

Boethius *pro se de magia*

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Although Chadwick characterizes it as “perhaps the most damaging and fatal charge” against him, Marenbon asserts that Boethius “is particularly brisk in dismissing the charge of magic” that was appended to the charge of treason of which he was convicted and sentenced to death.¹ In fact, Boethius does take the charges of *sacrilegium* and *maleficium* against him (and by association against Philosophy) seriously, and the *Consolation* contains as a sort of *apologia* a sustained reflection on the apparent similarities and real differences between philosophy and magic. At the end of his diatribe in *Consolation* 1,4, Boethius laments that his impious accusers seem to derive proof of their charge from his lifelong association with philosophy. As a result, Boethius and Philosophy herself are abused by the same evil gossip. In response, Boethius presents a picture of philosophy in the *Consolation* that accounts for the tendency of the ignorant to confuse it with magic, and at the same time distinguishes the kinds of thinking and praying that belong to philosophy from those that belong to magic. Thus, the Orphic, Pythagorean, Hermetic, erotic magical, daemonic, venefic, psychagogic, vatic, necromantic, astrological, and theurgic aspects of the *Consolation* are part of this defense.²

1. Henry Chadwick, *Boethius, The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 49; John Marenbon, *Boethius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 10. Philip Rousseau goes further, arguing that “a fuller understanding of why Boethius died—and notice I say fuller, not alternative—lies in the imputation of sorcery ... It may have been, in other words, the charge that stuck” (“The Death of Boethius: the Charge of *Maleficium*,” *Studi Medievali* 20 [1979]: 874). Rousseau takes up Thomas Hodgkin’s contention that “it is not the barbarous ignorance of the Goth, but the superstitious legislation of generations of Christian Emperors, that must bear the blame of this miscarriage of justice” (*Italy and her Invaders*, III, 2nd edition [Oxford, 1896], 247, quoted by Rousseau in “The Death of Boethius,” 874).

2. Cf. Boethius, *Opuscula Sacra*, vol. 1 ed. Claudio Moreschini (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 84–87. Moreschini sees in the *Consolation*’s presentation of astronomy an unfortunate resemblance to astrological practices.

At the end of the long complaint that Boethius tells us he barked (*deletravi[t]*) at Philosophy in 1,4, we learn of the charge of *sacrilegium* and *maleficium* which were added to darken (*fuscare*) the charges of treason (*maiestatis crimen*).³ As Chadwick notes, “in late antiquity the record includes several instances where charges of treason and of sorcery appear together.”⁴ Indeed, the charges had often been logically connected: in the case of Libo Drusus, Tacitus directly links “revolutionary activities” (*moliri res novas*) and “the forecasts of astrologers, the rituals of magicians” (*ad Chaldaeorum promissa, magorum sacra*).⁵ Tacitus also reports that Nero sent Furius Scribonianus “into exile, on a charge of inquiring into the end of the sovereign by the agency of astrologers.”⁶ In terms of the legal status of magic there do in fact seem to be two distinct reasons for prohibitions against *veneficium*. Clearly magic presented a perceived threat to individuals insofar as practitioners were believed capable of causing personal harm in private disputes, harm requiring legal redress just like any other kind of violence against persons. However, magic was also perceived as a threat to the very order of things. The emperor, as vice-regent of the gods (or, in some cases, *qua* god) could have no superior on earth. Hence the need for the prefect of Egypt to write to district governors, telling them: “let no one pretend to know that which is beyond human understanding through oracles or writings bestowed under the influence of the divine, or through processions of images or sorcery of this sort.”⁷

3. Book, section, and line references are to the Latin text of *De consolazione philosophiae*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Leipzig: Teubner, 2005). English translations follow, with certain modifications, Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S.J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

4. Chadwick, *Boethius*, 49. On *maleficium* and *maiestatis crimen*, see Rousseau, “The Death of Boethius,” 875, as well as María Victoria Escribano Paño, “Heretical Texts and *Maleficium* in the *Codex Theodosianus* (CTH. 16.5.34),” in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 122; and Michael R. Salzman, “Superstitio in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the Persecution of Pagans,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987): 181. On *sacrilegium* and *maiestas*, cf. R.A. Bauman, “The ‘Leges iudiciorum publicorum’ and their Interpretation in the Republic, Principate and Later Empire,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haas (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 103–233.

5. *Annals* 2.27–32. Text and translation from Tacitus, *Annals* I–III, trans. John Jackson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) and Tacitus, *Annals* IV–VI, XI–XII, trans. John Jackson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937).

6. *Annals* 12.52. Ironically, Scribonianus’ exile was short-lived; it is believed that he died by poison (*per venenum*). Nero was a notorious devotee of magic and thus the poisoning would have had associations with the practice of sorcery (*veneficium*). Boethius associates Nero with *venena* at 3, m.VI,17.

7. J. Rea, “A New Version of P. Yale inv. 299,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 27 (1977): 150–56, trans. Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 284–85.

In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Socrates makes clear how seriously the perceived threat could be taken in some cases. When the emperor Valens heard of an obscure oracle predicting that the name of his successor would begin with *theta*, *epsilon*, *omicron*, and *delta*, he slaughtered Theodoruses, Theodotuses, Theodosiuses, Theoduluses, “and all those that had names similar to these.”⁸

Thus when charges of treason were being leveled against Boethius, his lifelong association with philosophy gave his accusers a perfect complementary charge. Perfect because, as the exasperated Prisoner points out, from a certain perspective philosophy is *maleficium*.⁹ To the ignorant, the same sort of wisdom belongs to both.¹⁰ For them, ‘philosopher’ and ‘magus’ are different names for the same person. As Lady Philosophy herself reminds the Prisoner, charges of impiety against philosophers are as old as wisdom itself (1,3,4 ff.). This was the common view of the wisdom of the Egyptians according to Heliodorus, who points out that the many, in their ignorance,

are tricked into thinking that the wisdom of the Egyptians is all one and the same. One is common and, as it were, creeps over the ground. It attends ghosts and circles around the bodies of the dead. It clings to plants and relies on incantations. Neither does it result in any good, nor does it confer any good on those that use it. For the most part it slips itself up, although it occasionally achieves some miserable, trivial successes. It can make that which does not exist appear to do so, and it can cheat people of their hopes. It is an inventor of lawless activities and the servant of licentious pleasures. But the other wisdom, my child, the true one, of which this first variety is a corrupted version, masquerading under the same name, is one practiced by priests and the prophetic caste from childhood. It looks up toward heaven, it associates with the gods and participates in their nature. It tracks the movement of the stars and so derives the benefit of knowledge of the future. It has nothing to do with earthly evils but it devotes itself to all that leads to good and that is helpful to man.¹¹

8. EH 4.19 in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 285. Clearly he did not slaughter them all: he was succeeded by Theodosius I.

