BOETHIUS AND HOMER

by

MICHAEL FOURNIER

BOETHIUS wrote his *Consolation of Philosophy* while in prison awaiting execution.[1] Although it has a place in numerous traditions and genres (e.g., philosophical dialogue, protreptic, Menippean satire, theodicy, epiphany literature, *contemptus mundi*) it is prima facie a *consolatio*.[2] Yet in the studies of ancient consolations by Constant Martha, Karl Buresch, Rudolf Kassel, and Horst-Theodor Johann[3] there are no more than a few brief references to Boethius, and virtually none in the more recent surveys of the tradition by Robert Gregg and Paul Holloway.[4] However, as not only the title (which he gave to the work himself) and the frequent use of consolatory *topoi*, but also the parallels with the dramatic setting of the *Phaedo*[5] make clear, Boethius understood his work to belong to this tradition. In addition to consolations for the bereaved, Cicero asserts that there are a host of consolations for other afflictions, referring to 'definite words of comfort' for dealing with poverty (*de paupertate,…et ingloria*), a life without office and fame (*vita inhonorata*) as well as 'definite forms of discourse dealing with exile, ruin of country, slavery, infirmity, blindness, every accident upon which the term disaster can be fixed' (*Tusc.* 3,81). While Boethius deals with a number of these topics, including poverty (2,5; 3,3), the loss of office (2,6; 3,4) and fame (2,7; 3,6), exile (1,5,2-5), ruin of country (1,4,20-27), and even figurative and metaphorical slavery (1m2,25), infirmity (1m1,10-11) and blindness (1m3,1-2), the ultimate cause of the grief for which he seeks consolation is not one of these traditional problems.[6]

Boethius' work is, like Cicero's *Consolatio*, an example of self-consolation.[7] Like Cicero, Boethius was not content simply to read and reflect upon other consolatory writings. He was compelled by his grief to compose his own. There is, however, a tendency

among scholars to read the *Consolation* as though it was composed in the same manner. Cicero tells us he composed his *consolatio* by 'throwing together' a number of different (and ultimately incompatible) strategies into a single work.[8] Those who see this sort of diversity in the Boethian self-consolation also perceive unresolved philosophical tensions between its diverse arguments and conclusions.[9] This has given rise to the notion that the *Consolation* is a sort of 'florilegium qua *consolatio*' and thus to the opinion that the work was beautifully but not carefully written.

The question of the relation between the literary and the philosophical in the *Consolation* is an important one. At first glance, literature and philosophy appear to be at odds. Lady Philosophy, in a re-enactment of the *Republic*'s purgation of traditional poetry, banishes the Muses (1,1,8-11). Music and rhetoric are described as mere poultices (*fomenta*), not real cures for the Prisoner's ills (2,3,3). In book 4 the pleasures of poetry are temporarily set aside in favour of more serious philosophical arguments (*rationes*) (4,6,6). In particular, the quotations from poets, including Homer, seem to have little to do with the real means of consolation, i.e., the philosophical arguments. Yet at the heart of the *Consolation* is a fundamental reconciliation of philosophy and poetry. Not only does Lady Philosophy use arguments *and* poetry to console the Prisoner, but certain apparently literary features of the work have a philosophical purpose.[10] Thus while the literary and philosophical aspects of the *Consolation* are often treated (somewhat) independently,[11] Boethius himself was clearly at pains to unite these aspects of the work. When Philosophy first appears to the Prisoner she banishes the muses she finds ministering to him, instructing them to 'leave him to *my* Muses' (*meisque Musis*, *Cons.*1,1,8-14). Her first words to the Prisoner are those of her first poem (1m2), and she speaks not only of 'my Plato' (*nostri Platonis*, 1,3,6) and 'my Aristotle' (*Aristoteles meus*, 5,1,12), but also of 'my Lucan' (*noster Lucanus*, 4,6,33). Perhaps most significant is Boethius' consistent identification of Lady Philosophy with Homer.[12]

Boethius quotes Homer five times in the *Consolation of Philosophy*. The quotations are in Greek, in four of the five books, and occur in the work's poetry and in its prose. No other author, not even Plato, Aristotle or Cicero, has a similar role. Thus, even in a

relentlessly allusive work like the *Consolation*,[13] the Homeric lines stand out and seem to call for special attention. In calling them quotations I follow the custom of other commentators. In fact, Homer is only named the last time he is quoted, at 5m2,3. Except for the phrase *onos lyras* (1,4,1) (a clear enough reference to Varro's work by that name), all of the other Greek passages in the *Consolation* are attributed to their authors: to Pythagoras the maxim 'Follow God' (*hepou theōi*, 1,4,38); to the *tragicus*, later identified as Euripides (3,7,6), the lines quoted from *Andromache* (3,6,1); to Parmenides the 'well-rounded sphere' (3,12,37); even the unidentified passage, 'the body of a holy man the heavens did build' (*andros dē hierou demas aitheres oikodomēsan*, 4,6,38) is ascribed by Lady Philosophy to 'one more excellent than myself'.[14] Thus, while others are 'quoted', Homer's words are, with one exception, presented as Lady Philosophy's own, and in this way the two are more closely identified.

In this paper I treat the quotations as allusions, specifically as the sort of allusions for which Pasquali argues:

> In reading cultured, learned poetry, I look for what I have for years stopped calling reminiscences, and now call allusions, would call evocations, *and in some cases quotations* (italics mine). The poet may not be aware of reminiscences, and he may hope that his imitations may escape his public's notice; but allusions do not produce the desired effect if the reader does not clearly remember the text to which they refer.[15]

Various attempts have been made of late to rehabilitate Roman literature by reconsidering the use of allusions by various authors.[16] In this paper I suggest that Boethius uses the Homeric quotations as more than 'decorative flourishes' or 'rhetorical ornaments'. In fact, the Homeric lines constitute the steps of an ascent necessary for consolation.[17] Using Proclus's *Commentary on the Republic* as a model, I suggest that the Homeric quotations in the *Consolation* are part of the *philosophical* ascent used to console the Prisoner, and that this ascent is, in part, accomplished in virtue of the concord Boethius perceives between Homer and Plato.

