

— Beata Agrell, »Consolation of Literature as Rhetorical Tradition: Issues and Examples«

— A B S T R A C T —

This article investigates a tradition of consolation in order to explore rhetorical strategies and literary devices of consolatory texts. The aim is to elucidate how the view of consolation has varied through history and the impact of these variations on the motives for and the right to consolation. Issues dealt with are which sufferings that justified consolation, which kind of consolation that was accepted in an individual case, and which rhetorical means that were considered as appropriate.

At first a theoretical and historical introduction will discuss the concept of consolation, its variants in tradition, and different states of mind considered in need of consolation. A special discussion concerns the condition of melancholy. Thereafter a few examples of consolatory rhetoric from various genres and historical periods will be analyzed, from Homer to Derrida.

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■—Suffering is as old as mankind, and »our need for consolation is insatiable,« as the Swedish modernist Stig Dagerman claimed in a famous essay. »I seek out consolation as a hunter dogging his prey,« he continued.¹ Sometimes words are of no use; only physical presence and bodily closeness will help. Sometimes nothing helps – as in the case of Dagerman, who killed himself at the age of 31. His need for consolation was insatiable, indeed. Yet, he knew that some verbal expressions *do* have a consoling potential, among them religious and literary texts. In the same vein, artist characters in novels sometimes emphasize giving consolation as the main task of the writer.²

How, then, can texts give consolation? In this article, I will investigate how some texts are rhetorically and literary structured to mediate consolation, although their actual success depends on how they are read and received. Rhetoric signifies »the craft of speech,« as E. R. Curtius points out, but by inference, also written discourse is included. Thus, rhetoric »teaches how to construct a discourse artistically,« Curtius contends.³ What is constructed is a dynamic structure progressing through rhetorical strategies, that is, modes or techniques, that help a writer develop and embellish an argument so as to convey a purpose and /or affect the reader.⁴ The rhetorical strategies aim at creating a certain reader role prepared for, in this case, consoling modes of reading, but the real reader may refuse this role or misapprehend the strategies.

On the other hand, there are texts that, without this consoling rhetorical structure, may still give consolation to those in need. Sometimes the text is met by a searching and needy attitude, open for consolation. At other times, the real reader is not even aware of a need for consolation; yet, all of a sudden, the text may call forth forgotten sorrows at the same time as mediating consolation. This means that the experience of consolation – like most reader responses – is a personal issue, depending on individuality, situation and context. The most urgent task of a rhetorical strategy therefore is to create an effective *addressivity* that catches the attention and interest of the addressee.⁵ To accomplish this, rhetorical strategies and literary devices must cooperate so tightly that the sometimes rigidly upheld distinction between rhetoric and literature is of no use.⁶

This article, however, will mainly pay attention to rhetorical strategies designed for mediating consolation, and my task is

to track variations in a consolatory tradition. The issue is the relation between the rhetoric of texts, literary devices and the phenomenology of consolation. The consolatory tradition in question is huge, so I will proceed by example, and the examples are chosen to be illuminating but not exhaustive. They represent, however, a great number of periods, languages, text-types, and genres of a Western tradition that also includes small literatures and philosophical texts.

The article starts with a discussion of concepts of consolation. It is followed by an overview of the tradition of consolation and the phenomenon of melancholy. Next four sections deal more extensively with some textual examples: archaic, romantic, and modernist / postmodern. Finally some summarizing reflections.

— CONCEPTS OF CONSOLATION —

The concept of consolation itself is complicated. It refers both to the interpersonal act of mediating consolation and to the resulting personal experience of that act.⁷ In this article, I will focus on the former as rhetorical strategies of literary texts, aiming at consolation. But the personal experience still is presupposed and that affects the strategy. Therefore, it must be considered in the analysis of the strategies.

A vital question is: what *kind* of consolation is implied or otherwise involved in this or that strategy? However, a general concept of consolation still underlies this article. Consolation presupposes suffering, and the aim of the consolatory act is relief. Yet, there are different kinds of suffering, and all of them are not in need for consolation; others may be inconsolable. Toothache, for instance, requires painkillers rather than consolation, and the mental state of all-encompassing melancholy or depression often is inconsolable, that is insusceptible to consolation.⁸ Typically, consolation is for incurable existential sufferings producing a yearning for relief – like grief and mourning caused by death, loss, fatal illness, broken heart, deceit, and the like. Consolation does not remove the suffering or the causes of suffering, but it may change the sufferer's perception of and attitude to the suffering and its causes.⁹ Thus, the experience of consolation involves a shift of horizon that changes the sufferer's life-world.¹⁰ New aspects come to the fore, pertaining to meaning, significance, coherence, potentiality, hope, trust, faith, and suchlike things; yet nothing *outside* this experience has changed, and the worldly future gives no promises. This experience of consolation may be religious, offering a divine care or a better life after death; but it may be secular just as well, for instance connected to a faith in Life, Beauty, Goodness, or Meaning in a context of death and misery. In both cases, the interaction with another (human or divine) being is central, even if this being could be represented by a text. Most impor-

tant: the experience of consolation is not rational and cannot be discursively explained. It may be slow and tough, won after long and painful struggling. It may also be sudden as a conversion, giving peace of mind in the midst of a whirl.

— A TRADITION OF CONSOLATION —

In religious and literary history, there is a long tradition of consolation built on words and texts: from Antiquity to Modernity and even Postmodernism, but with its heyday in the Renaissance.¹¹ The traditional *consolatio* pertained to death, exile, bereavement, and loss, and more seldom to melancholy as a condition of chronic sadness, fear, and anxiety. In the modern era, the rhetorical structure of consoling discourse became looser, as happened in all kinds of discourse.¹² Yet, rhetorical strategies of one kind or another remained fundamental because of the recurring task of persuading or otherwise helping the sufferer into consolation and to that end creating a suitable role for the addressee.

As a genre, the *consolatio* is described as »writings of a philosophic bent, whose authors either try to dissuade individuals from grieving in the face of misfortune, or proffer general counsel on overcoming adversity.«¹³ Traditional rhetorical consolation conventionally was thought of as *epideictic* in kind – like praising deceased in funeral orations – but most consoling texts are fundamentally of the *deliberative* kind, that is, advising, consulting, and aiming at cure.¹⁴ This task seems to remain even in modern consolatory discourse, although the possible genres are numerous. But already in Antiquity and the Middle-Ages the *consolatio* could use almost any existing genre. The ceremonial oratory form and the letter were common, but so was lyric poetry, often in the form of an elegy. A fountainhead of early religious lyric consolation, however, was – and still is – the Old Testament Psalter, a multiform poetry often itself both describing and performing the process of consolation.¹⁵ Thus, even in archaic times, before the rhetorical system was invented, consolation was an important subject. As we will see below, in an analysis of the *Iliad*, archaic consolation was associated with certain ‘proto-rhetoric’ strategies that later on were included into the rhetorical system.

Yet, perspectives have varied. Not only are there different ideas of consolation but also of the *justification* of consolation. The Stoics tried to minimize the need for consolation because such needs were incompatible with the stoic philosophy of rationality connected to *apatheia* and contempt of *adiaphora*.¹⁶ Stoic consolation therefore aimed at eliminating the very need of consolation; the aim was education to stoicism. This is also the kind of stoically inspired consolation that Lady Philosophy offers the imprisoned Boëthius, waiting for his death sentence in agony: man cannot have true peace until

wealth, fame, and all external happiness are forsaken. True happiness comes from within and is totally independent of the world. Therefore, having this insight you are in no need for consolation.¹⁷ This message, however, is not presented as a thesis or a lesson, but as a dialogic process between the prisoner and the Lady. The text is a *menippean satire*, that is, a mixture of genres and discourses, where poetry and prose, lyrics, narrative, and discursive argument interact.¹⁸ This multifarious strategy also aims at activating the reader and creating a reflective reception.

