



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis in Medieval Studies

by
Réka Forrai

on
THE INTERPRETER OF THE POPES. THE TRANSLATION PROJECT OF
ANASTASIUS BIBLIOTHECARIUS

will be held on

Wednesday, 26 March 2008, at 15:30

in the

Gellner Room – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest

Examination Committee

Chair	Ferenc Huoranszki (Department of Philosophy– CEU)
Members	György Geréby – Supervisor (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Gábor Klaniczay (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Niels Gaul (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Marcell Sebők (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Péter Lautner (Institute of Philosophy - Pázmány Péter Catholic University)
External Readers	Paolo Chiesa (University of Milan) Bronwen Neil (Australian Catholic University)

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection in the CEU-ELTE Medieval Library, Budapest, 6-8
Múzeum krt.

Doctoral Thesis Abstract

Réka Forrai

The Interpreter of the Popes. The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius

The dissertation presents the career of a medieval translator at the intersection of two lines: the way knowledge of Greek put Anastasius Bibliothecarius in a monopoly position at the papal court of the second half of the ninth century, and the way the institution itself exploited his translating skills. I drew the profile of a very sophisticated diplomat, who employed his language skills for his own political purposes and for the institution he represented. Apart from the intrinsic value of such a monographic study, these historico-philological investigations also provide a more thorough insight into Greek-Latin cultural interactions of the ninth century.

Anastasius Bibliothecarius, rough contemporary of Eriugena, Photios and al-Kindi, was active in the second part of the ninth century, a culturally productive period everywhere in the medieval world, whether papal Rome or the Western Frankish Kingdom, Byzantine Constantinople or the Baghdad of the Abbasid caliphate. Born approximately between 800 and 817 and died probably before 877, he was the most prolific translator of the ninth century. His stormy life is one worthy of interest to the historian. He entered historical records rather problematically - excommunicated and anathematised by Pope Leo IV (847-855), and anti-pope of Benedict III (855-858) – we encounter him afterwards again under slightly different circumstances, as a close collaborator

of three ninth century popes: Nicholas I (858-867), Hadrian II (867-872), and John VIII (872-882). He was acquainted with all the significant actors in late-ninth century political and cultural life - the popes, the Frankish rulers Louis II (825-875) and Charles the Bald(823-877), Hincmar of Rheims (ca. 806-882), Eriugena (ca. 810-870) and Photios (ca. 810-893), are all in one way or the other parts of his worldwide spider web. One of the main reasons he is so often encountered on the Byzantium-Rome-Frankish court axis is that he possessed a precious diplomatic skill, rare at that time in the West: knowledge of Greek. His translations, featuring a wide range of literary genres, provide ample proof of this knowledge.

The texts he chose for translation are exclusively drawn from the Christian literary heritage, and consist mainly of late antique and early Byzantine literature, comprising genres such as hagiography, theology, and historiography. While the sheer literary value of his selection of works from the Greek patrimony may not excite much attention, I argue that a contextual examination of his translations can reveal a well-defined agenda that served political purposes, being embedded in the very practical aims and interests of the Roman pontiffs.

For such a complex agenda, the traditional settings of a monograph seemed too narrow a frame. I have decided to follow rather the current trend of non-linear biographies, where lives are reconstructed in a mosaic-like manner, focusing on distinctive moments of a protagonist's activity, on scenes which are at the crossway of the particular and the general, the individual and the society he is part of.

My thesis assesses the craft of a medieval translator not only by reading the texts translated, but also by examining other, para- as well as extra-textual

elements (such as his prologues, their political and cultural context) to reconstruct a deeply erudite and at the same time politically engaged project. By calling this pursuit 'project' I suggest that his translations are not results of random selection, reflecting his literary taste but an assortment of works chosen using a logic which confers unity to it.

I have examined Anastasius' project moving in concentric circles from the inner logic to the outer logic of its constitution. First, the philological context: that is to say the texts and their nature; second the historical context, mainly its social and ideological setting: the network Anastasius constructed with these translation-gifts; last but not least what I would call the final means and motivation of such a project: that is, the role of translations in shaping cultural identity.

Consequently, my thesis comprises the following main parts: after the introductory part presenting Anastasius' life and literary activity comes an exhaustive and detailed catalogue of his works as well as the context of the translations' genesis, problems of composition and layout, genres and authors preferred, and finally the methods and theories applied. This is followed by the general historical frame, the social and ideological setting which called for the existence of such a translation project. Illustrating some of my most important points, two major case studies assist the general investigation, analysing two different types of texts that have received little attention so far: the passion of Saint Demetrius and the notes of Anastasius to Eriugena's translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Moreover, an unexpected thread unfolded when I was reading the notes of Anastasius to the *Corpus Dionysiacum*: as I argued in this chapter, it seems that we can include three short fragments from Eusebius' church history to the list of Anastasian

translations. Next to the Eusebian fragments, I have also appended to the dissertation a diplomatic edition of the text Saint Demetrius' passion.

The pages of this dissertation are by no means the closing remarks on Anastasius' career. Of primary importance would be a research on Anastasius' afterlife in the Middle Ages, Renaissance and perhaps even further, studying not only the transmission of his texts, the survival of manuscripts, but the use people made of his translations and indexing all references to his achievements. Moreover, the apparition of the critical texts of the two ecumenical councils will be a new landmark in the research of Greek and Latin interactions. The translation of the *scholia* to the *Corpus Dionysiacum* would also need further attention. And last but not least, perhaps the list of his translations is not yet complete and further texts could be discovered.