The Homeric quotations: hereditates *or* progenies*?*

Scholars such as Courcelle, Lamberton, and O'Daly have looked at the Homeric passages in the *Consolation* and, while they have

noted a certain literary aptness, they concluded that the lines of Greek epic have more to do with the style than with the substance of the work.[18] They each note that the particular phrases employed by Boethius all have a literary life independent of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. While there is no doubt that Boethius was familiar with the originals, it seems clear that he selected these lines from commentaries, florilegia, and other sources in which they had been preserved. But does this mean that Boethius meant them as mere rhetorical ornaments? Are they only literary decorations? These phrases, I would argue, became commonplaces for a reason. They were selected by the tradition from the thousands of lines of the two epics because they were thought to possess a special power to convey particular truths. They are traditional but they are not arbitrary. Boethius would have recognized the special effect these words could have and tried to harness this power. This does not mean that he was unaware of their original contexts, or that he was not also drawing upon these contexts to speak to his audience at another level. The Homeric *topoi* would have their desired effect upon certain readers no matter what they knew of Homer's poems – the 'theurgic' properties of the lines would accomplish their work.[19] But an allusion using one of these *topoi* would also have a less visceral, more intellectual effect on others.

Scholars who take seriously Platonic readings of Homer and the essentially literary quality of the *Consolation*'s philosophy still tend to see the Homeric quotations as so many *flores* and not as part of the pith of the work. In his work on Neoplatonic allegorical readings of Homer, Robert Lamberton looks at Boethius' place in that tradition. Lamberton concludes that the most important aspect of the quotations is the persistent but rather general association of Lady Philosophy with Homer, the overall significance being that, 'for Boethius Homeric language and myth, properly understood, yield truths about the nature of man and the universe compatible with Platonism'.[20] I would add to this generic connection between Philosophy and Homer the basis for a specific identification of Philosophy with the original speaker in each, and the original context in Homer, in order to illuminate more precise points of comparison between Homeric poetry and Platonism.

Gerard O'Daly notes that in general Boethius uses quotations as signposts, often quoting context along with words,[21] but he

arrives at a conclusion similar to Lamberton's: 'the use of quotations from poetry is primarily rhetorical in the *Consolation*'.[22] While O'Daly finds nothing distinctively Neoplatonic in the quotations, he does not attempt to interpret them according to the best known Neoplatonic reading of Homer, that of Proclus, found in the fifth and sixth essays of his *Commentary on the Republic*. This is not surprising, since O'Daly does not find a positive theoretical model for Boethius' poetry by the hypothetical application of Proclus's poetics to the *Consolation*. Proclus's theory is here succinctly described by Russell:

> His system is based on a Neoplatonist metaphysics; its object is to establish acceptable principles of allegorical interpretation, which can save Homer from Plato's attack. Perhaps the most interesting concept is that of the correspondence of different types of poetry with the different kinds of life of the soul. There are three of these: one in which the soul is linked with the gods and lives 'not its own life but theirs'; one in which it functions by reason; and one in which it operates with imagination and irrational sensation and is filled with inferior realities. To these correspond three types of poetry: the inspired, the didactic and the imaginative.[23]

O'Daly abandons his attempt to find in the *Consolation* examples of the didactic and inspired varieties of poetry because of two basic difficulties in applying the Procline model. First, there is the obscurity of Proclus's own distinction between these two types: Proclus cites few examples from Homer, and there even seem to be differences between the fifth and sixth essays on the precise meaning of inspired poetry. The other main difficulty is in establishing a specific connection with Procline didactic poetry as distinct from the numerous other sources which Boethius could have drawn upon.

The lives of the soul in the Consolation

While O'Daly does not reconsider the Procline model when he comes to the Homeric quotations, there is reason to think that there are parallels between the *Consolation* and the *Commentary on the Republic*. Proclus's three states (*treis hexeis*) or three lives (*zoas*) of the soul, to which correspond the three types of poetry, are a version of the three Neoplatonic hypostases: One, *Nous* and Soul.

A similar 'four lives' inform the structure of the *Consolation* in the form of the four modes of knowing (*Cons.* 5,4,31-34): sense, imagination, reason and intellect (thus Boethius has four and not three because he distinguishes sensation and imagination where Proclus includes them both under Soul). This structure has been articulated by Thomas F. Curley[24] and Elaine Scarry.[25] Of the three structures Curley identifies in the text, the most important for him is the cognitive hierarchy which is articulated in book 5: 'Although this hierarchy of knowledge is articulated only towards the very end of the text, upon reflection it becomes clear that these four categories have provided a structural scheme for the work.'[26] In her essay on the *Consolation*, Elaine Scarry also takes the discussion in book 5 to provide an important principle for the organization of the work.[27] Neither Scarry nor Curley identifies this structure with Proclus, or even with Neoplatonism. Yet the structure described by both is easily assimilated to the general Neoplatonic schema of One, *Nous* and Soul. Boethius need not have known the *Commentary on the Republic*,[28] and I do not here argue for Proclus's work as an intertext. It is merely used to suggest that an analogous division of Homeric poetry was conceived by Boethius. As Lamberton notes,

> For at least two centuries, the orthodoxy of the three Plotinian hypostases, The One, Mind, and Soul, had prevailed in Platonist circles. Something of the mystery of the relationships of these three levels of being—the true reality, to which the world of matter stands in the relationship of the limiting darkness to the radiating light—seems gradually to penetrate into every mode of inquiry, every question of meaning.[29]

The application of this general schema to poetry could well have occurred twice and independently.[30]

All four modes are in a sense present in each book with one dominant mode in each book.[31] In the first book it is sensation. Philosophy appears to the prisoner (1,1,1) and sits by his side (1,1,14). Her first words to him are those of the song she sings at 1m2. She wipes his tears with her dress to clear his eyes and restore his vision (1,2,7). The savour of Philosophy is recalled: she is the milk he drank in as a child (1,2,2). Even the aura of her presence is evoked: the dust on her dress is likened to a smoke-blackened ancestral mask (*fumosas imagines*, 1,1,3). She puts her

hand on his chest during the initial diagnosis (1,2,5). The prisoner's hunched-over posture and downcast gaze are noted (1m2,25-27). He dwells upon his physical circumstances (1,4,3). Her first treatment (1m2) involves recalling his youthful study of nature and the heavens (i.e., the study of astronomy, which involves the visual observation of bodies in motion), so that in the perceived contrast between the order of the heavens and the disorder of his life the Prisoner can recall his lone remaining true opinion. After the lengthy lamentation in 1,4, the Prisoner still holds to the opinion (*sententiae*) that 'God the creator watches over and directs his work' (1,6,4). This is the spark of true opinion (the vividly Stoic and materialist *scintillula*) which if rekindled will restore him to health (1,6,20).

