
De motu animalium. *Fragmenta translationis anonymae* edited by Pieter De Leemans

De progressu animalium, De motu animalium. *Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka* edited by Pieter De Leemans

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For the last few decades of the last century, the biological works by Aristotle have received particular attention from researchers, both through the publication of essays and through the collection of contributions by various scholars. As with other parts of the Corpus Aristotelicum, the treatises dedicated to living beings—and animals in particular—have influenced and conditioned the cultural history, philosophy, and science of the civilizations that have evolved on the shores of the Mediterranean.

This review is focused on the medieval Latin tradition of the Aristotelian biological corpus; it concerns Pieter De Leemans' excellent work on two booklets in this corpus that belong to the group of treatises that Aristotle devoted to animals. We will also take into account the editions of the *Historia animalium* 1–5 [Beullens and Bossier 2000] and *De generatione animalium* [Drossaart Lulofs 1966], and what has already been done with regard to the Arab-Latin tradition of the *Libri animalium* [see Van Oppenraaji 1992, 1998].

Since the edition of the fragments of the *translatio anonyma* of *De motu* may be considered a sort of case study in the series of editions of Aristoteles Latinus (since we are dealing with the attempt at 'reconstructing' part of a version that did not come to us intact), we will begin with the editions of the translations of the *De progressu* and *De motu* by William of Moerbeke, and our discussion will extend to all the translations of Aristotle's treatises on animals and their circulation around the middle of the 13th century.

The geographical and chronological coordinates are central Italy (the papal kingdom and Magna Graecia during the reigns of Frederick II and then

Manfredi) in the period from 1215–1220 to 1260–1265, and the territories of the Byzantine Empire occupied by the Crusaders from 1204 to 1261. The main characters are Michael Scot for the Arabic-Latin version of the *Libri de animalibus* (which did not include the *De progressu* and *De motu*) and William of Moerbeke, whose presence in the papal curia in Viterbo is attested since 1267, even though he certainly finished translating the *De partibus animalium* while he was in Greece. Finally, with regard to the *translatio anonyma* of *De motu*, the textual tradition of reference is that of the *De principiis motus processivi* by Albert the Great, in which he says he found a translation of *De motu* while he was ‘in Campania juxta Greciam’, probably during his first journey to Italy in 1256/57.

Among the merits of De Leemans’ editions, we should note the clarity with which he guides the reader through his large and complex critical introductions. The history of the tradition of Moerbeke’s versions of the *De progressu* and *De motu* is documented in an introduction that extends for more than 200 pages [xv–cclx] which are divided into three chapters:

- Chapter 1. The Latin Tradition [xxiii–cxl]
- 2. Moerbeke’s Translation and the Greek Tradition [cxli–ccxxx]
- 3. Editorial Principles [ccxxxi–ccli].

These chapters have internal sections which are further divided in turn into paragraphs.

Not only at the beginning of the chapters but also at the beginning of each section, De Leemans clarifies for the reader the path that he intends to follow and his purpose. After rapidly recalling the *status quaestionis* relating to the medieval Arabic-Latin and Greek-Latin translations and to the editions of the Greek text, De Leemans indicates that, at every stage of his analysis, he will start from the *De progressu* and not from the *De motu*, although the translation of the latter was earlier than the former, because the tradition of the former booklet has manifested itself with greater clarity.

As expected, chapter 1 starts with the list of the manuscripts [part 1], continues with an analysis of the Parisian university tradition [parts 2–7], and then moves on to the independent tradition typical of ‘Italian’ manuscripts [parts 8–9] as well as to the manuscripts that reflect a contaminated tradition (but only for the *De motu*) [part 10]. De Leemans provides two lists of manuscripts: the first containing the *De progressu* (98 mss + 2 fragments), the second

containing the *De motu* (167 mss + 1 fragment). Following the example of the editions of the *Metaphysica* and *Meteorologica* by Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem [1995 and 2008, respectively], he notes for each codex the relationship that the text has with the university tradition or with the independent one and specifies its quality.

