatam?* (What should she complain of except that she was *loved*?, *Met.* 10.61).

⁷³ Scheible (1972, 44) argues that this laconic asyndeton is closer to Ovid, *Met.* 10.55 than to Vergil. It is strongly reminiscent of the brutal abduction of Persephone in *Met.* 5.395, quoted above (note 71). Both Zarini (1999) and Squillante (1997) refer to Caesar’s famous staccato *veni, vidi, vici*.

⁷⁴ O’Donnell (1984, 215) points out that metrically the middle syllable is short, hence the perfect of *occido* from *cado* (die), not *caedo* (kill), rare in high-style poetry (so Axelson 1945, 65ff., a reference suggested by an anonymous referee). Another referee suggests (against O’Donnell’s argument that “he killed” would make the sense redundant after “he lost” her) that on the page—in contrast to the ear—one might think of “slaying” as well as “perishing,” and that paranomasia could make of *perdidit* both “he lost her” and “he destroyed her.” A not impossible change of subject could yield the translation “she died.”

⁷⁵ Cf. Vergil, *Aen.* 4.369: *num lumina flexit?* (Surely he didn’t turn his eyes away?).

⁷⁶ Zarini (1999) interprets it as a Neoplatonic exposé of the incompatibility of *affectus* and *ratio* and a denunciation of the powerlessness of poetry. For Squillante

1997, the poem further shows the power of love and its final defeat in the face of death. Lerer (1985, 253) interprets Orpheus as a figure for the prisoner himself, recapitulating his earlier condition. Crabbe (1981a) sees Eurydice as representing both Boethius's *mens* and his *fortuna*, both of which he lost by his despair. Such diametrically opposite interpretations may be reconciled by postulating that Boethius the creative author may have, in typically Ovidian vein, deliberately complicated his metaphorical use of the myth by representing various aspects of the prisoner's complex personality by means of these two figures. Medieval interpretations saw the tale as an allegory of humanity dragged down by its inability to reject temptation, those earthly desires fatally flawed by the contaminating sting of the snake (so Scheible 1972, 44–51). Ranneft (1989, 88) construes the story's significance as a call to humanity not to lose the knowledge it has gained of what comprises true happiness, namely God.

⁷⁷ Yet Barchiesi (2001, 143–55) is firm about the reflexive mutuality of intertextual dialogue or allusion, whether it is between an earlier and a later writer or different parts of one author's oeuvre.

⁷⁸ Curley (1986, 258) suggests that Orpheus ultimately fails because his attempt to rescue Eurydice represents human interference in the cycle of nature: "He fails because his *amor* cannot bear to be constrained by Hades' law."

⁷⁹ See Walsh 1999, 153–54; O'Donnell 1984, 232–38.

⁸⁰ *Iura* for Boethius can mean secular rule, as in 3.m.5.5–6: *licet... tellus tua iura tremescat* (even though the world should tremble at your sway).

⁸¹ [*R*]egum... dominus / orbis... habenas temperat. He is unmoving, outside of time, but controls things that mark time, such as the sun's winged chariot (*volucrum currum*, 21). Cf. 1.m.8.6; 3.m.2.33.

⁸² *Frena* (121, 191); *loral/loris* (127, 200); *habenas* (150, 169).

⁸³ I have not seen R. Brown, "The Palace of the Sun in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in Michael Whitby, P. Hardie, and Mary Whitby, eds., *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bristol 1987) 211–20.

⁸⁴ Ovid, *Met.* 2: *Phoebus* (24); *verque nouum stabat cinctum florente corona* (27); *aestas* (28); *autumnus* (29); *glacialis Hiems* (30); *Sol* (32); *Phoebe* (36). Boethius 4.m.6: *sol* (6); *Phoebes... axem* (7); *vere tepente* (25); *florifer annus* (26); *aestas* (27); *autumnus* (28); *hiemem* (29).

⁸⁵ A referee suggests that Boethius may be experiencing *anamnesis* also of the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*, even though Ovid does not suggest *amor* as the creative force, but rather gives Jupiter the role of ordering principle (e.g., in 116–24 he determines the length and characteristics of the seasons). By extension, Sol is his appointee.

⁸⁶ Play on the root **flec-* repeats *flectit* from verse 9, where it refers to the course of the Great Bear, in which Walsh (1999, 154) finds "echoes of Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.246 and 2.481."

⁸⁷ Throughout the poem, alliteration on *f* and *fl* may be noted: *foedere* (4), *flectit* (10), *flammas* (12), *reficit* (16), *fidem frigora flammis* (22), *florifer* (26), *defluus* (29), *profert* (30), *aufert* (32), *flectit* (35), *fons* (36), *firmit* (39), *flexos* (41), *fonte fatiscant* (43), *fine* (45), *refluant* (48). There is no constant pattern: the use of a fricative and its combination with a liquid is merely an ornamental device that enhances a listener's enjoyment of the poem.

⁸⁸ I would argue that it was conscious, but there is room for either persuasion.

⁸⁹ See Claassen 1999a, 250–51 and 311 nn. 84–85.

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