In the second book, it is the Prisoner's imagination that is the focus of Philosophy's attention. The Prisoner has a false notion of Fortune (2,1,2), and Philosophy adapts herself to his imagination by speaking not merely on behalf of Fortune, but in Fortune's own words, allowing her to speak in her own defence (2,2,1 ff.).[32] By the end the Prisoner has recovered a true image of Fortune's regularity: her motion is no less constant than the motion of the heavens (2,8,4), and the centre (*cardo*) around which her inherently impotent gifts turn is in fact the self (2,4,23). The traditional consolatory *topoi* and arguments in book 2 rely upon the imagination: Philosophy uses the persuasive power of rhetoric and music (2,1,8) and consolations that depend upon the imagination. There is a version of the Cyrenaic consolatory strategy, which involves using the imagination to anticipate evils and thus negate their main force, i.e., the element of surprise (2,1,16). The Epicurean strategy of bringing to mind images of past and remaining goods in order to divert the mind from thoughts of evils is also used (2,3,4).[33]

Book 3 revives many of the arguments found in book 2, but with a different purpose. In book 2, the series of arguments against Fortune's gifts has as its conclusion the idea that happiness does not consist (*constare*) in these things (2,4,24). In book 3 similar arguments are used, this time not as part of a Stoic purgation that reveals the self as the only true good, but rather in order to show that the false images (3,1,5) of real goods cannot be the way (*via*) to happiness (3,8,1), for the real goods, of which

these are only images, are not of this world (3,10,2). The Platonic argument of book 3 moves from sensible images to intelligible goods. The conversion to the self in book 2 is followed by a conversion from the sensible to the intelligible in book 3. Book 4 continues the emphasis on reason, and adduces syllogistic arguments, considering the forms of vice and virtue themselves (4,3,1ff.) and the necessary relation of Fate to Providence (4,6,7ff.).

Book 5 sets aside the syllogistic arguments of book 4 when reason arrives at an aporia. The existence of free will is asserted by the same reason (*ratio*) that has just (in book 4) demonstrated the comprehensiveness of providence (5,2,3-4). The solution to the difficulty is found in the analogy between reason's relation to lower forms of cognition and its relation to a higher form (5,5,8). The simplicity of intellect is able to contain the apparent opposition of free will and providence (5,6,31).

The Homeric loci *reconsidered*

With these lives of the soul in mind, we now turn to the place and purpose of the Homeric quotations within this schema. With Lamberton's account of the Procline characterization of the levels of Homeric poetry as a pattern, we can see that when the Homeric context is compared with the Boethian context, a felicitous correspondence between the level of cognition and the character of the poetry emerges.

The first two quotations are found in book 1. In the first, from *Iliad* 1,363, Philosophy is Thetis to the Prisoner's Achilles (1,4,1), exhorting him to 'speak out, don't hide it in your heart' (*exauda, mē keuthe noōi*).[34] The emphasis in book 1 is on sensation, and restoring the Prisoner's senses. In the scene from the *Iliad*, the emphasis is also on sensation: Thetis hears Achilles wailing, comes to him, sits down, strokes him with her hand, and speaks to him. Like Thetis, Philosophy has heard the Prisoner's lamentations, approached him, sat down, and laid her hand on his breast (1,1-1,2). She has cleared his eyes so that with his restored vision he might recognize her, but she also asks if he is *onos lyras*, deaf to the lyre (1,4,1). Like Achilles, the Prisoner's response is one of surprise: Do you really need me to tell you what is wrong? Nonetheless, each rehearses his own misery for an all-knowing goddess.

The second quotation in the first book has Philosophy adopt the words of Odysseus from *Iliad* 2, 204-05: 'there is one ruler, one king' (*heis koiranos estin, heis basileus*, 1,5,4). With them Philosophy exhorts the Prisoner to recall his true homeland. They are the hero's words to the retreating Achaians. After Zeus has sent a promise of victory in a destructive dream (*oulon oneiron*)[35] to him, Agamemnon tests the men with talk of going home. Odysseus, spurred on by Athena, rallies the men, encouraging them to accept Agamemnon's test of their commitment. This second quotation, like the first, involves a divine epiphany. While Achilles sees Thetis, and she touches him, Odysseus hears Athena and knows hers as the voice of a goddess. Zeus's dream comes to Agamemnon in the likeness of Nestor and deceives him, yet when Athena, prompted by Hera, comes to Odysseus, she does not deceive him; she merely stands beside him and encourages him to stay and fight by an appeal to his virtue.

The Prisoner, who is identified with Achilles having withdrawn from the war in the first quotation, is now associated with the Achaians retreating to their ships in preparation to sail home. Only Odysseus is steadfast, and Philosophy has just portrayed herself in similar terms. Unlike the Muses who flee at the first sign of trouble (1,1,12), Philosophy assures the Prisoner that she has always been steadfast in the face of danger (1,3,6).

The Homeric quotation in book 2 (from *Iliad* 24,527) is perhaps the oldest consolatory *topos* in the tradition. Philosophy punctuates her *prosopopeia* of Fortune by asking the Prisoner, 'Did you not learn as a youth that on Jupiter's threshold there stand two jars, the evils in one, the blessings in the other?' (*duo pithous, ton men hena kakōn, ton de heteron eaōn*, 2,2,13). The image of Zeus's two jars is used by Philosophy in the same way as the Cyrenaic and Epicurean consolations. The Homeric consolation relies on the imagination, not only because it appears within the *prosopopeia*, but because the *topos* itself involves a poetic image of the nature of human life as a mixture. As she promised, Philosophy uses the sweet persuasiveness of rhetoric (*Rhetoricae dulcedinis*) and music native to her halls (*Musica laris nostri vernacula*, 2,1,8). She reconciles the Prisoner to his fate by replacing his false image with the true (or at least a provisionally *truer*) image that Achilles presents to Priam to console him after the death of Hector.