CURRICULUM VITAE
RÉKA FORRAI

PERSONAL DATA

Date of birth: 8 January 1977

Address: CEU, Medieval Studies Department, 1051 Budapest, Nádor street 9

Telephone: +36(1)3273235; Fax: +36(1)3273055

E-mail: rekaforrai@gmail.com ; forrair@ceu.hu

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Greek-Latin translation theory and practice; Greek-Latin cultural relations; Transmission of knowledge; Medieval intellectual history; Medieval Latin Literature; Letter-writing in the Middle Ages

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

September 2001 – Present - Ph.D. Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary (Thesis' Working Title: *The Interpreter of the Popes. The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*)

September 2000 – June 2000 - MA in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary (Thesis defended magna cum laude: *The Latin Tradition Of Aristotle's De Anima (1120-1270): the Relationship Between Text and Commentary*)

1999-2000 - MA in Ancient Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania

1995-1999 - Classical Philology, Faculty of Arts, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania

TEACHING AND OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

September 2004 – Present – Coordinator of the *Center for Hellenic Traditions*, CEU, Budapest [www.hellenic.hu]

2005 Winter Semester - Medieval Studies Department, CEU: *The Interplay of Sacred and Profane in Medieval Latin Literature* - course offered for MA and PhD students

1999 October - 2000 June - Latin and Greek instructor at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania, Faculty of Arts, Classical Philology Section

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ORGANIZED

July 19-31, 2004 - *Changing Intellectual Landscapes in Late Antiquity*, Summer University, CEU

November 20-21, 2005– Founding Conference of the Center for Hellenic Traditions, Budapest

May 20-21, 2005 – *Late Antique Alexandria*, Workshop in honour of Peter Brown, Budapest, CEU

November 23-25, 2007 – *Hellenism: Alien or Germane Wisdom?*, Budapest, CEU

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

27 January 2006, Rome, École Française de Rome: *Formation et transmission des collections textuelles de l'antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge central (IV^e- début XIII^e siècle) Atelier II*. Paper entitled: *Anastasio il Bibliotecario e i suoi dossieri testuali. Collane greche e trasmissioni latine a Roma alla fine dell'alto medioevo*.

14 June 2006, Budapest, Eötvös Lóránt University *From the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period*. Paper entitled: *Carolingian Translators (Eriugena, Anastasius Bibliothecarius and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite)*.

1-6 August, 2006, Toronto, York University – Interpreting Latin texts in the Middle Ages. Fifth International Medieval Congress, with the paper entitled: *The Notes of Anastasius Bibliothecarius on Eriugena's Translation of Pseudo-Dionysius*.

13-15 September, 2006, Center for Theoretical Study, Prague - *Memories Medieval and Non-Medieval*. Paper presented together with Sylvain Piron (EHESS, Paris): *The Philosopher's Companion: Heloise's literary self-fashioning and the Epistolae duorum amantium*

SCHOLARSHIPS

2006 October – 2007 June – Scholarship offered by the Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino (SISMEL), Firenze to undertake research at their institute and to participate in their project *Compendium Auctorum Latinorum Medii Aevii* (CALMA)

- 2003 November – Scholarship offered by École Française de Rome to undertake research at the institute
- 2003 October- 2004 April –Doctoral Research Support Grant of CEU to undertake research in Rome, at École Française de Rome, Vatican Library and the Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo
- 2001 June – Open Society Foundation Scholarship to undertake Ph.D in Medieval Studies, Central European University
- 2001 April - Tanasa Found (CEU Medieval Studies) scholarship for research at the Aristoteles Latinus Centre, Leuven

LIST OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy. Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation. Ed. by István Perczel, Réka Forrai and György Geréby. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006.

“Anastasio il Bibliotecario e i suoi dossier testuali. Collane greche e trasmissioni latine a Roma alla fine dell’alto medioevo.” In *Formation et transmission des collections textuelles de l’antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge central (IVe- début XIIIe siècle)*. Rome: École Française de Rome, forthcoming.

“The Notes of Anastasius Bibliothecarius on Eriugena’s Translation of Pseudo-Dionysius.” In *Journal of Medieval Latin* (18), 2008, forthcoming.

“Historical Curiosity in the Translations of Robert Grosseteste: the *Notulae* of the Commentaries to the *Nicomachean Ethics*.” In *Robert Grosseteste and His Intellectual Milieu*, International Robert Grosseteste Conference, 2003 July 18th-21st, Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln, UK. London: Ashgate, forthcoming.

“Burgundio Pisanus”. *Compendium Auctorum Latinorum Medii Aevii*. Vol. II.4. ed. by Claudio Leonardi and Michael Lapidge. Florence: Sismel, 2007 (forthcoming).

“Text and Commentary: The Role of Translations in the Latin Tradition of Aristotle’s *De anima* (1120-1270).” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 8 (2002): 139-156.

“The Latin Tradition of Aristotle’s *De anima* (1120-1270): the Relationship between Text and Commentary.” *Studia Universitatis Napocensis, Philosophia* 2 (2000): 87-115.