Margaret of Anjou as Patron of English Verse?: The *Liber Proverbiorum* and the *Romans of Partenay**

Abstract: This article presents Margaret of Anjou as a patron of English verse translation in the mid-fifteenth century. It argues that Margaret was the commissioner of the *Liber Proverbiorum*, an English rhyme royal translation of an early fourteenth-century sapiential text collecting together wise sayings from ancient authorities. The translator of the *Liber Proverbiorum* may very well also have been responsible for an English translation of Couldrette's French romance *Mélusine* or *Le Roman de Parthenay*. Both translations are notable for their poetic diction and for the comments on verse-form in their prologues and epilogues. The article also considers other texts of the 1440s and 1450s which are the products of patronage of English writing by noblewomen. The prologue and epilogue of the *Liber Proverbiorum* are edited in an Appendix for ease of reference.

The *Liber Proverbiorum* (also sometimes called the *Summum Sapientiae*), which survives in London, British Library MS Harley 7578 (fols. 2^{r} to 13^{r}), Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 59 (fols. 84^{v} to 98^{r}) and London, British Library MS Harley 2251 (fols. 156^{r} to 167^{v}), is a translation of Nicole Bozon's *Les proverbes de bon enseignement*.[1] In addition to the main text of the *Liber*, MS Harley 7578 preserves a unique prologue prefacing this rhyme royal translation of Bozon's collection of wise sayings and moral advice.[2] Bozon (*fl*. 1320) was a Franciscan friar, perhaps living in Nottingham, who wrote allegorical poems, saints' lives, Marian lyrics and verse sermons, as well as a collection of *exempla*, the *Contes moralisés*. In the *Proverbes*, each Latin

maxim, attributed to its authority (for example Seneca, Judith or Job), is followed by a paraphrase in Anglo-Norman couplets. Bozon's *Proverbes* were translated three times into Middle English. In addition to the *Liber Proverbiorum* under discussion here, the text appears in a trilingual form in the Vernon manuscript, each Latin proverb followed first by Bozon's Anglo-Norman paraphrase and then by a paraphrase in English couplets.[3] There is also a version in English couplets, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, preserved uniquely in British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D. XIII, which begins by addressing 'Myne awen dere sone' before offering fifty-seven 'wittys' or sayings.[4]

The translation of Bozon's *Proverbes* in MS Harley 7578 has been twice edited as a university dissertation, once by Ruth Kniep for a University of Florida PhD thesis (1954) and once by Thomas Napierkowski for a University of Colorado PhD thesis (1971).[5] The first three stanzas of the main text and the first four stanzas of the epilogue were printed from MS Harley 2251 by Max Förster in 1900.[6] H. N. MacCracken briefly dismissed the traditional view that the text is by John Lydgate, a point to which I will return below.[7] Beyond this, there has been very little critical discussion of the text and its prologue. Its relative obscurity and inaccessibility is unwarranted, as not only does the prologue comment in unprecedented fashion on form, language and the practice of translation, but the text's epilogue identifies the patron who requested the translation as an English queen. The prologue and epilogue (which are edited below in an Appendix) respond to the classicism which was becoming fashionable in English literature. Such classicism, as Daniel Wakelin has explored, was not necessarily a humanist return to Greek and Latin sources but was more inspired by allusions made in the poetry of Chaucer and Lydgate.[8] The translation is noteworthy for its poetic diction which draws distinctively on borrowings from French and also supplements English by means of creative

suffixation. Moreover, as I shall argue, this translator may also have been responsible for the Middle English verse-translation of the French romance *Mélusine*, also known as *Le Roman de Parthenay*. These translations may lie at the heart of a cluster of patronage of English verse by royal and noble women in the 1440s and 1450s, some of which patronage may have been more hoped-for than actual.

Date, Authorship and Patron

It is not a straightforward task to establish the date, authorship and patron of the *Liber Proverbiorum*. MS Ashmole 59, which contains the main text and epilogue of the *Liber*, must have been copied before 1456, the year in which its scribe John Shirley died.[9] Margaret Connolly has shown that Shirley copied the manuscript after the death of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester (February 1447), referred to on folio 57r, but before Lydgate's death in 1449 which is not mentioned anywhere in the manuscript despite frequent attribution of texts to Lydgate.[10] The section containing both the reference to Humfrey's death and the copy of *Liber Proverbiorum* is part of an 'unbroken sequence of quire numbers and catchwords', suggesting continuous copying. Shirley's use of the same type of paper throughout this sequence of quires indicates that the 'process of compilation must have taken place over a comparatively short period of time'.[11] The *Liber Proverbiorum* was thus copied by Shirley between February 1447 and 1449, and must have therefore been translated at some point prior to this.

The translator tells his patron that 'My auctor and I both be named Iohn' (l. 871), a confusing reference to the author of the French source, Nicole Bozon. At the end of the *Proverbes*, Bozon names himself as he requests prayers from his readers: 'Ore priez tous pur boun [i.e. Bozon] | Ki vous presente ceste lessun' (in the Vernon trilingual version this becomes

‘Ore prieȝ tous pur le houm’).[12] As the editor of the *Proverbes* notes, in texts of other surviving works his name appears as ‘Bosoun’, ‘Bozoun’, ‘Bousouns’ and ‘Boioun’.[13] Some spelling of Bozon’s name may have been misread as or mangled into ‘Johan’ or ‘Johannis’ in the transmission of this French source to the *Liber* translator. This was not the only potential confusion about authorship. Against the stanza in which the translator tells us that he is named John, the scribe of MS Harley 2251, the so-called Hammond scribe, adds a marginal identification which reads ‘Verba Iohannis Lydgate’ (fol. 167r).[14] The Tudor antiquarian John Bale lists a text named ‘Prouerbia Lidgati’, without giving its first line to identify it (perhaps suggesting he had not seen it himself), as one of Lydgate’s works in his *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytannie catalogus*.[15] Later post-medieval annotators of MS Harley 7578 repeat Bale’s attribution, assuming that this is the text which Bale catalogues, heading the text ‘John Lydgates Proverbs’ on fol. 2r and adding Bale’s attribution to the explicit on fol. 13r. Yet there are other proverbial and sapiential texts written by Lydgate which could be the work mentioned by Bale.[16] Shirley, who provides many texts of Lydgate’s works with highly plausible attributions, does not attribute the text to Lydgate, even though the text immediately following in MS Ashmole 59, *Stans puer ad mensam*, is ascribed to the monk of Bury. Shirley does not attribute *Liber Proverbiorum* to a named author in his incipit and has a marginal note at l. 826 (the beginning of the second stanza of the epilogue) which reads ‘Verba Auctoris’ (fol. 97r). The running header on fol. 97v labels the concluding stanzas of the epilogue as ‘The seynges of þe translacioun of þauctours wordes’.[17] Shirley, it seems, did not know the identity of the translator and did not think it was translated by Lydgate. The use of French neologisms in the translation is very unlike Lydgate, as MacCracken points out, despite the fact that the translator was influenced by aspects of Lydgate’s style.[18] The translator refers twice to his youthfulness as the reason for his poetic

failings (see ll. 70 and 76). Napierkowski dismissed this as a rhetorical trope as part of his argument for Lydgate's authorship, but Lydgate, born *circa* 1370, was in his sixties and seventies in the 1430s and 1440s when this translation was made. The translation was therefore not made by Lydgate, though we can easily understand why the Hammond scribe, when confronted with a sapiential text by an author named 'John', might have added his marginal note, given the considerable number of texts by Lydgate featuring proverbial and sapiential material.

