ACCULTURIZING ARISTOTLE: MATTHEW OF LINKÖPING'S *TRANSLATIO* OF POETIC REPRESENTATION

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Abstract

Dieser Beitrag enhält eine Neubewertung der „Poetria" des schwedischen Gelehrten Matthias von Linköping aus dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert. Man hat behauptet, dass Matthias die Bedeutung seine wichtigsten Quelle, Hermannus Alemannus' lateinischer Übersetzung von Averroes' „Mittlerem Kommentar" zu Aristoteles' „Poetik", nicht richtig verstanden hätte und dass er folglich einen bereits verwirrten Aristoteles weiter verwirrt hätte. Meiner Ansicht nach ist eine positivere Bewertung möglich. Ich argumentiere, dass Matthias ein eindrucksvoller Neuerer war, der versuchte, den Kommentar von Averroes/Hermannus so zu deuten, dass er mit den mittelalterlichen „Artes poetriae", wie z.B. Galfried von Vinsaufs „Poetria nova", vereinbar war.

This article offers a reappraisal of the "Poetria" which was written in the early fourteenth century by the Swedish scholar Matthew of Linköping. It has been claimed that Matthew did not understand properly the meaning of his most crucial source, Hermann the German's Latin translation of Averroes' "Middle Commentary" on Aristotle's "Poetics", and therefore he confused further an already-confused Aristotle. In my view, a more positive evaluation is possible. I argue that Matthew was an impressive innovator, who sought to make sense of the Averroes/Hermann commentary in a way which reconciled it with the medieval "Artes poetriae", such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's "Poetria nova".

In the history of medieval understanding of Aristotle's "Poetics", by far the most important document is the "Middle Commentary" on an Arabic version of that text which was produced in Islamic Spain by Averroes (Ibn Rushd) of Cordoba, who lived from 1126 until 1198. This commentary was best known in Western Europe – though initially its main sphere of influence was dominantly Parisian – in the Latin translation made in 1256 by Hermann the German, a monk living in Toledo. This work should be read as a reconfiguration of the values of Aristotle's text, in the light of medieval cultural values (and the vaguest of notions of classical theatrics), rather than as a 'misunderstanding' of what Aristotle had meant. The fact that it continued to be used in preference to the (impressively accurate) translation which William of Moerbeke made in 1278, is most telling. It made sense to medieval culture, medieval culture made sense of it.

One of the most fascinating, and arguably the most original, of the treatises which used Averroes/Hermann is the "Poetria" which was written in the early fourteenth century by the Swedish scholar Matthew of Linköping (who seems to have become familiar with the text as a student at the University of Paris). Best known as the friend and confessor of St Bridget of Sweden, Matthew is

coming to be recognized as, next to Bridget herself, "the most influential representative of Swedish medieval literature"[1] – here I quote Birger Bergh, who recently has produced an excellent edition of Matthew's "Poetria".[2] Matthew's contribution to medieval literary theory consists of two texts, a treatise on rhetoric entitled "Testa nucis" (unfortunately extant only in a single fragment) which has as its principal source William of Moerbeke's translation of Aristotle's "Rhetoric", and the "Poetria", which has survived entire.[3] The latter is Matthew's only, and last, word on poetics, as he himself indicates: "this is the theme we ourselves have spent least energy on, nor do we intend to devote ourselves to it later". But he expresses the hope that the "Poetria" will encourage "those of our people who slowly [perhaps 'lazily' is a better translation] ruminate on poetry to conduct studies of their own".[4] One may compare the complaint of Giovanni Boccaccio, that while other kinds of text (legal, philosophical, scriptural, etc.) have their commentaries, "poetry alone is without such honor. Few – very few – are they with whom it has dwelt continuously" (Genealogia deorum gentilium, xv. 6).[5] But, to the best of our knowledge, Matthew's plea fell on deaf ears. His treatise survives in a single manuscript, and seems to have had little if any influence – in marked contrast to the highly popular "Genealogia deorum gentilium". The "Poetria" was not known to any of Matthew's Italian contemporaries (such as Boccaccio and Petrarch), whose highly innovative poetic theory *inter alia* marks them out as harbingers of the Renaissance. But quantity of reception is not necessarily an indicator of quality of thought. In his own way, Matthew was an impressive innovator, someone who sought to make sense of the Averroes/Hermann commentary, and reconcile it with other authorities on poetics, as this essay hopes to demonstrate.

[1] Matthew of Linköping: "Testa nucis" and "Poetria", ed. and tr. by Birger Bergh, Arlöv 1996 (Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, 2nd ser. Latinska skrifter 9.2), p. 7. See also Anders Piltz: Magister Mathias of Sweden in his Theological Context. A Preliminary Survey, in: The Editing of Theological and Philosophical Texts from the Middle Ages. Acts of the Conference arranged by the Department of Classical Languages, University of Stockholm, 29-31. August 1984, ed. by Monika Asztalos, Stockholm 1986 (Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 30), pp. 137-50.
[2] See also his important studies, Magister Mathias och den medeltidslatinska poetiktraditionen, in: Lychnos. Lärdomshistoriska samfundets årsbok 1975–76, 1977, pp. 68–84, and: Critical Notes on Magister Mathias' "Poetria", in: Eranos 76, 1978, pp. 129–43.
[3] Both edited by Bergh, cf. note 1. Previously these texts had been edited by S. Sawicki: Poetria och Testa nucis av Magister Matthias Lincopensis, in: Samlaren (1936), pp. 109–52.
[4] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 62–3.
[5] Boccaccio on Poetry. Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's "Genealogia deorum gentilium" in an English Version with Introductory Essay and Commentary, tr. by Charles G. Osgood, Princeton 1930, p. 117.

I. The adventures of Aristotle: from Greece to Sweden

Averroes had no doubt whatever that Aristotle's pronouncements on poetry applied to most, if not all, nations at all times. "The purpose of this discussion is to comment upon those universal rules in Aristotle's "Poetics" that are common to all or most nations". He does qualify this grand pronouncement somewhat by admitting that "much of its contents are either rules particularly characteristic of their [i. e. Greek] poems and their customs therein are not found in the speech of the Arabs but are found in other languages".[6] But that does not stop him criticizing certain Arabic poems for their failure to meet Aristotle's standards. The Philosopher's rules are the measure of all poetry, and if they are best exemplified by Greek texts, that is an indication of the superiority of Greek over Arabic poems. Homer is singled out for special commendation as the one "who provided the principles of these arts"; "no one before him did anything worth considering as concerns the art of eulogy, the art of satire, or any of the other arts well known among them [i. e. among the Greeks]".[7] Elsewhere, Homer is praised for the way he managed to combine congruent comparisons with highly effective praising and blaming. Then comes the somewhat grudging remark that "it is not difficult [...] to find examples" of this combination "in the poems of the Arabs", which in turn is followed by outright criticism. Citing Abū Nasr al-Fārābī, Averroes declares that 'depravity' is encouraged by the kind of poetry they (i. e. the Arabs) call *nasīb*, this being the prelude to a kind of ode. "The young ought to avoid" this kind of poetry, "and should be educated in those poems of theirs that encourage valor and generosity". These are "the only two virtues encouraged by the Arabs in their poems", he adds – but immediately denigrates such poetry with the tart comment that this technique is not really practised to encourage these virtues "but only in order to boast" (presumably about the people portrayed therein).[8] Later he declares that, because Arab poems fail to praise virtuous actions and blame vicious ones, the Quran "heaps reproach upon them".[9] And, at the very end of the commentary, he goes so far as to say (quoting al-Fārābī again) that "the poetry made by the people of our tongue according to poetical rules is trifling".[10]