9. On the difficulties of emic definitions of magic, see: H.S. Versnel, “Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion,” *Numen* 38 (1991): 177–97; Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, “Extra-Ordinary People: *Mystai* and *Magoi*, Magicians and Orphics in the Derveni Papyrus,” *Classical Philology* 103 (2008): 16–19; Kyle A. Fraser, “The Contested Boundaries of ‘Magic’ and ‘Religion’ in Late Pagan Monotheism,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 4 (2009): 131–51; Robert Fowler, “Greek Magic, Greek Religion,” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, ed. Richard Buxton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 317–43. A very instructive overview of various difficulties is found in Sarah Iles Johnston et al., “Panel Discussion: *Magic in the Ancient World* by Fritz Graf,” *Numen* 46 (1999): 291–325.

10. By the late third century the Pauline *Sentences* on the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* deemed that “even the mere knowledge (*etiam scientia*) of this craft, let alone its pursuit as a trade, is forbidden.” *Paulus Sententiae* 5.23.18, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 279. Cf. Paño, “Heretical Texts,” 130.

11. *Aethiopica* 3.16, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 60. Philosophy and magic are also conflated from a sceptical perspective. Lucian comments on belief in the supernatural, whether magical or philosophical: “I’m not surprised that you should see such things, Ion ... since you

In his *Apologia*, Apuleius plays upon the common confusion between philosophy (and religion) and illicit magical practices for his defense. Rives describes Apuleius' rhetorical strategy:

Instead of denying the points alleged against him, he simply provided an alternative explanation of all of them: they were the actions not of a *magus*, but of a philosopher, and it was only his accuser's ignorance that led him to think otherwise. Apuleius proclaims this strategy in his address to the governor at the very start of his speech: 'I congratulate myself, by God, that with you as judge I have the opportunity and occasion to exonerate philosophy among the ignorant and to clear my own name' (*Apol.* 1.3).¹²

Boethius, like Apuleius, wishes to exonerate philosophy,¹³ the nature of which is so easily confused with magic by the many that the Prisoner knows he will appear to have been a close party to misdeeds (*maleficia*) precisely because he is steeped in Lady Philosophy's learning and trained in her ways.¹⁴ It is for this reason, I argue, the *Consolation* contains an account of Philosophy's appearance and activities which, from a certain perspective, look similar to magic. Ultimately, these elements are all incorporated into the Platonic presentation of the text, and in this way their use is distinguished from the illicit, impious, and therefore illegal practices feared by 'the many.'

As Derek Collins notes relative to Apuleius' defense, as far as the similarities between *religio* and magic, "it is not just a matter of one person's magic or superstition being another person's religion, but rather that the ritual practices which they share are inherently ambiguous."¹⁵ In the *Consolation*, Boethius adopts a version of the distinction between 'magical coercion' and 'religious/philosophical supplication' in order to show that although philosophy and

can also see the actual forms which your spirit father Plato reveals, whereas we only have a dim perception of them, short-sighted as we are" (*Philopseudes* 16, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 50–51).

12. James Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003): 325. Cf. Keith Bradley, "Law, Magic, and Culture in the *Apologia* of Apuleius," *Phoenix* 51 (1997): 203–23.

13. Apuleius, like Boethius, uses his *apologia* as an "opportunity to clear the name of Philosophy in the minds of the ignorant." Apuleius, *Rhetorical Works*, translated and annotated by Stephen Harrison, John Hilton, and Vincent Hunink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25. Thus William Murad argues that Apuleius avails himself of the magical craft in his defense, as he "conjures up Lady Philosophy to stand by his side as co-defendant in the trial ... In chapter 3, Apuleius claims, *sustineo enim non modo meam, verum etiam philosophiae defensionem, cuius magnitudo vel minimam reprehensionem pro maximo crimine aspernatur*." His paper on the *Apologia*, "Apuleius the Magician," can be found on J.J. O'Donnell's Apuleius page: www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/apuleius/.

14. For Boethius' concern with concealing *arcana* from the many who would misunderstand them, cf. his prefatory remarks in *De trinitate* and *Quomodo substantiae*.

15. Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 156.

magic both involve thinking and praying, the forms of thinking and praying differ. This is presented in terms of the difference between the practices of Boethius the Prisoner and Philosophy, in particular in the state of the Prisoner at the beginning of the work.

Although *Consolation* 1,4 is not the longest prose section of the *Consolation*, it can certainly *seem* like it is because of the Prisoner's tedious and self-pitying complaint. The complaint is punctuated by a poorly formulated prayer (1, m.V). The Prisoner comes up short with respect to the invocation (*epikleseis*), the aretology (*aretologia*), and the prayer (*eukai*). The shortcomings are clear when compared with the model of philosophical prayer offered by Lady Philosophy at 3, m.IX. Whereas the Prisoner invokes a builder (*conditor*), whose primary excellence is mechanically rotating the heavens, and then addresses his prayer to the indefinite *quisquis*, Philosophy's hexameter hymn invokes a creator (*sator*), who not only moves but governs (*gubernare*) the world. The aretology of her hymn describes much more than just the appearance of order in the heavens, going into details about the principles of this order and the composition of bodies as well as that of the soul. The prayer is addressed to the Father (*pater*), and clearly asks that light be granted to sight. The difference between the Prisoner's amateurish prayer and the nature of true and efficacious prayer as it is articulated later in the *Consolation* is laid out very clearly in Martin Curran's paper in this volume. However, by the time the Prisoner articulates this prayer, he has already made significant progress. There is a reference to another prayer, one which suggests a reinterpretation of the first sections of the book and in particular of the Prisoner's original condition and Philosophy's initial treatment of him.

