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*Aristoteles Latinus: Meteorologica. Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeke*  
by Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem

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*Reviewed by*  
Tiberiu Popa  
Butler University  
[tpopa@butler.edu](mailto:tpopa@butler.edu)

The last few decades have witnessed growing interest in the *Meteorology* and its relation to various aspects of Aristotle's natural philosophy, in its influence on developments in alchemy, and in ancient, medieval and Renaissance commentaries on this work. The lack of obvious unity in the *Meteorology*, among other things, was the cause of much perplexity and of a number of competing interpretations since ancient times. The first three books are concerned with natural phenomena (including rain, wind, earthquakes, rainbows, the appearance of the Milky Way, and the generation of stones and metal ores) that occur in the sublunary world and are caused partly by moist and dry exhalations. Those exhalations function as the key explanatory concepts in books 1–3. The fourth book of the *Meteorology*, however, has few obvious connections with the first three and, as we learn from its final chapter (ch. 12), it was likely meant primarily as a sort of preamble to some of Aristotle's biological studies: it presents his treatment of the nature of uniform (or homeomerous) bodies, of their 'chemical' composition and their distinctive dispositions (meltable, malleable, and so on). The enormous interest that the *Meteorology* commanded mainly from late antiquity until early modern times can be measured in part by the scores of commentaries devoted to it or to some of its books and by the number of translations into Arabic and Latin.

William of Moerbeke, one of the most prolific translators in the 13th century, was the first one to translate *Meteor.* 1–3 into Latin

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directly from Greek rather than from an intermediary Arabic translation and he provided a new Latin translation of the fourth book.<sup>1</sup> Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem has undertaken the arduous task of editing this complete translation of the *Meteorology*, her edition entailing the collation of more than 40 manuscripts, and of producing a truly impressive study of it in German. The author of this massive prefatory study and edition is well known for other contributions in this field, including her two-volume edition of Moerbeke's translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (published in the same prestigious series, *Aristoteles Latinus*, which comprises about 30 volumes of editions and introductory studies).

The first volume, the *praefatio*, is divided into five major sections, not counting the introduction (which focuses on older translations of *Meteorology* 1–3 from Arabic and of book 4 from Greek) and an appendix. In the first major part of this volume, Vuillemin-Diem tackles Moerbeke's translation, discusses his access to Alexander's commentary, and establishes, mainly by comparisons with Henricus Aristippus' 12th century *translatio vetus*, that Moerbeke provided a new translation of book 4, not a mere revision of an older translation. The second part deals in about 200 pages with the manuscripts and early editions of Moerbeke's *translatio nova*. This detailed account displays the editor's extraordinary philological acumen and dwells on several significant groups of manuscripts. The third part is concerned chiefly with the nature of Moerbeke's translation. This section includes a survey of the manuscript tradition of the Greek text of the *Meteorology*, with emphasis on an important ninth century manuscript (J, Vindobonensis phil. gr. 100), which was owned by Moerbeke himself. The fourth part explores the very process of translation, which appears to have involved three stages; Vuillemin-Diem examines there a number of interesting features ranging from Greek words whose meaning was probably obscure to Moerbeke to instances of rather loose translation. In the fifth part of the first volume, the author discusses the principles that govern her edition

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<sup>1</sup> For a synopsis of Moerbeke's translations, see Minio-Paluello's article in the *The Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography* [2008] and Grabmann's older but still helpful *Guglielmo di Moerbeke O.P. Il traduttore delle opera di Aristotele* [1946].

and the models that she followed with regard to specific aspects pertaining to her work on the next volume.

The second volume includes the edition of Moerbeke's translation accompanied by a twofold *apparatus criticus*—a very detailed one for *lectiones* in manuscripts of Moerbeke's text and a more succinct one for various readings that can be found in manuscripts of Aristotle's *Meteorology*. The text of the translation is marked for convenience both by Bekker page numbers and by numbers that run from the first line to the last one in any given book in this edition (e.g., in the case of the first book, from 1 to 935). This rendering of the *Meteorology* into Latin was meant, much like Moerbeke's other translations, to reflect the Greek text as faithfully as possible in order to allow his contemporaries to glimpse, as it were, Aristotle's syntax and terminology. Several medieval commentators, including Thomas Aquinas, took full advantage of this. The edition itself is preceded by a *conspectus siglorum* and is followed by a set of geometrical representations or *descriptiones* (of the direction of certain winds or the disposition of colors in the rainbow and so on) found in some of the Greek manuscripts and in the corresponding manuscripts of the Latin version, by a short appendix, and by two comprehensive and very helpful *indices verborum* (Greek-Latin and Latin-Greek). The indices demonstrate Moerbeke's desire to offer a translation that was largely consistent (e.g., πέφτις, an important concept in book 4, is consistently translated as 'digestio'). However, he tends to avoid being overly rigid as he was clearly aware of the polysemy of many Greek words. Besides, the two indices shed further light on his occasional hesitation between relying on Latin equivalence and resorting to transliteration (e.g., the Greek « ὑπόστασις » is translated as 'subsistentia' and as 'ypostasis'; « περικάρπιον » becomes 'fructiferum' and sometimes 'pericarpium'). Some of his transliterations contributed to the enrichment of medieval Latin and, subsequently, of various modern languages.

Anyone interested in the *fortuna* of Aristotle's *Meteorology* in the high Middle Ages or, more generally, in the intellectual context in which the Aristotelian corpus was gradually recovered in Latin

Europe will find an illuminating and most reliable tool in Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem's recent *praefatio* and edition.

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