Despite his denigration of Arabic poems, Averroes quotes a remarkable number of them in his treatise, and occasionally some words of praise do pass his lips, as when he commends al-Mutanabbī for the "exceptionally fine" verses in which may be found a combination of "discovery" and "reversal" (concepts

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[6] Averroes: Middle Commentary on Aristotle's "Poetics", tr. [from the Arabic] by Charles E. Butterworth, Princeton 1986, p. 59.
[7] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 71.
[8] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], pp. 67–8.
[9] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 108.
[10] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 142.

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which have traveled far from their original function of designating aspects of plot).[11] However, it is the Quran which, among Arabic writings, enjoys pride of place – as one would expect, given its appearance here, though the fact that Averroes was quite prepared to use this most sacred text to illustrate principles from the "Poetics" is in itself quite remarkable.[12] Particular interesting is Averroes' citation of the Quranic stories of Joseph and his brothers and Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as illustrations of how the morally efficacious emotions of pity and fear (which Aristotle had designated as appropriate to tragedy) may be stimulated.[13] Ignoring Aristotle's interest in the fatal flaw for which the tragic hero is culpable, Averroes concentrates on another aspect of the Philosopher's doctrine: the tragic hero fundamentally must be a decent person, who has not perpetrated a horrible crime, otherwise the audience will not be able to empathize with him. From this it is an easy step to the idea that his punishment is far in excess of any personal failing. Or indeed, that an account of the misery which "unnecessarily" befalls "someone who does not deserve it" is set fair to arouse feelings of pity and "tenderness". Furthermore, such a representation also induces fear, because the reader feels that, if such a thing could happen to so good a person, it could happen to him (as a less worthy individual), all the more readily.[14] All of this applies to Joseph and Abraham; in the latter case, "what he was ordered to do to his son is a statement that most inspires sorrow and fear".[15] As Aristotle did indeed say, we do "not become sad or feel pity about the evil that one enemy inflicts upon another", for that is to be expected; however, the evil which "loved ones inflict upon one another – like brothers killing one another, fathers killing sons, or sons fathers" – is a very different matter.[16] Hence the power of the story of Abraham and Isaac, though one might imagine Averroes having to argue that, even though no killing took place, the *prospect* of the sacrifice of Isaac was sufficient to arouse the emotions in question.

But does not the traditional 'unhappy ending' of tragedy cause a problem for Averroes' interpretation of these Quranic stories? (They seem rather to be 'comic', in the sense in which Dante's masterpiece was called the "Commedia"). The short answer is 'no', given the way in which Averroes has interpreted his

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[11] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 88. Cf. pp. 106 and 140, where other poets are praised.
[12] He does so also in his commentary on Plato's "Republic", "constantly citing passages from the Quran as a favorable example of what poetry might aim at" – and in the process subtly mitigating his author's "sweeping condemnation of the poets and poetry" (Butterworth, introduction to Averroes, Middle Commentary [n. 6], p. 12).
[13] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], pp. 92, 94–5.
[14] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 92.
[15] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 95.
[16] Averroes, Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6], p. 94.

source. Aristotle himself had praised the fact that many of Euripides' plays end in misfortune, this being the most tragic ending possible, whence Euripides is rightly regarded as "the most tragic of our dramatic poets".[17] But this value-judgment is tellingly absent from the Averroes/Hermann version of chapter 13 of the "Poetics". Furthermore, the traditional distinction between tragedy with its sad ending and comedy with its happy ending[18] is elided through Averroes' reworking of the concepts of 'reversal', 'discovery', 'simple plot' and 'complex plot'. These become, respectively, 'indirect' imagination (*circulatio*), 'direct' imagination or recognition (*directio sive directiva significatio*), 'simple imitation' (*imitatio simplex*) and 'compound imitation' (*imitatio composita*).[19] For Averroes, indirect imagination is representation of what is to be blamed whereas direct imagination is representation of what is to be praised. Furthermore, compound imitation (involving both praise and blame) is better than simple imitation (involving either praise or blame), and the best kind of compound imitation occurs when the text begins with indirect imagination (i. e. engages in blaming, presents the blameworthy) and ends with direct imagination (i. e. engages in praising, presents the praiseworthy). The narrative sequences of the stories of Joseph and Abraham, which end happily and with much credit being due to the protagonists, could therefore be read – though Averroes does not do so – as excellent examples of the best kind of imitation, viz. *imitatio composita*. At the very least, it may be said that Aristotle's theory of tragedy, as understood by Averroes, causes no problems at all for his reading of certain Quranic narratives as powerfully evocative of the prestigious emotions of pity and fear. Indeed, it gave the Muslim polymath scope for the application of even more (supposedly) Aristotelian principles to his sacred text, should he have wished to engage in such an enterprise. Many centuries later, Benvenuto da Imola was to praise Dante's "Commedia" as a wonderfully elaborate example of compound imitation, since it begins with the representation of blameworthy sinners in Hell and ends with the representation of the blessed, who are utterly praiseworthy, in Heaven.[20]

Here, then, is the Muslim *translatio* of Aristotelian literary theory which Hermann the German sought to make available to Latin Christendom. Hermann freely admits that, in attempting to understand the "Poetics" with the help of

[17] Aristotle: Poetics, xiii, tr. in: Classical Literary Criticism, ed. by Penelope Murray, T. S. Dorsch, London 2000, p. 73.
[18] On which see the relevant discussion in Henry A. Kelly: Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages, Cambridge 1993 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 18).
[19] See my discussion in Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary-Tradition, ed. by Alastair J. Minnis, A. B. Scott, with D. Wallace, Oxford 1988; rev. edn., Oxford 1991, repr. 2001, p. 287.
[20] See Hardison, pp. 346–7.