1, m.I is the only metre in the *Consolation* not written under the guidance of Philosophy's muses. It is included in the *Consolation* as the narrator's record of his condition before Philosophy appeared. He tells us that these were the thoughts he was thinking to himself in silence when he first became aware of Lady Philosophy's presence (1,1,1). The Prisoner's elegiac lament includes a startling reference to Death (*Mors*), who is welcomed when she comes having been called by those who want to end their misery. *Mors... vocata venit* rather clearly suggests a prayer to Death. The Prisoner goes on to suggest that in fact he himself had prayed to Death, but deaf (*surda*) to his cries she did not come. Marenbon takes this as nothing more than a wish "for death to come quickly,"¹⁶ and Relihan refers to "the *imagined* presence of Death, and the fleeting thought of suicide" (italics mine).¹⁷ But as Shanzer points out, "It is

16. Marenbon, *Boethius*, 150.

17. Joel Relihan, *Boethius, 'Consolation of Philosophy'* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 151. Despite the depersonalizing interpretation of 1, m.I,13, Relihan actually identifies Philosophy with Death, asserting that she has come "from the Land of the Dead,"

worth noting that at the beginning of the ‘Consolation’ when Boethius calls upon Death, *Mors hominum felix* it is Philosophy who answers his call.”¹⁸

Whether or not Philosophy’s appearance is occasioned by a prayer¹⁹ I think it is appropriate to take the personification of Death seriously here. The *Consolation* personifies Philosophy (who in turn personifies Fortune and her handmaidens), the Muses, Phoebus (and Phoebe), *Copia*, *Natura*, the Stoic and Epicurean schools (they are schools with hands [*manus*] capable of tearing Philosophy’s dress), *Clementia*, and a number of other abstract principles and forces. If the Prisoner has prayed to Death, this casts a different light on the first metre. Personifications of Death are fairly rare in Latin literature.²⁰ Lucan, in perhaps the most striking personification of *Mors*, describes civil war as most pleasing to the gods below (*si bene de uobis ciuilia bella merentur*).²¹ The reference to Death in 1, m.I, 13 might suggest some association with the prayer to death asked for by Sextus, who demands that the Thessalian witch Erictho “unbar the gates of Elysium, summon Death [herself], and force [her] to reveal to me which among us must be [her] prey” (*Elysias resera sedes ipsamque uocatam, quos petat e nobis, Mortem mihi coge fateri*).²² When, after first using her *carmina* in an attempt to reanimate the corpse of a Pompeian soldier as a *vates*, Erictho does not receive an immediate response from the gods below she becomes “enraged with Death” (*irataque morti*), and offers as a second ‘prayer’ a series of threats against the gods below.²³ This prayer epitomises the notion of ‘coercive magic.’

The Prisoner’s prayer to Death identifies him as a sort of *veneficus*, and the poem should be read in the light of the relevant literary antecedents. The

an allusion, he suggests, to Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (Ibid., 152). On ‘Philosophy and Death’ see also Relihan, *The Prisoner’s Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius’s Consolation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 59 ff.

18. Danuta Shanzer, “The Death of Boethius and the ‘Consolation of Philosophy,’” *Hermes* 112 (1984): 357.

19. Augustine does warn that everything depends upon knowing for which god one is calling: *sed quis te invocat nesciens te? aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens* (*Conf.* 1.1.1).

20. Notable instances include Virgil, *Aeneid* 11.197 (*multa boum circa mactantur corpora Morti*) and Statius, *Thebaid* 8.376 (*Mors fruitur caelo bellatoremque uolando*). War feeds Death with sacrifices in the *Aeneid*, and according to Statius the “strife of brethren” (*fraternas acies* [*Theb.* 1.1]) is a particularly pleasing offering.

21. *De bello civili* 6.719. Text and translation from Lucan, *The Civil War*, trans. J.D. Duff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928).

22. *De bello civili* 6.600–01. Philosophy refers to the poet of *De bello civili* as *noster Lucanus* at 4.6,33.

23. *De bello civili* 6.726. Apparently operating *outside* of time, Erictho reanimates the corpse of a soldier who died in the battle of Pharsalia, which will take place the following day. Bernard F. Dick, “The Technique of Prophecy in Lucan,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 94 (1963): 37–49. Dolores O’Higgins, “Lucan as *Vates*,” *Classical Antiquity* 2 (1988): 208–26.

prematurely aged, white-haired bone-bag that is the Prisoner (1, m.I,7–12)²⁴ resembles Horace in *Epode* 17: “My youth has sped; departed is my rosy bloom; my bones are covered with a yellow skin; with thy essences my hair is white; no respite relives me from torment.”²⁵ Horace too has poured forth prayers to a deaf divinity (*quid obseratis auribus fundis preces? / non saxa nudis surdiora navitis / Neptunus alto tundit hibernus salo*), and now will pray for Death (*sed tardiora fata te votis manent*).

In the opening chapters of the *Consolation* the Prisoner appears as one afflicted by a curse or under the influence of a spell: lethargy, amnesia, blindness, stupor. The spells (*carmina*) were the songs of the Muses.²⁶ Their enticements (*blanditiae*) are poisons (*venena*). They are likened to the Sirens,²⁷ the kin of Circe and Calypso, and the Prisoner is in their thrall as Odysseus was the object of the incantations of Circe, Calypso, and the Sirens. Odysseus was only able to evade the song of Circe and the Sirens, and only able to leave Calypso’s island, with the help of Hermes.²⁸ Hermes offered Odysseus the *môlu*, a ‘good drug’ to counter the effects of Circe’s *pharmaka* to which Odysseus’ men had already succumbed. These elements reappear more explicitly, and with a more explicit contrast between the impotence of herbs, which effect merely external change, and real remedies, in 4, m.III. There the incantations (*carmina*) and poisons (*venena*) of Circe are belittled as having power over the body but being powerless to affect the soul.