This is the only Homeric line in the *Consolation* upon which Proclus also directly comments. Proclus gives an account of myths which appear (*dokountōn*) to make the gods responsible for evils. He explains that the 'two jars' image is a 'mythic fiction' (*poiētēs muthologōn*, *In remp.* 98.26-100.18)[36] which represents two different kinds of goods, one lower and one higher, by the image of 'good and evil'. The lower goods are external gifts such as power, honours and riches. For Boethius these are the very handmaids of Fortune (2,2,6). As in the Procline interpretation, Fortune, says Philosophy, only *appears* to administer evils. By the end of book 2, the blows of fortune suffered by Boethius are seen to have been a good in that they revealed true friendships. By the end of book 4, there is no longer any distinction between good and bad fortune, there is only good fortune and the difference is between good and bad men (4,7,3). Philosophy, who in book 2 is concerned with the Prisoner's imagination, adopts the persona of Fortune, and puts an image from Homer before the prisoner. According to Proclus, poetry of this sort appeals to the emotions, and this is Philosophy's concern in book 2.

As Lamberton notes, Proclus's lowest life of the soul is 'based on imagining (*phantasia*) and irrational sense perceptions (*alogoi aisthēseis*)'.[37] The poetry which corresponds to this is mimetic, full of opinions and imaginings, and examples of it include 'heroes fighting or portrayed in character performing other activities'.[38] Boethius places his first two quotations in the book dominated by sensation, the third in the book dominated by imagination. Together these constitute the equivalent of Prolcus's lowest life of the soul. Once the sensual and imaginative characters of the Homeric contexts are recalled, these *topoi* appear perfectly adapted to their places. Boethius need only have known who the speaker was and the general circumstances of the original context to have constructed these allusions.

In book 4, the Homeric quotation comes only after the delights of music and song are postponed for the sake of difficult arguments (4,6,6). There is a new beginning (*ab alio orsa principio*) to the discourse (4,6,7). The quotation comes just past the point where Philosophy has reconciled the motions of Fate with the motionless divine Providence in the image of nested spheres with a common centre (4,6,14-17). The headiness of the conclusion

prompts Philosophy to hesitate lest she overstep and speak as though she were a god (*argaleon de me tauta theon hōs pant' agoreuein*, 4,6,53). She uses the words of the poet himself, the narrative voice of the *Iliad* (12,176).[39] The Homeric quotation here is non-mimetic and self-reflexive. It is Homer the poet reflecting on his own mind (*nous*).[40] Lamberton presents Proclus's account of the second life of the soul as the moment when 'Soul turns within itself and focuses on mind (*nous*) and wisdom (*epistēmē*)', and the type of poetry as a non-mimetic 'fusion of knower and known'.[41] Boethius would doubtless have understood this line as non-mimetic even if he knew only that it was Homer's narrative voice. The self-reflexive character of the line is manifest.

The final Homeric quotation appears in the last book (5m2,1). The poem begins 'Sees all and all things hears' (*pant' ephoran kai pant' epakouein*), and goes on to acknowledge the author of the Greek quotation: 'So Homer sings, he of the honeyed voice' (*melliflui canit oris Homerus*, 5m2,3). An epithet of Helios, the quotation 'sees all and all things hears' is a stock phrase in Homer. This final quotation could refer to the *Iliad*, and Agamemnon's prayer to Zeus and Helios before the fight between Menelaos and Alexandros. This would be fitting in so far as the ascent above reason to intellect in book 5 is the very sort of activity which called for prayer in the third book (3,9,32-33). Thus, the original context could be Agamemnon's prayer:

> Father Zeus, watching over us from Ida, most high, most honoured,/ and Helios, you who see all things, who listen to all things,/ earth, and rivers, and you who under the earth take vengeance/ on dead men, whoever among them has sworn to falsehood,/ you shall be witness, to guard the oaths of fidelity (*Iliad* 3, 276-280).[42]

This would mean that all of the *Consolation*'s Homeric quotations are from the *Iliad*, a remarkable fact considering that by Boethius' time the *Odyssey* would have long been read as a 'spiritual itinerary', one of the genres to which the *Consolation* itself belongs. But there is reason to believe that the Homeric context that Boethius has in mind is in fact from the *Odyssey* (11,108). The scene is the encounter between Odysseus and the shade of Teiresias.

I would begin my argument for this reference by noting that Boethius omits the name of Helios from his quotation, and goes

on to identify 'seeing all and hearing all' as attributes of Phoebus.[43] The identification with Apollo would support the notion that the speaker Boethius has in mind is Teiresias. Also, as Lamberton notes, 'The Homeric material, of course, goes beyond the line quoted in Greek.'[44] Verse 11, 'What is, what has been, and what is to come' (*quae sint, quae fuerint veniantque*), is a translation of *Iliad* 1,70 (*ta t' eonta, ta t' essomena pro t' eonta*) and describes the kind of vision that belongs to the seer Kalchas, the Teiresias figure of the *Iliad*.

When in the following prose section the Prisoner tries to formulate his understanding of the nature of the Apolline vision of Teiresias, he too chooses to use the words of Teiresias in dialogue with Odysseus. However, in the *Consolation*, only Philosophy quotes Homer. The Prisoner, in his pathetic attempt to emulate Philosophy, quotes instead Horace, from his *Satire* 2,5,59: 'Whatever I say will happen or not' (5,3,25). This quotation from Horace is a confused and absurd echo of the Homeric allusions in 5m2, and illustrates the disparity between the Prisoner's grasp and Philosophy's. This contrast only appears, and the choice of the line from Horace only makes sense, if the Homeric quotation is in fact from the *Odyssey* and not the *Iliad*.