Arab scholarship, he experienced great difficulty because of the differences in the way poetry was composed in Greek and Arabic.[21] The amount of citation of Arabic poetry is reduced in Hermann's version (mainly to make the text more manageable, I suspect) but he does not seem hostile to it; his only criticisms follow those made by Averroes in the original commentary. At one point (at least) Hermann may be guilty of censorship on grounds of prudery. To illustrate a type of simile, Averroes had quoted a phrase from a poem by Dhū al-Rummah: "sand like the thighs of young maidens I walked through".[22] The basic point is that, the sand being pure and fine, it is difficult to walk through. This image is at least erotic and may even bear an innuendo concerning the difficult sexual penetration of young virgins. At any rate, Hermann left it out. Of course, he simply may have found the phrase difficult to understand. But Hermann's abilities as a translator should not be underestimated (despite the grumblings of the cantankerous Roger Bacon, one of the few scholars who braved the literal translation of the "Poetics" by William of Moerbeke – and who, it should be emphasized, was heavily influenced by Hermann as he devised his own poetic theory).[23] Furthermore, Hermann displays no hostility towards Averroes' citations from the Quran (though he does not translate all of them); the stories of Joseph and Abraham are told with evident understanding, as one would expect in the case of materials which were common to the holy books of Islam and Christianity. Clearly, Hermann sees his task as that of a translator rather than a commentator. He sets about rendering Averroes' text as best he can, with occasional abbreviation, but not adding any materials by way of explanation of either Aristotle or Averroes. (This is why, throughout the following discussion, I am able to refer to 'Averroes/Hermann' when citing the Latin version of the "Middle Commentary".) At the beginning of his translation Hermann says that "considerable aid in understanding the "Poetics" [of Aristotle] is provided by the "Ars poetica" of Horace",[24] but this seems to be merely a tip for further reading – or at best, an assertion of the compatibility of these two major authorities on the art of poetry. But in what follows, Hermann himself does not draw on the "Ars poetica" or make any attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Horace.

[21] Averroes/Hermann: Averrois expositio poeticae interprete Hermanno Alemanno, sue Poetria Ibinrosdin, ed. by L. Minio-Paluello: Aristoteles Latinus xxxiii, ed. altera, Paris 1969, p. 41. Hereafter cited as "Translatio Hermanni".
[22] Middle Commentary, tr. Butterworth [n. 6] p. 62.
[23] See Vincent Gillespie: The Study of Classical Authors: From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450, in: The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 2: The Middle Ages, ed. by Alastair Minnis, Ian Johnson, Cambridge 2005, pp. 145-235 (at pp. 171–2).
[24] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 41; tr. in: Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations, ed. by A. Preminger, O. B. Hardison, K. Kerrane, New York 1974, p. 349.

Matthew of Linköping, however, does seek to bring together Aristotle and Horace's "Old Poetics" (a common late-medieval label for the "Ars poetica"), along with the "Poetria nova" of Geoffrey of Vinsauf. In a crucial statement, Matthew declares that he has "employed Aristotle" as his "source" for the principles (*principia*) of "Horace in *The Old* and the other one [i. e. Geoffrey of Vinsauf] in *The New Poetics*".[25] One may recall Averroes' reference to Homer as one "who provided the principles" of the poetic arts but, of course, Matthew has in mind the emergence of what we now call literary criticism, the principles of poetry as explicitly theorized from Aristotle onwards, rather than the first formal implementation of those principles in the early days of literary practice. The result is a fascinating blend of the "Poetics" as interpreted by Averroes with the pragmatic methods of making a poem characteristic of the medieval *artes poeticae*, of which Geoffrey of Vinsauf's treatise was the most popular example, with Horace's "Old Art" playing a supportive role (its influence extending beyond the few explicit citations found in Matthew's text).

The three basic categories which provide the basic structure for the "Poetria" – *representatio, tonum* and *metrum* – come from Aristotle, with Matthew emphasizing the priority of *representatio* (i. e. visualization, image-making) as the means whereby this 'science' attains its end.[26] That is the subject of the first and longest section (paragraphs 8–77 in Bergh's edition), which is heavily dependent on the Averroistic "Poetics", though the final paragraphs (68–77) are indebted rather to standard theory concerning the rhetorical 'circumstances' of the type included in Cicero's "De inventione", a foundational textbook for the teaching of rhetoric in the period.[27] The following section (the shortest of the three, 78–88) is on *tonus*, meaning intonation or the 'pronunciation' of words and sentences, though a major aspect of *pronunciatio* as usually understood in rhetorical doctrine, namely the appropriate use of gestures, is treated in the first section (52-55). A little had been said about *tonus* by Averroes/Hermann, but Matthew seems uninterested in this, rather choosing to retail doctrine of a kind familiar from the arts of poetry and such grammatical schoolbooks as the "Graecismus" of Everard of Béthune. The final section, on *metrum* (i. e. versification, 89–123), moves very far from Averroes/Hermann, to enter the world of the *artes poeticae*, particularly Geoffrey of Vinsauf's. Matthew says that he need give only a brief account of this subject, since it is "more thoroughly dealt with both in *The New* and in *The Old Poetics*"[28]; in fact it is the "Poetria nova" which is the determining influence, the reference to Horace being a means of

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[25] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 72–3.
[26] For an excellent summary of Matthew's treatise see H.A. Kelly: Aristotle-Averroes-Alemannus on Tragedy: The Influence of the "Poetics" on the Latin Middle Ages, in: Viator 10, 1979, pp. 161–209 (at pp. 181–6).
[27] To be discussed in more detail below, pp. 255–7.
[28] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], p. 81 (para. 124). Cf. p. 73 (para. 90).

affirming the impeccable credentials of Matthew's treatise, which, as Matthew has already said, has drawn on poetic theory both old and new. The text ends with a poem in praise of Uppsala and its Archbishop, Olaf Björnsson, to whom Matthew dedicates the "Poetria" in its preface. Birger Bergh plausibly suggests that Matthew may have got the idea from the poem in praise of Paris with which John of Garland opened his "Parisiana Poetria".[29] Wherever he got it, it was a really bad idea, because the poem is turgid and only partially comprehensible. As a poet, Matthew makes a good theorist.

Turning to the matter of his citation of earlier poets, it is particularly interesting to note that Matthew strikes out on his own here, not drawing on the quotations from Greek and Arabic texts which Averroes/Hermann had made easily accessible to him. Of Arabic poetry there is not a trace in Matthew's treatise, and when Matthew quotes Homer (which he does twice) he is making personal use of the "Ilias latina", not depending on Hermann's Latin renderings of Averroes' citations of those passages from Homer which were included in the Arabic version of the "Poetics" which he used (itself a translation of a Syriac translation of the original). The commanding position occupied by Greek poetry in the Averroistic "Poetics" is taken over by Latin poetry, with Virgil's "Aeneid" being quoted most frequently[30], along with Persius[31], Ovid (the "Metamorphoses")[32], Horace ("Ars poetica"),[33] and Cicero (the "Rhetorica ad Herennium" – generally supposed in Matthew's time to have been written by Cicero – is named, but the source in question is actually the "De inventione").[34] Neither does Matthew use the scriptural stories (as transmitted by Hermann) which the Old Testament shared with the Quran. Rather he quotes the New Testament, albeit only once (the miracle of the loaves and fishes as recounted in St John's Gospel, John 6:10), and when explaining how the virtues may be achieved through either "the exciting of love for virtue" or the "fear of some evil event", he resorts to what, for him, would have been specifically Christian discourse: "those who are not motivated by the delight prepared in heaven because they have a weak love for it or none at all, should at least strive after virtue in order to avoid the inconsolable misery and afflictions of Hell".[35]

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[29] As suggested by Bergh; Poetria [n. 1], p. 23.
[30] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 46–47, 48–49 (not actually named), 50–51, 52–3 (twice), 62–3, 64–5 (twice), 66–7 (3 times), 70–1, 72–3.
[31] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 44–5, 48–49, 50–51, 52–3, 70–1 (twice).
[32] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 62–3, 68–9 (three times), 76–7 (twice), 80–81.
[33] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 58–9, 72–3, 76–7 (twice).
[34] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], p. 67.
[35] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], p. 59.

