

“NOURISHED AT THE BREAST OF ROME”:
THE QUEENS OF OSTROGOTHIC ITALY
AND THE EDUCATION
OF THE ROMAN ELITE¹

Among studies on the education and the role of women of the Roman elite in Late Antiquity, recently enriched by a series of interesting contributions², the female part of the royal family in Ostrogothic Italy deserves special attention. It was not just propaganda, but the ambitions of the Amal family, which desired to imitate the best examples of the ‘Romanitas’ during the almost forty years of government.

In the panegyric written at the end of 536 to celebrate the wedding of Witigis and Matasuentha at Ravenna, Cassiodorus first praises Witigis, the *uir fortis*, who became king of the Goths by proving his military valour, and then continues praising Matasuentha, the bride³. The daughter of Amalasuintha and Theoderic’s

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2) See for example G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity. Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford 1993); C. Krumeich, *Hieronymus und die christlichen *feminae clarissimae** (Bonn 1993); P. Rousseau, ‘Learned Women’ and the Development of a Christian Culture in Late Antiquity, *SO 70* (1995) 116–147; G. Disselkamp, *Christiani senatus lumina. Zum Anteil römischer Frauen der Oberschicht im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert an der Christianisierung der römischen Senatsaristokratie* (Bodenheim 1997); C. Steininger, *Die ideale christliche Frau. Eine Studie zum Bild der idealen christlichen Frau bei Hieronymus und Pelagius* (St. Ottilien 1997); G. Vidén, *St. Jerome on the Female Chastity. Subjugating the Elements of Desire*, *SO 73* (1998) 139–157; M. R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy. Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass./London 2002). For the successive period see A. Kuhn (ed.), *Frauen im Mittelalter*, Bd. 2: *Frauenbild und Frauenrechte in Kirche und Gesellschaft. Quellen und Materialien* (Düsseldorf 1984); H. W. Goetz, *Frauen im frühen Mittelalter. Frauenbild und Frauenleben im Frankenreich* (Weimar/Köln/Wien 1995); C. Nolte, *Conversio und Christianitas. Frauen in der Christianisierung vom 5. bis 8. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1995).

3) Cassiod. *Orationum reliquiae*, MGH AA 12, L. Traube ed., 479 ll. 19–20: *redeamus igitur ad dominam felicem*.

niece, who now married the new king, certainly did not lack the necessary virtues⁴ that Cassiodorus refers to as “sisters”⁵, linking them metaphorically with parts of the body in an ideal image:

Huc ergo ad aulica penetralia, sorores honestissimae, conuenite; hic cum summo nitore comite, quae uos possit ornare. Prima frontem castitas caelestis instituat; deinde rosea uerecundia genas depingat; moderata temperantia fulgentium luminum serenet aspectum; cor nobile mitis pietas amministret; sermonem linguae honora sapientia largiatur; gressus religiosos modestia tranquillita componat: talem pompam habere meretur obsequii, quae tantorum regum posteritas potuit inueniri⁶.

Such praise of the last of the Amal queens that emphasizes traditional Roman virtues and acknowledges her learning is not really a novelty in Ostrogothic Italy. We know, in fact, almost always from Cassiodorus’ letters, that there had been persons of culture among Theoderic’s relatives and descendants⁷. Aside from Theodahad, king from 534 to 536, the princesses of the family were the ones who were especially notable for such skills. This applies, in general terms, to Amalafriada, Theoderic’s sister, given by him in marriage to the Vandal king Thrasamund; he recalled her virtues a few years later: *generis Hamali singulare praeconium . . . feminam prudentiae uestrae parem, quae non tantum reuerenda regno, quantum mira-*

4) Traube ed., 480 ll. 1–2.

5) See the definition of Mart. Cap. 2, 127 of the four Cardinal Virtues as *matronae sobrio decore laudabiles*.

6) Traube ed., 480 ll. 2–15, followed by the interesting parallel with the colours of flowers (ll. 15–20): *Vos autem nubescite prasini, pallescite lychnides, albescite hyacinthi, fuscaminii margaritae: non hic regias opes insana cupiditate deuoratis, tulit uobis pretia, quae de se probatur ornata*; and, on the same subject, the fragments on pages 481–482; see D. Romano, Cassiodoro panegirista, in: id., *Letteratura e storia nell’età tardoromana* (Palermo 1979) 364–365.

7) On this and on the work of Cassiodorus at court as ‘minister of education’ see S. Krautschick, *Cassiodor und die Politik seiner Zeit* (Bonn 1983) 142–160, 164–167; B. Luiselli, *I dialoghi scientifici fra Cassiodoro e Teoderico*, in: *Saggi di storia del pensiero scientifico dedicati a Valerio Tonini* (Roma 1983) 59–68; id., *Storia culturale dei rapporti tra mondo romano e mondo germanico* (Roma 1992) 677–684; J. Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford 1992) 87–88; U. Pizzani, *Le lettere di Teoderico a Boezio e la mediazione culturale di Cassiodoro*, *Cassiodorus 4* (1998) 141–161. On education in this period, see in general P. Riché, *Éducation et culture dans l’occident barbare. VI^e–VIII^e siècles* (Paris 1962) part. 96–98; id., *Les écoles et l’enseignement dans l’Occident chrétien de la fin du V^e siècle au milieu du XI^e siècle* (Paris 1979).

*bilis possit esse consilio*⁸. The same is true for Amalaberga, Amalafri-da's daughter, about whose marriage with Herminifrid, king of the Thuringians, Cassiodorus wrote: *habebit felix Thoringia quod nutriuit Italia, litteris doctam, moribus eruditam, decoram non solum genere, quantum et feminea dignitate, ut non minus patria uestra istius splendeat moribus quam suis triumphis*⁹. We may also recall the otherwise practically unknown Theodenantha, the daughter of Theodahad and Gudeliva¹⁰; a fragment of a poem in elegiac couplets probably composed by her has survived. It shows a remarkable literary ability¹¹.