If, however, the speaker is Teiresias, the relation between the quotation and the level of intellect that dominates book 5 is not immediately clear. Teiresias is a shade, and so bodiless. But how is this not simply like the epiphanies of book 1, where the gods appear to men's senses? How is it not, as in book 2's *prosopopeia*, an appeal to the imagination, Teiresias' shade being precisely an image of his former self?[45] Finally, how is this to be distinguished from book 4's non-mimetic rational mode? For indeed Teiresias is not simply a shade, as are the rest of those in the *nekyia* with whom Odysseus speaks or those he sees.[46] Teiresias is 'the blind prophet, whose senses (*phrenes*) stay unshaken within him,/ to whom alone Persephone has granted intelligence (*noon*)' (*Odyssey* 10,490-94). Thus, Teiresias is the lone 'rational' shade in Hades.

There are a number of significant differences between the shade of Teiresias and the earlier epiphanies. First of all, when Thetis appears to Achilles, she touches him with her hand.[47] There is no possibility of physical contact with Teiresias. When later Odysseus tries three times to embrace his mother, his hands simply pass through her shadowy body.[48] She explains that this is not some

deception by Persephone, 'this is just the way of mortals when we die' (*Od.* 11,218). What is more, in the *nekyia*, Teiresias does not simply appear to Odysseus. Whereas Thetis appears in response to Achilles' call, and Athena was sent to Odysseus by Hera, the roles of 'the one who appears' and 'the one for whom there is an appearance' are not so clearly defined in *Odyssey* 11. While the line between god and human can at times be difficult to distinguish, it is always a human recipient of a divine epiphany. In the *nekyia*, we have an encounter between one human who has died (Teiresias) and another who is simulating death (Odysseus). Odysseus comes to the edge of the kingdom of the dead and, as instructed, he digs a trench, pours libations, and finally makes the appropriate sacrifices (*Od.* 11,23 ff.). Teiresias is already there, and thus there is a certain sense in which Odysseus appears to Teiresias.[49] In addition, in epiphanies the gods and goddesses generally appear to men other than they are (i.e., as men known to them or as strangers, animals or birds). They do not reveal their true nature, if such a revelation is in fact possible.[50] Teiresias' shade on the other hand is a verisimilitude, a facsimile, of his former self.

Teiresias' shade, though 'rational', can also be distinguished from the reason which characterizes the narrative voice of the *Iliad* quoted in *Consolation* book 4. The mind that Teiresias preserves in death is not the sober, calculating, discursive reason of a man. Boethius would certainly have had in mind the traditional notion that 'what Lord Teiresias/ sees, is most often what the Lord Apollo/ sees',[51] and he 'in whom alone of mankind truth is native'.[52] Though intact, his mind is not characterized by reason, but rather by divine vision. This is precisely why he does not solve the riddle of the Sphinx, and why every word he speaks is in essence unintelligible to Oedipus. This is also why Philosophy distinguishes herself from the author of these words, as she did with the words of 'one more excellent' than herself (4,6,38). There the unidentified text is thought to be from an Hermetic source. A similar argument could be made that the inspired level of Homeric poetry, poetry that depicts divine madness and is itself an expression of *mania*, is more excellent (*excellentior*) than Philosophy. It is then significant that 5m2,3 is the only time Boethius identifies Homer as the author (despite the tendency of translators to insert his name when introducing the other

quotations). It is also the only Greek line to occur in the poetry of the *Consolation*. Philosophy distinguishes herself from Homer here in a way that she has not to this point because this is an example of inspired, divine poetry. She does not want, as she has already said in book 4, to speak as if she were a god. It is appropriate that Homer's name be primarily associated with the highest type of poetry, which makes up the majority of his work (see Proclus, *In remp.* 195-6). Thus, Boethius only identifies Homer when the reference is to 'inspired' poetry, the true Homeric poetry.

For Proclus, the highest life of the soul is 'on the level of the gods, transcending individual mind (*nous*)',[53] and the poetry that corresponds to it is characterized by inspiration, possession by the Muses, and divine madness (*mania*). It is also characterized by the use of symbols (*sumbola*). As Coulter rightly insists:

> The most important matter to note for the present is Proclus' assertion that in symbolic poetry there is no question of a 'relationship of model to copy', a characteristic, apparently, of eiconic representation and paideutic myth. Rather, there is a mysterious and much more complex relationship between the symbols of mythic narrative, on the face of it often bizarre and monstrous.[54]

The highest level is also non-mimetic (cf. the way that Philosophy imitates Thetis, Odysseus, and Achilles in books 1 and 2), but unlike the identity of knower and known that characterizes the second level, the highest is characterized by the apparent dissimilarity and incongruity of the symbol and the symbolized. Philosophy is here identified with Teiresias. If Boethius knew the Homeric scene and the speaker, as well as some notable aspects of Teiresias' biography, he had in mind a blind prophet who lived as both a man and a woman, and who in the underworld drinks the blood offered by Odysseus in order to reveal his prophecy to him. In addition to the divinely inspired, there is more than a little of the bizarre, even the grotesque, that belongs to the *sumbola* in this quotation to set it apart from the noetic quotation in book 4.

Conclusion

In response to a suggestion by Usener, who was in turn taking a cue from Bywater, E.K. Rand long ago scrutinized the notion that Boethius' *Consolation* contained mere 'recasts from Aristotelian and

Neoplatonic treatises', which 'he may not even have combined'.[55] Rand concluded that the *Consolation* was a far more sophisticated work than this, though he conceded that the object of his paper was 'not to attempt an ultimate determination of the various writings from which Boethius drew inspiration' but was merely 'a precursor to such a study'.[56] In a sense Gruber's commentary completes this work.[57] The net effect, however, of this source criticism has been that Boethius' *Consolation*, like most works of late antiquity, is viewed as a work straining under the weight of its sources. The general view is that Boethius was a compiler – learned, but always only rearranging the remains of once vital Greek originals. I hope that in this paper I have shown a degree of sophistication in the way that Boethius adopts well-worn Homeric *topoi* for the specific purpose of consolation.