The state of the prisoner when Philosophy finds him can be interpreted as the effects of magic. As Collins, summarizing the laundry list of magically induced afflictions, notes:

24. “*Gloria felicitis olim viridisque iuventae, / solantur maesti nunc mea fata senis. / Venit enim properata malis inopina senectus / et dolor aetatem iussit inesse suam. / Intempestivi funduntur vertice cani / et tremitt effeto corpore laxa cutis.*” Homer also describes the victims of the Sirens in similar terms (*Odyssey* 12.50 ff.).

25. “*fugit iuventas et verecundus color / reliquit ossa pelle amicta lurida, / tuis capillus albus est odoribus, / nullum a labore me reclinat otium*” (*Ep.* 17.21–24). Text and translation from Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, trans. C.E. Bennett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914).

26. If the notion of the Muses as *veneficae* or *sagae* seems strange, one must only recall that in his *Metemorphoses*, Ovid’s Minerva used Hecate’s herbs to transform Arachne into a spider, and in Pindar’s *Pythian* 4, Aphrodite equips Jason with a *iunx* to seduce Medea.

27. On the association between the Muses and the Sirens, and the magical character of both, see Marcello Carastro, *La cité des mages: Penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon, 2006).

28. Of course Circe instructs Odysseus to have his crew plug their ears as they pass the Sirens, but it was Hermes who allowed Odysseus to contend with and ultimately overcome Circe’s charms.

The sudden loss of mental faculty seems to accord with the frequent mention in the tablets of binding the soul, tongue, and feeling, and with the occasional mention of the head, words, speech, and even memory, of the victims. In a more general sense the binding of the *psukhe*, here roughly translated as 'spirit', has been taken to refer to the victim's will, which is bound so as to motivate the victim either to do or not to do something.²⁹

Gager too enumerates the sundry effects of magic: curses and binding spells were used to cause blindness, loss of memory, and to render their victims cold, useless and speechless like the very lead tablet upon which the curse was inscribed.³⁰ Despite being afflicted by all of these there is, however, no suggestion that the Prisoner has been the victim of another's magic. Rather, by invoking the Muses (an invocation not reported by the narrator but clearly implied by their presence), Boethius has bewitched and bound himself. There are numerous references in accounts of ancient magic to 'backfires.' In fact, most accounts of magic involve some reference to the destructive consequences of attempting to manipulate nature for private ends.³¹ In what is perhaps the most explicit example of the magical operator becoming the victim of his own art, Plutarch speaks of self-evil-eyeing, "usually caused by emanations from water or some other reflective surfaces."³² In the case of the Prisoner, the act of writing elegiac verses is connected with the cause of his condition. Ovid and other poets explicitly identify their own elegiac *carmina* with the incantations of *veneficae*, and attribute to them the same power to beguile the soul. For Ovid, love elegies are erotic magic.³³ For Boethius, elegies of lament are binding spells.³⁴ It is as if in writing this elegy, he is composing his own curse tablet.³⁵

29. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 79.

30. John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Porphyry relates a story of the effects of binding magic on Plotinus (*Vita Plotini* 10). On the continuity of this tradition into the Middle Ages, see Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

31. Pierre Hadot, *Le voile d'Isis: Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

32. *Moralia* 683a, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 223.

33. On incantations in/as poetry, see: Charles Segal, "Black and White Magic in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Passion, Love and Art," *Arion* 9 (2002): 10–34; Kerill O'Neill, "Symbolism and Sympathetic Magic in Propertius 4.5," *The Classical Journal* 94 (1998): 49–80; C.E. Manning, "Canidia in the *Epodes* of Horace," *Mnemosyne* 23 (1970): 393–401; E. Adelaide Hahn, "*Epodes* 5 and 17, *Carmina* 1.16 and 1.17," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 70 (1939): 213–30; T.W. Dickson, "Magic: A Theme of Roman Elegy," *The Sewanee Review* 35 (1927): 488–98; Dorota Dutsch, "Roman Pharmacology: Plautus' *Blanda Venena*," *Greece & Rome* 52 (2005): 205–20; Anne Duncan, "Spellbinding Performance: Poet as Witch in Theocritus' Second *Idyll* and Apollonius' *Argonautica*," *Helios* 28 (2001): 43–56.

34. On the connection between curses and love magic, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 43 ff.

35. The written element of these tablets can be connected to the idea of writing as a *phar-*

Finding the Prisoner the beguiled and enchanted victim of his own *carmina*, Philosophy begins to work. Her initial appearance evokes not only traditional epiphanies, but also the appearance of daemons, ghosts, or a god.³⁶ To be added to the lengthy list of allusions found in the description of Philosophy in 1,1,1 are parallels with the account in *De virtutibus herbarum* 21–28, which relates the epiphany of Asclepius to Thessalus of Tralles, accomplished through the practice of lecanomancy by an Egyptian wise man.³⁷ Relihan's suggestion that Philosophy is associated with Death relies on the fact that she is covered in the ash of an ancestral shrine. One might add the suggestion that while her blazing eyes (*oculis ardentibus*) recall Homer's epithet for Athena, there are striking similarities to Ovid's description of Dipsas' piercing look: "From her eyes, too, double pupils dart their lightning, with rays that issue forth from twin orbs. She summons forth from ancient sepulchres the dead of generations far remote, and with long incantations lays open the solid earth."³⁸

The Prisoner's initial confusion and lack of recognition allow for a moment of uncertainty. Philosophy's ambiguous appearance is captured in her variable height, and recalls the Homeric description of Eris at *Iliad* 4,440–43. Indeed, in the final analysis Philosophy is an intermediate, daemonic figure (cf. especially *me quoque excellentior* at 4,6,38).³⁹ However, from her first action, she begins a pattern of contrasting her work with that of *venificae*, *sagae*, and the powers they compel and constrain. She banishes the Muses not by means of a power akin to yet stronger than their own, i.e. *blandimenta* of a more powerful sort. She banishes them with a truth which they are compelled to recognize: their action is illicit and illegitimate.⁴⁰ The chorus

makon. Curse tablets, with their garbled words and *voces magicae*, are a singular form of text: they are written *not* to be read, or to be read by the divine agents whose assistance is being enlisted: ghosts, demons, or gods. For whom, one might ask, was the Prisoner writing these elegies?