In my opinion, it would have been useful to point out which codices—about 90, I think, all present in both the first and the second list—contain both booklets as well as also to indicate the codices (just under 40) that hand down one or both booklets along with other zoological treatises (*Hist. an.*, *De part. an.*, *De gen. an.*).¹ By providing these additional data, De Leemans' very complex and detailed examination of the issues related to the manuscript tradition, which is directly or indirectly dependent on the exemplars circulating in Paris during the 13th century, might have gained greater clarity. The issue of the exemplar of the books *De historiis animalium* and that of the exemplar containing the *De motibus animalium et aliorum parvorum*—both listed in the well-known taxation list of the exemplars of the *stationarius* André de Sens that is dated February 25, 1304—is a matter that has now been discussed for years by the scholars who engage in the editions of Aristotle's translations. De Leemans attempts a comprehensive and systematic reading, putting the research conducted by other scholars to good use in addition to his own and not only in relation to Aristotle's treatises.

Retracing the research done with great scrupulousness by De Leemans would mean re-proposing here a considerable part of the introduction. I will, therefore, try to summarize its main points.

After defending his doctoral thesis (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2001), which was supervised by the late, lamented Jozef Brams, De Leemans has continued his research by integrating and consolidating the results that he had already achieved. In part 3 of chapter 1 [xlvii–lxi], he documents the tradition depending on the exemplar containing, as we have said, the zoological works. Beullens and Bossier 2000 shows that the *pecia*² containing

¹ See respectively the lists published in Beullens and Bossier 2000, Beullens 2009, Rossi 2009, Drossaart Lulofs 1966.

² See Boyle 1991, 39:

In medieval universities the *pecia* system, in broadest terms, worked as follows. A bookseller (*stationarius*) obtained a fair copy or other exemplar of the

the translation of book 10 of the *Historia* was later inserted into the original exemplar (which was made up of 37 *peciae*, though in the above-mentioned taxation list of 1304 there are said to be 38). Consequently, some manuscripts do not contain book 10. In the case of the 38 *peciae*, the two booklets were covered by *peciae* 18–20.

In addition to the codices containing signs of *pecia* coincident with this exemplar that are already known, De Leemans adds other ones. Regarding *pecia* 18, a group of 14 manuscripts allegedly dates back to an exemplar (called **P**¹), while in *pecia* 19, which comes between the *De progressu* and *De motu*, the same manuscripts document a subdivision of the tradition represented by **P**¹ in **P**^{1a} and **P**^{1b}. Faced with this complex situation, De Leemans notes that **P**^{1b} could represent a second *pecia* 19, and asks:

The question then is if this *pecia* 19bis was intended to replace the original *pecia* (*pecia refecta*) or if both *peciae* remained in circulation (*peciae duplicatae*). [lxvii]

In the light of what was established by Beullens [2009] for *pecia* 15, De Leemans believes that both *peciae* very likely circulated in the same period of time. The type of tradition attested by *pecia* 20 is similar to that of *pecia* 18; but De Leemans claims that he will prove that it

was the model for one of the realizations (**P**^{2b}) of the *De motu animalium* in the original exemplar “Item de motibus animalium, et aliorum parvorum”. [60]

Regarding this branch of the Parisian university tradition, that of the exemplar containing only the *Libri de animalibus*, the ms. Cesena, Malatesta Library, Plut. XXIV sin. 4 (abbreviated as *De*), which is an exemplar made up by the *stationarius* ‘Adam corrector’ (who, as far as we know, was active in Paris from 1292 to 1296) constitutes a different case. Beullens and Bossier [2000, l–lii] had already recognized that this manuscript is ‘technically’ an exemplar dating back to the late 13th century (which also contains book 10 divided, however, into 37 *peciae*) but ruled out its inclusion both in the re-

work to be copied and sold. From this exemplar he had made a copy-text or exemplar-text of his own which generally was divided into equal units or *peciae*. These were then numbered in sequence and hired out in turn for copying to professional scribes (or, to use terminology current much later in England, ‘scriveners’).

construction of the text of the *Historia animalium* and in the documentation of the tradition, because no surviving codex can be said to derive from it.

De Leemans endorses this assessment and the consequent choice. I have tried elsewhere to use arguments derived from an examination of the tradition of Moerbeke's translation of *De partibus animalium* to show why, in my opinion, this manuscript should be taken into account in the edition of the Latin translation. Apart from the fact that we do not know whether the exemplar of 38 *peciae* filed with André de Sens was recent or if it had been in use for some time, it is also indisputable that the *De* is an 'official' copy, so to speak, of Moerbeke's translation of the treatises on animals given that it is an exemplar. Furthermore, for the very reason that no surviving codex would seem to derive from it, I believe that it should be not be excluded but rather should be taken into consideration, and also because the collations show that the text deriving from it is not inferior to the text of the other codices of the university tradition [see Rossi 2009, 70–72].