Although allusions to Homer were common in the works of early Christian authors, there is only one extant Greek example of that extreme of late Antique bookishness, cento poetry. But the Homeric centos of Eudocia provide a helpful comparison with the *Consolation*. For a long time they were thought to have been composed of lines randomly selected from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[58] Scholars have recently begun to reconsider the relation between the lines' original Homeric contexts and their new contexts in Eudocia's centos, and have discerned both parallels and contrasts which 'add new layers of meaning'.[59] While there certainly are lines to which nothing seems to be added by recalling their original *loci*, it is clear that some are intended to point to similarities between the Homeric scene they evoke and the Biblical scene they are used to re-describe.[60] In other cases, the Homeric scene is a foil for the Biblical scene. To the learned reader in late antiquity both of these serve to enrich the new narrative.[61]

To these Boethius adds another allusive possibility. The original contexts of Boethius' Homeric quotations do not simply parallel the *Consolation*'s (though the evocation of Thetis and Achilles in the first book works nicely enough when read this way), nor do they simply provide contrast (of course Boethius could appear merely to contrast the monotheism of Philosophy's phrase 'there is one ruler, one king' with the rallying cry of Odysseus, and 5m2 explicitly opposes Homer's Apollo with a God who truly sees and hears all things), and none is completely neutral (though there is

little which appears to connect Philosophy's hesitation to 'speak as if a god' with that of the poet's in the *Iliad*). In fact Boethius has constructed more complex allusions that depend upon an original Homeric context also being read according to a Neoplatonic poetics. Homer is of course the primary source for the mythic background of the *Consolation*. However, his real significance is as the poet *par excellence*, who provides all of the necessary forms of poetry, from the lowest to the highest: all of the forms required to lead a soul from its lowest mode of existence and most immediate sensual concerns to a glimpse of God contained in the highest form of poetry apprehended by the highest mode of the soul. With his senses recovered, in book 1 the Prisoner is able to internalize the first remedy, including a line of Homeric poetry aimed at the sensitive life of the soul. Gradually recovering his imagination and reason, he is able to receive the poetry appropriate to each of these modes of cognition and thus move higher up the *scala* depicted on Philosophy's dress (1,1,4). When in book 5 he looks, with Philosophy, toward the divine simplicity that can unite free will and providence, he mounts the final step, in part by means of the inspired verse in 5m2. The Homeric quotations not only mark the progress, but in fact cooperate with the arguments, *exempla* and meters in order to console the Prisoner.

NOTES

[1] The truth behind the traditional picture of Boethius' circumstances when he composed the *Consolation* seems to lie somewhere between a prison cell and house arrest. See Walsh's comments in Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated with an introduction and notes by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xix. The English translations of the *Consolation* in this paper are from Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by S.J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918). Book, section and line references are to the Latin text of *De consolatione philosophiae*, edited by Claudio Moreschini (Leipzig: Teubner, 2000).

[2] On the problem of *consolatio* as a genre, see J.H.D. Scourfield, 'Towards a Genre of Consolation', in *Acts of Consolation. Approaches to Loss and Sorrow from Sophocles to Shakespeare*, ed. Han Baltussen (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[3] Constant Martha, 'Les Consolations dans l'Antiquité', *Études Morales sur l'Antiquité* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et C, 1883); Karl Buresch, 'Consolationum a Graecis Romanisque scriptarum historia critica', *Leipziger Studien zur Philologie* 9 (1887), 1-170; Rudolf Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur Griechischen und Römischen Konsolationsliteratur* (Munich: Beck,1958); Horst-Theodor Johann, *Trauer und Trost: Eine quellen- und struckturanalytische Untersuchung der philosophischen Trostschriften über den Tod*, *Studia et Testimonia Antiqua* V (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968).

[4] Robert Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy. Greek and Christian* Paideia (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1975); Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians. Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For another recent survey of the tradition of consolatory writing, see J.H.D. Scourfield's introduction to his *Consoling Heliodorus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[5] The *Phaedo* was commonly read as a *consolatio* in antiquity. On the *Phaedo* as 'an *Ur*-text of philosophical *consolatio*', see George Boys-Stones, 'The *Consolatio ad Apollonium*: Therapy for the Dead', in Baltussen, ed., *Acts of Consolation*.

[6] After Philosophy has cleared away the apparent difficulties of these problems with the arguments of books 1 to 3, the Prisoner interrupts her silence at the beginning of book 4 to assert that 'this itself is the very greatest cause of my grief, that, although there does exist a good ruler of the universe, evil can exist at all and even pass unpunished, *Sed ea ipsa est uel maxima nostri causa maeroris quod, cum rerum bonus rector exsistat, uel esse omnino mala possint uel impunita praetereant*' (*Cons*. 4,1,3). Thus, the *Consolation* is also an example of theodicy as *consolatio*.

[7] After the death of his daughter Tullia, Cicero read every work of consolation available to him, and, finding them wanting as a remedy for his grief, he composed his own *consolatio*. For a recent re-evaluation of this important fragmentary text see Han Baltussen, 'Cicero's Grief in Context: his *Consolatio ad se*' in *Acts of Consolation*.

[8] Cicero describes this work, now lost, in the *Tusculans*. After enumerating the duties of comforters (*officia consolantium*) and the diverse approaches of Stoics, Cyrenaics and Epicureans, he notes that, different men being moved by diverse

arguments, there are those who advise collecting all these consolations (*consolando colligant*) in a single work, as he for the most part (*fere*) had done in his *consolatio* when he threw them all together (*nos…coniecimus*, 3,76). Text and translation from Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* translated by J.E. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927). Whether for *conicio* Cicero had in mind the sense of 'throw together', an admission his *consolatio* was hastily composed and philosophically flawed, or simply the sense of 'to collect' or 'unite' is not clear (cf. *Tusc.* 1,96; 5,13). In either case, Cicero's *Tusculans* are also in a sense 'a sustained *consolatio* composed in the aftermath of grave personal loss', and systematically analyse the same sorts of arguments found in the *Consolatio*. Stephen A. White, 'Cicero and the Therapists' in J.G.F. Powell, *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 226.