However, there is one who stands out among these learned princesses: Amalasuinth, Theoderic's daughter; she was widely celebrated for her wisdom, defined as *sapientissima domina*¹², she knew three languages (Latin, Greek and Gothic)¹³ and was described as a philosopher queen gifted with the wisdom of Solomon. Cassiodorus wrote *beata res publica quae tantae dominae gubernatione gloriatur*, referring to her, in a letter to the Roman Senate drafted in the name of Theodahad, recalling the well-known Platonic motif¹⁴.

8) Var. 5,43,1 (A. D. 511); see also Anon. Vales. 68 and Jord. Get. 299.

9) Var. 4,1,2 (A. D. 507–511); see Jord. Get. 299 and Anon. Vales. 70; Prok. BG 1,12,22. After the death of her husband she returned to her brother Theodahad's court; see Prok. BG 1,13,2.

10) About Gudeliva see Cassiod. var. 10,21 and 10,24.

11) See O. Fiebiger/L. Schmidt, *Inchriftensammlung zur Geschichte der Ostgermanen* (Vienna 1917) 103 num. 204 (already in Anth. Lat. 2 num. 1850; Bull. Arch. Crist. 1894, 77–82 pl. 8; ILS 8990): [*Mens percussa fjerit geminum uno tempore uulnus, | [et semper rem]eans fit sine fine dolor. | [Paruolus ille dedit lac]rimas, mox poscit et alter | [iam senior rar]a sed bonitate pater. | Fl. Amala Amalafri-da Theodenanda c[larissima] f[emina]*). About Theodenanda see Prok. BG 1,8,3.

12) Var. 10,4,4 and 8.

13) Var. 11,1,6: *Hanc enim dignissime omnia regna uenerantur, quam uidere reuerentia est, loquentem audire miraculum. Qua enim lingua non probatur esse doctissima? Atticae facundiae claritate diserta est: Romani eloquii pompa resplendet: natiui sermonis ubertate gloriatur: excellit cunctos in propriis, cum sit aequaliter ubique mirabilis. Nam si uernaculam linguam bene nosse prudentis est, quid de tali sapientia poterit aestimari, quae tot genera eloquii inoffensa exercitatione custodit?;* also var. 10,4,6: *Hinc est quod eius doctrina mirabilis per multiplices linguas magna ubertate diffunditur, cuius ingenium ita paratum reperitur ad subitum, ut non putetur esse terrenum.*

14) Var. 10,4,7 (of which see Plat. rep. 473D, and in those same years also Boeth. cons. 1,4,5), where he continues: *agnoscite, principes uiri, sapientissimae esse dominae, quod in nobis potuerit plus placere*. See especially §§ 5–6 of the letter: *discerent profecto noua philosophi, si uiderent et minora libris suis faterentur condita*

Procopius’ opinion was similar¹⁵. Amalasuintha was a leading figure in Ostrogothic Italy. There are two letters in particular in which Cassiodorus praises her for her wisdom: var. 10,4, in the name of Theodahad, and var. 11,1, a short oration in honour of the queen, apparently delivered in the Senate¹⁶. This latter work offers a succession of virtues in the final passage that is on the whole not unlike those later attributed to Matasuentha. They are attributed to her illustrious forebears:

*Ordo flagitat dictionis Augustarum ueterum pompam moderna comparatione excutere. Sed quemadmodum illi sufficere poterunt exempla feminea, cui uirorum laus cedit uniuersa? Hanc si parentum cohors illa regalis aspiceret, tamquam in speculum purissimum sua praeconia mox uideret. Enituit enim Hamalus felicitate, Ostrogotha patientia, Athala mansuetudine, Vvinitarius aequitate, Vnimundus forma, Thorismuth castitate, VValamer fide, Theudimer pietate, sapientia, ut iam uidistis, inclitus pater. Cognoscerent hic profecto uniuersi singillatim propria, sed feliciter faterentur esse superata, quando unius praeconium cum turba se iure non potest aequare uirtutum. Aestimate quale eis esset de tali herede gaudium, quae merita potuit transire cunctorum*¹⁷.

The passage suggests a ‘Romanised’ reading of the Amal royalty, in which the Roman types of virtue supersede the traditional warrior forms always identified with the Gothic kings (for example, in the *Getica* by Jordanes). And if the *sapientia* attributed to Theoderic – the queen’s *inclitus pater*¹⁸ – stands out, *felicitas*, *patientia*, *man-*

quam huic cognoscerent attributa. In tractatibus acuta, sed ad loquendum summa moderatione grauissima ... In libris regum regina austri uenisse legitur ad discendam sapientiam Salomonis: hic principes audiant quod sub ammiratione cognoscant.

15) BG 1,2,3 and HA 16,1.

16) See Romano (above n. 6) 369–373; Krautschick (above n. 7) 161–184, 124–125 and 140; also V. Fauvinet Ranson, Portrait d’une régente. Un panégyrique d’Amalasonthe (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 11,1), Cassiodorus 4 (1998) 267–308. This panegyric-letter, written by Cassiodorus in thanks for his promotion to the pretorian prefecture, is in the *Variae* the first of the letters in Cassiodorus’ name (books XI and XII).

17) Var. 11,1,19–20; see for example W. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarians History (A. D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon (Princeton 1988) 33–34, 39–40; B. Meyer-Flügel, Das Bild der ostgotisch-römischen Gesellschaft bei Cassiodor: Leben und Ethik von Römern und Germanen in Italien nach dem Ende des Weströmischen Reiches (Bern/Frankfurt a. M./New York/Paris/Wien 1992) 72, 579–580 notes 36–41; A. S. Christensen, Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths. Studies in a Migration Myth (Copenhagen 2002) 74–76.