Part 4 of chapter 1 [lxi–lxxix] deals with the composition of the other Parisian exemplar, i.e., the above-mentioned one which included the two booklets on animals in the context of other Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian booklets and treatises. This exemplar is recorded in the 1304 taxation list as follows: 'Item de motibus animalium, et aliorum parvorum'. Here De Leemans shows once again all his scrupulousness by exploiting the results already achieved by other scholars and by basing his analysis both on textual data and on an examination of the structure and succession of the treatises of natural philosophy in the codices reviewed as representatives of the so-called *corpus recentius*—such treatises include the two which he has edited. His investigation goes so far as to outline the probable location of the two booklets and the possible succession of much of the entire corpus in the Parisian exemplar.

Recognizing that we are still faced with trying to bring elements in favor of a proposal that is largely hypothetical, De Leemans comes to providing elements indicating the existence in succession of three exemplars called P², P³ and P⁴, which is documented in part 5 of the introduction for the *De progressu* [lxxix–lxxxix] and in part 6 for the *De motu* [xc–cxii]. While believing that the assumptions put forward may have a degree of probability and bearing in mind that, as expressly declared by De Leemans [lxiii], the study of the traditions of the *Parva naturalia* and other booklets has not yet been carried out and that he declares 'I will, therefore, confine myself to

general remarks and data for which I have found sufficient grounds,' one may have doubts when asked to contemplate the mistakes that allegedly document a further dichotomy in the tradition, such as those that would ground the subdivision of P^2 into P^{2a} and P^{2b} [lxxxii–lxxxv], especially when it comes to variations or misspellings of animal names transliterated from the Greek, variations which, I think, should in most cases be regarded as indifferent. A similar situation is documented, perhaps with more data, for the *De motu* and for P^{2a} and P^{2b} as well but with the difference that, in the *De motu*, P^{2b} is not derived from P^{2a} but is more complex because it is allegedly also articulated in P^{3a-b} [see part 6: xc–cxii]. De Leemans concludes that there is evidence to suggest that the Parisian university tradition, which is represented by the exemplars P^1 and P^2 , can be traced back to a common archetype P , although this can be stated with greater certainty for the *De progressu*.

After following De Leemans along his journey through the intricate Parisian university tradition, I should like to make some observations about a certain disorientation that this reader at least felt at the end of the journey and to state that this connects with what I noted in the beginning about the two separate lists of codices and leads as well to the question of how to proceed in the analysis of such an extensive tradition. If, in fact, De Leemans had provided a list of the manuscripts containing the two booklets inserted between the three main Aristotelian treatises on animals and another list of the codices containing these booklets included among other treatises by Aristotle (according to the more than likely content of the exemplar 'Item de motu animalium et aliorum parvorum'), and if he had organized the exposition of the results of the analysis of the tradition first considering only those codices and *then* all the others, the very complex survey undertaken by De Leemans would have been much clearer and the reader might experience less bewilderment at the end of it.

Furthermore, in my view, if De Leemans had emphasized more strongly or had given stronger 'typographic' emphasis to some revealing annotations that he has made, he might have guided the reader through his analysis better. Finally, it is not very easy to go from a list of codices in the alphabetical order of the libraries to a list of the same codices according to the number assigned to them in the catalogue compiled by the fathers of the Aristoteles Latinus in the alphabetical order of all nations and, for each of these, according to the alphabetical order of the libraries.

Part 8 [cxv–cxxxix] of chapter 1 presents and discusses data that led De Leemans to identify an independent tradition divided into (x) and (y), bipartitions that are configured differently for each booklet: *De progressu* in x, y₁, y_{1a}, y_{1b}, y₂, and the ms. *Zw*; *De motu* in x, y, z, z₁, z₂, and z₃. In particular, two manuscripts stand out for the quality of the text transmitted: the Borghese 134 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (abbreviated as *Bv*) and the Leop. Med. Fesul. 168 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (abbreviated as *Fa*). These manuscripts, already for the text of the *De generatione animalium*, represent a branch that is independent of the university tradition tracing back to the translator³ and seem to have the same value for the text of the *De partibus animalium* [see Rossi 2009, 69]. As for the two booklets considered here, *Fa* does not have a well-defined position but allegedly represents the tradition independent of the university, while De Leemans believes that ‘*Bv*, or more likely its father, was a direct yet careless copy of Moerbeke’s autograph’ [cxxxvii].

