A NOTE ON PLANUDES’ TRANSLATION OF BOETHIUS

CONSOLATIO 3,6

The two lines of Euripides’ Andromache that Philosophia quotes in book 3 of the Consolatio are intended to invoke the Platonic distinction between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη in the discussion of gloria. The theme of the first nine sections of book 3 is the relation of sensible images to intelligible realities, and gloria is associated with δόξα in order to suggest that glory is opinion in the Platonic sense that it is an unstable image of a stable reality, occupying an intermediate position between being and non-being. There are indications that Planudes recognised the allusion and that he attempted to reproduce it in his translation by assimilating these two senses of δόξα, ‘glory’ and ‘opinion.’

Keywords: Boethius; Planudes; gloria; δόξα

At Consolatio philosophiae 3,6,1,1 the personified Philosophia quotes two lines from Euripides’ Andromache (319–320), in which Andromache, having sought refuge at the altar of Thetis, attacks Menelaus with an indictment of reputation:

ὦ δόξα δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν
οὐδὲν γεγὼσι βίοτον ὠγκώσας μέγαν.

This is the longest Greek passage in the Consolatio (including the letters Π and Θ embroidered on Philosophia’s dress there are eleven), and the only one from a Greek tragedy. Most of these Greek quotations are allusions, specifically the sort for which Pasquali argues: “The poet may not be aware of reminiscences, and he may hope that his imitations may escape his public’s notice; but allusions do not produce the desired effect if the reader does not

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clearly remember the text to which they refer.”

This paper involves two points. The first concerns the specific allusion in Boethius’ quotation from Euripides. I argue that *Philosophia* speaks these lines in order to evoke the Platonic distinction between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη. Although *Philosophia* initially refers to Euripides as *tragicus* (3,6,1), she later calls him *Euripidis mei*. In the *Consolatio* Euripides, like Homer, is a philosophical poet, and so it is not strange for his words to carry Platonic connotations. Thus *gloria* is associated with δόξα in order to underscore its derivative nature. It is an unstable image of a stable reality, occupying an intermediate position between being and non-being. The second point involves the suggestion that Planudes in fact detected this allusion and conveyed it in his translation. While the only evidence is the interpretation implicit in his translation, I suggest that it is also possible to see the Platonic doctrine reflected in Planudes’ translation.

There is a particular rationale for focusing on this passage. As the manuscript tradition makes clear, the Greek quotations in Boethius’ *Consolatio philosophiae* were unintelligible to most readers and copyists in the Middle Ages. Even the anonymous ninth century commentator on the *Consolatio* (one of the few Latin commentators with any knowledge of Greek) could do little more than provide a word for word translation where the text had not been completely corrupted during transmission. There is certainly no indication that he recognizes the provenance of those quotations Boethius left unidentified. Even when the Greek lines of the *Consolatio* were glossed or translated in the margin, their original contexts would have been unknown to most Latins. However, when in Constantinople in the 13th century, Maximos Planudes produced a Greek translation of Boethius’ final

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3 Cons. 3,7,6, which contains a free translation of Andr. 420.

4 Cf. the Platonic notion of δόξα in *Meno* 97b ff. and *Republic* 476a–480a.


work, many of the allusions buried in the Greek of the *Consolatio* once again came alive.

The question arises: what reason is there to think that Boethius had an allusive purpose in using quotations from Greek authors, and what reason to think that Planudes read and translated this way? Indeed, scholars seem to agree that the Greek quotations are not used to construct the same sort of subtle allusions as are the references to Latin poets such as Virgil or Ovid. Even those disposed to generous readings of the Greek quotations find them somewhat prosaic. One reason for this is that most of these quotations are well known commonplaces from Homer. Boethius may well have selected them from *florilegia*, commentaries, or from the works of Aristotle and Plotinus. Thus, the Homeric quotations do not seem to have been intended to evoke their original contexts in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but are instead used because of a general association with Platonism. However, I have argued elsewhere that the Homeric quotations constitute more than borrowed phrases. In fact, Boethius seems to divide Homeric poetry in a way similar to Proclus, who in his *Commentary on the Republic* divides poetry into three kinds, all of which are found in Homer: “one in which the soul is linked with the gods and lives ‘not its own life but theirs’; one in which it functions by reason; and one in which it operates with imagination and irrational sensation and is filled with inferior realities. To these correspond three types of poetry: the inspired, the didactic and the imaginative.”