Neither did the Protestant Reformist Jean Calvin (1509–1564) see any real need for consolation. He interpreted despair as a divinely sent affliction that furthered virtue, that is, suffering was rather a *gift* than a phenomenon motivating consolation.¹⁹ A more conventional Christian consolatory recommendation was prayer and an intensified religious life in meditative retirement. According to *Der grosse Seelentrost* (The great Consolation for the Soul), a religious tract and *exempla*-collection of the 1400s, the very uttering in faith of the name »Jesus« is a great consolation: this name is like (e.g.) the sweetest honey in your mouth, the sweetest harp music in your ears, a happiness and joy for your heart, a consoling help in all distress, and a hope for all sinners.²⁰

Some Christian authorities, on the contrary, recommended an intensified participation in the social world as the best consolation in spiritual distress. Martin Luther (1483–1546), for instance, contended that food, drink and human company were the most adequate consolation for tribulations. Tribulations followed by sadness, he said, on the one hand were »a salutary means of comprehending one's own weakness and a pathology«, but on the other hand they were »a sickness of the soul« sent by the Devil to challenge faith, pushing the believer to ascetic isolation in anguish and doubt.²¹ Therefore, according to Luther, in order to protect your faith, you should tease and defy the Devil by doing the opposite to his ascetic temptations.²² Yet, as argued by Angus Gowland, until the end of the 16th century, protestant physicians and puritan divines – in theory, at least – »upheld a rigorous distinction between, on the one hand, the kind of despair betokening a naturally caused melancholy, and, on the other, that indicating a divinely afflicted conscience.«²³

The Christian consolatory tradition thus distinguished between »godly sorrow for sin« (*tristitia secundum Deum*) and »worldly grief« (*tristitia saeculi*).²⁴ Further, the Christian view of suffering was different from the classical and humanist tradition: from a pure Christian point of view suffering was an inescapable consequence of the Fall and thus a natural part of worldly life. Providence imposes suffering upon us »as an ultimately beneficial test of our piety and spiritual endurance«

and consequently as a »redemptive power«. ²⁵ This means that Christian consolation excluded the Classical idea that passions were the cause of melancholia and could be »managed by rational self-discipline.« Instead, the sufferer should learn to welcome his suffering as a sign of divine presence and care. ²⁶ After the Reformation, Luther problematized this view, while Calvin reinforced it – as already said above.

Even when the need for consolation was acknowledged, the approved kinds of consolation diverged. The humanist *consolatio* was partly Stoic in nature but rejected the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* in favour of Christian teachings and *exempla*. ²⁷ The aim of the humanist *consolatio* was, according to Gowland, »to alleviate and disperse the psychological pain experienced by individuals by means of philosophical wisdom and spiritual guidance, applied humanistically with the assistance of rhetorical eloquence and poetic expression.« ²⁸ Here consolation should operate not only on the intellect but also on the imagination. Therefore, in order to open all of the sufferer's senses to receiving consolation also the rhetorical manner of communication was important. As Gowland points out, by »literary-rhetorical means consolatory philosophical discourse could be addressed not just to the rational faculty of understanding, but also the sensitive power of imagination.« ²⁹

Such literary-rhetorical devices were obvious in secular Renaissance consolations concerning »worldly grief«, which were important text-types as well. Already Boccaccio (1313–1375) wrote his *Decamerone* (1349–1353) as a consolatory means in his time of pestilence and death. ³⁰ As will be seen below, similiar kinds of »worldly« consolatory rhetoric are fundamental also in early modern experimental genres like Montaigne's *Essays* (1580–1595). Writing the *Essays* was a processing of the pain after a deceased friend but also a diversion in the same vein as Boccaccio's idea of »delectable discourse«.

— CONSOLATION AND MELANCHOLY —

The relation between consolation and chronic *melancholy* (unlike sorrow and other afflictions) is a special issue. Melancholy is a different condition from grieving, since it has no cause and therefore in much modern psychiatry is seen as inconsolable. ³¹ Nevertheless, for some periods melancholy became almost a fashion. During early Modernity, melancholy was an assumed European epidemic, but the epidemic in fact was rather the widespread interest in melancholy. ³² Characteristic of melancholy is »dejection, sadness, sorrow«, and tiredness of life, often including feelings of unmotivated guilt or other delusions (false ideas). ³³ Sometimes melancholy was related to a deadly sin, that is *acedia*, generating *tristitia* (dejection, sadness, sorrow) and more melancholy. Medical historian Stanley W. Jackson emphasizes that *acedia* is no

synonym of melancholy, but neither is it a synonym of sloth. It is a condition of its own, associated with *tristitia* and melancholy, i.e. »dejection, sadness, sorrow«, and even »despair.«³⁴ For instance, Petrarch's (1304–1374) »secularized version of the condition« emphasized *acedia* as »grief, sorrow, and dejection.«³⁵ Further, »dejection about worldly matters, continued to be viewed as a sin and to evolve within the notion of *acedia*.«³⁶ In the 15th and 16th centuries *acedia* tended to be more closely related to sloth, but even then »states of dejection which might have been conceived of as *acedia* during the medieval centuries came to be viewed as melancholy.« Thus, »the continuity between the sorrow-dejection-despair aspect of *acedia* and the melancholy of the sixteenth century« is unbroken.³⁷

On the other hand, both Protestant and Catholic reform movements shared a significantly increased attentiveness to the psychological interior as the location of spiritual health.³⁸ The writing of consolations had been an important philosophical project for early Italian humanists, but the production of this type of discourse accelerated across the Continent from the later sixteenth century onwards. This was particularly the case in northern Europe after the Reformation, where the spiritual dimension of the consolation became increasingly visible.³⁹

The Renaissance has been called »The Golden Age of Melancholy« – with Albrecht Dürer's famous picture »*Melencholia*« (1514) as its emblem.⁴⁰ Yet, as Gowland observes, melancholy is a rare explicit theme in Renaissance *consolationes*. This is because traditional *consolationes* address sufferings from external causes rather than from internal mental or physical conditions. The latter was regarded as problems to be treated within the field of learned medicine, rather than the rhetorical philosophic genre of *consolatio*.⁴¹ The aim of the humanist *consolatio*, as seen above, was to offer moral guidance with rhetorical eloquence and poetic expression. Consolation in these cases meant to correct the delusions or false ideas, by philosophical argument as well as Christian guidance derived from Scripture or doctrine. Philosophy here renders the function of *medicina animi*, medicine for the soul, practiced already by Cicero (106–42 B.C.).⁴² But melancholy, according to current Galenic medicine, was a *disease* caused by a surplus of black bile, and disease is cured not by words but by herbs, that is, drugs.⁴³ Robert Burton, however, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621; 5th ed. 1651), applied both medical and psychological perspectives, but contended that life as a whole was an inescapable misery. Thus, the conclusion of his *consolatio* became a paradoxical praise of the melancholic disease as a »source of virtue, wisdom and (in some sense) happiness.«⁴⁴ In his combined medical, psychological and spiritual perspective on melancholia and in his effort to insert melancholy into the tradition of consolation, Burton is an exception of his time.

The Age of Enlightenment was not so fond of melancholy, but the interest heightened during the (Pre-)Romantic period, combining with ideas about the original genius as a necessarily suffering person – so in Edward Young, Thomas Gray, John Keats, Novalis, and even the young Goethe. In fact, it was not until the beginning secularisation of the 18th century that melancholy was regarded as an existential psychological condition in natural need for consolation. By then melancholy could be documented as an existential mood in epic poetry like Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742, 1745) and Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751). In these works, however, melancholy is not despair, but rather mindfulness, and the very act of writing seems soothing. In the early Romanticism melancholy almost developed into a fashion and the sign of a creative genius. Likewise, the phenomenon of *spleen* during the *fin de siècle* in the late 1800s and early 1900s was another expression of fashionable melancholy. In those contexts, consolation was less interesting than the suffering and its decadent consequences.