18) In the same year Theoderic is even called *purpuratus philosophus*, in var. 9,24,8, referring to Cassiodorus’ appointment to the pretorian prefecture (quoted below, n. 44).

suetudo, aequitas, forma, castitas, fides and *pietas* are no less significant, the virtues vaunted by ancestors of the royal house which, taken together, define the wise king. Indeed, Amalasuinthia, the last descendant *quae merita potuit transire cunctorum*, who is placed at the end of the list, is praised because she herself possesses all the virtues listed. Something similar is implied by the other letter quoted above, in which Theodahad referring to Amalasuinthia states: *in ipsa est enim decus regnorum omnium, in ipsa nostrae originis flos bonorum. Quicquid fulgemus, ab eius claritate suscipimus, quando non solum parentibus laudem contulit, sed ipsum quoque genus humanitatis ornauit. Quis possit sufficienter edicere, quanta pietate, quanto morum pondere decoretur?*¹⁹ Now, only three years after these two letters, Matasuinthia is presented as the ideal sovereign in accordance with a similar principle. In fact, the group of virtues associated with her is justified by the noble series of kings who have preceded her: *talem pompam habere meretur obsequii, quae tantorum regum posteritas potuit inueniri*, we read in the aforementioned fragment of the panegyric. It seems to be an interesting coincidence.

However, beyond the eulogistic character of Cassiodorus' works, what is the meaning of such a repertoire of Roman virtues at the Amal court? Procopius tells us that "Amalasuinthia wished to make her son (Athalaric) resemble the Roman princes in his manner of life and was already compelling him to attend the school of a teacher of letters (ἐς γραμματιστοῦ)"²⁰. Although the queen's efforts were hindered by the Gothic aristocracy, who wished to have a king brought up in the "barbarian way" (κατὰ τὸν βάρβαρον νόμον) and a worthy successor to Theoderic²¹, it is, however, possible to think that it could have been different for Matasuinthia, the daughter, who was given a 'literary' education just like the other princesses and members of the family who were not destined for the throne. Although the best results of the acculturation of the court are to be found in the later stages of

19) Var. 10,4,5. See also the fragment from the panegyric of Cassiodorus in Traube ed., 483, ll. 2–5: *iam, si cum propriis moribus compareris, facile ab insigni animae parte superaris, quae pulchritudine corporis mortalia cuncta transcendis*; Romano (above n. 6) 358–359 thinks the person mentioned is Amalasuinthia.

20) Prok. BG 1,2,6 (translation Dewing).

21) Prok. BG 1,2,6–17.

the Amal reign, especially in the figure of Amalasuintha and Theodahad²², it is known that in the early phases of this process Theoderic had already provided an impulse to Roman eloquence and had supported the study of letters to teach *civilitas*²³; his line was carried further by Athalaric, who intervened to ensure that the fees for *magistri* and the Roman professional categories were not reduced²⁴, because they were important for the *mores* in the Kingdom and for the royal palace: *per quos et honesti mores proueniunt et palatio nostro facunda nutriuntur ingenia*, as he stated²⁵.

These points may seem obvious, but they are actually important if we consider more carefully what the educational model was like for the Roman elite.

22) On Theodahad see var. 10,3 and 11,13,4; Prok. BG 1,3,1 and 1,6,15–18.

23) This in the panegyric by Ennodius, opusc. 1,74–77 and in general 1,2; see the comment by S. Rota, Magno Felice Ennodio. Panegirico del clementissimo re Teoderico (opusc. 1) (Roma 2002) 399–405. About the *civilitas* of Theoderic see T. Hodgkin, Theoderic the Goth, the barbarian Champion of Civilisation (London/New York 1923); W. Ensslin, Theoderich der Große (München 1959) 215–220; J. J. O’Donnell, Cassiodorus (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1979) 96–100; Moorhead (above n. 7) 75–80; B. Saitta, La *civilitas* di Teoderico. Rigore amministrativo, “tolleranza” religiosa e recupero dell’antico nell’Italia ostrogota (Roma 1993); M. Reydellet, Théoderic et la *civilitas*, in: A. Carile (ed.), Teoderico e i Goti tra Oriente e Occidente, ‘Atti del Congresso Internazionale Ravenna, 28 settembre – 2 ottobre 1992’ (Ravenna 1995) 285–296; A. Stüven, Rechtliche Ausprägungen der *civilitas* im Ostgotenreich. Mit vergleichender Berücksichtigung des westgotischen und des Burgundischen Rechts (Frankfurt a. M. 1995); D. Kohlhas-Müller, Untersuchungen zur Rechtsstellung Theoderichs des Großen (Frankfurt a. M./Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien 1995) passim; P. Amory, People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554 (Cambridge 1997) 43–78.

24) Var. 9,21,3–4 (A. D. 533), addressed to the Senate, in which he also states: *Prima enim grammaticorum schola est fundamentum pulcherrimum litterarum, mater gloriosa facundiae, quae cogitare nouit ad laudem, loqui sine uitio. Haec in ceteris orationis sic errorem cognoscit absorum, quemadmodum boni mores crimen detestantur externum . . . Grammatica magistra uerborum, ornatrix humani generis, quae per exercitationem pulcherrimae lectionis antiquorum nos cognoscitur iuuare consiliis. Hac non utuntur barbari reges: apud legales dominos manere cognoscitur singularis. Arma enim et reliqua gentes habent: sola reperitur eloquentia, quae Romanorum dominis obsecundat*; see Riché (above n. 7) 68 and in general 62–69 on the schools in Rome and in other important Italic cities; see also Rota (above n. 23) 17–22. Justinian confirmed these privileges (*quatenus iuuenes liberalibus studiis eruditi per nostram rempublicam floreat*), as we know from a paragraph in *Sancitio Pragmatica* (Nov. Iust. app. 7,22).