The translator addresses his patron as 'Right noble high and ful myghty princes | My most dred lady' (l. 100) in the prologue and as 'Moost Cristiane princesse / oure alþer souueraine | In quenely ordre / douly consecrate | Chosen be vertu / in this royaulme to reine' (ll. 905–7) in the epilogue. His patron is thus an English queen, one of three possible candidates between 1403 and 1461. Henry IV's second wife, Joan of Navarre (born *circa* 1370) died in 1437, having lived in semi-retirement from 1429 onwards. Catherine of Valois (born 1401), Henry V's widow and mother of Henry VI, also died in 1437. Given its language and style, which are characteristic of the middle decades of the fifteenth century, the translation might conceivably have been made for either of these women in the 1430s but this seems somewhat unlikely in either case. Joan was relatively elderly and living in seclusion in the 1430s and Catherine, though younger, was living out of the young king's household as a result of her marriage to the Welsh squire Owen Tudor, bearing him three children in quick succession from *circa* 1430 and ultimately suffering ill health for some years before her death.[19] A more likely candidate is Margaret of Anjou who was married to Henry VI by proxy in Tours in May 1444. She arrived in England in the spring of 1445 and was crowned on 30 May aged fifteen. The translator's celebration of his patron as 'In quenely ordre / douly consecrate' (l. 906) would thus therefore be a response to her recent coronation. The verses accompanying the pageants for Margaret's entry into London address her

as ‘Moost Cristen Princesse’, the same honorific chosen by the translator of the *Liber*.[20]

If the *Liber* was translated for Margaret, her commission made via a ‘moene’ (ll. 119 and 921), an intermediary who took her request to the translator, it was undertaken at the earliest in the summer of 1445 (following Margaret’s coronation on 30 May), before being copied, without its prologue, by John Shirley between 1447 and 1449. Napierkowski hypothesized that Shirley copied the text of the *Liber* in MS Ashmole 59 from an earlier version he himself had made.[21] That source for the text in MS Ashmole 59, whether copied by Shirley or not, was also the source of the text in MS Harley 2251 which shares with it a distinctive error in the forty-first proverb (ll. 281–7).[22] The Hammond scribe cannot have copied this text directly from MS Ashmole 59 because there are many instances where the Ashmole text has readings which seem less likely to be authorial and where MS Harley 2251 has the better text.[23] In MS Ashmole 59, Shirley copied fourteen texts which he had already copied in his two earlier anthologies, London, British Library MS Additional 16165 and Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 20, and we might conjecture (as Napierkowski did) that other of the texts in MS Ashmole 59 were from now-lost Shirley manuscripts. Though some of the duplications in Ashmole suggest relatively accurate recopying, others have a greater degree of textual variation, indicating differences either in exemplar or in Shirley’s practices as a scribe. These latter differences may, as Margaret Connolly explains, reflect the effects of Shirley’s considerable age (he was roughly eighty years old in the middle of the 1440s), especially perhaps failing eyesight which may have caused him to copy from memory or to improvise. Conversely, it may be that he decided to ‘improve’ or ‘edit’ texts he had already copied once before in order to update them to match his evolving perceptions of literary style and fashion. For Margaret of Anjou to be the *Liber*’s patron and for Shirley to have previously copied the text, he must have copied the text relatively accurately in

one manuscript (the source of MS Harley 2251) between 1445 and 1447 and then, perhaps two years later, made the copy in MS Ashmole 59. Napierkowski, considering this scenario to be unlikely, took this as evidence for an earlier date of composition before 1437 (and thus also that Lydgate was a plausible candidate for authorship of the text), presumably for either Joan of Navarre or Catherine of Valois, thus allowing time for Shirley to have made a more accurate copy at an earlier date.

It is however by no means certain that Shirley continued this practice of copying items from his prior manuscript anthologies throughout MS Ashmole 59. Though Shirley does duplicate many texts across quires three to six which he had copied in earlier manuscripts, none of the texts in the seventh quire (in which the *Liber Proverbiorum* is the final item) are texts which Shirley had already copied in London, British Library MS Additional 16165 or Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 20.[24] Connolly argues that the concentration of religious and didactic material in quires seven to twelve reflects the changing circumstances of Shirley's life as he grew older.[25] Shirley was living at St Bartholomew's Hospital from 1444 onwards and may thus have had no access to exemplars he had earlier drawn on belonging to the household of his former employer, Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick. There are notably fewer attributions in the incipits, explicits and running headers in quires seven to twelve.[26] This different set of material may have come from Shirley's contacts at St Bartholomew's, the City of London or via his work at the Exchequer. Though living at the Hospital, Shirley was listed as an Exchequer scribe until 1450, as Kathryn Veeman's doctoral research has revealed.[27] Textual and codicological research by Linne Mooney has established that at least one and possibly more now-lost Shirley manuscripts were copied in the mid to late 1440s.[28] Shirley was actively acquiring examplars and copying relatively quickly and productively throughout the 1440s.

There are thus scenarios to counter Napierkowski's objection to the short timescale (i.e. that Shirley had made first one good and then one bad copy of the text within three or four years of the *Liber*'s translation). Shirley may have acquired a copy of the *Liber Proverbiorum*, if it were indeed commissioned by Margaret, quite quickly after 1445. It came to him via some eventful route: the exemplar reached him without the text's prologue and he did not know who had written it when he copied it into MS Ashmole 59. This same exemplar, in this scenario, later reached the Hammond scribe. Alternatively, it is possible that Shirley made a relatively accurate copy *circa* 1446 (perhaps to sell or give away, a copy which later reached the Hammond scribe who was active in the later 1450s and 1460s) before making a much more heavily edited and/or much less accurately copied version in MS Ashmole 59 *circa* 1448 for a somewhat different purpose. Though we cannot be certain, it would thus be unwise to dismiss Margaret of Anjou as the *Liber Proverbiorum*'s commissioner in favour of Joan of Navarre or Catherine of Valois solely on the basis of Napierkowski's unease about the brevity of the timescale and desire to position Lydgate as the text's author. Contemporaries certainly saw Margaret, even as a new bride of fifteen, as capable of appreciating a variety of genres and styles of writing. The sumptuous 'Talbot Shrewsbury book' (London, British Library Royal MS E. 15. VI), given to Margaret in 1444 or 1445 in celebration of her betrothal or wedding by John Talbot, first earl of Shrewsbury, provided her with French romances, *chansons de geste*, works on chivalry and warfare, texts on politics and government, a chronicle and the statutes of the Order of the Garter.[29] These texts may ultimately have been intended for the education of a hoped-for son and heir, but the collection may also have been intended to suit and to help craft Margaret's image and self-image as a new queen.

Talbot's suppositions about Margaret's potential interests and capacities as reader are confirmed by what we know of Margaret's interests in books and texts. Margaret's arms appear in a copy of a legal text, the *Nova statuta Angliae*, made, as Rosemarie McGerr has recently argued, as a gift for her son as part of his education with astute attention to the iconographic and political implications of the statutes.[30] Margaret also owned books, as we might expect of a noblewoman of her station, a Latin life of Gilbert of Sempringham, and a book of hours and a psalter.[31] She reportedly took an interest in English poetry: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 73, a copy of Lydgate's *Life of our Lady*, contains a note that the book 'sumtym […] was Quene margarete boke'.[32] Later she became the subject-matter of a poem in her own lifetime. George Chastelain's *Temple of Bocace*, written 1463/64 when Margaret was exiled in France, places her within Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* which has been transformed from text into building.[33] Within this dream-vision setting, Chastelain, a Burgundian poet and chronicler, presents figures such as Richard II, Oton de Granson, William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk, and many other European notables for Margaret's education and consolation. Margaret is then imagined speaking to Boccaccio who, having been dead in his tomb, revives in order to debate with her. All of this confirms Raluca Radulescu's depiction of Margaret as 'a politically engaged and savvy queen'.[34] Historical reassessments of Margaret have highlighted her engagement with matters of politics and diplomacy even as a young daughter and bride.[35] Margaret, in her late teens, anticipating her roles as queen and as mother of a future English heir, might well have asked an English author to translate a sapiential text which supplied her with the wisdom of ancient authorities.