Next, I will more extensively discuss a number of examples.

— ARCHAIC CONSOLATION —

In archaic times, melancholy was an unknown concept. But suffering and consolation were not. Fundamental devices of the consolatory tradition developed long before both Christianity and Stoicism. Even rhetorical strategies were developed long before the system of rhetoric was invented. Already the *Iliad* deals with sorrow and consolation and thus anticipates the consolatory rhetorical tradition.⁴⁵ No Stoic or Christian ideologies are disturbing the lifeworld of that epic; yet, some later on recurring strategies are visible. In this heroic story, death and grieving are frequent, and consolation is adapted to the heroic lifeworld. Heroes are not callous; on the contrary: their emotions are as superhuman and violent as the heroes themselves, and this is presented as exemplary. In the *Iliad* the death of Achilles' friend Patroclus is said to be the »dramatic climax« of this epos, especially with a view to Achilles' violent reaction of grief and despair. Yet, in the context of this article I prefer to comment on another episode.

King Priam is grieving his son Hector, killed by Achilles, whom he asks to deliver the son's maltreated and desecrated body. Achilles harshly refuses, but when the vehemently crying Priam reminds Achilles of his dead father, Achilles himself starts to cry vehemently as well, both for his own dead father and for his killed friend Patroclus; and so the two hero-enemies both are crying oceans.⁴⁶ But even heroic crying has its limit: »brilliant Achilles had had his fill of tears,« and further crying is refuted with the argument that tears are useless and pity

must have an end: »Grief for your son will do no good at all. / You will never bring him back to life –.« Instead, the grieving father is recommended to eat, sleep and return to the living – like Niobe did, although she had lost *all* her twelve children.⁴⁷

These arguments would become recurrent *topoi* in much rhetorical argumentation later on. They are also a material and matter-of-fact kind of consolation that Priam finally accepts.⁴⁸ But he insists on getting Hector's dead body back, a request Achilles at last fulfils. His rhetorical strategy in persuading Achilles is *pathos*, that is, appealing to his emotions, as we have seen, especially by calling forth Achilles' similar predicament of latent grief. This is also a strategy of recognition that renders Achilles soft; it paves the way for friendly feelings instead of the hostility that the war naturally evokes. Achilles now not only delivers Hector's body, but also promises hold his troupes back for ten days until the funeral is over.

What in the end seems to be consoling here, however, is not argument or human words, but first, the free play of emotions in a limited moment of human closeness and mutual understanding; and secondly, the joint ritual of burying the body. The ritual is filled with grief, sorrow and mourning but seems to offer some kind of community, order and relief – as if Homer were acquainted with the modern concept of the »labour process« of grieving.⁴⁹

But this is not all. The rhetorical strategies of the Priam-episode not only aim at persuading within the story but also at awakening compassion and even grief on the part of the addressee. For one thing, Priam in his persuasive efforts to reclaim Hector's body reminds Achilles of his dead father and his dead friend. This way he calls forth a repressed sorrow and Achilles starts to cry – and so they are both crying, mourning their dead beloved ones. Thereby he makes Achilles emphatic and compassionate, so that he finally gets what he wants. Now, the narrative itself seems to practice same moving strategy vis-à-vis the addressee. In practice, this is the classic rhetorical strategy of *movere*, applied already in archaic times.

Secondly, the previous narrative of Hector's death is a drawn out depiction of the parent's despair while watching the fatal fight between Hector and Achilles. This depiction in turn is prepared by the detailed description of Hector's farewell to his loving wife and baby son before going to war. This scene pays attention to childish gestures like the boy's playing with the plumes of his father's helmet, and such everyday details renders the scene moving. This way, the addressee is guided into an emphatic role, prepared for a complex response during the narrative process. In the end, the addressee may accept even the unnatural reconciliation between deadly enemies that closes the narrative. The extreme character of their relation is emphasized by Priam's words to Achilles: »I have endured what

no one on earth has ever done before/ I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son.«⁵⁰ However unnatural, this conciliatory spirit is the consoling lesson of the epic, and the means of teaching (*docere*) anticipates the classic rhetorical tasks, moving and pleasing (*movere, delectare*) included.⁵¹

— RENAISSANCE AND EARLY MODERN CONSOLATION —

As an archaic anticipation of the rhetorical tradition of consolation the *Iliad* prefigures several consolatory *topoi* and arguments that in the classic era was incorporated into the system of rhetoric. As seen above, medieval consolatory rhetoric adapted the classic tradition to Christian motivations. This tendency remained and was strengthened with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. But in the Renaissance, also worldly consolatory strategies were developed. This section deals with such strategies in Boccaccio and Montaigne.

In his rhetorically embellished preface to the *Decameron*, Boccaccio emphasizes the general importance of compassion [*compassione*] and consolation [*consolazione; conforto*=comfort], not least, if you yourself have received it from others. The suffering here is the passion of love:⁵²

— 'Tis humane to have compassion on the afflicted; and as it shews well in all, so it is especially demanded of those who have had need of comfort [*conforto*] and have found it in others: among whom, if any had ever need thereof or found it precious or delectable [*piacere*], I may be numbered; [---] [Once] I had much praise and high esteem, but nevertheless extreme discomfort and suffering [...] through superabundant ardour engendered in the soul by ill-bridled desire; the which, as it allowed me no reasonable period of quiescence, frequently occasioned me an inordinate distress. In which distress so much relief was afforded me by the delectable [*piacevoli*] discourse of a friend and his commendable consolations [*consolazioni*], that I entertain a very solid conviction that to them I owe it that I am not dead.⁵³

Because of a friend's »delectable discourse« – his act of *delectare* – the narrator is now consoled and the previously painful love has turned to a delightful memory; yet he has not forgotten the pain nor »the kind offices done me by those who shared by sympathy the burden of my griefs; nor will it ever, I believe, pass from me except by death.«⁵⁴ Now is the time for payback to lovesick fellowmen, especially the ladies:

— [...] I have resolved, now that I may call myself free, to endeavour, in return for what I have received, to afford, so

far as in me lies, some solace [*conforto*], if not to those who succoured me, and who, perchance, by reason of their good sense or good fortune, need it not, at least to such as may be apt to receive it. And though my support or comfort [*conforto*], so to say, may be of little avail to the needy, nevertheless it seems to me meet to offer it most readily where the need is most apparent, because it will there be most serviceable and also most kindly received. Who will deny, that it should be given, for all that it may be worth, to gentle ladies much rather than to men? Within their soft bosoms, betwixt fear and shame, they harbour secret fires of love, and how much of strength concealment adds to those fires, they know who have proved it.⁵⁵

The payback will be in the form of »one hundred Novels or Fables or Parables or Stories, as we may please to call them,« the narrator contends, »from which stories the said ladies, who shall read them, may derive both pleasure from the entertaining matters set forth therein, and also good counsel [*utile consiglio*], in that they may learn [*cognoscere*] what to shun, and likewise what to pursue.«⁵⁶ Here consolation is supposed to be given by fictional texts, which is not too common at the period. Yet, the fictional world of the frame story points to reality, since it is set »in the time of the late mortal pestilence« affecting Boccaccio's contemporaries. That is, love is not the only suffering actualized in his foreword, but also death. Within the fictional world, the stories are told as a consoling diversion and delectation for agonized minds, fearing death. In the real world, the sufferings of a lost love are in focus, but here too the background is the horror of pestilence and death. The task of consolation here also is combined with delectation and learning.