Boethius selects quotations from Homer and arranges them in the *Consolatio* in a way that reflects the schema of modes of cognition articulated in book 5.4.27: *sensus, imaginatio, ratio, and intellegentia.* The

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10 On the cognitive hierarchy as the structural principle of the *Consolatio*, see ELAINE SCARRY. 1994. „The External Referent: Cosmic Order; The Well-Rounded Sphere: Cognition and Metaphysical Structure in Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy.*“ In
work presents an ascent from sensation in book 1, to imagination in book 2, followed by reason in books 3 and 4, and culminating in intellect in book 5. When their original contexts are examined, the Homeric quotations in books 1, 2, 4 and 5 easily map onto this structural schema in a way that suggests a division of Homeric poetry into mimetic (adapted to sense and imagination), noetic (adapted to reason) and inspired (adapted to the simplicity of intellect) kinds.

As far as the likelihood that Planudes not only read the Consolatio in such a way as to detect, but also translated it so as to reflect the allusion in the quotation from Euripides, it is important to consider Planudes’ general approach to translating Latin authors. Gigante argues that his translation of Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis is in fact an interpretation, and Fisher emphasises the Planudean authorship to the point that she originally insisted upon calling his translation his version of the Metamorphoses. In the case of the Consolatio, the decidedly non-literal character of Planudes’ translation has often been noted. The particularly sensitive way that Planudes reads and interprets Boethius is brought to light by the approach he takes to a second allusion to Euripides in 3,7, a Latin paraphrase of Andromache 420. It was his practice to supply corrected texts, and of especial relevance to a consideration of his translations from Latin to Greek is the insertion of a quotation from his own text of Plato’s Phaedrus into his translation of Cicero, where Cicero had translated the Greek into Latin. Thus, instead of translating

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12 Fisher, Elizabeth A. 1990. Planudes’ Greek Translation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990. Fisher’s dissertation is entitled Planudes’ Version of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and she only abandoned this term for the title of the monograph after she was satisfied that translation studies had vindicated her initial objection to the use of ‘translation’ for a work that was a great deal more than a mechanical reproduction of Ovid in another language.


Cicero’s Latin back into Greek, he simply inserted the original. But when Planudes comes to a similar circumstance in Boethius, he does not substitute the original Euripidean line. As Nóra Fodor points out, Planudes was aware of the original, as is indicated by certain lexical choices in his translation, but he attempts to reproduce a play on words found in Boethius’ paraphrased Latin that underscores the paradoxical sentiment of the line. Thus, in his translation Planudes acknowledges the Boethian twist on the Euripidean line.

If it is reasonable to think Planudes would pick up on an allusion in 3,6, what exactly is the allusion? The quotation, specifically the repeated term δόξα, is introduced in order to supply something missing in the range of meanings of the Latin term gloria. That is, Boethius wishes to say that gloria is δόξα, not only in the sense that both mean ‘glory’ or ‘reputation,’ but in the sense that gloria itself is mere opinion. Boethius turns to Euripides to evoke this sense of δόξα. As Meltzer has argued, in his Helen Euripides “exploits the tension inherent in the two primary meanings of kleos—a tension that already forms a crucial problem in Homeric poetics.” The two meanings, ‘immortal fame’ and ‘rumor, report’ are also bound together in δόξα, a term that appears thirty-eight times in the extant tragedies (not including fragments). Euripides uses it in the sense

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16 Fodor, Nóra. 2004. Die Übersetzungen Lateinischer Autoren durch M. Planudes. Diss. Universität Heidelberg, 207–208. Boethius paraphrases δυστυχῶν εὐδαιμονεῖ as infortunio...felicem, the sense of which Planudes attempts to preserve with δυστυχοῦντα... εὐτυχεῖν.