36. B.C. Dietrich, "Divine Epiphany in Homer," *Numen* 30 (1983): 53–79; cf. Eleni Pachoumi, "Divine Epiphanies of *Paredroi* in the *Greek Magical Papyri*," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 51 (2011): 155–65.

37. "Human words could not convey accurately his appearance or the beauty of the clothes he wore ... I could only just comprehend the words, for I was absolutely amazed and my mind was preoccupied with gazing at the form of the god" (*Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 52–53).

38. "*oculis quoque pupula duplex / fulminat, et gemino lumen ab orbe venit / evocat antiquis proavos atavosque sepulcris / et solidam longo carmine findit humum*" (*Amores* 1.8.15–18). Text and translation from Ovid, *Heroides and Amores* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914).

39. While there are significant differences, there are also striking similarities between Lady Philosophy and the demons of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. Like Boethius, Iamblichus is at pains to distinguish theurgy from magic. On these efforts see Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freeland Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 115–30.

40. A similar distinction is found in Jerome, when he contrasts Hilarion's power to expel demons with the demonic power of the priests of Asclepius: "The saint would not let the symbols

of Muses confesses its shame with blushes (*confessusque rubore*) and departs. The Prisoner is cast as the Odysseus to their Sirens, but without a crew whose ears have been plugged deaf to their songs to guide him safely past, he became ensnared. Philosophy frees the Prisoner, who is in fact more like Odysseus on Circe's or Calypso's islands. His reason was choked by passion, as Odysseus was suffocated by the passionate but intellectually lifeless existence on the islands of both witches.

Philosophy's first words to the Prisoner are a song, 1, m.II, one which recalls the Prisoner's Pythagorean past. His endeavors to discover the 'secrets of nature' (*latentis naturae ... causas*) are contrasted with the claim that his youth was occupied with the composition of *carmina* (1, m.I, 1–8). The scientific aspect of Pythagorean studies is emphasised in order to disentangle them from, for instance, the presence of Pythagoreanism in the *Greek Magical Papyri* or with number mysticism.⁴¹ Philosophy, observing his stupor, lethargy, and amnesia, dries the Prisoner's tears with her dress. The effect, described in 1, m.III, is likened to the disappearance of night's darkness and the return of light. However, it is important to note that the metaphor used by the narrator in the metre is elaborated by means of a simile. The simile which the narrator chooses is the piling up and dispersing of clouds. Philosophy's action is thus associated with, but distinguished from, a commonplace power of witches found in, among many other places, Ovid's description of Dipsas: "Whenever she willed, the clouds are rolled together over all the sky; whenever she has willed, the day shines forth in a clear heaven" (*cum voluit, toto glomerantur nubila caelo; / cum voluit, puro fulget in orbe dies*).⁴² While witches can compel and dispel clouds, and thus block the sun or stars, Philosophy's abilities go further. Doubtless, the ability to 'turn on the lights' pales in comparison with the ability to imbue human eyes with the capacity to apprehend divine things.⁴³

or the young man be hunted down before he had exorcised the virgin, lest the demon should be thought to have been detached and expelled by incantations, or he should himself be thought to have put faith in what the demon said" (Jerome, *Life of St. Hilarion the Hermit* 21 PL 23, 38–39, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 230).

41. On the Pythagorean order of the mathematical sciences of the quadrivium which form the steps of the Prisoner's ascent, see my "Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 34 (2008): 1–21; Cf. Dominic J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 338.

42. *Amores* 1.8.9–10.

43. Usually read as a reference to Athena's gift of divine vision to Diomedes in *Iliad* 5.127–28, 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.

When Philosophy asks the Prisoner if he has understood what she has been saying, she uses two Greek phrases. The provenance of the first, *onos lyras*, is somewhat obscure, but it is most likely a reference to the title of a Menippean satire by Varro.⁴⁴ The second Greek line has more obvious significance. It is the first of five lines of Homer quoted by Philosophy. I have argued elsewhere that Boethius uses these Homeric lines in a way that is consistent with the Procline division of Homer's poetry into three types.⁴⁵ For the purposes of this paper Russell's summary of the Procline system will suffice:

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.⁴⁶

However, as Collins notes, long before Proclus saved Homer from Plato's criticisms of poetry, "Homeric verses used in magic were employed either to protect or to heal."⁴⁷ The *Greek Magical Papyri* contain numerous appropriations of Homeric verses as incantations, consistent with the notion that "select verses taken from Homer, irrespective of narrative context, still contained divine power."⁴⁸ The Greek quotations from Homer in the *Consolation* could well have struck his contemporaries as reminiscent of the magical or theurgic use of Homer. But Philosophy does not use the Homeric verses

44. It is possibly significant that Shanzer has noted that this Greek proverb is not only used as a title by Varro, but that the material in the scholium (some of which is also found in Servius) suggests that the play involved Orpheus, his reputation for necromancy, and his use of *carmina* in the evoking (*evocare*) of souls. There is no way of knowing whether this is in fact an echo Boethius intended, although it does complement the Orpheus metre at 3, m.XII. A common feature of Menippean satire is a fantastic/magical, underworld journey.

45. See my "Boethius and Homer," *The Downside Review* 128 (2010): 183–204.

46. D.A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 66–67. On Proclus' reading of Homer, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (London: Duckworth, 1991); 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*, ed. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 115–33; and Oiva Kuisma, *Proclus' Defense of Homer*, *Commentaries Humanarum Litterarum* 109 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1996).