Talking about pleasure and learning, Boccaccio links up with the classic rhetoric tradition and the fundamental tasks of that tradition: to teach and to please (*docere, delectare*).⁵⁷ A third task is to move (*movere*), and it is naturally built into these love stories: however frivolous they also turn out to be they deal with love's labour; and *recognition* is an important part of their prepared moving function and a condition of their designed consoling effect. However, among the three classical tasks, *delectare* yet seems to be the most important. The current afflictions were inexorable, and the consolation offered by *The Decameron* is the diversion and oblivion that the *delectare* of literature can mediate.

In Montaigne the essay »On Diversion« [De la Diversion] argues explicitly for this combination of distraction and oblivion as consoling:

— The same applies everywhere: some painful idea gets hold of me; I find it quicker to change it than to subdue it. If I

cannot substitute an opposite one for it, I can at least find a different one. Change always solaces [*soulage*] it, dissolves it and dispels it. If I cannot fight it, I flee it; and by my flight I made a diversion [*diversion*] and use craft; by changing place, occupation and company I escape from it into the crowd of other pastimes and cogitations, in which it loses all track of me and cannot find me.⁵⁸

Diversion, however, is not always consoling or even possible, according to Montaigne. In him, as in Boccaccio, death is a recurring topic – this inevitable end »which nothing can assuage [*soulager*]«.⁵⁹ Death frightens [*faict peur*]. Therefore, »let us deprive death of its strangeness,« Montaigne urges, »let us frequent it, let us get used to it; let us have nothing more often in mind than death. At every instant let us evoke it in our imagination under all its aspects.«⁶⁰ Writing and reflecting on death like this constituted the indirectly consolatory genre of *memento mori*, which was an exercise in handling death as the fundamental human condition.⁶¹ Writing the *Essays* for Montaigne, among other things, was also a way of handling the death of a close friend.⁶²

As for his own death, Montaigne, like many other writers, also found another kind of consolation. The »frailty and short space of this life« is painful, he writes in a letter, but »to think that it is capable of being strengthened and prolonged by fame and reputation« is yet »a great comfort [*consolation*]«.⁶³ In one essay, he also argues for this idea through an example: »When he was dying, even Epicurus found consolation [*se console*] in the eternity and moral usefulness of his writings.«⁶⁴ To Montaigne, therefore, writing the essays was a consoling project at the same time as way of overcoming death. This idea of survival in posterity is a well-known topos at least since Horace's (65–27 B.C.) Ode XXX on poetry as a monument more lasting than copper and higher than the pyramids, giving fame, renown, and eternal life to the poet. This possibility of survival through a great work is consolatory, as the poet assures himself: »I shall not wholly die.«⁶⁵ In fact, already Homer makes use of the motif, for instance when Helen sings her lament on the dead Hector, making sure »that the memory of Hector will not die with him«, that is, the memory of his heroic deeds.⁶⁶ The topos preserved its popularity and consoling function even in the Christian era but was frequent not least during the younger Enlightenment period, when secularisation was growing and the faith in resurrection weakened.⁶⁷

— ROMANTIC CONSOLATION —

The Renaissance and early Modernity involved the peak of the classic rhetorical system, consolatory rhetoric included. The subsequent weakening of the classic tradition will here be represented by a much later and most beautiful example of

consolatory rhetoric: an elegy by the Swedish Romantic poet Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793–1823). The text is number XX in Stagnelius' collection *Liljor i Saron* (Lilies in Saron) of 1819.⁶⁸ As an elegy, it is a poem of sorrow, but this elegy uses a clearly consoling strategy. Here is an English translation:⁶⁹

— Friend, in the desolate time, when your soul is enshrouded in darkness
 When, in a deep abyss, mind and feeling die out,
 Thought diffidently gropes among shadowy forms and illusions
 Heart can no longer sigh; eye is unable to weep;
 When, from your night-clouded soul the wings of fire have fallen
 And you, to nothing, in fright, feel yourself sinking once more,
 Say, who rescues you then? – What kind of comforting angel
 Brings to your innermost soul order and beauty again,
 Building once more your fragmented world, restoring the fallen
 Altar, and when it is raised, lighting the sacred flame? – –
 None but the powerful Being who first from the limitless darkness
 Kissed the seraphs to life; woke all the suns to their dance.
 None but the holy Word calling the worlds: »Let there be!«
 And in whose power the worlds move on their paths to this day.
 Therefore, rejoice, oh friend, and sing in the darkness of sorrow:
 Night is the mother of day, Chaos the neighbour of God.

As you can see, the poem addresses a Friend, a »You,« in deep distress, depicting this distress with the greatest empathy. The poet describes vividly the very physical experience of darkness, emptiness, blindness, dumbness, and suffocation. Through this empathy, he builds up an *ethos* that might make his friend listen. (Alternatively, if the »you« is the poet himself, the same words give expression to his own suffering, which is a comfort in itself.) Even rhythm and meter are here important. The meter is elegiac distich: the rhythm is falling, and with a few exceptions composed in dactyls – like a lullaby. The consoling strategy, however, is not to eliminate the distress, but to situate it into the pair of contrasts it belongs to. Thus, the poet asks the rhetorical question of a saviour, but the answer is ontological rather than religious: it reminds the suffering you of the original nothingness at the creation of the living world by the Word: »Let there be!« Light was incorporated with darkness, and in the same way distress is incorporated with joy; the extremes hang together: »Night is the mother of day«, and »Chaos the neighbour of God«; and therefore there is reason to »sing in the darkness of sorrow«.

This is the argument. But argument is of little use when it comes to despair. Yet this argument of interdependent contrasts, in fact, is a well-trying cliché of the period: John Keats used it in his »Ode on Melancholy« (1819).⁷⁰ Keats connects each positive feeling with its melancholy end. In the spirit of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Keats wished his

reader to accept melancholy as a desirable experience: joy and pain are interdependent, and to experience joy fully we must experience sadness or melancholy fully.⁷¹ Melancholy should not be avoided but endured and that would foster the sufferer. Victor Hugo's (1802–1885) aesthetics of the grotesque is built on the same idea: interdependent contrasts lead both life and art.⁷²

But within this cliché-argument in Stagnelius, a wink about the power of the »holy Word« is built in. Because of the Biblical allusion, this word could be religious, but since the poet is an »alter Deus« and a »second maker« according to another cliché, it could be profane and poetic as well.⁷³ In this second case, the Stagnelian poem may also be referring to itself and the consoling power of its own words. This power, in fact, must not always derive from argument or even words, but from artistic devices beyond words and meanings. Yet, according to classical poetics the poetic power must be built into an argumentative structure.

Argument is a rhetorical device that according to classical tradition was supposed to structure all verbal composition even in Stagnelius' romantic period. But in his time, the rhetorical tradition was weakened, and more individualistic literary devices evolved.⁷⁴ In Stagnelius, however, we can see how classical and modern traditions meet. If his elegy is consoling, it is not because of its argument, but because of his way of composing it and using the tradition. Further, the way of reading the poem is decisive. The tradition here is not general rhetoric, but that *special* rhetoric that belongs to the tradition of consolation. This is a tradition of reading as well as a tradition of writing.

— MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST CONSOLATION —

With Romanticism, the classic rhetorical tradition was weakened, and the issue of consolation became more complicated. Yet, many earlier topoi survived and a rhetoric of consolation did develop in various directions. When rhetoric returns in the late 20th century at first it is as philosophy. This rhetoric is argumentative, but topical-inventive rather than logical. That is, a central issue is how to construct new concepts.⁷⁵ In the light of this it might be relevant with a glimpse of how a few literary theoreticians and philosophers of our days – post the Holocaust catastrophe – have handled the relation between suffering and consolation. In late modernist times, Theodore Adorno (1903–1969) gives expression to a very pessimistic outlook. »There is nothing innocuous left,« he says in his essays *Minima Moralia* (1951), and the only consolation is negating the present state of things, »holding fast to the possibility of what is better«:

— The little pleasures, expressions of life that seemed exempt from the responsibility of thought, not only have

an element of defiant silliness, of callous refusal to see, but directly serve their diametrical opposite. Even the blossoming tree lies the moment its bloom is seen without the shadow of terror; even the innocent 'How lovely!' becomes an excuse for an existence outrageously unlovely, and there is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better.⁷⁶

Consolation is not in anything given, not even in a blossoming tree, since it is hiding its »shadow of terror,« he argues. Instead consolation should be sought »in the gaze falling on horror,« while simultaneously »withstanding it«. As you can see, Adorno here uses the previous paradigm of interactive opposites, but inverting the mood. To him the traditional consolatory *topos* of the closeness of opposites has turned into a constant threat: darkness is the mother of light, all right, but light in its turn is the mother of darkness, and that is what counts in Adorno's life-world. Thus, there is no other consolation than awareness of this sinister fact and courage to gaze straight upon it, ready to fight it. Not even art in this era of culture industry could or should offer consolation: »The comfort that flows from great works of art lies less in what they express than in the fact that they have managed to struggle out our existence [*Dasein*]. Hope is soonest found among the comfortless.«⁷⁷ Yet, this all-encompassing pessimism somehow seems to be its own harsh consolation. This hopeless rhetoric surpasses Stoic heroism, but this excess might seem attractive: no tears but constant criticism and resistance.

Let's finally have a look at postmodernism and consolation. Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) has manifested interest in mourning as well as in the rhetoric of the funeral oration and the obituary. He was educated in the French tradition of classical rhetoric and literature, but his own practice is a personal blending of the two.⁷⁸ Here I will comment on a part of his long funeral oration on Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). Evidently, Levinas was a close friend of Derrida, and here Derrida comments on both the friend and the philosopher. The speech is 'topical-inventive' in the sense mentioned above of trying out new concepts – in this case *adieu* – while at the same time using them in an argumentation.

Derrida starts his speech by hesitating to say *adieu* »before« his now dead friend.⁷⁹ But he continues through an argumentative »meditation« on this word, initially asking about who the addressee is. Since the addressee in fact is missing, he is no one and the direct address seems to be nothing but an expression of the end of words. Or perhaps the addressee is the mourning community for whom the address constitutes the

first part of »the work of mourning« – as it is called »in a confused and terrible expression«?⁸⁰ This way, the *adieu* that starts the mourning process might also mediate the consolation needed. Yet, mourning is indecent, and consolation out of place, since that directs attention towards the mourning self instead of the deceased Other.⁸¹ This is important, for the funeral is a rite of passage within which the deceased is somehow present. In this short moment, death has not entirely finished its work. The funeral offers the last possibility to speak directly to the deceased.

Therefore, Derrida has another idea of the *adieu*-function, not associated with mourning. His speech is related to the *oeuvre* that the dead friend left behind, reviving his own words, in this case the words of Levinas. This means that death does not »have the last word, or the first one«. ⁸² According to Derrida, the funeral task is to speak both *to* and *for* the other, *for* the deceased beloved – »before speaking *of* him,« – with *uprightness* or *straightforwardness* [*droiture*]. This is a central concept for Levinas, who called it »stronger than death«. ⁸³ But it is not a »consolation« for death. Uprightness is »absolute self-criticism read in the eyes of the other who is the goal of my uprightness and whose look calls me into question,« Levinas writes in his »Four Talmudic Readings.« Derrida continues the quotation: »It is a movement toward the other [...] beyond anxiety« and only in this sense »stronger than death.« ⁸⁴ Thus, uprightness is more than justness and honesty; it is a deep existential force of human respect, reverence and even awe, a force that takes possession of your entire being in front of the other. This is »ethics before and beyond ontology, the State, or politics, but also ethics beyond ethics.« ⁸⁵ It is *holiness*, and holy is what the other person truly is. In fact, Derrida tells us, in a private conversation Levinas declared that his main issue was not ethics »but the holy, the holiness of the holy,« especially »the holiness of the Other.« ⁸⁶ Uprightness is »a Law« in life, and as »stronger than death« it holds even in death.

Uprightness therefore is also connected to the »unlimited responsibility« for the Other that, in Levinas, »exceeds and precedes my freedom« and is my human predicament: »the absolute anteriority of the face of the Other.« ⁸⁷ This responsibility emerges as a silent call from the naked look of the other's face that you cannot escape, not even in death. It emphasizes the infinite value of the Other in his very otherness. This means that death is an irreplaceable loss with no room for consolation, but it brings a task instead. Death, according to Levinas, is not nothingness but a certain experience for the survivor, Derrida reminds us: it is the experience of »non-response« for the survivor, but therefore also of »entrusted responsibility« – for the continuing inner dialogue with the silenced Other.⁸⁸ Derrida describes his own still on-going

dialogue with Levinas' work, as well as the kind of musing that Levinas calls »question-prayer« and that »would be anterior to all dialogue«. ⁸⁹

Here Derrida gives a hint of the kind of task that the entrusted responsibility after death implies: to keep the dialogue with the Other's oeuvre alive, to care for his memory and rumour, for his after-life in posterity and the spreading of his ideas. This is what he is doing already in this funeral oration. He is not only repeating Levinas' words but also reflecting on them, telling us their great significance, himself being »overwhelmed by gratitude and admiration.« ⁹⁰ Thus, the funeral oration also is a *eulogy*, an epideictic genre, in fact originally giving birth to funeral orations and obituaries. ⁹¹ Derrida refutes consolation, but as we have seen, this idea of after-life in the posterity is a traditional consolatory topos, well-tried since both Homer, Horace and Montaigne. But in Derrida – and perhaps indirectly the Levinas he appeals to – this topos does not refer to a self-generating process but to an active effort and task. Even if Derrida holds the concept of consolation back, it in fact becomes activated in the idea of the »entrusted responsibility« that mediates a task. Doing something for the silenced Other is better than mourning, and, as again Montaigne pointed out (above): by *doing*, the mourning is distracted.

— FINAL DISCUSSION —

In this article, I have presented some examples of a manifold consolatory tradition with some recurring topoi. The main issue concerning the relation between the rhetoric of texts, literary devices, and the phenomenology of consolation has been processed by my commenting on the different kinds of consolation that various topics, devices and strategies are connected to. As we have seen, the current idea of consolation as emotional relief, mediated by empathy and compassion, is relatively late. The classical tradition of consolation is mainly argumentative and didactic, appealing to the intellect rather than the feelings. This partly depends on the view of the suffering involved. Some earlier authorities regard suffering as a condition to endure and even accept with thankfulness. Others regard suffering as an irrational condition based on a delusion or misunderstanding of the human predicament. Most complex is the discourse on the suffering of melancholy. The span is extensive: from melancholy as a sin (*acedia*), an illness or insanity to a condition of the true genius and the poet as a second creator. In modern and postmodern ethical and philosophical discourses, the idea of an all-embracing suffering tends to take over the possibility or relevance of consolation. Yet, indirectly some relief seems to be mediated by either uncompromising awareness of suffering or an entrusted task.

