THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE IDEA OF THE CONSOLATORY: THE RHETORIC, ETHICS, AND MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSOLATION LITERATURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

BY

STEPHEN MICHAEL PARKIN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2019

The Idea of the Consolatory

For my wife, Jill:
constantiae amorisque praeclara.

And for my children, Lenora, August, and Cassandra:
aliquid gaudeo discere ut doceam.

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Acknowledgements

More people than can be acknowledged deserve my sincere gratitude for their support throughout the process of writing this dissertation, as well as for the educational history that undergirds it. Long before I arrived at the University of Chicago, my intellectual journey was shaped by dedicated, accomplished teachers. Ms. Brenda Millay-Mai, Mr. Mike Cantlon, Ms. Jeri Giachetti, and Dr. David Carey have left lasting impressions on all their students, myself very much included. Mr. Jonathan Knight taught me even more about resilience and moral integrity than he did about American history—and he was an excellent history teacher. At Whitman, Dr. Elizabeth Vandiver not only introduced me to classical antiquity, but became a treasured mentor, while Dr. Dana Burgess did more to shape my intellectual disposition than anyone before or since. His aside on an undergraduate paper in the distant past—"I see that *studium* is important to your argument here"—quite literally catalyzed the scholarly arc to which this dissertation belongs.

At the University of Chicago, my studies were enriched by many colleagues, mentors, students, and friends. Many thanks are due to my dissertation committee: Dr. David Wray provided the light hand and gentle guidance that I needed to complete this project, while Dr. Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer challenged, supported, and invited me to deeper insights, from my first graduate course (a survey of Latin poetry) through the completion of this project. Drs. Glenn Most and Elizabeth Asmis deeply influenced my intellectual and professional development, all for the better. My fellow Comparative Literature graduate students were a wellspring of inspiration and emotional support. From my cohort, Nana Holtsnider and Dan Olaru provided many hours of friendship, conversation, and commiseration. Through our dissertation writing group, Brian Berry, Chloe Blackshear, and Mollie McFee provided fellowship and support at a crucial time.

Chandani Patel provided friendship, wise counsel, and professional support for many years. Most of all, Monica Felix became not just a colleague, but a dear friend and spiritual companion during my time in Chicago; without our friendship, my graduate experience would have been inexpressibly poorer in every way.

Outside of my department, many people made me feel that the University was my professional home. In the Writing Program and the Chicago Center for Teaching, I found a family of colleagues as dedicated to excellence in teaching as I am. I thank the staff, directors, Lectors, and Teaching Consultants for many stimulating conversations about teaching and learning. At the Writing Program, Dr. Tracy Weiner deserves special acknowledgement for her lasting, and deeply felt, influence on my professional development. At College Housing, my fellow Resident Heads helped me maintain perspective through the trying and rewarding years at the helm of Phoenix House, while the residents of Phoenix grounded me and reminded me daily of the practical importance of education. Thanks must especially be given to Ajith John for two years of dedication, hard work, and continuing friendship.

No scholarship happens in isolation. Outside of the university, Maggie Bridger and Paul Krause provided a much needed anchor to the broader world, not to mention years of transformational friendship and unconditional love for my family. Most of all, my family deserves my deepest, everlasting gratitude. Sandi and Steve provide constant love, support, and compassion. Veronica remains my best friend: your zest for life is infectious and enriches everyone you touch. My parents, Janice and Mike, have shaped me in too many ways to count. From them I have learned, among many other things, the most important qualities in life: kindness, creativity, curiosity, responsibility, empathy, and resilience. Without the patience, love, and spiritual companionship of my wife, Jill, I would be a worse friend, a worse partner, a worse

parent—a worse person. I am in awe of your beauty, your compassion, and your strength. My love for you grows every day. And, finally, the most precious people in my life, without whom my life would not be complete: Lenora, August, and Cassandra, you have taught me how to love in ways that I never knew I could. You have brought light and divine joy into my life. I love you always and forever.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge those who financially and logistically supported my graduate education and this dissertation, including Lois and Maurice Beznos, who generously endowed a Comparative Literature fellowship, and the (sadly, now defunct) Jacob Javits Fellowship through the U.S. Dept. of Education. In addition, Steven Laney, Stephanie Oster, and Natalie Lawton provided hours of valuable writing time by helping to manage my rumpus of energetic toddlers.

Abstract

Secular consolation literature has been inadequately studied, particularly with regard to its conceptual foundations. In this dissertation, I argue against two dominant scholarly perceptions: on the one hand, that consolation constitutes a moribund genre that has been completely described in terms of defined rhetorical effects and staid philosophical arguments, and on the other, that consolation is essentially a social practice with contingent literary traces. Instead, I advance a conception of the consolatory as a vital, productive literary idea that provides unique approaches to moral questions of loss, grief, resilience, self-transformation, and value formation.

In three chapters of the dissertation, I develop a broad philosophy of consolation. First, I analyze the consolatory in terms of its rhetorical occasion, its complex audiences, the role of the consoler, and the central presence and function of empathy. Second, I analyze the first of two core consolatory functions, the therapeutic program, in terms of grief therapy and psychological resilience, and I draw on contemporary clinical research to establish a firm evidentiary basis for my claims. Third, I analyze the second core function, the moral development program, in terms of its roots in classical notions of preparation and habituation, and I describe a theoretical model of consolatory moral education that includes perspective adjustment and training in moral precepts, ethical analysis, self-critique, and moral resilience.

In the remaining two chapters, I critically examine philosophical consolations from pagan antiquity in order to both substantiate and challenge the theoretical model. The first critical chapter argues that Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife* enacts an oscillatory rhythm of shifting address from audience to audience to manage the disparate needs of the complex consolatory audience. The second critical chapter argues that Seneca's *Consolation to Marcia* mobilizes dialogic

techniques like *exempla* and *sermocinatio* not only to structure a model of grief therapy, but especially to enact a curriculum of moral education achieved through incremental adjustment of readers' perspectives. In both cases, I use the critical vocabulary synthesized by consolatory theory to advance scholarship about the particular consolations under consideration, but also to demonstrate how the consolatory plays a unique role in the formation of self-identity and the construction, or reclamation, of moral agency in consolation literature.

Finally, I conclude the dissertation by reflecting on the ontological, epistemological, and moral status of the idea of the consolatory itself, which I characterize as an ideological system that advances a comprehensive, normative vision of human life and that continues to arise in disparate literary genres, traditions, and modes.

Preface

As is so often the case with any book, I originally conceived of this dissertation in a very different form than it ultimately took. My initial proposal, in fact, focused narrowly on the role of exemplification in consolation literature. It sought to elucidate the ways that the *exempla* constructed in the consolations of antiquity seemed so often to both validate and resist the overriding consolatory goals for which they were created. As I began to research and write, I encountered small methodological and theoretical issues that I felt ought to be resolved, or at least approached hygienically, before I could continue with the detailed literary and rhetorical analysis that is my central approach as a scholar. As these small issues quickly accumulated, however, it became apparent that no consistent, thoughtful apparatus for resolving such issues existed. Indeed, no rigorous, comprehensive theory of consolation has yet been published, at least not in any way readily accessible to Anglophone scholarship.

Before long, of course, I discovered that my brief, scattered, prefatory observations about small theoretical issues had snowballed into an unwieldy hodgepodge of theoretical implications. With revision and development, I hoped that my thoughts might offer something substantial to future research into the phenomenon of consolation. It was only then that I capitulated to the necessity of outlining a philosophy of consolation. It took many months of research and reflection to develop a broad outline of that theory, which the three theoretical chapters of this dissertation present for the first time. Only after having completed that work was I able to briefly return to my initial plan to provide a rhetorically, ethically, and psychologically-informed critical analysis of specific consolations.

It was only near the end of the project that I realized the enormous methodological debt that this dissertation owes to Peter Szondi's seminal *The Idea of the Tragic,* which paired a

penetrating investigation of the tragic with a series of short, erudite essays on a variety of particular tragedies. Though I do not share Szondi's Hegelian commitments,[1] the influence of his idea of the tragic as a conceptual literary mode has indelibly shaped my own presentation of the consolatory. I am sure, too, that my own intellectual commitments—to rhetorical awareness, the benefits of empirical scientific research, and a classical notion of ethical development—surely shine through.

Like all research, then, this dissertation stands on the shoulders of accomplished scholars from previous generations, a fact that my title deliberately evokes. I will be satisfied if this dissertation makes a modest contribution to the methodological and theoretical issues that future scholars of consolation literature may face, and thereby advances our understanding of such an understudied and underappreciated literary tradition.

1. Though I do not explicitly discuss their influence, my commitments to Deweyan philosophical methods underlie the methodological framework of this dissertation.

A Brief Note on Rhetorical Terminology

The rhetorical organon[1] is composed of what can only be described as a tangled mess of overlapping technical terms in several languages, some of which generate confusion because they are used by different commentators to describe distinct or even contradictory rhetorical strategies, figures, or devices. When a rhetorical term is widely understood across literary studies, I have used it without comment: hence, metaphor, metonymy, *exemplum, prosopopoeia,* ekphrasis, apostrophe, and so forth. There are, however, a few terms that I use repeatedly whose definitions shift from source to source or which are not as well-known outside rhetorical circles. I describe those terms below. In all other cases, I have aimed at readability over excessive hairsplitting, that fatal vice of rhetorical catalogers, so I have eschewed needlessly precise terms when a somewhat more general one suffices.

Sermocinatio. A dialogic figure in which speech is represented as being delivered by someone other than the primary speaker, narrator, or author. This figure is the result of speech given by the person characterized in an instance of *prosopopoeia*. In addition to being used for dramatic effect, *sermocinatio* allows the speaker a degree of distance from the speech presented or invokes new relationships between characters within (and around) the text.

Anthypophora. Sometimes also called *hypophora,* this dialogic figure involves a speaker posing a question and then answering it. The question may be presented in another's voice (*sermocinatio*) or may be used by the speaker merely to structure her speech, to provide ornament or interest, or to anticipate objections. The figure (sometimes disarmingly) tends to portray the speaker as an ally.

1. I borrow this incisive term from Joachim Knape; see his *Modern Rhetoric,* 11-2.

Introduction

Problems in the Study of the Consolatory Tradition

Unlike other genres, consolation has not been adequately interrogated to understand the fundamental ethical, literary, and aesthetic ideas that animate it. In particular, there has been little interest in examining the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of consolation, which we might term the *consolatory*. This gap contrasts starkly with other literary formations—like tragedy, the novel, epic, or the Romantic—whose foundations have been repeatedly subject to copious, high-quality scholarship.[1] Indeed, the consolatory has rarely been analyzed in a comprehensive manner, and never with the serious, sustained interest that it deserves. Rather, consolation literature as a whole has been repeatedly denigrated and dismissed: as a minor ethical genre; as a shallow sibling to other, more consequential philosophical texts; as a dilettantish literary practice—but most of all, as a moribund genre within which little innovation or sophistication exists to draw the interest of either readers or scholars.[2] Even in those cases when scholars have turned to consolation literature, they have most often treated it as mere fodder, as if the consolatory tradition were little more than a storehouse of literary history to be ransacked for arguments or evidence in fields outside literature, including history, politics, law, society, religion, and philosophy.

This is not to suggest that high-quality scholarship on certain, limited aspects of consolation does not exist; on the contrary, consolation literature has been well-studied in other dimensions. For one, scholars have produced insightful studies of a variety of particular

1. The bibliography, obviously, is too extensive to reasonably cite here. I have in mind synoptic studies of literary types, such as Szondi (*An Essay on the Tragic*) or Eagleton (*Sweet Violence*) on the tragic, or Bakhtin ("The Epic and the Novel") and those he has influenced on the epic and the novel. The Romantic and the novel are perhaps the most extensively studied literary modes.
2. For details and substantiation, see my discussion of the history of consolation scholarship below.

consolations,[3] even if their conclusions have not led to broader insights about the phenomenon of consolation in general. Moreover, scholars—especially in the 19th century German philological tradition—have examined consolation as a historical tradition and as a catalog of rhetorical tropes and arguments, but this analysis has been highly formal, schematic, and historical.[4] Although such an inventory has contributed to the history of rhetorical technology and the sources of literary forms, it does not adequately describe the phenomenon of consolation—especially its motives and function—in a comprehensive way. At other times, the pendulum has swung too forcefully and too far in the opposite direction: when recent Anglophone scholars[5] have carefully analyzed the social, political, and historical context of various consolations, they too have more often been interested in that context and its implications alone, rather than also in the rigorous ethical, psychological, or educational aspects of the consolations themselves.[6] There exists, in other words, a gap in the study of consolation: although techniques, figures, and *topoi* have been inventoried, history and sources enumerated, specific consolations criticized, and context elucidated, little attention has been given to adequately describing the fundamental aims, means and function of the consolatory in an exacting, comprehensive way—more, that is, than

3. I mention some relevant studies below, and provide examples in the case study chapters (for studies pertaining to Seneca and Plutarch).
4. The foundational works in this tradition are also those cited ubiquitously across consolation scholarship: Kassel, *Untersuchungen Zur Griechischen Und Römischen Konsolationsliteratur,* and Buresch, "Consolationum a Gracis Romanisque scriptarum historia critica." To say that these studies have anchored—but also constrained—consolation scholarship for a century (up until the last decade, in fact) would not be an understatement.
5. And, it appears, scholars in other Western European countries; e.g. Alonso del Real (ed.), *Consolatio* (2001); Lillo Redonet, *Palabras Contra el Dolor* (2001); Baustert, *La Consolation Érudite* (2003); Chiecchi, *La Parola del Dolore* (2005), to cite a few of the broader consolation studies of which I am aware.
6. Recent Anglophone scholars have generally concluded that the consolatory is best conceptualized as a literary trace of a fundamentally sociological phenomenon, which tends to divert attention from the literary record and toward underlying social practices and attitudes toward death and healing. Most prominently, see work by David Scourfield (e.g. "Toward a Genre of Consolation") and Han Baltussen (e.g. "Introduction" to *Greek and Roman Consolations*).

simply calling it speech that aims to assuage grief and erroneously presuming that there is both consensus and extensive understanding of how it functions, and why.

To address that lacuna, this dissertation ultimately aims to develop a comprehensive analytical theory of the consolatory, and then to examine two consolations that illustrate how consolatory theory animates rhetorical, ethical, psychological, and aesthetic aspects the texts. To frame the project, this introduction first briefly discusses prior scholarship on consolation as a general phenomenon (rather, that is, than scholarship on particular consolations). In so doing, it describes fundamental problems in the study of consolation literature, and it indicates how existing scholarship has neglected to resolve these problems—and, indeed, how it has often magnified them. Next, it provides an overview of the consolatory theory that I develop at length throughout the dissertation. Then, it introduces the method that I use in interwoven case study chapters to animate the theory under development, with special discussion of how I use examples and vivid narration as a focal lens to analyze the consolatory in a given case study. Finally, the introduction concludes with preliminary comments about how a comprehensive theory of consolation resolves the problems presented throughout this chapter. (I return to this final point again, and more definitively, in the Conclusion.)

I. A Brief Review of Scholarly Approaches to the Study of Consolation

If a general theory of the consolatory has been grossly understudied, specific topics relevant to consolation literature have, in a sense, been grossly overstudied. In particular, copious commentary exists since antiquity about how to effectively address the emotions of loss (especially grief) through rhetoric, oratory, and discourse. Historically speaking, studies relevant to the consolatory might be divided into three types, each of which has been subjected to both

academic and metaconsolatory[7] treatments. The first class, studies of the emotions of loss, has the oldest pedigree, though such studies now are undertaken by philosophers, literary scholars, and psychologists more frequently than by rhetoricians or practicing consolers. The second class, catalogs of consolatory *topoi* and tropes, has received the most attention by literary scholars and especially by rhetoricians, both in modern times as well as throughout most of the history of scholarship on consolation. The third class, contextual rhetorical analyses, has been most prominent in contemporary literary and rhetoric scholarship, where studies of this type have achieved substantial rigor and insight. Even so, attention to context has frequently been a component of rhetorical analyses throughout history. In this section, I briefly describe each of these three classes and acknowledge both their strengths and shortcomings. I do not, however, comprehensively review significant individual works of academic scholarship on consolation, since recent books and dissertations have already provided such a survey.[8]

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7. Following Scourfield ("Towards a Genre of Consolation"), I sometimes find it helpful to distinguish between academic scholarship and metaconsolation:

   By "academic scholarship," I mean a research approach that does not involve actually conducting consolation or directly improving consolatory practice, but rather that involves the provision of accurate, factual accounts of such practices (and that may include discussion of any theory that underlies consolatory practice). Such research does not properly belong to the consolatory itself, but rather to its related scholarly apparatus.

   By "metaconsolation," I refer to speech that does not address an actual situation of loss (even a fictional one), but instead addresses, in general, how consolers ought to go about consoling the bereaved in different types of situations. Unlike pure academic scholarship, metaconsolation contributes directly to consolatory practice, even if its contribution largely revolves around providing strategic or compositional advice to consolers, and thus takes place outside of an immediate consolatory situation. (One should not discount the ways in which moral education may occur for non-bereaved consolatory audiences outside of an immediate consolatory situation.)

   In actual literature, of course, the two roughly-defined practices of "scholarship" and "metaconsolation" have been observed more often in the breach than the rule, especially considering that many prominent consolers, from Cicero to Joan Didion, have themselves also been prominent rhetoricians or literary theorists, and so have approached the consolatory from multiple perspectives, both practically and theoretically.

8. The best review of academic literature on consolation in general comes from Robinson's invaluable dissertation, "The Longest Transference," 17-39, which clearly, accurately, and thoroughly discusses each of the major texts from the modern academic study of consolation, including those I discuss below. Because only a few canonical studies analyze consolation in general, however, there are few works to review, so the introductions of most studies merely retread the same ground in more or less detail. Of these, the other work of greatest interest is Lillo Redonet, *Palabras Contra el Dolor,* 19-27, which focuses on studies of ancient consolation as a genre, though it too discusses the same handful of studies. Given the granularity, accuracy, and availability of Robinson's and Lillo Redonet's studies, it would not be helpful to further recycle this stale element of consolation studies.

The first—and oldest—class consists of studies of the emotions of loss. This type has an ancient pedigree, extending from ancient philosophical treatments in Crantor's *On Grief* to Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* all the way through to modern scholarly attention to the emotions of grief and loss, which have experienced a striking renaissance since the turn of the century (part of the so-called "affective turn").[9] Indeed, attention to the emotions has not only flourished in philosophy, psychology, and literary studies, but across the humanities and social sciences.[10] Insofar as studies of this type address the amelioration of, treatment for, or recovery from debilitating loss, they may be described as consolatory or metaconsolatory,[11] though many such modern studies are instead better described as academic scholarship (especially those undertaken by contemporary analytical philosophers and psychologists). Because many studies of this type, especially modern ones, tend to aim for either philosophical or psychological accuracy at the neglect of sensitive rhetorical understanding,[12] the class as a whole tends to provide useful empirical insights into the phenomenological or clinical experience of grief, even as it (generally speaking) falls short of high-quality analysis of related rhetorical technology.[13] The class's strength for the study of the consolatory, in other words, has more to do with how it elaborates possible

9. On just the general topic of emotion and ancient philosophy, for example, Robinson cites some 16 influential monographs and edited volumes, mostly from the last 15 years ("The Longest Transference," 36, n. 54). In the intervening five years, several more crucial works could be added, with more released every year. This dissertation, and the sources discussed within it, are themselves a continuing part of scholarly attention to the role of emotion in human life.
10. See, for example, my discussion of the contact between philosophical and psychological studies of empathy in Chapter One (38-54). In as different a field from my own as antebellum American history, I have been assured that affect studies are among the more popular type of current studies (Dr. Michael Woods, private correspondence).
11. Losses which are not debilitating do not require, or even allow, consolatory response (cf. 240f.).
12. Take O'Connell's dry and highly technical analytical approach to the philosophy of consolation in "Death, Grief and Consolation." (The dissertation is not recommended for insights into the consolatory.)
13. In actual practice, of course, a given study might adhere to this first, "studies of emotion" approach, but also incorporate (e.g.) contextual analysis like that pursued in third class of scholarship. That is, not all instances of actual scholarship purely exemplify the classes discussed here; rather, these classes refer to general trends in the scholarship as a whole. Nevertheless, the examples from psychiatry and social work, as discussed in Chapter 3, are good examples of how the rhetorical dimension has been lost. Indeed, even otherwise insightful works from literary scholars, e.g. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*, often face this difficulty.

grief therapy or moral development strategies rather than how it contributes to a theory of consolatory rhetorical technology.

The second class of studies encompasses catalogs of consolatory *topoi* and tropes. One branch of this class catalogs consolatory tropes, figures, techniques, and approaches. Following Joachim Knape, I refer to this branch of study as the consolatory organon,[14] since it concerns the instruments of rhetorical communication in consolation literature. This branch, which is mostly composed of technical rhetorical treatises, is characterized by its detailed study of particular, low-level rhetorical elements of consolatory discourse. Such studies, both descriptive and proscriptive, were widespread in antiquity, not only in metaconsolatory treatises like the *Tusculan Disputations,* but also in rhetorical manuals[15] and in the ubiquitous *prolegomena* (rhetorical training handbooks), both of which include highly didactic texts that often catalog the organon and provide learning exercises for students of rhetoric.[16] This same tradition extends to modernity, when—for example—mid-twentieth century scholars like Kassel[17] and Moran[18] describe consolation almost exclusively through formal, categorical rhetorical analyses of the consolatory organon.

On the other hand, this class also contains a second branch, one which emphasizes the consolatory tradition as a rhetorical configuration or genre. The genetic and generic emphasis of this branch was inaugurated in modern scholarship by Buresch's critical history,[19] which also established a clear canon of Greek and Roman works to be conclusively labeled "consolation." Many later literary critics have continued working within the generic/genetic paradigm, from

14. Knape, *Modern Rhetoric,* 3 and *passim*.
15. E.g. Ps.-Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* or Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria.*
16. See Webb, "The Progymnasmata as Practice" for an overview of the phenomenon, sources, and contemporary scholarship.
17. Kassel, *Untersuchungen.*
18. Moran, "The Consolations of Death."
19. Buresch, "*Historia critica*."

Favez's or Boyer's work on the tradition of early Christian consolation[20] to Von Moos's expansive study of medieval consolation[21] (and other studies of medieval consolation)[22] to early modern accounts,[23] especially McClure's wide-ranging book on consolation in Italian Humanism.[24] All of these studies emphasize the genetic influences that ancient consolation had in shaping medieval and modern forms of the genre. The generic approach also continues in contemporary scholarship, with the best example being Lillo Redonet's thoughtful consideration[25] of what a genre of consolation might entail,[26] though such approaches are now generally just one component of more wide-ranging rhetorical analyses. Overall, studies of the second class as a whole—of the consolatory rhetorical organon and genre-based accounts—are helpful entries in collective scholarly understanding of the particular rhetoric of consolation (and of rhetorical techniques and figures in general), as well as of literary history and influence within the consolation genre, yet such studies nevertheless generally fail to synthesize their specific findings or to convincingly connect those findings to a comprehensive theory of the consolatory.

The third, and most modern, class of studies takes a more synoptic and integrative approach to the study of consolation: it is characterized by sensitivity to the social, political, intellectual, and historical context within which (a) consolation developed and toward which the

20. Favez, *La Consolation Latine Crétienne;* Boyer, "*Les Consolations Chez les Grecs et les Romans,*" cited in Robinson, "The Longest Transference," 20-1. See also: Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy;* Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*; Beyenka, *Consolation in Augustine;* Courcelle, *La "Consolation de Philosophie."*
21. Von Moos, *Consolatio*.
22. Means, *The Consolatio Genre*; Schrock, *Consolation in Medieval Narrative;* Astell, "The Medieval 'Consolatio'"; Hultin, "The Rhetoric of Consolation." For Muslim medieval consolation, see Gil'adi, "*Sabr* (Steadfastness) of Bereaved Parents" and "'The Child Was Small.'"
23. McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation*; Langston, "Tudor Books of Consolation."
24. The book contains a helpful index of dozens of works of consolation from the period: McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation,* 287-92.
25. Lillo Redonet, *Palabras Contra el Dolor.*
26. On the other hand, many scholars blindly follow the genre criticism path—a brief perusal of recent dissertations about consolation in the ProQuest Dissertations database, for example, is enough to demonstrate how this default position continues to saturate (and dilute) consolation literature research.

consolatory is oriented.[27] The contextualist approach, which draws heavily from contemporary literary studies' disciplinary methodologies (e.g. New Historicism), examines consolatory practice through the lenses of history, culture, society, and politics, and is especially sensitive to the external pressures that have conditioned and shaped consolatory discourse in different contexts. This approach greatly expands the range of topics available to analysis and yields notable insights into consolation as a social, political, and cultural activity, yet it has also generally been too hesitant to make definitive claims about the constitutive qualities of the consolatory (or has overtly rejected the ontological possibility of such a thing on ideological grounds), most likely as a backlash against the highly formal, definitional, and strictly demarcated studies of the second class, which were dominant until the latter part of the twentieth century.[28]

In all, then, different specific aspects of consolation have been well studied. Studies of the first type have examined the consolatory's philosophical and psychological substratum. Studies of the second type have provided detailed analysis of the commonplaces, figures, and rhetorical tactics used within consolatory discourse, as well as the influences and connections between consolations across time. Studies of the third type have situated consolations within their broader sociocultural and historical context. What is missing from them all, however, is a theoretical account of the consolatory that provides a thorough account of the consolation's general

27. David Scourfield is undoubtedly the Anglophone exemplar of this type of scholarship, but other prominent examples include Han Baltussen. Recent articles on individual consolations frequently provide strong contextulist accounts, as well; I discuss exemplars in the case study chapters. Interestingly, Lillo Redonet (*Palabras Contra el Dolor)* approaches the topic contextually, but ends up circling back around to a traditional rhetorical/generic analysis, albeit a carefully elucidated and persuasive one. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric*, treats funerary ritual as a rhetorical practice, but his conclusions about consolatory rhetoric and discourse are generally inadequately precise and unpersuasive—in many ways, the book exemplifies the limits of contextualism to provide substantial insight into the consolatory itself.
28. I suspect that a general postmodern discomfort with normative or prescriptive accounts is also at play, which—in combination with the sensitivity and nuance of these otherwise excellent accounts—makes scholars hesitant to endorse a fundamentalist notion of the consolatory, even if one distinguishes between different types or degrees of that idea.

orientation and major rhetorical, psychological, and ethical strategies. Such a theory ought to integrate the theoretical, analytical, and contextual insights of the three dominant forms of previous scholarly discussion in order to synthesize a comprehensive, general theory of the consolatory. In the remainder of this dissertation, I propose the key details that such a theory would entail.

II. Overview of Consolatory Theory (Outline of the Argument)

The major goal of this dissertation is to outline a working theory of the consolatory. In particular, I describe such a theory in Chapters One, Three, and Four. (The intervening chapter takes up a case study.) As established above, any effective theory of the consolatory ought to account for the formal, rhetorical, and historical components of consolations such as those examined in previous scholarship, but also ought to describe the general motivations, goals, procedures, and techniques by which the consolatory functions. An adequate theory of the consolatory also ought to respond to theories of loss articulated by allied disciplines, such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, history, and social work, which incorporate clinical evidence-based insights into the ethical, literary, and rhetorical analysis accomplished through literary theory itself. Moreover, consolatory theory ought to distinguish the consolatory from other aesthetic responses to loss, including such modes as the tragic, the elegiac, and the gothic, to name just a few. Finally, a complete theory of the consolatory must respond to previous theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon, including both modern claims and historical metaconsolatory analyses, such as those found in contemporary scholarship on the one hand, and those found in e.g. Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations,* on the other. Throughout the three theory chapters, I develop a theory of the consolatory that meets these benchmarks, and which I hope

may be used as a foundation upon which to further articulate and develop a rigorous philosophy of consolation.

Ultimately, I conceive of the consolatory as a literary-rhetorical practice that is aimed at the creation of resilience and that entails both therapeutic and moral developmental programs. The consolatory is intrinsically structured for a complex audience, both those currently reacting to loss and also those preparing for inevitable future losses. Furthermore, in both its therapeutic and its moral developmental aspects, the consolatory pursues some (but not necessarily all) of certain practical positive outcomes. These outcomes are both psychological and moral: on the one hand, the amelioration of grief, the successful and ongoing restructuring of one's form of life, and the construction of psychological resilience against future loss; on the other, an optimal moral orientation toward loss, fluency with techniques of preparation and adaptation, and the ability to resist catastrophe and to regain agency in the face of strong emotion (a capacity that I term "moral resilience"). In total, I argue that these outcomes, from both the grief therapy and moral development programs, fall under a general rubric of resilience. Finally, I argue that the idea of the consolatory is flexibly immanent in a variety of texts and contexts. I conclude that the idea of the consolatory may be considered to be not only a complete philosophical system in itself, but also a self-contained ideological system that advances a holistic, normative vision of human life. In this way, consolatory ideology is itself humanistic.

In the first chapter, I address the large-scale rhetorical situation and occasion for consolation. I argue that the consolatory is fundamentally a literary-rhetorical phenomenon, and I describe the assumptions that accompany such a premise. Then, I describe a typology of consolatory audiences, who together form consolation's characteristic complex audience. The complex audience includes several types: the bereaved, who grapples with current loss and grief,

and who includes the direct, literal addressee of a consolation as well as those who have suffered more or less similar losses; the philosopher, who approaches consolation through the lens of ethical self-improvement, study of the emotions, and similar rational concerns, and who includes both critical interlocutors as well as students of ethics; and the literary reader, who engages with the aesthetic, thematic, or creative aspects of consolatory texts. Importantly, each of these three types of audience not only approaches loss from different perspectives and holds different interests, but also uses consolation for different practical purposes, a fact that implies audience-specific criteria for what constitutes effective consolation. Next, I analyze the distinction between the author and the consoler-persona, and I suggest that different consolatory occasions require that the persona be developed in different ways, which has a strong effect on the resulting tone and approach that a given consolation might take. Subsequently, I address the complex, crucial role that empathy plays within consolation. In particular, I conceptualize a pair of interrelated forms of empathy, rhetorical empathy and receptive empathy, that have similar mechanisms, but very different purposes, within consolatory theory. Finally, I situate the consolatory as an idea (as an abstraction from real, concrete consolations), and I introduce crucial questions about the consolatory's status in regard to genre definitions and to other literary modes. (I briefly pick up and further develop these questions in the Conclusion.)

In the following theory chapters, I discuss what is involved in the consolatory's two crucial, related programs, grief therapy (Chapter Three) and moral development (Chapter Four). The therapeutic program aims to ameliorate the bereaved's grief, while the moral development program aims to help the audience better understand grief and be better prepared to resist it. Ultimately, I argue that both aim to increase the audience's resilience, whether to present or future losses.

On one hand, I argue in the grief therapy chapter that consolation cannot be reduced to "therapy alone," as has often been the case, but I also maintain that the therapeutic function is an essential and effective aspect of the consolatory. The chapter takes an uncharacteristic approach in literary studies: I review and discuss the empirical science of grief therapy from psychology, psychiatry, social work, and sociology to argue that the consolatory engages in rigorous, effective clinical treatment for present grief. In particular, consolatory theory acknowledges that grief involves oscillation between focus on loss and on recovery, that it is an ongoing (lifelong) process that results in a new form of life for the bereaved, and that psychological resilience is an outcome of the experience. The psychotherapeutic strategies and techniques found in effective consolatory discourse instantiate these principles. In conjunction with the extended discussion of empathy in the first chapter, this chapter thus explores the moral psychology of consolation literature and argues that grief therapy is a core function of the consolatory.

In the moral development chapter, on the other hand, I argue that the consolatory has a fundamental educational orientation. In particular, I suggest that the consolatory aims to enrich the moral development of its audience, whatever their stage of development, so that they are better equipped to mitigate the deleterious effects of loss and grief on their moral lives. First, I discuss the underpinnings of the moral development program in ancient philosophy, which stresses the roles of preparation and habituation against future adversity. Next, I analyze the components of consolatory moral education, including the development of ethical self-awareness and the proper understanding of grief and loss; the understanding of moral precepts to guide one's response to adversity; the rectification of errant emotions and beliefs; the tools to continue pursuing right action; and an increased commitment to moral values. Finally, I comment on the

normative ethical texture of the moral development program and describe it as a complementary approach to the personal, therapeutic orientation of the grief therapy program.

In the end, a theory of the consolatory is worthwhile. Not only does it address a substantial lacuna in scholarly understanding of moral literature, but it also describes a comprehensive alternative response to ethical problems that subvert, transcend, or stand in tension with other modes of understanding the world, not least of which are the tragic and the Romantic.[29] Consolatory theory thus has stakes not only for scholars of the minor literature itself, but also for literary scholars working on ethical and aesthetic issues in related fields. Moreover, a rigorous theory of consolation illuminates the ways that the phenomenon has manifested over time, from classical secular consolation through medieval and early modern Christian consolation into contemporary trauma literature, memoirs of loss and displacement, and even popular philosophy in the form of self-help, autobiography, and "literary nonfiction" of other sorts. Finally, the consolatory provides insights which serve to further develop and enrich theoretical models of grief, resilience, and personal growth prevalent in other disciplines, especially in psychology and sociology.

III. Case Study Methodology: The Lens of Examples and Vivid Narration

This dissertation includes two case studies, one following the theoretical chapter defining the consolatory and discussing consolatory empathy, the other following the chapters on the therapeutic and moral development functions. The two case studies provide examples of how

29. The tragic is a particularly interesting case because it is not obviously an alternative ideology about death, in the way that e.g. the epic, the elegiac, the romantic, or the gothic are. Rather, it is in some ways a complementary response to the consolatory. See the final section of this chapter for further commentary.

consolatory literary criticism may be enriched by the concepts, principles, and criteria developed by the theory.

In selecting the case studies, I have adhered to a few principles. First, the case studies examine a small amount of material drawn from canonical philosophical consolations from antiquity. For one, the selection of cornerstone consolations allows me to demonstrate how the theory developed here may be productively applied even to those consolations that have been the subject of extensive, high-quality criticism, which in turn suggests the value of consolatory theory to contemporary scholarship. In addition, an emphasis on limited selections from the consolations is pragmatically useful; since the bulk of this dissertation is concerned with elucidating consolatory theory, there is simply not enough space to develop full, nuanced criticism of even the two consolations chosen, each of which could easily be the topic of a dissertation in its own right. Future projects will be required to provide the comprehensive analysis that these and other consolations deserve. Finally, the selection of consolations from antiquity depends on my own disciplinary training and affiliations; as a student of rhetoric and literature, my own interests bend toward antiquity, so I have chosen the case studies accordingly.

Secondly, my approach to the case studies is not merely anatomical: the case studies aim to do more than carve up and label the material according to the critical vocabulary developed by the theory. Rather, the case studies use consolatory theory to answer a set of questions about a central topic in consolation literature: the use and role of examples, personification, and other forms of vivid narration. As has been noted, examples are a common rhetorical feature of consolation. Along with related devices of vivid description, personification, and so forth, examples are a locus of exhortation, commiseration, challenge, reproach, and—in short—the full range of consolatory force. As such, they are a particularly rich site for analysis.

In both of the case studies, then, examples (and related techniques of vivid description, narration, and dialog) provide material for analysis. There are two pragmatic benefits of this approach: first, because of examples' ubiquitous role in consolation, they are particularly well-suited to being analyzed in terms of consolatory theory. Second, and more to the point, there is a substantial body of scholarship about examples in consolation. Indeed, where previous development of consolatory theory has withered, scholarship on consolatory examples has flourished. As such, an emphasis on examples allows the case studies to engage with current scholarly debate. The case studies chapters, therefore, frequently reference contemporary scholarship on specific consolatory examples and other techniques, much of which is of exceedingly high quality. By engaging with this material, and particularly by demonstrating how consolatory theory enriches analysis of consolatory examples, the case studies vividly show the value of consolatory theory.

The first case study (Chapter Two) focuses on Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife* (Plut. *Cons. Uxor.*). In response to perennial scholarly discussion about the public versus private nature of the text and its ultimate aim, I argue that consolatory theory provides insight by closely analyzing how Plutarch figures empathy in the text and how he constitutes and addresses various consolatory audiences. The text, I argue, exhibits a characteristic oscillatory rhythm by which Plutarch shifts focus from one audience to another in order to manage the competing interests of different audiences. Although the baseline rhythm of the consolation is itself effective, I also identify two pairs of *exempla* (among other techniques) that allow Plutarch a rare opportunity to multivalently address his entire complex audience.

The second case study (Chapter Five) focuses on Seneca's *Consolation to Marcia* (Sen. *Cons. Marc.*). The consolation argues that Seneca uses architectural *exempla* and *sermocinationes*

throughout the consolation in an explicitly educational way, but one that aligns with an implicit model of grief therapy in the consolation. First, two major structural *exempla,* Livia and Octavia, are adduced to constrain the field of imaginative possibility within which readers can conceptualize the situation of loss; second, that field of possible moral response is refined and made more complex through the use of clarifying *exempla* and a *sermocinatio;* and third, a set of personalized examples leverages emotional attachment to compel intellectual and behavioral adherence to consolatory outcomes of therapeutic healing and developmental growth. At the same time, the model of therapy and education constructed across these three rhetorical stages itself forms a model for study and practice for those using the consolation as a *meditatio,* and thus functions as a catalyst for the development of both psychological and moral resilience.

IV. Continuing Questions

Throughout this dissertation, two topics are posed that cannot be followed through within the scope of consolatory theory itself. The first relates to the status of the consolatory as an idea; the second, to the status of the consolatory as a literary mode. If the philosophy of consolation as outlined in the dissertation is persuasive, then the consolatory idea ought to be interpreted as a composite abstraction derived from analysis of actual consolations, but one which is flexibly expressed in real-world consolations according to the demands of local context. Although it is necessary to resist hypostatizing the idea, it is also the case that the concept of the consolatory ultimately advances a normative vision of human life, given that it promotes the conceptual strategies and technical components of an effective, comprehensive response to serious cases of loss and distress. As I argue in the Conclusion, consolatory theory therefore functions not only as an analytical toolkit, but indeed as a philosophical system in its own right, and in fact even as an

ideological system. As such, it entails a vision of human life quite different than that implied by other conceptual literary modes, even those (like the tragic) that likewise respond to death or loss. Of all such literary modes, the consolatory has perhaps received the least attention, despite its insightful observations about the psychology of empathy and grief, its innovative ethical recommendations, and its sophisticated mobilization of examples and vivid narration to effect rhetorical change. It is my hope that this dissertation not only establishes a critical vocabulary of productive concepts felicitous to the analysis of consolatory texts, but also that it demonstrates how literary criticism rooted in rigorous consolatory theory improves interpretations of particular consolations and thus contributes to the ongoing rehabilitation of consolation literature.

Chapter 1.

The Consolatory Situation:

Occasion, Audience, Consoler, Empathy, Idea

Having established the need for a rigorous theory of consolation, I begin here to establish such a theory. In this first chapter, I outline the major, high-level rhetorical components of consolatory theory. First, I discuss the accepted characteristics of consolation that form the premise for my later arguments. Next, I develop a typology of consolatory audiences, and I argue that these possible audiences exert pressure on the possible rhetorical devices and approaches available to consolation, a topic to which I return in each of the case studies. Then, I theorize the role of the author and the consoler's persona, and I argue that different consolatory occasions require different approaches to the development of the consoler persona. Having established the major characters in the drama, so to speak, I then address the complex, crucial role of empathy in consolatory theory. Finally, I conclude by framing my notion of the consolatory as an idea, but one that is variably and flexibly expressed within different discourse situations. In this way, the consolatory does not point toward a fixed genre or a formal idea, but rather a composite ideal that is not only expressed in, but also itself shapes, both consolation proper and also other related modes of discourse.

I. Prelude: Defining the Consolatory Occasion

At the outset, it is worth establishing a few of the premises that underlie my conception of the consolatory, but that will not be critically examined in the course of my explication of consolatory theory. In particular, I would like to make a few observations about the rhetorical occasion for consolation. In referring to these as observations, I mean to deliberately identify

them as generally accepted facts of the matter. (The final two points, however, are sometimes contested, so I provide support for and elaboration of them in the first part of this dissertation.) Specifically, I assert that consolation, as it is widely understood, consists of the following characteristics: consolation (1) addresses a situation of loss (2) that is accompanied by pain, distress, ethical malady, or maladaptive behaviors, and (3) that aims at recovery (4) by means of a dynamic process (5) that is both a sort of activity, as well as a literary record of that activity, and (6) that is both privately and publicly oriented, meaning that it simultaneously displays characteristics of both personal address (e.g. personal details) and popular discourse (e.g. public-facing rhetoric). Ultimately, these characteristics compose an initial definition of consolation that I extend as I establish a philosophy of consolation. I unpack these characteristics below.

First, the consolatory deals with situations of loss. The loss described may be of many types, including exile, disability, impoverishment, loss of reputation or station, loss of liberty, and so forth.[1] The paradigmatic case, however, has always been death, perhaps because it is seen as such a universal part of human moral and emotional life. Like many others, I tend in this dissertation to use the language of bereavement when discussing consolation, even when that language is metaphorical. Hence, I prefer to use the term "bereaved" to refer to the addressee of a consolation rather than a more tortured term of art like *consolandus,* even in those situations where the loss is not a literal bereavement. In any case, it is worth noting that the nature of the loss suffered will, of course, substantially inflect the content, tone, and style of a consolation. Under the umbrella of consolation, then, there exist different families or species of consolation, based on—among many other things—the nature of the loss suffered.

1. The list given by Cicero is cited ubiquitously in the scholarship: *de paupertate... de vita inhonorata et ingloria... de exsilio, de interitu patriae, de servitute, de debilitate, de caecitate, de omni casu in quo nomen poni solet calamitatis* (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.34.8).

Second, consolation only appropriately deals with serious losses, specifically those accompanied by pain, suffering, distress, ethical malady, or maladaptive behavior. The loss, in other words, must be problematic for the bereaved. On one hand, losses may be problematic when their emotional force interferes with the bereaved's emotional wellbeing—that is, when the bereaved becomes pathologically distressed or cannot easily recovery from the emotions of loss. Paradigmatically, this includes the death of a loved one when the bereaved subsequently becomes depressed or even suicidal. On the other hand, losses may also be problematic when they interfere with the bereaved's identity, agency, or ethical conduct, such as when an exile struggles with her self-conception following the loss of a community that she considered constitutive to her identity, or when a blinded artist turns to substance abuse because she is no longer being able to paint, an activity that was formerly an important component of her way of life. Consolation, to put it the other way, is not typically concerned with losses that do not have a strong and ongoing effect on the bereaved's wellbeing, like how most people might respond to losing a quarter from their pocket. In situations of loss that the bereaved does not find serious—that is, emotionally or ethically problematic—consolation is simply not a coherent response. Such situations are, as it were, out of bounds for consolatory discourse or practice.[2]

Third, and relatedly, the nominal telos of consolation is recovery, whatever that might mean in specific consolatory situations. (Indeed, its meaning varies for a given consoler and bereaved on a given occasion with respect to given contextual factors.) I say "nominal" because it turns out, on close examination, that a deeper telos animates the consolatory. (I discusses this telos, resilience, in Chapters Three and Four.) Nevertheless, the superficial, nominal, or

2. This claim turns out to have interesting implications for consolatory theory. Those implications, however, transcend the specific topic of this dissertation, so I discuss them somewhat speculatively in the Conclusion (cf. 240f.).

presumptive occasion for a consolation always involves recovery; if a discourse casts aside the pretense of recovery as telos, it becomes something else. That something else might closely orbit the core concept of consolation, but it ultimately is other: metaconsolation, rhetorical instruction, philosophical treatise, or the like.[3] In short, just as when loss is not attended by pain, suffering, distress, or maladaptive behavior, consolation proper is simply not a coherent response to a situation that does not presume to catalyze or otherwise entail recovery.

Fourth, insofar as consolation aims at recovery, it is a dynamic process. Ideally, consolatory arguments, counsel, and rhetorical intervention work in tandem to advance this process. Broadly speaking, then, consolatory rhetoric is motivational, and thus partakes of rhetorical exhortation and paraenesis: that is, it aims to cause changes in thinking, behavior, emotion, and values. Notably, this motivational process is responsive, which means that consolation engages sincerely with the professed (or imputed) needs and concerns of its various audiences.

Fifth, consolation is both an activity and a type of discourse. Specifically, the (disparate) variety of texts called "consolation" are conceptually related insofar as they form the residue of consolatory behavior. That is, the essence of consolation consists not in a record of words spoken or written, no matter how carefully crafted they may be as a literary artifact, but rather in the activity of formulating and presenting reasons, ideas, images, and so forth—discourse, in other words—in order to promote recovery for the imputed bereaved (real or contrived) who is

3. These other things are part of the consolatory's constellation—they are all part of a larger family of philosophical discourses about loss, grief, ethics, and recovery—but they become something conceptually distinct when they adopt other concerns, topics, or *teloi*.

   Note, too, that my claim here is neutral about whether consolation may actually *achieve* recovery, and even about whether the consoler's commitment to enabling recovery need actually be sincere. So long as consoler and audience cooperatively pretend that the superficial occasion for consolation is recovery, my assertions here hold. To what extent the nominal situation holds true or might instead be insincere, of course, is an intriguing avenue of investigation in the criticism of particular consolations; see, for example, Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy* on Boethius.

experiencing pain, distress, ethical malady, or maladaptive behavior resulting from a substantive moral loss.

Sixth, consolation proper must be both a private and a public type of activity. Consolation is private insofar as it involves a (more or less personally developed) consoler who addresses a specific (more or less developed) bereaved who suffers from a loss in a personal, individual, idiosyncratic way. If the personal nature of consolatory address is neglected, the resulting discourse slides, once again, into the constellation of allied modes of discourse like parable or philosophical treatise—conceptually speaking, it begins to become something other than consolation.

At the same time, consolation literature is not, at its core, a merely private, familiar affair, even though it may exclusively adopt the finery of private discussion from time to time. Rather, consolation is always (at least potentially) public.[4] This is because of the ethical component of consolation, which I describe below:[5] consolation makes recourse to ethical argumentation, which—as a form of reasoning—is explicitly available to the public. That is, consolation is always potentially relevant and accessible to the public: it doesn't merely provide private solace in the way that, e.g., a letter of condolence might, but it rather addresses situations that are broad enough to potentially interest at least substantial parts of the broader public. Indeed, I assert—perhaps controversially—that consolatory rhetoric is indelibly shaped by the constant ghostly presence of various possible (and likely!) public audiences.

4. I make a weak argument here for the public nature of consolation, but a stronger argument could be defended—after all, virtually all texts that are conventionally called "consolations" have been formally published, and so are *explicitly* public. That is, the relationship between literature and a public audience provides a defensible ground on which to argue that consolation is necessarily and inherently public.
5. See Chapter Four (135-176).

In summary, then, I take the following characteristics of consolation to be basically uncontroversial: it is an activity, and the developed literary record of that activity, wherein a consoler addresses an imputed bereaved who is suffering from pain, distress, ethical malady, or maladaptive behaviors resulting from a substantive moral loss, and who aims, through the deployment of both privately and publicly-oriented motivational rhetoric, to promote a dynamic process of recovery in the bereaved. Although I develop these initial characteristics below and follow up on their implications, I treat them as accepted premises throughout my explication of consolatory theory in this dissertation.

II. Consolation's Complex Audiences

Consolations are intrinsically rhetorical. This means that they are substantially oriented around an effort by a consoler to use socially acceptable, strategic communication to effectively achieve a given goal in a practical, social situation.[6] But consolations are also inherently ethical and literary. This means, on the one hand, that they mobilize reasoned argument to solve problems in human experience, and on the other, that they are aesthetic texts that transcend practical social, political, or historical goals, and which stand on their own as artistic artifacts at a partial—perhaps even playful—remove from lived reality. As a result, a study of the consolatory faces an immediate crux: a rhetorical audience is different in type and function from an ethical audience, and a literary audience is yet different. Indeed, the role of rhetorical audience implies a strong investment in a relevant, practical issue, whereas an ethical audience is engaged by reasoned moral argument, and literary audiences are oftentimes invested in explicitly impractical issues, such as aesthetic concerns like enjoyment/appreciation, creative expression, thematic or

6. This definition is unpacked by Joachim Knape in *Was ist Rhetorik*?

symbolic representation, or immersion in fiction. The consolatory, then, must account for the seeming incompatibility between the interests and needs of these strikingly different kinds of audience.

Consolatory theory answers this difficulty by asserting that a complex audience is, in fact, a special feature of consolation, one that is both intrinsic to its nature and indispensable to its function. In particular, I argue that the consolatory addresses three potential types of audience role:[7] the bereaved, the philosopher, and the literary reader. The bereaved typifies those audiences who identify with the addressee of a consolation, including the literal addressee of the text, as well as audiences who more distantly identify with the facts or circumstances of the loss. (I call these more distant audiences the "metonymic bereaved.") The philosopher typifies those audiences who engage with consolation not because of personal identification with a loss, but out of ethical concerns including self-development, moral preparation for loss, psychological interest in grief and mourning, and other rational considerations of the phenomenon of loss, grief, and recovery. Finally, the literary reader typifies those audiences who engage with a consolation as a literary artifact and whose concerns involve the aesthetic, thematic, and creative aspects of the text. Each of these types of latent audience role entails different expectations and needs, but the consolatory—whether instantiated in a particular consolation or deployed as a mode within a different, broader artistic context—generally offers something of value to each of these audiences. (If it doesn't, and instead explicitly excludes one or more of these audiences, it is usually appropriate to consider the text to be a limited expression of the consolatory. I return to this line of argument at the close of this chapter.) Nevertheless, particular consolations frequently privilege

7. Actual audiences, of course, will be characterized by their real, complex characteristics. The schematic typology here is exactly that—an abstract characterization of the broad categories of audience that analysis of consolation reveals. See the discussion on the following pages.

one or more possible audiences by attending more comprehensively to the needs or concerns of that type. In all, the multiplicity of audiences is a distinctive feature of the consolatory: as a result of the three basic audience roles (and their family permutations), a consolation functions simultaneously as a rhetorical, philosophical, and literary text.

It is important to note that my notion of audience here refers to audience types, not to the actual members of a given audience, who will of course each bring idiosyncratic motivations for reading a given consolation, and who may thus find their motivations in alignment with any of the three audience types. Each of the three types is exactly that: a broad conceptual type consisting of a set of coherent characteristics, especially motivations and interests, abstracted from common readerly characteristics. Sometimes an individual actual reader might have interests that strongly align with just one of the types that I describe here, but more commonly readers will be moved to read a given consolation by complex, heterogenous, changeable motivations, as well as by heterogenous experiences and interests that may be leveraged in a variety of ways by a skilled consoler. When I describe a consoler as addressing a given audience type, then, I am indicating that the consoler is addressing those who sufficiently—but more or less strongly—share an affinity with the motivations, interests, and needs of that type. Conversely, when I refer to one of the consolatory audiences, I am deploying a convenient critical shorthand to indicate an *ad hoc* group of actual or potential readers who are sufficiently engaged by the characteristic motivations of the given audience type so as to consider themselves to be target addressees of the consolation at that moment. In short, then, any real reader will consider her

interests to align with one, two, or all three audience types, depending on her individual position.[8]

Because of their differing concerns, each type of audience will be affected by different strategies of address. As a result, for a consolation to be effective, it must deploy compositional approaches that will be successful for all addressed audiences simultaneously, which leads the consolatory to be dominated by select rhetorical figures and types of literary expression. In particular, the consolatory's multiplex audience responds best to dramatic narration, personification, metaphor, and exemplification. I discuss the specifics of these compositional strategies throughout the case studies (Chapters Two and Five). Here, I analyze the different types of audiences to explain their special needs and interests, and I suggest how those concerns lead, generally speaking, to certain modes of address. Ultimately, I aim to demonstrate how the consolatory's complex total audience structures its other fundamental, underlying characteristics, which I continue to explicate throughout this chapter.

Consolations proper, as a rule, are addressed to the bereaved. In many cases, the bereavement is literal—death or exile, for example—but at other times it is a different sort of loss.[9] In any consolation, the literal bereaved is always a relevant audience (and is almost always the explicit addressee of a consolation), even in those (perhaps not uncommon) cases where the "literal" bereaved may actually just be a fictional construct. Even when the literal bereaved is presented as a contrived, fictional justification for a consolation, however, consolation addresses the facts of the loss *as if* they were true, which makes the relevance of the literal bereaved

8. Any reader with an intrinsic interest in reading a consolation must feel *some* affinity with at least one of the audience types—otherwise a consolation will not be able to provide any material to engage her, and thus will furnish no reason for her to continue reading. Readers *without* an intrinsic interest in reading—the "high school student" type, say—are beyond the scope of consideration here.
9. Cf. 19 n. 1.

impossible to neglect.[10] Therefore, in any analysis of a consolation, the literal bereaved is a key audience role.

At the same time, consolations are never merely addressed to the literal bereaved, but rather are also relevant to those who have been bereaved in similar ways and who thus identify with the situation of the literal bereaved. I call this audience role the metonymic bereaved. Indeed, it is impossible to limit the bereaved role to the literal bereaved; even in the most private letter of condolence, never intended for another's eyes, the forms of consolation offered will be largely relevant to those who have suffered similar bereavements. This occurs because the consolatory addresses widely shared human experiences, namely the pain of loss and grief. Insofar as it addresses shared human experiences, then, the consolatory is always potentially relevant to others who have suffered similar bereavements.

In fact, a given consolation may be said to address multiple types of metonymically bereaved individuals. For example, a consolation written to a mother regarding the death of a son will take that particular mother as its literal audience, who has a special role to play regarding the rhetorical structure and composition of the consolation. But a range of metonymic bereaved will also be implied: most strongly, other similar mothers who have lost similar sons in similar manners, and then—with each concentric circle resulting in weaker identification with the literal bereaved—other mothers who have lost sons, and other mothers who have lost children, and other parents who have lost children, and other individuals who have lost family members, and so forth. In other words, it is possible to describe a metonymic bereaved in terms of their empathic distance from the type of loss addressed by a given consolation, with a given

10. In this way, consolation is akin to autobiography, whose central conceit is that the audience must accept the narrative *as if* it were more or less real and true, despite the (well-acknowledged) literary distortions deployed in such writing. At stake, in other words, is a fundamental, mutual assumption of authenticity.

fact of loss implying concentric ripples of increasingly attenuated identification of metonymic bereaved with literal bereaved. Within any given consolation, therefore, the consoler may choose to more or less broadly address a range of metonymic bereaved, but regardless of how much they may explicitly attempt to limit the reach of the solace they offer, other potential metonymic bereaved will identify more or less closely with the literal bereaved, and thus will thus remain more or less rhetorically relevant.[11]

Why does this explication of degrees of metonymic bereavement matter? In short, as is the case with all rhetorics, the rhetoric of the consolatory is shaped by the audiences to whom it is (potentially as well as actually) addressed. The range of bereaved individuals, from literal to metonymically distant, imposes constraints on the forms and instruments that a given consoler may deploy, and thus these audiences shape the possible forms and instruments of the consolatory itself. In particular, because the consolatory is always rhetorically relevant to a range of bereaved individuals, it must fundamentally use rhetorical instruments—figures, procedures, structures—that are likely to be effective for the complex audience of bereaved. As I demonstrate throughout the case studies, the consolatory is fundamentally associated with rhetorical instruments of dramatic narration, which are themselves especially well-suited to addressing a range of direct addressees and to representing truths in a way that is relevant, intelligible, and perceived to be authentic to such groups.