25) Var. 9,21,8.

In the middle of Theoderic's reign (ca. 511/2), Ennodius dedicated an *opusculum* to two of his pupils; it is traditionally known as *Paraenesis didascalica*²⁶. The two youths for whom it was intended, Ambrosius and Beatus, had gone to Rome to complete their literary education and had asked Ennodius for advice as to how they should proceed in their studies, which schools of rhetoric and which teachers to follow²⁷. This short book, which finishes by praising a series of scholars among the Roman Senatorial elite – including Symmachus, the young Boethius and Cethegus – whom the author recommends to his pupils as teachers, has a particular structure. Alternating passages of praise and poems (the author's own choice, as he states)²⁸, Ennodius describes the most important Christian virtues, '*Verecundia*', '*Castitas*' and '*Fides*', and also the foundations of the learning (*de praefatis uirtutibus facessat studiorum liberalium deesse diligentiam, per quam diuinarum bona rerum quasi pretiosi monilis luce sublimentur*), '*Grammatica*' and '*Rhetorica*'; the latter are characterised as nurse and mother of the liberal arts²⁹. However, close observation of the individual parts of the work brings out an interesting aspect: are these not qualities which Cassiodorus was to attribute to Matasuentha twenty-five years later in the panegyric? Let us repeat them in order: *castitas*,

26) F. Vogel ed., MGH AA 7, opusc. 6. Following tradition, we are using this title, even if it may be incorrect; see for this G. Moretti, *L'Epistula didascalica* di Ennodio fra Marziano Capella e Boezio, in: F. Gasti (ed.), *Atti della prima Giornata Ennodiana*, Pavia 29–30 marzo 2000 (Pisa 2001) 69–78 at 71; see bibliography below, n. 35.

27) Opusc. 6,1: *multis etenim supplicationibus exegistis, ut pagina uobis concinnationis didascalicae fingeretur. Volens me in multorum iura summissi ...* and §26: *Ecce habetis gratiae meae obsidem paginam, quam uelut pedagogam sectamini*; see also §18, quoted below, n. 51.

28) Opusc. 6,3: *me tamen diu tenuerunt anxium deliberationis incerta, utrum ad uos per carmen an epistulari lege uerba promulgarem. Elegi affectionem meam circa uos utroque dicendi calle patefacere, quia et praecipientem decet fortis elocutio et pressis admonitione mentibus mollioris stili cura subuenitur.*

29) Opusc. 6,10–11 (see also §§12–13), '*Grammatica*': *Istae tamen prae foribus quasi nutricem ceterarum anteponunt grammaticam ...*; opusc. 6,14–17, '*Rhetorica*' (§§16–17): *Ad meum compendium ubicumque est Romanus inuigilat. Fasces diuinitas honores si non ornatus, abiecta sunt. Nos regna regimus et imperantis salubria iubemus ... Ante scipiones et trabeas est pomposa recitatio ... Poetica, iuris peritia, dialectica, arithmetica, cum me utantur quasi genetrice, me tamen adserente sunt pretio* (see also Cassiodorus, quoted at notes 24 and 39). To the *Rhetorica* Martianus Capella dedicates the central book of *De nuptiis* (the fifth in a work structured in nine books). See for example Riché (above n. 7) 79–80.

*uerecundia*³⁰ and *honora sapientia* – the latter referring to the *sermo linguae*; Cassiodorus adds *modestia tranquilla* (to regulate the *gressus religiosi*)³¹, and two more basic virtues of the traditional sovereign, *temperantia* and *pietas*³². This is not all. Are not these (as a whole) also the very same aforementioned qualities attributed to Amalasuintha? Cassiodorus’ Roman profile of the female Amal royalty is founded almost on the same repertoire of virtues which also Ennodius recommended to his pupils. However, Matasuentha’s virtues reflect the ideal feminine figure of the Roman aristocracy³³, while the virtues of Amalasuintha – the queen who rules for her infant child – show about all a political (platonically) significance. The complete list of virtues with their political and neo-platonic significance, referring to the four Cardinal Virtues, is found for example in Macrobius’ *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*. It is significant that this work was re-edited at Ravenna just before 485 by Symmachus the younger together with a descendant of the author (as we are informed by a *subscriptio*)³⁴.

30) It is worth noting Cassiodorus’ reference to Matasuentha (Traube ed., 480 ll. 5–7): *Prima frontem castitas caelestis instituat; deinde rosea uerecundia genas depingat*, and Ennodius’ verses of Paraenesis didascalica 5, referring to *uerecundia*, the *mater bonorum operum*: *Tinguite candentes roseo de murice uultus / Atque fidem morum pandite de facie. / In niueo spargens maculas sis pulchrior ore, / Cum sudans tenerum roscida colla feras. / Nil tibi plus lingua tribuas quam stemmate frontis. / Quicquid amare libet, hinc tibi concilia.*

31) The *fides*, which Cassiodorus does not mention in the panegyric to Matasuentha, is indirectly attributed to Amalasuintha in var. 11,1,19 (quoted above). This *uirtus* occupies the central position of Ennodius’ work, opusc. 6,8–9: *... fidei ornate consortio, quia sicut in emendatis moribus principem locum optinet ... quia nihil est quod fidem possit antecere ...*

32) See, for example, the aforementioned var. 11,1,19 and 10,4,5 (about Amalasuintha); also var. 10,3,7 and 11,13,4 (Theodahad).