47. Derek Collins, "The Magic of Homeric Verses," *Classical Philology* 103 (2008): 212.

48. *Ibid.*, 234. Collins also points out that the recent scholarship has revealed that some of the Homeric verses were understood to work via a sort of sympathetic magic.

as incantations to heal physical ailments. Homer is used as part of a spiritual *askesis*, and as such must be distinguished from the medical applications of the *Greek Magical Papyri*.

Philosophy will quote Homer four more times, as well as lines from Euripides, Parmenides, and Pythagoras.⁴⁹ She also quotes an unknown Greek source. Shanzer has persuasively argued for the Hermetic provenance of the line, “the body of a holy man the heavens did build” (*andros dē hierou demas aitheres oikodomēsan*) (4,6,38), which Lady Philosophy ascribes to “one more excellent than myself.”⁵⁰ Shanzer notes that the line appears to have been selected for its consistency with Christianity, and adds that “for Christian respect for Hermes in an earlier period one has to go no further than book VII of Lactantius’ *Divine Institutes*.” In fact, the 13th tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* “is one of those most often suspected of connection with the New Testament.” Thus if Boethius does in fact have Lady Philosophy quote the *Corpus Hermeticum*, he seems to have chosen one which was above suspicion of ‘vulgar’ association with magic.

Once Philosophy has arrived at a diagnosis, she presents the course of treatment.⁵¹ The *remedia* (which were first contrasted with the Muses’ *venena* in 1,1) will be applied first gently and moderately (*lenibus mediocribusque*), as the Prisoner is not healthy enough for stronger medicines (*firrioribus remediis*).⁵² While both Philosophy and the Muses use *carmina* as *fomenta*, it is precisely her technical knowledge which distinguishes Philosophy’s cures

49. The exhortation to ‘follow god’ (*hepou theo*) is attributed to Pythagoras by tradition. The quotation from Euripides’ *Andromache* at 3,6,1 identifies Philosophy with Andromache. Andromache is in Euripides’ play accused by Hermione of using abortifacient *pharmaka*, and thus poisoning Neoptolemus’ love. Andromache replies that the only effective potion (*philtion*) she uses is virtue: “I’ll tell you a love potion: it is not beauty but good character that delights one’s lover” (205). Andromache anticipates the ‘erotic magic’ of Socrates, who can induce the beautiful Alcibiades to pursue him. It is also just this sort of inversion of the traditional expectations about the lover and beloved that makes Apuleius liable to suspicion of erotic magic when he marries Pudentilla, an older woman.

50. See D.R. Shanzer, “‘Me Quoque Excellentior’: Boethius, *De Consolatione* 4.6.38,” *The Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983): 277–83 and “The Late Antique Tradition of Varro’s *ONOS LYRAS*,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (1986): 272–85.

51. Lady Philosophy concludes that the Prisoner’s self-inflicted ills not only cause sickness (*morbus*) but in fact death (*interitus*). Thus her treatment will bring the Prisoner back to life from a state close to death by reviving the faint spark, the *minima scintillula* (1,6,20) which she is only able to discern through questioning. Cf. a similar account in Philostratus: “Now whether he detected some spark of life in her not noticed ... or whether life was really extinct, and he restored it by the warmth of his touch, is a mysterious problem which neither I myself nor those who were present could decide” (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, trans. F.C. Coynbears [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912]).

52. There is here perhaps another echo of Horace’s Canidia, this time to her stronger potions (*maius potio*) in *Epode* 5.

from the Muse's sweet poison (*dulce . . . venenum*) (1.1.8). It is a commonplace of ancient magic that the difference between a love potion and a poison was the skill of the one who administers it. Typically the unskilled practitioner of love magic ended up poisoning her beloved. Philosophy goes on to paint Fortune as another *saga* or *venifica*: she is a *prodigium*, whose deceits (*fucos*) recall the *rubor* of the Muses.⁵³ She uses her blandishments (*blandimenta*) to beguile men.⁵⁴ Philosophy responds to Fortune with Music and Rhetoric. We have already seen the connection between music and magic. There is a similar tradition of identifying rhetoric and magic.⁵⁵ Gorgias asserts just such a connection between the way rhetoricians and sorcerers use words to bewitch, persuade, and alter the soul:

Come now, let me shift from one argument (*logos*) to another. Inspired incantations bring on pleasure and bring away grief through words (*logoi*). For conversing with the soul's opinion the power of incantation charms, persuades, and changes it by witchcraft. Two arts of witchcraft and magic have been discovered—errors of the soul and deceptions of opinion.⁵⁶

To appreciate that this is not a negative judgment of sorcery, one must consider that “[Gorgias said that tragedy creates a deception in which] the deceiver is more just than the nondeceiver and the deceived is wiser than the undeceived.”⁵⁷ There is an excellence in the power to deceive and in the receptivity to deception which is praised by Gorgias. In his *Encomium of Helen* Gorgias uses *goeteia* and *mageia* to illustrate the power of *logos*. The ‘magical’ *logos* is illuminated by its relation to the other causes of Helen's actions. The four causes are in fact comprehensive because they provide all logical arrangements of two key terms: the divine and the human. The first cause, *tyche / theos / ananke*, is clearly divine. The second cause, *bia*, is exclusively human. That *bia* is human is clear from the fact that it is not only *barbaros* and *adikos*, but an expression of *hybris*. The evaluative language of the second cause is strikingly absent from the first (divine necessity is neither good nor evil, and

53. The *Camenae/Musae* blush with shame, but their faces are already reddened: their cheeks are *laceratae* (1, m.1.3), and they are *sceniae meretriculas*.

54. Dutsch has suggested that for Plautus, “In her ability to disrupt personal boundaries and transform her victims, the *blanda meretrix* is the equal of the *veneficus/a*” (“Roman Pharmacology: Plautus’ *Blanda Venena*,” *Greece & Rome* 52 [2005]: 213). Tacitus also connects *blandimenta* with witchcraft and poisoning (*Ann.* 13.13.2).