11. It is also possible to distinguish a subcategory of distantly associated readers, those who may not have a direct empathetic connection to a bereavement, but who nevertheless are sympathetically moved by entering into and understanding the perspective of the literal bereaved. I assert, however, that purely empathetic readers of consolation are rare; in virtually all cases, this type of motivation is secondary to one of the primary motivations outlined in this section. (In particular, this type of reader is often associated with—and better described as—the literary reader type.) I discuss this in greater detail below in both this section and the later section regarding empathy.

There are, of course, additional dimensions to the total consolatory audience beyond the bereaved. Consolations not only address a literal bereaved, but notably also address those who have not yet suffered a relevant bereavement (even distantly), but who are instead interested in consolation for different reasons. The other two types of audience—philosophers and literary readers—do not, as types, empathically identify with the bereaved,[12] but rather are engaged by different aspects of consolatory rhetoric.

By definition, consolation never provides comforting words (or images) alone, but rather also advances reasons that teach or motivate the bereaved how to recover. Thus, in the moment that a consolation transitions from a letter of regret ("I'm sorry for your loss...") to a consolation proper ("Yet, here are reasons to limit your mourning..."), that consolation becomes an instance of philosophy, whose distinctive characteristic, after all, is the utilization of rational argumentation and thought. In particular, the consolatory becomes a species of ethics, that branch of philosophy that applies reason to human values, experiences, and action.

As an expression of ethical reasoning and thought, the consolatory thus entails a second audience role: the philosopher. As with the bereaved, this audience role actually encompasses as related family of interlocutors, including students of ethics, critical ethical interlocutors, and practicing philosophers with various agendas. As a type, philosophers are not currently experiencing grief, nor are they motivated by identification with the represented facts of the loss, so they are conceptually distinct from the various bereaved audiences. Rather, they are interested, for one reason or another, in the ethical reasoning advanced within the consolation. In a generous interpretation, such interlocutors are interested out of good will, and perhaps because they desire to improve or test their own ethical knowledge or preparation for pain and

12. That is, although empathy might be present for these readers, it is not a fundamental characteristic of the type.

grief. This group, however, also includes other potential sorts of philosophically-minded interlocutors, including philosophical adversaries (e.g. from a rival school of thought) who may engage with a consolation critically. As a subtype, the ethical critic will usually demand more rigorous, precise reasoning and argumentation than the student of ethics, while students of ethics might in turn prefer simpler, more intuitive demonstrations of an ethical point. In either case, a philosophical audience will expect a consolation to advance a reasoned defense of ethical precepts or practices around the idea of loss and grief.[13]

Notably, then, the consolatory must engage a range of appropriate rhetorical instruments suitable to the argumentative, rational interests of practical philosophers. At the same time, the content of a consolation ought to provide content—especially arguments or moral exercises—appropriate to this audience. Broadly speaking, the consolatory uses reflections on loss and grief to provide a special perspective on general ethical questions such as how one ought to prepare for misfortune or how one can best recover from adversity. Indeed, many philosophical audiences might even expect the consolatory to address perennial ethical questions such as: How can one act well or be a good person in any sort of circumstance? How can reason guide a life? Which values and meanings are best suited to human life, and how can those values and meanings be promoted? More specifically, the consolatory faces an intrinsic tension in its choice of topics and arguments, for the family of philosophers has very different needs than the various types of bereaved. Thus, consolation must partake of especially flexible rhetorical arguments that allow it to address ethical learners in terms relevant to them at the same time as it addresses the bereaved

13. The earliest known Western consolation—Crantor's (not extant) *On Grief*—was titled in the manner of a philosophical treatise, and apparently collected many of the ethical arguments that would later become stock *topoi* in the consolatory tradition.

in relevant terms.[14] These arguments cannot, however, be addressed to an (even fictional and contrived) universal audience of rational thinkers, such as that proposed by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca.[15] Rather, these arguments must be simultaneously made relevant to the bereaved. As a result, in addition to dramatic narration, the consolatory deploys techniques of exemplification, which allows it to elaborate general ethical principles and precepts just as it makes those precepts personal and intelligible to the (possibly) non-philosophical audience of bereaved.

Finally, the consolatory engages with a third type of audience: literary readers. This audience is not (necessarily) suffering from current, past, or expected bereavement—though it may be empathetically engaged by the thought or affect of such a loss—nor is it necessarily interested in the ethical arguments about (and rational salves to) grief. Rather, literary readers of consolation tend to be interested in aesthetic or thematic issues around loss and recovery.[16] For this audience, the consolation does not need to directly address their personal situation, as it must for the bereaved, nor does it need to engage in ethical reasoning or argumentation, as it must for philosophers. Instead, it must describe an encounter with loss, grief, and recovery in a way that is aesthetically, emotionally, and creatively compelling. As a result, this group, too, demands further refinement of the rhetorical tools that the consolatory may deploy, though the specific tools mobilized will be of general types, since various literary readers may hold strikingly different

14. Again, this theme will be important in my discussion of consolatory practice throughout the Case Study chapters.
15. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 31-5. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have advanced the most compelling epitome of audience choice in the history of rhetoric: "From the choice of the person to incarnate a particular audience, we can learn both the speaker's conception of his audience and the ends he hopes to attain" (40).
16. Knape (*Modern Rhetoric,* 17) defines the aesthetic function, in its pure form, as essentially divorced from the "real world, relevant influence of addressees." That is, the aesthetic dimension of consolatory texts is that part which does not directly respond to the practical implications of the text or its nominal situation. This pragmatic definition, reminiscent of Dewey's definition of art (*Art and Experience*), is an acceptable, functional way of disambiguating the practical (therapeutic and developmental) aspects of consolation from its literary-aesthetic aspects.

ideas of what specific literary and rhetorical devices count as aesthetically, emotionally, or creatively compelling.

In particular, literary audiences tend to be interested not only in techniques of dramatic narration (as is also suited to the bereaved type of audience), but are almost always interested in techniques of description. Many descriptive techniques will not be relevant to ethical learners or the bereaved, however, so the consolatory relies on a few special descriptive instruments that will be effective for its multiplex total audience. In particular, all three types of audience are generally satisfied by the flexible, powerful techniques of personification and metaphor.[17]

My analysis of different audience roles in consolation suggests the broad outlines of a rhetoric of the consolatory. At the outset, consolations may be analyzed in terms of the extent to which they privilege one specific audience above the plethora of other potential audiences. The consequences of such privileging are identifiable in the compositional traces that may be excavated from the text, whereby patterns of rhetorical technique and literary device indicate the heightened salience of a passage (or of the consolation writ large) to one or more subsections of the total, multiplex audience. Moreover, my analysis of audience roles suggests what will become three major centers of gravity within consolatory theory: namely, approaches originating in or tailored to the interests of each type of audience, from which I develop theories of consolatory grief therapy in Chapter Three, consolatory moral development in Chapter Four, and consolatory rhetoric in the case studies. Ultimately, then, the theoretical approaches

17. Throughout the dissertation, I address how vivid imagery, dramatic narration, exemplification, personification, metaphor, and so forth are well-suited for the needs of the consolatory's complex audience. For an overview of the topic in antiquity, see Plett, *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity.* Also see Newman, "Aristotle's Notion of 'Bringing-Before-the-Eyes'," on how vivid description may be a form of active engagement for literary audiences, and Lamp, "A City of Brick," on Roman visual rhetoric in the Augustan period. Kennedy goes so far as to specifically associate the broad rhetorical strategy of *prosopopoeia* with consolation: "under this genus [*prosopopoeia*]," he writes, "fall the species of consolations and exhortations and letter writing" (*Progymnasmata,* 47).

characteristic of consolation, as well as its literary-rhetorical form, are necessarily shaped from the outset by the several, sometimes competing, demands of its implied audiences.

III. The Consoler: Author and Persona

Just as a consolation always addresses a literal bereaved—even if merely as a literary contrivance—just so is a consolation always delivered from the perspective of a consoler. The consoler, of course, is a literary persona, and, like all personas, may be more or less literally associated with the author of the text. As with autobiography or many other forms of literary nonfiction, it may be tempting to elide the distinction between the actual author and the consoler's persona. Likewise, it may be tempting to reduce the consoler's persona to the role of therapist or ethical guide, given the importance of both those activities to consolation. In all cases, however, it is important that the theory of the consolatory resist these temptations, and instead describe the consoler persona in precise, accurate terms. In particular, it is useful to conceptualize a given persona as more or less fictionally represented within a text, as well as to accurately describe the relationship created between the persona and various audiences.

Some consolations thoroughly develop the role of the consoler persona, while others neglect to do so. In either case, the choice of how fully to develop the consoler ought to be viewed as a deliberate compositional strategy to emphasize certain consolatory possibilities, though always at the expense of others. Seneca's personas, for example, are often highly developed. Take the *Consolation to His Mother Helvia:* Seneca-the-consoler engages in lengthy dialog from his own point of view, and he associates himself strongly with Seneca-the-author. By thus stressing the consoler's ties to the bereaved (son to mother), Seneca-the-consoler is therefore able to mobilize relational and affective arguments, which are themselves greatly enhanced by the personal

development of the Seneca-persona. At the same time, however, the personal development of the persona reduces the efficacy of universally oriented ethical arguments, which seem potentially out of place given the intimate relationship implied by the development of the persona. (In fact, these universalizing arguments are not intended for Helvia, but rather for other audiences, especially the philosophical and literary audiences.)

On the other hand, the opposite dynamic is present in Pseudo-Plutarch's *Consolation to Apollonius,* where the consoler persona is scarcely allowed any room for personal development. As a result, despite the nominally personal nature of the relationship between consoler and addressee, that consolation emphasizes universal ethical arguments and lengthy allusions to death in other literary works, and so ought to be understood as a model teaching text whose primary receptive audience will be students of ethics or rhetoricians interested in paradigmatic consolatory writing.[18] In effect, then, the field of rhetorical possibilities is shaped by how fully the consoler persona is developed (or not).

Moreover, the relationship between the consoler and various audiences is shaped by the represented position of the consoler. If the consoler persona is established as a fellow seeker of knowledge rather than a paternalistic moralist, for example, certain rapport-building therapeutic and argumentative strategies are possible, while other (e.g. authority-based) strategies are less likely to be successful. This dynamic can be seen, for example, in Boethius' *Consolation to Philosophy,* where the interlocutors are the Prisoner persona and the personified Lady Philosophy, who—as a personification—leads the text toward poetic, narrative, and argumentative interactions, rather than either the personal, familiar tone or the patronizing ones most

18. In the Loeb edition, F. C. Babbitt makes the intriguing suggestion that the letter, as preserved, may have been an early draft that shows insight into Plutarch's compositional process (Plutarch, *Moralia, Vol. II,* 105-7). If true, this would be an appealing benefit of studying the work—but I find it rather unlikely, and instead prefer the (prevailing) view that the work is simply spurious.

commonly found in ancient consolation literature.[19] Likewise, if the consoler persona is established as an ethical or religious authority (and the audience is receptive to that positioning), then strategies based on authority or dogma are more likely to be effective. This dynamic can be seen in much of medieval Christian consolation (and its reliance on both Scripture and the authority of holy examples).[20] A similar dynamic may be at play in heavily argumentative consolation, where a direct address to students of ethics (or other educated, philosophical interlocutors) is foregrounded, either to be accepted as a paradigmatic case, or else to be taken as a test case from which to question and criticize accepted philosophical dogma in the practical realm. In any case, the rhetorical field of possibilities, which has already largely been shaped by the nature and needs of the various audiences, is further refined both by the relative development of the consoler persona, as well as by the fictional position established for the persona relative to the various foregrounded audiences. Within this field of possibilities, the consolatory will be articulated in its dual fundamental aspects, therapy and moral development.

It must be noted that several challenges attend analysis along the lines of author and persona, with the result that practical analysis may not be able to cleanly distinguish between the two, despite relevant conceptual distinctions. Methodologically speaking, rhetorical analysis takes as its primary object the textual artifact that results from recorded consolatory behavior—the written consolation—where only the persona is actually represented. Insofar as any conclusions may be made about the author, then, those conclusions rest upon inference drawn primarily from an analysis of the persona in the text, and only secondarily from other relevant external sources, such as those that may yield insight into the author's goals, motivations, tacit agenda,

19. This comment about Boethius, of course, is reductive. Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* is a rich, many layered text, and there are additional layers of relationship and position at play (not least the tantalizing hints that Boethius-persona has, in a sense, imagined this fictional interlocutor as his companion in prison).
20. See Introduction, 7, nn. 20-22.

and so forth. As opposed to the consoler persona, the author is a more distant figure, and is thus more difficult to analyze based on textual inference. This danger is sharpened by the tendency of nonfiction readers to deliberately elide the distinction between author and persona. Indeed, many consolatory texts advance such an elision through literary devices that directly suggest just such an elision—the direct use of first and second-person speech, for example. So, while it is in principle possible to cleanly distinguish between author and persona, the two are frequently entangled.

More substantially, a second danger attends a rhetorical analysis of the author's intentions and motivations, beyond the obvious difficulties of adducing rigorous, persuasive evidence for those intentions: the problem of unimagined audiences. Much of what I argue relies on the author to act with a more or less clear, correct estimation not only of their anticipated audiences' needs, but also—and herein lies the crux—with a similarly clear, correct estimation of the makeup of their actual audiences. Skillful authors, of course, tend to maintain a highly plausible estimation of their immediate audiences, but are likely to struggle the more that an audience is separated by time, distance, or culture. Ultimately, authors simply become increasingly inaccurate in their estimations of audiences' needs and concerns as that distance grows, to the point that such estimations eventually break down.

That fact, nonetheless, does not mean that all author-centered analysis is futile, but it does suggest that critics ought to recognize the limits of such analysis. The overzealous might be tempted to argue that there is something universal about situations of loss and grief that transcends time, place, and culture, with the result that consolatory authors can make more or less reasonable predictions about how an unknown and even an unimagined audience might react. This position, however, is strongly refuted by the best historical evidence provided across

the humanities and social sciences. I accept historicizing conclusions about the spatiotemporal and cultural locality of human experience, so I bypass the tenuous possibility of universalizing consolatory forces. It simply does not seem reasonable, given what scholars now understand about the historicity and embeddedness of culture, to seriously entertain the possibility.

Rather, what is called for is a clear recognition of the ways that an author's (and, thus, persona's) insight breaks down across gulfs of time, place, and culture. One must assume, for example, that the author's sense of her audience is conditioned by her context; thus, I interpret Seneca's moves in relation to his audience, for example, as fundamentally calibrated against the assumptions of a masculine, educated, Roman audience. Seneca might have aspirations to reach beyond these culturally conventional/likely audiences, and he might even make an effort to reach less conventional audiences (e.g. women or non-Romans), but his efforts to empathize with increasingly distant readers will, as a simple result of his historical and cultural position, be limited. Taken to a logical conclusion, it is thus not appropriate to refer to a "general audience" or "the public" when analyzing the relationship between author and audiences, since the very notions that an author will have of those broad audiences is nevertheless historically and culturally conditioned. One can attenuate one's personal bias and broaden one's perspective to a point, but one can never truly escape it. Seneca's notion of "the public," for example, can't respond in a detailed, accurate, sensitive way to, say, a queer American reader. None of this is to deny that such a reader might, in the end, nonetheless feel that Seneca's writing speaks to her situation—but such a response would be better understood as a reciprocal exercise of empathic imagination rather than as a clairvoyant insight by the author or a deterministic result of universal, shared qualities, as might be argued for in light of a trite notion of universalizing, essentializing humanism.

With these caveats about author-based rhetorical analysis having been established, I now turn to a major topic in the relationships between author/persona and audience: the role of empathy.

IV. Empathy and the Consolatory

There is one remaining component of the relationships between author, consoler, and the various audiences that has yet to be described, but which plays a central role in consolation literature: empathy. I argue that an analysis of how empathy is deployed in consolation provides crucial clues about the make-up of the consolatory. In particular, I argue that rhetorical empathy is a key process by which authors conceive of both the broad compositional strategy of a consolation as well as the specific representations (representational empathy) that they include in it. On the other hand, receptive empathy is a key criterion by which a specific audience finds a consolation to be effective or not. Before I discuss these two consolatory forms of empathy, however, I must establish a critical vocabulary by briefly grappling with unsettled, often conflicting ways that the concept called "empathy" has been conceptualized and studied.

Empathy: A Critical Vocabulary, Problems, and Solutions

Even considering the ubiquitous presence of empathy studies in contemporary academic philosophy of mind, psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, sociology, and literary studies, scholars remained divided over basic definitions of what empathy really consists of. Indeed, there exists a meta-scholarly debate about definitions that has led to the creation of an entire subdiscipline.[21]

21. For an overview of the contours of the debate, see the summative discussions (and substantial bibliography) in Coplan, "Understanding Empathy," 3-4 (esp. nn. 1-14) and Batson, "These Things Called Empathy." The debate is so unsettled that Coplan, for example, felt the need in 2004 to devote more than 850 words to just citing major contributions to the debate (Coplan, "Empathic Engagement with Narrative," 150-1, n. 15 and n.

Fortunately, it is not necessary here to recapitulate those debates, though it will be productive to rely upon a few theoretical conclusions and critical distinctions advocated for by various interlocutors in those debates.

In particular, empathy studies have generated a critical vocabulary that allows scholars to disambiguate similar phenomena. Among this critical vocabulary are three analytical distinctions that are highly relevant to the present study of consolatory empathy: lower-level empathy versus higher-level empathy; self-oriented versus other-oriented perspective-taking; and conceptual terms for nine distinct phenomena that fall under the broad umbrella of "empathy." Each of these terms may be productively applied to the analysis of consolatory empathy in the following section.

First, two different broad types of empathy may be distinguished. Like others, I follow Goldman[22] in referring to these as lower-level empathy and higher-level empathy. Lower-level empathy refers to bottom-up, often unconscious psychological processes, many akin to a sort of social perception, that result in a person coming to know and/or share another's affective state. According to Batson, the central question answered by lower-level empathy may be put, "How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?"[23] The criterion for lower-level empathy, then, involves providing precise, accurate accounts of others' mental states. As Coplan and Goldie have pointed out, the study of lower-level empathy has thus "tended to be more empirical... and robust... than the evidence [adduced] for higher-level empathy" (though higher-level empathy is also supported by scientific evidence).[24] In particular, lower-level empathy has been supported by recent neuroscientific research into mirror neurons, psychological research

19).
22. Goldman, *Simulating Minds*; cf. Coplan and Goldie, "Introduction," xxxiii-iv.
23. Batson, "These Things Called Empathy," 3.
24. Coplan and Goldie, "Introduction," xxxiii-iv.

into emotional contagion and empathic personal distress, and sociological research into the ways that individuals mutually calibrate their cognitive and affective states for purposes of other-knowledge and basic pro-social behavior.

Higher-level empathy, on the other hand, refers to intentional, motivated understanding of another's emotional state(s) by means of imaginative perspective-taking. Coplan, for example, defines empathy entirely in terms of higher-level empathy, stating that it is "a unique kind of understanding through which [people] can experience what it is to be another person," an understanding that is ultimately achieved through "a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining clear self-other differentiation." According to this higher-level notion of empathy, the observer achieves experiential understanding not by imagining how she would feel in the other person's place (so-called "self-oriented perspective-taking"), but rather by how she imagines the other person must feel, given her imaginative understanding of the other's experiences and characteristics ("other-oriented perspective-taking").[25] For Batson, higher-level empathy thus answers a different question than lower-level empathy, which focuses on accurate, factual accounting of another's thoughts and feelings. In particular, higher-level empathy asks, "What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?"[26] Higher-level empathy is thus understood to involve (especially other-centered) perspective-taking as a means by which understanding and care[27] may be established.

25. It should be noted in passing that many empathy scholars largely assume that some form of other-knowledge is possible. Indeed, to deny that conclusion would essentially invalidate the possibility of higher-level empathy itself. The counterpoint has been made strongly, however, by prominent philosophers Peter Goldie (e.g. "Anti-Empathy," 302-17) and Jesse Prinz (e.g. "Is Empathy Necessary for Morality?" 211-29). The most famous general statement of the problem (in contemporary epistemology and philosophy of mind) is Nagel's "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?"
26. Batson, "These Things Called Empathy," 3.
27. It is also highly contested whether care, compassion, and other (sympathetic?) responses may or may not be intrinsic to higher-level empathy. That debate, however, is not relevant here; like the plurality of scholars, I

The analytical distinction between lower-level and higher-level empathy is highly relevant for the study of the consolatory, for it distinguishes between different forms of empathy that have very different functions within consolation. Below, I will argue that higher-level empathy occurs on several levels, including the authorial, persona-presentation, and audience-interpretation levels. Lower-level empathy, on the other hand, is counterproductive on the authorial and persona-presentation levels, but is a distinguishing characteristic of the different audience types discussed earlier in this chapter.

Likewise, the second analytical distinction, between self- and other-oriented perspective-taking, is an important one. As discussed above, it distinguishes between approaches that project one's sense of self intact into an imagined situation, versus others that attempt to imagine how the other in that situation might feel, think, or act. In empathy studies, self-oriented perspective-taking is understood to introduce difficulties based in personal bias, egocentrism, and other factors that may lead to false, mistaken, or misdirected empathy.[28] Importantly, it also has significant practical consequences for how imagination works. Below, I argue that imaginative projection is a crucial activity in consolation, but that self- and other-centered imaginative projections lead to very different rhetorical and literary effects, depending on which mode is engaged in and by whom. The differing rhetorical-literary effects further refine the typology of author, persona, and audiences that I developed above.

Finally, in addition to the distinctions between lower-level and higher-level empathy and between self- and other-oriented perspective-taking, the consolatory benefits from a third analytical distinction: a disambiguation of the various distinct, particular phenomena that may be

contend (and take as granted) that care is, in fact, involved in higher-level empathy, at the very least for its instrumental value. But see the objections and counterpoints in Goldie, "Anti-Empathy."

28. Coplan, "Understanding Empathy," 10-13. Other-oriented perspective-taking, however, doesn't resolve all potential factors for misunderstanding; cf. ibid. 13-4.

called "empathy." In creating a critical vocabulary for empathy studies, prominent psychologist C. Daniel Batson argues that there are eight distinct (but related) phenomena commonly called empathy.[29] Literary critic Suzanne Keen persuasively argues for the addition of a ninth type that is relevant to the study of consolation literature.[30] According to this scheme, empathy is a multisignifying term that covers at least these concepts:

1. Knowing another person's internal state, including thoughts and feelings ("cognitive empathy")
2. Mirroring another person's responses, including posture, neural responses, etc. ("mimicry")
3. Coming to feel as another person feels (Humean sympathy,[31] or "affective empathy")
4. Intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation (Lipp's *einfühlung*,[32] or "aesthetic empathy")
5. Imagining or reasoning how another is thinking or feeling (other-oriented perspective taking)
6. Imagining how one would think and feel in the other's place (self-oriented perspective taking)

29. Batson, "These Things Called Empathy."
30. Keen, "Empathy Studies"; Keen, *Empathy and the Novel;* Carroll, "On Some Affective Relations;" Goldman, "Imagination and Simulation in Audience Response." Importantly, Coplan describes a variety of empirical studies that ground Keen's notion of narrative empathy (Coplan, "Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions").
31. Hume's actual position may be more complex than the simplistic "minds as mirrors" position that he is sometimes thought to defend; see Collier, "Hume's Theory of Moral Imagination." Collier argues that Hume conceived of at least two distinct types of sympathy, which he terms "associative sympathy" and "cognitive sympathy"—the latter of which is a rational process more like items number four and five on this list.
32. T. Lipps, "Empathy, Inward Imitation, and Sense Feelings;" Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology*. Cf. Coplan and Goldie, "Introduction," xii-xvii.

7. Feeling distress at witnessing another person's suffering ("personal distress"), i.e. being distressed by them (on account of their affect), not for them (on account of their affect or one's understanding of their affect)
8. Feeling for another person who is suffering ("empathic concern," but related to pity, compassion, etc.)
9. Treating a fictional representation as if they were a person to whom we may have an empathic response (Keen's "narrative empathy")

Some of these specific conceptions of empathy clearly fall into (or baldly present themselves as) the larger categories of "higher-level" and "lower-level" empathy, but several also operate across that distinction—Lippsian aesthetic empathy, for example, would seem to incorporate dimensions of both levels. Moreover, the types are obviously entangled in complex ways, some causal, some correlative, and some merely coincidental. Setting aside the ways that these terminological labels may be productively applied in empathy studies in general, it is helpful to to attach them, too, to the study of consolatory empathy. The terms "self-oriented" and "other-oriented perspective taking," "personal distress," and "empathic concern" are especially relevant to empathy studies, and I use them in the remainder of this chapter (and throughout the dissertation) in the technical senses established here.

More significantly, Batson and Keen's nine-fold scheme, when analyzed, yields several important conclusions for study of the consolatory: it distinguishes between different empathic modes, it reiterates the different ways that imagination is a core process for empathy, and it suggests that maintaining an appropriate psychic distance from the other is crucial. First, it is helpful to distinguish between several modes of empathy, including cognitive modes like knowing and predicting, affective modes like reflecting another's feelings or being affected by another's

plight, and imaginative modes, like projecting oneself into another's situation or taking their perspective. Each of these empathic modes are used in different aspects of consolatory theory, and I will refer to them as such throughout this dissertation. Second, some—but not all—forms of empathy require the use of imagination, and specifically a sort of imaginative projection, perspective taking, or fanciful transfer of the self[33] into a new context. As mentioned above, the use of imagination turns out to have important implications for consolatory theory, not only here (regarding high-level rhetorical concerns), but also for consoler and audiences in the later chapters on grief therapy and moral development. Third, empathy sometimes involves an alignment with the other (e.g. with their feelings, thoughts, even posture), but other times involves drawing away from the other (e.g. when affected by personal distress, or when one feels distancing emotions like pity). Empathy, in other words, involves both attraction and aversion to the other.[34] In fact, this dual attraction-aversion role will ultimately be reflected in consolatory rhetorical modes, especially in exhortation (the use of protreptic and apotreptic devices), in moral maneuvers like praise and blame, and in moral emotions like shame, disgust, anger, and pity.

As I may now have made clear, there will rarely be clearcut interpretations of empathy in consolation. In particular, tensions may often be found in the different ways that empathy is used, not only given the sometimes conflicting goals of author, persona, and different audiences, but even internally, given the complex characteristics of any one of those actors. Furthermore, as has been firmly established both by empathy scholarship and by historical reasoning, there exist wide variations in how empathy is expressed and interpreted across different configurations of culture, time, place, philosophical/spiritual tradition, and so forth. Indeed, consolation not only responds

33. To adopt Adam Smith's phrase.

34. Writing in a different register, Coplan calls this "self-other differentiation," and argues that it "is essential for empathy" (15) because it allows for the "optimal level of distance from the other for successful empathy" (16). In other words, it avoid dangers of over-identification, enmeshment, contamination by personal bias, and so forth.

to local conceptions and practices of empathy, but also—at least in the Western tradition—has been one place (among many) in which appropriate forms and expressions of empathy have been culturally shaped in the first place. The study of empathy in consolation, then, is not only riddled with tensions in its rhetorical aspect, but also in its sociocultural ones.

Obviously, the topic of empathy in consolation involves considerable complexity. Nevertheless, by examining its function, consolatory theory is enriched, for empathy has structural effects on consolatory activity at several levels. First, the forms and expressions of empathy mobilized within a consolation reveal many of the cultural pressures that have contributed to the particular forms of consolation in various periods and cultural configurations. How empathy is figured, in other words, shapes the possible ways that a given consolation may function. Second, particular strategies by which empathy is mobilized (or not) within a consolation reveal specific, local facts about a given consolation, especially when read against the broader cultural background. On this ground, for example, I interpret Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife* as an effort to use personal loss to narrow the gap between private mourning and public grief practices, a goal with both psychotherapeutic and didactic components.[35] Third, an analysis of empathy in consolation elucidates other affective dimensions of consolatory texts, and thereby helps to establish a robust theory of the consolatory that accounts for the role of imagination and of moral emotions like shame or pity. Each of these topics is elaborated in the discussion of consolatory empathy to which I now turn.

35. See Chapter Two (60-93).

Rhetorical Empathy and Receptive Empathy

Above, I established a critical vocabulary for consolatory empathy studies with the promise that this vocabulary would enrich the study of the consolatory. In this section, I demonstrate how empathy analysis does so. In particular, I argue that two broad types of empathy are relevant to consolatory theory. First, *rhetorical empathy* describes the ways that the author attempts to manipulate the empathic concern of her intended audiences. At the compositional level, she uses rhetorical empathy to predict the needs and concerns of her audience, which she will use to structure the argumentative and compositional approach taken by the consolation. At the representational level, she uses her persona and her descriptions of figures within the text to either promote empathic concern or to hinder it, depending on how she aims to manipulate her audience. On the other hand, *receptive empathy* describes the ways that actual audiences feel empathy upon reading a consolation. In particular, receptive empathy suggests that empathy as personal distress interferes with the core functions of consolation, while empathy as imaginative perspective-taking plays a core role in the successful achievement of consolation's core functions. Receptive empathy, then, helps establish success and failure conditions for the consolatory. Ultimately, consolatory empathy analysis not only further enriches my theory of author, persona, different types of audience, and consolatory functions, but also provides tools to describe how effectively (or ineffectively) the consolatory has functioned for heterogenous real audiences who have read a consolation over time and, frequently, across cultural divides.

First, then, I turn to rhetorical empathy, and particularly its presence at the compositional level. During the compositional process, the author exercises rhetorical empathy in order to accurately assess the needs and concerns of the direct bereaved and the other audiences that the

author aims to address. In this way, rhetorical empathy is a form of Batson's "cognitive empathy." This form of empathy is entirely pragmatic and instrumental, and it primarily serves the purpose of rhetorical invention. Note that the author is not required to have her consoler-persona represent or enact an analogous form of empathy. Rather, the rhetorical "getting into" the audience's mind is purely compositional. Rhetoric scholar Joachim Knape explains this fundamental rhetorical stance well:

> An orator must have a projective calculation in relation to his audience: he must imagine himself in the psyche of his addressees and formulate a rhetorical strategy tailored to the expectations and needs of his audience members. Such calculations are always imprecise and can be risky for the speaker. Above all, such considerations must focus on the communicative instruments that are most appropriate and effective at influencing a given audience.[36]

In other words, Knape stresses how the (author's understanding of the) audience's agenda influences the positioning of the persona, and moreover how the author's position and message—in relation to that audience—constrain the choice of rhetorical means. (Indeed, this formulation encapsulates the major fields of rhetorical theory—the analyses of orator, audience, and rhetorical means—as well as the mutual interactions between those fields.) In particular, I argue that the author, based on her analysis of the audiences' needs, will often adopt an other-oriented empathic perspective in order to emphasize one (but sometimes both) of the two primary consolatory strategies, viz. therapy and moral education.

As in other rhetorical situations, the demands on the consolatory author grow as the total anticipated audience becomes more complex. While the type of rhetorical empathy mobilized is more or less the same, the author is compelled nonetheless to apply compositional empathy, the so-called "projective calculation," to each specific audience, and then to compose her speech in

36. Knape, *Modern Rhetoric*, 9.

such a way as to simultaneously satisfy the total audience's composite needs. At times, this maneuver will be unsuccessful, with the result that the author will not successfully engage the audience that she has targeted with the consolation. This is but one of many failure states in the invention of a consolation.

Next, the author engages in representational empathy as she determines how she will establish the persona's empathic position vis a vis the various audiences. In other words, she must decide how to represent empathy diegetically, within the constructed literary world of the consolation, as well as how to represent figures within the text in such a way as to promote or hinder empathic concern in her intended audiences. Unavoidably, she must first determine how to represent the relationship between consoler and literal bereaved (i.e. the addressee). Modern Western consolation, shaped as it is by psychotherapy and the modern ethos of care, tends to position the consoler is a position of positive empathy: she recognizes, articulates, and validates the literal bereaved's feelings of pain, loss, and grief. By extension, she also validates the feelings of metonymic bereaved and demonstrates her humane qualities to other (non-bereaved) audiences. As noted above, however, the consoler's general empathic relationship to the literal bereaved is highly culturally specific, so in consolations from e.g. antiquity, the consoler instead frequently chides, reprimands, or denigrates the literal bereaved.[37]

This representational analysis provides one solution to a common problem. Contemporary readers are frequently troubled by negatively-valenced empathic relationships between consoler and literal bereaved, as well as by other ways that the initial core relationship between consoler and bereaved may be represented in a problematic way.[38] The objection,

37. See van Wassenhove, "Moral Admonition and the Emotions."
38. For example, see Robinson, "The Longest Transference" on self-consolation in antiquity.

simply put, wonders how consolation is possible without the author/persona having established the trust of the literal bereaved, generally understood to have be obtained by the (diegetic) offering of comfort. Indeed, classical rhetorical theory suggests that the consoler must leverage some sort of solidarity with the audience in order to be effective. In some cases, as when a son writes a mother, this communal bond may not be represented, presumable because such a bond preexists and transcends the consolatory situation. More frequently, however, there would seem to be the need for a *captatio benevolentiae*. How, then, can we explain its absence in various consolations?

I do not have a definitive solution, but I suggest that the absence of a *captatio benevolentiae* (or another device with similar function) signifies that the imputed relationship between consoler and literal bereaved is not actually at stake. Perhaps the addressee is a mere literary contrivance; perhaps the text of the consolation was revised and published long after the need for consolation in the nominal situation had been resolved; perhaps the text is of a purely argumentative or teaching type, as is frequently the case with model declamations or other forms of rhetorical education. In any case, if the consoler does not leverage a preexisting relationship with the bereaved or else offer narrative empathy, then that relationship should not be understood to be at stake in a meaningful way. Rather, the literal bereaved ought to be interpreted as a simple placeholder, while other audiences are more relevant foci for rhetorical analysis.[39]

39. My suggestion might also solve a problem in the study of self-consolation. That problem is usually phrased, "How can the author, who is herself distressed, maintain the necessary distance from which to provide effective therapy or moral developmental guidance?" The answer frequently given is that she cannot. (Cf. Robinson, "The Longest Transference.").

According to my reasoning, however, the relationship between author/persona and direct addressee isn't really at stake, but may exist merely as a literary convention. The resulting text thus neglects a core aspect of consolation, and should accurately be considered to be consolatory, but not a consolation proper. By this conclusion, the apparent failure of self-consolation does not, in fact, call into question the efficacy of consolation itself—rather, that failure, just like the de-emphasis of the persona-literal bereaved relationship, might simply be a characteristic of the self-consolation literary phenomenon, without therefore implying consequences for other, different sorts of literary phenomena, including other-addressed consolations. By this reasoning, self-consolation

In addition to representing an empathic relationship with the literal bereaved, the author must decide whether to construct figures within the text, such as the literal bereaved, in such a way that she provokes empathy for them among other audiences. These provocations will usually entail a form of narrative empathy, especially of the affective sort. For example, by diegetically representing the suffering of the literal bereaved, the author might provoke feelings of identification or empathic resonance in other, more distant bereaved audiences. Or, she might prompt feelings of sympathy or pity (Batson's "empathic concern") in different types of audience, such as literary readers or philosophers. Alternatively, the use of devices like *exempla* and metaphor might challenge less emotionally invested audience members to practice imaginatively projecting themselves into a position whereby they are able to sharpen their moral instincts and responses, even if the situation is contrived or if the literal bereaved is of no immediate, empathic concern to them. As the author constructs her persona and represents the literal bereaved, then, she is already engaging in deeper consolatory projects, e.g. an effort to engage readers in a process of moral development through the sharpening of empathic imagination.

On the other hand, representational empathy may be intentionally denied by the author. At times, for example, the author might construct the literal bereaved (or some other figure, like an *exemplum*) to provoke shame or disgust. When a repulsive or aversive response like disgust is intended, authors frequently position the consoler as a comforting figure, but then represent the literal bereaved in an extreme way that is likely to disgust more distant audiences. At the same time, the comforting consoler can be an attractive or admirable moral role made all the sharper through the contrast. Unsurprisingly, consolations that take this tack tend to present the consoler

is thus as much a sort of meditative *sermocinatio* as it is a "full" consolation, in the core sense.

as a wise moral authority. As I discuss at length in Chapter Four,[40] such aversive moral emotions are no less relevant to moral education than attractive ones like pity or compassion, for they too have a role to play in moral development. Thus, whether by provoking or blocking empathic responses through representation of the bereaved, consolatory authors use empathy to control readers' responses to a consolation and thus to direct them toward particular consolatory aims.

As I have shown, then, the consolatory author deploys empathy in two different domains: she uses rhetorical empathy during the compositional process in order to accurately interpret the needs and concerns of her intended audiences, while she creates (or denies) representational empathy for readers according to how she depicts the characters of a consolation, especially the persona and the literal bereaved (but also other audiences, *exempla*, and so forth). As I indicated above, however, empathy also has a second role to play in the reception of a consolation. This further dimension, which I call *receptive empathy,* is separate from how rhetorical empathy is used in the compositional and representational dimensions, because—unlike those uses—it does not find its locus in the activities and goals of the author or consoler, but rather in the ways that actual audiences respond to consolatory discourse, regardless of whether the author/persona deliberately attempted to provoke such a response, and indeed regardless of whether the actual responsive audience was even a possible imagined audience for the author at the time of composition. Thus, the study of consolatory empathy encompasses not only author and persona-centered efforts to deploy empathy in the text, but also involves the factual empathetic responses that various real audiences have had (or might reasonably have had) to their reception of consolatory discourse.

40. Esp. cf. 150f. and 172.

Methodologically speaking, the most precise analysis of receptive empathy would involve studying the actual responses of particular audience members and then analyzing their responses with respect to their context and in relation to other audience members' responses. A traditional literary approach would be to take a particular reader as an exemplar of a certain audience—a critical philosophical interlocutor in a certain time and place and with particular philosophical commitments, for example—and to use that individual's recorded responses to typify the relationship between the author and that type of audience. This method of study is relatively commonplace in the study of, e.g., modern literature, where the diaries of readers record their contemporaneous responses to reading specific texts, or when later authors' intertextual responses to earlier consolatory literature sheds light on their interpretive position and conclusions. On the other hand, a sophisticated data-driven approach would index, classify, and compare the standardized responses of large groups of readers using data analysis tools. This sort of study is becoming more widespread, especially with the penetration of the digital humanities into literary studies. Empirical scientific data about reception, however, do not exist very far into history, so this sort of analysis is really only feasible for recently collected data sets about contemporary readers, or for those rare, niche, generally recent topics for which rigorous, vetted data exists, usually in the form of readership surveys, journalism, or the like.

Though the application of either method to receptive empathy would be an interesting and worthwhile research project, both methods are far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Here, then, I'm unable to argue that any particular form of empathic response was or was not factually present for a given audience regarding a given consolation, though I do occasionally indulge in mild speculation. On the other hand, I do argue that receptive empathy, as a topic,

has theoretical implications that ought to be recognized, even if I do not have the data to empirically ground all of my observations about it.

In particular, I argue that receptive empathy has two important implications, each of which map to a success or failure condition for a specific consolatory audience. First, receptive empathy always entails a substantial risk, namely the danger that personal empathic distress cuts off other forms of empathy. Personal distress, recall, is the name for a type of empathic response which results in the reader becoming distressed *by* the individual represented in the text rather than *for* them.[41] This type of receptive empathy is a definite failure state of consolation. (I suspect, but cannot prove, that it is a major cause of modern discomfort with premodern consolation.) If the reader becomes alarmed and emotionally distressed by the way that an individual is represented in the text—the bereaved being displayed as overly wretched or being forcefully shamed, for example—then she is more likely to withdraw her empathic concern. In other words, insofar as a positive empathic bond is sought by an audience or a consoler, personal distress describes one way that the bond can be attenuated or broken, with the result that the reader's personal investment in the consolation is weakened, and thus the potential therapeutic or moral developmental force of the consolation is rendered impotent.

Second, receptive empathy is a component of successful consolation when it results in imaginative perspective-taking on the part of the specific audience member. In the third and fourth chapters, I describe the grief therapy and moral development programs of the consolatory. Both programs, simply put, rely on imaginative perspective-taking to achieve their goals. For grief therapy, the actual receptive audience must maintain perspective-taking—of either the other- or self-oriented varieties—in order to maintain the relevance of consolatory arguments

41. Cf. 43.

and ideas to their own situation. Likewise, for the moral development program, readers must specifically maintain other-oriented perspective. This is because the moral development program is closely rooted in the idea of personal preparation and the development of moral resilience through imaginative methods and spiritual discipline. Insofar as a consolation creates an opportunity to reflect on and imaginatively practice reacting to grief (and to try to establish resilience in such a circumstance), then, the actual receptive audience must maintain other-oriented forms of receptive empathy.

In summary, consolatory empathy analysis occurs in two different realms: the author/persona-centered realm of rhetorical empathy, and the audience-centered realm of receptive empathy. Rhetorical empathy is deployed at the compositional level, whereby the author attains a plausible, accurate sense of their audiences' needs and uses that information to structure the consolation in a rhetorically effective way. It is also deployed at the representational level, whereby the way that individuals are represented in the text of a consolation is aimed at rhetorically manipulating audiences' empathic responses, generally by either provoking empathic concern or by denying it. Receptive empathy, on the other hand, describes the way that actual audiences respond empathically to the figure within a consolation. When it leads to personal distress, receptive empathy blocks the core functions of consolation. When it leads to imaginative perspective-taking, however, it promotes consolation's core functions and provides key support in achieving them.

V. Real Consolations and The Idea of the Consolatory

Throughout my explication of a theory of the consolatory, I provide a normative description of the phenomenon. Such descriptions are prone to reductionism or to dismissing real

features of a phenomenon as mere epiphenomena. My account, therefore, works against this hazard in a variety of ways. Most importantly, despite conceptualizing the consolatory in normative terms, I vehemently reject the notion of a rigid idea of the consolatory. Rather, I argue that my theory of the consolatory establishes the categories and characteristics that are fundamental to an abstract, and thus necessarily ideal and unreal, conceptual model of consolation. In real world consolations, however, it is rare for the composite consolatory idea to be fully instantiated—that is, for the full spectrum of consolatory functions, strategies, and techniques to be mobilized in a particular consolation. Indeed, if they were, it seems likely that the resulting consolation would not effectively achieve its aims for its given particular audiences, since particular audiences have specific, complex, and sometimes conflicting needs that require consolation to be tailored to the specific local context. Just as consolers emphasize different aspects of the consolatory to suit the interests and needs of their audience and situation, just so must the rhetorical idea of context (τὸ πρέπον) be fundamentally associated with the consolatory. Consolatory theory thus asserts that aspects of the consolatory may be more or less present within any given instance of discourse. In short, consolatory theory ought to be understood as establishing an ideal mode of consolatory activity, one whose components, magnitude, and relative frequency vary in actual discourse and behavior. There will be discursive responses to situations of loss when the consolatory is only weakly expressed, and times when it is simply not present at all.

If, as I have suggested, the consolatory should be understood as a flexible, immanent idea which may be instantiated more or less weakly in a given actual situation, it nevertheless maintains substantial explanatory and evaluative power. Rather than inflexibly assessing a given work in a binary judgment, for example—a consolation, or not a consolation?—the consolatory

theory described here provides an ideal benchmark against which to describe the particularity of a given act of consolation. If a given instance of consolation focuses almost exclusively on grief therapy, for example, the theory need not argue that it fails to be a "real" or "full" consolation as a result of the minimization of the moral development component. Rather, the theory helps to explain the very phenomenon of focus: because the theory is fundamentally contextual, it takes the presented material, and its implied situation, as the basis for evaluation and critical engagement. Indeed, if a particular consolation is focused on (e.g.) grief therapy, we can thereby learn a great deal about the philosophical commitments of the consoler and of the practical, ethical, and therapeutic needs of the audience(s). In other words, consolatory theory is able to avoid many of the commonplace but facile demands made of normative theories because it explicitly articulates a principle of variable expressibility.[42]

In particular, insofar as it is considered an idea that may be variably expressed, the consolatory avoids the most damning attack on the possibility of a formal definition of consolation. This attack, most forcefully (and masterfully) presented by David Scourfield in his seminal chapter about the consolatory genre, asserts that the wide variety of texts commonly considered to be "consolation" makes it impossible to present any traditional definition of the genre that would adequately include them all without being "abnormally fluid and hard to define."[43] There is simply too much variety, he argues, for a formal for content-based definition to adequately circumscribe the phenomenon. (We might call this argument the "heterogeneity objection.") Rather than futilely trying to enforce order among the heterogenous expressions of the consolatory, he suggests, we ought instead to consider the consolatory to be the social practice

42. Scourfield claims that "a conceptual elasticity is essential in any attempt to define... consolation" ("Towards a Genre of Consolation," 10).
43. Scourfield, "Towards a Genre of Consolation," 1.

of responding to grief. Considered this way, we may look at the concentric circles by which different human activities and literary genres participate in that activity, with the result that consolation's ultimate referent is human practices in response to loss.[44]

Scourfield's attack, however, applies to a rigid definition of the consolatory, but not to the fuzzy, flexible one that I defend here. Indeed, his sociological solution attempts to avoid the problems of formal definition just as mine does, namely by suggesting a core idea (social practice) which centers and grounds different expressions of the idea, which are necessarily shaped by place, tradition, and culture. His solution, with its emphasis on culturally-embedded social practices, accounts for contextual (e.g. historical) factors, although in a different way than my own theory does. At the same time, however, his approach is too readily dismissive of the patterns, conventions, shared approaches, and prevailing goals that do, in fact, provide a family of characteristics that reliably describe consolatory thought and behavior, and which may (and here, do) form the basis of a rigorous conceptual definition.

The result of my defense is a fuzzy definition of the consolatory, because the theory explicitly denies its own ability to strictly demarcate *a priori* what "is" or "isn't" an actual instance of consolation, while nevertheless maintaining that judgements (e.g. as to degree of expressed consolatory ideals) may be made about a given text or act. In so doing, my consolatory theory gains the ability to describe a given work as more or less consolatory with respect to various features, according to its greater or lesser instantiation of various relevant consolatory characteristics. Thus, the idea of the consolatory is potentially and dynamically immanent in any instance of discourse, though its actual expression may be constrained (or even suppressed) by the many other features of a given text.

44. Scourfield, "Towards a Genre of Consolation," 15-21.

Because my theory stipulates that various consolatory features may be more or less present in a given text, it also addresses a major lacuna of previous conceptualizations of the consolatory: a sole focus on the therapeutic program and the rhetorical features of consolation. Most mainstream accounts of consolation focus almost entirely on its therapeutic program and/or on the consolatory's rhetorical organon, and thus fail to account for the moral education program (when it is present).[45] As a result, previous theories are too narrow. The present theory, on the other hand, can accurately describe consolations that are narrowly focused on e.g. therapeutic interventions, yet is also expansive enough to analyze the moral development program in traditional consolations, and even to reveal and trace the consolatory function as it is embedded in other literary modes or social phenomena.

Crucially, the theory's flexibility allows it to describe how the consolatory may be more or less present in a work that might also, according to a strict notion of genre or literary mode, be something other than consolation. In short: what the theory of the consolatory gives up in strictly definitional power, it gains in its ability to explain the literary, rhetorical, therapeutic, and ethical aspects of various discourses about loss or grief. In this way, consolatory theory escapes and transcends the moribund genre of classical consolation, and instead can be analyzed in any sample of literary output across time, space, and culture. It provides an opportunity to analyze consolatory elements within tragedy, for example, or within the Chinese novel, or even within real-world instances of discourse, such as the speech that President Obama delivered after the fatal Sandy Hook shooting in 2012.[46] First, however, I must describe the grief therapy and moral

45. See 94-100 for more details about this gap.
46. Obama, "Remarks by the President at Sandy Hook Interfaith Prayer Vigil." I would also contend that the consolatory can be analyzed in human social behavior, though a rigorous, scientific sociological study is far beyond the scope of this dissertation (and, in any case, would strain my expertise, though it would be a promising area for collaboration in the future).

development functions of the consolatory and provide case studies that demonstrate how the theory enriches criticism.

Chapter 2.

Case Study

Audience, Empathy, and Multivalent Address:

The "Rhythm" of Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife*

In the preceding chapter, I argued for two core, fundamental components of consolatory theory: first, that the consolatory necessarily involves a complex audience of several types, including the bereaved, philosophers, and literary readers; and second, that the relationships between the authorial persona and various audiences can be analyzed in terms of various sorts of empathy (or the lack thereof). The particular admixture of these (and other) elements gives a given consolation its texture; so, a consolation that emphasizes the bereaved audiences and expressions of representational empathy might come across as strongly instantiating an ethics of comfort or care, for example, while one that privileges an audience of specialist philosophers and that downplays representational empathy might instead be perceived as an intellectual investigation into the emotions of loss. An understanding of these dynamics allows sophisticated analysis of consolation literature, since the dynamics within a given consolation may be explicitly identified and discussed.

Within the tradition of ancient consolation, one of the texts that stands out for its controversial status with respect to these issues[1] is Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife* (Plut. *Cons. Ux.*).[2] The consolation purports to be a letter written by Plutarch to his wife, Timoxena, on the

1. Harvey's annotated bibliography in Pomeroy, *Plutarch's Advice*, 206-10 (current through 1999) is an invaluable resource for an overview of Plutarch scholarship. The breadth of recent Plutarch scholarship is too substantial to reasonably invoke here, and new additions are frequent. I discuss studies specific to the *Consolatio ad Uxorem* below.
2. I have followed Pomeroy's critical text and commentary (Pomeroy, *Plutarch's Advice,* 65-74). The translations in this chapter closely follow Russell's translation in the same volume (*op. cit.,* 59-63), though I have occasionally altered the translation to more transparently convey a rhetorical device or to better illustrate a point. All references to "sections" or "paragraphs" of the consolation are based on Russell's division, which itself closely follows the manuscript tradition.

occasion of the death of their young daughter, also called Timoxena. The consolatory epistle has been the focus of substantial debate for several reasons. First, scholars have engaged in ongoing debate about the status of the letter as a published, public text versus the record of a (relatively) private letter. The implications are especially important for scholars of sociology and history, for whom the text—interpreted correctly—might serve as a key primary source for as diverse issues as funerary practices for infants, the obligations of fathers in public roles (such as priest), the domestic relationships between husbands and wives and the obligations or customs that inhere in those relationships, customary practices and appropriate emotions around loss, and so forth.[3] Second, scholars have debated the place of the consolation within the tradition of consolation literature. Topics of disagreement include the essential question of innovation: to what extent are the arguments, *topoi*, and formal characteristics of the consolation expressive of traditional, conventional, or culturally expected elements of consolation, and how (and to what extent) do they innovate within that tradition? Because of these questions, the text is important for the study of consolation literature in particular, but also for students of literary genres and literary history more broadly. The stakes for persuasive, conclusive criticism about the consolation, in other words, extend far beyond interpretation of the text itself.

Critics have, unsurprisingly, taken a range of positions on these issues. For Pomeroy, for example, the consolation does not express much genuine grief, if any at all.[4] Instead, it is a

3. See esp. Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning." Cf. Lamberton's biography, *Plutarch*, and Pomeroy's interpretive essay in Pomeroy, *Plutarch's Advice*, esp. 75-77, as well as additional references cited in Baltussen and Pomeroy.
4. Indeed, Pomeroy is rather dismissive of Plutarch's potential feelings: "It is possible that the daughter's death was more grievous to the mother than to the father... despite his professed affection for his daughter, [Plutarch] was still a captive of the patriarchal tradition that valued men more highly than women. … Plutarch was then in his forties, a priest, a writer, and a person of influence, with much to divert him from family matters" ("Reflections," 76). Although Pomeroy may be correct as a matter of biographical fact, this conclusion fails to account for the strong expressions of sympathy and loss in the letter itself; even if Plutarch's posture there doesn't turn out to be genuine, Pomeroy's speculative line of reasoning, which relies on an argument from probability, does little to concretely support the contention.