In sum: suffering is as old as mankind, but ideas of suffering

vary with time and culture. Likewise, also ideas of consolation vary, as well as ideas of the need and relevance of consolation. Yet, some fundamental topoi are recurring. In this diverse context, some final reflections on Stig Dagerman's argument for the insatiable need for consolation might be productive. What does it mean – *insatiable*? Dagerman does not tell. What he seeks is »confirmation that my words have touched the world's heart«, but that is »something I can never have.«⁹² Therefore, he argues, his talent is no more than »a consolation for my solitude«, that is no consolation at all, since his talent by *not* touching the world's heart should rather reinforce his solitude. At the same time he sees his individual freedom as the only authentic consolation in the misery of Life. »And so my search for freedom forever enslaves me.«⁹³ But yearning for freedom and loathing for solitude collide, and that opposition generates more suffering. His suffering, thus, seems existential and an inconsolably melancholy.⁹⁴ In this perspective, Dagerman's famous dictum in itself invites pondering.

If indeed insatiable, the melancholy need for consolation might not even be connected to a specified suffering. On the contrary, the need might precede the suffering. If so, the suffering emerges with the consolation and legitimizes the comfort. *Qua* insatiable the need for consolation might even be the suffering itself. This is no paradox but a sign of a similarly insatiable need for acceptance, empathy, closeness, and embodied existential relations. All this the consolatory act may initiate in words or gestures. Thus, the insatiable need for consolation might be a detour directed at fulfilment of this insatiable need for existential closeness – a condition that also threatens the likewise insatiable need for freedom.

Yet, a problem is lurking here. You may feel lonely, but in this world, you are not alone, for better and for worse. You may feel enslaved, but there is always something you, and just you, can do. Remember the unlimited responsibility for the Other that Derrida emphasized in his *Adieu* to Levinas. This responsibility, as said above, emerges as a silent call from the naked look of the other's face that you cannot escape. You are subordinated »to the absolute anteriority of the face of the Other« in Derrida's formulation. If so, you are always enslaved as a human being. This is harsh. In the context of Derrida's Levinas, it means that my insatiable need for consolation is subordinated to yours. Who can live in such self-effacement? Certainly not Stig Dagerman. But maybe an insatiable need for consolation could be converted into an insatiable need for *consoling* the Other. When you forget yourself, you might regain your freedom, finding yourself in the Other, without knowing whom you meet. This is no win-win, but an existential predicament. Fundamentally, our insatiable need for consolation might be not private but a yearning for the Other and our otherness. ■

■ ENDNOTES

1 Stig Dagerman: »Vårt behov av tröst« in Olof Lagercrantz (ed.): *Prosa och poesi*. (Stockholm, 1963 [1955]), 285. Trans. as »Our Need for Consolation is Insatiable« by Steven Hartman in *Little Star* 5:5 (2014), 301.

2 See e.g. the Swedish novelist Sven Delblanc in *Prästkappan. En heroisk berättelse* [The Clergyman's Gown. A Heroic Story] (Stockholm, 1963): »Nej, inte sagor. Stjärnbilder. Dessa berättelser är oss givna för att vara oss till hjälp. De hjälper oss att dikta in en mening i vårt kaos. De är varpen där vi kan fästa vår väft av futtighet och kaos, så att ett mönster äntligen träder fram. Ja, för några är de mer än sagor, långt mera. De meddelar en kunskap, en insikt, en tröst kanhända... Ett igenkännande om man så vill« [No, not fairy-tales. Star constellations. These narratives are given to us to be of help. They help us to create a meaning in our chaos. They are the warp where we can attach our weft of futility and chaos, so that a pattern at last will emerge. Yes, for some of us they are more than fairy-tales, much more. They communicate knowledge, an insight, a consolation, perhaps... A recognition if you like.] (84). Also his *Samuels bok* [The Book of Samuel] (Stockholm, 1981): »Sorg är diktens väsen, medkänsla dess uttryck. Lindra livet, trösta döden, tala sanning om vårt elände: detta är skaldens uppdrag. Allt annat är tomt pladder och ett missbruk av diktens heliga gåva.« [Sorrow is the essence of poetry, compassion is its expression. Relieve life, console death, tell the truth of our misery: this is the mission of the poet. Everything else is empty chatter and abuse of the holy gift of poetry.], (269f.). The Romantic poet John Keats was of the same opinion; see Michael E. Holstein: »Keats: The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain« in *Keats-Shelley Journal* 36 (1987), 32–49.

3 Ernst Robert Curtius: *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Ger. orig. 1948), trans. Williard R. Trask (1953), (London & Henley, 1979), 64.

4 Cf. e.g. The Norton Reader Toolbar, »Rhetorical Strategies,« <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/write/read12/toolbar/set02.aspx>, access March 1, 2016.

5 For *addressivity* see Michail M. Bakhtin: »The Problem of Speech Genres« in M. M. Bakhtin: *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eds. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin, 1986), 95–99.

6 See George A. Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill and London, 1999). Kennedy emphasizes that »Overall, poetics can be regarded as parallel to and overlapping with rhetoric. Both share a concern with style, including word choice, tropes, figures, sentence structure, and rhythm.« (136) On the (modern) opposition between rhetoric and literature, see Michel Beaujour: »Rhetoric and Literature« in Michel Meyer

(ed.): *From Metaphysics to Rhetoric*, Synthese Library, ed. Jaakkko Hintikka, vol. 202 (Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1989), 152–168. Beaujour describes the divorce in terms of the opposition between two cultural systems, built on the inherited and collective on the one hand, and the new and individual on the other (153f.). Yet he argues for the close relationship between the two arts: all literary texts have a rhetorical aspect, just as all rhetorical texts have a literary aspect (152). Without the rhetorical aspect literature would be reduced »to that which is uttered in anguish, verging on the ineffable and the incommunicable.« (155) Rhetoric without literary (poetic) aspects, in its turn, would be dull and dysfunctional (152). Beaujour also emphasizes that »a great portion of the literary production nowadays remains persuasive« but without the writers knowing it. Thus, there is a »'forgetting' of rhetoric« in literature, in spite of a continuing »rhetorical or pararhetorical« practice (156f., 159). This tendency is also evident in the fact that many »contemporary argumentative texts [...] acknowledge themselves to be 'literary'« (163). Rhetoric, in fact »is everywhere«! (165) Cf. Anthony J. Cascardi: »Arts of Persuasion and Judgment: Rhetoric and Aesthetics« in Walter Jost and Wendy Olmsted (eds.): *A Companion to Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Malden, Oxford, Carlton, 2004), 204–310, mainly dealing with Kant's rejecting rhetoric, but also with modern continuations, like rhetorically grounded theories of reader response.

7 On the concept of consolation, cf. Åsa Roxberg *et. al.*: »The Meaning of Consolation as Experienced by Nurses in a Home-Care setting« in *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, no 17.8 (2008), 1080f.

8 Serious depression may include various catatonic states and even stupor, meaning that the patient is stiff and entirely insusceptible to contact: »the patient remains completely mute and immobile, with staring expression, gaze fixed into space, with an apparent complete loss of will, no reaction to sensory stimuli, sometimes with the symptom of waxy flexibility completely developed, as in catalepsy, sometimes of a mild degree, but clearly recognisable,« (Sergio E. Starkstein *et. al.*: »Catatonia in Depression. Prevalence, Clinical Correlates, and Validation of a Scale« in *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* 60:3 [1996], 326; cf. 331).

9 See Astrid Norberg, Monica Bergsten & Berit Lundman: »A Model of Consolation« in *Nursing Ethics* VIII:6 (2000): »a changed perception of the world in suffering persons that will set their suffering 'within a pattern of meaning'« (544f.).