33) See bibliography above, n. 2.

34) Macr. In somn. Scip. 1,8,7: *prudentialiae insunt ratio, intellectus, circumspectio, prouidentia, docilitas, cautio ... fortitudo praestat magnanimitatem, fiduciam, securitatem, magnificentiam, constantiam, tolerantiam, firmitatem ... temperantiam sequuntur modestia, uerecundia, abstinentia, castitas, honestas, moderatio, parcitas, sobrietas, pudicitia ... de iustitia ueniunt innocencia, amicitia, concordia, pietas, religio, affectus, humanitas*. See Willis ed. 2,94: *Aur. Memm(ius) Symmachus u. c. emendabam uel disting(uebam) meum Rauennae cum Macrobio Plotino Eudoxio u. c. Macrobbii Ambrosii Theodosii u. c. et inl. de Somnio Scipionis lib. prim.* About the political meaning of these virtues see for example C. Zintzen, *Römisches und Neoplatonisches bei Macrobius* (Bemerkungen zur πολιτική ἀρετή im *Comm. in somn. Scip.* I 8), *Palingenesia* 4 (Wiesbaden 1969) 357–376.

These (and other) coincidences between the panegyrist and composer of official letters for the Gothic court, and an author who entertained his private correspondence with personages of the Roman aristocracy, are remarkable, particularly because of the great significance that modern critics have given to Ennodius' work³⁵ as a prescriptive model for the Roman governing elite in Ostrogothic Italy (Ambrosius, one of the addressees of the *opusculum*, is probably the same person who became *quaestor palatii* of Athalaric in A. D. 526/7)³⁶. The booklet provides an educational system which, in line with the tendency prevailing at that time, unites the disciplines of the classical cultural heritage with the Christian virtues (see below, the example of Symmachus); the latter were already prominent in the late fourth and at the beginning of the fifth century in the religious treatises (for example *De officiis*, *De uirginitate* and *De doctrina christiana*) of Jerome, Ambrose, John Chrysostomus, Augustine, as well as in the private correspondence of some of them with women of the Roman aristocracy³⁷. This model clears the way for the liberal arts³⁸, particularly valued in that period by Boethius, Symmachus, Cassiodorus, and by Martianus Capella before them³⁹. Cassiodorus tends to charac-

35) See S. Légise, Saint Ennodius et la haute éducation littéraire dans le monde romain au commencement du VI^e siècle, L'Université Catholique n. s. 5 (1890) 209–228, 375–397, 568–590; W. Couvreur, 'n Paedagogisch traktaat uit het begin der VI^e eeuw. Paraenesis didascalica van Magnus Felix Ennodius, also id., 'n Paedagogisch traktaat uit het begin der VI^e eeuw. Ennodius als dichter en paedagoog, Philologische Studien 5 (1933/34) 122–133 and 215–226; R. A. Rallo-Freni, Le concezioni pedagogiche nella *Paraenesis didascalica* di Magno Felice Ennodio, in: Umanità e Storia. Scritti in onore di Adelchi Attisani 2: Letteratura e storia (Messina 1971) 109–126; L. Navarra, Ennodio e la "facies" storico culturale del suo tempo (Cassino 1974) part. 13–17; J. C. Relihan, Ancient Menippean Satire (Baltimore/London 1993) 164–175 and 211–219 (the English translation); Moretti (above n. 26) 69–78; S. A. H. Kennel, Magnus Felix Ennodius: A Gentleman of the Church (University of Michigan 2000) 54, 163–164.

36) See J. R. Martindale, The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, II, A. D. 395–527 (Cambridge 1980) 69.

37) About the meaning of these Christian virtues in the fourth and fifth centuries and the Christianising of the women of the Roman elite see for example the bibliography at n. 2.

38) Ennodius also mentions the *disciplinae* or the liberal *studia* in other works (see the index in Vogel ed., 392).

39) It is known that besides translating and commenting philosophic works Boethius also dedicated himself to the sciences of the *quadrivium*. As for Cassiodorus, considering the structure of the second book of the *Institutiones*,

terize the Amal queens accordingly, whose *mores* and Christian virtues accompany and complete the knowledge of the *litterae*. From this point of view, the virtues of Matasuentha, like those of Amalasuintha and the other queens, beside casting light on the question of the court’s culture, demonstrate in particular the direct link of the royal Amal family with the education of the Roman-Italic elite. In order to gain a clear understanding of the importance of certain virtues in the Roman education – also for female member of aristocratic families – at that time, it is sufficient to read how Boethius remembered his wife Rusticiana in his *Consolatio*: she was the daughter of the celebrated Symmachus, *uxor ingenio modesta, pudicitia pudore praecellens et, ut omnes eius dotes breuiter includam, patri similis*⁴⁰ (in this context Ennodius, Paraen. Didasc. 6, about the ‘*Castitas*’ is interesting: *pudori ergo cognatam semper sociate pudicitiam*). And, above all, one needs only to read what Ennodius wrote in the *Paraenesis didascalica* about Barbara and Stephania, two women belonging to the Roman nobility who were renowned for their *mores* and for the *sermo*, and who are true models to be imitated:

Iam si matronarum delectat aditio, habetis domnam Barbaram, Romani flos genii, quae testimonio uultus patefaciat lucem sanguinis et saporis, in qua inuenietis et uerecundam securitatem et de bono actionis confidentem uerecundiam, sermonem naturali et artificio simplicitate conditum, ut nec lepos deuenustet alloquii nec duris splendor feminarum rigescat affatibus, in qua sic in naturam transit honestatis diligentia, ut si uel mentiri uellet, non possit errorem. Sonat pudicam lingua dulcedinem nec mentis nubulum tecto sereni sermonis operitur: hoc est pectoris quod

where, in praef. 4, he states the topics he will deal with: *de arte grammatica, quae est uidelicet origo et fundamentum liberarium litterarum . . . de arte rhetorica, quae propter nitorem et copiam eloquentiae suae maxime in ciuilibus quaestionibus necessaria nimis et honorabilis aestimatur*; the following section, the third, is devoted to *logica (quae dialectica nuncupatur)*, and the fourth deals with the sciences of the *quadriniium*. Martianus Capella devotes books III–IX of *De nuptiis* to the single disciplines of the *triuuium* and the *quadriniium*. It is significant that *De nuptiis* was re-edited at Rome – in a school *ad portam Capenam* – in 534 by Securus Melior Felix and his scholar Deuterius (as we are informed in a *subscriptio*).