[9] There are others who see these same tensions as intended to problematize a too literal reading of the work. See Joel Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and *The Prisoner's Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[10] Perhaps the best example is the poem '*o qui perpetua*' at 3m9, the philosophical hymn that epitomizes Plato's *Timaeus* (and Proclus's commentary on it) in hexameter.

[11] Of course no one treats the work as 'simply literature' or 'simply philosophy', but many scholars of literature seem to assume that it lacks philosophical originality and thus its primary value is literary, while philosophers tend to see philosophical gems in a somewhat hackneyed literary effort. Important treatments of the literary character of the *Consolation* include Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire. Antécédents et postérité de Boèce* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967); Anna M. Crabbe, 'Literary design in the *De consolatione philosophiae*', *Boethius. His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 237-74; Thomas F. Curley, 'The *Consolation of Philosophy* as a work of literature', *American Journal of Philology* 108 (1987): 343-67. On the philosophical import of the *Consolation*, see Luca Obertello, 'Proclus, Ammonius and Boethius on Divine Knowledge', *Dionysius* 5 (1981): 127-64; Jean-Luc Solère, 'Bien, cercles et hebdomades: formes et raissonnement chez Boèce et Proclus', in *Boèce ou La chaîne des savoirs*, ed. Alain Galonnier (Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 55-129; Marenbon, *Boethius*.

[12] Even more than his philosophy, Boethius' poetry has suffered from the fickleness of readers' tastes. In *The Poetry of Boethius* (London: Duckworth, 1991) Gerard O'Daly shows that the poems of the *Consolation* are in fact more important to the argument of the work than usually thought, and, while they introduce various dimensions of allusion (both internal to the work and intertextual), they are also an important part of the philosophical argument. See also Ann W. Astell, *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Eileen C. Sweeney, *Logic, Theology and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille: Words in the Absence of Things* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

[13] For a sense of the quantity and quality of the *Consolation*'s allusions, see J. Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Berlin: De Gruyter,

1978). The other references to Homer in 1,1 alone are numerous. Lady Philosophy's burning eyes recall the description of Athena's eyes (*Iliad* 1, 363). Her variable height has a parallel in Homer's description of *Eris*, sister of Ares (*Iliad* 4,440-43). Lady Philosophy's dress, which she wove herself from imperishable thread, recalls Athena's dress which she too wove with her own hands (*Iliad* 5,733-5). Philosophy's dress, which depicts the ascent from *praktikē* to *theoretikē*, recalls as well our first glimpse of Helen, who is weaving stories on the robe she is making (*Iliad* 3,120-30). Philosophy banishes the Siren-like Muses of poetry, who are ministering to the prisoner in a way that also recalls Odysseus on Kalypso's island: they feed natural passion at the cost of human reason. On the Sirens and on Odysseus and Kalypso, see Félix Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1956). Finally, at 1,2,7, Lady Philosophy wipes the Prisoner's tears with her dress (1,3,7), just as Athena wipes the mist from the eyes of Diomedes (*Iliad* 5,125-30). Cf. Scott Goins, 'Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy* 1.2.6 and Virgil *Aeneid* 2: removing the clouds of mortal anxieties', *Phoenix* 55 (2001), 124-36. On Boethius' reading and rewriting of the Homeric myths, see Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Anne Astell also develops an analysis of the same Homeric aspects of the *Consolation*, arguing that, '…the three mythological metra, as fables teaching truth, constitute a step-by-step unfolding of the three essential features of human nature. The Orpheus metrum (III.m12) represents the linked truths of mortality and love. The Circe-Ulysses metrum (IV.m3) offers an imagistic reflection on human rationality. Lastly, the metrum that narrates the homeward voyage of Agamemnon, Ulysses, and Hercules (IV.m7) recalls the forgotten truth of telos.' *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth*, 45.

[14] See D.R. Shanzer, ' "Me Quoque Excellentior": Boethius, *De Consolatione* 4.6.38', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, vol. 33, no.1 (1983), 277-83 and 'The Late Antique Tradition of Varro's *ONOS LYRAS*', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (1986), 272-85.

[15] Pasquali, *Pagine straviganti* (Florence, 1968), vol. 2, 275, quoted in G.B. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, trans. from the Italian, edited with a Foreword by Charles Segal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 24-5.

[16] See Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext. Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Joseph Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader. Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). For an example of this re-evaluation in Boethian studies, see See Jo-Marie Claasen, 'Literary Anamnesis: Boethius Remembers Ovid', *Helios* 34 (2007), 1-35.

[17] The ladder on Philosophy's dress (1,1,4) is manifested in any number of structures of ascent. See Robert McMahon, 'The Structural Articulation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 21 (1994), 55-72. McMahon notes that 'The sequential unfolding of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* has been treated in various ways, all of them useful, none of them final.' Ibid., 55. For example, my own interpretation identifies the mathematical sciences of the quadrivium with the steps of the ladder in 'Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 34 (2008), 1-21.

[18] Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire*; Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*.

[19] On the affective power of poetry in Proclus, see Oiva Kuisma, *Proclus' Defense of Homer*, Commentaries Humanarum Literarum 109 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1996), 72. On characteristics of a hymn and on philosophy and hymn-singing, see R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus' hymns*: *essays, translations, commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 13-23. On hymns as theurgy, ibid., 86-110. Finally, van den Berg discusses Proclus's three types of poetry, ibid., 112-34.

[20] Op. cit., 279.

[21] O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*, 69.

[22] Ibid., 73.

[23] D.A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 66-7. On Proclus's reading of Homer, in addition to the work by Lamberton already discussed, see Anne D.R. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980); James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976) as well as Lamberton's 'The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of Homer' in *Homer's Ancient Readers*, eds. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 115-33; Oiva Kuisma, *Proclus' Defense of Homer*.

[24] Thomas F. Curley, 'How to read the *Consolation of Philosophy*', *Interpretation* (1986) XIV, 211-63.

[25] 'The External Referent: Cosmic Order. The Well-Rounded Sphere: Cognition and Metaphysical Structure in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*' in *Resisting Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 143-80.

[26] Curley, 'How to read the *Consolation of Philosophy*', 217.