Codex *Bv* deserves some thought. In addition to that in the catalogue of the Aristoteles Latinus, we have a detailed description of it made by Anneliese Maier [1952, 177–179]. But so far have we not taken into account that we have the ownership note by Pierre Roger de Maumont (the future Pope Clement VI, 1342–1352) which also describes its content. Pierre Roger became bishop of Arras in 1328 and in the ownership note he writes:

in hoc volumine continentur isti libri per ordinem et sunt p<etri> rotgerii de malomonte monachi caze dei. Prima pars libri de animalibus...

We are, therefore, not far from the truth if we hold that the collection was made (there are many copyists who worked on it) by this Benedictine monk during the years he spent at the University of Paris, where he had been sent by his superior in 1307 before being appointed bishop. According to Anheim [2006, 5], the Vatican codex was purchased between 1312 and 1316, before Pierre Roger got his first ecclesiastical benefice. The interesting fact is that, while there are no indications of *pecia* for the *De partibus* [ff. 1r–32v], *De*

³ See Drossaart Lulofs 1966, xxvii:

ex libro—nescio an ex ipso autographo vel ex apographo quodam—pristinam versionem continente, quem Guillelmus, ut eius aetatis mos erat, cursim percensuerat et verbis corrigendis expungendisque in marginibus vel inter lineas inserendis emendaverat.

coloribus [ff. 33r–36v], *De generatione animalium* [ff. 37r–75r], *De progressu* [ff. 75v–78v], and *De motu* [ff. 78v–84]), all *peciae* are clearly indicated for each of the treatises by Albert the Great that complete the collection, with the exception of *Speculum astronomiae* [cf. [Murano 2005](#), 225–228]:

De natura et origine animae: IIIa–VIIIa,

De natura loci: IIa–VIIIa,

De causis proprietatis elementorum: IIa–IXa,

De intellectu et intelligibili: IIa–Va,

De sensu et sensato, *De memoria*, *De reminiscencia*: Ia–XIVa⁴

Regarding VIa in this last series of *peciae*, it is clarified that: ‘G. senonensis. est’, thus ‘Guillelmus Senonensis’—William of Sens, who, according to Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse [[1991](#), 58], should be located ‘at the head of the list’ of the members of a family of stationers that was active in Paris for decades (about 1270—1342) [see also [Rouse and Rouse 2000](#), 1.73–98]. Silvia Donati (Albertus-Magnus-Institut, Bonn) will undoubtedly examine the *peciae* of the paraphrase of *De sensu et sensato* in her forthcoming edition of the text in the *Opera omnia* of Albert. What matters here is that, in the first decades of the 14th century, the probable son of William of Sens, Andrew, still possessed his grandfather’s *peciae*—or perhaps a copy of them with his grandfather’s ‘mark’—and that the family shop ‘was situated on the Left Bank, on the rue St-Jacques adjacent to the Dominican convent’ [[Rouse and Rouse 2000](#), 1.81], whose library William was able to draw on, as is testified by some manuscripts.

But let us go back to the Borghese codex 134 (*Bv*). Although composite, the note left by Pierre Roger claims possession of the entire codex, written by different people who were nevertheless all French. It seems well founded, then, to infer that at Andrew Sens’ *stationarius*, in addition to the exemplar of the *Libri de animalibus* (which appears to be in his possession in the taxation list of 1304), there was also another copy of those works or that, given the ‘historical’ bonds between the family and the convent of the Dominicans, Pierre Roger has had access to a copy of Moerbeke’s translations at their library, a text which was independent of the university tradition. It may also be the case that Pierre Roger had acquired and merged into one volume various materials available on the book market, perhaps in part dating back

⁴ These are all marked as ‘de sensu et sensato’.