II. The migrations of *mimesis*:
from imitation to imaginative likening (*assimilatio*)

In Averroes/Hermann, the concept of *mimesis* has been replaced with that of *assimilatio*, a process of linguistic "likening" which involves imaginative representation (*representatio*, a term used by Hermann as a synonym for *assimilatio*). The Arab commentator and his Latin translator happily channel Aristotle's proposition that the tendency to "'liken' one thing to another and to represent one thing by another (*assimilatio rei ad rem et representatio rei per rem*) is a natural instinct found in man from birth"; "among all the other animals, man alone takes pleasure in the ' likening' (*assimilatio*) of things which he has already received in his mind, and in representing and imitating them (*in earum representatione seu imitatione*)".[36] Clear proof of this is afforded by the fact that "we derive pleasure from the representation of some things which we do not enjoy when we experience them" in real life. "This occurs most notably in the configuration of many animals achieved by skilled sculptors or painters. This is why we use *exempla* in teaching, so that what is said may more easily understood, because of the moving power of the images". And a little later Averroes/Hermann adds:

> Ideoque multotiens non delectatur homo ex aspectu forme ipsius rei existentis in natura et delectatur in eius representatione per picturas et colores; et propterea utuntur homines arte pingendi et describendi.
>
> [So, frequently a man derives no pleasure from seeing the form of something which exists in nature, and yet does take pleasure in its representation and re-creation through the medium of painting and colours, and this is the reason why men employ the art of painting and description].[37]

But Averroes/Hermann spends little time on the principle of representation for pleasure's sake. "Without exception", all comparison and representation involves showing "what is becoming or unbecoming or base": and, "clearly this can have no other purpose than the pursuit of what is becoming and the rejection of what is base".[38] Two essential ingredients should be present in every act of poetic "likening", "the praise of what is good and condemnation of what is evil".[39]

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[36] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], pp. 44–5; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 293.

[37] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], pp. 48–9; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 295.

[38] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 43; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 291.

[39] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 43; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 292.

For Hermann, then, *assimilatio* designates both image-making (in the sense of representing reality – albeit in a selective and exaggerated way, on which more later) and the emotive effect which such images have on an audience. Poetry cannot prove (in the way in which the higher forms of logic can) but it can move. The key to its success, its impact on the morals of men, lies in its affectivity, which is achieved through the power of its representation. This is absolutely standard doctrine among the Arab literary theorists. As Ismail Dahiyat has said, they generally believe that "poetry is directed towards moving an audience with whom logical reasoning may not be effective"; its aim is the production of "a 'kinetic' movement of desire or avoidance, a psychological tendency towards acceptance or rejection of a moral action".[40] This may be seen as a development and a deepening of tendencies certainly present in Aristotle's "Poetics", where the moral effects of literature receives much attention. But alongside this in the original treatise is an aesthetic dimension, well exemplified by Aristotle's remark that men may take pleasure in the representation of things which, in real life, they find ugly and repellent, "such as the forms of the lowest animals and of corpses".[41] We have seen the partial survival of this idea in the passages quoted at the beginning of this section. Aristotle is also of the opinion that poetic truth may not simply be reduced to moral truth (in the sense of the power of a text to portray and inculcate modes of good behaviour). The "Poetics" accommodates the value of truth-to-life, verisimilitude, as when Aristotle asserts that human virtue and vice really do exist in actual human beings[42], and goes on to emphasize the importance of representing actions which might well happen in a given situation, and following a sequence of events which is plausible.[43] Since men are "necessarily either of good or bad character", Aristotle says, they can be imitated in one of three possible ways: "either as better than we are, or worse, or as the same kind of people as ourselves".[44] Comedy, he continues, represents us as worse than we are, and tragedy, as better than we are – a statement of fact concerning what actually happens in the literature known to him, rather than a recommendation of what should be done (at least, in my interpretation of Aristotle's text). Aristotle's Arab readers read this in rhetorical and ethical terms. In tragedy, people who are better than normal are depicted and shown to be praiseworthy. In comedy – effectively reduced to satire – people who are worse than normal are depicted, and duly shown to be blameworthy. Tragedy is therefore the art of praise (*laudatio*), while comedy is the art of blame or vituperation (*vituperatio*).

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[40] Ismail Dahiyat: Avicenna's Commentary on the "Poetics" of Aristotle. A Critical Study with an Annotated Translation of the Text, Leiden 1974, p. 19.

[41] Aristotle, Poetics, iv, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 61.

[42] Aristotle, Poetics, ii, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 59.

[43] Aristotle, Poetics, ix, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 69.

[44] Aristotle, Poetics, ii, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 59.

Here poetry has been assimilated to epideictic rhetoric, that branch of the subject which is concerned with praising and blaming. Like rhetoric poetry depends on its power to persuade – and the more plausible the represented actions are, "they have greater power to persuade", as Averroes/Hermann puts it.[45] That is to say, while the poet should exaggerate typical human qualities to condition the audience's response to his representations and drive home his moral message, he should not go too far, thereby making his *assimilationes* unbelievable – because then they will lose their psychological appeal and the poem will fail in its moral mission. This is what happens when poets use representations "arrived at by means of false and invented fictions", "like those in Aesop and similar fabulous writings". (Here Hermann has substituted Aesop for the Arabic text known as "Kalīlah wa Dimnah", as cited by Averroes, which has jackals as the two principal characters. This is part and parcel of a radical transformation of what Aristotle had said in chapter 9 of the "Poetics".) On this argument, verisimilitude is crucially important. And it has its *raison d'être* not in any aesthetic principle but in the extent to which it shows us which actions are to commended and which are to be condemned.

