«Tradizioni perdute»
of the «De Consolatione philosophiae»:

Comments on a recent Book¹

Dr Fabio Troncarelli’s proposals that the De consolatione philosophiae was available within a few years of its composition in what he has termed ‘une édition savante’ have aroused considerable scholarly interest². It is the purpose of this short note to examine three difficulties in Dr Troncarelli’s thesis, which need not be seen as obstacles to be demolished: they can open the way to a better understanding of the subject as a whole. It is in that cirenic and positive spirit that my observations are offered.

1. The prefatory ‘Vita’

The édition savante has been reconstructed from some two dozen manuscripts³. It is introduced by a Vita, which differs wholly or in part from all the other known Vitae, and which I shall call Vita T⁴. The critical edition of Vita T is based on five manuscripts (Troncarelli, pp. 11-14):

¹ I am indebted to the help, restraint and encouragement of many friends, particularly Carlotta Dionisotti.
³ TRONCARELLI, pp. 3-4. MS Maihingen, Öttingen-Wallerstein 1.2.4o.3, long unavailable and here used in the collation of Schepp (Troncarelli p. 3, n. 5), has passed with others of the same collection to the Universitätsbibliothek, Augsburg. They have been temporarily deposited in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.
⁴ Six Vitae were published by Peiper, from manuscripts of the ninth to twelfth centuries: R. PEIPER, Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii Philosophyae Consolationis libri quinque (Leipzig, 1871: Teubner), pp. xxviii-xxxv. For a seventh see the twelfth-century series of accessus edited by R.B.C. HUYGENS, Accessus ad auctores (Leiden, 1970), pp. 47-8; cf. the long passage in the contemporary pedagogic dialogue of Conrad of Hirsau (ibid., pp. 105-10). Vitae I-V are reprinted by Troncarelli (pp. 24-5). Still others are unpublished: e.g. MS London, BL. Egerton 628, fol. 4v-a.
MS London, BL, Harley 3095 s. ix/x
MS Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibl., 179 s. x
MS Metz, Bibl. Mun., 377 s. xi (destroyed)
MS Montpellier, École Méd., H 424 s. xii
MS Sélestat, Bibl. Mun., 93 s. xi.

The first and third parts (p. 12, lines 1-7; p. 13, lines 13-17) correspond to the Anecdoton Holderi⁵; the middle section includes material (p. 13, lines 1-5) that can be elucidated further:

**VITA T**

Ordinarius est qui per ordinem militat nec adhuc aliquem consecutus est gradum honoris.
Item et gregarius, id est humilis miles.
Rursus ordinarii dicuntur qui in proelio primos ordines ducunt.

Miles ordinarius est, qui per ordinem militat, nec adhuc aliquem consecutus est gradum honoris.
Est enim gregarius, id est humilis militiae. ISIDORE
Ordinarii dicuntur qui in proelio [quia primi sunt] ordines ducunt. VEGETIUS

Patricius secundus a rege dicitur: dictus quod sit pater ciuium.

Patricius inde uocati sunt, pro eo quod sicut patres filii, ita prouideant reipublicae. ISIDORE⁶

Whereas it is possible that *Vita T* and Isidore have a common source, prima facie *Vita T* is dependent here on Isidore (ob. 636). Perhaps the Isidore is an interpolation. But if we discount the Isidore (in all five manuscripts), why should we prefer the testimony of Harley 3095 + Sélestat 93 to the first quotation from the Anecdoton Holderi, and Einsiedeln 179 + Metz 377 + Sélestat 93 to the second quotation from the Anecdoton Holderi? What is for practical purposes the principal manuscript (in that it is accessible), Harley 3095, has the first quotation only, not the second. In short, it is a very delicate matter to assert the unity of *Vita T*. Each of the manuscripts has random prefatory notes, some of which coincide. Such coincidences do not of themselves constitute an independent *Vita*, still less a *Vita* written in the earlier sixth century.

If no one wrote the *Vita T*, then it is superfluous to argue that Cassiodorus did not do so. But since Dr Troncarelli has proposed Cassiodorus as the author of the *Vita T*, and hence, by extension, of the entire *édition savante*, we

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⁶. ISIDORE, Etymologiae IX.3.33 (ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911); Vegetius, De re militari II. 7 (ed. C. Lang, Leipzig, 1885, Teubner, p. 40); Isidore, ed. cit., IX.3.25.
must consider Cassiodorus' position. Cassiodorus wrote to Boethius on several occasions on behalf of Theodic the Ostrogoth. He was Boethius' immediate successor as *magister officiorum* at Ravenna. It was while Cassiodorus was *magister officiorum* that Boethius was imprisoned and murdered—a fine time for him to produce an edition of the *De consolatione philosophiae*. Some years later in the *Institutiones* Cassiodorus recommended the *De arithmetica* of Boethius, his translation of Euclid and at least two of the logical commentaries; there is no mention of the *Consolation*. The main link between the two men is the *Anecdoton Holderi*, which summarises the achievements of Symmachus, Boethius (omitting the *De consolatione philosophiae*) and Cassiodorus. That was written *c* 540, apparently by Cassiodorus himself; but it survives only in a fragment, which may be corrupt. Cassiodorus knew Boethius as a fellow-senator—whose pedigree was immensely longer than his own—and as a useful author for students of the *artes*. The evidence will take us no further.