The *Liber Proverbiorum* and the *Romans of Partenay*

Though we do not know the identity of the *Liber* translator beyond his first name, it may be possible to know a little more about him from another work. The *Romans of Partenay* is a fifteenth-century Middle English rhyme royal translation of a French version of the story of Mélusine, a fairy who becomes wife of the lord of Lusignan.[36] The French verse romance, *Mélusine* or *Le Roman de Parthenay* by one Couldrette, was completed in 1401 for Guillaume, seventh lord of Parthenay, following hot on the heels of Jean of Arras's prose version of the same story for Jean, duke of Berry, composed in 1383.[37] The English translation of Couldrette's narative is preserved in a single late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century manuscript, Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 17. The manuscript lacks the first folio of the translation, but eleven stanzas of the translator's prologue and the entirety of his ten-stanza epilogue remain.

It is highly likely that the translator of the *Liber Proverbiorum* was also responsible for the *Partenay*. Both texts make reference to the impact of form on translation, both texts have a distinctive approach to poetic diction and both make similar comments on the futility of invoking pagan gods. The *Liber Proverbiorum* epilogue is of particular interest because of its explicit discussion of stanza forms. The translator asserts the fidelity of his translation, but concedes that he has translated line-by-line 'Albeith the Frenshe / in foure staffes be | The Englissh seuen / kepen in degre' (ll. 881–2). *Staff* here means 'line', a semantic calque on the French *bastoun* meaning both 'stick' and 'line of verse' in continental French (and used in similar fashion in Middle English). While Bozon's original text paraphrases short Latin proverbs into groups of French couplets of varying lengths, a form which both of the other English versions imitate, this translator's version regularizes the form into rhyme royal stanzas, one per proverb. The copy of the text in MS Harley 2251 gives the relevant Latin proverbs marginally in most but not all cases, perhaps suggesting that the *Liber* translator's original version presented the queen with

both Latin and English verse paraphrase.[38] The translator makes the earlier history of the text his justification, for as the French expands on the Latin so his English expands on the French. To fulfil the demands of 'this metre', i.e. this distinctive English verse-form, requires seven lines, so the translator admits that he has to add material to his source. Rather than a conventional translator's preface, in which the accuracy of the translation is claimed as far as the change of language permits, this translator acknowledges that the form of the text takes priority over the accuracy of language of his translation.[39] English rhyme royal, pioneered by Chaucer and popularized by Hoccleve and Lydgate, now has a sufficiently distinctive identity to overrule prior conventions of translation and to require explanation for a non-native reader of verse. To explain and justify his English poetics to a newly arrived French reader, the translator coins a technical term, *staff*.

Just as the *Liber Proverbiorum* acknowledges verse-form, in like fashion the *Partenay* epilogue considers first accuracy in translation and then the length of the verse line. The *Partenay* translator tells his patron that he has translated his French source 'Cereatly by rew […] | Nerehande stafe by stafe, by gret diligence | Sauyng þat I most metre apply to;' (ll. 6554–6), that is in sequence, almost line-by-line except for the demands of metre. He claims that his translation is accurate, but admits that he must 'wourdes meue, and sett here and ther so, | Like as Latin ho-so will fourge uers' (ll. 6557–8) in order to meet the demands of metre. English poetry, like Latin, makes free use of the poetic licence of inverting or dislocating normal word order in order to fit the demands of rhyme and metre. The *Partenay* translator also observes the differences in prosody between his source text and his own chosen form: 'the Frensh staffes silabled be | More breueloker and shorter also | Then is the English lines' (ll. 6581–3). Couldrette's octosyllabic lines are shorter than the decasyllabic rhyme royal in which he writes.

As a result, two lines are sometimes ‘comperhended in on’ (l. 6584), that is two lines in his French source have been translated as a single line in his own English version. As in the *Liber Proverbiorum*, the translator acknowledges that form is privileged over accurate reproduction in the target language.

These two translations were therefore made to showcase form and style in English poetry rather than for the purpose of learning English. This is likely the case because both translations also share a distinctive poetic diction which was not the stuff of everyday English speech. In broad terms, both texts feature neologisms modelled directly on Latin words and coinages borrowed from French, as well as English suffixation creating words not attested elsewhere in Middle English.[40] The two texts also share a number of rare words (in some cases solely found in the *Liber* and *Partenay*, according to the *MED* and *OED*): *obliuie* (*LP*, ll. 13, 249, 402; *Par*, ll. 3798, 5137, 5141, 5416), *rhetorious* (*LP*, ll. 37, 90, 900, 911; cf. *rhetoriousli* at *Par*, l. 6661), *carectes* (*LP*, l. 80; *Par*, l. 6605), *ioynant* (*LP*, ll. 237, 790; *Par*, l. 4513), *frenlihede* (*LP*, l. 293; *Par*, ll. 1403, 3022, 6448), *conduce* (*LP*, l. 529; *Par* l. 206), *doucet* (*LP*, l. 635; *Par* ll. 877, 972, 1008, 3898), *ceriously* (*LP*, l. 880, cf. *ceriatly* at *Par*, ll. 18, 1836, 6554), *staffes* (*LP*, ll. 881, 889; *Par*, l. 6581), *disordinatly* (*LP*, l. 915; *Par*, ll. 3560, 3670); *bustoursly* (*LP*, l. 924, *Par*, ll. 2262, 3257, 4174, 4271). The translator also has a predilection for employing the adjective ‘huge’, especially before abstract nouns (i.e. *LP*, l. 19, ‘huge idelnesse’). *Huge* appears at least twenty times in the relatively short *Liber* and over one hundred times in the longer *Partenay*. Given that both texts are translations, where the choice of words is to some degree determined by the source text, this quantity of shared vocabulary of an idiosyncratic sort strongly suggests that both translations are by the same man. The *Partenay* translator, in what remains of the prologue, tells his addressee that he was ‘not aqueynted of birth naturall | With Frenshe’ (ll. 8–9). He is not

a native French speaker, implying that his French is the product of academic learning or diplomatic or military service. He warns his patron that he sometimes mistakes one French word for another, especially given the distortions of everyday language which are permitted through the licences of poetry in French (ll. 10–14). Despite the excuses made by the *Partenay* translator, however, the translator (or translators) of both texts make full use of poetic licence to borrow words from Latin and French and to coin English words, often for rhyme but also to enrich poetic vocabulary. Such language would not teach current English vocabulary but rather provides readers with an enhanced and stylized English which a bilingual reader like Margaret would be in an ideal position to decode and interpret. So, for example, *finabilly* (*Par*, ll. 5385, 6493), meaning 'in perpetuity, forever', translates French *finablement*, replacing the French suffix with its English equivalent, whilst *obliuie* (*LP*, ll. 13, 249, 402; *Par*, ll. 3798, 5137, 5141, 5416) is a Latin borrowing modelled on a French lexical item. This diction requires a trilingual readership to interpret and to appreciate fully its novelty. Such coinages provide an English which synthesizes Latin, French and English, a lingustic celebration of the Anglo-French alliances which were renewed by Margaret's marriage to Henry. This poetic diction is comparable with, but not entirely the same as, Lydgate's experiments with highly Latinate diction in his liturgical translations in 1430s and the coinages direct from Latin in the Middle English verse-translation of Palladius's *De re rustica*, *On Husbondrie*, made for Duke Humfrey in the early part of the 1440s, perhaps *circa* 1442/3.[41] It is closer to the sort of 'experimental English' (in Ardis Butterfield's description) found in the poems of London, British Library, MS Harley 682, attributed by Mary-Jo Arn to Charles of Orleans.[42] Charles's 'rough English', in which 'startling colloquialisms and radical neologisms' sit alongside idiosyncracies and what we might perceive as errors, is one product of what Butterfield characterizes as the 'place of contact

between English and French in the fifteenth century – a place full of pressure, radical redefinition and cultural uncertainty.'[43] The enhanced English of the *Liber Proverbiorum* and *Partenay* translations is another such experiment of a related but different sort.