"didactic" document that serves to "[establish] a standard of behavior" for Timoxena "that runs counter to social norms"[5] of expressive grief.[6] The consolation is thus aimed more at correcting social expressions of grief than it is at providing any moving, personal consolation. Nevertheless, Pomeroy admits the possibility that the composition of the consolation was, perhaps, a cathartic act for Plutarch, a man of letters,[7] and she argues for its status as a public-facing text carefully prepared for publication.[8]

In some ways, Claassen takes Pomeroy's argument further. She argues that the writing and publishing of the formal consolation allowed Plutarch to formally praise his wife's character and to create a lasting monument[9] to his deceased daughter.[10] Despite the emphasis on the public-facing nature of the work, however—an emphasis shared with Pomeroy—Claassen does not deny Plutarch's feelings. Rather than dismissing real feelings as unlikely, she instead presumes

5. It is worth noting that Plutarch's beliefs about the proper role(s) for women is complex and still very much a topic of debate; cf. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 42-3, n. 47 for a brief, cogent review of a half-dozen or so positions, which more or less span the range from "agent of the patriarchy" to "radical proto-feminist."
6. Pomeroy, "Reflections," 76.
7. Pomeroy, "Reflections," 195; cf. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 38, 42.
8. Pomeroy, "Reflections," 76-7. Pomeroy clearly suggests that there is a personal kernel to the letter, but finds it most plausible that the text, as we have received it, includes substantial revisions and expansions intended for a wider audience.
9. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," *passim.* Claassen's argument that the consolation is best understood as a monument to wife and daughter has been well received: cf. Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 83-4; Schorn, "Tears of the Bereaved," which is perhaps too credulous with respect to this question (though it contains an excellent snapshot of the archaeological evidence with respect to mourning the death of infants); and McIntyre, "Deification as Consolation," 234-5, which recycles Claassen's thesis, though more persuasively with respect to the anonymous, poetic *Consolation to Livia* than for Plutarch's *Consolation.* (For the best recent work on the public and commemorative role of the *Consolation to Livia,* see Jenkins, "Livia the *Princeps*.") Claassen suggests that Plutarch's motivation for commemorating both Timoxenai was essentially personal and emotional, but Strubbe—who also discusses this consolation—makes a persuasive case that commemorations like these were, in fact, "typical product[s] of [an] oligarchic society," viz. Imperial-period Greek communities (Strubbe, "Epigrams and Consolation Decrees," esp. 64-5; cf. King, "Commemorations of Infants" and Golden, *Children and Childhood*). This would seem to support Pomeroy's claim that Plutarch, in (plausibly) revising the consolation for publication, probably acted partially out of self-interest—that is, mindful of his prominent religious position (as priest at Delphi) and reputation as a man of letters (for both of which see Lamberton, *Plutarch*, esp. part one on Plutarch's biography and career).
10. In Chapter Three, I argue that "meaning reconstruction" and the creation of a "continuing bond" is a crucial aspect of consolation's therapeutic program. The creation of memorials to the deceased, then, should not be considered an act in opposition to consolation, as it too often is suggested to be in the studies cited above; rather, memorialization ought to be understood as a central part of the consoler persona's effort at "restoration orientation" therapeutic activity, a marker of both genuine grief and active consolatory practice. See 112-119.

the opposite, arguing repeatedly for the presence of strong, authentic grief: her Plutarch is not just "sad,"[11] but "doting,"[12] even "in a state of turmoil"[13] over the loss. Nevertheless, she considers the consolation primarily to be a polished, public-facing encomium to wife and child, since this formal epistolary format was likely the best available vehicle for Plutarch to express his grief.[14]

Nikolaidis argues for an alternative interpretation. Not only does he repeatedly emphasize Plutarch's "genuine affection" for his wife, but he also describes the consolation as "a moving letter to her on the death of their toddler daughter, a most intimate communication quite free from the rhetorical pretensions of consolatory epistolography."[15] Notably, this description highlights both a strong emotional quality—that is, the substantial presence of representational empathy[16]—as well as a limited audience ("a most intimate communication," presumably only for Timoxena's eyes[17]). Nikolaidis's description, then, stands in contrast to Pomeroy, who twice emphasizes the "conventional" nature of the letter in her short commentary,[18] and who would certainly question whether the communication was really as "free of rhetorical pretensions" or intended for as narrow an audience as Nikolaidis claims.

11. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 47.
12. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 44, 45.
13. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 38.
14. Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 47-8.
15. Nikolaidis, "Plutarch on Women and Marriage," 31. Emphasis added.
16. See 46-54.
17. That is, intimacy suggests that the *primary* audience is one held close by bonds of affection. Any intimate communication, however, can be performed in such a way that a secondary audience (of voyeurs, as it were) is invited to participate in the exchange—but not, however, *as addressees*, which is the performative role that is most at stake in intimate communication. Therefore, any audience which stands at a remove—who only intercepts or overhears, so to speak, or else who evaluates or criticizes or learns—must, at best, align with the latter two audience types, philosophers and literary readers, who are not likely targets for *intimate, emotional* address. Hence, given the normal caveats about how culture shapes expression, one can safely conclude that the degree of emotional intimacy represented within a consolation tends to correlate with a focus on the bereaved. (Note, however, that other forms of empathy—like "in his shoes" thinking—may be primarily directed at non-bereaved audiences, since such forms of empathy are as useful in e.g. teaching or reproach as they are in providing comfort.)
18. Pomeroy, "Reflections," 77f.

It would seem, however, that careful analysis of the language of the consolation ought to clarify many of these disagreements. Indeed, consolatory theory provides just the critical vocabulary necessary to do so. On the question of intimacy, for example, a critic could analyze the language of the consolation with respect to how explicitly, fully, or forcefully empathy is figured. Does Plutarch successfully deploy rhetorical empathy to effectively focus on Timoxena's needs, or does the language suggest that his rhetorical focus includes additional audiences (who would have different needs)? Does representational empathy play a strong role in the consolation, which would support the intimate, private reading? Or is it downplayed or absent, which would support the public reading? Is the consolation structured in such a way, and the language composed in such a way, that it would have been likely to provoke receptive empathy in Timoxena alone, or are Plutarch's provocations to receptive empathy instead better suited for a broader audience—and, if so, how broad? Which audiences does Plutarch address throughout the consolation? Where, when, and how much attention does he give each? Where and why does he shift his address? The questions posed by consolatory theory yield crucial information that permits critics to accurately interpret these and other issues.

Baltussen, who has an intuitive grasp of the importance of the questions posed by consolatory theory, provides a characteristically nuanced and sophisticated interpretation of Plutarch's text. Baltussen argues that the consolation is a "moving... intimate... personal reflection,"[19] yet also stands as a persuasive, innovative, public-facing letter meant to be relevant to a variety of audiences. In particular, Baltussen argues that the consolation repeatedly moves from personal, empathic response to philosophical content of general interest, and thus possess a

19. Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 67-8.

sort of rhetorical "rhythm,"[20] as he felicitously puts it, that serves to dramatize and publicize personal mourning for larger, didactic public consumption.[21] Although I agree with many of Baltussen's conclusions about the consolation, especially regarding the role of publicized representational empathy, I argue below that his comments about the complex audience for the consolation may be substantially sharpened, with the result that the consolation's social dimension may be more decisively understood.

In fact, debates about whether the consolation is fundamentally public or private are largely reductive; instead, the consolation can be productively analyzed in terms of how it shifts address from the bereaved audiences (Timoxena and similarly bereaved) to the more public audiences (philosophers and literary readers). In particular, the consolation exhibits a characteristic oscillatory structure—a rhythm, as Baltussen puts it—wherein the focus moves repeatedly and explicitly from Timoxena *senior* to the public audiences and back again. The fact of this oscillation has been the source of debates about the public versus private nature of the consolation, but my analysis suggests that the total consolatory audience, including bereaved, philosophers, and literary readers, is crucial to the text's importance and success. Indeed, Plutarch's consolation is most effective not just when the rhythm is tight or fluid, and thus when one or another of the audiences are kept in focus, but especially in a few key moments when he manages to transcend the oscillatory structure and instead to blend the diverse audiences together in multivalent address. Notably, Plutarch manages these moments of harmony not through passages of direct, empathic address to Timoxena, nor through passages of traditional

20. Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 70.

21. In this way, Plutarch carries the torch of public philosophical education in the tradition of e.g. Seneca; see Schafer's "Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* as Dramatized Education." The mainline scholarly consensus agrees about the didactic interpretation; in addition to Baltussen's discussion of anglophone commentators, see Schorn, "Tears of the Bereaved," for citations from continental academia.

consolatory argumentation (largely targeted to audiences of philosophers),[22] but rather through moments when he praises Timoxena as an *exemplum* herself and then contrasts that *exemplum* with apotreptic images and vivid narration.

In this case study, I analyze rhythms in the specific language and structure of the consolation to explain how and why Plutarch alternates focus between audiences. First, I explain how traces of empathy in the text allow a critic to determine which audience is in focus in a given passage. Next, I discuss passages where there is clear, regular alternation of focus from one audience to another, and then I identify moments when such rhythm is weaker—either because it drifts uncritically from one audience to another, or else because it focuses at length on one audience (to the relative neglect of others). Having established this baseline notion of rhythmic oscillation in the consolation, I then analyze key moments that problematize my explanation of rhythm by showing how *exempla* and vivid description temporarily harmonize focus and allow simultaneous multivalent address to all audiences. Finally, I conclude by returning to (and providing brief answers to) the critical questions posed in the introduction to this case study.

Throughout, I mobilize the musical metaphor of rhythm, for Plutarch's consolation is structured akin to a musical composition. As I show below, his focus—the melody—not only shifts from audience to audience regularly, but also repeats patterns: long emphasis on the therapeutic and philosophical audiences, brief staccato strikes on aesthetic interests. He plays with tempo: extended elaboration of a fable or description, followed by punchy *sententia*; or long passage of ethical analysis punctuated by a quick vivid image. Notably, he employs counterpoint, as when he juxtaposes a protreptic and apotreptic example or description, and then relies on the parallels and divergences between the two to drive home a point or emphasize a theme. Most of

22. Both types of passage are nevertheless essential to the overall function of the consolation, of course.

all, he strives where possible to create harmonies, as when his language simultaneously takes on multiple meanings for different audiences, such that all readers perceive themselves to be relevant addressees at the same time.

I. Setting the Tempo: Empathy and Audience Formation

Plutarch begins the consolation, as so many do, with a *captatio benevolentiae*, an expression of sympathy and compassion. His expression of sympathy is directed explicitly to Timoxena, and it contains specific personal details, including what appears to be both an encouragement for Timoxena to put her needs above her fear of Plutarch's reproach, as well as a tender expression of hope for healing in the future:

> I imagine the funeral is now over, and hope it has been done in the way that will make for least pain for you both now and in the future. If there is anything you wished to do but refrained from doing, waiting for my decision, but which you think will make things easier to bear, pray do it, without extravagance (περιεργίας) or superstition, for which I know you have no inclination.
>
> τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὴν ταφὴν ἤδη νομίζω γεγονέναι, γεγονότα δ' ἐχέτω ὥς σοι μέλλει καὶ νῦν ἀλυπότατα καὶ πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν ἔξειν. εἰ δέ τι βουλομένη μὴ πεποίηκας ἀλλὰ μένεις τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην, οἴει δὲ κουφότερον οἴσειν γενομένου, καὶ τοῦτ' ἔσται δίχα πάσης περιεργίας καὶ δεισιδαιμονίας, ὧν ἥκιστά σοι μέτεστι. (§1, 608B)

In terms of consolatory theory, this portion of the *captatio benevolentiae* may be accurately described as a linguistic act of representational empathy that is designed to provoke receptive empathy. As such, it functions as an affirmation and reinforcement of social bonds between the consoler-persona and the literal bereaved.[23]

23. In the context of ancient rhetorical conceptions of goodwill, one of the most penetrating studies remains Fortenbaugh's "Aristotle on Persuasion Through Character." According to Fortenbaugh, Aristotelian (and, indeed, traditional Greek conceptions of) goodwill (εὔνοια) involve(s) the orator demonstrating an orientation toward auditors that assures them of her commitment to their own advantage or self-interest (e.g. 221-2). That is, a classical office of the orator, and one deeply tied to the success of her persuasive project, is exactly the projection of goodwill that I describe here. (Cf. Montefusco, "Aristotle and Cicero on the *officia oratoris*.") In terms of grief, goodwill for the auditor depends on the deployment of representational empathy that causes an

At the same time, when such an act is performed publicly, it also functions to express empathy in different ways: the act of expressing sympathy and compassion shapes the nature of the persona's character in the eyes of other audiences (beyond the literal addressee), and also authorizes expressions of sympathy as a proper response within the given consolatory situation. In the familiar terms of Austin's speech act theory,[24] the consoler's public expression of sympathy thus has at least two different sorts of illocutionary force for different audiences: for the bereaved, it means, "I understand you and am working to connect with you emotionally and socially," whereas it communicates to external audiences (e.g. philosophers and literary readers), "This sort of speech is an effective way to connect to a loved one who is experiencing the pain of grief."

Indeed, the language of the text bears out the multivocal nature of Plutarch's consolation and reveals the extent to which various forms of empathy both compose and distinguish consolatory audiences. Take Plutarch's use of the word περιεργίας, for example. The word περιεργία has a fairly wide semantic range in various uses, but generally tends to express its linguistic roots rather literally, i.e. meaning something like "working too hard." It thus connotes both futility and excess,[25] but the particular sense is likely to be interpreted differently by different audiences. Timoxena, like similar metonymically bereaved audiences who are currently occupied with the pain of grief, is likely to interpret the word from within the frame of her grief: that is, as indicating the excessive emotional displays made by recent widows, replete with wailing and the beating of chests.[26] For this reason, Russell translates the word as "extravagance." For other

activation of receptive empathy; without these, the consoler does not have a credible platform from which to console.

24. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words.*
25. Elsewhere, Plutarch uses it in the sense of "superstition," but Russell and others are right not to simply treat it as a pleonasm for δεισιδαιμονίας—the emotional register is clearly intended here.
26. Cf. Plutarch's description at §4 (608F-609C). Note that the preposition περί, whence the prefix, was widely used from Homer on to signal an object of concern or preoccupation; cf. LSJ, s.v., C.I.3.

audiences, however, the aspect of futility will take precedence over the aspect of excess. Philosophical readers, for example, approach the text not from the frame of current grief, but rather from an educational frame. To such an audience, then, the word is likely to instead indicate an evaluation of the activity of those grieving; in this case, a clearly negative evaluation, since περιεργία contradicts the Plutarchan ideal of μετριοπάθεια.[27] Moreover, given their emphasis on preparing to act in the right way, philosophical audiences are likely to consider the word not just in its emotional register, but also insofar as it describes a sort of activity. For philosophical audiences, then, περιεργία is likely to connote the futile thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of those embroiled in grief.

The distinction is slight, but meaningful. For Timoxena and metonymic bereaved audiences, Plutarch validates their grief as reasonable and licenses moderate expressions of pain, and notably does so via relationship-building, empathic recognition of the attraction of "letting go" and being swept away by the excesses of pain. For philosophical audiences, on the other hand, Plutarch warns against illegitimate, unethical displays of emotion and establishes the boundaries of correct ethical behavior, boundaries whose breach, he suggests, would be an inefficacious method of resolving grief. Whereas bereaved audiences understand Plutarch as recognizing the mesmeric attraction of unrestrained grief, philosophical audiences understand Plutarch the moralist as warning about the ethical dangers of uncontrolled grief, and thus also establishing, per Pomeroy, the boundaries of acceptable behavior.

The choice of the word περιεργία, then, permits Plutarch to instantiate empathy in a number of senses. It requires rhetorical empathy, or the sensitivity to understand the different

27. On the topic of Plutarch's commitment to *metriopatheia,* see the excellent recent discussion in Machek, "Carving, Taming, or Gardening?"

frames within which different audiences will interpret the language of the consolation. It requires representational empathy, or the effective, pro-social expression of sympathy. And it provokes different forms of receptive empathy: for the bereaved, a sense of connection, altruism, and trust with the consoler; for philosophers, an invitation to imagine themselves acting rightly (i.e. without excess) in a situation of grief. In particular, the forms of empathy represented to (and provoked in) the bereaved audiences are primarily affective, while the forms of empathy represented to (and provoked in) philosophical audiences are primarily cognitive—just as one would expect, given the divergent interests of the two audiences.

From the outset, then, it is clear that Plutarch understands that his consolation must speak to multiple audiences and that he must deploy different forms of empathy to effectively reach those audiences. The best solution, of course, is to use language and ideas—like the choice of περιεργία—that speak simultaneously to different audiences in relevant ways. And, indeed, I discuss several more such examples at the end of this chapter. Such overloaded language, however, is not always possible (and sometimes can lead to misunderstanding or lack of clarity), so Plutarch establishes a different baseline practice, one that he maintains throughout the work and that is itself an example of the most common way that consolers deal with multiple audiences: he rapidly shifts the primary focus of his address from one audience to another.[28] Before analyzing more difficult moments of audience harmonization, then, it will be productive to examine the standard practice against which those moments work.

28. To be precise, he shifts from topics most relevant to one audience to topics most relevant to a different audience. That is, when I claim that he addresses a given audience, I am advancing an interpretation that establishes those links based on an argument about what topics are most appealing to various audiences. As always, one must appreciate caveats about the distinctions between abstract audience types, as I discuss here, and real audiences, who have multiple and sometimes conflicting interests, and who are thus rarely amenable to as simplistic categorization as one might assume from the present discussion.

II. The Baseline Rhythm: Shifting Focus, Drifting Focus

Immediately following the *captatio benevolentiae,* Plutarch establishes his conventional method: he begins with personal details addressed to Timoxena, but quickly shifts his address to topics or language more relevant to philosophers or literary readers. On the one hand, he begins with personal address:

> Only, my dear wife, at this sad moment, keep yourself, and me, calm. I know I can get the measure of what has happened; but if I see you grieving to excess, that will hurt me more than the loss. But I am no "child of oak or rock": you know that, you have shared with me the upbringing of all our children, all reared at home by ourselves, and you know that this child was beloved by me above all, because she was the daughter you wanted after four sons and she gave me the opportunity to give her your name.
>
> Μόνον, ὦ γύναι, τήρει κἀμὲ τῷ πάθει καὶ σεαυτὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ καθεστῶτος. ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς μὲν οἶδα καὶ ὁρίζω τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἡλίκον ἐστίν; ἂν δὲ σε τῷ δυσφορεῖν ὑπερβάλλουσαν εὕρω, τοῦτό μοι μᾶλλον ἐνοχλήσει τοῦ γεγονότος. καίτοι οὐδ' αὐτὸς 'ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης' ἐγενόμην; οἶσθα δὲ καὶ αὐτή τοσούτων μοι τέκνων ἀνατροφῆς κοινωνήσασα, πάντων ἐκτεθραμμένων οἴκοι δι' αὐτῶν ἡμῶν, τούτου δέ, ὅτι καὶ σοὶ ποθούσῃ θυγάτηρ μετὰ τέσσαρας υἱοὺς ἐγεννήθη κἀμοὶ τὸ σὸν ὄνομα θέσθαι παρέσχεν ἀφορμήν, [οἶδα] ἀγαπητὸν διαφερόντως γενομένον. (§2, 608B-C)

In so writing, Plutarch not only exhorts Timoxena to be resolute (with a characteristically stern combination of praise, shame, and social pressure), but he also provides an objective diagnosis to explain that it is natural for this loss, or for similar ones, to be so difficult, since the loss results from the close relational bond they shared with their deceased daughter. It is worth noticing that Plutarch begins with speech that is, at least *prima facie,* notably personalized—he situates the child among their other children and references her namesake. By explaining the force of the loss in terms of conjugal and parental relationships, Plutarch establishes a more intimate tone for the consolation than would have been the case if had he began, for example, with the traditional *laus*

mortui, if he had invoked broader relationships (rather than focusing on the infant),[29] or if he had chosen less personal terms in which to couch the general argument about what causes intimacy.

I am not claiming, of course, that personal address is solely relevant to the bereaved audiences, but rather that they are its primarily focus. Plutarch does make efforts, as it were, to keep other audiences engaged. Throughout this passage, for example, he includes subtle elements of both moral example and artistic commemoration. That is, Plutarch's praise for Timoxena is personal, but can also be read educationally, as setting standards of behavior—and with an idealized Timoxena herself the exemplar.[30] In allowing Timoxena to view herself through Plutarch's (idealizing) eyes, he doubtlessly pursues a therapeutic aim, namely helping his wife to view the loss in less personally catastrophic terms. On the other hand, the model that he thus creates is itself relevant to the interests of philosophical audiences. Moreover, the language throughout this passage is leavened with an allusion to Homer and with pleasing poeticisms (like the tenderness of the phrase "ἀγαπητὸν διαφερόντως γενομένον")—figures that are no doubt attractive to literary-reader type audiences. In short, Plutarch begins the consolation with an overt personal emphasis, but while nevertheless working to engage the full range of his intended audience.

From initial personal details, however, Plutarch's speech moves rather quickly to the impersonal consolatory language of traditional eulogy (608C-D).[31] This move highlights his

29. That is, conventional consolatory practices are still concerned with social relationships of various sorts, but Plutarch's emphasis here is specifically on personal, private, domestic relations—he deliberately avoids the consolatory *topos,* for example, that the couple's surviving children ought to be a source of consolation for Timoxena, and instead opts for this more intimate reflection on the parent's bond with their toddler.
30. This is the point that Pomeroy stresses. The first two sections have already provided examples, such as Plutarch's comments above about how much he trusts his wife's restraint and about how she may be comfort to him as well as vice versa. These moments of praise transform into fully developed *exempla* in later sections, as I discuss below (80-90).
31. The bibliography for ancient funerary rhetoric is vast. The recent scholarship most relevant to the argument here is Edward's *Death in Ancient Rome,* whose persuasive argument emphasizes how eulogy creates ideological models. Erasmo, *Reading Death in Ancient Rome,* provides a cogent argument about the theatricality of funerary

educational audience of philosophers, for the eulogy not only draws from traditional eulogistic *topoi,* but also provides a model for those who seek to perform the empathic duties of the consoler. As a result, the personal address and the impersonal eulogy, considered as a whole, illustrate how Plutarch characteristically repeats a pattern in which he begins with specific emphasis on Timoxena and similar bereaved, but then turns to other, less personal audiences. Directly following the personal address where he refers to the child's gender, order of birth, and namesake, Plutarch immediately—even abruptly—pivots to eulogistic commonplaces: young children capture our affections on account of their purity and innocence; the child was known for her gentleness; she often displayed her kindness (608C-D). These are, of course, commonplaces in eulogies of both children and females. Indeed, Plutarch acts as if he has recognized that a shift in emphasis may be appealing to non-bereaved audiences, but might also alienate the grieving, so he pivots again to personal details, this time describing how the child had generously shared imaginary food with her playthings (608D).[32] Across the section as a whole, then, the oscillatory structure is evident: it begins with personal details for the explicit addressee, transitions rapidly to conclusions of broader applicability (conclusions that would be appropriate, in particular, to audiences of philosophers and students), and finally returns to personal address. Across this section, one strategy becomes clear: as the author shifts focus rapidly from the themes, arguments, or images likely to be relevant to or valued by different audiences, he is able to keep multiple audiences in play, so to speak. As with the illusion of constant motion generated by the

rhetoric. For other references, especially relating to gender and age, see the bibliography in Hope and Huskinson (eds.), *Memory and Mourning,* and Hope, *Roman Death.* Fögen, *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World,* examines similar issues with an emphasis on literature and sociology, while Oliver, *The Epigraphy of Death*, does so through the rhetoric and archaeology of funerary monuments and inscriptions.

32. Although a common activity for young children, this must be interpreted as a genuine personal detail—anything else would have been shockingly alienating for Timoxena.

turning pages of a child's flip book, oscillating focus elides the less relevant gaps[33] in the text and thereby provides the illusion that continuous attention is being paid to members of any given audience.

The strategy of rapid oscillation is especially noticeable with respect to the audience of literary readers, who may be enticed with both large-scale devices (a series of rhetorical questions, say, or extended fables or descriptions) as well as small-scale figures (a brief allusion or quotation, a memorable maxim or turn of phrase). In section three, to take just one example, Plutarch quotes Euripides to claim, generally, that it is dangerous to "throw out the memory with the grief" (ἀλλὰ καὶ δέδια πάλιν, μὴ συνεκβάλωμεν τῷ λυποῦντι τὴν μνήμην, §3, 608D-E).[34] Then, he immediately relates this ethical precept back to Timoxena's specific situation: "But our daughter..." (δεῖ δέ, ὥσπερ αὐτὴ..., §3, 608E). The result is a philosophical precept that is relevant to the argument at hand and that is related to the specific situation of the loss, but that is momentarily cast as a figure (poetic allusion) likely to be attractive to literary readers. That is, philosophers and bereaved audiences are likely to find the thought relevant, but the interests of literary readers is briefly emphasized by the use of poetic allusion.

Indeed, Plutarch continues this approach to the literary audience throughout. In addition to the quotations from Homer (§2) and Euripides (§3, both above), he provides something of interest to literary readers regularly: rhetorical questions in apotreptic portrayal of women overcome by grief (§4), the contrasting encomiastic narrative of Timoxena's response to the loss of Chaeron (§5), the summary of Aesop's fable about grief as houseguest (§6), the description of

33. The phenomenology of reading already inclines to this effect—that is, readers already tend, as part of the sense-making process, to focus on the details most relevant to them and to intuitively fuse those details into a continual, salient, received impression of the text; but deliberate rhetorical decisions can impede or, as here, encourage this attentional process.
34. For commentary, see Pomeroy, "Reflections," 79.

excessive grief's deleterious effects on mental wellbeing and hygiene (also §6, and picking up the *apotrepsis* from §4), another allusion to Euripides (§7), continued analogies to illness (§7), similes, *anthypophora,* and analogical reasoning sprinkled throughout a long philosophical passage (§8-9), metaphors based in Dionysiac rites (§10), a quotation from Theognis (§10), and vivid *sententiae* scattered throughout—to mention only a few. The interests of literary readers, not to belabor the point, tend to be rapidly woven throughout the text in the interstitial spaces between philosophical argument and personal address. To simplify the argument that follows, I frequently shunt discussion of such elements to the footnotes, even though Plutarch maintains this approach to the literary audience throughout the consolation.

Oscillation does not just occur through the simple selection and alternation of compositional elements purely relevant to a given audience, of course. It also occurs in more complex ways through both small-scale shifting address (especially anastrophe) and large-scale structural elements, such as the gross organization of thoughts or the development of an argument. Take anastrophe: even at the granular level of individual words, Plutarch betrays his divided focus as his grammar itself slips from one audience to another. In section eight (610D-611A), for example, he incorporates consolatory commonplaces about memory into his address to Timoxena in order to adjust his wife's perspective.[35] He advises Timoxena to "try to take

35. As I discuss in Chapter Four, the invocation of memory is a core technique of both consolatory therapy and also consolatory moral education (cf. 169-170). Like other consolers of antiquity, Plutarch believes that grief can be counteracted by equally strong but opposing emotions. (Indeed, this homeostatic conception of emotions seems to be a widespread, cross-cultural intuition about how emotions work.) In section three, for example, he argues that "we [Plutarch and his wife] ought to let the thought of [baby Timoxena] also dwell in our minds and lives, for there is much more joy in it than sorrow" (δεῖ δέ, ὥσπερ αὐτὴ πάντων ἥδιστον ἡμῖν ἄσπασμα καὶ θέαμα καὶ ἄκουσμα παρεῖχεν ἑαυτήν, οὕτω καὶ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτῆς ἐνδιαιτᾶσθαι καὶ συμβιοῦν ἡμῖν πλέον ἔχουσαν μᾶλλον δὲ πολλαπλάσιον τὸ εὐφραῖνον ἢ τὸ λυποῦν, 608E). The implication is clear: joy, along with the moral value of memory (ἐπίνοια), may counteract the force of grief. Note the strongly cognitivist language used, both in terms of "joy" (τὸ εὐφραῖνον) and memory/reflection (ἐπίνοια). This is not merely a passive memory re-experienced, but rather an active, purposive moral behavior. Memory is thus not merely a bulwark, but also an active, therapeutic program of reflection. For non-bereaved audiences, this functions as yet more persuasion toward meditation and reflective practice as prophylactic to grief.

[herself] away in thought to the time before [they] had this child, when [they] had no complaint against the future" (πειρῶ δὲ τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ μεταφέρουσα σεαυτὴν ἀποκαθιστάναι πολλάκις εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον, ἐν ᾧ μηδέπω τοῦ παιδίου τούτου γεγονότος μηδὲν ἔγκλημα πρὸς τὴν τύχην εἴχομεν, §8, 610D). Having interrupted Timoxena's experience of grief with these remembrances, Plutarch then endeavors to reframe her perspective:[36]

> ... the intervening two years [of the child's life] are indeed not to be expunged from memory, but to be counted as pleasure because of the charm and enjoyment they gave us... in circumstances like these, he who most draws on the good things in his memory, and turns his thoughts to the bright and shining path of his life and away from darkness and troubles, either extinguishes his pain altogether or makes it dim and faint by the admixture of its opposite. … The thought of good things (ἡ ἐπίνοια τῶν ἀγαθῶν) in bad times actually serves as a necessary aid to those who do not avoid the memory of good things or find fault with fortune for everything and in every way.
>
> τὴν δ' ἐν μέσῳ διετίαν ἐξαιρεῖν μὲν οὐ δεῖ τῆς μνήμης, ὡς δὲ χάριν καὶ ἀπόλαυσιν παρασχοῦσαν ἐν ἡδονῇ τίθεσθαι … ἐν δὲ τοῖς τοιούτοις ὁ μάλιστα τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπαρυτόμενος καὶ τοῦ βίου πρὸς τὰ φωτεινὰ καὶ λαμπρὰ μεταστρέφων καὶ μεταφέρων ἐκ τῶν σκοτεινῶν καὶ ταρακτικῶν τὴν διάνοιαν ἢ παντάπασιν ἔσβεσε τὸ λυποῦν ἢ τῇ πρὸς τοὐναντίον μίξει μικρὸν καὶ ἀμαυρὸν ἐποίησεν. … ἡ ἐπίνοια τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐν τοῖς κακοῖς καὶ βοηθήματος ἀναγκαίου παρέχεται χρείαν τοῖς μὴ φεύγουσι τὸ μεμνῆσθαι τῶν χρηστῶν μηδὲ πάντα καὶ πάντως μεμφομένοις τὴν τύχην. (§8, 610E-F)

Through remembrance, Timoxena's perspective shifts from grieving parent—a black hole of despair—to proud, nostalgic parent, one who is likely to temper her grief through an admixture of that most warm and fuzzy ancient Greek feeling, στοργή. This sort of temporal dislocation through memory is a common consolatory technique used to interrupt the audience's grief and to provide distance during which therapeutic or developmental aims may be pursued.[37]

36. Note that, for the purposes of illustration, I've cut two metaphors—one about perfume, one about a book with a single erasure—that are likely to appeal to audiences of literary readers. My aim is to emphasize a particular line of thought with respect to the philosophical audience, but the constant flickering to and from the literary audience, which I discussed above, continues with the inclusion of the excised metaphors.
37. Note how Plutarch uses memory as a resource to redirect Timoxena toward a more cognitive understanding of her situation. "ἡ ἐπίνοια τῶν ἀγαθῶν," in particular, is explicitly rational—indeed, ἐπίνοια is a term of art favored by neo-Platonists and the Church Fathers, among others (like the Stoics Chrysippus and Posidonius, the

More salient to our purposes, however, is the grammatical drift in Plutarch's language. In particular, there is a sort of solecism in the text: although Plutarch is nominally addressing Timoxena, he nevertheless uses three masculine participles in the passage (ἀπαρυτόμενος, μεταστρέφων, μεταφέρων). Presumably Plutarch's slippage into philosophical argument, whose audience would largely (though not exclusively) consist of educated male readers, has been reflected in his grammatical slippage, from personal feminine cases to general masculine inflection. It is not uncommon for a slippage between different consolatory audiences to occur, of course, but it is revealing that Plutarch, whether deliberately or intuitively, has elliptically shifted address toward an implied audience of other educated, upper-class males at just the point when he takes up material most relevant to a philosophical audience made up (at the time of composition) of those very people.[38]

Just as the focus of Plutarch's language sometimes drifts, perhaps unintentionally, from one audience to another, there are times when his text instead barely manages to shift focus from one audience to another before returning to the first. In section nine (611A-D), for example, Plutarch perhaps most baldly addresses his philosophical audience. If any passage has little material directly relevant to Timoxena's situation (and thus may have been added for a public

Jewish scholars Josephus and Philo, and the historian Polybius).

38. One might object that the slippage to masculine cases instead indicates that Plutarch has shifted address from Timoxena to himself. If this were the case, the passage would be an interesting case of self-consolation, which is otherwise conspicuously rare in antiquity (with the obvious exception of Cicero's *Consolatio ad se;* but see Robinson, "The Longest Transference."). If this were indeed a case of self-consolation, however, it would not invalidate the point about the address to the masculine philosophical audience, of which Plutarch himself was of course a part (even a leading example!), though it would suggest an additional layer of multivocal address that would dovetail with the argument advanced in this chapter about the importance of multivocal language. Ultimately, however, I do not think that the evidence provides a persuasive reason to think that Plutarch must have had himself in mind here—the alternative explanation seems more compelling on the principle of simplicity —but I cannot conclusively deny the possibility. Obversely, even if some form of self-consolation has arisen here, a masculine philosophical audience cannot help but see themselves in this address, regardless of its intent, since Plutarch's language explicitly speaks to their interests (e.g. phrases like " ἡ ἐπίνοια τῶν ἀγαθῶν," as discussed above, as well as the paraenetic imagery of e.g. light and darkness).

audience), this long section is it. Aside from a rather bathic concluding remark about Timoxena's age,[39] Plutarch works throughout the passage to model ethical reasoning that begins with precepts—accepted premises, in this case—and to provide recommendations for correct ethical behavior. Throughout, the style weaves nominally personal address—the passage is written in second person—with adages and philosophical reasoning that will appeal to philosophical audiences. Indeed, the passage begins with explicitly analytical language, with only the direct second-person address to signify that he will discuss anything beyond abstract philosophy: "You have often been told that happiness depends on right thinking (ἐξ ὀρθῶν ἐπιλογισμῶν), which results in a stable frame of mind, and that the vicissitudes of fortune do not mean a great decline or any catastrophic landslide in one's life" (ὅτι μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ὀρθῶν ἐπιλογισμῶν εἰς εὐσταθῆ διάθεσιν τελευτώντων ἦρτηται τὸ μακάριον, αἱ δ' ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης τροπαὶ μεγάλας ἀποκλίσεις οὐ ποιοῦσιν οὐδ' ἐπιφέρουσι συγχυτικὰς ὀλισθήσεις τοῦ βίου, πολλάκις ἀκήκοας, 611A). The passage goes on at length to offer standard consolatory commonplaces in abstract language: do not heed the opinions of common folk; focus on your remaining blessings; even with the pain of bereavement, others would choose your life because it is so good.

Any oscillatory rhythm that the passage possesses is only weakly present. At times, Plutarch briefly mentions Timoxena's situation, though—to be fair—his points apply to most widows in general. He tersely refers, for example, to Timoxena's management of the household, her duties in regard to hospitality, her women friends, and her remaining children and family (e.g. ἀλλ' ἐννόει μᾶλλον ὡς ζηλουμένη διατελεῖς ὑπὸ τούτων ἐπὶ τέκνοις καὶ οἴκῳ καὶ βίῳ, 611B). These references, however, are passingly brief, and Plutarch's focus flicks to them only briefly

39. "Your Timoxena is deprived of little things, for little things are all she knew and all she took delight in" (Τιμοξένα δ' ἡ σὴ μικρῶν μὲν ἐστέρηται, μικρὰ γὰρ ἔγνω καὶ μικροῖς ἔχαιρε, 611D).

before returning to philosophical themes. Indeed, only the second-person address allows Timoxena the character any substantial presence in the passage, yet even this second-person address is ambiguous; given the philosophical content of the passage, it is likely that non-bereaved audiences, and especially philosophers, will interpret the "you" as addressing them rather than (or, at least, in addition to) Timoxena. (This effect tends to occur at any point where dramatic pretext is not strongly maintained within the text and through the text itself; otherwise, the phenomenology of reading tends to collapse such distance.) Likewise, the only real focus shared with literary audiences, aside from a few vivid phrases, is a striking metaphor comparing certain readers of Homer to misers (611B-C). To Timoxena and other similarly bereaved, then, the passage may read as philosophical advice tailored to her/their situation, but other audiences will read the passage with the personal color and literary figures as little more than comfortable set dressing, while the content of the philosophical messages, conversely, takes the foreground.

In one sense, one might argue that Plutarch has used ambiguity to provide a complex depth of field, so to speak, and therefore has allowed his readers to focus on the level of abstraction most relevant to them. This explanation would suggest that ambiguity causes different audiences to perceive their interests being met, even if the text itself doesn't really do so. Setting aside how uncharitably this interpretation portrays both Plutarch and his audiences (as conniving and stupid, respectively), it would still be forced at best, given the strong philosophical orientation of the relatively long passage. Furthermore, the rhythm of shifting address is still present within the passage, even if it reveals itself more through the momentary lapse from the philosophical audience rather than through its clear presence. As such, it seems more likely that the passage is just what it seems—a philosophical section that only briefly considers other

concerns—rather than an intricate piece of argumentation that relies on subtle ambiguities to appeal simultaneously to the various concerns of different audiences.

III. Collapsed Rhythms: Multivalent Address Through Vivid Description

Just as his specific language choices emphasize one audience and then another on a small scale, so to do the broad, high-level structures of Plutarch's thoughts and arguments possess an oscillating rhythm. At the organizational level in particular, Plutarch uses both structures of elaboration and structures of antithesis to control readers' attention. Because the devices he uses to do so have the multivalent power to address multiple audiences through one vehicle, however, the rhythm of personal to public address becomes divorced from its association with different audiences. Instead, since the *exempla* and other images that Plutarch adduce are highly salient to various audiences (even if for varying reasons), they form key interpretative nexuses within the text. In particular, they demonstrate how questions about the public or private nature of the consolation fail to adequately account for the force of the consolation, which compels different audiences, even when they have very different concerns, to take seriously the need to develop resilience. As such, they are crucial to Plutarch's persuasive efforts within the consolation.

Frequently, large-scale structural oscillation occurs within a "point and elaboration" structure. This strategy, widespread in popular philosophy from antiquity, traditionally establishes a general philosophical point or precept, and then provides examples, anecdotes, or other illustration of the point. Like Seneca, however, Plutarch is not only fond of this structure, but also prefers to invert it within consolation—first, he establishes a point in personal terms, then he elaborates with philosophical reasoning of one sort or another. For example, in section seven of the consolation (610C-D), Plutarch uses a personal detail from Timoxena's life to

establish a point about correct ethical behavior, and then he uses various forms of analogical reasoning to elaborate that point. To first establish the point, he praises Timoxena's behavior as a positive example of right conduct in the face of psychic weakness: "I know the fight you fought lately to help Theon's sister, confronting the women who visited her with their howling and shrieking, truly 'heaping fire on fire' [sc. not allowing her pain and grief to fade]" (γινώσκω γὰρ ποίους ἔναγχος ἀγῶνας ἠγωνίσω τῇ Θέωνος ἀδελφῇ βοηθοῦσα καὶ μαχομένη ταῖς μετ' ὀλοφυρμῶν καὶ ἀλαλαγμῶν ἔξωθεν ἐπιούσαις, ὥσπερ ἀτεχνῶς πῦρ ἐπὶ πῦρ φερούσαις, 610C). Note that Plutarch explicitly addresses Timoxena here, but that he also uses a vivid image and a Greek proverb to appeal to his literary readers. Then, Plutarch elaborates (at length) on the ethical lesson behind Timoxena's praiseworthy behavior. In so doing, he constructs glimpses of vivid, analogical situations through which he may critique errant behavior and suggest how it may be rectified—that is, his elaboration emphasizes philosophical instruction, the type of material most privileged by philosophical audiences. First, Plutarch continues the fire metaphor to describe where the unwise err in their psychic care: "When people see their friends' houses burning, they try to put the fire out with what speed and means they have; but when minds are ablaze, they bring fresh fuel to the flames" (τὰς μὲν γὰρ οἰκίας τῶν φίλων ὅταν καιομένας ἴδωσι, σβεννύουσιν ὡς ἔχει τάχους ἕκαστος ἢ δυνάμεως, ταῖς δὲ ψυχαῖς φλεγομέναις αὐτοὶ προσφέρουσιν ὑπεκκαύματα, 610C). He then immediately turns to a medical metaphor (an eye infection), based on the same analogy, to further support his argument for urgent action (610C-D).

In both elaborated analogies, the best course of ethical action reflects Timoxena's (putative) personal conduct: to address problems with speed and vigor. The urgent images of danger and illness mobilized in these passages increase the urgency of Plutarch's point, but the

underlying ethical reasoning and analysis, which critiques errant behavior, stands on its own: by imagining a situation in which others go wrong, the consoler's audiences may be better prepared to act correctly when an analogous situation occurs in their own lives.[40] As with Timoxena's *exemplum* in the initial point, the elaborative analogies use vivid description likely to be attractive to literary readers, while at the same time addressing the intellectual concerns of philosophical audiences. And, because the *exemplum* and vivid description marry the interests of various audiences and express them in a multivalent device (that is, a single device that carries different meanings for different audiences), the approach is both economical and effective.

At other times, structural oscillation takes the form of antithesis, which turns out to be an even more effective structure for multivalent address. In the central sections of the consolation, for example, Plutarch repeatedly frames an ethical point as an antithesis between protreptic and apotreptic *exempla*. In two adjacent passages, which I will discuss momentarily, Plutarch establishes Timoxena as a positive *exemplum* and then later describes vivid, contrasting scenes of poor behavior. At the outset, though, it ought to be said that Plutarch's repeated praise of Timoxena's moral strength is one of the most notable (and oft remarked-upon) elements of the consolation.[41] Critics have disagreed about the extent to which this praise is meant to activate pride in existing strength, as opposed to either leveraging shame for moral weakness or to provide aspirational, didactic goals for behavior,[42] but consolatory theory suggests that the proper

40. In Chapter Five, I emphasize how premeditation is one major technique of philosophical education (139-146). Here, Plutarch works with fundamentally conventional material, namely how to premeditate about virtuous action, such as the exercise of courage. Military metaphors, which are the most common source for such arguments, would be inappropriate given his addressee, so he instead turns to firefighting and medicine, both of which require bold, courageous action once intervention has been deemed necessary.

41. In particular, the encomia are delivered in the general form of *laus muliebris*, a particularly gendered and historically rooted description of an ideal woman's response to suffering. For *laus muliebris* in Plutarch see: Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 42-4; Blomquist, "From Olympias to Aretaphila."

42. Pomeroy suggests that the didactic goal is most likely (*Plutarch's Advice*, 76). Schorn, "Tears of the Bereaved," strongly prefers a commemorative interpretation, saying that the consolation "stands as a monument to the character of Timoxena..., raising her above other women of the time as a philosophically educated partner. It is

interpretation relies on audience analysis—that is, the *exempla* simultaneously function to bolster Timoxena (and similar bereaved's) resolve, to act as aspirational images for bereaved and philosophers alike, and to portray the ideas of the consolation in an attractive, comprehensible, and memorable literary form. It is largely irrelevant whether the strengths attributed to Timoxena genuinely exist and are being invoked to strengthen readers' moral resilience, or whether they are instead aspirational images invoked to counteract the appeal of grief. Indeed, as I've argued, Plutarch has enough skill as a stylist to make a point to several audiences at once, so it is unreasonable to think that he felt compelled to offer forced praise of Timoxena merely to address a different audience, to maintain a positive relationship with his wife, to demonstrate a claim about marriage for external audiences, or for the simple sake of convention. In fact, as I have shown, Plutarch has no qualms about simply addressing other audiences directly when it suits his purposes.[43] Of course, the *exempla* discussed in the following passages must be at least partially aspirational, since a person with the iron composure attributed to Timoxena would have no use for consolation such at that offered here and elsewhere. Nevertheless, although Plutarch could have fabricated the occasions about which he praises Timoxena, there is no compelling reason to think that he must have. In fact, as I argue below, there are good reasons to think that Timoxena's exemplification was a deliberate strategy to engage multiple audiences with a particularly flexible and multivalent device. If that is the case, then the *exempla* not only clearly function as important components of both the therapeutic and the moral development aspects of

likewise a monument to Plutarch's own philosophical convictions" (361). Baltussen, in contrast, prefers a pride/shame interpretation, though he agrees that Timoxena is genuinely portrayed as exemplary ("Personal Grief and Public Mourning," 77-9, 82). Jo-Marie Claassen, on the other hand, concludes that Plutarch wrote the consolation partially to work through his own grief, but mostly to memorialize his wife and child rather than to offer consolation or to teach ("Plutarch's Little Girl," 47-8).

43. Such as with masculine pronouns (above) or the ambiguous "you" (below).

Plutarch's consolatory program, but also play a key role in reconciling the competing interests of disparate audiences.

With respect to the rhythm created by structural antithesis, then, two pairs of contrasting *exempla*, drawn from the center of the consolation, suffice to substantiate the claim that *exempla* provide a rare opportunity for Plutarch to harmonize the concerns of the different audiences and thereby to bring them all into focus with the same device. The first *exemplum* describes Timoxena's conduct while preparing for the funeral, in which an encomiastic description of her habitual behaviors and beliefs provide a basis for moral resilience that leads directly to her exemplary conduct:

> Those who were with you tell me, with admiration, that you did not put on mourning, or allow yourself and the servants to disfigure yourselves; nor were there any ostentatious or lavish funeral preparations: everything was done decently and silently, and in the presence of close friends. It did not surprise me that you, who have never tricked yourself out for theaters or processions and have always believed that expense was useless in pleasures, should also have maintained that same simplicity and modesty in time of sorrow.
>
> καὶ τοῦτο λέγουσιν οἱ παραγενόμενοι καὶ θαυμάζουσιν, ὡς οὐδ' ἱμάτιον ἀνείληφας πένθιμον οὐδὲ σαυτῇ τινα προσήγαγες ἢ θεραπαινίσιν ἀμορφίαν καὶ αἰκίαν, οὐδ' ἦν παρασκευὴ πολυτελείας πανηγυρικῆς περὶ τὴν ταφήν, ἀλλ' ἐπράττετο κοσμίως πάντα καὶ σιωπῇ μετὰ τῶν ἀναγκαίων. ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἐθαύμαζον, εἰ μηδέποτε καλλωπισαμένη περὶ θέατρον ἢ πομπὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ἡδονὰς ἄχρηστον ἡγησαμένη τὴν πολυτέλειαν ἐν τοῖς σκυθρωποῖς διεφύλαξας τὸ ἀφελὲς καὶ λιτόν. (§4, 608F-609A)

Of particular note in this encomium is not only that Plutarch describes Timoxena's resolute behavior in terms of ideal behaviors like modesty and frugality,[44] but also that he emphasizes both the social act of witnessing and validation ("those who were with you[45] tell me, with

44. See Jo-Marie Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 42-3, n. 47 for an annotated bibliography about Plutarch's representation of women. For a strong argument in favor of idealization, see Hawley, "Practicing What You Preach," 125-6.

45. Presumably this is the niece mentioned at the beginning of the consolation, though the plural here (λέγουσιν οἱ παραγενόμενοι καὶ θαυμάζουσιν) might belie that fact; this passage might thus hint at later revision by indicating *exempla* added at a later date and therefore intended more for external audiences than for Timoxena herself, who

admiration...") and also the causal role of belief (because Timoxena "always believed that expense was useless in pleasures," that same belief fortified her moral resilience in the situation of pain). Note, too, how Plutarch emphasizes acting in the morally correct way, such as with the clause "you kept silent, according to necessity" (σιωπῇ μετὰ τῶν ἀναγκαίων)—because, of course, to keep silent is the moral rule that Plutarch advances, not just the customary practice.[46] In the passage, then, both behavior and belief have already become moral habits, with the result that Timoxena is well prepared for adversity.

In contrast to the *exempla* of Timoxena's well-ordered response, Plutarch concludes the thought with an apotreptic scene, explicitly gendered,[47] of women responding to grief in a disordered, excessive, unethical way.

> What is more irrational than to eliminate excesses in laughter and rejoicing, but open the floodgates of tears and lamentation, which all come from the same source? Or for men to resist women in matters of perfumes and purples, but allow mourning hairstyles black-dyed clothing, and sitting or lying in unseemly or uncomfortable vigils? Or (worst of all) to oppose and obstruct them if they punish maidservants excessively or unjustly but freely let them punish themselves brutally and cruelly in sadness and misfortune that calls rather for comfort and kindness?
>
> τί γὰρ ἀλογώτερον ἢ τὸ γέλωτος μὲν ὑπερβολὰς καὶ περιχαρείας ἀφαιρεῖν, τοῖς δὲ κλαυθμῶν καὶ ὀδυρμῶν ῥεύμασιν ἐκ μιᾶς πηγῆς φερομένων εἰς ἅπαν ἐφιέναι; καὶ περὶ μύρου μὲν ἐνίους καὶ πορφύρας διαμάχεσθαι ταῖς γυναιξί, κουρὰς δὲ συγχωρεῖν πενθίμους καὶ βαφὰς ἐσθῆτος μελαίνας καὶ καθίσεις ἀμόρφους καὶ κατακλίσεις ἐπιπόνους; καί, ὃ δὴ πάντων ἐστὶ χαλεπώτατον, ἂν οἰκέτας ἢ θεραπαινίδας κολάζωσιν ἀμέτρως καὶ ἀδίκως, ἐνίστασθαι καὶ κωλύειν αὐτάς, ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν δ' ὠμῶς κολαζομένας καὶ πικρῶς περιορᾶν ἐν πάθεσι καὶ τύχαις ῥᾳστώνης καὶ φιλανθρωπίας δεομέναις; (§4, 609B-C)

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would presumably have already received the initial letter, if there was indeed one.

46. Plutarch makes much of the (real) cultural and even legal rules forbidding excessive grief for very young children (§11). But the injunction of necessity, I think, should not be read just as a legal or customary social rule, but also —given how exemplification creates moral benchmarks—also as an ethical imperative, and specifically an expression of *metriopatheia.* For discussion (and gentle push back against Plutarch's blanket claims about traditional customs), see Claassen, "Plutarch's Little Girl," 30-3.

47. Note the allusion to Euripides' *Bacchae*, a tragedy that depicts enormous excesses of emotion and violence—and that suggests that such excess provides further harm to one's family and children.

The rhetorical questions in this passage not only depict a contrasting, apotropaic image, but are designed to provoke readers into explicitly repudiating such behavior. The purpose of the passage is to compel the bereaved to reframe their own situation, such as by prompting cognitive dissonance through the final question about why one would treat one's servant worse than oneself, which is surely one of the most valuable things a person possesses. Moreover, Plutarch paints a clear moral alternative for philosophers: whereas Timoxena *laudanda* remains composed —literally, "does everything in an orderly manner" (ἐπράττετο κοσμίως)—unethical conduct is instead described in terms of disorder, including lack of structure (ἀμόρφους) and unlimited excess (ἀμέτρως καὶ ἀδίκως). Of course, the moral terms here are exactly the ones that Plutarch implies ought to be applied to expressions of grief. To achieve *metriopatheia*, one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors must be constrained (κοσμίως), not unconstrained (ἀμέτρως). Indeed, this is the very philosophical maxim that Plutarch adduces in the space between the two passages: "... distress and emotional disturbance of mourning stands in need of control, not in order to resist feelings of affection (as it is often thought), but to resist license (μηδὲν ἧττον οἴεσθαι τὸν ἐν πένθεσι σάλον καὶ τὸ κίνημα τοῦ πάθους ἐγκρατείας δεῖσθαι διαμαχομένης οὐ πρὸς τὸ φιλόστοργον, ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀκόλαστον τῆς ψυχῆς, §4, 609A). Note, again, the language of self-control (ἐγκρατείας) and unrestrained excess (ἀκόλαστον, again an alpha-privative term to show deficiency of the real virtue, self-control). What matters here is not intentions, thoughts, emotions, or mental states, but whether or not one's conduct is restrained (the resonance of ἀκόλαστον).

Although the conjunction of these two passages demonstrates rhythm on the structural level, the ideas expressed begin to transcend the boundaries of simple oscillation. That is, it is not as if one image is more relevant to the bereaved, the other to philosophers, and so forth; rather,

the interests of the various audiences converge, as it were, in the act of exemplification. Regardless of an audience's motivation, the common thread for all is the image of a morally and psychologically resilient individual who resists the vicissitudes of grief and loss—who manages, in fact, to thrive through discipline and self-control. This moral image lies at the heart of the consolatory, and its pursuit is the goal of both the therapeutic and moral developmental programs. The image portrayed in these *exempla* begins with personal address to Timoxena and turns to general discussion of unbridled behavior, but it does so in a way (with both thought and specific language) salient to all major consolatory audiences. As a result, the *exempla* undermine the apparent alignment of bereaved with personal address and philosophers with general ethical speech.

Perhaps because of the efficacy of such vivid images at blurring these boundaries and speaking multivocally to several audiences at once, Plutarch again mobilizes a pair of antithetical images. Following the first set, Plutarch again describes Timoxena in ideal gendered terms, but this time he elevates his praise to exaggerated heights. He does so, however, in order that Timoxena's past conduct might serve as a guide to her in her present difficulties. In so doing, he again stresses how Timoxena's previously developed habits have created moral resilience that should support her through her present grief:

> You and I, my dear wife, have never needed [excess in either joy or lamentation]. Every philosopher who has been in our company has been amazed by the simplicity of your person and the unpretentiousness of your life. Every citizen in our temples, at our sacrifices, in our theaters, finds your simplicity a sight to behold. You have already displayed your stability (εὐστάθειαν) in situations like the present at the loss of your eldest child, and again when our beautiful Chaeron left us. I remember... [a lengthy anecdote of Timoxena's well-ordered response to Chaeron's death follows, as an explicit example of "noble and loving" (γενναῖα… καὶ φιλόστοργα) behavior.]
>
> ἀλλ' ἡμῖν γε, γύναι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους οὔτ' ἐκείνης ἐδέησε τῆς μάχης οὔτε ταύτης οἶμαι δεήσειν. εὐτελείᾳ μὲν γὰρ τῇ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἀθρυψίᾳ τῇ περὶ δίαιταν οὐδείς ἐστι

> τῶν φιλοσόφων, ὃν οὐκ ἐξέπληξας ἐν ὁμιλίᾳ καὶ συνηθείᾳ γενόμενον ἡμῖν, οὐδὲ τῶν πολιτῶν, ᾧ μὴ θέαμα παρέχεις ἐν ἱεροῖς καὶ θυσίαις καὶ θεάτροις τὴν σεαυτῆς ἀφέλειαν. ἤδη δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πολλὴν εὐστάθειαν ἐπεδείξω τὸ πρεσβύτατον τῶν τέκνων ἀποβαλοῦσα καὶ πάλιν ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ Χαίρωνος ἡμᾶς προλιπόντος. μέμνημαι γὰρ... (§5, 609C-D)

In this moment, Plutarch has not only repeated the use of encomium to reinforce right behavior and moral habits, but has again suggested that this vivid image of Timoxena's past behavior serve as a guide to her now. In truth, this moment reinforces moral resilience not only through the attractive aspirational force of encomium, but also by incorporating the memory *topos* and reference to Timoxena's previous commitments to her values and identity. As a result, the passage stands as a unified, powerful image of moral resilience.

Even while stipulating the hortatory power of this image for Timoxena, I would nevertheless suggest that this passage is, in fact, highly relevant to philosophers. In particular, the vivid image posits a central, irreplaceable role for habit. In the preceding *exemplum*, Plutarch used Timoxena's example to create an image of a grieving wife and mother behaving in accordance with the proscriptions of *metriopatheia.* Here, however, he explores the experiences and practices that disposed Timoxena to be the sort of person who would be prepared to act in such a way. Note, in particular, his emphasis on personal character: at stake is not particular behaviors (like wearing ostentatious mourning clothing, as in the prior pair of *exempla*), but rather character traits, like "simplicity" (ἀθρυψία) and "stability" (εὐστάθεια), that were forged over time by experience and practice into fundamental habits. Plutarch's implicit lesson for philosophical audiences, then, is a stark one: without preexisting strength built through experience and habitual practice, one is unlikely to have the resources that allow one to be resilient in the face of loss. Timoxena's past virtue thus functions not only as aspirational image for her and similar bereaved, but also an ideal model of resilience for philosophical practitioners.

