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Symposium report, August 2006

Our task has been to transcribe and collate the glosses to the Latin text in just over 60 manuscripts of Boethius's Consolation, with a cut-off point of 1100. We have been working at this steadily since the first year of the project, starting in each case with microfilms and finishing with visits to libraries, and now have complete collations of 35 manuscripts, and partial collations of 14.[1]

To give an idea of the numbers of glosses we are dealing with, a single manuscript might have as many as 12,000 glosses, or as few as 5 or 6. Our transcriptions and collations to date now run to nearly 2000 pages and record well over 100,000 individual glosses from the various manuscripts. The glosses range from one- or two-word lexical glosses to some that are nearly a page long. And since, with the longer glosses, it is rare for any two manuscripts to have exactly the same version of the gloss, we have had to develop a complex system of base text and apparatus to deal with them. We have also discovered several unrecorded Old English glosses and one Brittonic gloss, which turned out to be the earliest record of the Cornish language. In addition to these glosses, we have completed an edition of all the *vitae* material and of the comments and glosses on the titles to the Consolatio which are found in 52 of the manuscripts.

Of the manuscripts we have fully or partly collated so far, 14 were produced in the 9th century; 18 in the 10th century; and 17 in the 11th century. The glosses added to all these manuscripts range from those contemporary with the text to glosses of the 14th and 15th centuries, but as noted earlier we have not attempted to record glosses that were added after 1100.

The glosses come in various shapes, sizes and formats. The majority of the manuscripts contain the complete text of the Consolation with glosses written between the lines and in the margins. One of the more neatly written manuscripts we've transcribed is one currently at Trier (Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 1093), written in the 10th century.[2] Another is one in Paris (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 17814) that is thought to have been produced at Canterbury at the end of the 10th century; this Paris manuscript illustrates quite well the

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[1] In addition to these, our colleague Paolo Vaciago has transcribed and collated several others of the so-called 'St Gall' tradition.

[2] Images of this and the following manuscripts were shown at the symposium but are not reproduced here.

various layers of glosses that were added over the years. Some of the manuscripts were ruled to take glosses (for example, Cambridge, University Library, Kk.3.21, an 11th-century manuscript thought to be from Abingdon), but most glosses were written wherever the glossator pleased and more often than not the marginal glosses have no reference signs linking them to the lemmata.

A few manuscripts contain what has been described by others as a 'continuous commentary'. However, these so-called 'continuous' commentaries are essentially no more than a compilation of interlinear and marginal glosses separate from the full Latin text, sometimes with the lemma of the text and sometimes without, laid out on the page as if it is a single continuous text. Three of our manuscripts include such 'continuous' commentaries and in each case they are bound up with complete texts of the Consolation, which have further glosses added in the margins and between the lines. A few of the manuscripts we are looking at were written in double columns, but the majority were written in single columns.

In his two studies of Boethius's Consolation published in 1939 and 1967 Pierre Courcelle established a system of classifying the commentary manuscripts of the 9th to the 11th centuries.[3] He posited the existence of two original commentaries, one by Remigius of Auxerre and the other by the Anonymous of St Gall, and categorised most of the MSS as either 'Remigian' or 'St Gall', plus a few others that did not fit into these two main ones. Courcelle had constructed these distinct categories by analysing a selection of glosses on certain sections of the Boethius text in a few random manuscripts, rather than from full transcriptions or collations of the various extant manuscripts.

Whilst Courcelle's work was an indispensable starting point for our own work on the commentary manuscripts, we discovered as early as our first year (and Malcolm Godden reported this at our first symposium in 2003), that we could not sustain the strict distinctions that Courcelle made, and which numerous others after him[4] had followed.

There are undoubtedly patterns of glossing that emerge in certain groups of manuscripts, but just as one thinks that a manuscript falls into a particular category such as Courcelle's so-called 'Remigian' tradition, one comes across another group of glosses in the same manuscript that occur in Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, 179, the manuscript which Courcelle identified as the main representative of the St Gall commentary. So instead of Courcelle's neat categories we have found instead that there is a whole spectrum of glosses and manuscript groupings, and most manuscripts show a variety of types of glosses and

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[3] Pierre Courcelle, 'Étude critique sur les commentaires de la Consolation de Boèce (IXe–XVe) siècles)', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 14 (1939), 5-140 and *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris, 1967).

[4] See especially, Diane K. Bolton, 'The Study of the Consolation of Philosophy in Anglo-Saxon England', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 44 (1977), 33-78; Jacqueline Beaumont, 'The Latin Tradition of the De Consolatione Philosophiae', in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1981), pp. 278-305; Joseph Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius and its Latin Sources: a Reconsideration', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), 157-98; and the recent series, *Codices Boethiani: A Conspectus of Manuscripts of the Works of Boethius*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson et al. (1995-).

associations with other manuscripts. And this does not even take into account the shorter glosses, which appear to have a life of their own. So even if we might find a handful of manuscripts showing agreement in the longer glosses, of the nearly 49 manuscripts we have transcribed and collated so far, no two seem to have the same set of one- or two-word glosses.

Rather than Courcelle's notion of Remigian and St Gall traditions, there do appear to be patterns of glossing that one could conceivably describe as showing regional similarities. That is to say, there are glosses that tend to occur in manuscripts that were copied and glossed in Germanic areas, others that tend to occur in Frankish manuscripts and still others that tend to occur in manuscripts of English origin; these manuscripts might show Germanic, Frankish and English traditions. However, even these regional distinctions do not stand up to scrutiny for long. In some cases it is possible to say, for instance, that there are glosses in a manuscript of English origin in one book of Boethius that are typical of other commentary manuscripts of the English tradition, but in other books it might contain glosses that have no parallels with other English manuscripts, nor with any particular 'type' found in manuscripts of Continental origin.

All this is by way of saying that our early suspicion that we would have to transcribe or collate every single early gloss in every manuscript to get as full a picture as we can of the varieties of glossing, and to be sure of picking up those that might have been available to the Alfredian circle, has been confirmed and is reconfirmed every time we begin examining a new manuscript.