Both prologues also feature assertions of the supremacy of the Christian God in contrast with the futility of invoking pagan deities. In *Partenay*, the translator recalls that in ancient times men called not on God but on gods for help 'their werkys to fourge' (just as in the epilogue he describes the work of Latin poets who 'fourge uers', l. 6558). He notes that Valerius Maximus called on Tiberius Cesar in the prologue of his *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Tiberius Cesar, though an emperor, is praised by Valerius in deific terms, his 'caelesti providentia', for example, fosters virtues and punishes vices.[44] Valerius attributes divinity to Tiberius Cesar, divinity conferred by Rome rather than passively received from ancestral worship: 'reliquos enim deos accepimus, Caesares dedimus' (for other gods we have received, the Caesars we have bestowed). This may be a pointed example on the translator's part, demonstrating exactly how men make gods out of men. The following stanza in *Partenay* refers the reader to Valerius's 'notabile boke | Wher all thes goddis apertly [openly] may see' (ll. 29–30), whose first few chapters do indeed describe Roman religion. The translator then cites the example of Midas who, thanks to his golden touch which prevented him from eating or drinking, got more than he bargained for in requesting this wish from Bacchus. This example proves the point: it is futile, the translator argues, to call on pagan deities for aid, in part because they were invented by poets for self-agrandisement, and so he turns instead to the Almighty for assistance.

The *Liber Proverbiorum* begins its prologue with a very similar gesture, an analysis of the uselessness of calling on 'ficte and made goddis' (l. 8) who should be forsaken by Christian authors. Matters seem confused when he immediately turns to call on 'Polux' (which perhaps

may be an error for Apollo, on which see the notes to l. 28 in the Appendix). Pollux is, however, then hailed as the source of not only knowledge and eloquence, but also the source of 'noble prouerbes auncion' of the sort that Bozon has gathered together in the *Proverbes*. Pollux, fully conflated with the Christian God, is invited to aid the poet 'Thourgh your merciful / godhed almighty' (l. 87) and, in the final stanza of the epilogue, to keep safe the queen's worldly and spiritual well-being. This conflation, cheek-by-jowl with his statements about the futility of pagan worship, may seem puzzling, but it is very much in keeping with the fifteenth-century gestures at classical influence recently explored by Daniel Wakelin in a chapter of his book on *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature, 1430–1530*.[45] It derives in part from Chaucer's mixed messages in *Troilus and Criseyde* where pagan figures are invoked throughout but ultimately dismissed in the palinode. This rejection is often rhetorical, intended to draw attention to the author's learning, but may also reflect genuine disquiet. W. H. E. Sweet argues that Lydgate's 'rejection of the matter of antiquity' in the latter part of his career was not disingenuous, but rather a genuine expression of regret for his earlier poetry.[46]

Why authors simultaneously deployed and denied references to classical mythology and pagan religion is a complex matter, relating to the author's own identity (clerical or lay, academically trained or self-taught) and to contemporary fashion. It also depended on the identity, and perhaps particularly the gender, of the intended reader. Elements of texts which were a well-established part of late medieval literacy and schooling (such as Boethius's allusions to mythic figures or, in the case of the *Liber Proverbiorum*, the *sententiae* of pagan authorities such as Seneca) might nonetheless trigger anxiety (whether staged or authentic), depending on the identities of writer and reader. John Walton's prologue to his 1410 translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* for Elizabeth Berkeley, countess of Warwick, states his reluctance,

as a Christian author, to ponder ‘þese olde poysees derk’ (l. 42).[47] Osbern Bokenham, as Wakelin demonstrates, ‘covets this pseudo-classical rhetoric’ at the same time as he supposedly lists the muses to whom he will not call on for aid in the prologue to his life of Mary Magdalen (1445), written at the command of Isabel Bourchier, countess of Eu.[48] Many of these works show evidence of ‘humanist fashion […] but there is no full or deep humanist reading’ and their responses to literary and scholarly fashions can be conflicted.[49] Fifteenth-century authors, often clerics who had schooled themselves in Chaucer’s and Lydgate’s classicizing verse, the style of verse which their patrons desired, wished both to signal their Chaucerian inheritance but also to distinguish themselves from it. They acknowledged the humanism which was becoming fashionable through the activities of Duke Humfrey and others, yet also felt themselve unable or unwilling to let it pass without comment. The *Liber Proverbiorum*’s dismissal of pagan gods and its concurrent appeal to Pollux is explicable in this mid-fifteenth-century context, as is the suprising presence of similar gestures in *Partenay* (a romance narrative which would not necessarily prompt any thought of classicism). Writing for a queen created the conditions in which expressions of affiliation and disavowal were desirable.

The identity and gender of *Partenay*’s patron is not now discoverable, in part because presumably such details were given or alluded to in the stanzas now missing from the start of the prologue. The translator attributes ‘gentilnesse’ (l. 7) and ‘hy notable gentilesse’ (l. 6596) to his patron, and beseeches that she or he will look kindly on any imperfection in his work ‘Off your hy wurthry soueraynnesse’ (l. 6598). The work is a commission (‘at your request and commaundement | This warke on me toke’, ll. 6602–3) and the poet hopes that his incapacity and nervousness about his ability to complete the work successfully will be compensated for by the patron’s ‘wyl’ (l. 4) and ‘support’ (l. 21). If the same translator were responsible for both texts,

we nonetheless have no way of knowing whether this work was also commissioned by Margaret of Anjou (there is no reference to queenship or to an intermediary in what survives) or whether *Partenay* represents the *Liber Proverbiorum* translator writing for a second patron. The references to gentility and sovereignty could be in recognition of Margaret's status as queen, but would also be appropriate for another nobleman or noblewoman. Nonetheless, Margaret would be a plausible patron for a fashionable French romance translated into rhyme royal, and Margaret's contacts in France could have easily supplied the source text by Couldrette.

Female Patronage, 1445–1460

Though Margaret's commissioning of *Partenay* is not certain, the *Liber Proverbiorum* prologue and epilogue very likely reveal her role as a patron of letters very soon after her arrival in England. Her arrival may have had further consequences for the types of texts available for translation and for larger patterns of patronage in the 1440s and 1450s. Emily Wingfield has recently drawn attention to the reference to an earlier English translation of the French prose romance, *Cleriadus et Meliadice*, in the early sixteenth-century Scots version, *Clariodus*. The French *Cleriadus* is estimated to have been composed between 1440 and 1444, and the surviving manuscripts bear witness to the 'ownership by royal and aristocratic French women'.[50] Wingfield suggests that Margaret of Anjou's arrival in England provided 'an extremely probable context for the transmission of a copy of the French *Cleriadus* from France to England'.[51] As she argues, the text's references to peace between England and France would have made it particularly relevant in light of the Anglo-French Treaty of Tours and the royal wedding.

The author of the Scots version makes reference not only to the author of the French original but also to the author of an English prose translation of the same narative which has not

survived. He salutes ‘he, that did it out of French translait’ (l. 2255) a writer whom ‘it depaint of langwage full ornate, | And lustie termis richt poeticall’ (ll. 2256–7).[52] He compares his own versification to the literary skill of these two prior versions: he cannot ‘so meitter as thay put in prose’ (l. 2259). This implies an English prose translation of *Cleriadus* notable for its ornate language and ‘right poeticall’ vocabulary, *poetical* here perhaps invoking the ‘art poetical’ which is not supposedly on show in Chaucer’s *House of Fame* (l. 1095). The language of the *Liber Proverbiorum* and *Partenay* translations is distinguished very much by a vocabulary which makes use of all of the licences of poetry. Even if the lost *Cleriadus* translation were not by the translator of the *Liber Proverbiorum* (and the *Romans of Partenay*, if that were by the same man), we might extend Wingfield’s speculation a little. Perhaps Margaret, or someone close to her, not only brought the romance to England but also commissioned a translator to produce a translation similar in style to the *Romans of Partenay*, though in prose. Its ornate language may have been very like the French-derived lexis of *Partenay* and the *Liber*, not designed for language learning but a stylistic synthesis of French, Latin and English intended to celebrate Anglo-French alliances.