The antithetical image in this pair bears out the relevance of the comparison for philosophical audiences. In contrast to Timoxena's simplicity and stability, Plutarch describes the actions of unprepared women:

> Most mothers, though, take their children in their arms like toys when they have been cleaned and made pretty by others, and then, if they die, dissolve into vain, ungrateful grief, not out of affection (which is a good and reasoned thing) but because **a large admixture of vanity in a small quantity of natural emotion makes the act of grieving wild, insane, and difficult to sedate.**[48]
>
> τὰς δὲ πολλὰς ὁρῶμεν μητέρας, ὅταν ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων τὰ παιδία καθαρθῇ καὶ γανωθῇ, καθάπερ παίγνια λαμβανούσας εἰς χεῖρας, εἶτ᾽ ἀποθανόντων ἐκχεομένας εἰς κενὸν καὶ ἀχάριστον πένθος, οὐχ ὑπ᾽ εὐνοίας (εὐλόγιστον γὰρ εὔνοια καὶ καλόν), ἀλλὰ **μικρῷ τῷ φυσικῷ πάθει πολὺ συγκεραννύμενον τὸ πρὸς κενὴν δόξαν ἄγρια ποιεῖ καὶ μανικὰ καὶ δυσεξίλαστα <τὰ> πένθη.** (§6, 610E-F)

Whereas the Timoxena-description exercises restraint through force of habit and character, the unrestrained women have coupled their behavior not to practiced habit, nor even to measured, reasonable compassion (εὔνοια), but rather to empty, undisciplined belief (κενὴ δόξα). Note how the register immediately invokes philosophical terminology (εὔνοια, δόξα, the aside including the evaluative terms εὐλόγιστον... καὶ καλόν), just as the thought turns to philosophical precept (the bolded emphasis added to the block quote above). The apotreptic pole, at least, is primarily oriented—linguistically and conceptually—toward the concerns of philosophers, who are thus compelled to consider the Timoxena-description in parallel ethical terms. By moving from *apotrepsis* to a dogmatic statement of the cause of grief, Plutarch thus not only provides therapeutic psychoeducation to bereaved audiences, but also engages philosophical audiences[49]

48. Emphasis on the precept added.

49. Again, I have elided material that shifts focus to the literary audience (though I mentioned both earlier). In the case of the two pairs of antithetical *exempla* that I have identified, both are directly tied to material relevant to that audience. In the first case, literary readers are likely to be engaged first by the *exemplum* of Timoxena's moderate response at the funeral and so forth, then by the imagery of Bacchic excess, and finally (as noted earlier) by the rhetorical questions portraying excessive grief. In the second case, the gratuitous praise of the *exemplum* and the philosophical precepts lead directly into the long fable of Grief as houseguest, a particular point of interest for literary readers.

in a preexisting philosophical conversation that grounds his analysis of the ethical situation and demonstrates that his wife's current situation may indeed by analyzed and solved within the framework of existing ethical knowledge—in this case, the theory of *metriopathia.* At the same time, the pair of moral images, taken together, emphasize the outsize importance of habituation and character in building resilience. It is not merely enough to think in the right way; rather, one must have actively prepared in order to maintain self-control in the face of grief. This, we can fairly assume, will be a novel challenge to at least part of the philosophical audience, and also suggests yet another Aristotelian influence (in addition to *metriopatheia*) on Plutarch's normally Platonic inclinations. It also demonstrates, again, not only a rhythmic oscillation from the individual to the masses, but also the conjunction of different audiences' focus on a single idea: for bereaved, philosophers, and literary readers alike, Plutarch's vivid moral images exhort individuals to develop the habits of character that will lead to resilience in the face of adversity.

IV. Climax, Coda, Reprise

In this case study, I have argued for at least two different sorts of rhythm that course throughout the consolation. On the one hand, there is a background rhythm of shifting address created when Plutarch begins with personal address to the *consolanda,* generalizes his remarks, elaborates both movements with literary qualities, and then repeats the pattern. This baseline rhythm inheres in the techniques of address that Plutarch uses, from private to public and back again, but also generally aligns with the second rhythm, which consists of Plutarch's control over audience focus—that is, which audience's interests or concerns he presently emphasizes. To manage the various audiences inherent in consolation, Plutarch alternates between the various

audiences' needs. Sometimes this alternation is rapid, at other times delayed; sometimes he gives equal attention to various audiences, at other times he maintains focus on one audience.

In general, the several aspects of rhythm overlap: personal address with focus on the bereaved, public argumentation with focus on the audience of philosophers, narration and description with focus on literary readers. Moreover, the rhythm's particular tenor is refracted by the different forms of empathy expressed within the text. Representational, affective forms of empathy like sympathy, for example, marry private address and the bereaved's interests. Cognitive, in-his-shoes empathy, on the other hand, combines public methods of address (like abstract argument) with philosophers' interests. At other places, a lack of expressed empathy often accompanies different sorts of public address (specifically, a notable increase in narration or description) to privilege literary readers' interests.

At other points, however, such alignments break down, especially as personal address becomes relevant for philosophical audiences or public address becomes relevant for the bereaved (as in situations of social shame or repudiation). Notably, the various lines of rhythm converge through the use of multivalent rhetorical devices, especially *exempla* or devices of vivid description and narration, which temporarily address all consolatory audiences and remain salient to readers in both private and public spheres.

So, why does analysis through the metaphor of rhythm matter to interpretation of the consolation? At the outset of this case study, I identified a number of places where critics have disagreed about the consolation's purpose and impact. In particular, there have been disagreements about to what extent the consolation is an authentic, personal letter to Timoxena, how critics ought to interpret any potential memorializing function, and whether the consolation would effectively treat any audience's possible grief. The analysis in the chapter has, I hope,

provided specific conclusions helpful in answering these (and other) problems by identifying the specific places where one goal or another is pursued, for whom, and by what means. By emphasizing the metaphor of rhythm, I have especially aimed to show a characteristic feature of this particular text that is not often enough discussed, namely how Plutarch so tightly weaves a shifting focus between the different audiences (including an unusually strong emphasis on the literary audience) and what effect the oscillating focus has on the consolation's greater project.

In the end, this chapter's analysis concludes that the letter cannot simply be an expansion of purely private material for Timoxena, for the forms of empathy included and the methods of address can only be persuasively accounted for by the inclusion of public audiences. Indeed, there is comprehensive attention given to comforting, training, and exhorting a range of possible readers, even as there are traces of genuine tenderness and real-world (not merely fictionalized) intimacy. Similarly, the chapter's analysis shows that memorialization may be an effect of certain passages, but that the core purpose of the letter is indeed broad-spectrum consolation—that is, memorializing elements (like praise/*exempla* of Timoxena and the child) not only memorialize, but also participate in a substantial effort to build resilience in those currently grieving, primarily through therapeutic means; in those interested in preparation for responding well to future loss, primarily through educational means; and in those interested in literary representations of grief, primarily through exposure to attractive images of resilience and repellent images of despair. Most of all, my analysis suggests a sincere effort at consolation: if squinted at, the letter might be interpreted as a method for self-consolation, but personal motivations do not seem to influence the essential work of the consolation, which is an authentic effort to encourage a wide variety of readers to develop resilience against devastating personal loss through changes in their

perspective and the habituation of measured, humble behavior in the face of strong negative emotion.

Chapter 3.

The Therapeutic Function:

Consolation, Grief Therapy, and Psychological Resilience

It has been widely recognized, and sometimes even uncritically assumed, that consolation's core practice consists of a literary-rhetorical form of grief therapy. Insofar as grief therapy is understood to be just one part of consolation, this premise is indisputably true. Consolation is indeed, at least in part, fundamentally oriented toward the therapeutic treatment of grief, and particularly grief experiences that are pathological, ethically problematic, or of strong symbolic import. Likewise, it is indisputably true that consolation occurs primarily in literary-rhetorical form.[1]

Unfortunately, many scholars of consolation have implicitly or explicitly adopted what might be called the "grief therapy alone" hypothesis, the uncritical assumption that consolation consists solely of a particular literary tradition of grief therapy (but not associated programs of moral education). Sharon Weisser, for example, acknowledges the genetic influence of shared literary conventions as a lynchpin of the consolation tradition and identifies core rhetorical motifs (especially the use of *exempla*) as important to consolation's identity, yet she argues forcefully that "the most salient characteristic of the genre" consists of "the repetition of the same [therapeutic] consolatory arguments from letter to letter."[2] At its heart, she suggests, consolation consist of therapeutic consolatory arguments (*solacia*) that enact an agenda of straightforward cognitive grief therapy. (By cognitive grief therapy, I mean a collection of arguments intended to change the

1. I suggest elsewhere, however, that the idea of the consolatory finds expression in a much wider range of discourses and on a broader range of occasions than has generally been acknowledged: cf. 54-59.
2. Weisser, "Why Does Philo Criticize the Stoic Ideal of *Apatheia*?" 247.

patient's thinking in order to change their mourning behavior. I discuss cognitive grief therapy in detail later in this chapter.)

But even when scholars do not support the harsher versions of the "grief therapy alone" hypothesis, they frequently adopt a soft version of the premise, the "primarily/mostly grief therapy" hypothesis. According to this softer version, grief therapy (more or less understood as amelioration or extirpation of pathological grief) is assumed to be the default end and core purpose of consolation, even if other aspects of consolation are identified as important or given more weight as part of the definition. Hence Jane Mitchell, in an otherwise penetrating study of consolation in early Christian letters, repeatedly slips and equates "consolation proper" (or equivalent language)[3] with argument-based cognitive grief therapy, despite the fact that the article also discusses other aspects of the consolatory with great nuance throughout, and even though it *explicitly* discusses both "commiseration" (the expression of sympathy) and "exhortation" as other core aspects of consolation.[4] It is as if the "mostly grief therapy" hypothesis is so deeply rooted in consolation scholarship that it arises even against intentional resistance.[5]

Both the hard and the soft versions of the "grief therapy alone" hypothesis, however, can be dangerously misleading. For one, as I established in the first chapter, the consolatory addresses a much wider variety of audiences than just the bereaved, as a pure "grief therapy alone" notion of consolation might imply. Why would the consolatory address other audiences if it had nothing

3. Mitchell, "Consolatory Letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen," e.g. 302, 303, 309.
4. Mitchell, "Consolatory Letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen," *passim,* but esp. 302.
5. In many ways, this grief therapy definition is literally based in the history of scholarship on consolation: it is fundamental to Kassel's seminal study of the topic (Kassel, *Untersuchungen Zur Griechischen Und Römischen Konsolationsliteratur,* 3; cf. Scourfield, "Towards a Genre of Consolation," 2). Kassel describes consolations in general as "writings... meant to provide the [grief-afflicted] reader with *appropriate intellectual support* against adversities of many different kinds" (trans. Scourfield, emphasis added). Given the ubiquitous influence of Kassel's study on scholars of consolation, one can reasonably draw a line directly from Kassel's invocation of "appropriate intellectual support" to continuing emphasis by scholars on cognitive grief therapy.

to offer them, nothing to engage them? Surely the serious project that consolation has adopted for itself has more to add to grief therapy than just entertainment or the potential aesthetic enjoyment of a literary text. Additionally, if consolation were reduced to a limited tradition of cognitive grief therapy, then its rich ethical and philosophical substratum would, at best, be neglected, and at worst would be abandoned to wither completely. After all, the ethical dimensions of consolation are a core component of its identity, and one which often distinguishes it from other forms of writing about loss and grief, particularly when those writings are not oriented toward recovery, growth, and the generation of resilience.[6] In truth, the consolatory telos—the construction of resilience, both psychological and moral—transcends the limited goals of grief therapy, which itself only adds to those wider goals in a limited way, but cannot bear the full burden on its own. The aesthetic and ethical dimensions of consolatory texts must be respected. Moreover, repeated concerns in the literature about the apparent inefficacy of consolation[7] may be attributed to the mistaken idea that consolation is congruent, in activity and goals if not form, to grief therapy in particular. If grief therapy were the sole or even primary motivation for and function of consolation, then any apparent failure of therapy to console in a given consolation would indeed be damning. Consolation, however, has a more complex aim, one which is both more ambitious and energetic than grief therapy alone.

In all, the consolatory has more capacity to ameliorate grief and construct resilience than has generally been recognized. Far from being inadequate and bound for failure, consolatory

6. C. S. Lewis's well-known *A Grief Observed,* for example, has little philosophical merit, so is not a good representative of the full panoply of consolatory strategies and functions. On the generic presence of ethical components, see Kassel, *Untersuchungen* and Scourfield, "Towards a Genre of Consolation," 5-7.
7. Han Baltussen even goes so far as to call the question of efficacy "the most difficult question of all" (Baltussen, "Introduction," xiv). Cf. Baltussen, "Cicero's *Consolatio ad se*" and Adamson, "Arabic Ethics and the Limits of Philosophical Consolation" in the same volume for additional preoccupation with the question of effective consolatory therapy.

therapy marshals tremendous power to address and heal real human suffering in situations of loss and grief. Notably, how the consolatory does so may be productively analyzed using the concepts and critical vocabulary of rigorous modern clinical models.

Here, I take an uncharacteristic tack in the literary study of consolation by suggesting that modern clinical psychology provides substantial insights that may enrich scholars' conceptual understanding of the consolatory phenomenon. In particular, consolatory theory benefits from the conclusions of modern, clinically evidence-based scholarship on grief, loss, bereavement, and its treatments, including well-developed models of grief psychotherapy and psychological resilience that illuminate how the consolatory actually functions in its broad (not merely cognitive) therapeutic aspect. These topics are articulated primarily in psychiatry, academic and clinical psychology, and clinical social work, fields in which scholars and practitioners work closely with the practical and clinical, and not just theoretical or hypothetical, aspects of grief. To be clear, it would be a grave mistake to abdicate all authority to these fields, which themselves (unlike literary or rhetorical studies) can be shockingly deficient in accounting for (e.g.) moral, aesthetic, or historical aspects of human loss. Nevertheless, literary studies, philosophy, and rhetoric alike (as academic disciplines) benefit from marrying the empirical insights of allied disciplines (such as psychology) with their own special disciplinary strengths, on the one hand in articulating complex human experience, and on the other, in revealing the hidden subtlety of human communication. In short, the key concepts and therapeutic models described by modern scientific clinical grief therapy allow critics to describe how consolatory grief therapy functions more fully, accurately, and multidimensionally than would otherwise be the case.

In particular, psychiatry, psychology, and social work provide rigorous scientific models that illuminate a handful of key ideas in the study of consolation, especially regarding two broad

topics at the heart of consolation's therapeutic program: grief therapy and psychological resilience. Grief therapy, which involves the clinical treatment of grief and related psychological issues, provides clinical models and a critical vocabulary that accurately describe how consolatory grief therapy functions. Psychological resilience, on the other hand, describes a person's resistance to maladaptive functioning in cases of both present and future loss and grief, and likewise accurately describes the consolatory grief therapy program. Unlike models of grief therapy that focus primarily on bereaved audiences, however, psychological accounts of hardiness and resilience are also salient to other audiences who have not yet suffered loss, but who are preparing for that eventuality. The concept of psychological resilience, in other words, is not only a targeted outcome for the recovery stages of grief, but is also an essential part of the prophylactic approach taken by consolatory grief therapy and moral education alike.

In this chapter, I provide a curated overview of relevant concepts and models of grief therapy that are highly relevant to the analysis of consolatory literature. The concepts, models, and approaches discussed concretely improve the ability of consolatory theory to analyze how—and why—consolers go about providing grief therapy in the ways that they do. Ultimately, my approach here is validated by the close fit between the concepts and models described here and how grief therapy is represented in consolations across the tradition. In the first section, I describe prevailing modern models of grief therapy in clinical psychology and social work. In so doing, I briefly outline a historical model (the Grief Work hypothesis) that modern theories explicitly critique and repudiate, but which has sometimes been erroneously used to criticize how consolations actualize grief therapy. Then, I explicate four important models from modern clinical research that are highly relevant to consolatory theory, and I especially highlight the utility of core concepts constructed by these models, including oscillation between confrontation

and avoidance orientations, dialogic meaning reconstruction, and the importance of continuing bonds. Lastly, I synthesize these central concepts into an evaluative model that accurately describes the core components and functions of consolatory grief therapy. Then, in the second section, I briefly summarize the most current findings of the substantial body of academic psychological research on psychological resilience, and I argue that the construction of psychological resilience is a core goal of the consolatory as a whole. Lastly, I synthesize crucial theoretical insights from modern clinical theories of grief therapy, and I show how these models imply certain normative processes and results for effective therapy. Not all individual consolations, of course, will be effective according to the criteria established by modern clinical theories, but a complete theory of the consolatory is made stronger by taking account of these criteria, which provide one means of explaining why some consolations seem likely to be weak or inefficacious in terms of how well they conduct grief therapy.

Ultimately, this chapter establishes grief therapy as one (but not the only) core aspect of the consolatory. Consolatory grief therapy thus turns out to involve addressing situations of loss and complicated grief in ways that the best modern understandings of clinical grief therapy suggest ought to be effective. But consolatory therapy also addresses broader audiences, however, for it stresses how personal meaning and identity formation may be enhanced through therapy, and moreover connects these ideas to the narrative and dialogic maneuvers that underlie much of consolatory rhetoric. Most of all, this chapter implicitly critiques the shortcomings of "consolation as therapy alone" approaches by demonstrating that the resilience-constructing aspects of the consolatory transcend the limited goals of grief therapy, and are rather structured in such a way as to be effective for consolatory audiences of all different sorts, given that resilience is not merely reactive (e.g. to the fact of a loss), but may also be actively and

prospectively pursued as a part of therapeutic treatment for traumatic loss, as well as part of the consolatory moral education program (discussed in the following chapter).

Medical Metaphors and the Genesis of Consolation

In many ways, one of grief therapy's central historical trajectories has been to break free of the medical metaphors that initially constrained it, and thereby to break free of the faulty concepts that medical models had imposed and to replace them with more accurate, precise conceptualizations. This process is relevant to consolation, since it mirrors a core problem in the study of consolation, namely how to conceptualize the core concepts that support consolatory grief therapy. Insofar as readers and scholars have adopted concepts and models derived from medical metaphors, they are likely to miss the complete range of therapeutic strategies advanced within a given consolation, both in terms of organizing concepts and in terms of therapeutic techniques and approaches. Before discussing modern, productive theories of grief therapy that loan essential concepts to the consolatory, then, it is worth elaborating for a moment how early notions of grief therapy were shaped by governing medical metaphors, and then to discuss how two early models limited scholars' understanding of the possibilities of what grief therapy in general (and thus consolatory grief therapy in particular) might effectively entail.

Because consolation fundamentally entails therapeutic activity, it has been primarily discussed through medical metaphors. As has been shown in both the modern and classical[8] contexts, therapy of all sorts is governed across the Western tradition by underlying medical

8. At least as early as Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, the power of language to explain, motivate, and enthrall has been compared to a drug. See, for example, Segal, "Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos." For a survey of current scholarship on medical metaphors, see Mayer, "Medicine and Metaphor in Late Antiquity" (2018).

metaphors:[9] patients suffer from acute or chronic pathological afflictions or illnesses; therapists diagnose, treat, and heal; illnesses may be subject to surveillance, intervention, and recovery; and so forth. Indeed, these metaphors appear to have structured consolatory therapy from its genesis. Take one of the earliest recorded examples of explicitly consolatory discourse,[10] an anecdote attributed to Antiphon the Sophist. According to reports in Pseudo-Plutarch (*Lives of Ten Orators*)[11] and Philostratus,[12] Antiphon apparently practiced an early form of systematic cognitive grief therapy. According to the stories, Antiphon set up shop in the agora, where bereaved individuals would pay him to help diagnose the "real causes" (αἰτίας)[13] of their grief. The objective perspective that he provided led to new insight and self-knowledge on the part of the bereaved, and, ultimately, to the miraculous effect of curing that grief entirely.[14] The metaphor here is

9. The history of metaphor in therapeutic discourse has been most prominently studied by historians of psychiatry. For modern surveys that touch on consolation, in particular, see Jackson, *Care of the Psyche,* and Goldstein, *Console and Classify.* Other prominent examples from the last sixty years that explicitly discuss consolation include Drabkin, "Remarks on Ancient Psychopathology;" Simon, *Mind and Madness*; and Milns, "Attitudes Towards Mental Illness in Antiquity." Beverley Raphael's *The Anatomy of Bereavement* is a widely cited general work on bereavement that illustrates how extensively medical metaphors have infiltrated discussions of grief, loss, and mourning. David Leary, *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*, surveys major medical metaphors (among others) and their centrality to psychology. Neil Pickering, *The Metaphor of Mental Illness,* is a dense but thorough philosophical critique of the history of medical metaphors in psychiatric language and thought. Finally, one must mention Thomas Szasz (e.g. *The Myth of Psychotherapy*), who offers the radical opinion that psychotherapy is nothing more than a charlatan's exercise exactly because it is too riddled with metaphors (contrary to "real" medicine).

   From a literary perspective, the most influential study has been Martha Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire,* which systematically adopts and expands on the ubiquitous metaphors of therapy as medicine that are found in Hellenistic philosophy. (Also see her *Upheavals of Thought.*) Also of note is the somewhat less well-known study by Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Therapy of the Word,* a masterful survey of the genesis of psychotherapeutic medicine in antiquity. More recently, also see the bibliography in Mattern, *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing* (2008), on medical metaphors and analogies in ancient life and society.
10. The story of Antiphon's grief therapy references events that occurred before Crantor composed his *On Grief (Peri Penthous).* According to scholarly tradition, Crantor's work on grief was the first "real" consolation, i.e. a text which collated many of the philosophical arguments that later became *topoi* in philosophical consolation. As has been widely appreciated, however, consolatory speech more broadly has been present in literature from the very start, e.g. in Homer. It is worth noting that Pendrick is skeptical about the accuracy of reports about Antiphon's clinic (*op. cit.*).
11. Ps.-Plut., *Vitae X Or.*, 883C-D = T6(a) Pendrick
12. Philostr. 1.15 = 498 Olearius = T6(d) Pendrick = 2.15-16 Kayser.
13. Ps.-Plut., *Vitae X Or.*, 883C-D = T6(a) Pendrick
14. For discussion of these passages, see: William Furley, "Antiphon der Athener;" Gerard Pendrick, *Antiphon the Sophist* (and a marginally less developed commentary in "Ancient Tradition on Antiphon the Sophist"); and Hans Baltussen, "Private Grief and Public Mourning," 73-5. More Antiphon and Gorgias (among others) more generally, see Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Therapy of the Word*.

wholly medical: the physician examines the patient, diagnoses a cause of the illness, and oversees a restorative process that cures the illness. The key differences, of course, are that the afflictions referred to are primarily mental and emotional, not biophysical, and that the cure seems to have occurred immediately following diagnosis (without e.g. pharmacology or surgery), indicating that grief is caused by some sort of intellectual confusion.[15]

As the Antiphon story suggests, consolation is indeed a species of therapy, namely that which addresses psychic suffering caused by grief and loss. As with other afflictions, the suffering may be fresh and acute or chronic and prolonged.[16] But, because grief is always a socially embedded and culturally informed process as much as a biological imperative or private experience,[17] consolation cannot merely be described in the medical terms of biology and anatomy. Rather, just as the story suggests, consolatory therapy must instead focus on the mental, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of loss: in particular, on how grief affects an individual's self-image, sense of self-worth, moral agency, behavioral health, and social relationships.[18] As a result, governing medical metaphors are easily strained, since they often do not obviously translate into the psychic, moral, or social realms. It is not necessarily easy to

15. The story is not clear about what this confusion entails, but it is not difficult to see a relationship to e.g. Stoic notions of pathological emotions as rooted in incorrect judgments or to Platonic-Peripatetic notions of pathology as emotion that is not adequately controlled or regulated by the reasoning faculty.
16. Contemporary psychiatrists and other clinicians refer to *complicated grief* as the primary pathological category, which encompasses several older ideas of prolonged grief, repressed grief, impaired grief, severe/debilitating grief, and other forms of pathological mourning.
17. This truth is well-attested not only in scientific sources (cf. the following footnote), but also in humanistic and artistic realms. See, for example, Thorsten Fögen, *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World.*
18. As one might suspect, the general psychological scholarship on the effects of bereavement is massive. The sources which give the most compelling accounts—and those most scientifically supported—focus on complex interrelationship between cognitions, emotions, affect, identity, social position, and medical comorbidity. Excellent discussions include: Archer, *The Nature of Grief*; Attig, *The Heart of Grief*; Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness;* Boss, *Ambiguous Loss*; Kent, Davis, and Reich, *The Resilience Handbook*; Malkinson, *Cognitive Grief Therapy*; Malkinson, Rubin, and Witztum, *Traumatic and Non-Traumatic Loss and Bereavement*; Parkes, "Bereavement as a Psycho-Social Transition" and *Love and Loss*; Rubin, Malkinson, and Witztum, "Trauma and Bereavement;" Roos, *Chronic Sorrow*; Silberschatz and Sampson, "Affects in Psychopathology and Psychotherapy;" Weisman, *On Dying and Denying;* and Zautra, *Emotions, Stress, and Health*.

decode, for example, how the metaphors of excision or pharmacological treatment might apply to a case of prolonged mourning about a deceased child, who both should not and cannot simply be extirpated from the bereaved's life and memory. And medical metaphors become strained to the breaking point when physio-medical notions such as homeostasis are applied to human moral experiences.[19] Nonetheless, medical metaphors are used ubiquitously across the consolatory tradition, so consolatory theory must be able to explain and correct the relationship between consolatory medical metaphors and the actual psychic processes, relational contexts, and moral experiences that they invoke. Modern empirical theories of grief therapy provide this corrective, so it is to them that I now turn.

I. Modern Empirical Models of Grief Therapy

In this section, I describe five modern models of grief therapy. First, I discuss the initial errors made in early psychoanalytic models of grief therapy, and I connect misconceptions arising from this model to flawed analyses of consolatory therapy. Next, I briefly outline three contemporary theories based in strong clinical evidence, and I argue that each lends a crucial concept to consolatory theory: oscillation between confrontation and avoidance, dialogic meaning reconstruction, and continuing bonds. Indeed, each of these concepts closely describes maneuvers made in consolations from across the tradition. Finally, I review a task-based model of grief therapy that aligns closely with the duties of a consoler within a consolatory situation, and which thus provides theoretical and empirical grounding for analogous tasks within consolatory therapy.

19. On resilience and homeostasis/allostasis, for example, see Rivers, Zautra, and Davis, "Resilience," 29, itself an exemplar of how medical metaphors can pervert the social, moral, cultural, or spiritual implications of a concept.

In the first subsection, then, I describe the Dual Process Model, according to which healthy coping with grief involves *oscillation between confrontation and avoidance* with the fact of the loss and with the bereaved's new reality.[20] The model suggests that catalyzing oscillation between the two is, indeed, a hallmark of effective grief therapy. This insight clarifies a perennial tension in the study of consolation literature, namely to what extent direct versus indirect therapeutic approaches are desirable or even minimally effective. Notably, consolatory rhetoric enacts exactly this dynamic, including oscillation, in the most effective consolations, which suggests that insights about human psychology found in consolation may be confirmed by the strong scientific evidence underlying the Dual Process Model. As a result, the details of the Dual Process Model may be mobilized to judge why a particular moment of confrontation or avoidance in consolation is successful or not (based on the clinical principles elaborated by the technical details of the model).

In the second subsection, I describe a group of related Constructivist models that I refer to as *(dialogic) meaning reconstruction,* a concept that contends that recovery from grief primarily involves the reconstruction of meaning, identity, and self through narrative or dialogic clinical techniques.[21] Meaning reconstruction theorizes about the underlying (and ongoing) personality and character effects of grief and recovery, and it posits a link between biopsychosocial functioning and moral health, including autonomy, agency, and self-image. Ultimately, because meaning and identify formation rely on narrative and dialogic techniques of self-description, this theory establishes a crucial link between clinical grief therapy and the literary-rhetorical form of consolatory therapy found in consolatory discourse.

20. For the canonical statement, see Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement."
21. For a concise overview, see Niemeyer et al., "Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement."

In the third subsection, I describe a key tenet from Attachment Theory, the concept of *continuing bonds,* which claims that the effective treatment of grief must involve the creation of a continuing bond between the bereaved and the deceased.[22] The notion of a continuing bond, of course, conceptualizes a major theme of consolatory literature (and a major *topos* of consolatory rhetoric), namely how the fact of a loss requires a person to reestablish herself into an altered social network, which includes creating a connection to the memory of the deceased (as opposed to an actual, vital relationship). The idea of a continuing bond also emphasizes that effective consolation does not neglect the memory of the deceased as it encourages the bereaved to establish new forms of social relationships and to reestablish older ones.

Each of these core concepts from contemporary scientific theory—oscillation between confrontation and avoidance, dialogic reconstruction of meaning, and continuing bonds—shape the contours of consolatory grief therapy. They might be considered the central tenets of consolatory grief therapy, or else viewed as the components through which effective grief therapy is created. As the core characteristics of consolatory grief therapy, each idea also has a role to play in judgments about the efficacy of consolation. Indeed, a fourth contemporary model of grief therapy brings these ideas together into a unified account of how effective grief therapy occurs.

That theory, the Task-Based Model, rejects linear phases or stages of grief and instead proposes four discrete tasks, supported by rigorous scientific evidence, that must be completed in an organic, nonlinear fashion.[23] I describe these four tasks in the final subsection. Each of the tasks are highly thematically and topically present in consolation, and together form a strikingly

22. See Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds,* as well as the citations at 118 n. 54, below.
23. For a concise statement, see Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved." For a full description, see Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy.*

effective way of summarizing the specific therapeutic tasks asked of effective consolation, to the point that they are strong candidates for consolatory success criteria. I suggest, then, that the four tasks should be adopted as working criteria by which the core success of consolatory grief therapy may be judged: acknowledging the reality of the loss, processing the pain of grief, adjusting to a world without the deceased, and finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life. In each of these tasks, the other core concepts outlined above (oscillation, meaning reconstruction, continuing bonds) play constituent parts.

Each of these major, contemporary models mentioned above are based in the best available evidence-based clinical research,[24] so they are not only broadly supported by current scientific research, but have also generated a panoply of practical instruments: therapeutic diagnostics, intervention techniques, and so forth. In this section, however, I do not discuss the specific tools used to achieve the clinical outcomes supported by the various models, since this is largely a technical exercise that depends greatly on the context of the bereaved and the clinical approach of the therapist.[25] Rather, I briefly discuss the key theoretical claims of the theories so that I can use these models and their key conceptual vocabulary in my elaboration of a philosophy of consolation.

24. For a comprehensive, comparative overview of the empirical evidence supporting the different models of bereavement and recovery, see the studies (and bibliography) in Currier et al., "The Effectiveness of Psychotherapeutic Interventions." Other key studies, weighted toward scholarship from the past ten years, include Bonanno and Lilienfeld, "Let's Be Realistic;" Boelen, van den Hout, and van den Bout, "A Cognitive-Behavioral Conceptualization of Complicated Grief;" Currier, Holland, and Niemeyer, "Do CBT-Based Interventions Alleviate Distress Following Bereavement?"; Jordan and Niemeyer, "Does Grief Counseling Work?"; Parkes and Prigerson, *Bereavement*; Schut et al., "The Efficacy of Bereavement Interventions;" Shear et al., "Treatment of Complicated Grief;" Zech, Ryckebosch, and Delespaus, "Improving the Efficacy of Intervention;" and Zhang, El-Jawahri, and Prigerson, "Update on Bereavement Research."
25. Hooyman and Kramer, *Living Through Loss,* provides a high-quality overview of many particular techniques for grief counseling, broken down according to the developmental stage/life context of the bereaved. Many more specific intervention tools have been published in the relevant academic journals and handbooks.

The Lasting, Erroneous Influence of Psychoanalytic "Grief Work"

Within the context of modern psychology,[26] the earliest systemic model of grief, called "grief work," was articulated by Freud and developed by his followers.[27] Though influential for half a century, the grief work model has nevertheless largely been disproved by scientific evidence.[28] The grief work hypothesis, in short, suggests that the bereaved must continually confront her feelings of grief, loss, and pain in order to separate her emotional attachment from the deceased and redirect that energy and attention to the present and future. As a result, therapy based on "grief work" encourages the bereaved to face a traumatic loss repeatedly.[29] The wide consensus within the field, however, is that,

> Although Freud's perspective that grief work is healthy was widely adopted and almost axiomatic for more than fifty years, the empirical evidence for its benefits is weak [with many citations given here]. Critics maintain that confronting negative emotions through grief work, which is often accompanied by intense sadness, can lead to more negative thoughts, depression, and malfunctioning, such as difficulty thinking or completing tasks. In fact, there is little empirical evidence that confrontational strategies are associated with better outcomes than avoidant ones are. Instead, confrontational strategies such as thinking about one's relationship with the loved one or how the loss occurred may create future difficulties, such as preoccupation or excessive rumination.[30]

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26. I do not mean to dismiss premodern psychology. In terms of empirical science, however, premodern theories and models have not often been found to provide a rigorous ground for scientific psychology.
27. For the original statement, see Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*. The most influential statement of "grief work" and its emphasis on addressing repressed grief through confrontation comes from the work of Eric Lindemann, especially his 1944 "The Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief." Deutsch's "Absence of Grief" (1937), from a decade earlier, outlines the traditional Freudian view of grief and repression, and remained influential through the 1980s. Even at the time, however, some traditional psychoanalysts realized that confrontation and repressed grief were not compelling models for the most common forms of acute or chronic grief. See, for example, Anderson's (at the time, largely ignored) study, "Aspects of Pathological Grief and Mourning."
28. See n. 24 for reference to comprehensive studies of empirical effectiveness. In addition, damning arguments against grief work are advanced by M. Stroebe, "The Dual Process Model;" Coifman et al., "Does Repressive Coping Promote Resilience?" and Wortman and Silver, "The Myths of Coping with Loss." These criticisms, and others, have become increasingly prevalent (and widely accepted by experts in the field) since the early nineties.
29. Zech, "Attachment and Coping with Bereavement," 24.
30. Hooyman and Kramer, *Living Through Loss,* 28-9; cf. 22-4.

So, while psychodynamic approaches to grief are still somewhat popular in limited circles (primarily among psychoanalytic clinical practitioners), adherents to evidence-based therapeutic practices have largely discounted the "grief work" approach as an adequate model for grief therapy, both because it considers grief and mourning to be a closed, solvable problem, and also because it advocates a narrow, confrontational model of therapy that is inflexible to the nature of the loss, the bereaved's context, and other personal factors.

The grief work hypothesis has had a lasting, negative effect on how modern readers evaluate the probably efficacy of a given consolation. Because the notion of grief work has permeated the general, nonspecialist population so thoroughly, I suspect that many modern readers expect it to be a primary method used in consolation. At the same time, Freudian psychology has become distrusted as quackery by a substantial portion of the general population. As a result, I suggest that consolation has been placed into an impossible spot: whenever it uses confrontational strategies, as it sometimes does, contemporary readers are likely to associate it with Freudian psychoanalysis and then dismiss it as Freudian quackery; but when it uses methods that are neither confrontational nor comforting, it is not perceived to be doing grief work in the way that is commonly culturally expected. Regardless of whether these musings are correct, the grief work hypothesis at the very least deferred rigorous, evidence-based inquiry into grief therapy until the last thirty years, when progress has finally been made in explicating the real concepts that underlie grief therapy.

The Dual Process Model: Oscillation Between Confrontation and Avoidance

While continual, consistent confrontation with the fact of a loss has been shown to be ineffective and even counterproductive, researchers have found that occasional confrontation

with loss is indeed productive. The definitive statement of how and when confrontation may be productive comes from the Dual Process Model (DPM), first described by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut in the late nineties,[31] which posits that healthy coping with grief involves both confrontation and avoidance. In particular, DPM posits that healthy coping involves an oscillation between two types of stressors: those associated with the immediate experience of loss, and those associated with the challenges of adapting to the new, lived reality. According to the DPM, the bereaved is loss-oriented when she responds to the first type of stressors, and restoration-oriented when she responds to the second type. Healthy grief is marked by periodic, measured engagement with both types of stressor; thus, the facts of a loss must sometimes be confronted, but sometimes also avoided, for a person to recover from grief.

Loss-orientation is similar to grief work's emphasis on confronting the fact of a loss. According to Stroebe and Schut,

> "Loss-orientation refers to the concentration on, and dealing with, processing of some aspect of the loss experience itself, most particularly, with respect to the deceased person. The grief work concept of traditional theories falls within this dimension, focusing as it does on the relationship, tie, or bond with the deceased person, and it typically involves rumination about the deceased, about life together as it had been, and the circumstances and events surrounding the death."[32]

Loss-orientation is thus a cognitive and behavioral stance, but it also describes an affective orientation. "It also encompasses," for example, "yearning for the deceased, looking at old photos, imagining how he or she would react, or crying about the death of the loved person. It is evident that a range of emotional reactions are involved, from pleasurable reminiscing to painful

31. See M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement," where previous theories are harshly, but fairly, criticized. The only contemporary model which is given any substantial praise is Worden's Task-Based Model. This article remains canonical and highly influential in the field. Moreover, the DPM has been shown to be mutually supportive of meaning reconstruction, which I discuss in the next section. A key article discussing the convergence is M. Stroebe and Schut, "Meaning Making in the Dual Process Model."
32. M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 212-3.

longing, from happiness that the deceased is no longer suffering to despair that one is left alone."[33] Attention to loss-orientation, then, is necessary to process one's grief, but it may be counterproductive when taken to an extreme.

On the other hand, restoration-orientation involves confronting the bereaved's world as it has been changed by the loss. According to Stroebe and Schut,

> ... "restoration" does not refer to an outcome... but to secondary sources of, and coping with, stress. In other words, [it describes] what needs to be dealt with (e.g. social loneliness), and how it is dealt with (e.g., by avoiding solitariness), and not with the result of this process (e.g., restored well-being and social reintegration). When a loved one dies, not only is there grief for the deceased person, one also has to adjust to substantial changes that are secondary consequences of the loss. In many bereavements these additional sources of stress add considerably to the burden of loss and cause extreme additional anxiety and upset. They include mastering the tasks that the deceased had undertaken... dealing with arrangements for the reorganization of life without the loved one... the development of a new identity from "spouse" to "widow(er)" or from "parent" to "parent of a deceased child" (it is noteworthy that there is no single word in our society for this change in identity)... [and so forth.]"[34]

As with loss-orientation, restoration-orientation is both behavioral and affective: "Again, a myriad of emotional reactions can be involved in coping with [the] tasks of restoration, from relief and pride that one has mastered a new skill or taken the courage to go out alone, to anxiety and fear that one will not succeed or despair at the loneliness of being with others and yet on one's own."[35] Moreover, just as with loss-orientation, too much or too little attention to restoration-orientation may be counterproductive.

Thus, both loss- and restoration-oriented stressors must be addressed, but constant interaction with each source of stress can be debilitating. Instead, DPM argues that the bereaved ought to engage with each type in moderation, and that she should alternate dynamically between the types of stressors. Grief therapy is often useful when the bereaved has difficulty

33. M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 212-3.
34. M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 213-4
35. M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 214.

engaging in the dynamic process, which DPM calls oscillation. According to Stroebe and Schut, oscillation is a "dynamic process, postulated as fundamental to successful coping. ... [It] refers to the alternation between loss- and restoration-oriented coping, the process of juxtaposition of confrontation and avoidance of different stressors associated with bereavement."[36]

For a theory of consolation, DPM provides useful insights into effective grief therapy. These insights are useful both to the composition of consolations, as well as for their evaluation (e.g. as to the probably efficacy of a consolation for a given audience). First, DPM emphasizes that grief therapy is a personal process, and that a given individual will, at different times, require either confrontation with or avoidance from a source of grief-related stress. Compositionally, this suggests that consolers ought to proceed from their empathic understanding of the bereaved's needs, but must include techniques to enable both modes if comprehensive grief therapy is intended. Evaluatively, this suggests that consolation is more likely to be effective to the extent that it addresses a reader's real, personal concerns (and also that its total efficacy will be magnified the more that it is able to do so with respect to a greater proportion of its total complex audience).

Moreover, DPM describes these stressors not just as rumination about the bereaved and her absence, but also as the difficulty in adapting to lived experience without the bereaved, and it emphasizes the impact that such a readjustment has on one's identity and sense of self. Insofar as consolatory grief therapy enables an audience either to successfully balance these competing concerns, or else to grapple with these issues when they arise, it will be effective. Thus, consolers ought to confront audiences with the need to engage in meaning reconstruction when appropriate, just as they ought to assist audiences in avoiding such large topics and should rather

36. M. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 214.

focus on small-scale or practical issues when such an approach would be most appropriate. The maintenance of effective oscillation is thus a potential aim for any consoler, just as a given consolation's therapeutic efforts may be evaluated on the basis of how effectively oscillation is maintained.

Most of all, DPM argues persuasively that coping with grief is a disordered, dynamic process driven by the organic needs of a given individual. As such, successful therapies will respect the bereaved's disordered, idiosyncratic process, but will also support the bereaved's oscillation process by creating structure that facilitates necessary confrontation or avoidance with certain stressors. Indeed, this structural approach is fundamental to the consolatory, which creates a rhetorical reality whose very goal is to facilitate such engagement in a structured way and to such a magnitude as the consoler judges most effective for the addressee (and other relevant audiences, real or potential).

Dialogic Meaning Reconstruction

While grief therapy will often be concerned with balancing confrontation and avoidance with both loss- and restoration-oriented stressors, as described by the Dual Process Model, it must also be able to offer the bereaved support when confronting substantial ethical topics like how a loss changes one's identity. In these situations, the consolatory benefits from a modern, influential model of grief and recovery based in existential, dialogic concepts of the self, especially those promoted by constructivist psychology.[37] Like other narrativist theories of selfhood, this

37. Most notably, by the grandfather of Constructivist Psychology, Carl Rogers, but also influenced by Existential Psychotherapy, e.g. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. Bruner's *Acts of Meaning* was also an important influence during constructivism's ongoing renaissance in the late seventies.

approach—Meaning Reconstruction—has been a dominant approach in academia over the past twenty years.[38]

According to Meaning Reconstruction, bereavement creates what Niemeyer terms a "crisis of meaning,"[39] in which self-narratives—the symbolic structures of belief, intention, motivation, interpretation, understanding, and validation—become disrupted, challenged, or made incoherent. For Meaning Reconstruction, a crisis of understanding interferes with our ability to create a coherent self-narrative, which Niemeyer defines as "an overarching cognitive-affective-behavioral structure that organizes the 'micro-narratives' of everyday life into a 'macro-narrative' that consolidates our self-understanding, establishes our characteristic range of emotions and goals, and guides our performance on the stage of the social world."[40] In many cases, of course, a loss does not challenge one's self-narrative or necessitate revision of life meanings,[41] but when it does, therapists and other caregivers are most successful when they "foster a sense of presence to the needs of the grieving client"[42] and help the client make sense of the loss, for example by integrating it into the bereaved's religious practices, helping the bereaved find a benefit in it, or developing rituals to honor the deceased or to express ongoing feelings toward her.[43]

38. Following the poststructuralist turn toward master narratives and discourse-as-reality, dialogic theories—especially of selfhood and sociopolitical institutions—have become ubiquitous, though there are reasons to think that this intellectual movement may be losing momentum. Among psychologists, Niemeyer (discussed in this section at length) is a canonical figure. In the philosophy of mind, Daniel Dennett's theories have been highly influential (e.g. Daniel Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity"), while the skeptical-pragmatist tradition in American philosophy of language also influenced dialogic theories (e.g. the tradition from Quine to Davidson to Rorty, e.g. Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*). In critical theory, Jean-Francois Lyotard is a consummate example of applying dialogic theory to society and social institutions (e.g. *The Postmodern Condition*).
39. The Nietzschean resonance of this phrase is intentional.
40. Niemeyer, "Fostering Posttraumatic Growth," 53-4.
41. Niemeyer et al., "Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement," 11.
42. This phrase deliberately invokes Carl Rogers, the towering figure in humanistic psychology.
43. Niemeyer et al., "Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement," 12-3. Cf. n. 44, below. Note that "meaning making" and "benefit finding" are both terms of art in clinical psychology, and that both have been established as resilience factors (cf. the next section of this chapter). Of the two, evidence suggests that benefit finding *may* be more relevant to resilience than meaning making, especially over the long term. The seminal findings were

Given that consolation is a literary, rhetorical, and ethical phenomenon, Meaning Reconstruction has clear resonance with consolatory theory. Most of all, Meaning Reconstruction promotes a humanist understanding of loss as a fundamental constituent of identity, and it suggests that pathological grief may best be addressed by an explicit focus not on medical or biopsychosocial functioning, but rather by spiritual, ethical, and personal meaning-making activities. At its root, the single most important method in Meaning Reconstruction is the telling of a story: about the deceased in life, about their death, about their influence on the bereaved going forward, and about the bereaved's new self. In this dissertation as a whole, I argue that the narration of such stories is indispensable to consolation, and I posit that the consolatory in particular relies on two specific storytelling devices: rhetorical exemplification and personification. In other words, it is exactly characteristic of the consolatory that story-telling and sense-making examples lead to recovery from pathological grief. Insofar as Meaning Reconstruction is supported by a large and growing body of scientific evidence,[44] this indicates that the rhetorical techniques of description and narration mobilized by the consolatory are not mere florid flourishes of purple prose, but rather may function as precise instruments of therapeutic intervention. Moreover, it suggests that the composition of a consolation ought to

initially established in Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Larson, "Making Sense of Loss and Benefitting from the Experience." Controversy continues regarding which of the two factors (if at all) are most important; see, for instance, the 2006 special issue of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* (Park and Helgeson, "Special Section").

44. The literature is both substantial and expansive. Influential additions, mostly from the past fifteen years, include: Currier, Holland, and Niemeyer, "Sense Making, Grief and the Experience of Violent Loss;" Gilbert, "Taking a Narrative Approach to Grief Research;" Holland, Currier, and Niemeyer, "Meaning Reconstruction in the First Two Years;" Lichtenthal et al., "Sense and Significance;" Niemeyer, *Constructivist Psychotherapy*; Niemeyer, "Fostering Posttraumatic Growth;" Niemeyer (ed.), *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss*; Niemeyer, "Narrating the Dialogical Self;" Niemeyer, "Reauthoring Life Narratives;" Niemeyer and Arvay, "Performing the Self;" Niemeyer et al., "Grief Therapy and the Reconstruction of Meaning;" Niemeyer, Klass, and Dennis, "Mourning, Meaning, and Memory;" Niemeyer and Raskin, *Constructions of Disorder*; Rynearson, *Retelling Violent Death*; Shear, Boelen, and Niemeyer, "Treating Complicated Grief;" Park, "Making Sense of the Meaning Literature;" and Walter, "A New Model of Grief."

intentionally draw on myriad appropriate stories to elaborate its points, since the evaluation of such stories (e.g. analyses of *exempla*) are a primary method uniting consolatory rhetoric and the evaluation of consolatory grief therapy.

Ultimately, dialogic models of the self, like those proposed by Meaning Reconstruction, are essential to a well-functioning theory of consolation, which presupposes a plastic self amenable to persuasion. Indeed, I argue that the primary goal of the consolatory is exactly the reformation of a new self which has integrated the experience of loss and is prepared to continue living in a healthy, well-functioning, socially-integrated manner—in other words, the rhetorical creation of a self marked by both psychological and moral resilience. In the case study chapters of this dissertation, I attend to the precise methods and effects that dialogic interventions have on different audiences while pursuing just this goal.

Continuing Bonds

Insofar as bereavement, exile, or other forms of loss involve damage to one's social connections,[45] consolatory grief therapy must address the damage caused by social losses. The most compelling empirical statement of the origins and details of such social losses are provided by Attachment Theory.[46] Attachment Theory is relevant to the consolatory primarily insofar as it explains why the bereaved might struggle to come to terms with certain losses more than others, but also because it explains the origin of both acute and chronic grief as a matter of lost intimate

45. This could also occur, of course, on account of a physical or mental disability, political misfortune, or most any other type of loss, so it is relevant to more or less the whole range of consolatory situations.

46. Canonical and recent, high-quality sources for an overview of the major topics in Attachment Theory include: Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*; Cassidy and Shaver, *Handbook of Attachment*; Fraley and Shaver, "Loss and Bereavement;" Mikulincer and Shaver, "An Attachment Perspective on Bereavement;" Mikulincer and Shaver, "Implications of Attachment Theory;" Shaver and Fraley, "Attachment, Loss, and Grief;" Shaver and Tancredy, "Emotion, Attachment, and Bereavement;" Shear et al., "An Attachment-Based Model of Complicated Grief;" Shear and Shair, "Attachment, Loss, and Complicated Grief;" and M. Stroebe, Schut, and W. Stroebe, "Attachment in Coping with Bereavement."

relationships. Importantly, Attachment Theory has established the concept of a continuing bond, which refers to the way that a person must refigure their relationship to the deceased in order to be successful in grief therapy.

According to Attachment Theory, positive adult social and emotional functioning results from the relational quality of important individuals in a person's life.[47] (This is opposed to the medical idea of biopsychosocial functioning, which is largely neurobiological, atomistic, and mechanistic.) Attachment theorists contend that humans can bond in healthy, functional ways—so-called secure attachments—or that they may form various dysfunctional types of social-emotional bonds, which later influence the pathologies to which they will be prone. For example, anxious types of attachments are characterized by over-involvement, excessive identification with another, and heightened emotional investment in a relationship, while avoidant types of attachments are characterized by dismissiveness, withdrawal, and inadequate emotional connection.[48]

In terms of grief therapy, Attachment Theory explains why certain losses, or losses for certain individuals, may yield acute or chronic grief responses. In short, the "basic premise of attachment theory is that humans are instinctively predisposed to form and maintain close attachments. Support from loved ones during times of stress is seen as a natural human need, as are the ongoing confidence and support of loved ones as we pursue autonomous goals."[49] Without such support, or when such attachments are maladaptive, humans are prone to various

47. Initially, the theory was based on literal proximity, but researchers later discovered that physical proximity and emotional intimacy are behaviorally and evolutionarily linked, which led to studies not only about how mammals seek out each other's physical presence, but also about how emotional involvement yields similar behavioral benefits and responses.
48. Attachment Theory articulates numerous subtypes of these bonds, which will be of use to clinical practitioners as they diagnose a patient's needs and the best course of therapy, but which do not provide substantial clarification to a theory of consolation, so I not discuss them here.
49. Shear et al., "Treating Complicated Grief," 141.

psychological illnesses. Attachment Theory is rooted not only in psychology, however, but also in neurobiology. The theory "posits the existence of cognitive-affective neurobiological circuitry called working models that contain autobiographical information about the self and attachment relationships as well as motivation for attachment-related behavior." These working models drive our behavior toward our loved ones, including experiences like yearning for a person who isn't present. But, after a loss, "the working model must be revised. However, like other mental models, attachment working models are resistant to change. … To effectively revise the working model requires acknowledging the finality of the loss and its consequences." This creates a cognitive dilemma: "Albeit irrational, thinking the loss is not irretrievable maintains hope, but because this is at odds with reality it also engenders disappointment and frustration; whereas accepting the finality of the loss is more realistic but may seem too painful or even terrifying."[50] According to Attachment Theory, then,

> Acute grief occurs during the period before a mourner resolves this dilemma. … most people process such important but unwanted information by oscillating between facing it and defensively excluding it from awareness...[51] Mourning is a preoccupying and erratic process by which bereaved people come to accept their changed circumstances, revise the working models, and redefine life goals. … With acceptance of the painful reality and integration of information about the loss, the associated cognitive-affective response, and implications for ongoing life, grief symptoms abate, albeit leaving a permanent residue of integrated grief.[52]

So, Attachment Theory not only describes the broad sorts of experiences that the bereaved may go through as they heal, but also provides an explanation of the origin of grief as a function of an individual's natural difficulty in adapting to the fact of lost relationships. Moreover, the tenor of those relationships—secure, anxious, avoidant, or otherwise—affects the tenor of the bereaved's grief and recovery.

50. Shear et al., "Treating Complicated Grief: Converging Approaches," 141.
51. Sc. the Dual Process Model, above.
52. Shear et al., "Treating Complicated Grief: Converging Approaches," 141.

In addition to describing the source of grief, Attachment Theory has established a crucial concept in both bereavement studies and consolatory theory: the notion of a continuing bond. According to Attachment Theory, the bereaved maintains a relationship with the deceased even after death, though this relationship is obviously different than the sort of relationships that the bereaved will maintain with other living individuals.[53] Clinicians and researchers refer to this on-going relationship as the continuing bond, and they argue that a key step to recovery from acute or chronic grief involves establishing a healthy, secure continuing bond with the deceased.[54] Indeed, to establish this bond, something like Worden's tasks (described in the next section) are necessary: to acknowledge the loss, to process the pain of the death, to adjust to living without the deceased, and to integrate the new continuing bond into one's life, perhaps through the use of rituals or other techniques.

Most importantly, Attachment Theory concludes that recovery from grief is impossible without the creation of a continuing bond: by denying, avoiding, excessively wallowing in, or otherwise failing to establish a secure, healthy relationship to the deceased, an individual will be prone to pathological grief. In terms of consolation, this means that one necessary therapeutic outcome of grief therapy must be the establishment of a continuing bond with the deceased. As I will demonstrate in later chapters, this is a crucial success condition (and common failure state) that distinguishes successful from unsuccessful consolations, and is thus among the clearest criteria for what effective consolatory grief therapy might consist of.

53. This view repudiates that Freudian idea that *detachment* from the deceased is the singular goal of grief therapy.
54. For important clinical and theoretical descriptions of the continuing bond, see: Field, "Unresolved Loss and the Continuing Bond;" Field, "Whether to Maintain or Relinquish a Bond;" Field et al., "Continuing Bonds in Bereavement;" Klass, "Continuing Conversation about Continuing Bonds;" Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds*; and M. Stroebe, Schut, and Boerner, "Continuing Bonds in Adaptation to Bereavement."

Although Attachment Theory does not immediately help to conceptualize the consolatory itself, it is a crucial theory insofar as it stresses the central importance of relationships in grief and loss. Indeed, as every sober scholar working on consolation has noted, the consolatory is fundamentally a social, relational phenomenon, and thus is ultimately inseparable from larger social and cultural contexts of mourning. Effective grief therapy, therefore, must be responsive to the bereaved's particular social and cultural situation, and therefore demands that consolation be undertaken in a contextually sensitive way, with its constituent parts carefully aligned in such a way as to reinforce and support rather than conflict with the cultural positions of the bereaved. (It also means that consolation becomes less effective as its audiences become more alienated from the specific situations discussed; this may be one reason among many for the strong cosmopolitan tendency in much of consolation.)