40) Boeth. cons. 2,4,6. Such female virtues derive directly from the traditional pagan ones, examples of which are found in some well known funeral inscriptions: ILS 8393 ll. 30–34 (Turia); ILS 8394 (Murdia); ILS 1259 (Aconia Paulina). About this topic see in general E. A. Hemelrijk, *Masculinity and Femininity in the Laudatio Turiae*, CQ 54 (2004) 185–197.

loquela. Det ueniam feminarum diadema praesument, quod eius inuideo quieti: uelim illam omnibus Italiae partibus imitationem praeferr, ut quae non adquiescunt monitis formarentur exemplis. Est illic etiam Stefania, splendidissimum catholicae lumen ecclesiae, cuius natales ita maiore luce fuscantur, si mores intellegas, ac si facem mundi oculus sol obumbret: si ingenitae conuersationis radios seponas, plus eius sanguine nil lucebit⁴¹.

It is notable that their image is not unlike that of Amalaberga as described (at around the same time) by Cassiodorus in a few telling words: *quod nutriuit Italia, litteris doctam, moribus eruditam, decoram non solum genere, quantum et feminea dignitate* (var. 4,1,2, quoted above). One can also compare the terminology with the aforementioned panegyric to Mata-suentha: *uerecundia ... sermonem linguae honora sapientia largiatur*.

It could be just a coincidence but exactly at that time Barbara, exalted by Ennodius as *flos Romani genii* and possessing the aforementioned virtues, was invited to court to take an official position, probably as tutor for Amalasuintha! In a letter Ennodius congratulated and tried to persuade her to accept the position: *promitto mihi etiam et desiderii meis, quod cum felicitate uestra et gaudio a d comitatenses excubias, quae uotis meis satisfaciatur, dignitas adepta uos euocet. Noli, domna, huic te labori, huic oneri submouere. Videant bona Romanae ciuitatis prouinciae et, quae monitis uix instituuntur, per bona quae uobis deus contulit formentur exemplis* (a similar expression referring to Barbara Ennodius uses in the *Paraenesis didascalica*)⁴².

Thus, Cassiodorus, both panegyrist and ‘minister of education’ of the Amals⁴³, exalted and favoured during his long career the spread of a model of education at the Gothic court that was not unlike that of the Roman elite, as for example recommended by

41) Ennod. opusc. 6, part. 23–25.

42) Ennod. epist. 8,16,3 (to Barbara); he addressed to Barbara also epist. 8,27, to Stephania (the sister of Fl. Anicius Probus Faustus junior Niger) epist. 8,17; 9,15; 9,18. See Martindale (above n. 36) 1028 (Stephania 1) and 209–210 (Barbara): “Possibly she was invited to act as tutor to Theoderic’s daughter Amalasuintha, on account of her interest in literature” (quoted 210). Barbara received in her home at Rome Ennodius’ pupils; among them was Beatus (Ennod. epist. 7,29,5).

43) See notes 7 and 44.

Ennodius and presumably introduced to royal women of the Ravenna palace by highly educated people like Barbara. Cassiodorus did not hesitate to characterize the Amal queens, especially the last two ones, according to this traditional model, and behind that can be recognized the political ideals of Amalasuintha, supporter of a Roman model of royalty⁴⁴ and of education. She had her daughter raised according to this model.

I would like to see the educational perspective of Ennodius and Cassiodorus – although referring to different environments (there is no evidence for relations between the both authors) – as referring back (or, at least, linked) to the ‘Archetype’ of the Roman Anicii; it was no coincidence that they always felt connected to them by ties of both family and learning⁴⁵. This we can grasp especially from the *excerpta* of that enigmatic booklet of Cassiodorus known as *Ordo generum Cassiodorum*⁴⁶, addressed to Cethegus, in which Symmachus and Boethius are the *eruditi* of the family to which Cassiodorus liked to associate himself: a book in which the theme of *eruditio* is, together with *imitatio*, the central one, and not by

44) See above n. 16. Amalasuintha at that time conferred to Cassiodorus the praetorian prefecture: one of his merits was to have entertained cultural dialogues with Theoderic; var. 9,24,8: *egisti [i. e. Cassiodorus] rerum domino iudicem familiarem et internum procerem. Nam cum esset publica cura uacuat, sententias prudentium a tuis fabulis exigebat, ut factis propriis se aequaret antiquis. Stellarum cursus, maris sinus, fontium miracula rimator acutissimus inquirebat, ut rerum naturis diligentius perscrutatis quidam purpuratus uideretur esse philosophus. Longa fiunt, si cuncta proferamus: quin potius ad beneficia nostra conuertimur, ut quod ab illo cognoscebatur deberi, ab herede imperii tibi sentias iuste persolui.*

45) See also below, notes 46–51. In spite of the varying reactions it has aroused, the well-known essay by A. Momigliano, *Gli Anicii e la storiografia latina di VI sec. d. C.*, RAL ser. VIII 9 fasc. 11–12 (1956) 279–297 (= Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici [Roma 1960] 231–253) is still valid with regard to the role of the Anicii in Ostrogothic Italy.