Other English authors may have seen Margaret as a potential patron for translation of French works into English. Stephen Scrope’s translation of Christine de Pizan’s *Épître d’Othéa la déesse à Hector*, the *Epistle of Othea*, survives in three manuscripts, one presenting the work to Sir John Fastolf and another dedicating the text to Humphrey Stafford.[53] It seems likely that Scrope translated the work first for Fastolf, his stepfather and guardian, around 1440. Stafford was created duke of Buckingham on 14 September 1444 and as is referred to as such in the prologue, so Scrope must have re-dedicated the translation to Stafford at some point between 1440 and the duke’s death in 1460. Sonja Drimmer, in her fine study of this sequence of

dedication and rededication, points out that Stafford's dedication is written over erasure, implying that Scrope had changed his mind about the text's dedicatee.[54] The third copy of the *Epistle*, now preserved in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M. 775, may represent another speculative dedication. Scrope alters what in Stafford's dedication are references the duke's 'mankyndlynes' to refer instead to 'good ladishipe', replacing an address to his 'ryght hiȝ prince' with one to his 'ryght hiȝ princesse'.[55] It is thus conceivable that the 'hiȝ princesse' Scrope addressed was Margaret of Anjou, even though there is little surviving trace of connections between Scrope and the Queen. Margaret had received one Christine de Pizan text (the *Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie*) in the Talbot Shrewsbury book, and she may thus have occurred to Scrope as a potential patron. But for an unknown reason, Scrope's rededicated text was not retained by its high princess or perhaps did not even reach her. MS M. 775, featuring the 'high princess' dedication, came into the possession of Sir John Astley before 1461/2. Drimmer notes that Astley removed the first folio of the gathering which contained this text of the *Epistle*, a folio probably including a presentation scene, before this text was added to the volume.[56] It is thus likely that these folios were the self-same text sent by Scrope to the high princess, perhaps making its way to Astley because of the chaotic upheavals imposed on Margaret and her household as the forces of Lancaster and York began to confront each other in 1459 and 1460. Astley also removed several other illuminations, including one of the goddess Temperance with her society of women, an apt choice if the folios had originally been presented to Margaret.

One further possibility, admittedly much more circumstantial, may also indicate patronage which, like Scrope's rededications, was not so much actual but hoped-for. The author of the mid-fifteenth-century Middle English rhyme royal translation of Boccaccio's *De*

mulieribus claris notes the need for patronage, and specifically female patronage, to sustain a poet's work and reputation:

The whiche boke I haue had in purpose,
If I in Englisshe cowde it clere expresse,
To haue translatyd, but euer I dydd suppose,
Wythout gret ayde of sum noble pryncess
All in veyne shuld be my besyness,
For poetys ben of litell reputacyon,
That of estatys haue no sustentacyon. (ll. 22–8)[57]

This translation of *De mulieribus claris* must date from after 1438 as the translator refers to the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* for Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, in ll. 15–18. Given that it was translated in the 1440s or 1450s, the noble princess whom the translator imagines might provide aid and support, if the writer has a particular figure in mind, might conceivably be Margaret of Anjou. These lines may simply acknowledge the English author's lack of patronage in comparison to Boccaccio, who begins his text with a dedication to Lady Andrea Acciaiuoli of Florence, countess of Altavilla. Certainly the translator asks 'All ladyes' to protect his work from the slander and envy of maliciously minded readers rather than an individual addressee (ll. 33–5). Nonetheless, other aspects of the text hint at some sort of provisional or hoped-for patronage rather than a commission, as the prologues of the *Liber Proverbiorum* and *Romans of Partenay* both claim to be. After making a selection of Boccaccio's lives of notable women as his first book, the author writes two concluding stanzas,

comparing his conclusion of the first book to a pause on a long journey (ll. 1779–92). He will carry on, he says, to translate the stories of more notable women if his audience so desires, but will first 'take counsell' (l. 1790) as to the success of the first book, as he has no wish to waste his efforts on further work. Whether generic or particular, it is interesting that the appeal for patronage is directed towards a royal woman.

Perhaps because of the much more well-known cultural sponsorship of figures such as Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, female patronage, especially as a driver of literary fashion and innovation, has less often been considered.[58] The brief flourishing of patronage by queens and princesses under discussion here may have been shortlived, initiated by Margaret's arrival in 1445 and disrupted as the Wars of the Roses took hold in 1459/60. The translations of *Partenay* and *Cleriadus* may be part of such patronage, as perhaps are some of the attempts to elicit patronage discussed above. The *Liber Proverbiorum* provides firmer evidence of the sponsorship of translation by an English queen of French birth, most likely Margaret of Anjou. This patronage brought new imperatives to English verse, complicating already complicated trends of fashion and influence. The anonymous translator of the *Liber* and of *Partenay*, if both works were by the same man, was prompted by his commissions to give unprecedented attention to verse form and fashion in his prefatory and concluding material, as well as to create a distinctively trilingual poetic diction.

Appendix

This Appendix presents the text of the unique *Liber Proverbiorum* prologue, as well as the text's epilogue, from MS Harley 7578. The epilogue is also preserved in MS Ashmole 59 and MS Harley 2251, and collations from these two manuscripts can be found in the editions of the *Liber*

Proverbiorum/*Summum Sapientiae* made by Kniep and Napierkowski. Capitalization and word-division have been modernized and abbreviations have been silently expanded, though I have not modernized the scribe's verse punctuation. The scribe's corrections of his own work have been likewise silently incorporated. I have been assisted in transcribing the text by Napierkowski's highly accurate transcription, from which I differ in only a very few readings.

[T]o calle theim whiche haue no suffisance
The dulle appalled myndes / to redresse
In whom no feith ys / ne trewe affiance
But be variant / of no stablenesse
Suche to require / what helpith in distresse 5
Semyng alle in veyne / and but fantassie
My witte therto / no wise can applie

This ficte and made goddis / is that I mene
Whiche by daies olde / were deified
Thoo that ben Cristen / shulde forsake theim clene 10
And alle thoo / whiche to theim ben allied
That in olde bookes / ben specified
In obliuie shit / from theire present fate
As in remembrance / neuer to haue date

