

## HERMANN THE GERMAN'S TRANSLATION OF ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

About 1250 Hermann the German translated Aristotle's *Rhetoric* from the Arabic into Latin. In 1256 he translated Averroes' Arabic commentary on the *Poetics*, which included lemmata but no complete text of the *Poetics*. In the preface to this latter work Hermann wrote :

«Postquam cum non modico labore consummaveram translationem Rethorice Aristotilis, volens manum mittere ad eius Poetiam, tantam inveni difficultatem propter disconvenientiam modi metrificandi in Greco cum modo metrificandi in Arabico et propter vocabulorum obscuritatem et plures alias causas, quod non sum confisus me posse sane et integre illius operis translationem studiis tradere Latinorum. Assumpsi ergo editionem Averosd determinativam dicti operis Aristotilis secundum quod ipse aliquid intelligibile elicere potuit ab ipso, et modo quo potui in eloquium redegi Latinum. Et nonnullum conferet intelligendi adiutorium ea que in hoc libro sunt intellectus poetrie Oratii, sicut intellectus rethoricarum Tullii Ciceronis adiuvens est ad intelligendum negotium Aristotilicale rethorice. Suscipiant igitur, si placet, et huius editionis Poetrie translationem viri studiosi et gaudeant se cum hoc adeptos logici negotii Aristotilis complementum.»<sup>1</sup>

This has been interpreted by Franceschini as meaning that Hermann did not finish the translation of the *Poetics*. This interpretation is indeed quite possible. Yet Hermann's words may mean merely that after translating the *Poetics* he felt that his version was too obscure to be satisfactory ; that therefore he decided to make a translation of Averroes' commentary as a supplement.

There seems to be evidence, in fact, that Hermann finished his trans-

1. G. LACOMBE, *Aristoteles Latinus*, I (Rome 1939), 212 ; E. FRANCESCHINI, *La «Poetica» di Aristotele nel secolo XIII*, «Atti del R. Ist. Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti», 94 (1934-35), Pt. 2, p. 526. I cannot agree with the statement in Lacombe (p. 103) that this version might better be called «Aristotelis Poetica, cum commentario medio». Very little of the Aristotle is included in the lemmata.

lation of the *Poetics* before turning to Averroes' commentary. In the preface to his translation of the *Rhetoric* he states :

«Opus presentis translationis Rethorice Aristotilis et eius Poetrie ex Arabico eloquio in Latinum iam dudum intuitu venerabilis patris Iohannis Burgensis episcopi et regis Castelle cancellarii inceperam, sed propter occurrentia impedimenta usque nunc non potui consummare. Suscipiant ergo ipsum Latini ... ut sic habeant complementum logici negotii secundum Aristotilis intentionem. Quod autem hi duo libri logicales sint, nemo dubitat... Imo ex ipso textu manifestius hoc patebit. Neque excusabiles sunt, ut fortassis alicui videbitur, propter Marci Tullii Rethoricam et Oratii Poetiam. Tullius namque rethoricam partem civilis scientie posuit et secundum hanc intuitionem eam potissime tractavit. Oratius vero poetiam prout pertinet ad gramaticam potius expedivit. Verumptamen dictorum virorum scripta non minimum utilia sunt ad opera presentia intelligendum... Hoc est quod intelligere et excipere potuimus de translatione que pervenit ad nos horum voluminum Aristotilis. Ideoque usque hodie etiam apud Arabes hi duo libri quasi neglecti sunt, et vix unum invenire potui qui mecum studendo in ipsis vellet diligentius laborare. Veniam igitur concedant qui forsitan non immerito poterunt hunc meum laborem de imperfectione redarguare... Sane tamen ipsis consulo ut malint hos codices habere sic translatos quam penitus derelictos.»<sup>2</sup>

The preface explicitly mentions the *Poetics*, not Averroes' commentary, and is clearly intended to cover both *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. Over and over it refers to both works : *hi duo libri* ; *opera presentia* ; *horum voluminum* ; *hi duo libri* ; *hos codices* ; *his opusculis*. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* are compared with Cicero's rhetorical works and Horace's *Ars poetica*. Presumably this preface, like prefaces in general, was written after the translation of the two works was completed and is not an unfulfilled promise of something to be done. Certainly, if we did not have the separate preface to Averroes' *Commentary*, it would not have occurred to anyone to doubt that Hermann had translated both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*.

Hermann complains of the difficulty and obscurity of both works. In the translation of the *Rhetoric* he sometimes substituted variants from Alfarabius and paraphrases from Avicenna, as well as prefixing part of Averroes to his text.<sup>3</sup> To remove some of the obscurity of the *Poetics* he later translated Averroes' *Commentary*, probably using his own earlier translation of the *Poetics* for the lemmata. This translation of Averroes seems to have supplanted the translation of the *Poetics* because it was supposed to be more intelligible — not that it is any masterpiece of clarity.