The Task-Based Model: An Integrated, Evaluative Model for Consolatory Grief Therapy

Among modern models of grief, one stands out as impressive for its scope, insight, and evidentiary basis: the Task-Based Model (TBM), first formulated by J. William Worden in the late eighties and early nineties, and further refined over time.[55] The Task-Based Model developed from the rejection of developmental ideas about "stages" or "phases."[56] Indeed, the idea of

55. To be fair, Worden has been critiqued in recent years for failing to incorporate the most recent bereavement research into his handbook. In the process of my discussion here, however, I indicated the way that innovative research may indeed buttress his model—hence, my elaboration in the following pages about how the model is fortified by incorporating the notions of oscillation between confrontation and avoidance, dialogic meaning reconstruction, and the continuing bond.

56. It is worth noting that Worden's work on mourning is based on pioneering scholarship about developmental tasks (as opposed to stages). Worden owes a particular debt to Havinghurst, esp. *Developmental Tasks and Education*. Prior to these innovations, many grief theories—from the advent of psychoanalysis and on—were based on the idea of stages. Among the most prominent included Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, and John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (see next note).

Among contemporary researchers, stage theory has only been prominently supported by Maciejewski, Zhang, Block, and Prigerson in "An Empirical Examination of the Stage Theory of Grief," but that article too generated substantial controversy upon publication.

developmental or procedural stages were prominent not only in Freudian grief work and Piaget's theory of cognitive-developmental stages, but also in Bowlby's influential Attachment Theory-based understanding of grief.[57] The Task-Based Model, however, rejects the rigidity of stages in favor of a dynamic therapeutic process. As Worden explains, "The problem with both stage theories and phase theories is their relative rigidity and the assumption of a sequential time trajectory. Task theory," on the other hand, "presents a much more fluid understanding of the mourning process. Tasks can be addressed with no special ordering, and they can be revisited and reworked over time,"[58] in accordance with the best contemporary understanding of grief as an open-ended, non-linear process.

According to TBM, there are four major tasks that the bereaved must work through as she heals. The four tasks are:[59]

1. **To Acknowledge the Reality of the Loss:** According to Worden, the bereaved "need[s] first to believe that the death happened before [she] can deal with the emotional impact of the loss... It is important to have both cognitive and emotional acceptance of the death."[60] Periodic confrontation with the fact of the loss, à la the Dual Process Model, is highly relevant to this task, but this task is also the first step in the creation of a continuing bond and in dialogic meaning reconstruction.

57. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*. Bowlby's theory is phasic: he describes a "protest" phase, where the bereaved refuses to accept the loss; a "despair" phase, where the bereaved is overcome with depression and sadness, and so cannot see a healthy future; and a "reorganization" phase, where the bereaved accepts the loss and structures her life toward future relationships. Bowlby's phases were heavily influenced by early Attachment Theory, and in turn had a pronounced effect on later attachment theorists, especially because they popularized the idea of a continuing bond with the deceased as part of the "reorganization" phase. See the previous section for the importance of the continuing bond.
58. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 57-8.
59. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 58-67. The fullest account of this model, including a discussion of the evidence supporting it and the therapeutic techniques that it recommends, may be found in Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*.
60. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 58.

2. **To Process the Pain of Grief:** Individuals vary greatly in the effort and time necessary to ameliorate their grief: "Some deaths portend more pain than others, depending on the various mediators of mourning. And people vary in their ability to process pain in a healthy manner. … The pain of grief depends on multiple mediators that influence the amount and type of pain that the death causes. [For example,] the loss of one's child is often reported as a more painful loss than the loss of a sibling, parent, or even spouse..."[61] Here, again, the work of grief therapy occurs: the bereaved is assisted in oscillating toward loss-oriented thinking and behaviors, while the techniques of meaning reconstruction and the continuing bond are instantiated.
3. **To Adjust to a World Without the Deceased:** Many of the tasks required for effective grief therapy have little to do with the deceased, but rather directly address the ways that the bereaved must change and grow as a result of the experience. Worden identifies several categories of restoration-oriented adjustments that may need to be made:

> "Some deaths portend more changes in the mourner's life, and some require less adaptation. … External adjustments are the most obvious challenges: … [including] those activities of daily living and/or family roles that have changed significantly. … Internal adjustments include not only social self-definitions, … but also important personality variables such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. … Spiritual adjustments involve the way the death has shaken the foundations of one's assumptive world... Violent deaths like suicide, homicide, and accidents are particular challenges to belief in these areas [spiritual adjustments]."[62]

In this task, dialogic meaning making is especially important, since the bereaved must grapple with issues of self, identity, role, and worldview, which are the components that meaning making most effectively addresses.

61. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 60.
62. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 62.

4. **To Find an Enduring Connection with the Deceased in the Midst of Embarking on a New Life:** This final task addresses the most fundamental consolatory problem, which is how to help a person move on from a loss when they are "stuck," so to speak, in grief. (Indeed, a substantial plurality of extent consolations take this as the paradigmatic case, though there are obviously other patterns common in the literature.) As Worden describes it,

> "one cannot keep a dead loved one in one's life in just the same way as when that person was alive. Some try to do this and stop moving forward with life at the time the loved one died. … [Rather,] it is important to find a way to keep the dead loved one in one's life and memorialize that person, but in a way that doesn't keep the mourner from moving on with his or her life."[63]

With this task, the bereaved not only creates a continuing bond, but also invests emotional energy into developing meaningful relationships with the living. As a result, this final task is perhaps the most complex: it simultaneously addresses the facts of the loss (loss-orientation), the necessity of change from the experience (restoration-orientation), and even prospects for new forms of life. As a result, it engages each of the core concepts described above (oscillation, meaning reconstruction, and the continuing bond).

For the purposes of consolatory theory, TBM is a crucial model. As I will demonstrate in the case studies, TBM's four tasks are highly accurate ways of conceptualizing different categories of consolatory arguments that have been levied from antiquity to the present. Most likely, this is a case of convergence: clinical therapeutic practice, as well as literary consolation, has ultimately discovered effective responses to underlying problems of grief and recovery. I suggest that these four categories do not perfectly apply to consolation, in particular because they do not effectively account for the moral-developmental arguments and techniques used in consolation.

63. Worden and Winokuer, "A Task-Based Approach for Counseling the Bereaved," 65.

Nonetheless, they constitute a functional schema for accurately describing major therapeutic techniques used in consolation, and may indeed even explain major compositional sections of certain consolations.

Moreover, TBM provides consolatory theory valuable analytical tools. For example, by analyzing what task(s) are most prominently pursued within a consolation, the model may be used to identify the likely barriers to recovery and resilience that the bereaved is facing, and therefore to suggest which therapeutic concepts are most relevant. During composition, consolers may use their knowledge of the bereaved's pathology (or may postulate a hypothetical form of pathology) in order to effectively tailor their grief therapy to relevant audiences. During analysis, on the other hand, the model may be used as a benchmark against which to measure the efficacy of clinical therapeutic interventions within a consolation, for example by asking whether the appropriate therapeutic concepts are invoked. Finally, if a consolation does not appear to conform to the model, it provides an opportunity for a critic to use the nuance of a given consolation to further elaborate the TBM, and vice versa; that is, any friction between model and actual practice may be interpreted as a fertile space for further inquiry and exploration.

Taken altogether, then, the modern empirical science of clinical grief therapy has much to offer to theorists, practitioners, and critics of consolation. The empirical models, of course, should not be blindly adopted—after all, the rich tradition of consolation literature provides at least as much insight into human experience as modern empirical science—yet the two approaches, both rigorous and well-developed in their own right, may be used together to better describe the full complexity of consolatory grief therapy, and in so doing, to better elucidate its deep structure.

II. Psychological Resilience: Consolation as the Development of Hardiness and Other Resilience Factors

The consolatory's therapeutic program has, as its ultimate aim, not only the amelioration of grief, but also the development of psychological resilience. Resilience refers to the dynamic process of adaptation and thriving in the context of significant adversity, and as such involves recovery (e.g. to baseline functioning equivalent to that before the loss), but it also goes beyond mere homeostasis, and instead also includes sustainability and even growth, such that a situation of loss becomes integrated into one's self and contributes positively to one's future wellbeing.[64]

Developmental psychologists take the construct of resilience to include many other phenomena and concepts.[65] With respect to the consolatory, however, three resilience factors are most relevant: repressive coping, self-enhancement, and especially hardiness.[66] Each of these factors plays a role not only in resilience outcomes, but also in building resiliency,[67] and so—importantly for the consolatory—each may be proactively developed before a loss has occurred. As a result, they are relevant not only to the immediate subjects of grief therapy (viz. the various

64. E.g. Rivers, Zautra, and Davis, "Resilience."

65. As a complex, multidisciplinary theoretical construct, the science of resilience has been criticized from many sides. These criticisms have tended to both further enrich and delineate the construct and its many constituent parts and associated concepts, processes, and phenomena. For an excellent overview of resilience research, including sober analyses of its challenges and controversies as well as its many accomplishments, see the following literature review studies (and the citations adduced there): Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, "The Construct of Resilience;" Luthar, Sawyer, and Brown, "Conceptual Issues in Studies of Resilience."

66. These three are related to two other key factors, namely *social support* and *positive emotions*. These latter factors are also relevant to the consolatory, but consolation tends to approach them through the three that I focus on here. For example, social supports are generally offered as a counterbalance to social isolation, which is in turn thought to be caused by complicated grief—so, consolation cuts to the heart of the matter by recommending repressive coping, which treats the underlying cause (complicated grief), and only then advances social support as an alternative response (in contrast to social isolation). Repressive coping is therefore a primary consolatory strategy, and social support a secondary one (but one which is nevertheless important, and is described in detail elsewhere in this dissertation). Similarly, positive emotion is often a medial factor, one which the consolatory primarily achieves through repressive coping and self-enhancement.

    Influential studies on social support resilience factors include two important studies that qualify the extent of its utility: W. Stroebe, Zech, M. Stroebe, and Abakoumin, "Does Social Support Help in Bereavement?" and Lepore, Silver, Wortman, and Wayment, "Social Constraints, Intrusive Thoughts, and Depressive Symptoms."

    For references to influential studies on positive emotions, see n. 75.

67. Psychologists use "resiliency" to refer to the personality trait of being disposed to resilient outcomes and adaptations, and "resilience" to refer to the fact of resilient outcomes.

bereaved audiences), but also to the wide range of other audiences implied within the consolatory frame, including those interested in using consolation to prepare for future loss rather than merely to respond to it. In this section, I consider each of the three factors in turn: repressive coping and self-enhancement briefly, and then hardiness—a key concept—in somewhat more detail.

Theories of grief therapy and resilience are relevant to the consolatory only insofar as they illuminate the aims, functions, and methods of consolation. In the case of both repressive coping and self-enhancement, the psychological research is relevant because it strongly indicates that these two techniques yield positive, constructive responses to loss,[68] and thus indicate two primary methods of resilience that ought to be effective in consolation. And, indeed, both methods have been commonly used across the consolatory tradition to promote psychological resilience.[69]

Repressive coping refers to the phenomenon wherein resilience is promoted as subjects who have experienced loss render unpleasant or painful emotions unconscious. Repressive coping suggests, in other words, that the bereaved ought to deliberately avoid ruminating about

68. In the last twenty years, empirical research into resilience, and especially the adaptive components of resiliency in loss, have greatly progressed. The most significant recent reviews and studies considering resilience and resiliency (with an emphasis on repressive coping, self-enhancement, hardiness, and other resiliency factors) include: Boerner and Jopp, "Resilience in Response to Loss;" Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience;" Bonanno et al., "Weighing the Costs of Disaster;" Bonanno et al., "Resilience to Loss and Chronic Grief;" Bonanno, Wortman, and Nesse, "Prospective Patterns of Resilience and Maladjustment;" Coifman et al., "Does Repressive Coping Promote Resilience?" Diminich and Bonanno, "Resilience;" Dutton and Zisook, "Adaptation to Bereavement;" Infurna and Luthar, "Multidimensional Nature of Resilience;" Masten, "Resilience Over the Lifespan;" Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Bonanno, "Positive Predictors of Positive Emotions Following Spousal Loss;" Ong et al., "Psychological Resilience, Positive Emotions, and Successful Adaptation;" Wortman and Boerner, "Reactions to the Death of a Loved One;" and Wortman and Silver, "The Myths of Coping with Loss."

    See n. 75 below for additional references to empirical studies or reviews of ego-resiliency, self-enhancement, and positive emotions.

    See nn. 78 and 81 below for additional references to empirical studies and reviews of hardiness.

69. I analyze limited instances in the case study chapters; to substantiate this claim further would require another dissertation.

or otherwise exploring their negative emotions surrounding the fact of the loss. Rather, they ought to be directed toward positive emotions and behaviors, from laughter to meditation on positive aspects of their life (family, community, values, hobbies, etc.).[70] Indeed, empirical psychological evidence suggests that repressive coping is strongly associated with resilience outcomes for individuals,[71] despite the (largely faulty) psychoanalytic emphasis on reflecting about and re-experiencing the pain of a loss over and over again.[72] With that said, effective repressive coping should not (but sometimes does) involve other, maladaptive coping responses such as avoidance, social isolation, substance abuse, and so forth. Ideally, it involves psychologically emphasizing positive emotions around the loss and minimizing negative ones, so that autonomic cardiovascular responses are led to interfere with biological dispositions to negative emotivity.

Repressive coping, as a psychological strategy, is surprisingly common in consolation. On first blush, it is tempting to think that consolations do not frequently utilize this strategy, and instead prefer to interrogate or confront the unpleasant emotions resulting from loss—in other words, to do Freudian "grief work." In fact, however, most of the rhetorical techniques used in consolation enable repressive coping, either by redirecting the bereaved toward positive emotions (e.g. emphasizing family, community, and other socially engaging topics), or else by emphasizing a rational approach wherein unpleasant emotions are sidelined in favor of cognitive interventions which, coincidentally, move focus from sentiment to reasons or rational judgment and thereby repress negative emotivity.[73] Broadly speaking, then, repressive coping may be seen as a resilience

70. See n. 75 (on self-enhancement) for additional references to the role of positive emotions.
71. See n. 68.
72. Cf. nn. 27-28 on the failures of the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches. Repressive coping is not without critics, though supporters tend to have empirical evidence (and not merely psychodynamic theory) on their side; in addition to Coifman et. al (cited in n. 28), cf. Bonanno, Keltner, Holen, and Horowitz, "When Avoiding Unpleasant Emotions Might Not Be Such a Bad Thing."
73. For example, see Chapter Five for my extensive discussion of how Seneca continually redirects Marcia toward reconnection with her surviving family.

strategy employed by effective consolations, while ineffective consolations will instead emphasize and reinforce the negative emotions that the bereaved feels about a loss.

Importantly, repressive coping seems to be a strategy that can be learned.[74] As a result, it is relevant not only to the bereaved audiences of consolation, but also to other audiences, especially those preparing for future grief. By practicing specific techniques of repressive coping —like focusing one's attention on present positive emotions e.g. resulting from the presence of family—consolation may therefore, at least hypothetically, serve a prophylactic purpose. Indeed, this is one way in which the therapeutic program of the consolatory is deeply intertwined with its complementary parts, viz. the moral development program and consolatory rhetoric. In the moral development program, as I will discuss in the next chapter, an emphasis on social connectivity and other resilience factors is a crucial aspect of the consolatory's preparatory power, while consolatory rhetoric makes ubiquitous use of commonplaces related to repressive coping.

Like repressive coping, a second component of psychological resilience—self-enhancement—binds the resilience function to the other components of the consolatory. Self-enhancement, simply put, describes the phenomenon wherein an individual has a biased, positive self-assessment. That is, self-enhancement is a sort of illusory placebo; based simply on a biased,

74. Most studies have focused on adversity during childhood. The bibliography is extensive, but not entirely relevant here, since what is at stake for consolatory moral development and psychological resilience is deliberate intervention and inoculation rather than the contingent development of resiliency following an unforeseen calamity. With that said, there are several data-driven reviews of how adults learn repressive coping and other adaptive strategies following adversity of one sort or another. An excellent overview of the evidence is in Bonanno, Brewin, Kaniasty, and La Greca, "Weighing the Costs of Disaster," esp. 17-20, which suggests that preventative preparation ought to be possible, given that a common response to a disaster is resilience to future, similar events. (The *similarity criterion* is crucial, as it forms the crux of debates about how effectively one might be able to prospectively develop resilience. Objections emphasize that non-real preparation—e.g. imaginative exercises or training distant from an aversive event—may not be sufficiently similar to stimulate resilience responses.)

Cf. nn. 82 and 83 for references to review literature discussing to what extent resilience is trainable (and what the limits of that trainability may be, and what further research may be necessary going forward).

inaccurate, overinflated sense of one's strength or resilience, a person is actually less susceptible to acute grief. In this way, self-enhancement possesses the power of that old saw about faking it until you make it.[75] This has obvious implications for both moral development and consolatory rhetoric: from a developmental perspective, techniques of self-persuasion that emphasize radical strength, imperturbability, and so forth may lead to the development of exactly those qualities in oneself,[76] while rhetorical interventions that praise an individual's strength may serve to at least temporarily promote self-enhancement.[77]

If repressive coping and self-enhancement are indeed resilience factors that are appropriate to (and characteristic of) effective consolation, as I have suggested, then the concept of hardiness is even more crucial.[78] According to empirical psychologists, hardiness consists of a set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that contribute substantially to resistance to stress. In fact, hardiness has been shown to be substantially more effective at reducing negative health outcomes even than exercise, diet, social support, and relaxation meditation.[79]

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75. In addition to the general resilience scholarship cited above (n. 68), influential studies on self-enhancement, its super-category (ego-resiliency), and positive emotions include: Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin, "What Good are Positive Emotions in Crisis?" Tugade and Fredrickson, "Resilient Individuals Use Positive Emotions," and especially the comprehensive review in Taylor and Armor, "Positive Illusions and Coping with Adversity."
76. I set aside, of course, the potential ethical *flaws* in this sort of self-persuasion—especially self-aggrandizement and egotism, which are its likely results. Consolatory moral development, that is, finds potential value in egotistic self-development, whereas many normative ethics would instead consider overweening self-enhancement to be a vice, or at least not a valuable aim of moral development. On the other hand, the consolatory does suggest one reason why many individuals in the real world are egotistic: although it may be boorish or obnoxious in everyday life, to be so does have strong adaptive value in the face of adversity. Thus, it is a potentially useful trait to have against future loss, just as it may indicate that an individual has developed it in the first place as part of their recovery from past pain and loss.
77. Praise, then, is not only useful as part of e.g. a *captatio benevolentiae*, but also to promote resiliency. In my discussion of Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife*, for example, I note how Plutarch positions Timoxena as an exaggerated positive *exemplum* for herself and thereby promotes resilience (see 80-90).
78. Discussions of hardiness and grief have been strongly influenced by research by Salvatore Maddi and his students. The initial (and still definitive) description of the construct is Kobasa, "Stressful Life Events, Personality, and Health." (See, too, Maddi's "The Story of Hardiness" and "On Hardiness and Other Pathways to Resilience," which point to practical clinical—and organizational—applications of his conceptual work.)
79. Maddi, "The Story of Hardiness," 173-4 and 178-9 summarizes major studies and findings. Cf., too, the pioneering study on health and stress by Kobasa, Maddi, and Kahn, "Hardiness and Health." On stress, health, and resilience in general, see Zautra, *Emotions, Stress, and Health.*

Hardiness is conceptualized as consisting of three components: commitment, control, and challenge. Each of these components may be deliberately developed. According to Maddi,

> What we call... commitment [is] a predisposition to be involved with people, things, and contexts rather than [to] be detached, isolated, or alienated. Control involve[s] struggling to have an influence on outcomes going on around oneself, rather than sinking into passivity and powerlessness. Challenge signifie[s] wanting to learn continually from one's experience, whether positive or negative, rather than playing it safe by avoiding uncertainties and potential threats.[80]

Hardy individuals possess all three components,[81] as expressed both in their attitudes (e.g. that they should continue seeking out opportunities to learn and grow, or that they can have a positive effect on their situations and problems) and also in their behaviors (e.g. actively collaborating with peers, taking decisive actions to address problems, and choosing new, difficult situations rather than avoiding them for fear of the unknown or unpredictable).

Like the other factors, hardiness is both a central component of the grief therapy program and also a link to both the moral development program and to consolatory rhetoric. Training programs exist to develop hardy behaviors and attitudes,[82] but there is evidence that hardiness may also be developed in childhood.[83] Indeed, the moral development program has, as a central goal, the development of resilience, and it functions—among other ways—by taking natural processes of development and subjecting them to the guidance of deliberate, well-reasoned educational models. More so than other coping responses to adversity, hardiness may be deliberately developed, so that—even if personality traits do in fact play a limited role in

80. Maddi, "The Story of Hardiness," 174. See Kobasa, Maddi, and Kahn, "Hardiness and Health," 169-70, for a more detailed (and technical) description.
81. For general remarks and reasoning, see Maddi, "The Story of Hardiness," 175-6, and Kobasa, "Stressful Life Events, Personality, and Health," 9-10. For psychometric evidence, see: Kobasa, Maddi, and Kahn, "Hardiness and Health," 172-3.
82. For instance, the Hardiness Institute (http://www.hardinessinstitute.com/).
83. Khoshaba and Maddi, "Early Experiences in Hardiness Development." For other summaries of resilience construction in childhood, see: Seery, Holman, and Silver, "Whatever Does Not Kill Us" and Norris and Murrell, "Prior Experience as a Moderator of Disaster Impact."

resiliency—it is a primary candidate for deliberate development in support of prophylactic resiliency.

In all, then, psychological resilience is the aim of the therapeutic program, for it encompasses not only amelioration of grief and recovery—the immediate outcomes sought by grief therapy—but also incorporates future-oriented stability and personal growth. In this way, the consolatory is able to flexibly address the needs of both the bereaved audiences, who are suffering from immediate, present grief and thus require grief therapy, as well as the needs of its other, more distant audiences, such as philosophers who may be seeking to proactively develop resilience or literary readers who find edification in the dramatization of the process of suffering, healing, and growth.

III. Conclusion: The Principles of Consolatory Therapy

Although not all particular consolations will emphasize every aspect of the general therapeutic program laid out here, the consolatory, as a whole, is distinguished by this therapeutic program. The program consists of two major parts: grief therapy and resilience. Grief therapy is targeted most specifically at bereaved audiences, though its central concepts are potentially relevant to other audiences: guidance in the dynamic, organic process of oscillation between confrontation and avoidance; the dialogic construction of new meaning out of adversity; and the creation of a continuing bond with who (or what) has been lost. Whereas grief therapy largely describes the therapeutic process of consolation, psychological resilience largely describes the outcome of that program. In particular, whenever it would be productive for a specific audience member, the resilience agenda seeks to promote repressive coping, self-enhancement, and the development of hardiness.

Together, the two parts of consolatory therapy not only describe the phenomenon, but also provide a basis for judging the likely psychological efficacy of a consolation for a given audience. The criteria for judgement are elucidated with particular clarity through modern theories and models of grief therapy and psychological resilience. The general principles that may be derived from the discussion of those models in this chapter include the following:

1. Grief involves personal transformation. Grief is an open-ended process, and thus cannot be permanently resolved. Nevertheless, grief—when effectively treated—will eventually transform from suffering into a new form of life, and therefore a bereaved individual will cease feeling the loss as a source of acute pain, discomfort, and maladaptation, but rather will grow into a new stage of their personhood. In this way, grief and recovery—especially the formation of a continuing bond and a revised self-narrative—constitute a process of ethical self-formation and identity (re)construction.

Moreover, confrontation or comfort alone are not adequate clinical strategies. Rather, confrontation, comfort, and support must be used in combination to help the bereaved successfully recover. As a result, grief therapy is not just about the bereaved's loss and attendant feelings and behaviors, but must also focus on other aspects of the bereaved's life (and her process of adaptation and self-redefinition). The bereaved's personal history, social relationships, political standing, and so forth are thus also important topics for consolatory address, insofar as they form crucial narrative beats in the bereaved's self-narrative.

2. Grief and healing is a personal, idiosyncratic, organic process, and thus must respond to the specific character of the bereaved and the nature of her grief. As a process, grief is not sequential, but rather is dynamic and cyclical. Thus, any effective therapy must respond to relapses, recurrences, and the particular psychic movements of the bereaved. When a consolation is overly prescriptive of stages

of healing, it may either be ineffective,[84] or else be primarily intended as a simplified model for ethical education. At the same time, recovery involves addressing discrete tasks of both loss- and restoration-orientations, which a given consolation might prompt, guide, or motivate through its rhetorical and discursive composition.

In addition, grief therapy must respond to individual circumstances to be effective.[85] Though certain features may be common, each loss and each sufferer is ultimately unique, so a non-targeted approach will fail. (In rhetorical terms, consolatory grief therapy is thus an occasional process, just as the resulting textual artifact is an instance of occasional discourse.) Thus, personal engagement is crucial to successful consolation for all consolatory audiences.

3. Successful therapy results in the generation of increased resilience to future adversity, and may even be protective before the fact of adversity. Resilience is the substantial aim of consolatory grief therapy. It has a role in the prevention of pathological grief, but also in the process of self-reformation that ultimately resolves it. A given consolation might choose to forgo training in resilience based on the bereaved's particular needs, but the consolatory as a whole must include it as an indispensable component of successful consolatory therapy.

Resilience is not only the result of successful recovery from grief, but may plausibly be trained through the imaginative recital of loss and grief, and especially through practicing the

84. This objection is at the heart of concerns about ancient consolation, in particular: because they are frequently so normative, structural, and rigid in their approach, ancient consolations sometimes seem to lack the flexibility to effectively address the messy process at the heart of consolatory therapy. I believe that there are a number of persuasive responses to this objection, the most compelling of which argues that ancient consolations are rather more flexible and complex than has often been thought. For substantiation, see the case studies in Chapters Two and Five.

85. Cf. Zech and Arnold, "Attachment and Coping with Bereavement," 24: "...[In accordance with recent, high-quality evidence,] bereaved individuals should not all get the same intervention but, rather, an intervention that addresses the specific process that is at hand and explains or maintains their own specific difficulty... The [Dual Process Model] provides insight into the way in which individuals grieve, and the authors have proposed that coping with bereavement is largely influenced by the person's style of attachment" (cf. the section on Attachment Theory above, 115-119).

habits of thought and story-telling that allow a person to recover more readily in the face of adversity. In this way, the rhetoric of exemplarity and personification may be directly tied to both the educational and therapeutic aspects of consolation. This possibility will be taken up at length in the following two chapters.

Taken as a whole, these three principles suggest that consolatory therapy exists in a state of constant tension. As established in the previous chapter, consolation necessarily involves address to a multiplex audience with different agendas. A given consolation, then, must balance the imperative to address an individual bereaved's situation as idiosyncratically as possible, while simultaneously recognizing the overarching need to remain relevant and meaningful to the total audience (to the extent that that ideal may be possible). Described in another way, the tension at the heart of consolatory therapy endures in the perennial struggle to focus on practical, presented problems, but also to offer insight into abstract philosophical issues and guidance about impersonal political, rhetorical, or historical concerns.

As it navigates this tension, consolatory therapy must also juggle competing approaches. It must, for example, respond to different dimensions of loss: acknowledgment of the new situation, treatment of the pain of loss, adjustment to the new reality of loss, and resolution of grief by integrating it into a new self-identity. But, although the consolatory is focused on a personal loss and personal self-transformation, it also recognizes that loss occurs in a relational context, so any effective recovery must acknowledge the loss and help to re-embed the bereaved into a healthy social context, albeit one fundamentally changed by the absence of the deceased. Finally, because consolatory grief therapy is fundamentally related to narrative self-construction, it must therefore make use of associated literary-rhetorical techniques of self-construction (like exemplarity, personification, and dramatic narration) as part of its clinical therapeutic work,

which adds characteristic texture to the peculiar forms of grief therapy and resilience generation found in consolation.

In the following chapter, I take up a key thread generated throughout this chapter: the moral development aspect of the consolatory, with a particular emphasis on the ethical dimension of self-transformation enacted by consolatory argument and rhetoric.

Chapter 4.

The Moral Development Program:

Self-Improvement Through Habituation and Preparation,

Perspectivism, Ethical Doctrine, Ethical Analysis, and Moral Resilience

The second major program essential to the consolatory is moral development. While the therapeutic function emphasizes the centrality of grief therapy, meaning reconstruction, and psychological resilience to the process of recovery from grief (as well as to its future prevention), the moral development function emphasizes the fundamentally educational nature of the consolatory. That is, the consolatory is marked by a central and ongoing interest in promoting the moral development of its audiences, at all stages of development, such that they are better equipped to think deeply, reason lucidly, communicate clearly, and especially act correctly when dealing with the difficult ethical issues raised by loss, grief, and bereavement. In particular, the consolatory incorporates a range of ethical outcomes: the development of ethical self-awareness; deeper fluency in moral precepts, philosophical truths, and ethical reasoning; rectification of errant emotion and behavior; and increased commitment to moral values. In its developmental aspect, then, the consolatory touches on the major components of normative moral life, from our self-image and self-understanding to a rigorous analysis of our beliefs to the adjustment of our behavior and action to better accord with our principles. As such, it advances a comprehensive vision of correct human action, and especially the right response to—and preparation for—adversity. In all, I epitomize this comprehensive orientation toward the ethics of adversity and personal catastrophe as moral resilience.

In many ways, the consolatory's moral development program is fundamentally ancient, being rooted in consolation's historical development in the Greco-Roman world of antiquity and

sharing in the major ethical concerns and controversies of that period. In that context, especially in the Hellenistic and later Roman Imperial periods, philosophy was frequently understood not only as a method or style of inquiry into the truth, but also as a tool for self-improvement. The traces of this conception of practical philosophy are well-recognized by modern scholars, and include an ongoing emphasis on elements of ethics and practical wisdom like Neo-Aristotelian notions of exercise, habituation, and expertise-formation;[1] spiritual practices of askesis, moral discipline, and ethical "forms of life" (or, more broadly, philosophical lifestyles and *techniques du soi*);[2] the importance of moral preparation, in general;[3] and the role of imagination and the emotions in moral development.[4] In short, the consolations of Greco-Roman antiquity established not only the literary genre of consolation, but also the scope of consolatory moral development, which later historical examples of consolation—for example, from the medieval and early modern periods—eventually refined, but never truly transcended.[5]

In this chapter, I discuss the ethical context from which consolation arose, the components of the consolatory's moral development program, and the implications of its moral

1. The Neo-Aristotelian approach is widespread in Anglophone academia. Prominent contemporary accounts include those found in the work of Phillipa Foot, Alisdair MacIntrye, Martha Nussbaum, and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, among many others. Recent discussions of the Neo-Aristotelian approach include: Timothy Chappell (ed.), *Values and Virtues*; Eugene Garver, *Confronting Aristotle's Ethics*; Christopher Gill, *Virtue, Norms, and Objectivity*; Mark LeBar, *The Value of Living Well*; Alasdair MacIntryre, *Dependent Rational Animals*; Julia Peters, *Aristotelian Ethics in Contemporary Perspective*; and Daniel Russell, *Happiness for Humans*.
2. The leading proponent of this theory has been Pierre Hadot (e.g. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*), although the theory was popularized in the United States through the work of Michel Foucault, esp. *The Care of the Self*.
3. E.g. the practice of meditation, on which see Robert Newman, *Cotidie Meditare* and Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness,* 48-73 and 450-2. Cf. 142f., esp. n. 12.
4. I am unable in this dissertation to provide a detailed study of the relationship between moral development, emotion, and imagination. Webb, "Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions," provides a valuable starting point within the scope of ancient rhetorical practice, which is also the ground upon which I would situate the topic. In a similar vein, see Pender, "Rhetoric, Grief, and Imagination."
5. This point is driven home forcefully by George McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation* (e.g. 4-17), who treats the effects of the ancient and medieval traditions on Italian humanism; Michael Means, *The Consolatio Genre,* who argues for the central influence of Boethius' *Consolatio* on medieval English didactic poetry; and Charles Favez's overview of the tradition, *La Consolation Latine Crétienne*. The issue is discussed at least in passing by most commentators, who demonstrate ways that the classical ideal has been modified, extrapolated, challenged, and updated to contemporary concerns, but has never truly been outgrown. Prominent examples of criticism discussing the tradition include those cited in the Introduction (see 3-9).

resiliency orientation. First, I argue that the moral development program differs fundamentally from the grief therapy program in that the latter is primarily focused on healing a past wound, while the moral development program is primarily focused on avoiding or softening the blow of a future one. In this way, the two programs address the fundamental consolatory situation—the experience of grief, loss, recovery, and resilience—from alternative, but complementary directions. For the moral development program, classical conceptions of self-improvement explicitly drive the theory: preparation drives a person to begin the process of dealing with loss and grief before experiencing a debilitating incident wherein such activity will be greatly hindered, while habituation makes that practice effective beyond the immediate moment. Together, the two methods (preparation and habituation) establish an optimistic, forward-looking perspective on loss and grief wherein practice, both literal and imaginative, develops resiliency in advance of one's experience of a personal catastrophe.

Second, I decompose the major components of the consolatory's moral development program. In particular, I argue that the consolatory emphasizes four distinct areas of moral growth: *moral perspectivism,* which allows one to better recognize and articulate her own moral position; *ethical doctrine,* which increases one's ethical knowledge, especially that relevant to the special adversity imposed by loss and grief; *ethical analysis,* which trains one to better analyze both herself and a situation to determine the best course of action, and then to implement practices of right, healthy action; and *moral resiliency,* which motivates one to adopt the optimal (most healthy, true, and ethical) beliefs, attitudes, and values toward situations of loss and grief, and thus disposes a person to resist (or otherwise be left unperturbed by) excessive shock. Taken together, these components form a comprehensive educational guide which uses situations of loss and grief to train individuals, through the practice of reason, judgment, and practical wisdom, to both act

better and become better. While the specific moral developmental process implied in any given consolation will necessarily be incomplete, and occasionally even flawed, the program in general nevertheless situates the consolatory as a bold, progressive, idealistic exercise in moral development, one with a particularly earnest and refreshing goal, given strands of modern (and postmodern) world-weariness and skepticism so commonly found in contemporary moral thought.

In all, the consolatory theory of moral development suggests a fundamental self-improvement project at the heart of the consolatory. In a sense, the grief therapy program is primarily concerned with resolving the immediate and medium-term psychological and behavioral effects of loss and grief, while the moral development program is primarily concerned with the long-term, teleological effects that loss and grief may have on a person's moral formation and ethical action. As a result, the moral development program takes a broad view of its subject matter, which consists of nothing less than preparation for the lifelong, experiential effects of loss and grief on a person's moral wellbeing.

The scope of the moral development program, therefore, is both broader and more teleological than that of the grief therapy program. Specific consolations imply (or baldly state) specific visions of ideal human moral functioning, and then mobilize educational techniques to train audiences with respect to those ideals. Consequently, the moral development program is frequently less concerned with the specific details of a loss than it is with the general patterns of response to such situations and the way that specific individuals may fall into unhealthy modes of life.

In this way, the moral development program takes on a distinctly philosophical, and specifically a normative, ethical texture. This normative, ethical texture, as a key component of

the consolatory, is one important characteristic by which consolation proper may be distinguished from "mere" grief therapy, which may be entirely occasional and pragmatic. In general, the consolatory blends the general ethical emphasis of the moral development program with the contingent, occasional, and functional emphasis of the grief therapy program, resulting in a textual formation relevant to complex audiences across time and cultural difference.

I. The Classical Roots of Consolatory Moral Development: Self-Improvement Through Preparation and Habituation

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the primary telos of consolation is the construction of resilience, which includes both adaptive recovery from loss and grief as well as inoculation against future loss and grief such that one may bear the burdens of loss more easily and with less psychological and personal damage. In many ways, the grief therapy program is primarily retrospective and reactive; that is, it provides little of use for individuals who have not yet suffered a debilitating loss.[6] The moral development program, on the other hand, is essentially prospective and proactive: it establishes a group of tasks that prepare a person to confront the pain and adversity of loss, whenever it should occur in the future and whatever form it may take. The moral development program is thus less specific and particular than the grief therapy program, and it takes a broader view of what counts as its proper object.

In this way, the moral development program most clearly shows its classical philosophical origins. Not only are classical ethical theories generally normative and teleological, as the moral

6. In the discussion of meaning reconstruction in Chapter Three, however, I have stressed the ways in which the psychological resilience aspect is prospective as well as retrospective: in particular, the grief therapy program provides a sophisticated path to recovery and future thriving by indicating the ways that excessive grief and psychological distress can not only be most effectively treated, but also transformed into a powerful, adaptive resource that supports future resilience and wellbeing. Moreover, I cite research there indicating that hardiness to future adversity may be trainable without prior experiences of trauma. Cf. 112-115.

development program is, but they also tend to emphasize the importance of preparation and habituation, for these behaviors are theorized to play a fundamental role in self-formation and self-improvement, with the result that one's sense of self and identity is made more durable and stable when it has been formed and tempered by both of these activities. Indeed, while the components of consolatory moral development accommodate retrospective use—like perspectivism applied to a previous loss—it is striking that they may all be exercised in advance. (The same, in contrast, is not true of every component of consolatory grief therapy.)

The role of self-improvement, and particularly of preparation and habituation, has been well-studied.[7] Because of that fact, and because this dissertation takes the form of a theoretical and a critical rather than an historical investigation, I must refrain here from engaging in a comprehensive survey of the topic. Rather, I point to a few select studies that are particularly relevant to the study of consolation literature. In particular, I argue that classical philosophy (especially of the Hellenistic variety) popularized the idea of incremental ethical progress, the idea that the end(s) of moral development may be approached through the right kinds of practice at the right time under the right circumstances, and that adequate practice will, at least in theory, allow a person to develop toward moral perfection.[8] Ultimately, incremental progressivism, the idea of step-by-step improvement towards moral resiliency, forms a crucial substrate to the moral development theory that I outline in the following section, for that theory presumes the

7. See nn. 1-3, 10, and 12 in this chapter, but this topic has been a central concern throughout the history of ethics.
8. The different schools disagree—sometimes vehemently—on what moral perfection consists of, and indeed as to whether it is even possible. The Stoics and Epicureans, for example, seem to think that it is, whereas Aristotle is committed to the notion of moral luck, whereby preparation is only one component of moral thriving—and not a wholly sufficient one. This broad topic is discussed by the major scholarship cited throughout this section, especially those works focused on Stoicism. The idea remains a topic of study in contemporary ethics, as may be seen in (e.g.) Cavell's discussion of Emerson *(Cities of Words,* e.g. 26-7, but also *passim*, and *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome).*

directionality, feasibility, and value of both preparation and habituation to the project of moral self-improvement.

The basic form of classical self-improvement involves four stages: motivation, guided exercise, repetitive practice, and correct responsiveness. Speaking roughly, the first two elements (motivation and guided exercises) might be described as elements of preparation, while the latter two (repetitive practice and correct responsiveness) may be placed under the aegis of habituation. According to this formal model, individuals progress incrementally through the stages, which mark distinguishable (though continuous) states of ethical progress. Thus, like modern theories of human development, the classical model posits a scaffolded approach[9] as the most effective way to learn. Unlike modern theories of human development, however, the classical model does not generally suggest that progress is often domain-specific and must be repeated in new contexts; rather, classical theories tend to view progress as sequential and cumulative, even if not inevitable. With effort, individuals thus progress through each of the four stages over time.

Ancient philosophical education stresses the importance of preparation. According to Pierre Hadot, whose notion of "spiritual exercises" harmonizes with my notion of moral education, preparation is both an intellectual task and a mental discipline. Intellectually, it includes practices like reading, writing, listening, debating, and conducting research—activities, that is, relevant to intellectual self-improvement. These activities alone, however, are not sufficient; rather, they must be accompanied by a deliberate effort to use what is learned as fuel for self-improvement. As a mental and spiritual discipline, on the other hand, moral education includes practices like mindfulness ("attention"), meditation/reflection, self-critique, and self-

9. *Encyclopedia of Human Development*, s.v. "Scaffolding."

control.[10] Notably, these activities are all pragmatically oriented processes of self-improvement: they invite the practitioner to make progress, step by step, from whatever their initial position may be. As such, they are at heart a form of experiential education, wherein the fact of learning propositional knowledge is inherently accompanied by a simultaneous inculcation of actions, attitudes, and values.[11]

In terms of the philosophy of consolation, preparation accords with the classical practice of *meditatio.*[12] Although the practice may have initially consisted only of passive contemplation,[13] under the Stoics it became an active, rigorous, deliberate approach that sought not merely to lessen the surprise of an evil occurrence (and thus the distress caused by the surprise), but also to fortify the practitioner against distress by mentally rehearsing the actual ethical behaviors and practices that would allow one to act ethically in the face of future adversity.[14] As such, the *meditatio* consists especially of imaginative practice, and thus seeks to use persuasive images and rhetorical figures to present the imaginary situation in as "vivid" and "present" terms as possible.[15] The major insight of this historical account is to emphasize the connection between

10. P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 84ff. Cf. Rabbow, *Seelenführung,* whose earlier notion of a methodology of therapeutic exercise also includes physical exercises.
11. The best explication of this mode of education, and one highly influential to my notion of moral education, may be found in John Dewey's writings on education. On the present topic, see especially *Experience and Education* and *Democracy and Education*. For recent interest in the topic of Deweyan ethics, emotion, and moral imagination, see Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics* and Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination.*
12. The bibliography on the history of Western meditation is vast. For the *meditatio* in classical antiquity, see esp. P. Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* and *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and Rabbow, *Seelenführung.* On Roman Stoicism, see Newman, "*Cotidie Meditare*" and I. Hadot, *Seneca und Die Griechisch-römische Tradition Der Seelenleitung.* On medieval and early modern *meditatio,* see the papers in Enenkel and Melion (eds.), *Meditatio,* especially the overview of codified medieval practices in Enenkel and Melion, "Introduction." On medieval visual meditation, see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought.* For a detailed study of literary *meditatio* in the 18th century, see Wodianka, *Betrachtungen Des Todes.*
13. Newman, "*Cotidie meditare,*"1477-8.
14. Newman, "*Cotidie meditare,*"1477-82 and *passim.*
15. The inherent rhetorical nature of the *mediatio* has been widely noted, but the best discussion of the crucial role of rhetorical imagery is Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* which emphasizes how techniques of *enargeia* are the *sine qua non* for meditation.

imaginative rehearsal and real action. Empirically speaking, this connection is real,[16] even if one might doubt (as I do) a wholly cognitivist account[17] of the phenomenon.

Conceptually speaking, how might the link between *meditatio* and ethical behavior be characterized? It is not reasonable to think that the primary effect of meditative preparation occurs through a correspondence between rehearsal of a particular case and the later correct response to that same case. Such an approach, after all, would be destined for failure, given the wide variety of possible forms of loss and the impossibility of rehearsing the particular responses necessary given the particular details of each of those diverse cases. The particularist approach, in other words, sets an impossibly high standard for how much meditation would be necessary to effectively prepare for future loss. The solution, rather, depends on how the *meditatio* contributes to self-formation. According to the classical virtue-based account,[18] particular actions work to shape one's general character: the patterns and modes of response instantiated in the repetition of specific behaviors configure one's disposition to act in certain ways in general.[19]

Importantly, the classical notion of habituation differs from certain modern, deterministic notions of habit. For modern behavioral psychologists in the mode of Skinner, habits are caused by conditioning, i.e. the simple fact of coincidence between a stimulus and a response that becomes engrained and deterministic of future action. For Aristotle, on the other hand, habit does not deterministically link an action with a given response, but rather describes a more

16. The current standard reference for meditation as a general therapeutic/mental health practice (not just the ethical version discussed here) is Germer, Siegel, and Fulton (eds.), *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*.
17. E.g. the Stoic account, which understands meditation to achieve its effect through the removal of false opinions and beliefs.
18. Here, I basically rely on the Aristotelian notion of *hexis* as described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
19. In Aristotelian terms, *meditatio* is one method by which *phronesis* may be developed—that is, it is not only excellence of character that is developed, but also the power of the practical decision-making faculty itself. On *phronesis* and practical education, see Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education,* 85-103. On Aristotelian character development more broadly, see Annas, *Intelligent Virtue,* as well as the analysis and bibliography in Jagannathan, "The Labors of Wisdom."

flexible process by which our actions, taken as a whole, given direction, tendency, and stability to our disposition for future activity (but without deterministic force).[20] That is, specific actions, including imaginative practices of preparation, provide shape and direction to the development of one's (ethical) character and capacity to exercise practical wisdom (*phronesis*). One's ethical self thus mediates between purely cognitive activities (like *meditatio*) and purely practical activities (like responding to actual loss and grief) through the mechanism of habituation. As it proceeds, preparatory practice gains breadth by considering a range of different cases and depth by repeating similar cases. As it does so, the process of habituation establishes and then reinforces one's ethical character—that is, one's active, stable tendency to behave in certain virtuous ways in given sorts of moral situations. But this character, of course, turns out (in the scope of loss and grief) to consist of nothing less than moral resilience, the very goal of consolatory moral education.

Consolation, therefore, has a close relationship with both preparation and habituation. On the one hand, consolatory speech emphasizes the preparatory elements of motivation and guided exercise: rhetorically speaking, protreptic and exhortation are indispensable rhetorical modes for consolation, because they specialize in building motivation to change one's beliefs or behavior, just as guided imaginative exercise, as expressed through consolatory advice, counsel, strong imagery, and *meditatio,* is a characteristic element of consolatory texts. On the other hand, a given consolation does not always provide an explicit curriculum in habituation, since habituation involves repetition over time until a response is made automatic (and thus consistent, predictable, and reliable). But, although singular consolations do not always explicitly provide an

20. See, for example, Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* 1103b (ed. Bywater, trans. H. Rackham): "Hence it is incumbent on us to control the character of our activities, since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions" (διὸ δεῖ τὰς ἐνεργείας ποιὰς ἀποδιδόναι: κατὰ γὰρ τὰς τούτων διαφορὰς ἀκολουθοῦσιν αἱ ἕξεις). Notice the explicit link between "τὰς ἐνεργείας" and "αἱ ἕξεις."

invitation for practice, the consolatory in general provides both opportunity and catalyst for interested readers, for each given consolation functions as one instructional text among the many that are cumulatively indexed in a student's library, so to speak. In fact, insofar as any given consolation may be considered a case for any readers beyond the immediate, nominal addressee to engage with, each thus provides an implicit occasion upon which to imaginatively practice correct responses, to validate the details of that practice against the model provided (or implied) by the text, and to test one's immediate (e.g. emotional) responses to determine whether prior practice has yet settled them into reliable, automatic guards against personal crisis.

Consolation, in other words, has a different ethical function for different audiences. For what might be thought of as beginning and intermediate readers (in the sense of "deficient or not yet advanced in teleological ethical progress"), consolation offers explicit motivation and guidance about how to begin healing from a loss and creating greater resiliency for oneself to prevent, as much as possible, the pain from future losses. For individuals of advanced ethical practice, on the other hand, the value of a consolation is not in its (for these audiences, remedial) attempts at creating motivation and persuading the reader to do certain, specific pain-limiting things;[21] instead, a given consolation is valuable as an invitation to practice general, consolatory attitudes and activity in the confines of a controlled educational environment. For very advanced individuals, those who have progressed to the cusp of even needing practice, a given consolation instead becomes not a contrived occasion upon which to practice, but rather a sort of ethical test to face. Like autobiographies, consolations claim to be true, in the sense that they address what they describe as real or authentic cases of loss and pain, even if the cases are in fact contrived. As a real case that may be entered into imaginatively, as it were, they thus provide a testing ground

21. Even though this reinforcement, like a "back to basics" approach, might occasionally be fortifying.

as close to real loss as possible. Advanced students with highly-developed ethical selves use these real (or "real") cases to assess to what extent their prepared habits can stand up to "real" pressure. A reader's prior ethical preparation, then, will determine how and to what extent she is likely to engage with the moral development program.

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze the moral development program of the consolatory in terms of four components. It is worth bearing in mind that each of these components will be more or less relevant to various readers and audience types based on their needs in terms of preparation and habituation; ethical precepts, for example, are highly relevant to those who need guided exercise, whereas moral resiliency is a dispositional goal more relevant to advanced ethical audiences who are able to use a consolation not as an instructional text, but rather as an occasion to rehearse or test already-developed capacities for resistance to the pain of loss and its accompanying threats to moral wellbeing.

II. Consolatory Moral Development: Perspectivism, Precepts, Analysis, and Resilience

Consolatory moral development consists of four analytical components. Below, I describe each of the four components in turn. One caveat must be noted at the outset, however: although I describe the four elements below as analytically distinct, and although they may be described, in a sense, as sequential, they nevertheless in reality occur simultaneously, at different rates, and in entangled ways, and they may be continually reiterated and elaborated in different ways to reach different audiences and to address the different, transient needs of those to whom they are addressed. Thus, when a moment of consolatory moral development is analyzed in terms of one function, it is important to note that other functions of moral development (as well as of consolatory grief psychotherapy) are not therefore precluded from being entailed in the same

moment, despite the necessity of isolation and concentration for the analytical process. On the contrary, the richest examples of consolatory moral development—as is so characteristic of literature in general—occur in overloaded, multiply signifying, conceptually dense passages that demand repeated reading and interpretation and that function on several rhetorical levels simultaneously. So, although I focus on one isolated aspect of the moral development program at a time in this section, I nevertheless do not intend to suggest that a given passage, analyzed in such isolated terms, will have been treated in a comprehensive or complete manner.

The four components, then, are *moral perspectivism,* the process of gaining a clear understanding of one's ethical position; *ethical precepts,* training in moral principles that may be used to guide conduct in more or less overt ways; *ethical analysis,* the crucial philosophical skill in evaluating and critiquing one's situation and personal behavior and then in correcting it; and *moral resiliency,* the creation of values, attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors that develop resilience against future catastrophes that may harm one's values, ethical commitments, self-identity, and sense of agency.

Component One: Adjustment of Moral Perspective

Analytically speaking, the first imperative of the consolatory's moral development program involves preparing a person to use reason to accurately assess and respond to their specific moral situation. In situations of loss and grief, however, the bereaved is frequently overcome with emotion, such that rational activity is, at best, impeded. What is needed, then, is a sort of interrupt switch: a strategy to decrease or delay emotional response, and then to provide a more objective (rational) awareness of one's situation.

In these efforts, two metaphors dominate: distance and perspective. According to these metaphors, one first needs distance from one's emotions in order to engage rational thought, and second, the benefit of an outside perspective from which to develop a less emotionally biased self-assessment. Both distance and outside perspective enable insight, and therefore more objective self-knowledge. According to this apparently rationalist account,[22] humans—given the opportunity—are naturally able to mobilize their reason to achieve (even limited) objective self-knowledge. The perspective-adjustment function of consolatory ethics involves providing such an opportunity.

It is important to note, despite the rationalist tenor of this line of thought, that the consolatory does not deny humans' inherent emotivity. Rather, the consolatory is thoroughly rooted in a holistic sense of the human condition, one that accepts both rational and emotional components to human life.[23] Perspective adjustment is thus not an intrinsically valuable end in itself, nor is the process of gaining objective self-knowledge considered superior to subjective, emotional, or non-propositional forms of self-knowledge and self-awareness. Rather, the consolatory's implicit model of the self suggests that a self is a balanced, harmonized unity from which pathological imbalance may arise, and that such imbalances will require an intervention tailored to the nature of the cause of the pathology. Reason, of course, is not the sole form of possible response to a given cause. In the case of consolation, however, the specific sort of

22. In fact, I would argue that what is really at stake is a *phenomenology* of the self and of the experience of grief. Phenomenologically speaking, humans seem to experience a conflict, at times, between reason and emotion. This conflict has in many ways been reified in Western philosophy, yet there are good reasons to doubt whether the conflict encapsulates a genuine, fundamental distinction rather than one merely elevated from a passing perception of conflict within a single, complex mind. On the topic of grief, for example, one might ask whether we really experience separate, conflicting, counterbalancing psychic movements, à la Platonism, or whether the conflict might instead be rooted in our reflexive, conscious self-perception of singular but complex, complicated, non-univocal motivations, feelings, impulses, or beliefs. To me, at least, the latter view seems to be more persuasive (and better founded in both self-reflection and empirical science), though I'm not convinced that the debate has direct implications for the theory of moral perspectivism under consideration here.
23. Cf. the Conclusion to this dissertation (232-242).

imbalance that arises is generally an emotional one, viz. either excessive grief and mourning or else excessive social withdrawal and isolation. The response to this sort of imbalance just happens to often involve reason.[24]

Depending on their sociocultural situation and the character of the bereaved, consolers use a variety of tactics and techniques to achieve an interrupted, distanced effect, which I term the adjustment of one's perspective, or simply *perspectivism.* In the history of practical ethics, there are many varieties of perspectivism. A survey of those techniques, including extensive pagan, Judeo-Christian, Indic, and East Asian spiritual practices of mindfulness, is far beyond the scope of this section. Rather, I emphasize here the specific characteristics of consolatory practices of interrupting and distancing, which I describe (more literally) in terms of suggestibility engendered through the three perspectival techniques of *arrest, depersonalization,* and *reframing.*

Before perspectivism can be encouraged, the bereaved's excessive emotions must be arrested, or at least ameliorated, in order that the bereaved be made suggestible to alternative perspectives.[25] Much of this task of interruption, of course, falls to techniques of grief therapy that motivate the bereaved to be open to suggestions about alternative ways of conceptualizing, interpreting or otherwise understanding a loss. But this task also falls, in part, to the use of rhetoric, and especially to the reasoned use of rhetorical techniques that might counteract or interrupt a circuit of emotion.

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24. It is possible to imagine, for example, a loss wherein one's emotional stability is not strongly affected, but where one's reason is deeply affected, perhaps by suffering crippling rational self-doubt based on the substantial change in one's identity (e.g. from husband to widower), and where the solution is primarily emotional, e.g. to use therapeutic techniques to generate rational acknowledgement of the depth of loss that has occurred, in order to either rehabilitate one's reason by drawing it closer to a point of emotional stability, or else by actively engendering feelings of pain and grief which may be used to appropriately condition one's rationality.
25. The underlying premise, of course, is that strong emotion interferes with one's ability to learn. This notion is strongly supported by modern empirical research into the emotions: see the review in Tyng, Amin, Saad, and Malik, "The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory."