to the late 13th century. A closer examination of the codex will perhaps shed some light on this.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship of Moerbeke's translation to the Greek tradition. Once again, at the beginning of this very complex chapter, De Leemans indicates schematically what he means to do and how he intends to proceed. We know that the research conducted in recent decades on numerous of Moerbeke's translations of Aristotle's treatises has documented the existence of one or more 'stages' in the translation of the text corresponding to one or more revisions attributable to the translator himself. The data affording evidence of this 'evolution' of the text must obviously have special features and so, as noted by De Leemans, we must

pay attention both to variant readings in different groups of manuscripts that might be renderings of the same Greek word and to Latin variants that are (or might be) renderings of as many Greek variants. [cxliv]

As for the *De progressu*, he considers Bekker's edition and all subsequent editions⁵ as well as the study by Berger [2005] of the entire Greek tradition that has survived. For the *De motu*, De Leemans also considers the editions by Luigi Torraca [1958] and Martha Craven Nussbaum [1978].

Welcoming the conclusions reached by Berger, De Leemans has collated four other manuscripts of the *De progressu* that were not considered by editors before. For the *De motu*, he starts from the text by Nussbaum, who collated five other codices not considered in previous editions, and decides to check all the codices never used by editors in *loci* of particular interest to the Latin tradition. Then, he selects the five that he has fully collated [clxxxii]. De Leemans thus comes to the conclusion that in the tradition of *De motu* we are able to distinguish three stages of the text and that many interventions have been made by resorting to another Greek manuscript. But he reaches no certain conclusion in the case of the *De progressu*. The extreme fluctuation between the families α and β of the tradition of the *De progressu*⁶ does not allow us to connect its translation to one of the two families with a sufficient

⁵ See Jaeger 1913, Forster 1937, Louis 1973.

⁶ See the complex *stemma codicum* developed by Berger on page cxlvi and the hypotheses discussed by De Leemans on pages clxxiii–clxxviii.

degree of probability. A similar situation is acknowledged for the *De motu*.⁷ What text is actually being edited, then?

As for the *De progressu*, De Leemans states:

I have decided to offer a text that represents the stage of the translation when a copy of it was made and sent to the University of Paris. This stage is mainly found in y_1 , y_2 , *Zw*, and the Paris tradition (**P**). Since these all stem from the same ancestor y , the text that they offer needs emendation. I have used for these emendations not only x , but also *Bv* and *Aeg.*, which represent the same stage of the translation as y . [ccxxv: cf. the stemma on ccxxvii]

De Leemans, therefore, has chosen to offer the text of the university tradition but one that has been amended, yet not by witnesses of other branches of the same tradition but by witnesses representative of other stages of the tradition. The stemma, in fact, represents three stages of tradition that are chronologically, I think, distinct and different. The branching of the university tradition seems to be dependent on the second stage, which is bipartite: the *peciae* tradition on the one hand (the most numerically significant), *Bv* and *Aeg.* on the other.

Even if we can agree with De Leemans's decision (because in all probability the interested reader will find in the text or in the apparatus the lessons that he/she is looking for), it seems to me that a question remains unanswered: What criteria prevailed in the constitution of the text? Adherence to university *vulgata*, respect for the 'first stage' text, or/and the subsequent interventions of the translator?

Regarding the constitution of the text of the *De motu*, De Leemans's decision was radically different: he chose to offer the text in the final review of the translator, relegating to the apparatus the variants of the other branches of the tradition, which in this case are also 'chronologically' later. In my opinion, there were sufficient grounds to make a similar choice for the *De progressu*.

One final note. There are apparently two new studies on the Greek tradition of *De motu*⁸ that will lead to the establishment of a new text. In his recent French translation, Pierre-Marie Morel states:

⁷ See the stemma proposed for the *De motu* by Nussbaum on page clxxx.

⁸ Primavesi 2013, Primavesi and Corcilius 2013: both are forthcoming but not yet available.

Celle [scil. la traduction] du Mouvement des animaux se fonde sur le texte édité par L. Torraca, bon connaisseur de la tradition manuscrite, dont les choix sont très souvent confirmés par les éditeurs les plus récents, et dont les notes attestent une très fine compréhension du texte. Pour le Mouvement des animaux, nous avons également pris en compte, avec une attention plus particulière, l'édition de M. Nussbaum (1985), ainsi que l'édition encore à paraître de O. Primavesi (2013). [Morel 2013, 48]

We must now await the publication of this new edition of the Greek text.