46) The document was published for the first time by H. Usener, *Anecdoton Holderi*. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Roms in ostgotischer Zeit (Bonn 1877). See among the various contributions: O’Donnell (above n. 23) 259–266; Krautschick (above n. 7) 78–84; F. Troncarelli, *L’Ordo generis Cassiodorum e il programma pedagogico delle Institutiones*, REAug 35 (1989) 129–134; id., *Vivarium: i libri, il destino* (Turnhout 1998) 16–18; A. M. Milazzo, *L’Anecdoton Holderi: un genere letterario contaminato*, in: S. Leanza (ed.), *Cassiodoro. Dalla corte di Ravenna al Vivarium di Squillace, ‘Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Squillace, 25–27 ottobre 1990’* (Catanzaro 1993) 177–189; finally the edition by A. Galonnier, *Anecdoton Holderi ou Ordo generis Cassiodorum*. Introduction, édition, traduction et commentaire, AntTard 4 (1996) 299–312.

chance⁴⁷. (It is also worth noting that Cassiodorus referred to Symmachus as *antiquorum diligentissimus imitator, modernorum nobilissimus institutor* in a letter⁴⁸, and that the latter had re-edited Macrobius' *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* at Ravenna – an important work, containing the complete list of the political virtues [see above, note 34].) Cethegus, Symmachus and Boethius are precisely the *eruditi* who, together with other illustrious members of the circle, are recommended by Ennodius to his pupils as famous Roman masters (*Haec ergo, dulcissimi, et adsequi contendite et adepta custodite. Sed replicetis: quibus ad ista magistris, quibus utamur institutoribus, quorum erigamur exemplis*)⁴⁹; Symmachus, who is invoked in the final verses of the booklet, probably received a copy of it⁵⁰. Ennodius added to these three erudites also

47) Ll. 3–4, *Ordo generis Cassiodororum qui scriptores extiterint ex eorum progenie uel ex quibus eruditus ...*; ll. 5–7, *Symmachus ... uir philosophus qui antiqui Catonis fuit nouellus imitator sed uirtutes ueterum sanctissima religione transcendit ... parentesque suos imitatus historiam quoque Romanam septem libris edidit*; ll. 9–14, *Boethius ... utraque lingua peritissimus orator fuit ... sed in opere artis loicae id est dialecticae transferendo ac mathematicis disciplinis talis fuit ut antiquos auctores aut aequipararet aut uinceret*; ll. 14–15, *Cassiodorus uir eruditissimus* (Galonnier ed.). It is interesting to note that Cethegus, the addressee of the pamphlet, was still active at court in the role of *magister officiorum*: a position that Boethius and Cassiodorus had also held or would hold.

48) Var. 4,51,2 (A. D. 507–511). About Symmachus and his circle see for example P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident, de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris 1948) 304–312; M. A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des Römischen Reichs* ('s-Gravenhage 1967) 89–148; P. Heather, *The Historical Culture of Ostrogothic Italy*, in: Teoderico il Grande e i Goti d'Italia, 'Atti del XIII Congresso internazionale di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Milano 2–6 novembre 1992' (Spoleto 1993) 332–335; Moorhead (above n. 7) 158–172.

49) Opusc. 6,18; see also §25: *Istorum, quoscumque praefatus sum, caelestis uos dispensatio iungat obsequiis*.

50) The final dedication to Symmachus as (metaphorical) saviour of the shipwrecked (Opusc. 6,26): *Symmache ... Da dextram tenui et tecum me tolle per undas. / Non facit ad mores credentem fallere sanctus. / Nil moror: en supplex uenio, miserere precanti, / Vilia diuitibus commendans dicta patronis*; and the closing lines: *Germiua clara / sumite sicci / uerba parentis ...* Very important is Ennod. epist. 8,28,2–3, to Beatus: *ergo honore salutationis adcepto noueris me iuxta petitionem uestram epistolam ad uos admonitionis quamuis sub festinatione dictasse, quam ad domnum patricium Symmachum idcirco dirigere procurauis, ut quod in ea emendatione dignum est corrigatur. Sed propter subreptionem negligentiae te quoque eius exemplaribus informauis. Qua de re tu apud te esto et caue ne tibi ad te perlata manifestes conprehensio superius eminentissimo uiro, ceu rem nouam postulans, quia si eius eam magisterio placuisse cognoueris, ad notitiam perferre eorum qui sapiunt non timebis*. See Moorhead (above n. 7) 161.

Faustus (Stephania’s brother), Avienus, Festus, Probinus (father of Cethegus), Agapitus and Probus⁵¹. These persons were exponents of the *familia toto orbe praedicata*, which even have bonds of relationship with the Amals – ten years after the execution of Boethius and Symmachus a member of the family married a princess of the royal house⁵² – and which, together with other associated families,