Next, the consoler must, in one way or another, push the bereaved to experience a sense of distance from her emotions, lest excessive emotion again overwhelm her. In less metaphorical terms, the consoler engages in a process of depersonalization in which an individual's apparent imbrication in her own suffering is clarified and explained in impersonal or objective terms, which has the practical psychological effect of weakening—or at times even breaking—grief's psychological hold. In actual practice, of course, the nature of human development guarantees that this is a messy, repetitive process, and one which most likely must be repeated over time in a variety of contexts in order to extract one's sense of self from identification with one's strong emotions or disastrous personal situation.

Seneca, for example, often intentionally uses discourse meant to shock or berate the bereaved (or similar, emotionally entrapped readers) into momentarily escaping the experience of pain or suffering and becoming open to new suggestions, at which point he is free, as consoler, to endorse a different perspective on the bereaved's grief experience.[26] In a letter to a philosophical interlocutor whom he judges ought to have already developed greater resilience, for example, Seneca uses shame to shock his interlocutor into an unguarded moment of openness that may, in turn, lead to an adjustment of his perspective. Seneca opens with pointed reproach, "You expect solace? Take reproach instead!" (*Solacia expectas? Convicia accipe., Ep.* 99.2). The harsh tone continues, but Seneca also begins to introduce a characteristically Stoic perspective, the universalizing cosmic perspective, to provide a new, depersonalized frame of reference. In particular, he emphasizes the expansiveness of cosmic time as a way of destabilizing the addressee's self-consuming inward gaze, as when he orders his addressee to

26. See Van Wassenhove, "Moral Admonition and the Emotions in Seneca's Philosophical Works."

> Just imagine the vast extent of time: embrace the universe in thought, and then compare that immeasurable span with what we call a human life, and you will see how small a thing it is that we yearn for and wish to prolong.[27]
>
> *Propone temporis profundi vastitatem et universum conplectere, deinde hoc quod aetatem vocamus humanam compara immenso: videbis quam exiguum sit quod optamus, quod extendimus.* (99.10)

And then again, this time near the end of the epistle (rather than in the middle), Seneca claims that

> … young or old, every life is equally short when compared with that of the universe. For any possible lifespan is less even than what one would call a tiny bit. A tiny bit is at least something, but this life of ours is practically nothing.[28]
>
> *… omnes, quantum ad brevitatem aevi, si universo compares, et iuvenes et senes, in aequo sumus. Minus enim ad nos ex aetate omni venit quam quod minimum esse quis dixerit, quoniam quidem minimum aliqua pars est: hoc quod vivimus proximum nihilo est.* (99.31)

In both cases, Seneca takes up the topic at hand—the apparent injustice of a son dying so young—and inverts the theme into a new, depersonalized frame by emphasizing the cosmic scale of time. Moreover, Seneca's rhetoric reinforces the point: he uses *correctio* to further minimize human experience by changing his first description of the span of human life from "a paltry thing" (*exiguum*) to "a tiny bit" (*minimum*) to "virtually nothing at all (*proximum nihilo*). The comparison (*compara*, 99.10; *comparas*, 99.31) with cosmic time instantiates a progressive reframing of perspective that pressures the addressee to adjust his perspective on his loss.

It is also important to note that, while the process of distancing often uses the strategy of making an event impersonal, it also rarely denies the personal entirely. Instead, distance may also be created by other techniques, e.g. temporal dislocation, in which the consoler attempts to distance the bereaved from the immediacy of the loss, and instead tries to replaces the immediate pain or longing with, for example, the comforting nostalgia of memory or the closeness of family

27. Trans. Graver and Long.
28. Trans. Graver and Long.

relationships.[29] Whatever the exact technique used, the ultimate goal is the same: to create reflective distance by refocusing the bereaved's attention away from her immediate experience and feelings, and instead to reframe those experiences and feelings in a way that is less immediate and, thus, less emotionally crippling.

In many cases, of course, the simple presentation of an objective description of one's suffering is not nearly sufficient to attenuate that suffering. Instead, it is often helpful—or even necessary—to use that description as the basis of a new personal perspective, i.e. to reframe the situation. That is, the consoler must not merely arrest emotion's hold and then break it by describing the situation objectively, but must also reframe the bereaved's position in such as way as to help the bereaved consider it through fresh eyes, as it were. In other words, the consoler must help the bereaved to not fall back into her initial perspective, as habit directs, but rather to adopt the new, more objective perspective as her own.

Though this move is crucial, it is also fiendishly difficult, which is one reason why the activity of consolation is not simple. Because the human psyche is resistant to abrupt or substantial change, it often takes multiple efforts to persuade it to transform even to a slight degree. As a result, consolations often undertake multiple small shifts in perspective wherein the bereaved is led slowly and deliberately toward a more substantial change of position, as if step by step through concentric circles of expanding perspective. At the same time, resilience must be developed so that the bereaved does not backslide. Alternatively, rather than progressively shifting perspective, as I indicated in the example above, consolers may sometimes choose to instead reach for a single image, *sententia,* or similar figure so striking that it presents all three

29. E.g. Sen., *Ep.* 99.23: "Speak to him often, however, and celebrate his memory as much as you can... [etc.]" (*Ceterum frequenter de illo loquere et memoriam eius quantum potes celebra...*; trans. Graver and Long).

perspectival techniques at once, as when Plutarch presents an explosive paradox attributed to Diogenes the Cynic in his consolatory text *On Exile* (*De exilio*): "Thus Diogenes the Cynic responded to the one who said, 'The Sinopians sentenced you to exile far from the Pontos,'—'Rather,' he replied, 'I condemned them to stay there.'" (διὸ καὶ Διογένης ὁ κύων, πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα, "Σινωπεῖς σου φυγὴν ἐκ Πόντου κατέγνωσαν," "ἐγὼ δέ," εἶπεν, "ἐκείνων ἐν Πόντῳ μονήν," 602a, ed. Henderson [Loeb Classical Library]). Diogenes's reply is characteristically biting: he turns the questioner's point back against him, an unexpected move that causes a moment of arrest and suddenly reveals a radically different perspective on the situation. Indeed, Plutarch is fond of these paradoxical reversals in *De exilio*. Just a few pages later, he uses the same technique, this time regarding the Stoic Zeno:

> Zeno indeed, when he learned that his only remaining ship had been engulfed with its cargo by the sea, exclaimed: "Well done, Fortune! thus to confine me to a threadbare cloak" and a philosopher's life. (Trans. de Lacy)
>
> Ὁ μὲν οὖν Ζήνων, πυθόμενος ἦν ἔτι λοιπὴν εἶχε ναῦν μετὰ τῶν φορτίων καταπεπομένην ὑπὸ τῆς θαλάσσης, "εὖγε," εἶπεν, "ὦ τύχη, ποιεῖς, εἰς τρίβωνα" καὶ βίον φιλόσοφον "συνελαύνουσα ἡμᾶς·" (603d)

In this case, however, Plutarch goes on to analyze and unpack the anecdote at some length; thus, the *exemplum* serves to interrupt any self-directed rumination and open the way for the ethical precepts that follow (for which cf. "Component Two," below) rather than standing as a self-contained reversal that in and of itself depersonalizes and reframes the ethical situation.

Finally, the degree of metaphorical distance which must be opened by arresting, depersonalizing, and reframing depends a great deal on the personality of the bereaved, on her general ethical development, on her previous preparation for adversity, and on the nature of her loss, in addition to other contextual factors. It is best, then, to consider the total process of perspective adjustment—interrupting and distancing through the specific activities of arresting,

depersonalizing, and reframing—as a complex, ongoing task that interacts continually not only with the other elements of moral development, but also with those of the therapeutic program.

Component Two: Ethical Principles, Precepts, and Dogma

Because consolatory arguments and forms of comfort are offered from the perspective of the consoler (or occasionally her fictional agent), the philosophical commitments of the consoler-persona matter. In particular, a given consolation is generally inflected by the use of philosophical dogmas[30] drawn from particular schools or traditions. (It sometimes also matters when consolers choose not to utilize certain precepts that are available to them, since this also counts as a distinct rhetorical choice.) Ultimately, the use of philosophical dogma is an important component of moral education because it allows audiences to relate their immediate experience to larger, more systematic ethical frameworks, under whose auspices they may be better equipped with the conceptual apparatus to analyze their situation and discover a remedy or other path forward. On their own, of course, precepts will never be sufficient to resolve an ethical issue, for they are simply too impersonal and nonspecific to respond effectively to the particular contextual details of one's situation. Nevertheless, they are indispensable didactic and mnemonic devices that consolers may use to help their audiences rationally frame and analyze their ethical situation, and thus to locate it within the realm of known possible effective responses.

Generally speaking, precepts function in one of three manners: as didactic, exhortation, or mnemonic. When used didactically, precepts are usually used to convey knowledge that the

30. By "dogma," I mean a certain species of ethical precept. Pierre Hadot (*The Inner Citadel*, 36) defines them well: "A dogma is a universal principle which founds and justifies a specific practical conduct, and which can be formulated in one or in several propositions." Dogmas may be stated explicitly and logically, or invoked through maxim, or merely alluded to, depending on the consoler, the audiences involved, and the present compositional imperatives.

consoler wishes to teach to the bereaved, and especially to succinctly summarize that information in a memorable and vivid way. (Indeed, perhaps the most attractive quality of precepts is their ease of later re-invocation, so the didactic case is tied closely to the mnemonic one.) Didactic precepts are frequently used in both therapeutic psychoeducation as well as in moral education, so they may be appropriate for a variety of audiences.

The hortatory use of precepts, on the other hand, usually involves using a dogma as a maxim, which consolers frequently use as stylistic devices to punctuate a persuasive or argumentative point. As one would expect, the hortatory use is more common in consolatory situations where a key outcome involves motivating the bereaved (or other audiences) to change, or else when the text functions as a teaching text for students who may require external motivation to apply themselves to preparing against adversity, or even sometimes when the text functions as a vehement refutation of philosophical critics who may be skeptical of a dogma that underlays a consolatory argument. Hortatory precepts may also be used if the philosophical commitments of an audience are known to the consoler, who may then leverage those preexisting, dogmatic commitments by connecting them to the present consolatory discourse.

Finally, precepts are commonly used mnemonically, either to remind the reader of preexisting knowledge (from prior experience or from an earlier conclusion within the consolation) or to connect a novel point to accepted cultural wisdom. In most cases, the mnemonic use of precepts actually just refers to other times in which a precept has been successfully used, either didactically or as exhortation. By using precepts to refer back in a succinct way to previous points, the audience's understanding may be advanced step by step, an effective educational tactic called "scaffolding"[31] that is obviously related to the more general

31. *Encyclopedia of Human Development*, s.v. "Scaffolding."

pattern of incremental ethical progress found in consolation. Alternatively, the consoler may use mnemonic precepts simply to reiterate previously effective dogmas, which may serve to reinforce or support their consolatory effects.

In actual practice, all three distinct uses of precepts are often more or less at play simultaneously, even though one function may be more relevant in a given context. Indeed, given the multiplex audience for consolation, precepts rely on their universalizing form to speak to multiple different audience needs at the same time, while nevertheless appearing to be directly relevant to the situation of any member of those audiences. So, while it may be helpful to analytically distinguish between the different manners in which precepts are used, as I have outlined above, it is frequently unnecessary to do so in practice, given that precepts are so frequently used in a multivalent, interconnected way.

An example of this point may be seen in the consolatory speech delivered by President Barack Obama at the Sandy Hook Interfaith Prayer Vigil[32] following the massacre of twenty young children and six adults at a school in Newtown, Connecticut. At one point, Obama argues that

> It comes as a shock at a certain point where you realize, no matter how much you love these kids, you can't do it by yourself. That this job of keeping our children safe, and teaching them well, is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors, the help of a community, and the help of a nation. And in that way, we come to realize that we bear a responsibility for every child because we're counting on everybody else to help look after ours; that we're all parents; that they're all our children.

The passage here attempts perspective adjustment; rather than viewing the tragedy as individuals from individual vantage points, Obama instead suggests that readers ought to view the tragedy as

32. Obama, "Remarks by the President at Sandy Hook Interfaith Prayer Vigil," transcript available online at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/12/16/remarks-president-sandy-hook-interfaith-prayer-vigil.

if part of a communal social body bound by reciprocal moral obligations. To support this point, he advances a maxim: "... we bear a responsibility for every child... we're all parents... they're all our children." The maxim here, especially the final two clauses, uses parallelism, repetition, and climax to fix itself in reader's minds. That it, the ethical precept is memorable. Moreover, the precept plays a clear hortatory role: later in the speech, Obama argues for political action on the topic of mass shootings, a topic (mass political action based in communal responsibility) that this precept clearly supports and motivates. Therefore, this passage exemplifies the concept of ethical precepts used in a memorable fashion to exhort an alignment of values and political will across different audiences in pursuit of communal action.

Component Three: Ethical Analysis and Behavior Change

Ethical analysis and the changes to one's behavior that result together form a core activity of moral practice and habituation, one which is largely the payoff for perspective adjustment and teaching/invocation of ethical precepts. After the bereaved (or the implicit audiences particularly interested in moral development, either as learners or critics) have been prepared to rationally consider their situation—at least, once an opening for this sort of analysis has been created—and once the field of analysis has been prepared through the teaching of ethical precepts, then those readers may fully engage in ethical analysis of their situation (or of the type of loss described within the consolation).

In short, ethical analysis marries rational education about the elements and structure of correct action with a critique of how those elements are well or poorly instantiated in model cases, and then ultimately in the bereaved's posited case. On the one hand, rational education involves describing and discussing the many aspects of an ethical situation and guiding the

student, with more or less overt direction, to a conceptual understanding of the various elements and how they interact. In this process, examples and models are commonly used,[33] in addition to more purely logical or analytical approaches. On the other hand, critique involves applying those insights and models to particular cases, and then using those cases to both elaborate the general philosophical points involved as well as to analyze the bereaved's (or other characters') specific circumstances, with a special emphasis on how models or cases may be used to shed light on the relevant specific circumstances, and thus to provide guidance about how to most effectively act in a given situation.

In most cases, the consolatory is distinguished by ethical analysis that is more rigorous than that advanced by mere "common sense" or general cultural understandings of correct behavior around grief and mourning. A collection of platitudes about death, despite superficial resemblances, rarely engages its audiences, and consequently tends to fail as consolation, just as mere condolence (which does not rise to the level of analysis or behavior rectification) likewise falls short of full-throated consolation.[34] Rather, consolatory ethical analysis adds depth, rigor, and insight into an experience of grief such that a possible path forward toward recovery may be discovered, while more effective preparation for future adversity may simultaneously be inculcated. At the end of the day, the process of ethical analysis is fundamentally educational in the broadest sense: it seeks to provide a structured opportunity for individuals to engage with the problem of loss in such a way as to lead to greater insight, knowledge, and growth, with the

33. There are, of course, many other educational techniques used, not least of all analogical or metaphorical techniques that speak more directly to the student. Here, though, I emphasize those aspects that are not only educational, but also explicitly relevant to the analytical understanding of the parts of one's grief experience.
34. See the Conclusion (232-242) for a longer discussion of how the idea of the consolatory may be more or less expressed in various kinds of texts.

ultimate effect that any current pain is ameliorated and any future pain is made less likely or less severe.

Because consolatory audiences may have radically different concerns, however, consolers must approach ethical analysis with sensitivity to local context. It is particularly important for consolers to be aware of the ways that affect interferes with ethical analysis. For students of ethics, for example, the optimal analytical approach—reasoning in an appropriately simple way, down to their level of understanding—is one that strives for clarity of explanation and easily understandable, step-by-step reasoning about the facts of, situation of, and recommended response to a particular loss. For knowledgeable critics or skeptics, on the other hand, a more pointed approach may be called for, one that sacrifices didactic simplicity for precise, robust arguments, even if those arguments become complex and difficult to follow for less sophisticated audiences. And neither of these approaches, of course, is likely to be appropriate for bereaved audiences, who are generally more receptive to ethical analysis that remains closely related to their personal emotional experiences and that focuses relentlessly on practical, personal outcomes (such as ameliorating the source of their grief). Even bereaved audiences, however, have diverse needs, since metonymic bereaved will often prefer analysis to occur at the level of example or case, which will be more broadly applicable to their (more distant) experience of loss, whereas the literal bereaved will usually prefer ethical analysis to reference the literal specifics of her situation in order for the analysis provided to be as closely fitted to her actual grief as possible.

Obviously, these divergent needs will often conflict. As a result, the consoler may face difficult choices, including ones which may alienate various components of their total audience. In some cases, one audience is prioritized to such a degree that a text may accurately be described as a "teaching consolation" that has little to offer to bereaved audiences. In other cases,

the analysis presented is so specific and personal that it may be highly effective for bereaved audiences, but of limited use to audiences of students or philosophical critics. In some cases, then, consolers must simply choose to focus on a certain audience or two to the detriment of others. When this occurs, the consoler is led to a high-stakes rhetorical decision that, in fact, provides one basis by which critics may distinguish and classify the major varieties of consolation. In short, the analytical passages of a consolation are one of the places in which the consoler's focus on certain audiences is most clearly revealed.

Examples may help to illustrate the point. A prominent example of the first, didactic type might be the consolatory books of Cicero's analytical *Tusculan Disputations,* such as the passage defining the core goal and strategies of consolation (3.55-8) or the important passage about topics of consolation, a passage that carefully indexes and evaluates various strategies employed by earlier consolers (3.77-9). Throughout books three and four, Cicero maintains a meticulous, analytical approach that can hardly be thought to be effective for the actual therapeutic treatment of a reader engrossed in present grief. Rather, his audience must instead consist primarily of non-bereaved readers, and especially philosophical audiences.

A prominent example of the second, personal type, on the other hand, might be C. S. Lewis's aphoristic and impressionistic *A Grief Observed.* If the strictly didactic type aims for intellectual virtues such as comprehensiveness and exactitude, the strictly personal type instead aims at truthfulness and verisimilitude through largely incompatible means, including reflection, meditation, mindful observance, and so forth. Against Cicero's cataloging, careful parsing, and analytic evaluation, then, Lewis offers impressionistic aphorisms that activate powerful emotional recognition in bereaved audiences, even as they remain mostly impenetrable to analytical

readings. A consolatory text of this sort grossly privileges bereaved audiences, but tends to alienate philosophical ones.

The contrast in how the two texts imagine their audience may be brought to a point, for example, in how both discuss the experience of grief. In the analytic style characteristic of the work, Cicero writes:

> The fact is that the experience of distress has more than one cause. First, there is the belief that what has happened is a bad thing. Once a person has this impression, and decides that it is true, distress necessarily follows. Second, people also think that by being terribly grieved, they are doing something that is pleasing to the deceased. To this is added the womanish superstition that it will be easier for them to appease the gods if they profess to be completely crushed by the blow they have received. (3.72, trans. Graver)

The *Tusculan Disputations,* of course, are formally dedicated to a philosopher, and the internal drama is explicitly a philosophical discussion among experienced philosophers. Yet this imagined audience would nevertheless be clear from passages such as this one, which pursue didactic aims through analytical rhetoric, and which are thus appropriate for audiences that value these aims and approaches—that is, for philosophical consolatory audiences. Lewis, on the other hand, reflects:

> … grief still feels like fear. Perhaps, more strictly, like suspense. Or like waiting; just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling. It doesn't seem worth starting anything. I can't settle down. I yawn, I fidget, I smoke too much. Up till this I always had too little time. Now there is nothing but time. Almost pure time, empty successiveness. (*A Grief Observed,* 46)

Against the first mode, Lewis is explicitly personal (note the first-person speech) and deliberately emphasizes his emotions and his personal reaction to (and reflections about) those emotional experiences. Because of the thoroughgoing personal emphasis, this passage would likely only be interesting to strictly philosophical audiences insofar as it provides a phenomenological self-description of the experience of grief. But, because its point cannot be readily generalized, it is

likely to be of limited interest to philosophers. Bereaved audiences, on the other hand, are likely to find the passage relevant to their own current grief and, because it combats the overwhelming social isolation of grief, to therefore function as a moving source of solace. Thus, the very modes of discourse by which the two passages discuss the experience of grief indicate the divergent audiences imagined by both.

Yet, despite the practical compositional pressure to focus on one audience or another, consolers often nevertheless strive to make their consolation as relevant as possible to a variety of audiences. Indeed, an interest in reaching a multiplex audience is a core feature of consolation, one which distinguishes it from similar literary modes and genres.[35] At the same time, when considering the decision whether to circumscribe a large audience or a small one, consolers must carefully consider the precise rhetorical tactics that ought to be mobilized. In particular, I contend that a few classes of rhetorical devices—especially the narrative and dramatic techniques of examples, personification, dialog, and vivid narration—are notably effective in reaching multiplex audiences.

In terms of ethical analysis, however, the use of *exempla* and related devices has important implications, most notably that consolatory ethical analysis has a different, more personal texture than ethical analysis found in different philosophical contexts. Consolatory analysis eschews the highly rationalist, abstract approach common to generalized philosophical argumentation; consolation does not, in other words, simply function as a variety of philosophical treatise. At the same time, consolatory texts make arguments structured to appeal to a multiplex audience, so the consolatory therefore transcends the limits of mere epistle or personal writing on the one hand, and of non-argumentative wisdom literature (e.g. Psalms) on the other. Insofar as consolatory

35. Cf. Chapter One, 23-33.

ethical analysis refuses to jettison its appeal to different possible audiences, it thus forms a third option distinct from philosophical treatise and personal essay. Instead, largely as a result of authors' decisions to address the multiplex audience of literal bereaved, metonymic bereaved, students of ethics, practicing philosophers, and literary readers, the consolatory becomes a rhetorically atomic form of human discourse and behavior.

An example of this approach is Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking,* a reflective memoir that combines the didactic approach of a Cicero with the personal focus of a Lewis. In the book, Didion describes her grief experience following the unexpected death of her husband while her daughter was hospitalized with a coma. The memoir mixes penetrating personal reflections and memories[36] with carefully parsed descriptions of her attempts to regain objective perspective,[37] often flitting between the two quickly (not unlike Plutarch's approach in *Consolation to His Wife*, as discussed in Chapter Two). The result is a complex piece of literature that sits somewhere between calm journalism and the raw record of a breaking psyche, yet Didion manages to recreate the working of her mind as she grapples with her moral situation. The memoir thus recreates a vivid case of grief that not only speaks to bereaved and literary audiences, but notably provides philosophical audiences both an example of a difficult, "live" instance of overwhelming grief to confront as well as a record of attempts at self-exhortation and self-critique.

Despite the rare text that manages to skillfully provide ethical material for all audiences, however, there remains a major tension inherent in consolatory ethical analysis: how broad or

36. For example, the description of the "vortex" of memory that is strung throughout the book. See Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking,* 107-12 for the initial description of the phenomenon, which Didion represents with such skill that a similar vertiginous feeling is provoked in the reader.
37. For example, the refrain "go to the literature," e.g. 44-53, or the thread throughout the book in which Didion constantly struggles to recreate an objective timeline of how and when events fit together.

narrow of an audience does an instance of ethical analysis effectively address? That is, to what degree does the consoler seek to preserve the fullest possible audience as opposed to choosing to focus on a smaller subset of that possible audience? Although consolers use rhetorical techniques to help multiple audiences appreciate a given point, the use of those techniques is nevertheless often less effective for a narrow audience segment than a more bespoke approach would be. (This tension is by no means unique to consolation; indeed, it is a meta-rhetorical concern for any discourse with multiple audiences.) I would like to suggest not only that the preservation of this tension is, in fact, a core characteristic of the consolatory, but also that major species of consolation result from the degree to which certain consolations privilege certain audiences in their use of ethical analysis. Traditional consolations might direct their analysis primarily toward the literal or metonymic bereaved, for example, while "metaconsolatory" texts[38] may be primarily addressed to orators, authors, and practicing philosophers, and "model consolations" may be directed to students of philosophy or rhetoric.[39] In practice, the blend of particular analytical approaches and audience focuses instantiated in a given consolation shapes the tenor and effectiveness of the consolation for its audiences.

Regardless of its targeted audience(s), however, consolatory analysis goes hand in hand with changes in ethical behavior. In this sense, consolatory theory is thoroughly cognitivist: it suggests that individuals will be compelled to change their beliefs and behaviors after having been provided adequate cognitive interventions, such as those described under the above headings (perspectival techniques of interrupting, distancing, and reframing; intellectual techniques of providing ethical dogmas to guide belief and behavior; and models of ethical analysis whereby

38. Scourfield, "Toward a Genre of Consolation."
39. Ancient *progymnasmata* provided highly formal rules for composition, including of consolatory texts. For an overview of the topic, see Ruth Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice."

greater analytical understanding of one's situation and ethical conduct may be developed). So, while consolatory moral development is certainly rooted in intellectual growth, such as the development of knowledge, understanding, and self-awareness, it is also focused on behavioral change. Indeed, perspectivism, precepts, and ethical analysis are not only worthy outcomes in their own right, but are also ultimately preparation for changes in behavior and belief.

Ultimately, to catalyze ethical behavior, the consolatory relies primarily on three related rhetorical approaches: example, exhortation, and critique. As a core technique of behavioral rectification, the consolatory relies on examples to model effective, ethical responses to different situations. The use of examples to rectify behavior is drawn from casuistry,[40] wherein exemplary cases serve as paradigmatic examples against which (actual) test cases may be compared to determine a relevant guide for ethical action. Such examples can both motivate and direct ethical behavior.

Second, the consolatory engages in exhortation to right behavior. Because ethical behavior in response to loss is a key outcome for consolation, the consolatory should be considered, as it traditionally has been, to be a species of exhortation,[41] through which lens many of its rhetorical and literary characteristics may be accurately analyzed. Hortatory techniques and devices closely related to the provision of advice or counsel, including praise and reproach, are also frequently used.

Finally, the consolatory seeks to alter behavior through strategies of reflection and critique. Having described correct behavior, provided models for emulation, and exhorted the addressee to ethical action, the consolatory is free to critique actual or imagined behavior in

40. The best historical overview of (and apology for) casuistry remains Jonsen and Toulmin's *The Abuse of Casuistry*.
41. The most lucid scholarly account of philosophical exhortation in antiquity is Collins's recent *Exhortations to Philosophy*.

order to help the addressee construct a critical understanding of how her behavioral patterns and responses ought to be corrected or transformed. (Note that this feature is highly relevant to advanced ethical practitioners, perhaps even more so than to less ethically advanced students.) To effectively rectify action through critique, consolers sometimes examine and critique an individual's historical behavior.[42] At other times, however, consolers choose to examine a fictional, simulated, or imagined response to certain situations of loss, which thus serve not only as model examples, but also as educational cases to be engaged, analyzed, and corrected. As a result, behavior correction is not only a useful hypothetical practice for the bereaved, but is also highly relevant both for those preparing for future loss as well as for those who are currently struggling to rectify their own behavior. In fact, the techniques of critique, even those drawn from the classical philosophical tradition, are closely related to modern therapeutic techniques used in contemporary grief psychoeducation in order to prime or stage behavioral interventions.[43]

Component Four: Moral Resilience

As with the therapeutic program, the moral development program is oriented toward the construction of resilience, but it is also specifically interested in catalyzing resiliency. Whereas grief therapy and meaning reconstruction are ways of promoting psychological resilience, however, the components of ethical development instead intervene at a deeper moral level. That

42. Hence the *topos* of the addressee's past action serving as an *exemplum* for her current situation, a strategy that I describe prominently in both of the case study chapters.
43. The bibliography of psychoeducation and intervention techniques, of course, is a massive field. Two of the best handbooks that describe evidence-based interventions, with a special focus on various techniques of critique, bridging, perceptual shift, and similar ideas are McMullin, *The New Handbook of Cognitive Therapy Techniques* and Dobson, *Handbook of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies.* On the influence of ancient philosophy (esp. Stoicism) on modern Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, see Robertson, *The Philosophy of Cognitive-behavioral Therapy.*

is, the moral development program seeks to build resilience not only into an individual's psychological disposition and activity, including behavior, cognitions, and emotions, but also into characteristically moral aspects of her life, including into her values, attitudes, self-conception, identity, and worldview. Thus, the development of moral resilience prepares a person to weather the tempest of moral shocks, existential crises, identity wounds, and other forms of personal, ethically-resonant trauma that often accompany severe losses.

Whereas psychological resilience is a buttress against psychic instability and pathology, moral resilience is a buttress against the collapse of one's values, sense of self, and sense of moral agency.[44] As such, the development of moral resilience, and its concomitant dedication to right ethical values, attitudes, and worldview, may be the most important stake for all possible varieties of audience, since it is crucially related to one's holistic spiritual wellbeing. Indeed, the inculcation of moral resilience functions as the capstone of the moral development program, since none of the other training or arguments offered through the other developmental aspects are of long-term value if such advances are not fixed deeply in one's heart and mind. This final aspect of moral education, then, is in many ways the most important one, for it acts as a sort of glue that causes a consolation's insights to be bound firmly into one's self.

Moral resilience is a complex concept and an outcome that is difficult to achieve, and as such is supported by a wide variety of strategies and techniques. Like other aspects of the moral development program, rationalist and analytical techniques are used, just as techniques of

44. There is clear overlap between aspects of the psychological and moral domains, but their distinctive emphases and orientations also differentiate the relevant forms of resilience. Take agency, for example; psychology has many tools to conceptualize and analyze agency, such as *sense of agency, sense of ownership, internal* versus *external locus of control,* and empirical neuroscientific research, but philosophy offers rigorous conceptualizations with a more elemental moral focus, such as *action theory*, theories of choice and free will, values-oriented accounts, and so forth. Other approaches are characteristic of yet other disciplines, such as sociology or economics. In some cases, one discipline might provide superior insight; at other times, a combination of approaches turns out to be most revealing. For the purposes of the study of resilience, I argue, it is essential for a complete account of the philosophy of consolation to pay explicit attention to the moral dimension.

exhortation continue to play a central role. Unlike the other components, however, the commitment and values-building aspect of moral resiliency development notably privileges literary approaches, especially those approaches that appeal to audiences in deep, pre-rational ways. These techniques include notable uses of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism, which are used both as appealing, aspirational motivators as well as to activate prior, deeply held values.[45] Unsurprisingly, the specific techniques of moral resilience are also closely related to the *peroratio* techniques of classical rhetoric, wherein the major points or conclusions of an oration are fixed as effectively as possible in interlocutors' minds, and also to consolatory notions of empathy, especially insofar as the development of moral resilience requires solidarity and trust between consoler and audience members. In addition to the empathic techniques described in Chapter One, salient techniques for moral resilience include the use of summary, pathos, and strong imagery, which—in combination—provide consolation a strongly literary texture.

Moral resiliency is not a binary quality that a given person does or does not possess; rather, it may be strengthened or weakened by experience and practice long after its initial establishment. An important class of techniques, then, aims to reinforce existing moral qualities in the bereaved. A substantial loss or bereavement may be destabilizing and disorienting, and thus require interventions in order to restore moral stability. Unsurprisingly, many consolatory commonplaces are thus directed at restoring moral stability by recalling a time when that stability existed, often as an adjunct to an integrated sense of self or a strong commitment to established values. Such backward-looking interventions include the *topoi* of memory, renewed commitments, and social connectivity.

45. As consolatory values are linked to other, more general philosophical values and commitments, the consolatory takes on important systemic and ideological characteristics. I discuss this process and its outcome at length in the Conclusion (232-242).

The *topos* of memory—"keep the deceased/departed in your memory"—is one of the consolatory tradition's most venerable commonplaces, and it may easily serve as a paradigmatic example of moral resilience-building efforts. As discussed in the previous chapter (regarding grief therapy), the memory *topos* has therapeutic function insofar as it helps to re-establish social relationships and create personal meaning out of trauma, but it also functions to restore a sense of moral stability and agency to the bereaved at a time when her foundational moral qualities—often including her self-conception and identity—have been shaken. When one's child dies, for example, what effect does that have on one's identity as a parent? Moral shocks of this type are partially psychological phenomena and may be partially treated as such—for example, by meaning reconstruction therapy or by psychopharmacology—but they also invoke deeper moral issues of self-conception, social identity, planning for the future, and values. In the face of moral shock, consolers often privilege ethical recentering (a homeostatic reinforcement of core aspects of identity) and the restoration of pre-shock values. Thus, consolers frequently rely on the comfort and stability of valued memories as a reliable method of helping the bereaved restore moral equilibrium. (They also work to advise learners to create these sorts of relationships, which may function as a resilience factor in future situations of adversity.)[46]

Although paradigmatic, memory is not, of course, the only type of personal anchor that may be (re)invoked to reinforce or rebuild self-identity, moral agency, or values. Often, consolers seek to reactivate values that had been important to the bereaved. At other times, however, they direct the bereaved toward things that she would value. Two ubiquitous *topoi* are used in both ways: exhortation toward previous (or, occasionally, future) commitments (e.g. parenthood,

46. Note the convergence between moral resiliency here and techniques of meaning reconstruction (cf. 112-115), both of which involve revision of one's self-conception and identity as a result of trauma.

political life, or philosophy), and encomia of the bereaved's moral strength(s). Both forms of moral resilience-building devices rely on perspective adjustment (especially reframing) and on ethical analysis, as the bereaved is directed away from the object of her grief and toward thoughts and behaviors that will reinforce her moral resilience. The objets of both exhortation and encomium might also be actual moral anchors, such as concrete previous commitments made, or else they might be potential, aspirational anchors, such as things that the bereaved would like to do and in which she might create new meaning. In other words, moral resilience may be past-oriented, i.e. directed at restoring historically effective personal anchors, or it may be future-oriented, i.e. directed at possibilities that might be valued, but which have not, as of yet, been established. In either case, moral resilience is nurtured through the reinforcement of values and constructive self-concepts.

In addition to focusing on prior values, the consoler may remind the bereaved of the responsibilities, obligations, and duties to which she had previously dedicated herself and in which she is likely to again find meaning. The particular content of these responsibilities varies by individual and cultural context, but often includes such topics as caring for surviving family, engaging in (unfinished) political or creative work, connecting with treasured friends, finishing projects, and so forth. Alternatively, prior obligations may invoke previously held strong beliefs, e.g. religious beliefs about the soul's immortality, about the nature of death, or about resurrection. At the same time, consolation suggests that those who have not yet established such anchors should do so urgently in order to have resources to face future calamity.

When the consoler invokes these commitments or beliefs, she activates and leverages their pre-existing moral power. According to consolatory accounts, uncontrolled grief is a strong emotion, so it must be combated with even more potent feelings, thoughts, and judgments.

Minor commitments or preferences will, of course, not be strong enough to counteract grief's hold, but major commitments—those things that a person finds great personal meaning in and by which they define themselves—may be strong enough to counteract grief. The process is, in a way, a sort of moral conflict akin to cognitive dissonance; the consoler seeks to make apparent to the bereaved the way in which grief has forced her to adopt an identity like "wracked by grief." By appealing to strongly held self-concepts, the consoler may attempt to force a decision between the "grieving" self-concept and other, potentially more valued self-concepts—"self-reliant," for example, or "an attentive parent." Should the bereaved be adequately prepared (e.g. by grief therapy, the interruption and reframing effects of perspectivism, or ethical analysis) to be able to recognize the undesirability of the grief proposition, whether rationally or intuitively, she may be equipped to recommit to a healthier moral anchor, such as her identity as (e.g.) parent to existing children, political or creative worker, etc.

These techniques—recourse to memory, values, prior commitments, and other anchors—may be found ubiquitously throughout consolatory discourse. Near the end of Viktor Frankl's autobiographical account of his time in Nazi concentration camps, for example, he relates a consolatory speech that he gave to his fellow prisoners.[47] In the speech, he returns continually to the theme of moral resilience. Notably, he not only invokes preexisting sources of value, including "health, family, happiness, professional abilities, fortune, [and] position in society," but he explicitly acknowledges that these anchors are crucial for moral resilience: "I also mentioned the past," he writes, "all its joys, and how its light shone even in the present darkness. … Not only our experiences, but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we

47. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning,* 66-8.

have suffered, all this is not lost, though it is past; we have brought it into being."[48] As a consoler, Frankl used these prior anchors to reactivate prior identities and values—that is, to dislodge his patients' "concentration camp prisoner" identity and to remind them of their prior identities, which he suggests successfully rekindled hope in his sickly comrades.[49]

In other cases, moral resilience may rely upon a technique whereby resiliency is reinforced through encomia of the bereaved's moral strength. In particular, praise—and its counterpart, reproach—largely functions by leveraging social emotions, especially pride and shame.[50] When the consoler praises the bereaved's moral character, she seeks to have these powerful emotions counteract grief and lead to changes in both behavior and self-conception. At the most basic level, a person lost in grief has also often lost sense of the qualities in which she might find both strength and solace. By praise of either actual or aspirational moral qualities, the consoler thus not only provides outside perspective and reframes the bereaved's situation, but also lends force to one side or the other in the ongoing contest of moral values that consolatory models of psychic distress imply.

Importantly, praise and reproach are not only effective insofar as they help to break grief's hold, but also insofar as they buttress one's moral self against future shocks. For audiences in preparation, consolation suggests that praise and reproach of the right things may impel readers to create judgments of or desires for those things that may be later activated by praise or reproach. Effective moral education, in other words, not only makes use of strategies of praise and blame, but also makes a person better disposed to react productively to the use of legitimate future praise and blame. This occurs not only through the processes that I have described here,

48. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning,* 67.
49. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning,* 68.
50. For the power of these emotions, see: B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity;* Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*; Van Wassenhove, "Moral Admonition and the Emotions in Seneca's Philosophical Works."

however, but also through the close connection of praise and blame with the rhetoric of consolatory exemplification.

The techniques that I've outlined here, then, are applicable to other audiences, and especially to audiences of practical philosophers, including both students and critical interlocutors. For those audiences, as compared to bereaved audiences, the consoler's moves have less immediate salience, and thus are unlikely to automatically, infallibly lead to substantial, concrete changes in self-concept or—in cases of future bereavement—to changes in mourning behavior. At the same time, however, they do serve as didactic information about those qualities that will best prepare a person to face the adversity of loss. Commonly praised characteristics, for example, often include fortitude, *metriopaetheia* or *apatheia*, and providing an example to others (or oneself). Learners and other audiences may interpret these characteristics as asserted goals for personal growth. Likewise, the consoler might praise certain culturally-specific qualities, such as activity in accord with an accepted social role, gendered activity, or custom. Such praise has the effect of creating and reinforcing both ethical and customary norms in audiences. Indeed, even if an audience disagrees with a particular point of praise, they often implicitly accept that it is the sort of thing that may have normative force, as evinced by any spirited disagreement regarding the propriety of that characteristic. Ultimately, the locus of didactic engagement for these audiences resides in the (potential) normative force of praise and reproach, as well as in the associated social emotions of pride and shame.

Moral resilience, then, is a complex topic that involves the establishment, reinforcement, and battle of moral values, self-conceptions, and a sense of agency against adverse influences—most relevantly, against grief. As I have suggested in this section (and throughout this chapter), moral resilience is rarely a stand-alone goal or the sole outcome of particular consolatory tactics,

but rather frequently co-occurs with other components of both the moral education program, especially perspectivism and analysis, and also the therapeutic program, especially the inculcation of psychological resilience and the creation of meaning out of loss.

III. Conclusion: The Role of Moral Development in the Consolatory

The consolatory consists of two major programs: therapy and moral development. Whereas the therapeutic function generally tends to focus on the contingent, immediate, and ongoing psychological fallout from an experience of loss, the moral development function instead focuses more generally on constructing a mode of life that not only insulates a person from the trauma of loss, but also prepares them to thrive despite adverse experiences that may even shake the ethical foundations of their self-conception and worldview. As a result, the therapeutic program tends to engage in problem-solving, while the moral development program instead generally attempts to shape broad patterns of thought and behavior. Both programs emphasize resilience and resiliency as the ultimate achievement of consolation, but they characteristically emphasize different aspect of resilience as more relevant to their particular missions.

The moral development program is fundamentally educational, and as such promotes self-improvement as a route to greater resilience against moral shocks and other calamities that challenge one's worldview, self-identity, and moral agency. It does so according to the classical paradigms of preparation and habituation: a consistent, productive response to personal catastrophe involves preemptive work to inculcate the right habits of mind and perspective, the right ethical doctrines and modes of understanding, and the right methods of ethical analysis and behavioral rectification in order to practice and incrementally, progressively construct moral resilience. With proper exercise, the self-improvement practices necessary to recover from grief

and loss may be strengthened and more easily activated in the case of a traumatic loss. Indeed, they may even ultimately be able to be made automatic to a greater or lesser degree. Consolatory moral development, then, is not merely an ethical sideshow, but instead forms a crucial part of general ethical preparation and moral wellbeing. It is itself an indispensable component of any comprehensive program of moral education and general human flourishing.

It is all the more remarkable, then, that consolation—especially in its moral development aspect—has become so neglected. Without the prospective, preparatory effects established by consolatory moral development, one's resiliency to loss is weakened, and so more and more pressure is put on the more reactive half of consolatory activity, the therapeutic program. It is tempting to suggest that this development—the sacrifice of long-term effort for a less secure, more reactive problem-solving approach—is characteristic of our times, and that it tracks, for example, how preventative medicine has been neglected in favor of drastic, acute responses to medical emergencies, or how long-term care for commonwealth and the common good have withered on the vine against the onslaught of short-term political opportunism. Regardless of whether such a conjecture is well-established or merely the discontented grumbling of a philosopher, it provides one possible explanation for why popular understandings of consolation have tended to isolate the therapeutic function and not attend carefully enough to the moral developmental function, and—concomitantly—have emphasized the utility of consolation for bereaved audiences over other audiences, and especially over audiences of philosophers and students of ethics. (When was Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* or Lewis's *A Grief Observed* last gifted to a friend *before* they suffered a serious personal loss?)

Finally, consolation literature itself must be understood differently through the lens of consolatory moral development. In consolation, moral developmental rhetoric is frequently

addressed to appropriate audiences, and educational methods are frequently both described and modeled. In this way, the moral development aspect is similar to the therapeutic aspect. In one striking way, however, the moral development component occurs in a unique way: by interpreting the literary situation presented (and represented) in a consolation as a case for reflection in and of itself, a consolation provides material for understanding different perspectives (and practice inhabiting them), for learning how ethical doctrine applies to specific, practical ethical cases, for engaging in ethical analysis and critique, and thereby for practicing the exercises and manners of thinking that incrementally improve one's own moral resiliency. In terms of moral development, then, a consolation is not merely an intervention itself, nor simply a model of such an intervention—as may be the case with the therapeutic function—but rather is an educational nexus, a case that demands to be inhabited, explored, tested, deeply considered, argued with and against, and generally grappled with. In this way, the best consolations are a form of high literature: they provide a plethora of enriching intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, and ethical experiences for a variety of audiences, they maintain their deep relevance for readers across culture and time, and they challenge their readers to grow as a result of the encounter.

Chapter 5.

Case Study

Seneca's Consolatory Perspectivism:

Architectural *Exempla* in the *Consolation to Marcia*

Criticism of Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* has rightly emphasized the crucial role of two antithetical *exempla*, Livia and Octavia. Both characters are noblewomen, like the addressee Marcia, and both have likewise lost sons, yet Seneca emphasizes how the women's responses to their bereavement contrast: Livia embodies the virtuous example of grief constrained by reason, while Octavia represents the deterrent example of pathological distress. Prior interpretations of these crucial *exempla* have held that the two *exempla* remain static touchstones for moral behavior throughout the consolation rather than acknowledging how the *exempla* are dynamically refigured as the consolation progresses. As a result, the *exempla* have been subjected to overly simplistic interpretations, such as Wilcox's reduction of the *exempla* to a table of antithetical qualities.[1] In fact, the distinction between Livia and Octavia does much more than frame Marcia's (and by extension, readers') response to grief as an evaluative decision between grieving and recovery. Rather, the consolation first establishes the *exempla* as the gross outlines for a field of possible ethical responses to bereavement, but then proceeds to use additional dramatic techniques (*exempla, prosopopoeia, sermocinatio, anthypophora*) to modify, revise, and add complexity to that conception. The consolation, as a result, marries the dictates of grief therapy to moral education: the use of *exempla* and *prosopopoeia* structures the consolation and propels readers through a course of progressive, incremental changes in perspective that causes them to reconceptualize the proper ethical response to lingering grief.

1. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 85.

In this chapter, I argue that the *Consolatio ad Marciam* relies on techniques of *consolatory perspectivism*[2] to enact an ambitious therapeutic agenda derived from Seneca's general philosophical model for incremental ethical progress. In particular, I argue that Seneca deploys consolatory perspectivism through the use of crucial perspectival figures, especially vivid moral *exempla* and *prosopopoeia*.[3] These perspectival techniques lead his interlocutors incrementally toward increased moral agency by providing openings to reverse the effects of grief for those who are suffering and by creating habits of liberation for those who use the texts as an educational tool. For Seneca, incremental moral progress always involves the emotions as well as one's rational faculties, so the literature of loss and grief itself thus becomes an exemplary form through which to achieve his educational mission.

At the same time, Seneca uses his masterful grasp of rhetoric to address the consolation's multiplex audiences, who are confronted with layers of political, philosophical, and therapeutic ideas that generate an interlocking ideology of consolatory perspectivism. For the bereaved, Seneca uses examples and vivid dramatic language to arrest overpowering emotion, to build awareness of the variety of possible responses to personal calamity, and to leverage that enlarged

2. It is important to note that I am using the term "perspectivism" here in the sense of the critical term developed in this dissertation (see 147-154). According to consolatory theory, perspectivism involves cognitive interventions like *arrest, depersonalization,* and *reframing* to interrupt emotional distress and provide an opportunity (via critical distance) for a person to rationally transform her self-understanding and her understanding of her ethical situation. In this sense, consolatory perspectivism is a crucial first step in the process of consolatory moral education. To be clear, I am *not* using the term "perspectivism" to refer to Stoic notions of cosmic perspectivism ("the view from above"), Nietzschean antifoundationalism, theatrical notions of spectatorship, etc.
3. Wilson notes the importance of "ecphrastic consolatory performances" ("Seneca the Consoler?" 96) in Seneca's consolations. Both *exempla* and *prosopopoeia* have been thoroughly discussed in the consolation (see below), but their importance to Seneca's model of grief therapy and course of perspectivism has not always been noticed or adequately appreciated.

   For general recent work on Seneca's characteristic prose style felicitous to my argument here, esp. see Hine, "Form and Function in the Prose Works." Also relevant are Costa, "Rhetoric as a Protreptic Force;" G. Williams, "Style and Form in Seneca's Writing;" Inwood, "The Importance of Form in Seneca's Philosophical Letters;" and Claassen, *Displaced Persons,* 89-98. On Seneca's use of interior dialog in the philosophical works, see Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self,* 244-55. On rhetorical figures in the consolations in particular, see Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm" and Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 106-7.

perspective to motivate the bereaved to change their beliefs. By changing their beliefs and thus their judgment about a situation, the bereaved effectively reclaims agency rather than continuing to yield to suffering. For his philosophical readers, Seneca uses examples and other instances of vivid narration as practical cases that demand moral reflection. When his readers encounter these cases, they rehearse habits of response that serve, at least in aim, to strengthen their judgment so that they will be more likely to resist entrapment in grief and suffering in the first place, but will also be better prepared to treat it should those efforts fail. For literary readers, the examples provide vivid, memorable images of moral life that are not just engaging, but that may prove a moral resource (*solacium*) in the future. Taken together, these forms of incremental moral improvement are used throughout Seneca's consolatory writings not only to address his readers' motivation(s), but also to exhort them to liberation through reconceptualization of their perspective. When Seneca's rhetoric is effective, therefore, it compels his various audiences to reconceptualize their personal situation, reevaluate their values and commitments, and reform their moral lives.

In this case study, I first argue that a moral educational lens in the most productive primary method of interpretation when considering Seneca's consolatory writings *qua* consolation. Then, I identify three stages of grief therapy in the *Consolatio ad Marciam,* each of which mobilizes perspectival techniques of arrest, depersonalization, and reframing,[4] and each of which is motivated by a pivotal use of *exempla* or *prosopopoeia*. As Seneca moves through each stage, he refines and adds detail to the grief therapy that he offers: first, he famously uses a pair of antithetical *exempla,* Livia and Octavia, to frame the broad field of possible responses; then, he uses more specific and restricted *exempla* and *prosopopoeia/sermocinatio* to provide detailed

4. On techniques of consolatory perspectivism, see 147-154.

instructions and specific models for emulation; finally, he turns from instruction back to motivation by providing crucial climactic *sermocinationes* and a *prosopopoeia* to persuade Marcia and his other readers to reject their grief. In each stage, Seneca cycles through perspectival techniques that help Marcia loosen her identification with her grief, with the ultimate result that Marcia (who stands in for all consolatory readers) gains the necessary distance and perspective to understand her grief to be a choice, thereby creating an authentic opportunity for the exercise of moral agency. Taken together, these three stages elaborate a more basic Stoic principle: initial affective impulses (*προπάθεια, impetus/morsus*) may be unavoidable, but emotions are a result of judgments, so it is possible to ameliorate a negative emotion by causing a person to reevaluate events from an objective perspective.[5] Finally, I consider how a triple set of *sermocinationes* demonstrates that Seneca's dialogic rhetoric provides a course in perspective adjustment for non-bereaved audiences and thus situates the consolation as a moral educational text for its complete, complex consolatory audience.

By examining the use of *exempla* and *prosopopoeia* in the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, this chapter advances an improved account of how Seneca's consolatory rhetoric supports his broader educational goals, especially his perspectival efforts to arrest overwhelming emotion, depersonalize situations of loss and grief, and reframe challenging emotional situations as opportunities for incremental ethical growth. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates how Seneca's rhetorical instincts, and especially his masterful management of multiple audiences, allows him to be an effective, influential pedagogue and therapist. Throughout the chapter, I ground

5. There are many helpful recent studies about the function of emotion and judgment in general Stoic thought and in Seneca in particular. See, for example: Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion;* Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions;* Brennan, "Stoic Moral Psychology;" Wildberger, "Seneca and the Stoic Theory of Cognition," esp. 86-93. Important sources and commentary are collected in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* §§60-2 and 65-6 (esp. see §65).

theoretical claims from the previous chapters in close reading and literary criticism, but I also point to further ways in which a rigorous conceptual understanding of the consolatory reveals understudied dimensions of this minor genre of moral literature.

I. Therapy, Philosophy, Politics, and Society in the Study of Seneca's Consolatory Writings

Seneca's consolatory literature has been received as one crucial pillar of classical consolation, and indeed constitutes one of the most extensive extant classical corpuses of the genre.[6] As a result, the Senecan consolatory corpus[7] has been widely discussed, not only as an exemplar of consolation literature itself, but also insofar as it relates to Seneca's ethical philosophy, his role in politics and history, and so forth. In general, there has been little disagreement among scholars about the most basic aim of Senecan consolation, what we might term its therapeutic goal: to shorten or end an individual's grief. But beyond this pillar, widely divergent opinions reign about Seneca's consolatory goals and methods. Most contemporary accounts, however, align with one of four central methodological approaches that one might characterize as therapeutic, philosophical, political, or social. Each type may be characterized by the the topics with which it is concerned and by the methods of interpretation that it deploys. Despite some shortcomings, each of these approaches has yielded productive insights in their respective disciplines as well as in Senecan studies generally.

The dominant approach to Seneca's consolations has emphasized the therapeutic dimension and function. Martha Nussbaum and Pierre Hadot have done more than any other

6. In terms of classical and post-classical material, Seneca's consolatory output is both the greatest in quantity and also constitutes the most substantial pagan influence on later consolatory practice, rivaled only by post-classical Christian consolers' influence on medieval and early modern consolation literature.
7. Including not only the three formal consolations, consolatory letters (63 and 99), and book six of the *Quaestiones Naturales*, but also consolatory themes developed throughout the total prose corpus.

scholars to establish this understanding of Senecan consolation (and indeed of Hellenistic and later classical moral philosophy as a whole),[8] but the therapeutic theme has been the baseline assumption[9] about Senecan consolation far earlier than its increased popularity in the last thirty years.[10] Marcus Wilson shows one reason why the consolations in particular have been identified as therapeutic: not only does the therapy metaphor align both with the putative goal of consolation, to heal and enable recovery, as well as with the medical metaphors that attend that goal, but it also reinforces the fundamental rhetorical nature of consolation: "It is necessary," Wilson writes, "to relate the arguments [of a given consolation] to the particular parties and the situation in which they are placed,"[11] a statement as true for therapy and medicine as for rhetoric. The rhetorical approach taken in consolation, then, forms a productive marriage with therapeutic efforts to ameliorate or end pathological grief.

Although the therapeutic emphasis has productively focused scholarly argument on the specific, pragmatic, and grounded psychotherapeutic concerns that are at least partially (or potentially) at stake in all consolation, however, the therapeutic approach has also tended to functionally delegitimize other approaches by presenting totalizing accounts of consolation, as if the only questions that are interesting are about the rhetorical, philosophical, and literary techniques used to achieve grief therapy (or to fail trying). That this is the case is apparent

8. Esp. in Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire;* Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. An argument could be made that Foucault, as a transmitter of Hadot's ideas in his writing about *les techniques de soi,* was more responsible than Hadot himself for bringing these ideas to both scholarly and public attention.
9. Hence, a scholar like Williams can state that one of Seneca's consolations (*Cons. Helv.*) "constitutes no special, intimately personal case within his philosophical oeuvre but amounts to *another stage or aspect of the therapeutic program that his prose corpus cumulatively represents*" (G. Williams, "Introduction," 46; emphasis added).
10. As early as 1966, for example, Ferrill claims that he "can find no exception" to naïve readings of Seneca's *Consolatio ad Helviam* as basically sincere in its literary and therapeutic pretensions (Ferrill, "Seneca's Exile," n. 11), an interpretative position that he caustically rejects—as do most contemporary commentators of that text, e.g. Fantham, "Dialogues of Displacement," on the many "indirections" (175) and other layers of the text, and G. Williams, "States of Exile, States of Mind," on the consolation as a wide-ranging "literary-philosophical disquisition into the many possible implications or side-applications of the idea of exile" (148).
11. Wilson, "Subjugation of Grief," 67.

enough by reference to other interpretative positions, which ubiquitously deny a purely therapeutic interpretation to make room for e.g. political or ideological accounts.[12]

Still, critics have frequently seen that the therapeutic metaphor cannot adequately account for the totality of Seneca's consolatory project. As Wilson declares, "we should not take at face value the pretensions of the *consolatio* as a genre to be disinterestedly therapeutic in function,"[13] for, as I argue throughout this dissertation, the consolatory also engages in serious philosophy, not to mention politics, psychology, sociology, and cultural criticism. For Wilson, for example, Seneca's canonical epistolary consolation *Ep.* 9 is "a non-consolatory consolation,"[14] given that it, like other "consolatory writings," is only "ostensibly preoccupied with grief," but in fact "carr[ies] underneath [it] a strong ideological imperative concerned with" the philosophical topics of "self-definition and the fortification of identity."[15] Likewise, Mayer identifies the primary goal of the consolations to Marcia and Polybius to be "thinly disguised" flattery, not recovery from loss.[16] Indeed, as I show below, critics have perceived underlying non-therapeutic aspects of various consolations, which has led them to promote different accounts that explicitly sideline or even reject therapeutic interpretations.