Let us turn to Albert, the translation of the *De motu* that he discovered during his first stay in Italy in 1256–1257, and the fragments of it appearing in his *De principiis motus processivi*, a text of which we have the autograph [see De Leemans 2011]. As I have already mentioned, Albert stated that he had found a translation of Aristotle's treatise 'in Campania juxta Greciam' [see Gayer 1955, 48.66–74]. In the introduction [ix–xviii], De Leemans briefly summarizes what we know in this regard, namely, that:

- (a) until around the middle of the 13th century, the texts of the zoological works by Aristotle were known by the Latins essentially through Arab mediation, although, in David of Dinant's *Quaternuli*, there are quite a few references to these treatises translated from the Greek;
- (b) at the court of Frederick II, there were many translators, among them Michael Scot; and
- (c) a certain Nicolaus Siculus Grecus (a Sicilian, as the name indicates) figures among the collaborators who translated from Greek in the circle of Robert Grosseteste († 1253) in Lincoln, while Bartholomew of Messina worked at the court of King Manfredi.

That, in some areas of southern Italy, people continued albeit to a very limited extent to use Greek in the liturgy, is well-known and has been studied by eminent scholars. No wonder, then, that Albertus spoke about 'Greece', although, I believe, he was referring not to Greece proper but to Magna Graecia, i.e., to southern Italy, a geographic area which was in contact with Byzantium and in which, during the 12th century, translations from Greek and from Arabic already flourished. It should be borne in mind that southern Italy was also the crossroads of the maritime contacts between the West and the East, particularly during the Latin Empire of the East. However, it is in the region of Campania that Albertus came across the Greek-Latin

translation of the *De motu*, which fortuitously compensated for the absence of this text among the *Libri de animalibus* translated by Scot.

The procedure developed by De Leemans for detecting the remains of the lost version is ingenious and flawless from a philological point of view, given not only the paraphrastic nature of Albert's treatise but also the way in which Albert used his sources [see xix–xlv]. However, by keeping in mind Albert's *usus scribendi*, his license with regard to the *littera*, and his insight in interpreting the very rough-edge translations of Aristotle's treatises, one might not agree with De Leemans that fluctuations in the interpretation of certain passages are actual changes of perspective after a re-reading [xlv].

It has to be acknowledged that De Leemans expresses some doubts too [xlvii–li]. Nevertheless, in my view, since this is Albert, the *variae lectiones* that we find should prompt greater caution in attributing them to the anonymous translator. Regarding the lexicon, the comparison with that of the published translations in the Aristoteles Latinus discloses a tendency to *variatio* and to translation of terms not evidenced elsewhere. Such peculiarities make it possible to set this translator next to that of *Rhetorica anonyma*. De Leemans concludes:

The author of the *Rhetorica anonyma* was probably active in the first half of the thirteenth century, when quite a few translators appear to have been active in southern Italy. In the next chapter, which deals with the Greek sources of the translation, I will argue that if not with the translator of the *Rhetorica* himself, there is probably a link between the translator of *De motu animalium* and the southern Italian translators active in the first half of the thirteenth century. [lvii]

I think that the southern Italian translators referred to by De Leemans are the above-named Nicolaus Graecus and Bartholomew, and perhaps, in addition to the anonymous translator of the *Rhetorica*, the anonymous translator of the *De partibus animalium*, since this translation manifests similar characteristics with regard to the lexicon [see Rossi 1989]. In chapter 3, De Leemans addresses the possible relationship of the fragments recovered with the Greek tradition. The task that he proposes to undertake is very complex and problematic because generally we are not faced with passages of different length but with very short phrases or single words. Despite this, he believes that he has isolated some textual data that would lead us to envisage a relationship between the codex used by the anonymous Italian translator and the tradition represented by *Z*^a [Ms. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 87.21].