[27] Scarry, 'The External Referent', 146.

[28] As O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*, 66, notes, 'It is certainly plausible that Boethius knows the theory: his acquaintance with Proclus, if not specifically with the *Commentary on the Republic*, has long been demonstrated.'

[29] Lamberton, 'The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of Homer', 120.

[30] Boethius presents a version of the triad in the opening scene of the work, in Lady Philosophy's ambiguous stature (*statura ambiguae*): she seems at one time human in height, at another time so tall that her head touches heaven, and sometimes even seems to penetrates heaven (*caelum penetrabat*) (1,1,2). I owe this observation to Wayne Hankey.

[31] 'Boethius attempts to accommodate the four aspects of knowledge in his selection of the *Consolation*'s basic structural elements: knowledge is given (a) 'sensitive' representation in its personification as Lady Philosophy, (b) 'imaginative' representation in its manifestation as poetry, (c) 'rational' representation in its manifestation as prose, and (d) representation as 'all aspects grasped simultaneously' in that structural element which grasps all structural elements simultaneously, the *Consolation* as a single entity – an entity whose 'singularity' and 'simultaneity' are made visible in the work's internal bonding: the division

into five books, and the multiple bonds by which they are bound.' 'The External Referent', 147.

[32] The Prisoner has accused Fortune in his tirade, asking if she is not ashamed (*Itane nihil fortunam puduit,* 1,4,19) by the fact that an innocent man was accused by those so base and vile.

[33] On the Cyrenaic and Epicurean consolatory strategies, see Cicero, *Tusculanae* 3,28-33 and 3,52-54.

[34] I will only cite the Greek of the *Consolation*, not the Homeric text.

[35] *Iliad* 2,6, from West's Teubner edition.

[36] A.J. Festugière's *Commentaire sur la République*, trans. A.J. Festugière, 3 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1970). For the Greek text see Proclus, *In Platonis Rem Publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1899-1901). On the 'two jars' see also Kuisma, *Proclus' Defense of Homer*, 209-11.

[37] Lamberton, 'The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of Homer', 121.

[38] Ibid.

[39] In this scene the poet considers his ability to capture the complexity of a great battle. A similar hesitation is expressed before the catalogue of ships in book two (*Iliad* 2,485-90). While Lamberton suggests that this phrase is an allusion to negative theology (*Homer the Theologian*, 278) and not, as in its original context, in relation to a difficulty describing a battle, there is a bellicose element to the context in *Consolation*. In book 3 Philosophy compares the clash of their arguments to the Giants challenging heaven (3,12,24). In book 4, wrestling with the arguments about Fate and Providence is compared to doing battle with the Hydra (4,6,3). The final meter of book 4 compares the fates of Agamemnon, Odysseus and Hercules (3m12). Hercules, who killed the Hydra, is the only hero who overcomes the earth and gains the heavens (4m7,34-35).

[40] See Socrates' account of the non-mimetic (and therefore non-mendacious) character of the poet's own narrative voice at *Republic* 393c ff.

[41] Lamberton, 'The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of Homer', 121.

[42] Translated by Richmond Lattimore, *The* Iliad *of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

[43] On the traditional identification of Helios and Apollo after Homer, see Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, 187-8.

[44] Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 279.

[45] Cf. Virgil's account of the shades as *tenuis sine corporae vitas* and *cava sub imagine formae* at *Aeneid* 6, 290-95.

[46] Compare Teiresias in particular with Heracles, who is a shade in the land of the dead, but is in fact with the immortal gods (*Odyssey* 11, 600-605).

[47] Earlier (*Iliad* 1,195-200) Athena not only appeared to Achilles, she 'caught him by the fair hair'.

[48] *Od.* 11,204 ff. It seems as well that Odysseus is on one side of the trench, all of the shades are on the other.

[49] Certainly in the case of nearly every other shade (Elpinor, Heracles and

Teiresias as the exceptions), the dead can not only not speak but do not even recognize Odysseus until they have drunk the blood of the sacrifice.

[50] For an overview of the various difficulties involved in Homeric epiphanies, see B.C. Dietrich, 'Divine Epiphanies in Homer', *Numen* 30:1 (1983), 53-79.

[51] *Oedipus the King*, 284-6, trans. David Greene.

[52] Ibid., 299.

[53] Lamberton, 'The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of Homer', 121.

[54] James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm*, 50. Van den Berg rejects this distinction between *symbola* and *eikones*. See *Proclus' Hymns*, 120-23.

[55] E.K. Rand, 'On the Composition of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 15 (1904), 1-28.

[56] Ibid., 3.

[57] Op. cit.

[58] 'Random' because the choice of any given Homeric line seemed to have been completely determined by external constraints (i.e. the demands of the new narrative), and thus the relationship between the original context and the context in the cento was assumed to be 'neutral'. For a re-evaluation, see Mary Whitby, 'Nonnus' *Paraphrase* of St. John's Gospel and "Eudocia"s' Homeric centos', *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity. Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, ed. J.H.D. Scourfield (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2007), 195-231. For Whitby's discussion of various approaches to Homeric and Virgilian intertexts in the work of Christian authors, see ibid., 211.

[59] Ibid. In the same volume Roger P.H. Green, 'Birth and transfiguration: some Gospel episodes in Juvencus and Sedulius', 135-71, discusses various significant examples of *kontrastimitation* in Gospel paraphrases by Latin authors. The Virgilian cento of Proba has a more ambiguous relation to the original, as it seems Proba herself understood Virgil as a proto-Christian. For a selection of Proba's cento with the *loci* of the Virgilian lines identified, see Caroline White, *Early Christian Latin Poets* (London: Routledge, 2000), 39-41.

[60] Of especial interest for my reading of the *Consolation* is Eudocia's identification of two seers, Teiresias and Theoclymenos, with Christ. In particular, the cento uses a line from Teiresias' prophecy to Odysseus in book 11.

[61] As Whitby notes, 'late Antiquity was an era when cultured Christian elites might have clear recall both of Homer and the Gospels. If the Homeric lines are familiar and loaded to us, might they not also have been equally resonant then?' op. cit., 213.