19 Why else does Boethius turn to these lines of Euripides (which seem to have no significant Nachleben in ancient authors) when Latin literature is rich with condemnations of glory? Cf. Leeman, A. D. 1952. „Seneca and Posidonius: A Philosophical Commentary on Sen. EP. 102, 3–19.“ Mnemosyne, 5, 57–79.


of ‘renown’ or ‘reputation,’ but also with the senses of ‘seeming,’ ‘opinion,’ ‘semblance,’ and a variety of other related meanings. Essential to Andromache’s condemnation of Menelaus is the tension between the two meanings. Boethius would have been able to see the two senses at work in Andromache’s declamatory speech indicting δόξα. Planudes would have known the Euripidean notion of δόξα not only from the Byzantine Triad (where it occurs four times), but from the other six plays for which there were scholia, where it has both the sense of ‘reputation’ as well as ‘hope,’ ‘dream,’ ‘thinking,’ ‘semblance’ etc.

Boethius’ association of gloria with δόξα emphasizes the Platonic point made repeatedly in book 3. The same goods which were dismissed as false gifts of fickle fortune in book 2 are reconsidered in book 3 as imagines, images of true goods and thus as useful for revealing the true good. Gloria is not itself a good, but is an image of a real good, and thus instrumental in the Platonic movement of book 3. Gloria is an opinion in the sense that it stands to claritas and celebritas (Boethius’ terms for the reality of which gloria is an image) as opinion to true knowledge. Opinion is a belief, specifically a belief grounded in the apprehension of a sensible image, while knowledge is the apprehension of the intelligible reality.

If this is the allusion, what indication is there that Planudes recognised it? One difficulty is that Boethius appears simply to equate gloria and δόξα. There is a very long tradition of translating one by the other, and in fact Planudes regularly translates gloria as δόξα with no suggestion of the sense of ‘opinion.’ It is in fact striking how consistently Planudes renders gloria

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23 Consider the range of meanings of δόξα in the plays of the Byzantine Triad: in Hecuba, δόξα is used with the senses of ‘opinion’ (117), ‘hope’ (370), and ‘reputation’ (489); in Orestes its sense is closer to ‘semblance’ (235).

with δόξα in the Consolatio as well as in his translations of Cicero and Ovid.\textsuperscript{25} It would appear that Planudes had no way to indicate this sense of δόξα, which he would have known from the Greek Fathers and Plato, even though he also translates opinio, sententia and estimatio with δόξα.

Despite these apparent difficulties, I argue that Planudes does successfully simulate the allusion constructed by Boethius. He does so by means of a conspicuous emphasis on δόξα and its cognates in his translation of Consolatio 3,6. The repetition urges the reader to meditate upon the alternate meaning of δόξα, opinion. I argue that Planudes reproduces the same allusive effect as Boethius through the increased frequency of δόξα and cognates in 3,6, changes to the Greek word order, and other lexical choices that are made in the translation. Δόξα and cognates appear throughout the Consolatio, but there are a few significant clusters.

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<th>Section</th>
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<th>Number of lines in section\textsuperscript{26}</th>
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<tr>
<td>2,7</td>
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<td>3,2</td>
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<td>c. 70</td>
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Three sections which display a clustering of uses of δόξα and cognates (clustering which does not appear in the Latin text) are explicable in terms of their general subject matter. In Consolatio 2,7 Philosophia discusses gloria as one of the false goods of fortuna.\textsuperscript{27} Sections 3,2 and 3,9 introduce and conclude the discussion of the apparent goods which are in fact images of true goods. Only section 4,4 has a comparable number of occurrences of δόξα and cognates, yet there is no obvious connection between the frequency and the subject of the section. However, it is worth noting that while the absolute number is high (7), the total number of lines in that section


\textsuperscript{26} In order to make the quantitative comparison I use the marginal line numbering in the edition of M. PAPATHOMOPOULOS (1999).

\textsuperscript{27} COOLIDGE, JOHN S. 1963. „Boethius and ‘That Last Infirmity of Noble Mind’.“ Philological Quarterly, 42, 176–182.
make the uses of δόξα less significant. In any case there is an extraordinary frequency of δόξα and cognates in 3,6, such as would have to be regarded as, at the very least, a serious case of inelegant repetition, unless there is some other reason for it.