Sith so is / to whom shal I calle or clepe 15

Sith theire effect / is of no perfitnesse

Theim to honoure / I take no kepe

Whiche may not helpe / ne socoure in distresse

Off verrey trouth / hit is huge idelnesse

Theim to worshipe / in any degre 20

That can no remydie / in aduersite

What shall I say / sith destitute am of witte

Grouen in the soyle / of dulled ignorance

The arke of sapience / agayne me is shitte

Plunged in wawes / of huge comberance 25

To declare this matere / in substance

What shalle I do / to whom shalle I complayne

But to the Polux / my chefe souueraine

Thy cristal stremys of perfite cognisance

Lete discende lord / most gracious 30

With the liquide liquor / of perseuerance

To thy seruaunt / largely and plentivous

That called on the / that art victorious

Refresshyng his soule / that is fulle bareine

Naked standyng / of nudenesse doith compleine 35

The clothes lakke / of sugred eloquence

Rethorious langage / put in exile

The mynde falleth / into obliuiscence

His tonge not whette / ne can it redely file

Suche soleine strange / matires to compilee 40

Whiche autentikly / ben auctoriȝed

By the olde wise / ordeined and deuised

And sithen from you / of profounde discreccion

Issuen oute / of antiquious date

Thise noble prouerbes auncion 45

As by you / to the centre cicle dilate

In richesse more worth / than gold or siluer plate

Or gemme or jewel moost precious

Youre science alone / and moost vertouous

Ye socoure and supporte me / in my writynge 50

My rudenesse redres sith lak is eloquence

That haue had / so fruteful prouerbial thing

In youre huge wittis / of sapience

Extende ye a parte / vnto my presence

That the lynial lynes / I may directe 55

And be called / a seruant of youre secte

And þat the prouerbial / ditees olde

Of antiquite / be youre sages vsed

Youre polletiquie / wittes / haue to vs vnfolde

Youre conceites / by labour mused 60

It passeth my witte / haue me excused

Thaugh I not directe / my penne so expresse

As ye dud / thourgh your connyngnesse

To folowe your stappes aureat

My dulled spirit / is clouded sore 65

With mysty yngnorance / set is algate

Not acqueinted / with muses ne lore

My lewde rakilnesse / so lewde euermore

In my hert grauen / with huge impressure

Whiche causeth necgligence / of youthis tendure 70

That my woful goost compleyneth hym sore

With waymous waylyng / lamentacion

For lak of Lady / Sapience lore

Not had in faueur / ne in supportacion

Of her high honeurs dominacion 75

Whiche is me byraft / by huge iuuonence

Deuolued into gret inco[n]uenience

My feuered handes / quakyng for drede

Tymerously tremelynge / paynously

Dredinge how he shal / his carectes lede 80

This mateir to disclose / and pictifie

Wherfor Lord / I trost to the oonlye

To attemper / the liquide licour sabilline

So this huge ditees / it may determine

O glorious Polux / in heuenis high 85

Illumine my derke / blendy ignorance

Thourgh your merciful / godhed almighty

With the lye flaume / of perseuerance

So my wordes issuen to plesance

Albeit they lak rhethorious langage 90

Me wantyng / that specious auantage

Whiche causen my spirit / sore to be dradde

Feer of displesance / howe I shall procede

Sith this libel / approce shal and be hadde

Vnto youre high presence / I quake for drede 95

With humble hart / beseche youre souuerainehede

Thaugh huge symplenesse / make degression

It be acceptable / to youre high renon

Under support / of youre magnificence

Right noble high / and ful myghty princes 100

My most dred lady / in erth existence

Sith it liked / youre notable highnesse

As by a mene / to commande me write expresse

The fruteful ditees / of auctours olde

Whych by their wisdomes / to vs ben vnfolde 105

I it to presume / or to take on

So huge an emprise / to youre excellence

I durst nought ne wolde / haue suyche presumpcion

But as by hest of youre high magnificence
Whiche causith me doo / my feithful diligence 110
Though innocencie / schewe his cloudes derke
Trusting your highnesse / to faueure þis rudely werk

Thaugh simplenesse / appere to youre high astate
Wrought necgligently / makinge furth progresse
The sentencial mateire / violat 115
By huge moenes of vnperfitnesse
Yet of youre soueraine / graciousnesse
Redresse ye it vnto þe best entent
Sith by moene is don / at youre commaundement

And ye al / whiche be fortune shal be guydede 120
To ouerloke / this symple wroughten thynge
Thaugh the reason / be not so prouyded
As be the poetes / in there makynge
Pardoneth me / my rudely practising
For vnto youre faueure / I haue gret nede 125
This furth withal / here I wolde procede

[The main text of the *Liber Proverbiorum* here follows in 106 rhyme royal stanzas, each individual stanza providing the wise saying of a named authority.]

If I durst presume / or take oon
My name to reherse / as to youre highnesse 870
My auctor and I both be named Iohn
Like as the Frensh / seith it expresse
To pray for vs / that we come by pro[cesse]
Vnto the right wey / of saluacion
After this wordly peregrinacion 875

This done and writen / the translacion
Effectually / after my symplenesse
Fro Frensh to Englissh by estimacion
As miche as mynde coude make his digresse
Ceriously conueyinge / the processe 880
Albeith the Frenshe / in foure staffes be
The Englissh seuen / kepen in degre

Thise Frensh ditees / the Latyn don excede
Likewise the Englissh / theim both do passe
The metres to fulfille / furth most procede 885

Suffre Augmentacion to shewe her face

By addicions / to make her purchasse

For this metre / wol non othre applie

But in staffes seuen be sette redelye

And thaugh Appentesis / shew her largesse 890

In this prouerbial / ditees sentence

By addici[o]ns / the mateire encresse

I t[r]ust as to / man-is [in]telligence

It not defouled is as by violence

Thaugh leude vnconnynge / [and] necglligencie 895

On me hath kithed / thaire huge maistrie

And thaugh that rudenesse / with rural visage

On this mateir loure / ful frowardlye

Not perfitly had / in normal langage

Lackinge rethorious / eloquencie 900

To lymme and florissh / this matere fressly

So as plesance may be to euery borne wight

That shulde it rede / and haue it in sight

And in especial / to your high estate

Moost Cristiane princesse / oure alþer souueraine 905

In quenely ordre / douly consecrate

Chosen be vertu / in this royaulme to reine

My rude langage / þat shal to you attaine

With humble hert / beseche youre hig[h]nesse

To faueure me / in my vnperfitnesse 910

Where this saide / rethorious eloquencee

Withdraweth her bemes / of huge clernesse

And nought wroughten / so compendiouslie

As oth*re* bokes been / cause of simplesse

Disordinatly / failinge the processe 915

The reason not prouided / to pleasance

The effectuous roule / with me at distance

Yet of your mercy and quenely excellence

Right mighty princesse / lady souueraine

Sith plesance was / to youre magnificens 920

By moene me commaunde / in English this to saine

Pardoneth me / sith I wol not gaine

Myne rude langage lakkynge eloquence

Bustoursly set / causeth by necligence

Now glorious Polux in heuyns high 925

So gouerne and warde youre roial estate

In prosperous welth / as here wor[l]dlie

As hertes ease / and pleasance may be ate

And longe you mainteine / in youre present fate

And after wor[l]dly transmigracion 930

In heuyns high haue your habitacion

Explicit Liber Prouerbiorum

Notes to the Appendix

Line 1: ‘call theim’, i.e. to call on the pagan gods.

Line 8: *ficte*, i.e. ‘fictional, created by man’. Not in *MED*. See *OED fict* (adj. and n.) meaning ‘feigned’, from Latin *fictus*.

Line 13: *obliuie*, i.e. ‘oblivion’. Not in *MED*. See *OED oblivy*, a ‘borrowing from Latin; modelled on a French lexical item’.

Lines 13–14: i.e. ‘shut away in oblivion as a result of their current fate which is never to be marked in memory.

Line 24: 'arke', i.e. the coffer or chest of wisdom.

Line 28: See also ll. 85, 925. Marginal notes in MSS Ashmole 59 and Harley 2251 at fols. 97^{v} and 167^{v} respectively read 'Pollux est Deus qui omne dat*um*' (i.e. that Pollux here should be interpreted as the Christian God). This note makes sense of the seeming confusion here, with a pagan figure invoked *after* the translator has asserted the futility of addressing pagan deities. Napierkowski notes that Fortunatus and many other mythographers and allegorists used pagan names to identify particular aspects of God's nature (p. 200). It is unclear what particular relevance Pollux may have here, though he was allegorized in the Middle Ages as a god who shared his divinity with his mortal twin, Castor, by descending into the underworld. Castor and Pollux were also allegorized as the body and the soul, the soul sharing mortal life temporarily before the body shares in the immortality of the spirit.[59] This is relevant only in the most general of ways to the prologue's invocation of Pollux as source of wisdom and eloquence. One more relevant possibility, though not in any way provable, is that Pollux may have been an error either by the translator or an early copyist for Apollo. Apollo is allegorized as 'Sapientia' by Bernardus Silvestris and as 'divine wisdom' in the *Ovid Moralisé*.[60] He is also associated with poetry and with learning, as well as music and medicine. Moreover, the Delphic Maxims are a set of nearly 150 maxims supposedly given by Apollo himself via his Oracle at Delphi. If the *Liber Proverbiorum* translator did originally write or intend Apollo, then this god would fit much more precisely with the details given, especially the divine figure as a source of eloquence and rhetoric and of 'noble prouerbes auncion' (l. 45). Mistakes with classical names were very possible in this period: in the 'Interpretacion of the names of goddys and goddesses' which precedes the late fifteenth-century poem *The Assembly of Gods*, for example, Morpheus becomes 'Morpleus' and Eolus is mangled as 'Colus'.[61]

Line 33: I follow Napierkowski in correcting the MS reading of ‘calledh’ to ‘called’.

Line 37: *rhetorious*, i.e. ‘in the manner of a teacher of rhetoric’. Not in *MED*. See *OED rhetoriously*, where its etymology given as *rhetor* plus the suffixes *–ious* and *–ly*, the sole citation from *Partenay*,

Line 38: *obliuiscence*, i.e. ‘oblivion’. Not in *MED*. *OED* has the word from 1775 onwards. Formed from Latin *oblivisci* plus the suffix *–ence*.