10 For the phenomenological concepts of *horizon* and *life-world*, see H. G. Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., rev. trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall (London & New York, 2006 [1975; German orig. 1960]): »The horizon is the

range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so.« (301); »To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion.« (304) The *life-world* is »the world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes an object as such for us, but that represents the pregiven basis of all experience. [---] As a horizon phenomenon 'world' is essentially related to subjectivity, and this relation means also that it 'exists in transiency.' The life-world exists in a constant movement of relative validity.« (239)

11 Angus Gowland: »Consolations for Melancholy in Renaissance Humanism« in *Society and Politics* VI:1 (2012), 11f.

12 Manfred Kern: »Consolation Literature« in *Brill's New Pauly*. Antiquity volumes, (eds.) Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, Brill Online, 2015, Gothenburg University Library, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/consolation-literature-ct-e1410070>, access March 10, 2015, section 2 and 3. First appeared online: 2006, first print edition: 2011.

13 Wilhelm Kierdorf: »Consolatio as a Literary Genre« in *Brill's New Pauly*. Gothenburg University Library, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/consolatio-as-a-literary-genre-e619600>, access March, 10, 2015, section A.

14 See Curtius: *European Literature*, 69, on consolatory orations as deliberative. Also Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric*: »A great deal of what is commonly called epideictic oratory is deliberative, written in an epideictic style.« (87f.) For cure, see Anna Carrdus: »Consolation Arguments and Maternal Grief in Seventeenth-Century Verse. The Example of Margarethe Susanna von Kuntschl« in *German Life and Letters* (1994) 47:2: »All consolatory writing follow a medical model, whether explicitly or implicitly, with the roles of patient and physician filled by the bereaved person and a sympathetic comforter.« (136)

15 See e.g. Ps. 94, starting in despair, »O LORD, how long shall the wicked, / how long shall the wicked exult?« (3), describing the atrocities of these evildoers and the sufferings they cause, but finally praising the Lord for his »consolation«, i.e. his promise to »wipe them out for their wickedness« (New Revised standard Version, 23). Thus, the poem simultaneously describes and performs the consoling process.

16 See further Bo Lindberg's article on consolation and Stoicism in this book.

17 Ancius Manlius Severinus Boethius: *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Joel C. Reliahan (Indianapolis/Cambridge,

2001), e.g. Book I, Meter 4:13–18, Meter 7:25–30, Book II, Prose 4:18, 21–23.

18 Thomas F. Curley: »The Consolation of Philosophy as a Work of Literature« in *The American Journal of Philology* 108:2 (1987), 343f., 355f.

19 Angus Gowland: »The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy« in *Past & Present*, no 161 (May, 2006), 104: »for Calvin, despair had a necessary and unequivocally positive eschatological function. Properly interpreted, it was a sign of the working of divine providence, part of the punishment preceding redemption that manifested itself in the afflicted conscience.« (cf. 161).

20 »[...] eyn sote honich seim in dem munde vnde eyn sote seyden klangk in den oren, eyn gheystlijk vraude in deme herten, eyn trostlijk hulpe in allen noden, [...] eyn hopenunge aller sundere [...].« In Margarete Schmitt (hg.): *Der grosse Seelentrost. Ein niederdeutsches Erbauungsbuch des vierzehnten Jahres* [The Great Consolation for the Soul. A Low-German Religious Tract of the 1400s], *Niederdeutsche Studien*, hg. William Foerste, Band 5 (Köln, Graz, 1959), 44f.

21 See Gowland: »The Problem,« 104.

22 See Birgit Stolt: »Joy, Love, and Trust. Basic Ingredients in Martin Luther's Theology of the Faith of the Heart«, Luther Colloquy Lectures 2001, October 31, 2001, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, <http://www.soundshoremia.com/joy-love-and-trust-basic-ingredients-in-luthers-theology-of-the-faith-of-the-heart-by-birgit-stolt/>, access Febr. 20, 2014.

23 Gowland: »The Problem,« 18, 106.

24 Gowland: »Consolations,« 15. »godly sorrow for sin« is Gowland's wording, although »for sin« is not literally included in the Latin formula.

25 Gowland: »Consolations,« 15.

26 Gowland: »Consolations,« 16.

27 Gowland: »Consolations,« 12.

28 Gowland: »Consolations,« 11.

29 Gowland: »Consolations,« 13.

30 Brenda Deen Schildgen: »Boethius and the Consolation of Literature in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*« in Leonard Michael Koff & Brenda Deen Schildgen (eds.): *Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question* (Cranbury, London & Ontario, 2000), 115–121.

31 See e.g. Starkstein et al.: »Catatonia in Depression«, 326, 326; cf. note 8 above.

32 Gowland: »The Problem,« 83f.

33 See Stanley W. Jackson: »Acedia the Sin and Its Relationship to Sorrow and Melancholia« in Arthur Kleinman & Byron Good (eds.), *Culture and Depression. Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder* (London, 1985), 44, 54.

- 34 Jackson: »Acedia,« 45; also 54.
- 35 Jackson: »Acedia,« 51.
- 36 Jackson: »Acedia,« 53.
- 37 Jackson: »Acedia,« 55, 56.
- 38 Gowland: »The Problem,« 103. Emphasized also in Jackson: »Acedia,« 58.
- 39 Gowland: »The Problem,« 102.
- 40 Jean Starobinski: *A History of the Treatment of Melancholy from Earliest Times to 1900* (Basle, 1962), 38.
- 41 Gowland: »Consolations,« 17.
- 42 Gowland: »Consolations,« 11.
- 43 Gowland: »Consolations,« 18.
- 44 Gowland: »Consolations,« 27.
- 45 See Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric*, chapter »Rhetoric in Homeric Poems,« 5–12. Kennedy emphasizes Homer's rhetorical strategies as anticipating the classic system of rhetoric: »Many devices of invention, arrangement, and style were clearly in use long before they were identified and named.« (11; also 8 on consolation)
- 46 See Sabine Föllinger: »Tears and Crying in Archaic Greek Poetry (especially Homer)« in Thorsten Fögen (ed.): *Tears in the Greco-Roman World* (Berlin, 2009), 25–27.
- 47 Homer: *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York, Toronto & London, 1990), verses 610–612, 644–645, 707. See commentary in Malcolm Davies: »'Self-Consolation' in the *Iliad*« in *Classical Quarterly* 56.2 (2006), 583.
- 48 See the expanded discussion in Roland Baumgarten: »Dangerous tears? Platonic Provocations and Aristotelic Answers« in *Tears in the Greco-Roman World*, 102.
- 49 See Pantelia: »Helen,« 23–26, on the function of the Greek funeral ritual.
- 50 Homer: *The Iliad*: verses 590–591. See further commentary on this Greek mentality (*oiktos* and *eleos*) by Mary Scott: »Pity and Pathos in Homer« in *Acta Classica* 22 (1980), 7f., 11f.
- 51 See further analysis in R. B. Rutherford: »Form and Feeling in the *Iliad*« in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982), 158.
- 52 Boccaccio's idea of the passion of love as the main suffering in need of consolation derives from Ovid's foreword to his *Amores*, according to Robert Hollander: »The Decameron Proem« in Elissa B. Weaver (ed.): *The Decameron. First Day in Perspective* (Toronto, 2004), 15f. Hollander argues that Boccaccio's Proem closely imitates the consoling and curing role of Ovid's rhetorical subject (19–22). In fact, she points out, Boccaccio's aim is medical rather than moral – a point connecting to my discussion of medical aspects of consolation in other parts of this article.
- 53 Giovanni Boccaccio: *The Decameron*, trans. J. M. Rigg, Vol. I (London 1903 [1353]), 1. The Italian words derive from V. Branca's critical Einaudi edition (1992). See the Decameron

Web, http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/, access July 7, 2015. Thanks to Ph.D. Ulla Åkerström, Gothenburg University, for professional help with the Italian text.