The most prominent alternative to therapeutic accounts, and the one with the longest tenure, consists of philosophical approaches that have tended to emphasize connections between Seneca's consolatory writing and his broader philosophy, often in order to serve a larger argument about Senecan or Stoic ethics or moral psychology. This has been the approach often

12. See below.
13. Wilson, "Subjugation of Grief," 59.
14. Wilson, "Subjugation of Grief," 66.
15. Wilson, "Subjugation of Grief," 60.
16. Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca," 308-9.

taken, for example, by Brad Inwood,[17] as well as now outdated (but formerly mainstream) interpretations of Seneca's consolations such as those advanced by Grollios and Favez.[18] Much of this effect, of course, comes from the disciplinary orientations of philosophers and intellectual historians, who tend (understandably) to be less interested in literary and rhetorical approaches than ones native to their own disciplines.[19] At the same time, given that literary critics have only infrequently engaged in a rigorous philosophical way with philosophical aspects of Seneca's consolations, and given that such critics have themselves been shaped by their own disciplinary affiliations, Senecan consolation has thus rarely received thoughtful, serious philosophical treatment on its own merits.

Unsurprisingly, when philosophers read Seneca but neglect the rhetorical occasion for consolation, they have usually been disappointed. Cooper, for example, concludes glumly that "Seneca so completely cuts off the basis on which he is encouraging his addressee to live from the reasons provided by Stoic philosophical theory for living that way... that it becomes highly questionable whether [his addressees] *can* be making real progress toward virtue and the fully happy life if they follow him."[20] Likewise, Graver calls ancient consolation "not, on the whole,

17. For example, the discussion of the consolation in *Quaestiones Naturales* 6 in *Reading Seneca,* 178-85. While Inwood frequently writes in the manner of analytic philosophers, however, he also presents sensitive, sophisticated literary readings, e.g. "The Importance of Form in Seneca."
18. Summarized well in Manning, "The Consolatory Tradition," 72-3 and 72 n. 5. The practice is not dead: for two recent examples, see Sorabji's effort to reconcile Senecan consolation with psychotherapy ("Is Stoic Philosophy Helpful as Psychotherapy?" esp. 203-7) and Graver's analysis of the consolatory letters 63 and 99 (Graver, "The Weeping Wise"), which focuses on the extent to which Seneca's argument follows Stoic orthodoxy as opposed to including syncretic elements of (esp.) Epicurean grief therapy strategies.
19. In the following paragraph, for example, I mention Cooper, who deserves praise for a career marked by lucid, insightful philosophical explication of difficult topics in ancient philosophy. On the topic of Stoic philosophical education, however, he repeatedly misses the mark as a result of his logocentric disciplinary bias—see, for example, *Pursuits of Wisdom,* 221-3, where he dismisses the Roman Stoics as inadequately transparent with prospective students about the "indispensable" (223) need for logic, argumentation, and analysis as part of a philosophical lifestyle. In contrast, I find Hadot's emphasis on exercises of attention, meditation, contemplation, and active practice to be far more compelling, not to mention relevant for a philosophy of consolation (for his more persuasive account of Stoic exercises, see P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 84ff.).
20. Cooper, "Seneca on Moral Theory," 55. Note how Cooper characteristically emphasizes the central role of abstract/theoretical rationality, *contra* habituation-based perspectives (e.g. from P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of*

philosophically ambitious," though she admits that Seneca, among others, provides some moments of "serious philosophical endeavour."[21] Without attention to what Ker calls Seneca's "polygeneric" approach to writing,[22] it seems, Seneca's consolatory output remains—to many philosophers—a simplistic echo of his philosophical oeuvre, at best.

Notions of philosophy as concerned with abstract rationality are, however, both constrained and limiting, for they neglect the rhetorical, occasional, and personal focus of ancient philosophical writing. Wilson, for example, agrees that the constrained notion of philosophy is *not* the most interesting aspect of Seneca's philosophical work. Rather, the "most salient characteristic" of Seneca's consolatory writings, he argues, "is [in fact] their abstention from philosophy, and even their suppression of it."[23] Instead, scholars like Wilson, Nussbaum,[24] and Sorabji[25] promote a rhetorically sensitive engagement with Senecan philosophy; rather than advancing totalizing readings of the consolations as abstract arguments about philosophical truths, they suggest that they ought be to interpreted as practical educational documents involving a blend of ethics and exhortation.[26]

Life) or practical wisdom-based accounts (e.g. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?*). Against Cooper's pessimistic reading of Seneca on moral progress, see Wagoner, "Seneca on Moral Theory and Moral Improvement," who—in my view—provides a persuasive rebuttal, the thrust of which relies on an a consideration of the *Epistulae Morales*'s audience and rhetorical context.

21. Graver, "The Weeping Wise," 235. Despite her somewhat misleading dismissal here, Graver seems to consider Senecan literary and rhetorical work on the emotions quite sophisticated and amenable to philosophical ambition; see, for example, the importance of *de Ira* for her argument in *Stoicism and Emotion,* Ch. 5.
22. Ker, "Seneca, Man of Many Genres," *passim.* Cf. 191 n. 58, below.
23. Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 94; cf. 104ff., esp. 109-16.
24. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire.* Nussbaum uses the term "therapeutic" in a more expansive sense than I do; in this dissertation, "therapy" refers specifically to psychotherapy for pathological grief. Nussbaum's broader sense aligns with the practical application of reason and wisdom to psychic healing—that is, psychagogic processes that I discuss under the aegis of "moral education."
25. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind.* As in my account, Sorabji finds the Stoics to be particularly important contributors ("the driving force in the whole ancient discussion," 1), as does Nussbaum (e.g. the elaboration of an essentially Chrysippean view in *Upheavals of Thought*).
26. I wholeheartedly endorse Ker's recognition of the consolations as examples of throughly occasional rhetoric (Ker, *Deaths of Seneca,* 90-1).

Taken in the broader sense of philosophical exhortation and moral education, then, Seneca's goal is indeed philosophical. It is true that Senecan consolation should not, on the whole, be understood as the mere transfer of propositional knowledge, but rather as an effort to influence his readers' behavior—in terms of consolatory theory, to teach readers resilience.[27] The emphasis on philosophical education is deliberate, since consolation's goal is itself fundamentally rhetorical: it is an attempt to use symbolic speech to effect change in the world, and specifically in the thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, values, and commitments of his consolatory audience. Wilson himself identifies the goal of Senecan consolation not as the purely therapeutic liberation from grief, nor as a course in theoretical contemplation about grief, but rather as practical training in the tools to effectively battle grief: "This shifts the very purpose of consolation, in that it is not to free the unhappy addressee from a destructive passion so much as a call to arms, a speech before entering battle, a demand that the downcast stand up and fight."[28] In the broader context of practical wisdom and applied ethics, philosophy turns out to be an important lens for Senecan consolation.[29]

Indeed, such philosophically rigorous accounts of the consolations in particular do in fact exist, the best of which may be Amy Olberding's statement on the topic.[30] Olberding argues that

27. I invoke here the well-known contrast in epistemology between "know-that" and "know-how." Seneca's ethics are oriented at teaching a person *how* to live, not *that* a given fact (e.g. about the cause of grief) is true, even if the latter is a necessary condition for the former.
28. Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 109. The ubiquity and importance of military metaphors has been widely noticed. The best discussions are Edwards' discussion of *virtus* (*Death in Ancient Rome,* 86-112, esp. 87-98) and Asmis' examination of Seneca's *exempla* on similar topics in "Seneca on Fortune." More broadly, see Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla*;" Roller, "Precept(or) and Example in Seneca;" and Roller, "Between Unique and Typical."
29. Indeed, both philosophical education and exhortation are major topics in studies of Senecan philosophy, and their presence in his consolatory writings deserves greater explication. For Senecan philosophical education, see: Edwards, "Self-scrutiny and Self-transformation in Seneca's Letters;" Griffin, "*Imago Vitae Suae*;" Griffin, "Seneca's Pedagogic Strategy;" I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung;* Long, "Seneca on the Self: Why Now?"; Manning, "The Consolatory Tradition;" Newman, "*In umbra virtutis: Gloria* in the Thought of Seneca;" Schafer, "Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* as Dramatized Education;" Wagoner, "Seneca on Moral Theory and Moral Improvement."
30. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart.'"

Seneca the consoler "offers strategies that emphasize not reason but rigorous self-mastery."[31] According to this view, Senecan consolation thus focuses on teaching the bereaved to choose to behave in such a way as to resist the pain of loss.[32] To do so, the bereaved "must both grasp death's universality and personalize it,"[33] so consolation primarily proceeds not through logically reasoned argumentation, as most contemporary analytic philosophers (such as Cooper) would strictly define philosophical activity, but rather—as Wilson suggests—through ethical exhortation, what Olberding calls "heroic aspiration."[34] According to Olberding, "where reason distances the individual from suffering by de-personalizing it, Seneca's heroic figures... function to restore a personal, lived reality to sorrow."[35] Senecan consolatory therapy thus fundamentally coincides with moral education in that it attempts to impart "not simply reason, but courage."[36] When philosophical accounts take into consideration the rhetorical situation, they thus allow for important philosophical conclusions about Seneca's theory of consolation.

The educational account, despite its importance to the theory of consolation that I develop throughout this dissertation, is not the only one that pushes back against the dominance of therapeutic interpretations. More recently, for example, political analyses have gained traction. The political approach tends to read the consolations as historical artifacts with more or less overt political goals and implications. Certain texts, like the exilic consolations to Helvia and Polybius, are especially prone to this treatment, but readings informed by politics and ideology are not, of course, a new phenomenon. Overall, analyses that emphasize politics and political

31. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 141.
32. "To dispel grief, Seneca claims, is to learn to refuse it" (Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 147-8).
33. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 148.
34. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 152.
35. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 152.
36. Olberding, "The 'Stout Heart,'" 152.

ideology tend to argue that a covert purpose subverts the ostensible therapeutic or educational aspects of the texts, which are themselves reduced to convention, pretense, or mere contrivance.

The political purpose identified in such interpretations might be either opportunistic or ideological. Take political opportunism in the exile consolations, for example: I have already pointed to Mayer's claim about flattery in the *Consolatio ad Polybium*, which he suggests is little more than Seneca's self-serving attempt to resolve his political plight by ingratiating himself with the emperor and those with influence over him,[37] while Fantham similarly concludes that the exile consolations are motivated by Seneca's desire to make a case for his own innocence against the political charges that led to his exile,[38] and Ker argues that the exile consolations aim, with the "obvious implicit goal,"[39] to demonstrate Seneca's utility as a political advisor and thereby to secure his recall.[40] On the other hand, interpretations based in political ideology have also been advanced: hence, Williams's claim that the *Consolatio ad Helviam* allows Seneca to "launch... [an] aggressive response to the Roman power that exiled him,"[41] not only by making a forceful statement about cosmopolitanism and philosophical self-sufficiency, but also by advancing a "critique of Roman state mythology."[42] Similarly, Claassen argues that Roman exile literature (not just Seneca, but also consolatory writing from Cicero, Ovid, and Dio Chrysostom) uses autobiographical narrative and self-mythologizing to create alternative political accounts of exile

37. Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca," 308-9. The "flattery" reading has been established in Continental scholarship for some time; see, for example, Degl'Innocenti Pierini, "*Motivi consolatorii e ideologia imperiale.*" Italian academics have produced more scholarship on Senecan consolation than scholars working in any other language. Rita Degl'Innocenti Pierini, in particular, has repeatedly commented insightfully on the consolations to Helvia and Polybius.
38. Fantham, "Dialogues of Displacement." Fantham explicitly rejects an ironic interpretation of the *Cons. Polyb.* (184-7) for the traditional one emphasizing Seneca's "flattery" and "unworthy fawning" (185). On this topic, also see Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 114 and n. 42.
39. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 100.
40. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 97-103. In Spanish, also see Castillo, "*Tradición literaria y realidad política*" on political opportunism in the consolations.
41. G. Williams, "States of Exile, States of Mind," 173.
42. G. Williams, "States of Exile, States of Mind," 173.

—accounts that frequently undermine stock consolatory motifs.[43] (Ker advances a congruent argument about "mediating narratives" in Senecan consolation, which he thinks emphasize Seneca's agenda over the needs of the *consolandus*.)[44] Synthesizing both the opportunistic and ideological approaches, Wilson even goes so far as to describe Seneca's consolations as "opportune literary vehicle[s] for the oblique expression of unsanctioned and politically hazardous opinions."[45] Like other political readings, Wilson's claim establishes politics and ideology as a lens that explains but also distorts the motivations and effects of Senecan consolation. Given that literature of any sort is marked by multivalent possibilities of address, one ought to be skeptical of any interpretation that claims to provide a totalizing account of a text;[46] yet, with that caveat in mind, it is fair to conclude that these and other political interpretations have provided welcome nuance and complexity to the study of Senecan consolatory literature, even though they sometimes go too far in universalizing their political lens.

Finally, scholarly emphasis—especially in recent years, and in conjunction with expanding focus on the social context of literature in general—has often privileged the social dimension of Seneca's consolations. James Ker, for example, suggests that the second basic goal of consolation is to "reintegrat[e] the addressee into society,"[47] so a social concentration is natural

43. Claassen, *Displaced Persons*.
44. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 87-112 (esp. 90ff.)
45. Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 94.
46. See the helpful and important comment by Wilson, who warns against overstating Seneca's political importance at earlier points in his career ("Seneca the Consoler?" 118-9 n. 44).
47. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 92.

to consolation.[48] In agreement, Wilson calls it a "social gesture,"[49] Scourfield a "social fact" and "social practice,"[50] and Baltussen "a philosophically informed written crystallization of a social practice."[51] There has been an interest, as a result, on the relationship of the consolations to society.

In particular, critics have been interested in how Seneca constructs the persona of the addressee/literal bereaved, and especially with how he uses *exempla* for certain audiences. Take the issue of gender, for example: Wilcox has thoughtfully examined how Seneca subverts gender expectations by providing female exemplars of (normally) masculine *virtus*[52] and how Senecan consolatory epistles figure and refigure notions and images of *amicitia* (friendship),[53] while Holloway has written about how Seneca's notions of gender equality fall short of his ideal in the two consolations to women.[54] Literary-critical approaches have also benefitted from the work of social historians on topics like gender and class.[55] More broadly, explosive interest in Senecan *exempla* has frequently approached the topic from a social and historical perspective, though the best studies tend to marry these considerations with moral and literary issues.[56]

48. But Ker (*The Deaths of Seneca,* 87-112) also mobilizes this idea in slippery and perhaps imprecise ways: he applies it not only to the literal reintegration of the bereaved into his or her actual (or putative) society or community, but also to Seneca's covert efforts to effect his own return to political life in Rome (*Cons. Helv.* and *Polyb.*), to figurative "returns" to *amicitia* and communities of friendship (*Ep. Mor.*), and to exhortations toward *studia* (in the *Cons. Polyb.*) and similar philosophical activities (e.g. *contemplatio, cogitatio, meditatio* in *Ep. Mor.*). It is not clear, however, what specific benefit is accrued by describing these later "reintegrations" through the metaphor of social isolation rather than through the more precise language of motivations, ends/goals, and productive behavioral changes, which are the real interventions in conduct that Ker describes in the later instances.
49. Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler?" 112.
50. Scourfield, "Towards a Genre of Consolation, 15.
51. Baltussen, "Introduction," xiv.
52. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief." Similarly but less comprehensively, see Langlands, "A Woman's Influence" and Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 92-6 and 110-2 (and other discussion cited on 93, n. 21). On the topic in classical antiquity in general, see Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome,* 179-206 (and esp. 205, regarding Senecan consolation).
53. Wilcox, "Consolation and Community." On the topic of friendship in consolation, also see Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 108-10 and Claassen, *Displaced Persons,* 119-22.
54. Holloway, "Gender and Grief." For the dissenting position, see Lillo Redonet, "*La mujer en la consolación filosófica antigua*."
55. E.g. Langlands, "A Woman's Influence" on Marcia and Seneca.
56. The best recent work on Senecan *exempla* informed by sociohistorical considerations include: Asmis, "Seneca on Fortune;" Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome,* 75-77, 87-90; Langlands, "Roman Exemplarity;" Mayer, "Roman

Although various studies align more or less cleanly with the four types that I have introduced, it remains true that Senecan consolation is a complex literary phenomenon that deserves appreciation in its fullness.[57] Indeed, according to James Ker, Seneca's prose writing should not only be interpreted as intellectually wide-ranging, philosophically eclectic, and highly influential, but also as "polygeneric,"[58] in that Seneca displays striking flexibility, innovation, recombination, and even playfulness in his adoption and rejection of literary conventions. Ker thus warns against making sweeping judgments or evaluations about a fixed nature of Seneca's writings; rather, he suggests that Seneca must be interpreted "holistically,"[59] with the total scope of his wide-ranging corpus in mind, lest commentators inadvertently make outsized claims distorted by a narrow snapshot of a given work or genre. Too strict of adherence to any particular interpretative lens, therefore, introduces risk: although lenses such as the therapeutic, philosophical, political, or social help to focalize attention on certain aspects of the text and allow for certain conclusions and forms of insight, these lenses may also obscure relevant aspects of the texts.

To recast Ker's warning, it seems uncontroversial to me to argue that Senecan consolation benefits from a wide range of interpretative positions and methods. Even while celebrating how diverse methods provide various insights, however, critics must be willing to weigh differing conclusions and accept that certain interpretations are more compelling than

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Historical *Exempla*;" Roller, "Between Unique and Typical;" Roller, *Models From the Past;* Roller, "Precept(or) and Example in Seneca;" Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm."

Chaplin, *Livy's Exemplary History*, discusses general features of ancient and then Roman *exempla* (2-31), and then focuses on Livy, whose history describes many individuals that Seneca adduces as *exempla*. Chaplin's bibliography is also an excellent resource on *exempla* and historiography (current until 2000).

Roller, *Models From the Past* contains the most comprehensive, up to date bibliography of work on Roman exemplification (current until 2018).

57. In truth, the topic deserves a monograph on its own; the wealth of contributions in journal articles is helpful, but such articles generally lack the space necessary for sustained focus on the most vexing problems.
58. Ker, "Seneca, Man of Many Genres," *passim*. Cf. G. Williams, "Style and Form in Seneca's Writing," 147-9.
59. Ker, "Seneca, Man of Many Genres," 40.

others, for the critic's basic practice consists of critical judgment and evaluation rooted in careful analysis and understanding of texts.[60] Given that imperative, I argue that consolatory theory endorses the central role of moral education in Seneca's consolatory literature.

For Seneca, incremental moral progress lies at the heart of the consolatory. Like much of his ethical production, the consolations function as exhortations and guides to self-improvement. As Seneca himself often asserts, one of his central goals is for each person to liberate themselves from bondage,[61] not least of which is bondage from one's own passions, biases, and ignorance. When Seneca turns to grief psychotherapy, then, his approach in intimately tied to his deeper project of moral education: loss and suffering, like life's other calamities, are occasions for a principled (and practiced) ethical response, so Seneca's role as a moral pedagogue is to equip his students with the proper models, habits, and commitments to resist or even escape whatever distress may arise. Ever the educator, Seneca uses consolation as a multivocal vehicle that simultaneously addresses his students, his fellow philosophers, his supporters, and his critics, and that consistently works to achieve the gradual opening of one's perspective to an ever-widening cosmic vision of human life and activity.

Excursus: The Structure and Argument of the Consolatio ad Marciam

Although analysts disagree on exactly where to divide a few of the parts of the text, the *Consolatio ad Marciam*[62] has traditionally been analyzed as consisting of six basic divisions (not

60. My perspective on this point has been deeply influenced by Edwin Black (*Rhetorical Criticism*).
61. He famously begins the *Epistulae Morales* this way: *Ita fac, mi Lucili, vindica te tibi* (*Ep.* 1.1).
62. In this chapter, I follow the Reynold's critical edition. Translations closely follow Hine's translation from *Hardship and Happiness*.

counting transitional or linking passages).[63] These parts include (with paragraph sections indicated):

1. Introduction/exordium (§1)
2. Examples of Livia and Octavia (2-5)
3. General *praecepta* about death (6-11)
4. *Praecepta* related to Marcia's particular situation (12-19.3)
5. *Praecepta* related to Metilius's particular situation (19.3-25)
6. Conclusion/peroration (26)

Jo-Ann Shelton has persuasively argued that the first two divisions together form a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*,[64] an effort by Seneca to gain Marcia's trust and attention and thus to prepare the way for the precepts to come.[65] According to this rhetorical division, the remainder of the text advances precepts, along with supporting examples and illustration, relevant to bereaved of progressively different sorts. Yet as Chris Manning correctly concludes, Seneca "probably [did] not... attempt... a rigid *'divisio,'*"[66] but rather adopted a looser, more fluid organization throughout.

In this chapter, however, I argue for a more complex division of the text than the traditional rhetorical division above. In particular, I suggest that the consolation is in fact articulated through a complex series of small, cumulative psychagogic moves. In this way, my approach is similar in superficial ways to Abel's, though the results are rather different.[67] First, I

63. See Manning, *On Seneca's "Ad Marciam,"* 8-11; Grollios, *Seneca's Ad Marciam,* 16; Hine, "Introduction," 4. For psychological rather than rhetorical structure, see Abel, *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen*. The most commonly debated divisions regard internal transitional passages, e.g. 6 and the span from 19.2-4.
64. But see Manning, *On Seneca's "Ad Marciam,"* 27, who argues that the *captatio benevolentiae* ends at 1.4.
65. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm."
66. Manning, *On Seneca's "Ad Marciam,"* 35.
67. Abel, *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen,* e.g. 20-2 on the Livia/Octavia *exempla.*

argue that the exordium and the Livia/Octavia *exempla* create the initial framework for the consolation, with the two antithetical *exempla* establishing a basic cognitive model for how addressees ought to conceive of positive/negative responses to grief. Next, I argue—still within the traditional second division—that Seneca immediately undertakes to add complexity and nuance to the field of possible responses initially created by the two framing *exempla*. That is, crucial rhetorical maneuvers occur within this and the other steps of the traditional topical division, so a finer scale must be adopted. Then, I again analyze the middle of the consolation (traditional divisions 3-5) in more complex terms. Rather than a progression of *praecepta* and *exempla* first on death in general, then relating to Marcia, then relating to Metilius, I instead show how different strands of consolatory argumentation are developed for different audiences. For the sake of simplicity, I first analyze how the middle passages stage progress for bereaved audiences, and then I analyze those same sections again while following the thread of the non-bereaved audiences. In both cases, I emphasize how the middle sections of the consolation deliberately compel readers, through an escalating series of dichotomies and redirections, to reconsider their initial understandings of (the) bereavement, and thus to open (and subsequently push) the possibility for reconfigured understandings of how best to respond to grief. Finally, I argue that the conclusion of the consolation is longer than the formal peroration (traditional division six), but rather begins much earlier by slowly imbricating Marcia's conception of Metilius into a moving cosmic image of moral resilience. My understanding of the structure of the consolation, then, is based around a psychagogic model wherein readers' understanding of and relationship to grief is progressively refined (including through coercive rhetorical means) until it is ultimately radically refigured. In the end, I argue that the psychological progression of the text consists of a

particular consolatory manifestation of Seneca's more general method of incremental ethical development.

II. Framing Possible Responses for a Complex Audience: The Exempla *of Octavia and Livia*

Seneca's initial challenge in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* is to mobilize the rhetorical means to achieve his consolatory purpose. After characterizing the audience that constrains his approach, I argue that Seneca introduces the pair of antithetical *exempla* of Livia and Octavia to create a structured field of possible moral responses in the imaginations of his readers. As the standard scholarly consensus holds,[68] the two *exempla* are situated as two ultimate poles of possible response, a constructed binary that simplifies the ethical situation into an easy choice between the attractive image of Livia and the deterrent example of Octavia. Against this otherwise compelling account, however, I argue that the intervention that Seneca stages here is not primarily an intellectualist move to compel rational assent with Stoic principles of *apatheia*, but rather a pre-rational psychological maneuver whose utility is exactly in how it constrains how one might first conceptualize of her possible ethical activity in the first place. In the remainder of the consolation, therefore, Seneca does not simply continue to use the pair of *exempla* as static touchstones, but instead goes on to further refine the field of possible ethical action by using additional *exempla* and similar dramatic devices (esp. *sermocinatio*) to add complexity and nuance to readers' understanding of what correct action entails in the circumstances.

The audience for the *Consolatio ad Marciam,* like all consolatory audiences, is complex. The nominal recipient of the consolation is Marcia, a Roman noblewoman who has been grieving an

68. Best argued by Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," but supported in most commentary on the consolation (in the places cited throughout this remainder of this chapter).

excessively long time—roughly three years—about the death of her son.[69] It is noteworthy that Seneca treats Marcia's persona, at the outset of the consolation, in the traditional terms of Roman *virtus*. According to Shelton, Seneca does so to set up "former Marcia" as an *exemplum* for "present Marcia," a technique intended to make the pursuit of *apatheia* seem more attainable.[70] Wilcox's discussion of Marcia's *virtus*, on the other hand, focuses on the public display of self-control to emphasize how the masculine characteristic is transformed when applied to women.[71] On this reading, Marcia is encouraged to face her grief publicly rather than hiding it. In both cases, the *exemplum* of Marcia's previous strength, her *virtus,* thus acts as a symbolic representation of womanly resilience both for her current grieving persona and for other women (e.g. the metonymic bereaved, and by extension other readers).

At the same time, Seneca undoubtedly wrote the text for broader circulation. Seneca's expected contemporaneous readership would have consisted mostly of educated, male Romans. Because Stoicism was by far the predominant ethical system in aristocratic Rome at the time, many of these readers—much like the academic readers of Seneca's work today, in fact—were likely to possess a general understanding of Stoic teachings; at the same time, the consolation is not a technical philosophical treatise, so Seneca's expected audience of learners most likely would not have included many advanced philosophers.[72] How would such readers have used the text?

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69. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* correctly points out that the consolation also addresses Marcia's earlier, unresolved loss of her father (93-4). Since Seneca is here attempting to revise Marcia's beliefs and judgments about death, the father's secondary presence is a germane one. On this point, also see Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 185-8.
70. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 185-8. On 185, Shelton writes, "Seneca needs... to build Marcia's confidence that she can extricate herself from her present distress."
71. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 81-7.
72. Of course, advanced philosophers might be interested in the text as a popular manifestation of Stoic ideas or as a literary work in its own right—but their interests and understanding would be far more advanced than the needs of those to whom this therapeutic and educational text is addressed. Thus, should such readers already have well-developed resilience toward the emotional effects of loss, the work might have some minor value as a reference for or model of educational methods, but their engagement with it would not be intrinsically consolatory.

The consolatory theory described in this dissertation suggests that students of philosophy (including outside of Seneca's initial historical context) ought to use it as an opportunity for reflection and preparation for future loss, and I show below that I believe that philosophical audiences would have indeed used it in this way (or, more precisely, that Seneca structured it in such a way as to invite moral reflection—whether it was ever used in this way is a contingent historical question.)

On the other hand, critics have argued that male Roman readers, and perhaps male readers across history and today, would have read the consolation in different ways. Wilcox contends that the female exemplars of *virtus* in the text (not just Marcia, but especially Livia and the apotreptic Octavia) would have been "an added means of goading a male addressee [sc. reader]"[73] to his own displays of *virtus,* because such readers would understand the *exempla* to be a moral challenge: "If [the female exemplars of *virtus*] can also meet... masculine standards or exceed them," Wilcox asks, "how much more shameful for a male reader of Seneca's consolation who fails to conquer grief?"[74] Langlands concurs with this analysis, writing about another *exemplum* in the text (Cloelia's statue on the Sacred Way) that the text

> set[s] up... two different kinds of readers who read from different perspectives and respond differently to the material. … On the one hand we have Seneca's characterization of Marcia—an anxious woman who has queried her ability to live up to the standards set by male examples, and who should be reassured by the passage of her own potential and inspired to virtue by the figures of famous women. On the other hand, we have the degenerate Roman youth who should (if they bother to take notice of it) be stung by the disapproval which it expresses of their lifestyle, and embarrassed into reforming their own lives. … Marcia [sc. bereaved audiences] is invited to identify with

73. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 93.
74. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 93. Shelton, following Abel, prefers to understand shame as motivational for Marcia (and similarly bereaved audiences; "Persuasion and Paradigm," 177-8). Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome,* complicates Wilcox's thesis about female *virtus* by showing the complex transformation of *pudicitia* when figured by different authors in different contexts for different purposes.

> and emulate Lucretia and Cloelia, the young men to see themselves as fundamentally different from and to aspire to outdo them.[75]

To the bereaved and students of philosophy, then, we might specifically single out male readers who identify with traditional masculine values as both historical and current potential readers for the consolation.

Moreover, Ker suggests in a political reading that Seneca's peers at the imperial court ought be a kept in mind as readers of the consolation.[76] According to this reading, Seneca himself is figured within and around the text, both as a philosophical advisor in the manner of the depicted Areus, and also as a literary producer/publisher himself.[77] Ker thus emphasizes how historical and political factors might have influenced Seneca's composition of his audience. Like other political readings, however, Ker's argument applies to the historical conditions for the production of the text, but does not specifically address the *consolatory* audience demanded by the consolation's composition *qua* consolation. For this reason, I set aside discussion of historical audiences without transhistorical analogues in other readers.[78]

In addition to the ever-present audience of general literary readers, who seek versions of entertainment, pleasure, engagement, or thoughtfulness from texts, the *Consolatio ad Marciam* thus appears to incorporate many of the common, audience-dependent features of consolation: emulation and encouragement, opportunities for reflection on ethical development, shame and reproach. Given these audiences and their differing needs—both therapeutically and educationally—how does Seneca pursue the consolatory work of the text?

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75. Langlands, "A Woman's Influence," 91.
76. Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 92-6.
77. Seneca praises Marcia for saving and publishing her father's work (*Cons. Marc.* 1.3).
78. Perhaps anachronistic readers might find e.g. Areus' *sermocinatio* to recommend Seneca as an advisor, but I can't see how such representations would be more persuasive to audiences than the literary artifact itself as a whole.

In short, Seneca begins by framing the consolation with the vivid *exempla* of Livia and Octavia, an antithetical pair that constrain and predispose readers' conception of the consolatory situation.[79] The two *exempla,* which Seneca explicitly identifies as vivid (*ponam ante oculos maxima… exempla*, 2.2),[80] function as powerful touchstones for the rest of the work. As befits the nominal addressee, the two women chosen as *exempla* are older, powerful, wealthy, aristocratic mothers who lived contemporaneously with Marcia, and with whom she—and those bereaved audiences who identify with her—would thus presumably identify (*maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla*, 2.2).[81] As Shelton and others have noted,[82] the choice of *exempla* are not only noteworthy on account of their gender and age, as Seneca announces, but also because they had been known personally by Marcia and because of their political connections and historical biographical details. Accordingly, there is good reason to think that these *exempla* were selected to provide "thick" rather than "thin" points of reference.[83] Importantly, the thick representation provides room for the *exempla* to be expanded, discussed, and revised through further argument—in contrast to the way, that is, that a flat, merely synecdochical *exemplum* resists such a treatment (e.g. Cato as an exemplar of *patientia*—or, depending on one's perspective, of *severitas*—whose *exemplum,* when extensively elaborated, generally inclines to bathos, ridicule, or disgust, but not to further insight).

79. Cf. Manning, "The Consolatory Tradition," 73-4: "A teacher of morals, aiming to create healthy attitudes... must aim to create the right disposition to receive the doctrine [that he is imparting]; he must lead gently from common ground to his own position." For an educator, an alliance with the reader/student is not limited to a *captatio benevolentiae,* but must continue through the entirety of the argument and exhortation.
80. The language of "placing before the eyes" is the traditional way of referring to vivid description (*enargeia*) in antiquity. In this case, a "vivid *exempla*" is one that will be developed discursively, as Seneca indeed goes on to do. The phrase thus indicates for readers that *narratio* and not merely reference is forthcoming.
81. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 172ff.
82. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 170-8; Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 81-7; Langlands, "A Woman's Influence," 90-2; Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca,* 92-6.
83. Geertz, "Thick Description."

On the other hand, Livia and Octavia are *not* much like Seneca's male literary audience. If *exempla* function especially because readers identify with them, as Langlands suggests,[84] then the *exempla* that Seneca has chosen are likely to fail with that audience. But identification is only superficially important for *exempla;* as both Wilcox and Langlands have shown, these *exempla* signify multiply to different audiences, so identity differences may be just as relevant (though in different ways) than identity similarities.[85] It seems, rather, that a different form of association is most important for the work of Roman *exempla*: what matters is readers' affirmation (or critique, or rejection) of the values expressed or validated within a given *exemplum.*[86] In this, an *exemplum*'s distance from an audience may even make them *more* effective as cases for reflection,[87] since reflection is strengthened by a minimum distance, and since the values of past generations or different cultures is always a topic of likely critique for members of different times, places, and identities. These two *exempla*, then, are not efficacious merely because Marcia may identify with them, but instead because they possess an important psychagogic purpose: they go beyond mere identification, and instead aim to prompt reflection, and perhaps critique, about the ways that readers conceive of the ethical situation itself. In short, for audiences both similar to the literal bereaved and very different than her, these two central *exempla* function as a prompt to reconceptualization.

How, specifically, does the process of reconceptualization work? In the first *exemplum*, Seneca describes Octavia's unending grief at the loss of her son Marcellus. Importantly, Seneca frames Octavia's conspicuous displays of grief as a choice that she makes over and over. For one,

84. "... certain kinds of *exempla* work best when the reader identifies very closely with the protagonist," in "A Woman's Influence," 90.
85. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief;" Langlands, "A Woman's Influence."
86. See Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca," 311-5 and Roller "Precept(or) and Example in Seneca," esp. 129-31 and 154-6.
87. Cf. Armison-Marchetti, "Imagination and Meditation in Seneca."

she refuses anyone who wishes to offer her help or solace: "she refuse[s] to stop crying" and "[does] not permit anyone to offer her comfort," whether with words or with tokens of goodwill (*nullum finem per omne vitae suae tempus flendi gemendique fecit nec ullas admisit voces salutare aliquid adferendis*, 2.4; *carmina celebrandae Marcelli… reiecit et aures suas adversas omne solacium clusit,* 2.5). Moreover, she is not only passive or reactive: she also actively hates other, happy mothers (*oderat omnes matres*, 2.5) and so withdraws from society (*a sollemnibus officiis seducta… et abdidit*, 2.5).

It is important to note that Seneca has not only used gendered cultural values to portray Octavia as a wretched mother and citizen, but has also used Stoic values to portray her as especially ethically wretched. In particular, the *exemplum* of Octavia perverts two central Stoic ideals: constancy and good judgment. Seneca explicitly says, for example, that Octavia erred in her *judgment,* such as when she "judg[ed] it to be a second bereavement to allow tears" for his loss (*secundum orbitatem* ***iudicans*** *lacrimas amittere*, 2.4) or when she "consider[ed] herself bereft, even though surrounded by the living" (*quibus [liberis, nepotibus] salvis orba* ***sibi videbatur***, 2.4). Because of her faulty judgement and self-conception, Octavia turned her will against healing: "She did not dare stand up, but refused to be helped up… nor did she allow any image of her dear son to be kept, nor any mention be made of him" (*non* ***ausa*** *consergere, sed adlevari recusans… nullam habere imaginem filii carissimi* ***voluit****, nullam sibi de illo fieri mentionem*; 2.4). Likewise, Seneca depicts Octavia as perverting the Stoic ideals of self-discipline and steadfastness (*constantia*) through her continued commitment to a disordered emotional life (***nullum finem per omne*** *vitae suae…* ***intenta in unam rem et toto animo adfixa****… talis* ***per omnem vitam****, qualis in funere*, 2.4). Throughout these cases, Octavia rejects the correct judgment about and forbearance to material events that the Stoics thought central to maintaining the dispassionate attitude (*apatheia*) that was the key to an ethical life.

Contrary to his apotreptic *exemplum* Octavia, Seneca portrays his protreptic *exemplum* Livia as exemplary not only according to gendered Roman cultural values, but also to specific Stoic ideals. Livia suffers a loss like that of Octavia,[88] but she only grieves for the culturally appropriate amount of time (until the funeral):[89] "Yet as soon as he was interred in the tomb, she immediately put to rest both her son and her sorrow" (*ut primum tamen intulit tumulo, simul et illum et dolorem suum posuit*, 3.2). In so doing, Livia demonstrates good Stoic judgment about her son Drusus's death; in particular, she does not judge it an evil with which to be burdened, but instead judges his death to indeed be worth celebrating:

> And finally, she never stopped praising the name of her dear Drusus, recalling him everywhere both in private and in public, gladly speaking about him and hearing about him: she lived with his memory, something no one can preserve and revisit if it has been allowed to become a source of sadness.
>
> *Non desiit denique Drusi sui celebrare nomen, ubique illum sibi privatim publiceque repraesentare, libentissime de illo loqui, de illo audire: cum memoria illius vixit; quam nemo potest retinere et frequentare, qui illam tristem sibi reddidit.* (3.2)

In creating these two *exempla*, one apotreptic and one protreptic, then, Seneca does more than present Marcia with a facile dichotomy (*Elige itaque, utrum exemplum putes probabilius*, 3.3), as so many commentators would have it.[90] It is true that the two women are established at two poles of ethical response, but—as Shelton notes[91]—Seneca already gestures, with the comparative

88. But see Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 85-7 for an important argument about how the nature of Livia and Octavia's losses—including the status of their sons at the time of death and the manner of their deaths—ultimately inflected the different courses of their grief. The various constraints on Octavia (but not Livia), in short, may have contributed substantially to her pathological grief over Marcellus's death.
89. At 3.4, Seneca calls this the *morum probitas et verecundia*.
90. E.g. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 170-5; Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief" 85; Manning, "On Seneca's 'Ad Marciam,'" 9; Langlands, "A Woman's Influence," 90; Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca," 309.
91. Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm," 173-4; cf. 176. Shelton prefers an interpretation whereby both women are treated respectfully and portrayed as strong, but where Livia is simply the *better* choice. In this, I argue that Shelton goes too far—Octavia is, in fact, portrayed as weak and ignoble, even if in more sympathetic terms than those reserved for traditional apotreptic *exemplum* of, e.g., horrible tyrants given over to vice. Shelton is correct that the apotreptic *exemplum* of Octavia is not presented in such a way as to shock or disgust readers, but Octavia is nevertheless not portrayed as a simply less-worthy example of how to deal with grief. In short, Seneca provides room for feelings of pity, yet still criticizes Octavia's failure to manage her grief in strong terms.

adjective *probabilius,* toward a more complex field of possible responses that lies between the two. Therefore, it is at least premature, if not false, to interpret the contrasting *exempla* as "stark" alternatives, much less to reduce the dynamic to a table of antithetical values.[92]

Instead, the pair of *exempla* ought to be understood to be a first step toward defining a path to ethical action. Insofar as consolations are educational, Seneca must meet his students where they are. In the cases of Marcia, the metonymic bereaved, students of ethics, those who identify with traditional masculinity, and a general literary audience alike—that is, the audiences identified at the outset—the initial position must be relatively simplistic.[93] The antithesis of Livia and Octavia, then, should not be interpreted as the final statement about how to conceive of responding to grief. Rather, these women serve to define the initial, gross boundaries of the problem: the issue as framed involves errors of judgment and evaluation about the moral characteristics of a son's death, and especially about the proper behaviors in response to such a bereavement. This initial definition of the problem, however, is just that—a crude account that will be revised through the process of education. Thus, it is certainly the case that Seneca uses the two *exempla* as touchstones in a broader matrix of possible responses, with the result that these two *exempla* frame the entire field of perceived possible responses, and thus conceptualize his readers' very notion of the problem of how to act when suffering a major loss. In a sense, then, the two *exempla* of Octavia and Livia are the structural linchpins that underlie Seneca's efforts to compel reconceptualization.[94] A complete interpretation, however, must recognize that these

92. Wilcox does both; see "Exemplary Grief," 85.

93. As it would not necessarily need to be for a Stoic *proficiens,* for example. See Seneca's *De tranquillate animi,* addressed to his friend Serenus, for an example of the latter—the dialog is more philosophically advanced throughout.

94. Indeed, Seneca will continue to present Marcia with the dilemma of choice as a means of constraining how she views a problem, and vivid description will continue to be his method of choice. Late in the consolation, for example, Seneca embarks on two extended ekphraseis, delivered in *sermocinatio*, on the City of Syracuse (the apotreptic pole, 17.2-6) and a theoretical City of Heaven (the protreptic pole, 18.1-8). The later antitheses, however, tend to add nuance; in the City of Heaven, Seneca includes scenes of suffering and calamity (18.8) to

initial, simplistic depictions are modified throughout the course of the consolation—a point that has, to my knowledge, not yet been made in a systematic way, and which has implications for how the consolations and the two *exempla* are interpreted, not least of which is to be cautious about overemphasizing Seneca's creation of a simple dichotomy for his readers.

As in other aspects of moral development, then, Seneca's idea here is one of incremental progress. The antithesis of Livia and Marcia is simply the first step in the process. By beginning his intervention at the patient's initial position, however advanced or remedial that position may be, Seneca's method dovetails with that of most modern clinical therapists and educators, who are likewise committed to patient- and student-centric approaches. This approach creates a productive initial relationship between teacher and student; after all, if Marcia—who stands in for all bereaved readers—perceived Seneca to be dismissive of her grief, she would likely withdraw from his attempts.[95] As such, the situation demands a more subtle sort of persuasion, one which acknowledges and validates the patient's current feelings while progressively distancing the patient from those feelings until their immediate grip fades and the patient is able to productively reflect on their experience without being consumed by it. It is to the next step in that process that I now turn.

show that life will always, inevitably entail struggle. (For which see Bartsch, "'Wait a Moment, *Phantasia*.'") I discuss these passages below.

95. Shelton, in particular, emphasizes the first six sections of the text as an extended effort by Seneca to build rapport and credibility with Marcia. Shelton argues that *exempla* are particularly well-suited to establishing *auctoritas* ("Persuasion and Paradigm," 162-6), which is why Seneca uses them in the opening sections to "succeed in gaining Marcia's trust and [to make] her receptive to [his] philosophical advice," which comes later in the text (*op. cit.* 158; cf. 168).

III. Creating Distance Through Sermocinatio *and* Exempla

In the consolation, Seneca's first step has been to construct a compelling account of the moral stakes for his consolation. To do so, he has established the *exempla* of Livia and Octavia as the poles of possible responses: Livia, who manages and then conquers her grief, and Octavia, who willfully chooses to be overwhelmed by hers. Yet, despite Seneca's early imperative for Marcia—"*Elige!*"—he cannot expect Marcia to be adequately prepared to receive his consolatory efforts, for he has not yet broken the stubborn cycle of withdrawal, hopelessness, and suffering in which Marcia is trapped (7.1-9.2). The first step consisted only of creating a cognitive frame, the intellectual groundwork for future consolation; the two initial *exempla* have merely opened a vivid imaginary field upon which the battle will be fought, so to speak. At this point, Seneca has constructed the foundation for consolation, but has not yet fully challenged Marcia's emotions. Only after having created these structural bulwarks upon which he will attempt to reform Marcia's self-understanding can Seneca turn to the detailed work of mobilizing grief therapy within the frame of the incoherent response (Octavia) and the principled response (Livia) to suffering.

Seneca's second step, then, is to undertake grief therapy proper. In particular, he must now make strenuous attempts (in the terms of consolatory theory) to arrest Marcia's emotions and to depersonalize her situation. In this intermediate step, Seneca acknowledges and validates Marcia's grief, but moves to establish it as potentially bounded—a step toward the examples of Livia and "past Marcia"—rather than endless. Seneca makes two sorties in this battle: first, a *sermocinatio* presented by Areus, a philosophical advisor; and second, a discussion of additional *exempla* that add nuance to the initial pair of framing *exempla.* Seneca uses these two tactics to

interrupt Marcia's grief and to depersonalize it to such a degree that she will be susceptible to a final gambit: the substantial reformation of her perspective on her grief.

Areus's Consolation and Emotional Arrest

To create distance, Seneca creates a fiction embedded within the consolation. He presents a fictional speech in the mouth of Areus, a philosophical advisor to the historical Livia, and then—after presenting the speech—asks Marcia to imagine herself as the recipient of the address (only the "cast list" is different: *Tuum illic, Marcia, negotium actum, tibi Areus adsedit; muta personam—te consolatus est,* 6.1). In his speech, Areus offers traditional Roman comfort: continue to act as you wish to be perceived by others; be strong for the sake of your friends and family; focus on the good times and not the bad, on your own strength rather than your weakness; respond with courage to this difficult trial (4.3-5.6). But these are commonplaces, and Seneca does not expect these commonplaces alone to break the resistance caused by Marcia's grief—indeed, they have failed repeatedly in the past (*Quis enim erit finis? Omnia in supervacuum temptata sunt: fatigatae adlocutiones amicorum, auctoritates magnorum et adfinium tibi virorum;* etc., 1.6). What purpose, then, does the *sermocinatio* serve?

The speech relies on two displacements. First, Seneca explicitly associates Marcia with Livia (*muta personam*). This blurs the lines between *exemplum* and addressee: on the one hand, Marcia is implied to be open to consolation and to be capable of Livia's strength;[96] on the other,

96. Shelton's discussion of this passage is incisive ("Persuasion and Paradigm," 178-81). She suggests that "the portrait of Livia which is presented in Areus's *consolatio* reveals that she was as vulnerable to emotional impulses as Marcia and Octavia, that she experienced difficulty in suppressing grief, and that she is therefore a realistic and appropriate paradigm for Marcia, who may now be inspired to recover her rational control, even as Livia had. ... The account of Areus's success in helping Livia thus verifies the efficacy of philosophical consultation. ... Seneca encourages Marcia to reflect on both the benefits of philosophical guidance and also the special role which he can serve as her therapist and guide. In this way, he prepares her to be receptive to the instruction he offers in the rest of the essay" (180).

Livia is portrayed at the same time as suddenly open to consolation (which Seneca had previously asserted she did not need: …*primum tamen intulit tumulo, simul et illum et dolorem suum posuit,* **nec plus doluit quam aut honestum erat Caesare aut aequum salvo***,* 3.2). The previous *exemplum* of Livia, then, has been refined to close the gap between Livia-*exemplum* and Marcia-persona*:* Seneca alters the relationship to suit the needs of his addressee at this particular juncture. For Marcia, Livia's *exemplum* therefore accretes another layer and thereby becomes "thicker," with the result that Marcia identifies even more strongly with her.

On the other hand, the speech also relies on another displacement, this one of the Seneca-persona from the consolatory speech instead attributed to Areus. By putting the speech into Areus's mouth, Seneca can speak forcefully without dismantling the goodwill and rapport that he has established with Marcia. As Seneca asserted at the outset, Marcia's grief is so great that it must be "shattered" (*Non possum nunc per obsequium nec molliter adgredi tam durum dolorem;* **frangendus est***,* 1.8). In terms of consolatory theory, Seneca recognizes that Marcia's emotions must be arrested before she will be open to other forms of perspectival adjustment. Areus's speech is one crucial component of this "shattering," for it consists of reproach. In particular, Areus-Seneca mobilizes shame (5.1-6), perhaps the most powerful moral emotion, to compel Livia-Marcia to retreat from grief, at least momentarily.[97] Again, the homeostatic conception of emotion reigns here: by eliciting a powerful, contrary emotion, the former emotion is attenuated. By using the fiction of Areus, Seneca can make a forceful attack against Marcia's grief without harming the rapport that he has established with her in the first pages of the consolation. Indeed, Seneca makes sure to immediately reinforce this goodwill following the *sermocinatio*: "I am not

97. Cf. Van Wassenhove, "Moral Admonition and the Emotions" on shame in Seneca's philosophical writings. More generally, also see B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*.

trying to mollify you, nor am I making light of your misfortune," he says (*non permulceo te nec extenuo calamitatem tuam,* 6.1), and he even (rhetorically) offers to join in her grief (6.2).

Through the Areus *sermocinatio,* Seneca provides grief therapy to create an opening for moral education: he arrests Marcia's grief just enough to open a discussion about moderating that grief. In this, he makes a first movement toward *depersonalization,* whereby Marcia's judgment and rational thinking are distanced from her consuming impulse toward grief. Marcia is likely to still recognize herself in the example of continued suffering, but should begin to feel dissociated from that suffering insofar as she has now been destabilized (via shame) into considering its consequences for her family. A momentary interruption in Marcia's grief may be a small step toward Livia's exemplary moderation and forbearance, but it provides a crucial opening.

Depersonalization and an Exempla *Listicle*

If the first step toward healing is to acknowledge that one's overwhelming suffering may have an end, then the next might well be to accept that it is possible not only to bring an end to one's suffering, but to grieve "with composure" (*placide,* 12.5, which calls to mind Stoic *tranquillitas*) while nevertheless permitting oneself to feel and express one's grief. Indeed, Seneca attempts exactly this next step for Marcia. Notably, he once again does so through the use of *exempla.*[98] In this case, he "produces examples... to show [how] many people have softened a harsh blow by bearing it with composure" (*Quosdam tamen referam... ut scias fuisse multos qui lenirent aspera placide ferendo*, 12.5).

98. In the intervening pages, Seneca has further elaborated the reasons for accepting an end to suffering as the first step. I return to the importance of his commentary when discussing the use of the consolation as a reflective, educational text; see below.

Seneca then elaborates a list of seven Roman men (12.6-15.3) and two Roman women (16.3-4) who responded to the death of a child with composure. In each case, Seneca emphasizes not only that the bereaved's grief came to an appropriate natural end, but also that grief was limited in magnitude and was expressed in culturally appropriate ways. For example, the priest Pulvillus received notice of the death of his son while engaged in a ritual, but he did not immediately react, and only later, "when he got home, did his eyes fill with tears and he uttered some cries of grief" for a short time (*Idem tamen, ut redit domum, et inplevit oculos et aliquas voces flebiles misit; sed peractis quae mos erat praestare defunctis ad Capitolinum redit vultum,* 13.2). Likewise, Julius Caesar heard news of his daughter's death while on campaign, he resumed his command "within three days... and conquered grief as quickly as he conquered everything else" (*Tamen intra tertium diem imperatoria obit munia et tam cito dolorem vicit quam omnia solebat*, 14.3). In these cases and the others, Seneca emphasizes the limited time for mourning, the return to one's social obligations and duties, and grief as a private rather than public experience.

For Marcia, these *exempla* serve their traditional roles as models for emulation, but they also continue the process of depersonalization. Indeed, Seneca includes two female *exempla* (two Cornelias) so as not to alienate Marcia too stringently (see 16.1), but nevertheless emphasizes the male *exempla* at length. On the one hand, the male *exempla* are obviously relevant to other audiences, like (putatively masculine) philosophical learners who are interested in examples as sources of emulation and guidance, or like the masculine addressees in need of challenge as posited by Wilcox, who are drawn in by the male *exempla* before being rebuked by the female ones (Cornelia is a crucial part of both Wilcox and Langland's arguments on this point[99]). On the other hand, the male *exempla* are, perhaps counterintuitively, also important to Marcia's moral

99. Wilcox, "Exemplary Grief," 86-7; Langlands, "A Woman's Influence," 90-2.

education. In particular, the male *exempla* adduced serve social roles distant from Marcia's experience—general, priest, statesmen, even dictator—that serve to package the moral content of the example, so to speak, in foreign garb. Yet, personal distance in fact now helps Marcia dissociate her perspective and self-image from her suffering by allowing her the imaginative opportunity to reflect on and mentally rehearse the proper, ethical response to grief without the deleterious interference of triggered personal emotions.

Imagined personal distance also again refines the initial framing *exempla,* where the protreptic Livia has now had her reported moral strength thickened through oblique association with the variety of (recent) historical *exempla* that Seneca discusses. Among other things, Livia thus becomes less an exceptional individual, a *rara avis,* and instead just another member of an expansive class—one made up of praiseworthy Romans, yes, but also one made up of aristocratic Romans. Importantly, the invocation of this larger aristocratic society leads Marcia to understand that many people, not just the anomalous individual, are capable of moderating grief; but, at the same time, it also invokes a social class that Marcia *already perceives herself to be a part of* and to which she aspires. Thus, the list of *exempla* simultaneously distances Marcia from her strong emotions, but at the same time motivates her to accept the necessity of moderate grief. Again, Seneca achieves this effect through the mobilization of veiled social shame. The set of *exempla,* that is, not only provide aspirational images, but also challenge Marcia: as a self-perceived member of the aristocratic class, why isn't she living up to the standard of moderate grief that prominent members of the class have set?[100]

100. In a sense, I'm turning Wilcox's argument around. Whereas female *exempla* might challenge male readers, so too might aristocratic examples of forbearance challenge aristocrats who are *not* displaying this trait. The class-based shame of falling short of one's perceived peers is a strong form of shame indeed.

Finally, it ought to be noted that this catalog of *exempla* speaks directly to Seneca's other expected readers and their current needs as philosophical novices. For one, it is notable that Seneca does not emphasize a *lack* of grief and mourning, but rather shows that his examples moderate, endure, and eventually *overcome* their losses. For a well-developed Stoic, Seneca might well focus on entirely eliminating the response to suffering. For an audience of learners, however, Seneca instead again emphasizes the idea of incremental progress.[101] Here as elsewhere, Seneca continues to balance the competing demands of his nominal addressee and his expected readership.