55. For a fine introduction to the contemporary discussion of this connection see Jacqueline de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

56. *Encomium of Helen* (82 B11) in *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia*, ed. Patricia Curd, trans. Richard D. McKirahan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), 102–03. Gorgias also likens the power of *logos* to that of *pharmaka* in his defense of Helen.

57. *Ibid.*, 104.

is certainly not unjust). While B 11.6 and B 11.7 give succinct exposition of two possibilities (*either* divine *or* human), B 11.8–14 and B 11.15–19 provide accounts of the other two, more complicated possibilities: the third cause, *logos*, is both human and divine, while the fourth, *eros*, is a cause that may be either human or divine, but not both (this disjunction differs from the first in that, despite the reference in B 11.6, *bia* is not properly speaking divine, nor is there any real human *ananke*). Thus the four causes exhaust the combinations of the two terms. Gorgias distinguishes magic from pure divine *ananke* and merely human *bia*. It is, like Helen, both human and divine. For Boethius it is precisely because rhetoric has such great power that, like poetry, it must be under the control of Philosophy (2,1,8).

As with the Muses, Philosophy does not use her own magic to contend with Fortune's magic.⁵⁸ She notes that Fortune is deaf to men's prayers (2, m.I,5–6), and there is no use trying to compel or constrain her. To rid the Prisoner of his attachment to her, Philosophy puts on *Fortuna's* face and speaks in her defense using her own words. Fortune's wheel (*rota*) is the instrument of torture, and recalls the *iunx* or *rhombus* of love magic.⁵⁹ Philosophy's *remedia* for Fortune's *blandimenta* is self-knowledge.⁶⁰ The oracular origins of the philosophical tradition of self-knowing go without saying.⁶¹ The contrast is clear: Philosophy teaches that refuge from the vicissitudes of Fortune and her external gifts can only be found in the Delphic commandment to 'know thyself.' To pray to *Fortuna/Tyche* is to put on her yoke and accept her ways. Self-knowledge is the only effective protective 'amulet' or 'charm' (*remedia*) against her power.

2, m.VI contains two more echoes of magical practices. The poem provides an argument for the illusory nature of power: if the nearly absolute *potestas* of the emperor Nero could not constrain his madness, is power in fact powerful at all? Boethius uses the same argument about the impotence of Nero's worldly *potestas* as Pliny uses about magic:

58. On the association between magic and misfortune, see Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft Confessions & Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 17–45.

59. See Christopher A. Faraone, "The Wheel, the Whip and other Implements of Torture: Erotic Magic in Pindar *Pythian* 4.213–19," *The Classical Journal* 89 (1993): 1–19; Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Song of the *Lynx*: Magic and Rhetoric in the *Pythian* 4," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 125 (1995): 177–206.

60. It is worth noting that the *Greek Magical Papyri* contain reflections on the Delphic Oracle which involve a form of self-knowledge, specifically knowing one's personal daemon. See Betz (1970) on the Delphic 'know thyself' in the *PGM*. Hans Dieter Betz, "The Delphic Maxim 'Know Yourself' in the Greek Magical Papyri," *History of Religions* 21 (1981): 156–71.

61. The oracular origin of Philosophy is alluded to in the reference to the arguments produced *de nostro adyto*, "from our very sanctuary" (2,1,5).

In our own era the emperor Nero discovered all these claims [about magic] to be empty and false. Indeed his devotion to magic outstripped even his devotion to the lyre and the songs of tragedy. The greatness of his fortune in the human sphere developed desires in the deep flaws of his mind. His first ambition was to give commands to the gods. He had no nobler aims, no one ever supported any craft more strongly. To the pursuit of this end were devoted no shortage of money, power, inquiring intellect, or anything that the world allowed. Nero's abandonment of the craft is a huge and indisputable proof that it is bogus.⁶²

Nero's madness is exemplified in the poem by his response to seeing his mother's corpse. While there is no explicit reference to magic (although the mention of *venena* would likely evoke not only poison but the art of the *venificus*), there are implied connections. In the same passage from Suetonius in which we find the report of Nero critiquing the corpse of his mother we also find an account of Nero's desire to contact and placate his mother's ghost. Suetonius tells us that "He actually went so far as to have the mages perform a rite and attempted to call up her ghost and beg off its anger."⁶³

There are other echoes of magic in book 2 and the beginning of book 3. The 'Golden Age' of 2, m.V is rich with allusions, not the least of which would be the purifications required before the descent into Hades in Lucian's *Menippus* 2.6.⁶⁴ The final metre in the book, 2, m.VIII, is Philosophy's version of erotic magic, as she invokes the *amor* that rules the stars and prays it would also rule the hearts of men. Book 3 contains two metres of interest. 3, m.II presents a philosophical account of the 'secret power of nature.' This is not the arcane knowledge of the power of herbs that is revealed by the gods (i.e., Hecate's gift to Circe and Medea, or Asclepius' to Thessalus). The metre shows that the power of Nature is manifest in the tamed lion that devours his trainer, the caged bird who will starve to death in sight of her homeland, the sapling, and the sun. The 'hidden power' of nature is glimpsed in each.

Book 3 contains what is perhaps the most significant connection to magical practices: the myth of Orpheus.⁶⁵ Founding figure of the Orphic religion, notorious for his associations with necromancy and the evocation of the dead, for his enchanting music, and for his descent into Hades, Orpheus is

62. *Nat. Hist.* 30.14–15, in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 42.

63. *Quin et facto per Magos sacro evocare Manes et exorare temptavit* (Nero 34), in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 166.

64. Menippus tells the Friend that if asked, he should say his name is Heracles, Odysseus or Orpheus. The Prisoner is identified with all three of these figures (as well as with Aeneas) who returned alive from Hades.