Line 41: *autentikly*, i.e. ‘authoritatively’.

Line 44: *antiquious*, i.e. ‘ancient’. Not in *MED*. Modelled on Latin *antiquus* or combining French *antique* with the suffix *–ious*.

Lines 43–50: The sense and syntax of this stanza and its relationship to the first line of the following stanza are hard to decipher. It may be that *dilate* is a pseudo-Latinate English form of the Latin perfect participle *dilatus* from *dilatare*, ‘to dilate or spread’. What follows is a tentative paraphrase: ‘And since from you, from deep judgement, these ancient noble proverbs have proceeded forth from ancient times, just so through your singular and most virtuous knowledge, worth more in value than gold or silver-plate or a most precious gem or jewel, having been spread wide by you [i.e. from God/Pollux/Apollo in the Empyrean Heavens] to the centre circle [i.e. Earth at the heart of a geocentric universe], may you aid and support me in my writing…’

Line 56: *lynial lynes*, i.e. lines of verse straight or in rows, here the lines of his verse.

Line 59: *polletiquie*, i.e. ‘wise, sagacious’.

Line 66: *mysty yngnorante*, i.e. ‘obfuscating ignorance’. *Yngnorante* may be a scribal error for the more common *ignorance*.

Line 69: *impressure*, i.e. ‘impression’. Not in *MED*. Either directly from French *impressure* or combining the verb *impress* with the suffix *–ure*.

Line 70: *tendure*, i.e. ‘tenderness’. Not in *MED* as a noun, though the adjective can be spelled thus. A nonceword coined for rhyme.

Like 72: *waymous*, i.e. ‘sorrowful’. Not in *MED*. Coined from the first element of the nouns *waiment*, *waimentacioun* and *waimentrie*, or from the verb *waimenten*, plus the suffix *–ous*.

Line 76: *iuuonence*, i.e. ‘youthfulness’. Not in *MED*. Coined on the model of various other related nouns (*juvens*, *juvente*, *juventude*, *juventute*) for rhyme.

Line 79: *Tymerously, i.e.* ‘timidly’. Not in *MED*. Combining *timorous* with the suffix *–ly*.

Line 80: *carectes*, i.e. ‘characters, written letters’, here meaning the way in which his source is written.

Line 81: *pictifie*, i.e. ‘depict’. Not in *MED* or *OED*, a nonceword coined for rhyme from the noun *picture* or the Latin verb *pictio*. *OED* has *pict* as a verb. Napierkowski reads ‘patifie’ which he glosses without explanation as ‘to disclose, manifest, reveal’ (p. 244).

Line 83: *liquide licour sabilline*, i.e. ‘sable-coloured flowing liquid’, the writer’s ink. *Sabilline*, meaning the fur of the sable, is listed in *MED*. *Sabilline* here combines *sable* (in the heraldic sense referring the colour black) with the suffix *–ine*. The translator puts his trust in Pollux to guide and control the flow of his ink.

Line 86: *blendy*, i.e. ‘blinded, slightless’. Combining *blind* and the suffix *–y*.

Line 88: *lye*, i.e. ‘fire, a blaze’, a noun in *MED* here used as an adjective.

Line 91: *specious*, i.e. ‘relating to beautiful writing’.

Lines 113–9: The sense and syntax of the stanza is difficult to follow, and what follows is a speculative paraphrase: ‘Even though [this work’s] ignorance is evident to your high estate, carelessly crafted, [as] the composition progresses further the sentential subject-matter [being] desecrated by huge intervening stages of imperfection, yet, through your royal graciousness, put it right to its best possible purpose since it is made at your commandment, given by an intermediary.’

Line 873: The MS reading ‘prosse’ is likely an error for *processe*, i.e. ‘in due course’. MS Harley 2251 has ‘processe’ here. Napierkowski keeps ‘prosse’ as the better reading, but this seems unlikely given the rhyme-scheme.

Line 877: *Effectually*, i.e. ‘in good faith, earnestly, diligently’.

Line 879: *digresse*, i.e. ‘digression’. Not in *MED*. *OED* has a sixteenth-century example and gives the etymology as being derived from Latin *digressus*, ‘a departure’.

Line 880: *Ceriously*, i.e. ‘in good order, successively’

Line 881: *staffes*, i.e. ‘lines of verse’.

Line 886: *make her purchasse*, i.e. ‘reach her intended outcome’.

Line 890: *Appentesis*. Napierkowski takes this as a garbled version of a personified form of ‘Appendices’, i.e. things which are added because of the change in verse-form, very similar to ‘Augmentacion’ who needs permission to show her face in l. 886. *MED* lists this as *appens*, ‘a thought, reflection’, from OF *apens*, here presumably plural and personified.

Line 901: *lymme*, i.e. ‘to illuminate as in a manuscript’. Not in *MED*, but there are fifteenth-century examples in *OED* under *limn* (vb) spelled both *lymne* and *lymme*. Napierkowski reads this as *lyuune*, i.e. ‘liven, enliven’.

Line 915: i.e. ‘conveying the narrative in jumbled fashion’. Not in *MED*, though *disordinate* is used as an adjective.

Line 916: i.e. ‘the meaning not supplied to your liking’.

Line 917: i.e. ‘the efficacious order/guide to living at odds with me’ or ‘the efficacious order/guide to living is out of my grasp’.

Line 921: *saine*, i.e. ‘to utter, to say’.

Line 924: *Bustoursly*, i.e. ‘rudely, crudely’.

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[1] Nicole Bozon, *Les proverbes de bon enseignement*, ed. A. C. Thorn (Lund, 1921). Since the publication of Thorn’s edition based on nine manuscripts, a further text has been discovered: Hugh Shields, ‘A Text of Nicole Bozon’s “Proverbes de bon enseignement” in Irish Transmission’, *MLR*, 69 (1974), 274–8.

[2] The unique prologue is *IMEV* 3749 (*DIMEV* 5967) and the main text of the *Liber Proverbiorum* is *IMEV* 3487 (*DIMEV* 5502). Folios 13^{v} to 20^{v}, in the same hand as the *Liber*, offer a collection of short poems by Chaucer and

Lydgate, as well as anonymous fifteenth-century lyrics often categorised as Chaucerian. The rest of the manuscript is a composite of material unrelated to this opening group of texts.

[3] *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Mansucript: Part II*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, O.S. 117 (London, 1901), 522–53.

[4] Tauno F. Mustanoja, '*Myne Awen Dere Sone*', *NM*, 49 (1948), 145–93.

[5] Ruth Matilda Miller Kniep, '*Liber Prouerbiorum*: An Edition of Middle English Proverbs formerly attributed to John Lydgate' (University of Florida, 1954) and Thomas Joseph Napierkowski, 'A Critical Edition of the *Summum Sapientiae*' (University of Colorado at Boulder, 1971). The two dissertations are available via the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

[6] Max Förster, 'Kleine Mitteilungen zur mittelenglische Lehrdichtung', *Archiv*, 104 (1900), 293–309 (308–9).

[7] *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, EETS, E.S. 107 (London, 1911), p. xliv, fn. 1.

[8] Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature, 1430–1530* (Oxford, 2007), 63–70.

[9] For a detailed study of this manuscript, see Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1998), 145–69.

[10] Connolly, *John Shirley*, 152.

[11] Connolly, *John Shirley*, 151–2.

[12] *Proverbes de bon enseignement*, 53; *Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript: Part II*, 553.

[13] *Proverbes de bon enseignement*, pp. vii–ix.

[14] For a comprehensive bibliography of studies of the work of this scribe, see his entry in Daniel Mosser's *Digital Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Manuscripts and Incunables of the 'Canterbury Tales'*, second edition: http://mossercatalogue.net/.

[15] John Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytannie catalogus*, vol. 1 (Farnsworth, 1971), 587.