At this point, the history of the surviving fragments of the *Translatio anonyma* of the *De motu* connects with that of the texts transmitted by *Z^a* and the history of the codex itself. In particular, De Leemans recalls what was documented by Dieter Harlfinger [1971] about the relationship between the Latin version made by Robert Grosseteste of *De lineis indivisibilibus* and the Greek tradition represented by the codex *Z^a*, which dates back to the early 14th century and comes from the monastery of San Nicola di Casole Bruzio (Calabria) [see [Moraux et al. 1976](#), 323–324]. The upshot is that the codex was written and made in Italy, purchased for Lorenzo the Magnificent by Janos Lascaris, and probably modeled on another codex circulating in the same area. The fact that in England Grosseteste used for his translation of *De lineis* a codex no longer extant which referred to the tradition represented by *Z^a* suggests the possible ‘material’ mediation of Nicolaus Graecus, who was in his service.

While acknowledging that such a mediation is conceivable, I should like to note that, to my knowledge, the evidence and research conducted so far on the Bishop of Lincoln’s study and knowledge of Greek and his ‘Greek library’ assign a prominent role to John of Basingstoke and not to Nicolaus: we know almost nothing about why and with whom Grosseteste studied Greek and it was Basingstoke who reported to him the existence of *Testamenta XII patriarcharum* and got him a copy on his request (ms. Cambridge, University Library, Ff. 1. 24, 12th century) [see [Dionisotti 1988](#)].

I will conclude this review of De Leemans’ excellent work with some considerations that do not put into question at all the value of his work but are instead aimed at raising a more general problem. We have seen that, for the 12th century, there has been much progress in our efforts to assign authorship to the translations of Aristotle from Greek into Latin which have come to us anonymously. For the 13th century, however, it seems to me that we are forced to turn about in a circle from Grosseteste to his ‘adiutores’ (mainly Nicolaus Graecus, Moerbeke, and Bartholomew of Messina) whenever we are faced with an anonymous translation. Furthermore, Moerbeke, besides having prepared translations from Greek for over a quarter of a century that are far superior to the work done by any other translator in the history of Western culture, is alleged to have revised (even more than once) his versions of major treatises such as the *Metaphysica*, *Physica*, *De caelo*, *De anima*, and *Meteorologica* as well as the zoological and biological treatises,

as we have seen. Indeed, Father Gauthier asked about these revisions or successive stages of many of Moerbeke's translations in a note to one of his own publications:

D'autre part, je me pose une question (mais sans doute est-elle due à mon incompetence): Guillaume de Moerbeke n'aurait-il pas eu à sa disposition comme Robert Grosseteste, comme saint Thomas, une équipe de secrétaires qui lui auraient préparé le travail et dont l'intervention suggérerait une interprétation moins linéaire des divergences de traduction? [Gauthier 1993, 85n37]

Father Gauthier's 'lack of competence' is charming modesty; mine is real. Whenever it is proposed that we should resort to Moerbeke's intervention in order to explain variants of translation that are reflected in Greek variations, I am quite perplexed. It seems to me that there may be other explanations and perhaps more 'economic' ones. Rather than simply accepting that Moerbeke has revised the text here and there on one or two different occasions and very often without being driven by the need to make the translated text more understandable, the question should, I think, be 'Why would he have done so and by what criteria?' It is well known that in Italy, especially in an ecclesiastical environment, the knowledge and use of the Greek language never disappeared; and that, precisely in the 60s of the 13th century, the need to mediate between the papacy and the Byzantine emperors (who had re-conquered Byzantium) required linguistic mediators. In theology, for example, Pope Urban IV in 1263 or early 1264 asked Thomas Aquinas his opinion about *Liber contra errores graecorum*, a text compiled in Greek by Nicholas of Cotrone and translated by him into Latin. Aquinas gives a harsh judgment, noting that the author does not have sufficient knowledge of the theological consequences of inaccurate or even misleading translations of Greek terms [FOP 1969]. Thomas, in the dedicatory epistle to Cardinal Annibaldo Annibaldi of *Catena super evangelia*, a work composed in Rome between 1265 and 1268, says:

Et ut magis integra et continua praedicta sanctorum expositio redderetur, quasdam expositiones Doctorum graecorum in latinum feci transferri.... [FOP 1953, 429]

Thus, in the convent of Santa Sabina or, in any case, in Rome, Thomas was easily able to get a translation of the parts that he needed of the comments of the Greek Fathers. But who were these translators? We know that teamwork

was customary among the Dominicans in the 13th century [see Congar 1984], so perhaps it is also the case that Friar William of Moerbeke had ‘adiutores’.

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