II. The metres

In the *édition savante* the 39 metra of the *De consolatione philosophiae* are correctly named within the text—e.g.

CARMINA QUI QVONDAM STVDDIO FLORENTE PEREGI

elegiac

HEV QVAM PRECIPITI MERSA PROFVND0

dactilic tetrameter

TVNC ME DISCVSSA LIQVERVNT NOCTE TENEBAE

heroic alcmanian

The 27 different metres are all found in the *De centum metris* of the fourth-century grammarian Servius. They were also listed, with a prefatory note, by Lupus of Ferrières, within whose lifetime the earliest surviving manuscript

9. See A. Momigliano, 'Cassiodoro', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* xxi (Rome, 1978), pp. 494-504, at 495a. To me the *Anecdoton Holderi* has the look of a colophon, '... haec sunt> excerpta ex libello ... magistri officiorum', followed by a new rubric: 'ORDO GENERIS CASSIODORVM etc.'.
of the édition savante was written (MS Orléans 270). Given that Boethius himself and all his later commentators had access to the De centum metris, it is clearly impossible to judge whether Lupus drew on the metrical annotations in the édition savante or vice versa; or whether indeed Lupus’ list of Boethian metres is irrelevant to the édition savante either as source or as testimonium.

III. The rhetorical annotations

All five books of the édition savante (but principally I-III) have brief Latin and Greek marginal annotations of a broadly rhetorical character, which Dr Troncarelli has printed, with variants (pp. 38-45). It is perhaps unwise to press the suggestion that about half these rhetorical notes are usages found in (if not characteristic of) Cassiodorus’ Commentary on the Psalms. They are the common currency of antique rhetoric 13. But they can take us a little further into the unknown. The rhetorical annotations are of two kinds.

(a) Latin annotations

There are 28 different Latin words and phrases, some repeated several times. They all belong to the terminology of logic and rhetoric: ‘pleonas-

mus’ and ‘sardismus’, to take the most difficult; ‘conclusio’ and ‘me-
taforice’, to name the favourites. It may be Latin with a Greek flavour, but it is hardly abstruse. Most is in Isidore; the balance can be found in Servius’ commentary on the Aeneid – but for ‘sardismus. commixtio lingua-

rum’. That was conveniently available in Cassiodorus’ commentary on Psalm 59, verses 8 and following 14.

(b) Greek annotations

There are 50 different Greek words and phrases, with or without Latin equivalents. Some are repeated several times. Rather more than half can be

13. Troncarelli argues (i) that the terminology is Cassiodoran and (ii) that the marginal signs (e.g. D.M., AG.) found in some manuscripts are the characteristic authorial marginalia of Cassiodorus’ Commentary on the Psalms. On (i) the language is too widely current to imply specifically Cassiodoran authorship; see particularly the remarks of G. Milanese, reviewing Troncarelli, in Maia n.s. XXXIV (1982), 270-3. On (ii) the authorial marginalia to the Psalter- commentary, which have been scrupulously included by the Corpus Christianorum editor on the basis of three early manuscripts, have a repertoire of 13 signs, three of which are among the 8 signs listed – without loci – by Troncarelli (p. 36). However these signs arose, they have the appearance of an accepted scholarly practice, rather than the idiosyncratic shorthand of one individual.

14. Sed haec hebraea nomina, per hunc et alias tres versus qui sequuntur, mixta graece

found in the great Harleian glossary that was published by Goetz from an Italian manuscript of the late eighth century. The Harleian glossary is a Graeco-Latin list in a wonderfully exact alphabetical arrangement. That is to say, the key-words are Greek, not Latin; and there is no categorisation by subject. Hence it is nearly impossible that the author of the édition savante should have drawn on the Harleian glossary as such. But his own fifty Graeco-Latin annotations, when alphabeticised, constitute a hypothetical rhetorical glossary with the not inappropriate title, δυνατον: impossible. This hypothetical glossary could only be a source for the Harleian glossary, not vice versa. Would this relationship date the édition savante? Regrettably no: for the hypothetical glossary could remain intact and available throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. Nevertheless its existence in eighth-century Italy implies an active teaching milieu which contributed to the Harleian glossary. That milieu — it is perhaps prudent to avoid the word 'school' — had the materials used in the édition savante (e.g. Isidore), and may well have been responsible for it. Pace Dr Troncarelli’s belief in an insular textual tradition of the De consolatione philosophiae, it is also the most likely source for Alcuin’s manuscript of the Consolation: that crucial manuscript which inaugurated the serious study of the De consolatione philosophiae by the Carolingian intelligentsia.

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Résumé: Dr Troncarelli’s interesting hypothesis that Cassiodorus was responsible for an édition savante of the De consolatione philosophiae raises three questions, which merit further discussion. (i) the ‘Cassiodoran’ Vita has insufficient support in the manuscript tradition; (ii) the identification of the metres in the proposed édition savante must be referred not only to Lupus of Ferrières but to Servius, De centum metris; (iii) the rhetorical annotations, in themselves the common currency of antique rhetoric, in part relate to the great Graeco-Latin glossary that survives in an Italian manuscript of the later eighth century (ed. Goetz, Corpus Glossarium Latinorum II). It may be well to consider northern Italy as the milieu in which the text of the Consolation was preserved and its serious study resumed, or begun, in the later eighth century.


16. The Harleian glossary is on such a scale that its author must have worked from prior collections, rather than directly from texts and their marginalia.