IV. Three Prosopopoeia *and the Formation of Moral Resilience*

To guide Marcia to a reconceptualization of her loss and thereby to ameliorate her grief, Seneca has first established the gross range of ethical responses through two framing *exempla*, then used additional dialogic techniques to refine that field of possible ethical action and to undertake therapeutic and educational strategies to arrest Marcia's overwhelming grief and depersonalize her loss to help her gain the necessary perspectival distance to reflect productively on her experience. If Seneca's efforts have succeeded, Marcia has now not only tentatively accepted that her present grief must not be unending, but has also begun to conceptualize her present grief as something that can be attenuated. (At the very least, she has confronted the challenge in an emotionally visceral way, given the power of shame.) As a result, she should no longer perceive

101. As Shelton notes, there is no reason to take this as a heretical endorsement of Epicurean *metriopathia:* "The specific purpose of the consolation to heal and advise a person already overwhelmed by emotion seems to require that the consoler address the topic of limiting grief before exploring the topic of suppressing further emotional impulses. The consoler's task is first remedial, and then preventative" (184). But Shelton misses the deeper method of incremental progress that undergirds Seneca's approach to therapy in her discussion of the "sequence" of Marcia's therapy (184-5). On Senecan *praemeditatio* as prophylactic treatment tailored to the interlocutor (and another rebuttal of the influence of Epicureanism in Seneca's consolatory thought), cf. Armisen-Marchetti, "Imagination and Meditation in Seneca" and Manning, "Seneca's 98th Epistle."

her grief to be monolithic, nor should she think resistance to be futile. Seneca's final move, and by far his most difficult rhetorical task, is therefore to convince Marcia to choose to set aside her current grief. Only at the end of the consolation has Marcia been prepared to actualize Seneca's command, "Choose!", from the start of the consolation. Yet the choices available to her have now been developed in greater nuance and detail, since each prior move has compelled Marcia to incrementally reconceptualize her grief as (at least potentially) limited in scope and force. Seneca's final gambit, then, attempts the culmination of the consolatory educational process, wherein Marcia's idea of her loss has been so attenuated that she will be receptive to reversing her prior judgment about the moral badness of her son's death.

Stoic moral psychology asserts that living well stems from making proper judgments about things as they actually are.[102] When judgment errs, however, humans become prone to all manner of vices, suffering, and—in the language of therapy—pathology. Seneca's fundamental task, then, is to persuade Marcia to reevaluate her earlier judgments: the death of her son must not be judged a bad thing, or else she will be entrapped by pain and suffering. Instead, Marcia must learn to evaluate her son's death as neutral, and thereby to find liberation from her grief. Throughout the majority of the consolation, Seneca has only attempted to lessen the perceived "badness" of Marcia's son's death. At the final juncture, Seneca now must convince her that her son's death must not, in fact, be considered bad in any way. For a time, Seneca rehearses yet more stock philosophical arguments (*solaces*), but this is primarily for the benefit of his non-bereaved readers (see the following section). Because Marcia is still consumed with grief, however, such reasons alone will not suffice to conquer grief, as we may safely predict is the likely

102. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* §65.

outcome for anyone other than, perhaps, an advanced Stoic practitioner. In short, Marcia must be *moved*, not merely lectured to.

Thus, Seneca chooses to conclude the consolation with the most powerful leverage available to him: Marcia's personal experiences, and particularly her memory and image of her family.[103] He chooses three moments from Marcia's family history to persuade her that death may, in fact, be choiceworthy. First, Seneca explicates an *exemplum* of Marcia's father (22.4-8) to convince her that death might be choiceworthy *under the right circumstances*. Then, Seneca uses vivid description of Marcia's son's life (24.1-4) to praise his virtues and to portray those virtues as even more true, eternal, and glorious now that he has died—in other words, to convince her that death might be choiceworthy *for the right kind of person*. Finally, Seneca uses an extraordinary, striking image *sub specie aeternitatis* (24.5-26.7) in which Marcia's father directly exhorts her (through *sermocinatio*) to view all death not as an evil, but indeed as a beautiful and worthy part of the cosmic process of intricate unfolding, conflagration, and rebirth. These three cumulative efforts intervene at the level of values and moral commitment, and thus directly relate to the creation of moral resilience. That is, Seneca aims to enable Marcia to transform her entire way of thinking and acting[104] such that she will no longer be affected by *any* sort of calamity.

Death Under the Right Circumstances

103. We know from previous arguments in the consolation that Seneca thinks that Marcia will be particularly moved by memory and family: especially see 1.2; 5.2-4; 16.6-8.

104. P. Hadot identifies this sort of change as a *conversion,* which is perhaps the best metaphor for the specific outcome intended here. See *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 83: "In [the Stoics'] view, philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory—much less in the exegesis of texts—but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom."

Having attempted to persuade Marcia that death is not an unending, overwhelming evil, Seneca uses an *exemplum* of her father to argue that death may be, in limited circumstances, a good thing, even a "right."[105] In an extended *narratio* embellished by direct speech (*sermocinatio* at 22.6), Seneca elaborates on Marcia's father's persecution at the hands of Sejanus, his private decision to hunger strike, and his eventual private death by starvation (22.4-8). Notably, Seneca's rhetorical approach portrays the suicide not as a result of mere political infighting, as an historical account might support; instead, he frames the episode in entirely moral terms.[106] Sejanus and his ilk play the villains: in vivid terms, they are portrayed as tyrants trampling the necks of the populace (*Irascebatur illi [Seiani] ob unum aut alterum liberius dictum, quod tacitus ferre non potuerat Seianum in cervices nostras ne inponi quidem sed escendere,* 22.4), fabricators of false charges and vicious political attacks (†*Consecratur*† *subscriptio, et acerrimi canes, quos illi, ut sibi uni mansuetos, omnibus feros haberet, sanguine humano pascebat, circumlatrare hominem... incipiunt,* 22.5), and politically power-hungry (again with the metaphor of rabid dogs: *Cognito consilio eius publica voluptas erat, quod e faucibus avidissimorum luporum educeretur praeda,* 22.6). Marcia's father, on the other hand, is represented as a wise, moral person: he refuses to be silent in the face of tyranny (his words, and by extension character, are *liberius*, 22.4); he acts resolutely but not flamboyantly, so as not to disturb others (22.6); and he "wins" the court case against him through cleverly asserting his own freedom of choice and action (*Magna res erat in quaestione, an mortis <ius> rei perderent; dum deliberatur, dum accusatores iterum adeunt, ille se absolverat*, 22.7).

105. <*Ius*>. Though the exact word is missing from the manuscript, the context of the law court renders the idea clear: a person should be able to choose their own death.

106. This reflects the moral terms used to describe Livia and Octavia's judgment in the initial framing *exempla.* Thus, this *exemplum* should be interpreted as another recursive revision to the simplistic field of possible actions first established earlier in the consolation—that is, as yet another thickening of the Livia/"former Marcia"/aristocratic Romans nexus of *exempla.*

Because of the emphasis on morality, Seneca is able to frame the example as a limited, though powerful, case in favor of death.[107] This continues the process of incremental reconceptualization: if suicide can at times be an honorable, preferable course of action, then death itself cannot be inherently bad. Even if Marcia accepts this case, she is likely to feel that her son's death is different, since he did not choose an honorable suicide. Nevertheless, Seneca has created an important opening. If his approach has succeeded, Marcia must no longer consider her losses and suffering to be categorically bad, but should now be thinking about her bereavement with more nuance—in particular, she should be attending to the context of her loss(es), so she ought to accept, at least in principle, that the *right occasion* renders death preferable and even choiceworthy.

Death For the Right Kind of Person

As if anticipating that Marcia is likely to rebut the example of her father's death as an appropriate reference case for her son's, Seneca immediately ratchets up the pressure by directly addressing her son's death. He repeatedly portrays Metilius as a young man of upstanding virtue, even going so far as to spin rather un-virtuous behavior as the opposite. Indeed, Seneca frames the encomium by referencing Plato's *Phaedo*[108] and suggesting that Metilius has perfect virtue and has been completely liberated from vice (23.1-2). Marcia's son has already completed his moral self-development before his death (23.3), yet he remains piously devoted to his mother, even to

107. In this, *pace* Ker et al., I suggest that Seneca has deliberately elided the political dimension from the explicit psychagogy that he offers Marcia.

108. "This is the basis for what Plato proclaims..." (*Inde est quod Platon clamat,* 23.2). Hine points to *Phaedo* 64a and 67d as the source (commentary to trans. in *Hardship and Happiness*). The allusion to Plato—in conjunction with the later description of the Stoic cosmic view (26.1-5) and ἐκπύρωσις (26.6)—no doubt reinforces the relevance of the *peroratio* for philosophical audiences, a helpful maneuver given than the remainder of the text otherwise leans heavily on personal details from Marcia's life.

the point that he continues to live with her, refuses military service (24.1-2), and acts with utter chastity (24.3). Indeed, Seneca describes Metilius as an exemplar of Roman manhood: he demonstrates the key characteristics of *virtus*, *fides*, and *pietas*, as well as being intelligent, handsome, and wise. In so doing, Seneca has brilliantly transformed into filial virtues what traditional Roman custom would consider faults (shirking military duty, a man spending too much time in a woman's orbit, etc.). There is no doubt that this praise is intended to arrest and counteract Marcia's grief with pride.

In his encomium, Seneca portrays Metilius as if he had already lived a full live. He is strong, *as if* he had served in the military; he is wise, *as if* he had matched the intellectual achievements of his grandfather; he is chaste (*sanctitate morum,* 24.3), *as if* he were a priest. In so doing, Seneca portrays a completed life—with the crucial implication that it is not length of time, but rather achievement and moral character, which distinguish such a life. Seneca's words, then, are not just encomium; they are eulogy. By means of this rhetorical amplification, Seneca again pushes Marcia to reconceptualize her view of death: if death arrives at the summation of a life of excellence, no matter the duration of that life, is is not inherently bad, but rather must be celebrated (*Harum contemplatione virtutem filium gere quasi <sinu>,* 24.4).

If he has succeeded, Seneca has now helped Marcia not only perceive a limit and moderation to her grief, but also to accept that death can in fact be positive, at least in the right circumstances or for the right kind of person. Yet Seneca proceeds under the hypothesis that Marcia still does not perceive her grief as something that she may choose to reject, and certainly not as something that must be rejected urgently. In the face of stubborn, prolonged grief, this is a prudent assumption. By discussing Marcia's family, Seneca has engaged her emotions and her most cherished relationships—in other words, the locus of her grief. In his final gambit, Seneca

aims to move Marcia so viscerally that she perceives both death *in general* and this *specific* death to be a natural part of human life. Because Marcia's final resistance is deeply emotional, Seneca's task is to make that resistance appear tiny and insignificant.

Death From the Cosmic Perspective

Seneca's final gambit involves striking, cosmic imagery; an uplifting account of eternal life; and a moving, universal view that minimizes death and grief to the point that they feel easy to relinquish (21.1-6). First, Seneca argues for a divide between merely material things and spiritual things, and he exhorts Marcia to attend to the one and not the other. Next, he portrays spiritual life as one of perfect bliss, whereby it is impossible to judge death as something bad rather than as a sort of promotion. Finally, he has Marcia's father directly address her in a lengthy *sermocinatio* which exhorts her to revisit her judgment about the badness of death and to instead view death as a natural, even positive return to cosmic nature.[109] Throughout these final passages, Seneca works especially at the emotional level of imagery. Knowing that emotions drive action when they forestall judgment, Seneca confronts Marcia's deep grief with equal measures of validation, joy, and shame. By counterbalancing her passions, he works to open space, so to speak, for her to make a dispassionate judgment about the loss of her son, which he has prepared her to see as a neutral (or even choiceworthy) event rather than a bad one.

To transition from his encomium of Metilius's worldly characteristics to his heavenly attributes (as foreshadowed by the *Phaedo* allusion), Seneca invokes a metaphor that he will widely mobilize in his later writing: body as prison, mind as eternal, and death as liberation from a

109. On the genealogy and philosophical background of this passage (esp. the final part, *Cons. Marc.* 26.6), see Armisen-Marchetti, "*Échos du* Songe de Scipion *chez Sénèque.*"

constant struggle between the two.[110] Our mortal bodies, Seneca asserts, are merely "external baggage" (*oneribus alienis*, 24.5), a poor reflection of our true selves, which instead consist of eternal minds (*anima*) that constantly struggle to be released from the "chains and darkness" which "smother, choke, and poison" them (*vincula animorum tenebraeque sunt; obruitur his, offocatur inficitur, arcetur a veris et suis in falsa coiectus*, 25.5). As a result, there is no reason for Marcia to haunt her son's tomb: what she is grasping after is already gone, so her grief—though powerfully felt—is misguided, an error of judgment and evaluation, and as a result cannot sensibly be maintained.

Having drawn the distinction between body and mind, Seneca goes on to confront Marcia's grief with powerful, opposite emotions: the attractive image of cosmic life and motivation through shame. To do so, Seneca again leverages Marcia's dedication to her family. According to Seneca's depiction, Marcia's own father welcomes her son into the heavenly city and guides him there. Marcia should be attracted to this image of a peaceful, leisurely life of study and contemplation (25.2). To the attractive image, however, Seneca adds direct reproach:

> So, Marcia, behave as though you are in full view of your father and your son, who are not as you knew them, but far nobler, living in the highest heaven. You should feel ashamed of <entertaining> humble, commonplace <thoughts>, and of weeping for your relatives when they have been transformed into something better.
>
> *Sic itaque te, Marcia, gere, tamquam sub oculis patris filique posita, non illorum quos noveras, sed tanto excelsiorum et in summo locatorum. Erubesce quicquam humile aut vulgare <cogitare> et mutatos in melius tuos flere.* (25.3)

Note that the verb of shaming here, *erubescere,* specifically refers to a sort of social shame, as when a person is caught doing something beneath them and feels embarrassed about having been caught in the act. No one blushes in private.

110. On Senecan bodily metaphors, see Bartsch, "Senecan Metaphor and Stoic Self-Instruction."

Indeed, the emphasis on witnessing and shame is crucial here. Seneca himself makes the connection in Epistle 11, where he repeatedly connects shame and blushing to social monitoring and emphasizes the importance for moral development of having people see and recognize your faults. The letter ends, "Choose[111] anyone whom you admire for their actions or their words... Keep that person in view at all times as your guardian or your example (*vel custodem vel exemplum*). I repeat: we need a person who can set the standard for our conduct"[112] (*Elige eum cuius tibi placuit et vita et oratio et ipse animum ante se ferens vultus; illum tibi semper ostende vel custodem vel exemplum. Opus est, inquam, aliquo ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant, Ep.* 11.10).[113] The force of the *custos/exemplum* here is both regulatory and normative: on the one hand, the image of one's mentor causes a person to internalize ethical evaluation of one's actions and thereby to regulate behavior,[114] while it continues at the same time to provide an ethical standard and model for emulation.[115] Accordingly, Seneca posits Marcia's kin as (in Long's terms) "normative standards for self-assessment and aspiration."[116] Given how he explicitly links the act of witnessing and the motivational power of shame, one can confidently conclude that Seneca understands shame to be a productive technique for exhortation. Thus, when Seneca constructs *prosopopoeia* and presents them vividly to his readers (*sub oculis positum*), his goal must—at least in part—entail intervention at the level of emotion.

111. The imperative here, "*Elige!*", echoes the command at *Cons. Marc.* 3.3.
112. Trans. Graver and Long, modified.
113. Cf. *Epp.* 25, 32, 52, 94, 120. The translation follows Graver and Long. The Latin text follows Reynolds's critical Oxford edition.
114. On the *exemplum* as mentor and guide, see Shelton, "Paradigm and Persuasion," 162-6, as well as the following footnote. On Seneca's notion of internalizing one's relationship with one's perceived guardian, see Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self,* 244-50; Edwards, "Self-Scrutiny and Self-Transformation."
115. On the Stoic guardian as normative standard for emulation, see Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self,* esp. 191-208; Edwards, "Self-Scrutiny and Self-Transformation;" Roller, "Precept(or) and Example in Seneca."
116. Long, "Seneca on the Self," 28. Cf. Williams, "Minding the Gap."

In the two back-to-back passages, then, Seneca whips Marcia between images of peaceful repose and biting reproach to loosen her commitment to her grief and leave her vulnerable to emotional intervention. The homeostatic logic again applies: if what Marcia needs is a tremendously strong countervailing emotion to displace her grief, Seneca strives to provide that emotion, whether pride, shame, anger, or any other powerful moral emotion. Indeed, the juxtaposition of such different emotions as pride and shame seems designed to destabilize one's psychic and emotional state, and thereby to allow for reconstruction, reformation, or conversion.

Unlike with Areus's use of shame above, Seneca's exhortation here is not presented in another's mouth. It is no longer necessary for Seneca to prioritize the therapeutic rapport he has established with Marcia; rather, his concern now is to suggest a new frame entirely from which to view her situation. As a result, Seneca can allow himself, the therapist-educator, to depart the frame. He does so with a final bitter barb of shame, perhaps intended (again) to shock Marcia from her grief and to disarm her of her grief such that she will passively receive an interpretation far different from her own implicit understanding of her loss. Thus, Seneca pivots quickly away from his reproach and instead returns to the imagery of peaceful repose, but this time stretches the distance between Marcia and the represented viewpoint yet farther.

In the final passage, then, the consolation concludes with an extended *sermocinatio* in which Seneca steadily but progressively has Marcia's father stretch her perspective from individual to cosmic. In the passage, Marcia's father first chides her for dwelling in grief (26.2), then suggests that her family has often found death a relief (26.3-4), and then finally returns to the encomium of peaceful, heavenly repose (26.5) before concluding with a image of universal life and cosmic conflagration and rebirth (26.6-7). As the speech progresses, Marcia's father's

language mirrors the march from specific to cosmic. At the outset of his *sermocinatio,* he addresses Marcia directly in the second person:

> "Why, my daughter, are you in the grip of such long lasting grief? Why do you persist in such ignorance of the truth that you think your son has been unjustly treated because he has gone to join his ancestors... Do you not realize...? Should I give you...?
>
> *'Cur te, filia, tam longa tenet aegritudo? Cur in tanta veri ignoratione versaris ut inique actum cum filio tuo iudices quod integro domus statu integer ipse <se> ad maiores recepit suos? Nescit...? Regesne tibi...?* (26.2)

Congruent with the second-person mode, the *sermocinatio* focuses on specific details of Marcia's lived experience of grief, and especially her willful rejection (*iudices,* explicitly mirroring the moral language of judgment found the initial framing *exempla*) of consolatory arguments. Next, the speech shifts as he refers to Marcia's family, including her deceased son, who is in heaven. In particular, the language shifts to inclusive, first-person plural address:

> Why, in our family, is the person whose death was the most fortunate being lamented the longest? We are all united, and no longer surrounded by deep night, we see that nothing in your world is, as you suppose, desirable, nothing is sublime, nothing is glorious, but everything is insignificant, oppressive, anxious, and aware of only a tiny fraction of the light we enjoy!
>
> *Cur in domo nostra diutissime lugetur qui felicissime moritur? Coimus omnes in unum videmusque non alta nocte circumdati nil apud vos, ut putatis, optabile, nil excelsum, nil splendidum, sed humilia cuncta et gravia et anxia et quotam partem luminis nostri cernentia!* (26.3)

As the speech turns away from the specific details of Metilius's death, so too does the emphasis on Marcia ("you") shift to the family as a whole ("we"). At the same time, the argument becomes more general: it now addresses death and loss in human life in general to suggest that death is nothing evil for those who have experienced it. Logically enough, the speech then generalizes for a second time, in this case from Marcia's family to the state of heavenly repose in general. Simultaneously, Seneca's language transforms to impersonal third-person address:

> … no armies charge at each other in a frenzy, fleets are not shattered against fleets, family murders are not planned or even contemplated, and the marketplaces do not buzz with court cases all day and every day... nothing is kept secret, minds are laid bare, and all of history is visible, together with events to come...
>
> *Quid dicam nulla hic arma mutuis furere concursibus nec classes classibus frangi nec parricidia aut fingi aut cogitari nec fora litibus strepere dies perpetuos, nihil in obscuro, detectas mentes et aperta praecordia et in publico medioque vitam et omnis aevi prospectum venientiumque?* (26.4)

Not only have specific individuals disappeared entirely from the narrative, but the content of the speech also increasingly departs from (masculine) mortal concerns—war and violence and law—to cosmic, intellectual themes of knowledge and insight.

The final narrative of the speech turns explicitly to the cosmic perspective, but reverses the repudiation of violence in order to again destabilize Marcia's understanding and therefore to open her mind to new perspectives:

> … realize that nothing will remain standing where it now stands, that old age will topple everything and sweep it away. [The universality of fate] will toy not just with human beings (for what a tiny fraction of the power of fortune they represent) but with places, with countries, with whole sections of the world. It will flatten entire mountains and in other places will force up new cliffs; it will swallow seas, divert rivers, disrupt communication between nations, and undo the partnership and cohesion of the human race; elsewhere it will make cities disappear into huge chasms, shake them with earthquakes, send plague-ridden air from deep below, cover all habitation with floods, kill every living creature as it drowns the earth, and scorch and burn all that is mortal in huge fires. [etc.]
>
> *Nam si tibi potest solacio esse desideri tui commune fatum, nihil quo stat loco stabit, omnia sternet abducetque secum vetustas. Nec hominibus solum (quota enim ista fortuitae potentiae portio est?) sed locis, sed regionibus, sed mundi partibus ludet. Totos supprimet montes et alibi rupes in altum novas exprimet; maria sorbebit, flumina avertet et commercio gentium rupto societatem generis humani coetumque dissolvet; alibi hiatibus vastis subducet urbes, tremoribus quatiet, et ex infimo pestilentiae halitus mittet et inundationibus quidquid habitatur obducet necabitque omne animal orbe submerso et ignibus vastis torrebit incendetque mortalia.* (26.6)

First of all, the cosmic perspective emphasizes deep ethical and physical principles, including "the universality of fate" (*commune fatum*) and "the power of fortune" (*fortuitae potentiae*). The actors here, so to speak, are fully abstract, intellectualized forces: *fatum, potentia.* The language within the

passage also explicitly continues widening; notice, for example, the *correctio* (a figure to explicitly call out rhetorical amplification if there ever was one) in the tripartite climax "*sed locis, sed regionibus, sed mundi partibus.*" Finally, and most importantly, notice how the theme of violence is transmuted. Previously, Seneca argued that heavenly repose entailed no warfare (literal, legal, or otherwise; 26.4). Here, however, there is a much deeper and more unavoidable violence: the devastation of natural calamities, the complete collapse of human civilization and society, and—finally—the consumption and utter destruction of everything in the cosmos in a fiery conflagration. Notably, Seneca provides no respite from this horrific and awe-some imagery; there is no mention, for example, of the Stoic principle that the world will cycle back into existence and that the intricate blossoming of life will repeat itself. Instead, the final image is of overwhelming cosmic loss on a scale so many orders of magnitude greater than Marcia's personal loss as to render her present grief utterly insignificant.

This *sermocinatio,* an imaged plea directly from Marcia's father's mouth, directly confronts Marcia's most tender emotional connections and self-perspective. In this, the consolation moves beyond its complex earlier efforts to arrest Marcia's grief and present her situation in depersonalized terms. In the preparatory stages, Seneca had used *exempla* to frame the field of possible responses to grief and to motivate Marcia to see her own grief as limited, in need of moderation, and an improper response to certain kinds of bereavement (e.g. righteous suicide or the loss of a completely virtuous person). Throughout, Seneca also laid the groundwork to impel Marcia to correctly judge her loss as not a terrible evil. Now, finally, he brings the issue to its head by compelling her to revisit that judgment. Confronted by the image of her deceased father shaming her for her excessive, errant response and reproaching her lack of joyous contemplation and universal perspective, Marcia is presented with a radically different perspective on her loss. If

the cognitive and emotional interventions that Seneca has progressively undertaken to prepare her have been effective, and if the final cosmic perspective manages to shatter her limited self-conception,[117] then the consolation will have compelled Marcia to reevaluate her judgment about the moral character of her son's death. If Seneca's consolatory efforts have succeeded, she will assent to the understanding that his death was not something bad, and in so doing she may be consoled.

V. The Consolation as a Catalyst for Moral Reflection and Moral Education

Thus far, I have primarily described the *Consolatio ad Marciam* as an interaction between Seneca, the therapist or healer, and Marcia, the patient. As discussed in the first section, however, the consolation is self-evidently a work crafted for wider publication. The audience implied by this fact has, over the years, no doubt been a complex one. Some may have identified with Marcia's feelings of loss, and thus have viewed the text both as an emblem of their own suffering and as a potential salve. Many others, however, must not have identified with the occasion of the text (a mother's long, apparently excessive grief about a son's death), including readers in Seneca's own day. If the consolation is indeed a model for one method of grief therapy, as I have argued, then how should such non therapy-seeking readers use the text?

Various non-bereaved audiences may use the consolation as a constructive occasion for reflection and for rehearsing habits of response to grief and distress. According to this account, the therapeutic method that Seneca has demonstrated itself serves as a model to be emulated and as a goad for reflection. Seneca seems to believe that learning is easiest when one first practices without serious pressure, so the consolatory method of the text becomes an invitation to that very

117. At the outset, Seneca declared of Marcia's grief, "*Frangendus est*." But in the end, he has aimed to shatter not just her distress (*aegritudo,* 26.1), but indeed her limited self-conception and narrow perspective on human life.

practice: because readers are distant from the actual emotions of grief and loss, they are able to rehearse their intended response to such a loss without the crushing burden of actual grief. Ultimately, by meditating on the text and practicing virtual self-control, readers begin to habituate themselves against actual, excessive behaviors based in grief.[118] Indeed, Seneca seems to have thought that this would occur even for audiences that do not set out to actively use the text in this way, which may be one reason why he prefers memorable images and turns of phrase: they may substantially outlive any explicit memory of their source or any conscious desire by readers to learn from the text. Seneca thus systematically includes philosophical material for popular (non-specialist) audiences within the text itself. This suggests that he has deliberately structured the work to provide an invitation to moral reflection for a broad variety of educated but non-philosophical audiences, all of whom are prompted by his rhetorical maneuvers to contemplate death and to practice the habits of response that prepare a person to face adversity. In this way, the *Consolatio ad Marciam* acts not only as a salve for the bereaved's present grief, but as support, too, for future and as yet unexperienced suffering. Seneca's consolation is thus not merely therapeutic, but also thoroughly educational.

For Seneca, moral reflection is a key component of ethical progress, for it provides a virtual opportunity to either rehearse or rectify—and thus improve—one's philosophical practice. As a moral educator, Seneca therefore provides opportunities for readers to reflect on moral situations through direct engagement with his readers, whom he continually invokes in the consolation through both the ambiguous and the universal "you." Indeed, Seneca frequently addresses his non-bereaved audiences throughout the consolation with the flexible, ambiguous

118. On Senecan *meditatio*, see: P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 84ff.; Newman, "*Cotidie Meditare;*" Armisen-Marchetti, "Imagination and Meditation in Seneca;" Webb, "Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions." On *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* in particular, see the further bibliography in Wildberger, "Seneca and the Stoic Theory of Cognition," 93 n. 40 and n. 41.

pronoun *tu,* the often-ambiguous second-person verb, or other forms of second-person address[119] that may refer to a specific person (nominally, Marcia), but also to his readers in general. Seneca offers this general "you" a range of stock arguments from the consolation tradition. The stretch from 19.1 to 22.3, in which Seneca provides "sources of consolation" (*solacia*, 19.1), is a good example of his approach to using general consolatory *topoi,* as is the somewhat more personalized stretch from 7.1 to 12.3 (for *solacia* about an aristocratic mother's loss of a son rather than general *solacia* for whatever case). Aside from demonstrating Seneca's literary mastery over the *topoi* of the generic tradition, the string of conventional arguments reviewed in these passage helps readers make connections between abstract principles and actual lived cases, even as the specific language and rhetorical address continually turn the thrust of the *solacia* away from Marcia's particular case and toward the philosophical readers' own situations.

Seneca not only addresses his larger readership through the familiar and even dry *topoi* of traditional consolation, however, but rather continues to admix entertaining narration with philosophical lessons, his characteristic way of leavening philosophical medicine with honey.[120] For his broader audiences, too, Seneca utilizes vivid description, *sermocinatio*, and especially exemplification to engage readers and prompt reflection. Indeed, Seneca's characteristic approach to popularizing moral reflection is exemplified by a long dilemma that he explicates in the middle of the consolation (17.1-18.8). Seneca begins the passage, as he often does throughout the consolation, with a terse statement of the philosophical *topos,* one that will be thoroughly familiar to his educated readers. (He also maintains his question-and-response manner, i.e. *anthypophora*, as throughout the consolation and many of the other dialogues.)

119. Or, occasionally, impersonal third-person or similarly ambiguous, multisignifying grammar.
120. Cf. Lucretius 1.931-50; 4.8-25.

> "But it is hard to lose a young man whom you have raised, just when he was beginning to lend help and distinction to his mother and his father." Who would deny it is hard? But it is human. You were born for this, to suffer loss, to perish, to hope and to fear, to upset others and yourself, to dread death and yet also desire it, and, worst of all, never to understand your true condition.
>
> *'Grave est tamen quem educaveris iuvenem, iam matri iam patri praesidium ac decus admittere.' Quis negat grave esse? sed humanum est. Ad hoc genitus es, ut perderes ut perires, ut sperares metueres, alios teque inquietares, mortem et timeres et optares et, quod est pessimum, numquam scires cuius esses status.* (17.1)

The question, as posed, relates to Marcia's situation (namely, how a parent should bear the loss of a child), but Seneca's answer does not reference that specific case in any way. Rather, he provides a universal response relevant to adversity of all kinds, so the repeated second-person verbs and pronouns may refer to his readers in general (and even to humanity as a whole).

Following this statement of the *topos* and the terse, philosophical reply, Seneca then embellishes the lesson through not just one image, but rather a lengthy series of three connected *sermocinationes*. Each of the speeches creates an antithesis which compels readers to reflect on a simplified choice between two opposite lives. (This series of binaries mirrors Seneca's framing of the consolation as a whole, which he established as a dichotomy between the *exempla* of Octavia and Livia. As intellectual parallels, these *exempla* thus further thicken those already complicated points of reference.) In the first *sermocinatio*, Seneca's unidentified speaker provides an ekphrasis of Syracuse, including both its positive characteristics (geography, winter climate, urban design) and its negative ones (summer climate, political rulership, customs and morals). The speaker ends the speech by presenting the binary choice: "You have heard what could attract you, and what could put you off: so either set sail or stop right here" (*Audisti quid te invitare possit, quid absterre: proinde aut naviga aut resiste*, 17.5). Immediately following, Seneca presents a second *sermocinatio*, this one delivered by Nature personified, who provides the terms of a legal contract (*leges*, 17.7) which

bind us all to a dilemma: either we avoid all suffering by never living at all, or we must accept suffering as a constituent part of life. Finally, Seneca himself addresses his readers, saying, "Imagine me coming to give you advice as you were being born" (*Puta nascenti me tibi venire in consilium*, 18.1). His long speech creates an analogy with the initial *topographia* of Syracuse, but in this case Seneca presents a idealized metaphorical image of life itself, with the well-ordered cosmos overhead, but the unpredictable mortal realm below (18.1-8). Again, Seneca ends with a dilemma: "Think it over and weigh up what you want: to reach the one [positive] set of experiences you must run the gauntlet of the other" (*Delibera tecum et perpende quid velis: ut ad illa venias, per illa exeudum est*, 18.8).

Each of these *sermocinationes* entertains readers with their striking rhetorical polish, but each also serves an important philosophical purpose. Because of the ambiguous second-person address throughout—the character Marcia drops out except via the most superficial of gestures—Seneca's readers feel that the choices and dilemmas are being presented not just to Marcia, but also to them, which directly implicates them and, in effect, asks them to reflect on their own ethical position. It is no mistake that the three binaries take the same topic as and thereby prefigure the final, climactic personification of Marcia's father—namely, whether life is choiceworthy despite our knowledge that it entails suffering—but that they also approach it from a less emotional perspective and with less confrontation, but rather through a combination of rhetorical polish and intellectual sophistication, the key points of interest for philosophical and literary readers. In the initial *topographia,* the point is simple: one is not permitted to submit to groans, complaints, or grief when one makes a choice or acts with reasonable knowledge ("fully informed," *prudens sciensque*, 17.6) of the outcome. The implication for situations of loss is that

one's grief is unwarranted, but the dilemmas also compel readers to question whether they are prepared to act in accordance with reasons or whether they will yield to illicit grief.

The second *sermocinatio*, like the first, invites readers to reflect on their own ethical preparation and the coherence of their beliefs and knowledge. Nature's speech is coercive: Seneca assumes that his readers—not just Stoics, but most contemporary Romans—hold Nature to be intrinsic and foundational to human ethical life, such that no rational person would consider rejecting her "terms," such as they are. According to this variety of foundationalist naturalism, it simply isn't conceivable that one is able to exist outside of or without Nature, so her contract must accordingly be something that each person must simply accept. Readers who deny that suffering is a part of human life are thus told that their resistance is unnatural and false. For such readers, Nature's speech aims to compel them to reflect on their false beliefs and to reconcile those beliefs to natural ethical imperatives.[121] This move, of course, results in exactly the sort of cognitive dissonance that is required to reform beliefs and that thus plays an important role in consolatory educational theory.[122]

Of the three representations, however, the final *sermocinatio* provides the most nuanced choice to readers. It reflects the *topographia* of the first speech and prefigures that of the final, climactic cosmic scene, but this third ekphrastic account of the cosmos and human life forces readers to reconceptualize the question: in the Syracuse *topographia,* the question was whether to accept this particular life or that one, while Seneca's climactic personified speech *sub specie aeternitatis* instead asks whether readers will accept this life *given that it necessarily includes both joy and, ultimately, suffering and destruction*. In other words, the choice is no longer between images of two

121. Because Stoics so highly privileged "following nature" as their foundational precept, potential Stoics (aspiring or accomplished) should be particularly susceptible to Nature's pressure in this speech.
122. Cf. 171.

different lives, but rather between an image of life in its complexity and a total lack of life at all. Crucially, the option of a perfectly joyous life (of Stoic εὐπάθεια, say) has been deliberately eliminated to constrain readers' options. Because of that omission, this formulation of the dilemma is even more coercive than Nature's speech, but it is startlingly effective for that reason: only the most bereft, suicidal person would choose to have never lived rather than to have lived through both joy and pain. Indeed, Seneca slyly admits his conceit when he concludes the speech by saying, "You will reply that you want to live, of course. (Or on second thought, I suppose, you will not put yourself in a position where any curtailment causes you grief.)" (*Respondebis velle te vivere. Quidni? immo, puto, ad id non accedes ex quo tibi aliquid decuti doles!*, 18.8). Given the option, Seneca asserts that the (forced) choice is to live, even though life includes suffering—but, in a sideways wink to his more advanced Stoic readers, Seneca admits the obfuscated possibility beyond the simple dichotomy, wherein one advances to such a point of ethical self-sufficiency that she is no longer subject to any misfortune.

Throughout these three speeches, Seneca's focus clearly shifts away from Marcia and toward his popular audience,[123] which mostly consists of educated readers but not necessarily advanced philosophers. Unlike other places in the consolation, Seneca has altered his innovative "*exempla* first, precepts later" approach, and has instead reverted to the traditional method of writing consolation: name the topic or objection, state the principle, and then embellish it with examples appropriate to one's audience. In this, he is conforming to the cultured expectations of his non-bereaved audience. Rather than dwelling on precept and argument, however, Seneca

123. That is not to suggest that Marcia would not benefit from these images—after all, that they speak to multiple audiences is a key aspect of Seneca's rhetorical success. But insofar as focus (or focalization) is a relevant concept, it is clear that Marcia has fallen into the background.

At the same time, I would also suggest that these *sermocinationes*, addressed to non-bereaved audiences, surreptitiously advance a stratagem of familiarity, with the result that Marcia and other bereaved audiences are subtly prepared to be more receptive to the crucial, climactic cosmic *sermocinatio*.

continues to emphasize the psychagogic importance of his examples, metaphors, and vivid descriptions, which are, in the end, better suited for an audience of non-specialist readers uninterested in the technical details of philosophy. In short, Seneca's use of these dialogic, narrative, and descriptive devices reveals the central emphasis of moral education for his consolatory audiences.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the *Consolatio ad Marciam* is fundamentally a moral educational document that uses dialogic, narrative, and descriptive rhetoric to drive a program of perspectivism. In particular, Seneca undertakes a deliberate, destabilizing incremental method by which his various audiences are slowly but inexorably prepared—through psychological priming, rhetorical contrivance, and rational development—toward adopting a new ethical perspective on their moral situation. Ultimately, Seneca's perspectivism seeks to destabilize his readers' entrenched modes of thinking and acting and thereby to open them to broader, even cosmic perspectives on their emotional and moral lives. In these efforts, Seneca incorporates some aspects of Stoic ethics, physics, and moral psychology, and he writes with an eye toward his current social and political situation, yet his overriding concern remains that he achieve his educational goals, which—as Pierre Hadot says—amount to nothing less than the conversion of his readers to a new, and better, form of life, one marked most of all by a deep reserve of moral resilience.

Conclusion

The Consolatory Idea

Throughout this dissertation, I've outlined a descriptive theory of the consolatory as a comprehensive mode of discourse directed toward an individual who has suffered a distressing loss, and I've argued that consolatory activity seeks to develop resilience in a complex audience—not merely in the bereaved—through grief therapy and moral education. At the outset of the dissertation, I set forth several criteria for a well-formed theory of consolation: that it sufficiently describe the major aims, components, procedures, and techniques of consolation, that it cohere with the best models and explanations from allied disciplines, and that it respond to both contemporary and historical accounts of consolation and to the facts of particular consolations. In the foregoing pages, I have outlined consolatory theory according to these principles.

I also suggested that consolatory theory ought to be able distinguish the consolatory from other conceptual literary responses to loss, such as the tragic, gothic, elegiac, and so forth. Although an extensive study of these differences would be necessary to rigorously support the point, I nevertheless aim in this conclusion to sketch the outlines of the consolatory's distinct approach to issues of loss, grief, and recovery vis a vis other conceptual literary modes. In particular, I argue that consolatory theory not only synthesizes a complete theory from literary, philosophical, and rhetorical elements, but that it properly counts as a philosophical system of thought in and of itself, and furthermore that it possesses key characteristics that in fact establish it as an ideological system.[1] Having done so, I briefly contrast the idea of the consolatory with

1. I use the term "ideology" in a neutral (not pejorative) sense to refer to a generally systematic body of ideas, especially those action-oriented beliefs characteristic of a particular social group, that provides a comprehensive orientation to future belief and activity. In this neutral sense, ideology consists of a system of ideas, beliefs, and practices that structures individuals' worldviews by being intimately involved in how people make sense of their experiences and choose to act. Ideologies can be involved in structures of power, violence, and oppression (see Eagleton, *Ideology,* 4-10; Althusser, *On Ideology,* 15-22) and frequently involve a more or less malign distortion of

that of the tragic, which I hope will serve as a counterpoint to how the consolatory may be distinguished from other literary modes not only in terms of themes, technique, orientation, context, history, and so forth, but also on general conceptual grounds. Although my demonstration here will not definitely prove these relations, nor will it explicate the grounds for a general theory of conceptual literary modes, it does suggest directions for future research into conceptual literary modes as a whole. Moreover, it models a value-neutral approach to ideological analysis, one grounded in literary studies rather than politics, sociology, or cultural studies, which have together been the traditional sources of research into ideology. Most of all, though, this section illustrates the normative vision of human life advanced by the consolatory: that is, a humanistic vision that is grounded in the holistic experience of suffering from loss, marked by an optimism about human resiliency, and oriented toward the promotion of human flourishing.

The consolatory is not just an idea, but also an ideology. That it, it is a comprehensive philosophical system that involves a constellation of beliefs, attitudes, commitments, values, and feelings that provide interpretative structure to one's worldview and experiences.[2] New experience is interpreted through the lens of the system and is assimilated to it, either through

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reality (for an overview, see Eagleton, *Ideology,* 11-26; for a lucid theoretical description, see Habermas, "On Systematically Distorted Communication;" for intersections with rhetorical theory, see Burleson and Kline, "Habermas' Theory of Communication") insofar as they filter an individual's experience and shape it with respect to prior beliefs, but in my view are not necessarily inherently noxious, even if certain ideologies (e.g. many forms of religious fundamentalism) tend to be. (Also see the following footnote.)

2. Note that I'm mobilizing one particular conception of ideology among the many that have been advanced over time. In particular, I use ideology to refer to a comprehensive worldview with interpretative power, but without intrinsic moral valence; ideology as a concept is not essentially an evil thing, even though it sometimes causes humans to distort the truth of a matter. Rather, particular ideologies ought to be criticized—on account of the values that they promote, the degree to which they distort reality, and the content of their beliefs, attitudes, and commitments. Such criticism, while often both justified and necessary, nevertheless does not impugn the nature of ideology itself, which is a simple and inescapable fact of human mental and social life.

   For an overview of the topic of ideology, Terry Eagleton's *Ideology* remains the best summary of the concept. Eagleton's study includes a nuanced discussion of the competing ways that the term "ideology" has been leveraged by scholars in different fields and with different agendas (esp. see 1-31).

simple distortion or through an adaptation of the system that incorporates the new experience in the least radical way possible.[3] Indeed, the ultimate power of an idea like the consolatory is exactly that it is ideological: it is not only effective in its conceptual, explanatory power and practical function, but also insofar as it effectively structures the possibilities for how experience will be interpreted and incorporated into one's understanding. In this way, the consolatory is not merely an idea, but also an ideal way of thinking and behaving.

Two theories help explain how the consolatory's conclusions and master concepts transform it from a mere idea into a controlling ideology: *ultimate terms* and *systematization*. I borrow the first term from Richard Weaver and the latter from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. Weaver's notion of ultimate terms helps explain how the consolatory's values become constitutive of a particular worldview, while Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's work illustrates how philosophical systems are rhetorically formed and how they both shape and are shaped by forms of human discourse.

In a well-known paper,[4] Richard Weaver argues that institutions, political movements, and individuals structure their worldview through what he calls "ultimate terms."[5] These ultimate terms play a key orientational role in any ideology, both because they are accepted as a source of rhetorical power and also because they provide the benchmark by which other ideas, activities, and states may be measured. According to Weaver, ultimate terms are the "ultimate

3. Ideology is occasionally susceptible to more radical forms of alteration, usually through a process of so-called "quantum change," wherein the input that causes the change is disproportionate to its effect on the ideological system. In truth, quantum change is a feature of most complex systems of any type, and is at least partially responsible for such moral phenomena as existential crises, crises of faith, moments of religious conversion, and so forth. See Miller, "The Phenomenon of Quantum Change;" Miller and C'de Baca, *Quantum Change*; W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* 189-258.
4. Richard Weaver, "Ultimate Terms."
5. Weaver's "ultimate terms" are similar to Rorty's "final vocabulary," but do not merely function as ultimate terms of moral approval or censure, but rather also provide moral force to other, subordinate terms. Moreover, they retain greater objective force than Rorty allots to one's subjective(izing) "final vocabulary." For Rorty on final vocabulary, see *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, esp. 73.

generator[s] of [rhetorical] force flowing down through many links of ancillary terms. ... [An ultimate term's] force imparts to the others their lesser degree of force, and fixes the scale by which degrees of comparison are understood."[6] So-called "God terms," like the consolatory's notions of resilience, recovery, and growth, are master concepts that become structurally synonymous with the highest possible good.[7] For 20th-century American conservatives, for example, "liberty" functioned as a God term, a value whose invocation functioned as both ground and justification of last resort. If a policy or principle advanced liberty, it was imputed to be fundamentally good and desirable. "Devil terms" work in the opposite way; for modern American conservatives, "terrorism"—or especially "radical Islamic terrorism"—function as terms of maximum revulsion. By defining the value poles of maximal attraction and revulsion, ultimate terms thus demarcate the boundaries of a given ideology.

Within consolatory theory, "resilience" may be considered a God term. It is the concept toward which key concepts like "grief therapy" and "moral development" (and their supporting apparatus) are systematically oriented, from which those concepts gain their positive valence, and against which their success is measured. Indeed, the God term becomes its own justification: resilience, which initially may be thought to entail recovery and personal growth, ultimately transcends and encompasses those outcomes to become an end in itself, one which justifies and explains all consolatory activity, behavior, and cognition about adversity. For the consolatory, resilience is desirable because being resilient is inherently excellent. It is the outcome, activity, and state of being by which all other components of consolation are measured. As such, it serves

6. Weaver, "Ultimate Terms," 212.
7. In some ways, Weaver's ultimate terms are kin with Lyotard's "master narratives" (cf. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition.*), except that they specifically convey positive value and not just ideological dominance. Though Weaver was a moral realist, ultimate terms emphasize the functional (not necessarily metaphysically real) aspect of values used for rhetorical purposes, and are thus useful tools of analysis even for antifoundationalists.

as a linchpin of consolatory ideology, where it provides the ultimate grounds for other key concepts, like "recovery," "therapy," and "moral education," that orient and coordinate the other components of the system.

If ultimate terms help explain the structure of consolatory ideology, then Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's notion of systematization explains the structure of its internal conceptual system. According to the two, a philosophical system is formed when philosophical binaries are organized in a systemic way.[8] In particular, a philosophical system is constructed[9] when the results of analysis—the fundamental philosophical activity that they term *dissociation*[10]—are organized and ordered. As a result, philosophical binaries like *reality,* as distinguished from *appearance,* are made to correspond with other "philosophical pairs," like *real,* as opposed to *verbal.*[11] In turn, these pairs of correspondences can be aligned with and thus used to support other pairs through argumentation, wherein a contested pair is justified by its correspondence to established, accepted pairs.[12] One might argue, for example, that a ritual that supports the creation of a continuing bond is more effective to grief therapy than a pure avoidance strategy; this argument relies on the coordination between "continuing bonds" and "effective grief therapy" with "the development of resilience" (the ultimate consolatory term) as opposed to the analogous binary structure "avoidance strategies" with "ineffective grief therapy" and therefore with "pathological grief," an ultimate anti-consolatory term.

8. "... the philosopher will establish a *system* that will lead essentially to the relating of the various philosophical pairs with each other" (emphasis in the original). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 421.
9. "... [the dissociated term] is not simply a datum, it is a *construction* which... enables those [other terms/concepts] that do not conform to the rule... to be termed illusory, erroneous, or apparent (in the depreciatory sense of this word)." (Emphasis in the original.) Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric,* 416.
10. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric,* 411-15.
11. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric,* 415-36.
12. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric,* 436-50.

Not all analytical pairs are philosophical, of course. Rather, normal analytical procedure will form "opposite pairs," "classificatory pairs," and other sorts of hierarchical relationships between terms.[13] Philosophical pairs, in contrast, are distinguished by how they take as their object an apparently unitary concept, show an inconsistency or other problem with the concept, and then separate from the concept an actual unitary, consistent second idea that, by being distinguished from the first, resolves the inconsistency or problem. Moreover, these pairs of antithetical ideas may be arranged into a schema of correspondences; when they are, the pairs resolve into a philosophical system.

By this definition, the consolatory is a philosophical system. The consolatory's origins arise in problems about how to respond to loss. In particular, the consolatory first analyzes the broad concept of "coping" and argues that the idea is inadequate to account for what is actually involved in the provision of consolation; rather, the consolatory births the idea of "resilience" by distinguishing merely getting along (i.e. without any real adaptation to new circumstances) from deeper, more adaptive change—that is, between mere coping and resilience. Resilience, the theory claims, is the *real, true* goal of recovery from grief, whereas coping is *merely* an *apparent* goal. (In other words, "resilience" is aligned with "truth" and "reality" and "adaptive outcomes," while "coping" is aligned with unsatisfactory terms like "opinion" and "appearance" and "maladaptive outcomes"). Within consolatory theory, other dissociated pairs are then put into correspondence with this initial analytical maneuver: grief therapy is dissociated from the mere giving of comfort, for example, while moral education is dissociated from the provision of vague moral platitudes. Likewise, the problem of the audience is solved by dissociating the addressee into the literal bereaved, the metonymic bereaved, learners, philosophical critics, and so forth, where the

13. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric,* 422-3.

address to a single, specific person is merely *apparent* and *simplistic*, not *true* and *nuanced*. In this way, as many internal dissociations are performed and the resulting pairs brought into correspondence, the consolatory becomes defined as a set of relations between constituent ideas. Indeed, the theoretical chapters of this dissertation are engaged, in part, with this very analytical and dissociative practice.

As I have implied, in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's formulation, a philosophical system is also implicitly defined by contrast against those organized concepts which it is *not*. This, too, is characteristic of the consolatory. Among other things, the consolatory concludes that humans are inherently social beings, not isolated, independent subjects; hence the importance of social reintegration and the formation of continuing bonds. It posits that humans are flexible, tough, and capable of growth and recovery, not fragile or immutable; hence the emphasis on meaning reconstruction and on habituation. It accepts that loss rightly involves pain and suffering, not that human life is (or ought to be) separate from emotional distress; hence the importance of empathy, of therapeutic techniques to calm grief (e.g. Worden's Task Theory), of moral educational efforts at preparation (e.g. *meditatio*), and of the role of emotion in all aspects of the consolatory. Most of all, it asserts that death, in particular, is both a challenge to and opportunity for growth, not something that is inherently good or bad; hence the central value of resilience, which involves transforming an experience of distressing loss into a new form of life. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca provide a compelling rhetorical account of a philosophical system, but they say little about ideology. When joined with Weaver's idea of ultimate terms, however, their account suggests how a philosophical system may be transformed into an ideological one. When the structural correspondence of concepts becomes not only horizontally aligned, but also oriented toward and linked to pair of central, ultimate terms, the constituent

ideas thus function as the structural elements of an ideological, and not merely philosophical, system. As high-level terms support and define more specific ones,[14] the shape the resulting network provides internal structure and definition to the ideological system as a whole. According to this reasoning, the consolatory itself is an ideological system as well as a philosophical one. The consolatory becomes ideological when it reifies[15] philosophical concepts like "grief therapy," "meaning reconstruction," "continuing bonds," "moral education/development," "perspectivism," "ethical analysis," and so forth around a master concept, the god term "resilience," and then organizes those key concepts into a structure that explains experiences and phenomena in the world.

As an ideological system, however, the consolatory aims at more than accurately explaining a phenomenon and persuading others to adopt that explanation; rather, it also provides a normative vision of human life and the moral cosmos. (Indeed, the attractiveness of such images imparts e.g. religious ideologies with much of their seductive power.) For the consolatory, the worldview advanced is one where serious adversity is unavoidable, but where such adversity can both be overcome and also contribute to one's moral growth. In particular, the consolatory emphasizes humans' ability to feel, to reason, to learn, and to create social connections as primary paths to recovery, growth, and personal development, and it also focuses on humans' capacity to heal and recover from serious blows to their self-conception and self-understandings of their social/relational world. It asserts that certain activities—engaging in therapy, imaginatively practicing resilience, rehearsing ethical reasoning—allow a person to become more fully human, including by proactive behavioral and cognitive self-shaping. And it

14. Cf. Richard Weaver, "Ultimate Terms," 217.
15. I use this word to indicate hypostatization: the treatment of a conceptual abstraction as concrete reality, e.g. when I say, "Grief therapy demands..." as if it were a unitary thing with a univocal voice rather than an abstraction from myriad actual practices.

optimistically contends that growth and recovery is possible even in response to the most trying forms of adversity. In the end, all of this activity leads to a vision of humanity as fundamentally resilient against misfortune, instability, and distress.

Finally, the consolatory—like all ideologies—distorts reality. In particular, despite its demonstrated explanatory power or its internal ideological claims to the contrary, the consolatory cannot fully account for the practical elements of loss, grief, and recovery for every actual bereaved individual. Instead, it can do no more than suggest a set of needs and approaches based in its ideological agenda. Whenever a bereaved does not grieve a loss, for example, the consolatory has little traction; in truth, it can do little better than say, "This is beyond my scope." Thus, for example, when an abused spouse murders their abuser and feels no grief or loss from the act, the very grounds for consolation do not exist. Categories like "therapy," "resilience," and "ethical analysis" are simply inappropriate ways of describing the abused's situation or norms for their behavior. An errant and aggressive act of consolation, of course, might try to force such a loss to be treated by consolation by saying something like, "No, what we have here is *actually* a problem of denied grief (or whatever), so what is *really* needed is grief therapy and/or moral education," but such a response would do little more than reveal that the consolatory, like any idea, is ultimately constrained and limited by its own ideological commitments and conceptual vocabulary. The variety of human experience always ultimately escapes the grasp of any particular idea.

In closing, I would like to return to the topic of the consolatory's relationship to analogous literary modes. The framework within which I have situated this theory of the consolatory also implies parallel theories of other literary modes, each of which would then also advance a normative vision of human life. Take the tragic, for example, which has prompted much

commentary about its precise nature.[16] Although a detailed engagement with that discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, I would argue that a theory of the tragic operates parallel to my theory of the consolatory. That is, tragic theory is composed from a wide scope of ideal characteristics, some of them in tension, which may be more or less instantiated in a given text. Moreover, insofar as a text instantiates those characteristics, that text may be considered to more or less fully partake of the spirit of the tragic, although a distant participation in the immanent idea would not therefore imply any general aesthetic judgment of quality.

But the tragic, of course, also advances a very different image of human life than the consolatory. Where the consolatory emphasizes a person's ability to engage productively with strong grief, to integrate adverse experiences into their self-conception, to form meaningful continuing bonds with the deceased, to find strength in community, to dedicate one's reason to the growth of insight and wisdom, and so forth, the tragic instead implies a vision of human life in which the ties of blood and kinship structure human relational life, in which self-destruction is sometimes the most human response to events, in which the brutal laws of reciprocity and contagion guide human activity, and in which emotion determines action and supersedes reason. Because each theory advances an idealistic description of human activity, one which is ideologically self-contained when taken to its ultimate end, each thus promotes a very different vision of what it is to be human.

In fact, literature has developed a staggering array of conceptual modes through which human experience, and especially the near-universal experience of loss and grief, may be understood. In particular, literature has provided numerous alternative ideas in response to loss:

16. The best two analyses remain Peter Szondi's *The Idea of the Tragic*, which partially inspired this dissertation, and Terry Eagleton's *Sweet Violence,* which provides a sensitive description of the tragic, as well as a penetrating critique of theorizing in the way that I have done above (regarding the consolatory). My conceptualization of the consolatory idea as "fuzzy" and "immanent" (cf. 54ff.) was shaped by Eagleton's critique.

the consolatory, of course, and the tragic, but also the gothic, the elegiac, the Romantic,[17] and so forth. Taken together, these various modes provide lenses through which human experience is refracted and distorted, but also revealed and illuminated. Among the various modes relating to loss, the consolatory has been given the least scholarly attention. It is my hope that this dissertation has provided an initial, satisfactory account of the consolatory's features, and that future studies will continue to develop its distinctive approach to thinking about literature addressing death, grief, and recovery.

17. Specialists in the Romantic often argue whether there are, in fact, different and competing forms of the Romantic. For a wide-ranging survey of Anglophone critics and theories on the subject, see Hogle, "Romanticism and the 'Schools' of Criticism and Theory."

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