65. Rousseau, "The Death of Boethius," 879 ff., notes the identification of Boethius with Orpheus in Cassiodorus's *Variae*. On Orpheus as magician, see Fabienne Jourdan, "Orphée, sorcier ou mage?" *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 1 (2008): 5–36.

one of the paradigmatic figures of ancient magic. His ability to command not only nature but the gods themselves with his music was traditionally connected with sorcery. 3, m.XII is the culmination of three consecutive poems with echoes of the Platonic ascent out of the cave in *Republic* 7. 3, m.X, 1–2 refers to prisoners in chains (*capti in catenae*), and 3, m.XI to the mind's conversion (*in se revolvat*) and recollection (*immemor recordatur*). The story of Orpheus is re-interpreted within this schema as a corrective to the necromantic associations of the myth. In the poem these necromantic echoes are preserved in order to make clear the differences. Orpheus is a *vates*, who employs *carmina* to enchant the gods below. Indeed, Orpheus, like the Prisoner in 1, m.I, 13, prays (*dulci veniam prece*) to the lords of Hades. However, his singular accomplishment, moving the gods below to pity in order to negotiate the release of Eurydice, is dissociated from its necromantic and psychogogic context by the Platonic interpretation of the poem that is appended to the end. The poem is also cautionary: Orpheus ultimately fails, and his mistake is meant to instruct Boethius.⁶⁶

In book 4, Philosophy implicitly contrasts the bestial metamorphoses accomplished by witches (Boethius surely has Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 1.9–12 in mind) with the transformative power of vice (4,3,16 ff.). Witches like Meroe and Panthia turn men's bodies into those of beavers, frogs, rams, and tortoises, but vices make the very souls of men like those of dogs, foxes, lions, deer, birds, and sows. Philosophy also compares the "popular idea of fortune" (*fortuna populari*) (4,5,2), which is "random and confused when the true ground of its order is unknown," with "the common people's error" (*publicus error*) (4, m.V, 12) about celestial phenomena when she mentions the practice of striking bronze (*aera*) during an eclipse. Ovid connects the practice of clashing bronze cymbals with attempts to counteract the drawing down of the moon by witches,⁶⁷ a practice which Plutarch in turn connects with eclipses.⁶⁸ Later in book 4 Philosophy decisively distinguishes the astrological and demonological references in the *Consolation* from their more fraught connotations in the popular imagination. Fate might well be administered by demons or the influence of the stars. However, as Philosophy is at pains to show in 4,6, Fate is completely determined by Providence.⁶⁹

66. Heracles in 4, m.VII provides the positive model for Boethius. Heracles' own connection to the magical tradition consists of his death at the hands of his wife Deianeira, who was tricked by the centaur Nessus into poisoning her husband with a love potion (*philtro*).

67. *Met.* 4.329–33.

68. *Moralia* 145c–d.

69. One might profitably compare the reflections on fate found in Philosophy's own Lucan. In book 6 of the *De bello civili*, Erichth gives a disquisition to Sextus on two kinds of fate: the kind controlled by the stars, which she can change even if every star in the heavens is involved in determining the course of a single life, and the kind that she simply cannot. The latter is *a prima ... origine mundi* (she refers to Chaos at 6.617) and is immutable. As Chadwick notes,

There are no clear references to magic in book 5, but I would offer the following suggestion by way of conclusion. The reflections on chance (*casum*) (which rely on Aristotle's discussion of *tyche* in *Physics* 2.4–5) and the reflections on eternal providence are the acme of Philosophy's *psychagogia*. She has led the Prisoner to the *cacumen* of *ratio*, the point where reason's dividedness almost vanishes into the simplicity of intellect. Her *psychagogia* has been definitively distinguished from that which belongs to *veneficae* or the underworld powers. The goddess Tyche of the *Greek Magical Papyri* has been revealed to be an agent of Providence, and Providence places no constraints on human freedom. It is in this context that the final Homeric verse appears in 5, m.II. This is the only time Homer is quoted in one of the metres, and it is from the encounter between Odysseus and Teiresias in *Odyssey* 11.108. The Teiresian *vates* is compared with Philosophy, and his vision is shown to be deficient. Teiresias is “the blind prophet, whose senses (*phrenes*) stay unshaken within him, / to whom alone Persephone has granted intelligence (*noon*).”⁷⁰ Although Boethius would certainly have had in mind the traditional notion that “what Lord Teiresias / sees, is most often what the Lord Apollo / sees,”⁷¹ and he “in whom alone of mankind truth is native,”⁷² it is precisely this Apollonian vision that is compared with that of the “true sun” (*verum ... solem*) (5, m.II,14) and found wanting. The *nekylia* in *Odyssey* 11, the paradigmatic presentation of necromancy in the Greek tradition, is used as the primary point of reference when Philosophy wishes to clarify the nature of her activity. Philosophy adumbrates the simplicity of divine vision by way of a comparison with Teiresian vatic vision in the underworld. In the following prose section (5,3) the Prisoner offers an interpretation of the problem that provides an opportunity for another comparison. His ‘rational’ grasp of Teiresian prophecy must be corrected. The ridiculous figure of Teiresias in Horace (who prophesises, “Whatever I say will either happen or not”⁷³) is adduced by the Prisoner to reveal the limits of reason's understanding of prophecy. Cicero's refutation of divination, cited at 5,4,1, is the philosophical formulation of the Horatian *ridiculus ... vaticinus*. It is this formulation that necessitates the conclusion of the work, the relation of providence and rational freedom that preserves hope and prayer. In the course of her treatment Philosophy has shown the Prisoner the difference between philosophical prayer, the paradigm of which is the hymn at 3, m.IX, and the corrupted, coercive invocation of *Mors* at 1, m.I,13.

Boethius' “second commentary on *Interpretation* (ii, 231) allows substantial place to the determining power of the stars over animal life, and over human life as well” (*Boethius*, 50).

70. *Odyssey* 10,490–94.

71. *Oedipus the King*, 284–86, trans. David Greene.

72. *Ibid.*, 299.

73. *Satire* 2.5.59.