In the preface to Averroes' *Commentary* it is stated that in addition to

2. LACOMBE, *op. cit.*, 211 ; FRANCESCHINI, *op. cit.*, 527.

3. LACOMBE, *op. cit.*, 102.



(Et) the *Commentary*, the *Ars poetica* of Horace will be a help in understanding this book (which I take to mean the *Poetics*, not the *Commentary*), just as Cicero aided with the *Rhetoric*. Would there be a need to help understand the *Commentary* when this work was translated because the translation of the *Poetics* was not sufficiently intelligible? Then follows a sentence (beginning *Suscipiant*) evidently modeled (intentionally or not) on one in the preface to the *Rhetoric*. If the phrase *huius editionis poetrie translationem* refers to Averroes' *Commentary*, as may be thought, then it would be this that is called *logici negotii Aristotilis complementum*, a phrase used in the preface of the *Rhetoric* in reference to the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* — not the *Commentary*. Can one call Averroes' *Commentary* «logici negotii Aristotilis complementum», especially after the identical language was used of Aristotle's (not Averroes') *Rhetoric*?

That brings up an interesting point. Luquet had maintained that this *Rhetoric* was actually Averroes' commentary, a view that was categorically denied by Birkenmajer (in Lacombe, p. 102). In similar fashion I hold that Hermann did translate the *Poetics* and that the preface refers to it, not to Averroes. There is far too little Aristotle in the lemmata of the *Commentary* to allow us to call it a substitute for or equivalent of the *Poetics*.

There is evidence that Averroes' *Commentary* and perhaps Hermann's translation of the *Poetics* were used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For example, Thomas Aquinas used Averroes.<sup>4</sup>

Franceschini quotes a passage from Mussato's *Evidentia tragediarum* in a dialogue between Mussato and Lovato:<sup>5</sup>

«*Mu.* Quis hunc pedem [*i. e.*, iambum] huius modulationis invenit?  
*Lo.* Ignoro. Ipsa enim ignoravit antiquitas; dicit enim Aristotiles in traditione artis poetice quod quis eum adinvenit ignoratum est.»

This could not be based on the *Commentary* of Averroes because that does not mention the word *iambus*.<sup>6</sup> The statement must be based either on Hermann's translation or on William of Moerbeke's, discovered by Lacombe in two manuscripts in 1931.<sup>7</sup> The latter is perhaps more likely.

4. I agree with E. N. TIGERSTEDT, «*Lychnos*», 1960-1961, p. 151, against G. VINAY, «*Gior. stor. lett. ital.*», 126 (1949), 126 ff., that Thomas used Averroes, not a translation of the *Poetics*.

5. EZIO FRANCESCHINI, *Studi e note di filologia latina medievale* (Milan 1938), 16.

6. At least it is not in the first fourth of the treatise, beyond which it could hardly occur, nor in the passage in Aristotle (1448b 28-32) on which the observation was based. On this passage I disagree with TIGERSTEDT, *loc. cit.*

7. Published by FRANCESCHINI and MINIO-PALUELLO in *Aristoteles Latinus*, XXXIII (Bruges 1953); see also LACOMBE, *op. cit.*, p. 79. E. FRANCESCHINI in «*Atti del R. Ist. Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*», 94 (1934-35), 523. E. LOBEL, in «*Proceedings of the British Academy*», 1931, p. 309. Lobel concludes from the reading

On the other hand, a quotation in a commentary on Mussato's *Ecerinis* is certainly from the *Commentary* of Averroes, as Franceschini notes and as the quotation itself indicates: «iuxta commentatorem poetice Aristotelis».<sup>8</sup>

In the *De laboribus Herculis*, which Coluccio Salutati began after 1383 and left unfinished at his death in 1406, he made the following statements:

1. «Sunt qui putent nichil esse poeticam nisi figmentum, contra quos est Aristoteles noster in ultima parte Logices, quam curiosissimo tractatu poetice dedicavit. Inquit enim in ipsius libelli fronte omne poema esse orationem vituperationis aut laudis» (*Poetics* 1448 b 25 or 1447 a 13?).<sup>8</sup>

2. «Convenienter possumus cum Aristotele diffinire poesim esse potentiam considerantem laudationes et vituperationes prout metris et figurativis locutionibus concinuntur.»

3. «Affirmat philosophus in Poetria dicens: "Omne itaque poema et omnis oratio poetica aut est vituperatio aut laudatio".»<sup>9</sup>

Similar statements are to be found in Salutati's letters. Noteworthy are the following:

4. «Quod autem ars sit, testis est philosophorum princeps Aristoteles, qui de ipsa specialem tractatum edidit et eam artem componendi sermones figurativos et representativos diffinivit imaginum... Et licet hoc verum esse confitear et placeat quod per Philosophum dicitur: poemata quidem esse sermones imaginativos vituperationis vel laudationis.»

5. «Poete ... de qua quidem facultate pater Aristoteles post omne trivium librum fecit singularem.»

6. «Quoniam ut pater inquit Aristoteles: "omne poema et omnis oratio poetica aut est vituperatio aut laudatio".»

