their gift from God and that it was by divine order that they had to divulge the truth”] (202).

The aspects Moser sheds light on are striking. Her exposition of the plant metaphors — so characteristic of the rhetoricians — is arresting as is her exposé of how this use of metaphor turns out to originate from Classical and Mediaeval ‘tree structures’, which were used to give a clear idea of logical categories or to give structure to a sermon in a transparent way. The author gives a clear exposition of how poetry and music, poetry and rhetoric became alienated. The conclusion that relations with the Church were of decisive importance for the rhetoricians’ success is not novel. Though the subtitle suggests that the reader will be able to form an idea of the poetics and position of the rhetoricians between 1450 and 1620, it has to be said that the author’s focus is mainly on the early sixteenth century. Although only nineteen poems have been included in the appendix it appears from — sometimes offhand — quotations that Moser has had access to more sources. This raises questions about the scope of her claims. For example, in how many texts does the image of rhetoric as Word Incarnate or as daughter of the Holy Ghost occur? How can the reader check Moser’s findings if he has no way of viewing the sources she used? Moreover, Moser’s study gives something less of a general outline than the subtitle suggests. She does, however, discuss interesting partial aspects of rhetoricians’ poetry. Recommended to all those interested in the literature of the rhetoricians.

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People have always needed consolation and they still do. In recent years Wim Kayser interviewed several scholars, artists and musicians ‘on consolation and beauty’: what can give consolation when ideologies have faded? The medieval philosopher Boethius had an ideology and wrote a consolation for his contemporaries.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480-ca. 526) was a late-antique Roman philosopher and statesman who wrote his famous De consolatione philosophiae (On the consolation drawn from philosophy) during his stay in prison. Gibbon described the author as ‘the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully [= Cicero] could have acknowledged for their countryman.’ On De Consolatione Philosophiae this chronicler of the later Roman Empire commented: ‘a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully, but which claims incomparable merit from the barbarism of the times and the situation of the author.’ In five parts, called ‘books’, Boethius describes the road to the highest degree of knowledge man can reach. The Consolatio was famous and
popular during the Middle Ages, as is attested by the many manuscripts and the many imitations, translations, allusions and paraphrases that appeared at the time. For instance, it was translated into German, French, Italian, Catalan, Greek, English and Dutch before the end of the 15th century.

Boethius begins the first book with lamenting his premature old age. A woman appears to him whom he recognizes as Philosophy. She tries to seek a remedy for his grief; she questions him and finds out that he believes that God rules the world, but does not know what he is himself, which is the cause of his weakness. In the second book Philosophy presents Fortune. The latter enumerates the blessings bestowed by her on Boethius. They are shown to be unsatisfactory and uncertain. In the third book Philosophy promises to lead him to true happiness, which is to be found in God alone, being the highest good and true happiness. Evil cannot exist, since the almighty God does not wish evil. In the fourth book Boethius raises the question of the theodicy and asks why, if the governor of the universe is good, evil exists and virtue is often punished and vice rewarded? Philosophy shows that in fact evil never goes unpunished nor virtue unrewarded, and she proceeds to discuss the nature of providence and fate. The fifth and last book takes up the question of man's free will and God's foreknowledge and tries to show that these doctrines do not contradict each other. The conclusion is drawn that God is a foreknowing spectator of all events and His ever-present eternal vision accords with our future actions, thus rewarding the good and punishing the evil.

The Consolatio is not a Christian work. It contains expressions such as daemones, angelica virtus and purgatoria clementia, but they are used in a pagan sense. Nowhere does Boethius find consolation in any Christian belief, and Christ is never mentioned in the work. This gives rise to the question why the Consolation was so popular in the Middle Ages, which were imbued with Christianity. We can understand this if we look at the way the Consolatio was commented on in those days. The so-called Gentse Boethius, a Dutch translation of the Consolatio (published in 1485), combined pagan and Christian authorities in the commentary. For instance, the third prose fragment of the second book ("Now if fortune spoke to you in this way in her own defence, you would not know what to reply, would you? If indeed you do have anything to say that would justify your complaints, you must utter it. You shall have your chance to speak now") is commented on by quoting among other authors Solomon, Jesus Sirach, Ambrosius, Cato, Cicero, Horace, Matthaeus Vindocinensis, Ovid, Seneca, Isidorus of Sevilla, St. Matthew, the psalmist, Henricus of Samaria and Aristotle. In this way the work was annexed to the Christian literature.

Recently, an edition of the second book of this Gentse Boethius has been defended as a thesis at Nijmegen University. Its author, Mariken Goris, provides the reader with text and translation (the section that is mentioned above can be found on pp. 218-220), but she neither gives any sources nor