III. Reconfiguring *representatio*

We are now in a position to investigate where Matthew stands, in relation to the process whereby an aesthetic poetic (or at least, a poetic which allowed some aesthetic considerations) was replaced by a dominantly rhetorical-ethical one. In denoting the process of 'likening' or image-making which is essential to poetry, Matthew prefers to speak of *representatio* rather than adopt Hermann's technical term of choice, *assimilatio*. Following Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of *mimesis*, he asserts that poetic *representatio* is concerned with men's actions, "which are honest or shameful, laudable or reprehensible. Every poem will therefore consist of praise or censure".[46] And this dictum raises for Matthew, as it had done for Averroes and Hermann before him, the issue of verisimilitude. "In consequence, it is not the poet's affair to make up fables and insert them in his verses, since such inventions do not create the kind of credibility required in eulogy". However, Matthew seems to have thought there was something odd about that statement – as well he might, given that it seems to fly in the face of medieval approval of beast-fables, such as those of Aesop and Avianus, for their didactic utility, particularly with schoolchildren. "Fables were invented so that by introducing the fictitious conversation of dumb animals or insensible objects, certain similarities in human morals and behaviour might be criticized".[47] Here I quote a (quite representative) comment by the

twelfth-century grammarian Conrad of Hirsau, who goes on to claim that Aesop's fables were "invented to give pleasure" and work towards a "moral end"; their author "wanted to delight and also to recall irrational nature to its true self by a comparison with brute beasts".[48] For his part, Avianus sought "to describe the ignorance of stupidity of those who err, and thus to summon the straying conscience back to a state of goodness".[49]

Matthew's qualification of Averroes/Hermann begins quite gently with the suggestion that there are many different kinds of *fabula*, and we simply cannot lump them together: "If they are made up with care and convey probability, they are now and then admitted".[50] This is reminiscent of Aristotle's view that the poet is not limited to describing things which actually happened, that being the function of the historian; rather, the poet's function is to describe "the kinds of thing that *might* happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary".[51] There is, however, no need to postulate here some kind of spiritual osmosis between the ancient Greek philosopher and the fourteenth-century Swede, which mysteriously transcends centuries of *translatio* and *transformatio* of Aristotle's text. For elsewhere in the "Middle Commentary" Averroes/Hermann clearly says that authors should not be criticized for including "fictitious tales" in their laudatory poems[52]; if such material helps inspire feelings of "sadness and fear", then their use is perfectly justifiable. Is that altogether consistent with Averroes/Hermann's attack on "false and invented fictions"? The matter is debatable, but a reconciliation may be effected through the argument that fiction of a kind which does not threaten the appearance of truth-to-life is quite different from the fables of Aesop which, with their talking animals, lack all verisimilitude.

But as Matthew's sentence continues[53], it seems that he also has in mind those very fables, and would wish to include them in his defence. Sometimes, Matthew says, fables may be admitted "primarily in order to give pleasure, sometimes also to conceal some truth which is understood by the very fables". (His choice of the term *occultacio* ('concealment') is quite revealing here – strongly reminiscent of the genre of beast-fable.) Matthew then suggests that the prob-

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45 Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 52; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 300; cf. p. 284.
46 Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 54–5.
47 Conrad of Hirsau: Dialogus super auctores, tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 47.

48 Tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 48.
49 Tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], pp. 49–50.
50 Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 54–5.
51 Aristotle, Poetics, ix, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 68.
52 Or, indeed, "those based on history". Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 56; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], p. 305.
53 The complete sentence, which I have divided in two here for purposes of analysis, runs as follows: *Admittuntur tamen quandoque, si conuenienter fingantur et verisimiliter, maxime propter delectandum, nonnumquam eciam propter occultacionem alicuius veri per ipsas fabulas intellecti* [Nevertheless, if they are made up with care and convey probability, they are now and then admitted of, primarily in order to give pleasure, sometimes also to conceal some truth which is understood by the very fables].

lem may be one of classification. "In such cases" we may be dealing not with fables but with "either metaphors or allegories (*mathafore aut permutaciones*) of the kind" which he himself has "just dealt with", and which evidently require no justification.

What, then, has Matthew to say about those crucial Averroistic categories of *laudatio* and *vituperatio*? His account deviates from the strong tendency of the "Middle Commentary" to identify the art of praise with tragedy and the art of blame with comedy. This is one of the most original and distinctive features of the Swede's treatise. Matthew emphasizes the fact (as he saw it) that praise and blame have been used "as incitements to the virtues" since time immemorial, and are crucial characteristics of poetry in general. "Poetic praise" (*laus poetica*) is defined as "something said in verse that incites to virtues"[54], and the poetry of blame has the same end, though it attains it through a different textual process. Thus the moral objective of poetry is made abundantly clear. And Matthew is particularly interested in the ways in which certain methods of representation can help or hinder this objective. Certain types of representation may provoke "contrary emotions" which "stand in the way of the achievement of what is right".[55] Therefore, the poet should take no chances, but give clear moral direction to his audience by adding "words that generate such emotions as are conducive to the achievement of virtues, as for instance the exciting of love for virtue or fear of some evil event. In this way the mind is strongly excited (*vehementer incitatur anima*)". There is no doubt, then, that Matthew has accepted fully the affective poetics which is such a major feature of Averroes/Hermann's treatise.

What is quite intriguing is the nature of Matthew's concern with the techniques of representation which are characteristic of poetry, and in the extent to which he seems willing to allow aesthetic valence to excellent use of those techniques – without feeling the need constantly to reassure his audience that the moral outcome is what really matters. This underlies Matthew's rewriting of the comparison between the poet and the painter which he found in the Averroistic "Poetics" (and which we quoted at the beginning of the present section of this essay).

Sicut enim pictor peritus rem, que in se delectabilis non esset aspicere, propter conuenienciam in disposicione parcium picture et colorum delectabiliter inuenitur representare, sic poeta perfectus delectat animam in faciendo rem secundum suas proprietates imaginari.

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[54] In contrast with rhetoric, where praise is carried out by means of "persuasions and enthymemes in prose", *laus poetica* is effected through visualization in verse (*per representacionem in sermone metrico factam*). Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 54–5.

[55] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 58–9.

[For the skilful painter, by the harmonious arrangement of the different parts and colours of the picture, turns out to give an agreeable representation of something that would not in itself be agreeable to look at, and in the same way the perfect poet gives pleasure by making us imagine a thing in accordance with its characteristics].[56]

Such *imaginacio* is accomplished by three means, *representatio, tonum* and *metrum*, though *representatio* alone "is an essential part of poetry". Matthew proceeds to define it as "the making visible of something in words, as it seems to pass vividly before our eyes": *Est igitur representacio ostensio rei per sermonum, tanquam iam ante oculos fieri videatur.* And this serves as the basis for a commendation of Virgil's artistry.

Vnde, sicut credo, Virgilius non propter subtilitatem eloquii quantum propter hanc representacionem conuenientissime factam primatum inter poetas optinuit.

[Therefore, to my mind it is not so much Virgil's subtle style that has given him the first place among poets as his very representation, so skillfully accomplished].[57]

First and foremost, then, Virgil is to be commended for the way in which he can make the actions depicted in the "Aeneid" (evidently this is the work which Matthew has in mind) "pass vividly before our eyes". There is not a word – not here, not anywhere else in the "Poetria" – of the moral end of this epic. This is not to suggest for a moment that Matthew would have challenged such a reading of the "Aeneid". On the contrary, his acceptance of the affective poetics promoted by Averroes/Hermann makes it quite obvious that he would happily have endorsed such a view. My point is rather that, for Matthew, this is not the only thing to emphasize about a poem, the only basis on which it may be commended. Such a position does not make him unique or even unusual within the sphere of medieval literary theory and criticism. But he expresses it both fully and elegantly.