51) Opusc. 6,18–22: *Sed replicetis: quibus ad ista magistris, quibus utamur institutoribus, quorum erigamur exemplis, cum Faustum et Avienum, saeculi nostri beatitudinem et Latiaris flumen eloquii, aulicis districtum teneat fors secunda consilii? ... patricii Festus et Symmachus, omnium disciplinarum materia et constantis forma sapientiae, ab urbe sacratissima non recedunt. In ipsi est nobilis curiae principatus, quos uidisse erudiri est ... istorum quamvis in omnibus iussa sequenda sint, est tamen in illis et magistra taciturnitas et eruditi forma silentii. Est etiam Probinus patricius, Placidi germinis examinata claritudo, quem eruditorum familiae mores ad unguem ducti contulerunt, qui et de patris et de soceri hausit fonte, quod mundus est. Est patricius Cethegus, eius filius, uir consularis, qui canam prudentiam minor transgrediens sine aetatis praeiudicio habet et provectorum saporem et mella pueritiae. Est Boethius patricius, in quo uix discendi annos respicis et intellegis peritiam sufficere iam docendi, de quo emendatorum iudicauit electio. Est Agapitus patricius, et honestate diues et scientia. Est Probus V.I., quem si sequamini, illum Faustum et Avienum, quos praedixistis, praesentes, etiam cum desunt, habebitis. Ceteros claros uiros, quos tantum ad me opinio detulit, silentio relinquo: per hos, si uobis iam cordi est maturitas, aut per eos, quos sum praefatus, agnoscite. Manifestis enim patet indiciiis amicus bonorum nec in altero mores quisquam hominum, nisi quos in se formauit, amplectitur.* As for the family ties and links with the Anicii claimed by Ennodius, with Boethius in particular, see also epist. 7,13,3–4, in general epist. 8,1, and epist. 7,25, to Symmachus, in which we read (§ 2): *restat in potestate celsitudinis uestrae, si sustinere eligitis garrulum, non tacere et de originario Symmachiani fontis lacte me pascere. Vale in Christo nostro, Romanae gentis nobilitas, et me iam ut clientem et famulum pro morum et naturae luce dignare*; also epist. 8,28,2 (quoted above, n. 50). See Troncarelli (above n. 46) 134: “Ennodio ha delineato, in sostanza, l’itinerario che un giovane desideroso di entrare nelle grazie degli Anicii deve compiere: mostrare fede religiosa, verecondia e castità cristiane; conoscere la grammatica e la retorica che dischiudono l’universo delle arti liberali; prendere a modello uomini come Simmaco, Boezio e Cetego, pedagoghi di una generazione. Il rapporto con l’Ordo cassiodoriano è evidente: anche in questo caso l’imitazione dell’esempio prestigioso dei più celebri degli Anicii è il fulcro di un programma etico politico che porta alla *civilitas* ...”. See also Milazzo (above n. 46) 187–188.

52) The family of the Anicii was celebrated as late as 535 by Theodahad, in two letters referring to the investiture as *primiceriatus* of Maximus, who had married a princess of the Amal family; var. 10,11,2: *Anicios quidem paene principibus pares aetas prisca progeniuit: quorum nominis dignitas ad te sanguinis fonte perducta collectis uiribus hilarior instaurata rutilauit. Quis ergo relinqueret in posteris minus honoros, quos tamdiu constat fuisse praecipuos? Accusarentur saecula, si talis potuisset latere familia*; var. 10,12,2: *neque enim fas est humile dici quod gerit Anicius: familia toto orbe praedicata, quae uere dicitur nobilis, quando ab ea actionis probitas non*

maintained a true “intellectual dominance”⁵³ in that difficult and complex period of history. They taught aristocratic offspring and prepared it for later government; even aristocrats from outside Rome sent their children or youthful protégés to them (see for example Cassiod. var. 4,6 and also Ennodius’ letters referring to Pathenius [epist. 5,9–12]). They were, more or less deliberately, models of the age: not only the heirs but also the jealous custodians of the Roman traditions in an Italy threatened by the Germanic *gentilitas*. Their venerable *mores*, their at this time Christian virtues (according to Cassiodorus Symmachus was the *uir philosophus qui antiqui Catonis fuit nouellus imitator sed uirtutes ueterum sanctissima religione transcendit*, while Boethius remembered him as *illud pretiosissimum generis humani decus . . . uir totus ex sapientia uirtutibusque factus*)⁵⁴, which were transmitted through their *parentes* like Barbara and like Cassiodorus, penetrated the Ravenna palace, conferring a patina of the Roman spirit to the Gothic royalty. Indeed, it was Rome that could boast, as the Amal domination came to an end, that it had “nourished at its breast” certain members of the reigning family. Or, at least, the old venerable goddess was pleased to claim in Theodahad’s eulogy: *habui multos reges, sed neminem huiusmodi litteratum: habui prudentes uiros, sed nullum sic doctrina et pietate pollentem. Diligo Hamalum meis uberis enutritum, uirum fortem mea conuersatione compositum . . .*⁵⁵.

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recedit. The marriage is referred to in var. 10,11,3–4 and 10,12,3–4. Consider also the much-debated statement by Jordanes, Get. 314, concerning the youthful Germanus, the posthumous son of Germanus, nephew of Justinianus and Matasuentha: *in quo coniuncta Aniciorum genus cum Amala stirpe spem adhuc utriusque generi domino praestante promittit*. We know that Amalasuintha gave back to the heirs of Symmachus and Boethius the properties confiscated by Theoderic; see Prok. BG 1,2,5.

53) The expression is Momigliano’s (above n. 45) 233.

54) Anec. Hold. 5–6; Boeth. cons. 2,4,5.

55) Var. 11,13,4; see also Prok. BG 1,6,15; Cassiodorus also uses the verb *nurire* in var. 4,1,2 (quoted above) and 11,21,8 (the work of the *magistri*); also see var. 2,1,2: *ut alumnos proprios ad ubera sua Roma recolligat*; var. 4,6,3: *Roma . . . illa eloquentiae fecunda mater, illa virtutum omnium latissimum templum*, var. 10,7,2. As for the definition of Rome as the nourisher of liberal disciplines see Ennod. epist. 5,9,2: *in qua est natalis eruditio*; epist. 6,23,1: *urbem amicam liberalibus studiis*; epist. 7,19,2: *in illa urbe litterarum*, and 4: *constitit cum conatibus Latiaris elocutio, dum per alueum suum Romanae eloquentiae unda praelabitur*.