54 Boccaccio: *Decameron*, 2.

55 Boccaccio: *Decameron*, 2.

56 Boccaccio: *Decameron*, 3.

57 See Nancy Worman: »Fighting Words: Verbal Contest in Archaic Poetry« in Erik Gunderson (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric* (New York, 2009), 30. See also Pier Massimo Forni: *Adventures in Speech. Rhetoric and Narration in Boccaccio's Decamerone* (Philadelphia, 1996), 5, on Boccaccio here »following the norms of ancient and medieval rhetoric and poetics« in coupling »docere with delectare.« – »A didactic, eudaimonistic program informs the project [*Decameron*]«, Forni contends; it is »a book that will address serious concerns with the intention of bettering the mental state of its readers.«

58 Michel de Montaigne: »On Diversion« in *The Complete Essays*, Book III, no 4, in M. A. Screech (ed. and trans.): *The Complete Essays* (London 2003 [1987]). Cf. the original French, esp. the phrase »Tousjours la variation soulage, dissout et dissipe« in *Les Essais*, the Bordeaux Copy, ed. P. Villey & Verdun L. Saulnier, p. 836, »The Montaigne Project,« <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:4:3.montaigne>, access March 11, 2015.

59 Montaigne: »That to Philosophize is to learn how to die« in *The Complete Essays*, Book I, no 20. Cf. *Les Essais*, the Villey-Saulnier edition, p. 83, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:2:20.montaigne>, access March 14, 2015.

60 Cf. *Les Essais*, the Villey-Saulnier edition, Book I, No. 20, p. 86.

61 Dorothea B. Heitsch: »Approaching Death by Writing: Montaigne's Essays and the Literature of Consolation« in *Literature and Medicine* 19:1 (2000), 97.

62 Heitsch: »Approaching Death,« 97, 101–103.

63 Montaigne immediately adds: »I most heartily give in to so pleasant and favourable an opinion, which is innate in us, without a curious inquiry into the how or the wherefore.« See Montaigne: »The Letters of Montaigne, IV« to Monsieur de Mesmes, Lord of Roissy and Malassize, Privy Councillor to the King in *Works of Michel de Montaigne*, IV, trans. W. Hazlitt, ed. O. W. Wight, rev. ed. (New York, 1864 [1859]), 484. Cf. the French original in *Essais de Michel de Montaigne avec des notes* (Paris, 1834), 675. Cf. also Montaigne's criticism of the same idea in e.g. »On not sharing One's Fame« in *The Complete Essays*, Book I, no 41.

64 Montaigne: »On Diversion« in *The Complete Essays*, Book III, no 4. Cf. *Les Essais*, the Villey-Saulnier edition, p. 834.

65 Horace: *The Odes of Horace*, Book III.30, trans. John Conington, The Latin Library, http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/Horace_Odes/a/Book-III-30-Of-The-Odes-And-Carmen-Saeculare-Of-Horace.htm, access March 2, 2014.

66 Maria C. Pantelia: »Helen and the Last Song for Hector« in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 132:1 (2002), 26.

67 See e.g. Arnold Ages: »Diderot, Falconet and the Theology of Art: The Testimony of the Correspondence« in *Orbis Litterarum* 45 (1990), 214.

68 The Swedish original in Erik Johan Stagnelius: *Samlade skrifter. Andra delen. Lyriska dikter efter tiden omkring 1818. Liljor i Saron*, ed. Fredrik Böök (Malmö, 1957 [1913]), 54:

Vän! I förödelsens stund, när ditt inre af mörker betäckes,
 När i ett afgrundsdjup minne och aning förgå,
 Tanken famlar försagd bland skuggestalter och irrbloss,
 Hjertat ej sucka kan, ögat ej gråta förmår;
 När från din nattomtöcknade själ eldvingarne falla,
 Och du till intet, med skräck, känner dig sjunka på nytt,
 Säg, hvem räddar dig då? – Hvem är den vänliga ängel,
 Som åt ditt inre ger ordning och skönhet igen,
 Bygger på nytt din störtade verld, uppreser det fallna
 Altaret, tändande der flamman med presterlig hand? –
 Endast det mägtiga Väsen, som först ur den eviga natten
 Kysste serafen till lif, solarne väckte till dans.
 Endast det heliga Ord, som ropte åt verldarne: »Blifven!«
 Och i hvars lefvande kraft verldarne röras ännu.
 Därföre gläds, o vän, och sjung i bedröfvansens mörker:
 Natten är dagens mor, Kaos är granne med Gud.

69 Trans. Bill Coyle (but somewhat improved by me, BA) in *First Things*, May 2003, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2003/05/friend-in-the-desolate-time>, access May 16, 2014. Cf. John Swedenmark's literal translation, independent of meter and rhythm, in Stephen Prickett & Simon Haines (eds.): *European Romanticism: A Reader* (London, 2010), 423.

70 John Keats: »Ode on Melancholy«: »Ay, in the very temple of Delight / Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine« (in Jim Manor [ed.]: *Keats' Poetry: 4 Books* [Pennsylvania, 2012]), 314, www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/keats/keats6x9.pdf, access Febr. 20, 2014.

71 »There emerges from the clash of opposites an implicitly equal valuation of positive and negative,« according to Jeffrey Baker: »Nightingale and Melancholy« in Harold Bloom (ed.): *John Keats: Updated Edition* (New York, 2007), 63. In Burton, »everything in this shadowy world could be seen as an inversion of the luminous world beyond«, according to Angus Gowland: »Consolations,« 28.

72 Victor Hugo: »Preface to Cromwell« in E. H. & A. M. Blackmore (ed. & trans.), *The Essential Victor Hugo* (Oxford, 2004), 23f., 27f.

73 See E. N. Tigerstedt: »The Poet as Creator: Origins of a Metaphor« in *Comparative Literature Studies* 5:4 (1968), 455–488.

74 T. V. F. Brogan: »Rhetoric and Poetry« in Alex Preminger & T. V. F. Brogan (eds.), *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1993), 1049f.

75 See also James Crosswhite: »Rhetoric in the Wilderness. The Deep Rhetoric of the Late Twentieth Century« in Walter Jost and Wendy Olmsted (eds.): *A Companion to Rhetoric*, 373, 374, and 375.

76 Theodore Adorno: *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London & New York, 2005 [Ger. Orig. 1974]), §5, p. 25.

77 Adorno: *Minima Moralia*, §143, p. 223.

78 Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric* describes Derrida as »a powerful thinker, well versed in classical Greek language, literature, and rhetoric.« (298)

79 Jacques Derrida: »Adieu« in Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas (eds. & trans.), *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago & London, 2001 [Fr. orig. 1995]), 200.

80 Derrida: »Adieu,« 200.

81 Derrida: »Adieu,« 200.

82 Derrida: »Adieu,« 201.

83 Derrida: »Adieu,« 200f. Since my task is not exegesis of Levinas, my comments below keep to Derrida's exposition of Levinas without corrections.

84 Quoted by Derrida in »Adieu,« 201.

85 Derrida: »Adieu,« 202.

86 Derrida: »Adieu,« 202.

87 Derrida: »Adieu,« 202.

88 Derrida: »Adieu,« 203.

89 Derrida: »Adieu,« 204, 206, 209.

90 Derrida: »Adieu,« 206.

91 Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric*, 87.

92 Dagerman, trans. Hartman: »Our Need,« 303.

93 Dagerman, trans. Hartman: »Our Need,« 304.

94 For Dagerman's melancholy and depression from an existential analytic point of view, see Johan Cullberg: *Skapar-kriser: Strindbergs inferno och Dagermans* [Crises of Creation: Strindberg's and Dagerman's Inferno] (Stockholm, 1994 [1992]).