7. «Quia ... videtur poetarum enarratio ad grammaticam pertinere, et prout ars et scientia est pars una logice, hoc est sermocinalis scientie, et distincta facultas est, et de qua Philosophus speciali libello tractatum habuit singularem.»<sup>10</sup>

*paulatine* (for *paulatim*), as he puts it, which occurs twice in the Eton manuscript, that this manuscript had at least one Latin predecessor. But apparently the manuscript has *paulative* (recognized in Du Cange), for that is the reading given in the edition in *Aristoteles Latinus*, with no mention of a variant. So too in HERMANN'S preface to the *Rhetoric* but in the adjective form *paulatina* (for *paulativa*).

8. Averroes is also quoted by BENVENUTO DA IMOLA in his *Comentum super Dan-tis Comœdiam*, ed. G. F. LACAITA (Florence 1887), I, 7.

9. COLUCCI SALUTATI, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. ULLMAN (Zurich 1951), 10, 4; 14, 28; 68, 11.

10. F. NOVATI, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (Rome 1896-1905), III, 225 (written in 1389 or earlier; see my *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome 1955), 230); IV, 177, 197 (1404-05), 230 (1406). Cf. III, 66 (1397-98), 289 (1398); IV, 231, 239 (1406). The last two are based generally on *Poetics* 1457ab but not being direct quotations cannot be attributed either to Averroes' *Commentary* or William of Moerbeke's translation or the supposed translation of Hermann.



First of all it should be noted that the direct quotation of Aristotle, which occurs several times, agrees with the lemma in Hermann's translation of Averroes' commentary.<sup>11</sup> Coluccio therefore used Hermann's version of either the *Poetics* or Averroes, equipped with lemmata based on the former. But we can go farther. From No. 1 it would seem that Coluccio used a translation of Aristotle, not one of Averroes, whom he does not mention. Furthermore in this quotation and in No. 7 there are indications that Coluccio had read the preface to the *Rhetoric* (or rather, as I have shown, to the combined *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*).

It would appear, then, that Coluccio had a manuscript containing both *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in Hermann's translation, together with the translator's preface, and that when Hermann translated Averroes' commentary he used his own earlier translation of the *Poetics* in the lemmata.

Coluccio used Hermann's translation of the *Rhetoric* in his *De verecundia*. After citing *Rhet.* II, 6 from the translation of William of Moerbeke, he adds:

«Secundum aliam translationem, "erubescet qui proculdubio secundum hunc modum scilicet omne quod fuerit ex malitia fedum, vituperabile quando accidit ei aut alicui eorum de quibus curat".»<sup>12</sup>

This is the wording of Paris lat. 16673, fol. 102<sup>r</sup>, which contains Hermann's translation, except for two variants in the Paris manuscript, *malis* for *malitia* and *acciderit* for *accidit*.

I have been unable to find the elaboration of the definition in No. 2 either in the *Poetics* or in Averroes. Possibly it is based on *Poetics* 1049 b 34-35, which William of Moerbeke translates thus:

«Dico autem locutionem quidem ipsam *metrorum* compositionem, melodie factionem autem quod *potentiam* manifestam habet omnem.»

Could Coluccio have found his wording in the lost translation of Hermann?

The arguments I have indicated in favor of a translation of the whole *Poetics* by Hermann may be countered as follows:

1. It is natural to infer from the preface to Averroes that Hermann merely began the translation of the *Poetics*.

2. The fact that in the preface to the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* Hermann makes no mention of Averroes, thereby allowing one to assume that he translated the *Poetics*, may be due to his feeling that the *Commentary* was

11. It is quoted by LACOMBE, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

12. COLUCCIO SALUTATI, *De nobilitate legum et medicinae, De verecundia*, ed. E. GARIN (Florence 1947), 326.

an equivalent for the *Poetics*, or to his desire to have the reader believe that he had translated the latter.

3. Coluccio's similar position might be due to his reading Hermann's preface to the *Rhetoric*.

4. Coluccio says that the definition of poetry is «in ipsius libelli fronte». In Averroes it is on the first page, in Aristotle on about the third page, if one agrees that it is based on 1448 b 25, which is by no means certain.<sup>13</sup>

5. It should be said that Coluccio seems to have had recourse to Averroes' *Commentary* at one point and therefore may have used it at others; he gives the etymology «antropos quasi arbor inversa», though without attribution.<sup>14</sup>

Though I have not convinced myself that these five points destroy my theory, I am unwilling to assert that I have proved my point. I have called attention to a perplexing situation which calls for further investigation. In the meantime I am inclined to believe that Hermann translated the whole of the *Poetics*.

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13. It has been suggested that this is a free translation from Syriac into Arabic of 1447a 13-16 rather than of 1448b 25: J. TKATSCH, *Die arabische Übersetzung der Poetik des Aristoteles und die Grundlage der Kritik des griechischen Textes*, I (Vienna 1928), 220. Thus the apparent misplacement would be explained.

14. *De laboribus Herculis*, p. III, 3. It is near the end of Averroes' *Commentary*. It does not appear in the sixteenth-century Latin translation from the Hebrew version of the Arabic, and may therefore be Hermann's addition, based perhaps on the same source that Coluccio used. An examination of the Arabic version is needed to settle the point.