[16] Bale may have been referring instead to the collection of texts printed by Wynkyn de Worde under the title *The Prouerbes of Lydgate*, STC (2nd edn) 17026.

[17] Shirley heads the text 'Here folowen nowe þe seyinges of wysemen / of Prophetes . of Poetes / of Philosophres of hooly men / of gret and Auctorysed Clerkes / of þe olde testament and of þe nuwe' (fol. 84^{v}).

[18] *Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. MacCracken, p. xliv, fn. 1.

[19] Kniep (pp. xiii–xix) sets out the evidence for the linguistic and stylistic influence of not only Chaucer but also Lydgate on the author of the *Liber*, indicating that the *Liber* was written after Lydgate's period of extraordinary productivity in the 1420s and 1430s. She draws attention to the use of Chaucerian and Lydgatian stock line-fillers, verbal doublets, expressions of humility and various other set phrases characteristic of Lydgate's usage.

[20] John Lydgate, *Mummings and Entertainments*, ed. Claire Sponsler (Kalamazoo, 2010), 160–66 (ll. 1, 16, 17, 32).

[21] Napierkowski, 13–8, 26–8.

[22] Napierkowski, 15–6.

[23] See the collations given in Napierkowski's edition. For discussion of Shirley's manuscripts as sources for later copying see Connolly, *John Shirley*, 170–89; Linne R. Mooney, 'John Shirley's Heirs', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 182–98; and Kathryn M. Veeman, '"Sende this booke ageyne hoome to Shirley": John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-century England' (University of Notre Dame PhD, 2011), 94–105.

[24] For the collation and contents of the manuscript, see Connolly's Table 3 (pp. 146–9), and for the texts duplicated within Shirley's manuscripts, see Connolly's Table 4 (p. 154).

[25] Connolly, *John Shirley*, 164–5.

[26] The incipits, explicits and running headers are listed in Veeman's Table A.5, 'John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts', 214–24. Quires seven to twelve, in Connolly's collation, run from fol. 70^{v} to fol. 134^{v}.

[27] Veeman, 'John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts', 3, 10–2, 38.

[28] Mooney, 'Shirley's Heirs', 195–6.

[29] On the Talbot Shrewsbury Book, see the essays by Andrew Taylor, Craig Taylor and Karen Fresco in Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman (eds), *Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe (14th–17th Centuries)* (Columbus, 2012), and also Andrew Taylor, 'The French Self-Presentation of an English Mastiff: John Talbot's Book of Chivalry', in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (ed.), *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100–c.1500* (Woodbridge, 2009), 444–56.

[30] Rosemarie Potz McGerr, *A Lancastrian Mirror for Princes: The Yale Law School New Statutes of England* (Bloomington, 2001), especially chapters 3 and 4.

[31] For more on books associated with Margaret, see McGerr, *Lancastrian Mirror for Princes*, 99–100.

[32] Carol M. Meale and Julia Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', in Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 3: *1400–1557* (Cambridge, 1998), 526–40 (527–8).

[33] George Chastelain, *Le Temple de Bocace*, ed. Susanna Bliggenstorfer ([Zurich], 1988).

[34] Raluca L. Radulescu, 'Preparing for Mature Years: The Case of Margaret of Anjou and her Books', in Sue Niebrzydowski (ed.), *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2011), 115–36 (117).

[35] See Diana Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of Henry VI: A Reassessment of her Role, 1445–53', in Rowena E. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 1995), 107–43; Helen E. Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003); J. L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship, 1445–1503* (Oxford, 2004); and the account of Margaret's life given in a recent study of her father by Margaret L. Kekewich, *The Good King: René of Anjou and Fifteenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke, 2008).

[36] *The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen, otherwise known as the tale of Melusine*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS, O.S. 22 (London, 1866).

[37] *A Critical Edition of Couldrette's Mélusine or Le Roman de Parthenay*, ed. Matthew W. Morris (Lewiston, 2003).

[38] This practice aligns this translation with popular mid-fifteenth-century works such as Benedict Burgh's verse-translations, *Cato Minor* and *Cato Major*, which appear in some manuscripts with the original Latin next to the relevant stanza. See for example the copies of these works which follow shortly after the *Liber* in MS Harley 2251.

[39] Brenda M. Hosington examines this translator's *modus operandi*: 'From "Theory" to Practice: The Middle English Translation of the *Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 35 (1999), 408–20.

[40] For examples of the translator's distinctive diction, see the glossaries in the edition of the *Liber Proverbiorum* by Napierkowski and in the edition of *Partenay* by W. W. Skeat.

[41] On Lydgate's aureate diction, see John Lydgate, *Poems*, ed. John Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1966), 192–5. For *On Husbondrie*, see D. R. Howlett, 'The Date and Authorship of the Middle English Verse Translation of Palladius' *De Re Rustica*', *Medium Ævum*, 46 (1977), 245–52, and Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature*, 43–56.

[42] Ardis Butterfield, 'Rough Translation: Charles d'Orleans, Lydgate and Hoccleve', in Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (eds), *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory* (Cambridge, 2012), 204–25 (223). The MS

Harley 682 works are edited by Mary-Jo Arn as *Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love: A Critical Edition* (Binghamton, 1994).

[43] Butterfield, 'Rough Translation', 215, 224. For detailed discussion of Charles's English, see Mary-Jo Arn, 'Charles of Orleans and the Poems of BL MS, Harley 682', *English Studies*, 74 (1993), 222–35.

[44] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 1–2. This preface is discussed in detail by Hans-Friedrich Mueller, *Roman Religion in Valerius Maximus* (London, 2002), 11–20.

[45] Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature*, 62–92.

[46] W. H. E. Sweet, 'Lydgate's Retraction and "his resorte to his religyoun"', in Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (eds), *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England* (Turnhout, 2011), 343–62.

[47] *Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae*, trans. John Walton, ed. Mark Science, EETS, O.S. 170 (London, 1927), 1–4. On Walton's classicism, see Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature*, 9–11.

[48] Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature*, 62.

[49] Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature*, 70.

[50] Emily Wingfield, '"And He, That Did it Out of French Translait": *Cleriadus* in France, England and Scotland, *c.* 1440–1550', *Neophilologus*, 95 (2011), 649–60.

[51] Wingfield, '*Cleriadus* in France, England and Scotland', 657.

[52] *Clariodus: A Metrical Romance*, ed. Edward Piper (Edinburgh, 1830), 352.

[53] *The Epistle of Othea, translated by the French Text of Christine de Pisan by Stephen Scrope*, ed. Curt F. Bühler, EETS, O.S. 264 (Oxford, 1970), pp. xi–xxi.

[54] Sonja Drimmer, 'Failure before Print (The Case of Stephen Scrope)', *Viator*, 46 (2015), 343–72 (351).

[55] *Epistle of Othea*, 4 (see textual apparatus for ll. 14 and 24).

[56] Drimmer, 'Failure before Print', 355–8.

[57] *Of Famous Women: The Middle English Translation of Boccaccio's 'De Mulieribus* Claris', ed. Janet Cowen (Heidelberg, 2015). See also Janet Cowen, 'An English Reading of Boccaccio: A Selective Middle English Version of Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris* in British Library MS Additional 10304', in Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith (eds), *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron* (Cambridge, 2000), 129–40.

[58] Karen K. Jambeck surveys the surviving evidence: 'Patterns of Literary Patronage: England, 1200–ca. 1475', in June Hall McCash (ed.), *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens, 1996), 228–67. See especially the list of 'Works and Dedications' (pp. 246–8) which clearly indicates the growth in female patronage in the first half of the fifteenth century, to which the *Liber Proverbiorum* can be added.

[59] H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (London, 1998), 65–6.

[60] Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends*, 28–32. See also Jamie C. Fumo, *The Legacy of Apollo: Antiquity, Authority, and Chaucerian Poetics* (Toronto, 2010).

[61] *The Assembly of Gods: Le Assemble de Dyeus, or Banquet of Gods and Goddesses, with the Discourse of Reason and Sensuality*, ed. Jane Chance (Kalamazoo, 1999), 27–8, 134 (textual notes).