Matthew's analogy between the poet and the painter has been compared to comparisons made by Horace in two passages of "The Old Poetics", as Matthew calls it. The first passage, located at the very beginning of the "Ars poetica", likens poets who produce monstrous forms by muddling together different styles, or treating their chosen subject in an inappropriate style, and so forth, to painters who "chose to put a human head on a horse's neck, or to spread feathers of various colours over the limbs of several different creatures, or to make what in the upper part is a beautiful woman tail off into a hideous fish".[58] The second passage comprises the famous *ut pictura poesis* excursus, the

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[56] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 46–7.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Horace, Ars poetica, ll. 1-13, ed. by Henry R. Fairclough: Horace: Satires, Epistles, Ars poetica, 1926, rev. 1929; repr. Cambridge, London 1978 (The Loeb Classical Library 194), pp. 450-1; tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 98.

basic point being that, just as some paintings may be viewed close up whereas others are best viewed from "a good distance", certain poems bear close scrutiny whereas others, if they are to be enjoyed, are best left (so to speak) in "a rather dark corner" with their imperfections obscured.[59] Neither of these passages, in my view, has much, if anything, to do with Matthew's disquisition, which has (as already indicated) its fundamental source in Averroes/Hermann.

Matthew's disquisition contains, however, a crucial elaboration of the relevant passage in the "Translatio Hermanni", the significance of which will now be investigated. I refer to Matthew's definition of *representatio* as "the making visible of something in words, as it seems to pass vividly before our eyes (*ante oculos fieri videatur*)". No statement of the kind is found at the point at which Averroes, and Hermann after him, first discuss the concept of *assimilatio*. However, the notion is found elsewhere in "The Middle Commentary", as when it is explained that

> oportet ut sit fabularis adinventio pavorosa dolorosa invento *quasi ante oculos constituta*, que quasi ex visu fidem habeat.
>
> [fictional invention intended to inspire grief or fear must be invention that is 'set before our eyes', so that it may convince us, as if we had actually seen the event happen].[60]

With this may be compared Averroes/Hermann's later praise of the poet who can write in such a convincing manner (*sic certitudinaliter narrat*) that what is narrated is, as it were, made present to the sense and sight of the audience (*ut rem narratam quasi presentem sub sensu et aspectu auditorium*).[61]

Such doctrine was not, of course, confined to the Averroistic "Poetics"; Matthew had to look no further than the "Rhetorica ad Herennium" to find, for example, *demonstratio* being defined as describing an event so vividly "that the business seems to be enacted and the subject to pass before our eyes (*res ante oculos esse videatur*)".[62] One may compare the subsequent account of *demonstratio* in another text which Matthew certainly knew, the "New Poetics" of Geoffrey of Vinsauf: "At another time the subject is revealed (*demonstrat*) so

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[59] Horace, Ars poetica, ll. 361-5, ed. Fairclough [n. 58], pp. 480-1; tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 108.
[60] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 56; tr. in Minnis, Scott [n. 19], pp. 305-6.
[61] Translatio Hermanni, ed. Minio-Paluello [n. 21], p. 62.
[62] Ad Herennium IV. lv. 68; ed. by Harry Caplan, Cambridge/MA, London 1954 (The Loeb Classical Library 403), pp. 404-5. The parallel is noted by Bergh, Poetria [n. 1], p. 47n. Cf. Matthew's earlier explanation of how a comparison (*similitudo*) may be "set before our eyes (*ante oculos ponendi*)" to achieve a vivid effect. Ad Herennium IV. xlvii. 60; ed. Caplan, pp. 380-1.

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vividly that it seems to be present to the eyes (*ut quasi sit praesens oculis*)".[63] In similar vein, John of Garland defines *demonstratio* as when language is used "to put an object before our very eyes (*ut ante oculos videatur*)".[64]

What we are dealing with here was, in fact, a commonplace of medieval theory of imagination, which in the later Middle Ages was stimulated by study of Aristotle's recently-recovered psychological doctrine, especially that found in the "De anima". Commenting on this text, Thomas Aquinas spoke of how images can arise in us at will, "because it is in our power to form something that appears before our eyes, so to speak (*quasi apparens ante oculos nostros*) – such as golden mountains or whatever we want to appear". This, he explains, is what people do when they recall past experiences and form them at will into imaginary pictures.[65] Occasionally such ideas are applied to literary texts, as when, introducing his "Historia destructionis Troiae" (completed by 1287), Guido delle Colonne remarks that the survival of certain great events from long ago is due to the writings of the ancients, which "depict the past as if it were the present" (*preterita uelud presentia*) and "endow valiant heroes with the courageous spirit they are imagined (*spiritum ymaginarie*) to have had, just as if they were alive – heroes whom the extensive age of the world long ago swallowed up by death".[66] All that having been said, I believe that the rhetorical understanding of *demonstratio* was of particular importance for Matthew, as I now hope to show, with reference to what Matthew made of the concepts of *consuetudo*, *credulitas* and *consideratio* which he found in the Averroistic "Poetics".

IV. *Consuetudo, credulitas, consideratio:*
a reconstruction of categories

According to Averroes/Hermann, in tragedy (or, the art of praise) there are three things which are 'likened' or 'assimilated': *consuetudines* (typical characteristics), *credulitas* (belief), and *consideratio* (regarding). As already noted, Matthew does not endorse the Middle Commentary's strong tendency to reduce praise poetry to *tragedia*. This has major consequences for the status and content of these categories. *Consuetudo*, *credulitas* and *consideratio* are cut

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[63] Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle, ed. by E. Faral, 1923; repr. Geneva 1982 (Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études 238), p. 236; tr. by Margaret F. Nims: The "Poetria Nova" of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Toronto 1967, p. 62.
[64] John of Garland: Parisiana poetria, vi. 388-9, ed. and tr. by Traugott Lawler, New Haven, London 1974 (Yale Studies in English 182), pp. 133-4.
[65] Sancti Thomae Aquinatis in Aristotelis librum de anima commentarium, III, iv, 633, 3rd edn. by Angeli M. Pirotta, Turin, Rome 1948, p. 156; tr. by Robert Pasnau, Thomas Aquinas: A Commentary on Aristotle's "De anima", New Haven, London 1999, p. 325.
[66] Historia destructionis Troiae, ed. by Nathaniel E. Griffin, Cambridge/MA 1936 (Medieval Academy of America 26), p. 3; tr. by M. E. Meek, Bloomington, London 1974, p. 1.

loose from tragedy; Matthew takes them as features of *representacio poetica* in general, not confined to any genre in particular.[67]

The reconstruction of each of these categories will now be considered, beginning with 'typical characteristics'. What we are in fact dealing with here is a substitute term for 'character' in the original "Poetics". Put simply, *consuetudo* means 'habit', 'custom', 'normal practice'; in this context it designates those typical patterns of behavior which are common to many humans as opposed to the personal eccentricities of some individual. Here one might think of the typical characteristics of the king or of the warrior, for example; it is such normative (one might even say 'stock') qualities that Averroes, and Hermann after him, seem to have had in mind. Just like Aristotle before them. Matthew, for his part, says, "by *consuetudines* I refer to anything a man can get used to through frequent actions".[68] There is no attempt to relate this principle to any poetic text. Instead Matthew quickly moves on to define *credulitas* (belief). What Aristotle had described as "the ability to say what is possible and appropriate in any given circumstance" (to borrow a phrase from the modern translation of the "Poetics" by Murray and Dorsch)[69] has mutated into 'belief' or 'credibility' in the sense of the imitated action being made convincing to its reader or hearer.[70] The tragic poet must represent what something is, and what it is not, in such a way that the audience believes it.