In addition to this quantitative claim, there is the fact that Planudes has arranged three occurrences of δόξα and cognates in such a way that the two meanings are displayed side-by-side. The phrase *fit ut quem tu aestimmas esse gloriosum proxima parte terrarum videatur inglourius* (3,6,5) is reorganised in the Greek translation to bring together the words ἐνδοξεῖν δοκοῦντα ἄδοξον. The sense of ‘glory seeming inglorius,’ the suggestion that essential to gloria is the idea of ‘appearance,’ the subjective, an opinion, is reinforced in Planudes’ expression of the Boethian sentiment.

Planudes’ rendering of videatur by δοκοῦντα is a lexical choice which seems innocuous, but is in fact significant. In 3,6 Boethius uses passive forms of video four times (videtur and videatur are each used twice). Throughout his translation of the Consolatio Planudes varies the translation of passive forms of video. There are at least nine other verbs used in addition to δοκέω. In this respect the Consolatio translation can be fruitfully compared with the translation of the Metamorphoses. While Planudes generally uses some form of δοκέω for passive forms of video, he uses the appropriate form of φαίνω six times in books 1–9. However, in books 10–15 Planudes goes on to use four other verbs six times, and φαίνω four more times. Thus, if we assume that he translated the books of the Metamorphoses in order, and that he translated the Consolatio after the Metamorphoses (as most scholars believe), then it appears that Planudes became increasingly interested in varying his translations, except when he came to translate Consolatio 3,6. There is no other instance of consecutive uses of videor that Planudes so diligently renders with some form of δοκέω. In every other case we see him varying the Greek word used to translate a form of videor.

In addition to the decision to translate all four instances of the passive of video by a form of δοκέω, there are two other lexical choices which are suggestive. Planudes renders meritis at 3,6,7 with ἐνδοκιμήσεως and splendidum at 3,6,8 with ἑπίδοξον. Elsewhere in the translation Planudes renders

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28 Of the 143 instances of the verb video in the Consolation, 83 are in the passive voice. Videtur and videatur are translated elsewhere as διατρέπειν (2,5,25), φανεράς (3,10,28), καταφαίνεται (3,10,4), ἀναφαίνεται (3,11,13), and at 1,4,18 and 2,8,3 Planudes omits an equivalent for videtur.

29 Scholars have noted the variation even in the rendering of technical, philosophical terms.
three other occurrences of meritum with three different words (διάθεσις, ἀμοιβή, and ἐνέργημα). The choice of εὐδοκιμήσεως certainly seems to suit the specific context, but taken with the decision to render videor exclusively by δοκέω it becomes notable. So too does the choice of ἐπίδοξον for splendidum, a connection that might not be without precedent, but is by no means standard.

Taken together, the frequency and arrangement of instances of δόξα and cognates in 3,6, as well as the lexical choices involved in rendering a variety of etymologically unrelated Latin terms by some form of δόξα, indicate that there is here something more than a case of inelegant repetition. In the context of the chapter, the book, and the work itself, the use of δόξα points to an attempt to evoke the alternate but related meaning, ‘opinion,’ and this because it is this meaning that Boethius wished to extend to the Latin term under consideration, gloria. The Boethian allusion works in virtue of the Euripidean context, a context well known to Planudes. The lack of attention paid by Medieval Latin readers of the Consolatio to its literary allusions is understandable. Even if they were not primarily interested in the grammatical and philosophical features of the work (as a school text the Consolatio was used as a source for Latin style as well as mined for philosophical doctrines), readers in the West had no access to the very sources necessary to interpret the work’s carefully constructed allusions. However, the reluctance of contemporary scholars to read the Greek quotations as allusive in the same way as the less explicit recollections of Virgil or Ovid is not so understandable. The possibility of reading Boethius in this way is in fact presented by one of his medieval readers. Planudes’ knowledge of Euripides made it possible for him to pick up on the rather clear allusion to the ambiguity in δόξα that Boethius wished to import into his analysis of gloria. From there it was only a matter of finding a way to transpose this allusion into his Greek translation.