Matthew's treatment of the third category, *consideracio*, brings him back to the art of poetry and focuses attention on the literary relevance of the other two categories here adopted.

> *Consideracio uero non est nisi ostensio dubiorum et hoc non per raciones aut peruasiones (quoniam hoc non spectat ad poetam) sed per representaciones tam certe et veraciter factas, ut non credatur res ficta esse.*

> [Consideration, however, is nothing but the presentation of uncertain things – not, however, through rational arguments or persuasions (since this is not the poet's business) but through visualizations so certain and plausible that the matter does not seem to have been made up].

Underlying this statement is the faint palimpsest of Aristotle's concept of "spectacle", i. e. the production of "stage effects", which is afforded a low status, being a matter for the "property man" rather than the playwright himself.[71] In Matthew the concept enjoys a major upgrade, as we move from the external world of the stage to the internal world of the mind. What is at issue is the

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[67] *Poetria*, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 62–5.
[68] *Poetria*, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 62–3.
[69] *Poetics*, vi, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 66.
[70] *Poetria*, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 64–5.
[71] *Poetics*, vi, tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 66.

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plausibility of the poetic matter, how potentially "uncertain" things may be made to seem "certain" to the audience's intellectual perception – to what, at the very beginning of his treatise, Matthew calls the "inner eyes".[72] In other words, good *consideracio* makes for effective visualization or *representatio*; indeed, it could be inferred that *representatio* can hardly exist without *consideracio*. Furthermore, it would seem to be necessary for (or at least highly conducive to) the achievement of *consuetudo* and *credulitas*.

Between Aristotle and Matthew lies Averroes/Hermann's understanding of *consideracio* as "the argument or proof of what is correct belief or correct behaviour, without using persuasive speech" – that being, as we have seen, the prerogative of the rhetorician, the poet being limited to the use of representational speech. "Indeed", Averroes/Hermann continues, "the art of poetry does not consist in arguments or in philosophical speculation"; that is echoed by Matthew's statement (as quoted above) that "rational arguments or persuasions" are "not the poet's business". Matthew clarifies matters considerably by his subsequent statement that poetry works instead through visualizations or representations which are "so certain and plausible" that they do not look like fiction. And he goes beyond his source by adding that the effect of such plausibility can be created by the use of incidental detail, what one might call "local color" nowadays.

> *Et hoc contingit, quando res nichil vel modicum pertinentes ad propositum interseruntur tanquam intersignia rei facte.*

> [This happens when things pertaining not at all or little to the theme are nevertheless inserted as signs of an event] (pp. 64–5).

For example, in St John's account of the miracle of the five loaves and fishes we are told that "there was much grass in the place", etc. (cf. John 6:10);[73] indeed, this hardly pertains to the theme itself, i. e. Christ's miracle, but it certainly makes the Gospel account more vivid, by contributing to its *mise-en-scene* or visualization. Here, then, is 'certain and plausible' *representatio* at its best and at its most effective.

Matthew seems quite taken with the power of what may be termed 'circumstantial detail', for he goes to illustrate various types of it – by applying the theory of *circumstantiae*, which has its roots in the attempts of ancient rhetoricians to summarize everything which could form the subject of a dispute or discussion, through a series of questions. Matthew had already offered a series of such questions in the "Testa nucis", with the "Rhetorica ad Herennium" being named as

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[72] *Poetria*, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 44–5. By "audience" should be understood here those who read or hear a poem, rather than experience the performance of a play in a theatre.
[73] This is Matthew's only citation of any part of the New Testament.

his source; in fact the "De inventione" seems to have been the major influence.[74] The sequence followed in the earlier text is as follows: who, what, where, by means of what, why, how, and when. This very same order of terms is followed here in the "Poetria", with illustrations drawn from Homer and Virgil. When Hector is described as rushing forward, terrifying his enemies with his hostile spear (Ilias latina, 677 ff.)[75], and Dardanus is presented as "the first father and founder of the city of Ilium" (Aeneid, viii. 134–6), these are examples of one particular type of circumstance, namely "who" is performing a certain action. "The tight-drawn shaft" which kills Remulus by passing through his head (Aeneid, ix. 631–33) is an instance of "what". Virgil's account of "a deep inlet" where "an island" forms a harbour with the barrier of its sides' illustrates both "where" something happens and "by what means"; here Matthew draws on a passage which describes an inlet on the Lybian coast where Aeneas's ships seek shelter (Aeneid, i. 159 ff.). "Why" did Juno keep the survivors from Troy at sea for many years? Because Carthage was dear to her, and she knows that "a race was springing from Trojan blood" to "overthrow some day the Tyrian towers" (cf. Aeneid i. 19–22). When one of Aeneas's comrades "tumbled down at the blow" from Agamemnon's spear and "shed his life together with his warm blood" (Ilias latina, 514 ff.)[76], this is an instance of "how" something happens. And finally, when Aeneas flees from Dido as "early Dawn was sprinkling her fresh rays upon the earth" (Aeneid iv. 585 ff.) this shows "when" something happens.[77]

How can Matthew move with such ease from *consideratio* to the *circumstantiae*?

Because, I believe, of the importance to him of the concept of *representatio* and its relationship with the rhetorical sense of *demonstratio*. As already noted, for Matthew *representatio* means the making visible of something in words, "as if it seems to pass vividly before our eyes (*ante oculos fieri videatur*)."[78] Excessive and gratuitous detail should be avoided; "the listener must not be wearied by the mention of many details inherent in the same thing, but only as much as is needed to set the thing before our eyes (*ante oculos*)", thereby rendering the *representacio* delightful (*delectabilis*).[79] "A thing is set before our eyes", Matthew continues, "when it is introduced as creating an impression of actuality (*tanquam presencialiter operans*)". A little later he tells us he has been talking about "demonstrative representations" (*representaciones demonstrative*), which create "presence by setting a thing before our eyes (*rem ante oculos presencial-*

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[74] As Bergh notes; Poetria [n. 1], p. 67n.
[75] Ilias latina, ed. by Marco Scaffai, 2nd edn. Bologna 1997 (Editioni e saggi universitari di filologia classica 28), pp. 146–9.
[76] Ilias latina, ed. Scaffai [n. 76], pp. 132–5.
[77] But see also the appearance of the same phrase at Aeneid, ix. 459 ff.
[78] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 46–7.
[79] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 46–9.

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iter ostendentes)".[80] That he has in mind the rhetorical sense of *demonstratio* here is evident. As already noted, in discussing *demonstratio* Geoffrey of Vinsauf had spoken of the subject being "revealed so vividly that it seems to be present to the eyes".[81] In the very next sentence Geoffrey says that "this effect will be perfectly achieved by five means: if I show what precedes, what constitutes, and what follows the event itself, what circumstances attend it, and what consequences follow upon it".[82] In other words, the use of such *circumstantiae* makes the subject so vivid that it seems to appear before our very eyes. Whether we are told that "there was much grass in the place" where Christ performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes, or whether Hector (as the rhetorical "who" in question) is described as terrifying his enemies with his hostile spear, we are being presented with just the right (and hence delightful) amount of visualizing detail that is necessary to create the effect of presence, and reassure the listener that he is not being fobbed off with mere fiction.[83] As Matthew himself puts it, "the *circumstantiae* [...] should be represented in our versification in order to lend credibility (*credulitas*) to the poem".[84] Here, then, are the principles which unite Matthew's discussion of the three major concerns – *consuetudo, credulitas* and *consideratio* – of *representacio poetica*.

So, then, does Matthew of Linköping succeed in constructing a viable poetics?

H.A. Kelly thinks not, due to his deviation from Averroes/Hermann: Matthew "does not seem to have understood or accepted the complete identification of praise-poetry with tragedy postulated by the Alemannus translation".[85] Indeed, he continues, Matthew "mentions tragedy only in connection with Horace's remarks on using suitable language".[86] Here Kelly is referring to a passage in which Matthew declares that "tragedy speaks on lofty things and uses the high style" (an echo of doctrine precedented in Horace and found in certain medieval *artes poeticae*)[87], which he goes on to qualify with the view, with which he credits Horace, that "insignificant matters" may quite properly be "brought up

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[80] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 60–1.
[81] Poetria nova, ed. Faral [n. 63], p. 236; tr. Nims [n. 63], p. 62.
[82] Poetria nova, ed. Faral [n. 63], p. 236; tr. Nims [n. 63], p. 62;
demonstro quid ante, quid in re,
Quid post et quae rem circumstent, quaeve sequantur (vv. 1274–5).
[83] Compare the way in which John of Garland, in order to exemplify how *demonstratio* works, invites us to imagine great Aristotle toiling "greatly at his studies", torturing "himself with his weighty investigations": "raised to the magisterial chair he deserved" he sits writing the "Topics", "analyzing to the last little detail the whole subject of the *Elenchus*" (Parisiana poetria, vi. 390–3; ed. Lawler [n. 64], pp. 132–3).
[84] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 66–7.
[85] Cf. his similar comment in: Aristotle-Averroes-Alemannus on Tragedy [n. 26].
[86] Kelly, Ideas and Forms of Tragedy [n. 18], p. 124.
[87] Cf. Kelly, Ideas and Forms of Tragedy [n. 18], pp. 99, 101, etc.

in tragedy".[88] Kelly's point here is that the Averroistic understanding of tragedy as the art of praise has been quite erased, with the very term *tragedia* having to enter the discourse of Matthew's "Poetria" through a very different route – and by the back door, so to speak.

But there is another way of comprehending Matthew's maneuver. It may be argued that he was reluctant to reduce praise poetry to tragedy and, concomitantly, to identify blame poetry with comedy. We are dealing, then, not with a misunderstanding on Matthew's part but rather with his refusal to follow a major tendency in the Averroistic "Poetics".[89] I speak of "*a* major tendency" because of course there are other, and competing, tendencies within that text, as when at one point Averroes declares that "it is not difficult" to find parallels in Arabic poetry with the way in which Homer combined certain comparisons with praising and blaming, and yet at another quotes the Quran as attacking Arabic poetry for its failure to praise virtuous actions and blame vicious ones. This disjunction may be explained by Averroës' wish to apply universal Aristotelian canons to all kind of poetry, whenever or wherever written, which is countered by his feeling that "the people of our tongue" have only made "trifling" use of the "poetical rules", and so they don't really apply, or apply infrequently and imperfectly, to Arabic poetry. And yet: elsewhere Averroes can find superb examples of poetic' technique – such as the arousal of the emotions of pity and fear – in the Quran itself, that most holy of Muslim texts.[90] So, then, Aristotelian principles are, so to speak, alive and well in Arabic literature. From all this, it would seem there is more interpretative slack, or perhaps slippage is the better word, in the Averroistic "Poetics" than Kelly's remarks might suggest.

Given that situation, it may be concluded that Matthew made intelligent choices. As I have argued above, he managed to disclose the interrelations of *consuetudo*, *credulitas* and *consideratio* in a convincing manner, turning them into crucial characteristics of *representatio* in general rather than of tragedy in particular. It is unsurprising, then, that Matthew should present *tragedia* and its distinctive high style only within the context of theory which is quite characteristic of the medieval *artes poeticae* and exegesis of Horace. Far from being completely identified with the art of praise, and thereby achieving world domination (so to speak), tragedy is curtailed, kept in its place. A highly respected place, to be sure, but a clearly demarcated and limited one. And this relocation

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[88] Poetria, ed. Bergh [n. 1], pp. 74–7. Cf. Horace, Ars poetica, ll. 95–8, ed. Fairclough [n. 58], pp. 456–9; tr. in Murray, Dorsch [n. 17], p. 101.
[89] Here I allow Matthew more agency than Kelly does, to judge from his conclusion that Matthew "did not consider Aristotle's treatise and Averroes's commentary to be primarily about tragedy, but rather about poetry in general". Aristotle-Averroes-Alemannus on Tragedy [n. 26], p. 185.
[90] See pp. 240–1 above.

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is quite understandable, given the dearth of information available to Aristotle's medieval readers concerning what Greek drama had actually been like.

Birger Bergh has remarked, "It would hardly be correct to say that Mathias offers anything principally new not extant in his important source. On the contrary, one is inclined to maintain that Mathias, by not fully grasping the meaning of Hermannus' text, contributed to obscuring the already obscured Aristotle".[91] Given that Bergh knows the text of Matthew's "Poetria" better than anyone else, his opinion must be treated with the utmost respect. But I believe that a more positive conclusion is possible. Matthew is not a commentator on the "Poetics", as Averroes/Hermann was, and is therefore quite free to pick and choose within the "Middle Commentary" and to range beyond it if and when he pleases; after all, he was self-consciously trying to reconcile what he believed was Aristotle's doctrine with other sources of poetic theory. Surely the result should be judged not in terms of its consonance with the Averroistic "Poetics", but with regard to the amount of internal coherence which it displays – which, I believe, is considerable. Thanks to Matthew's efforts, poetic representation completed a long and tortuous *translatio* from Spain to Sweden, and from an Islamic to a Christian value-system.

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[91] In the introduction to his edition of Matthew's Poetria [n. 1], p. 13.