

Translation, Early Printing, and Gender in England, 1484-1535

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Translation cannot be divorced from the context in which it flourishes, that is, from the linguistic, literary, social, and cultural developments taking place at a given time and in a given setting. Nor can it be fully comprehended without a consideration of certain ideological impulses. One of the socio-cultural developments affecting translation in the years 1484-1535 is the introduction of printing to England. One of the ideological concerns in the period also affecting translation is that of gender. Both intersect in the production of translations concerning women and women's issues, of which there is a significant number. These, I think, should be considered against the backdrop of early printing in England, for printers and patrons often had specific agendas in mind, motivated by ideological concerns — be they religious, moral, or commercial — which dictated not only the choice of texts to be published but also the editorial changes to be made within those texts.

As Lotte Hellinga has pointed out, the history of printing reflects two dynamics that are in varying balance — the obvious one that is commercial and borne of the printer's need to cover expenses and make a profit, and the more complex one that is non-commercial and relates to the power of the printed text to disseminate knowledge, implant new ideas, and so on.¹ The first, the commercial aspect, has been an ongoing consideration in the history of print. Pollard, back in 1978, claimed that printers went ahead with a specific work only because they believed it could be sold.² Some

1 Hellinga, *Catalogue of Books*, 56-57.

2 Pollard, "The English Market," *passim*.

years earlier, Febvre and Martin had stated quite categorically that printers and booksellers (who were sometimes one and the same, especially in the early days of printing) “worked above all and from the beginning for profit.” They therefore chose books that had already enjoyed previous success in manuscript form.³ Roger Chartier, too, notes that a printer’s decision to produce a certain text or press run was based on his perception, accurate or inaccurate, of the market.⁴ Such a perception most certainly influenced Pynson’s and Thynne’s decision to print Chaucerian anthologies (of which more later in this article). In the case of English printing, the proven popularity, and hence commercial success, of earlier printed Continental works also influenced the choice of books to import. In France, for example, where the earliest of the translations considered in this article came from, courtly love poetry, works from the court of Burgundy, and books dealing with the themes of women and of marriage had proved their worth right from the beginning and thus constituted a potentially reliable source of texts for English printers. The importation of such books has been the subject of many studies over the years, particularly with regard to Caxton’s relations with Burgundy and Bruges and with regard to Wynkyn de Worde’s various Continental networks.⁵ French books were sometimes bought *in situ*, by private buyers who brought them back to England, or through an agent on the Continent, a practice that increased greatly in the 1520s and 1530s, or, much more infrequently, in bookshops such as the London one owned by the Parisian printer, Antoine Vérard.

While there was still a market in England for books written in French, a declining knowledge of the language led to a need to translate them. Translations made up a large part of the early printers’ stocks. Over one third of Wynkyn de Worde’s list, for example, comprised translations from Latin and French.⁶ Yet nothing is really known about the printers’ relationships with their translators. De Worde employed two of the translators of texts in the corpus discussed here, Henry Watson and Robert Copland, as printer-apprentices who also worked as translators. Later, Berthelet specifically used the services of men who were humanist scholars. However, other printers seem to have had far more haphazard means of finding people to translate texts. Caxton, of course, was himself both printer and translator, although he also published a few texts by other

3 Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, 249.

4 R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print*, 145.

5 See for example Plomer, “The Importation of Low Country and French Books”; Kerling, “Caxton and the Trade”; Armstrong, “English Purchases”; Boffey, “Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson.”

6 I have based this figure on Bennett’s list of de Worde’s publications — now admittedly old and needing adjustment, but still useful — in *English Books and Readers*, 242-76.

translators. No doubt some translators approached printers with their work. Their aims would sometimes have been commercial, sometimes altruistic, for translation by its very nature aims at selling to a larger readership than that comprising unilingual readers, while at the same time being a disseminator of knowledge and conduit of culture. Whatever their purpose, these early translators remain a largely unstudied group whose history remains to be written. And, of course, many remained anonymous.

As well as the effect of printing practices on translation, the impact of ideological concerns, namely, in this case, gender, must also be considered. The interest in women and marriage that had inspired many a tract and text throughout the Middle Ages and that had been refuelled by the *querelle des femmes* in the fifteenth century, accounted for a proliferation of printed works. It had in fact proved a boon to early French printers and promised to be equally advantageous to their English counterparts. Some in this group of texts belong to the long tradition of anti-feminine writings about women and marriage that predate the *querelle*, but one is Christine de Pizan's response to such works in her *Cité des dames*. No fewer than six printers in the period under consideration published texts ranging from revivals and continuations of medieval misogynist literature to humanist texts on women. This whole group of texts, appearing from the early days of print from 1484 till 1535, has not hitherto been the subject of any study. Julia Boffey's fine article on misogyny and print concentrates exclusively on works published by de Worde's press,⁷ while Utley's *Crooked Rib*, although still a useful reference work, contains some omissions and errors, is now dated, and has little to say specifically about the role which translation played in the printing of *querelle*-related texts.⁸

The corpus considered here comprises fourteen translations in all, of which twelve look back to medieval sources and two emanate from the pens of humanist writers. This article will not be concerned with detailed comparisons of these translations and their source texts, nor will it enter into a theoretical discussion of translational methodologies in the period. Rather, its aims are to present an overview of all those translated texts that in varying ways relate to issues concerning women and to demonstrate how translation, publishing, and gender were closely intertwined in the first decades of English printing.

The first female-oriented work to appear in England is a 1484 translation by William Caxton of a French manual entitled *Le livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry pour*

7 Boffey, "Wynkyn de Worde and Misogyny."

8 Utley, *The Crooked Rib: An Analytical Index to the Argument about Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568* (1944).

l'enseignement de ses filles, written in 1372 by a knight for, in Caxton's words, "then-syngmentys and techyng of his daughters."⁹ As a very popular text in manuscript, of which no fewer than twenty-one are extant, and an item in the Duke of Burgundy's collection with which Caxton was extremely familiar due to his stay in the Low Countries and his connections with Margaret of Burgundy, the French text must have appealed strongly to the printer-translator, although, according to his Prologue, he did not choose it himself. Rather, he claims, the "boke is comen to my handes by the request & desyre of a noble lady which hath brouzt forth many noble & fayr douzters which ben vertuously nourished & lerned." This lady, he continues, "desired & required me to translate & reduce this said book out of frenssh in to our vulgar englissh to thende that it may the better be vnderstonde of al suche as shal rede or here it."¹⁰ The "noble lady" most certainly was Elizabeth Woodville, recent widow of Edward IV, who also had Burgundian connections. However, according to Blake, her direct connection with Caxton as recounted here is doubtful to say the least.¹¹ Whether his claims be true or fictional, by emphasizing the role of a female patron in making the work available, he nevertheless foregrounds the importance of the work to women.

Caxton's prologue to the *Booke whiche the knight of the towre made* is very different in tone and execution from La Tour Landry's. Firstly, he makes clear that the translation is intended to instruct both men and women. The French narrator, on the other hand, thinks of his young daughters and the need to "chastier courtoisement par bonnes exemples et par doctrines" (to correct courteously by means of teaching and good examples).¹² To this end, he explains, he has written a book providing examples of both good and bad women. Caxton replaces the French courtly setting with a heavily moralizing opening comment on right behaviour addressed to both sexes. A few lines later, he echoes La Tour Landry in underlining the need for fathers as well as mothers to have their children "vertuously brouzt forth," but whereas the French author says he is writing separate books for his sons and daughters, Caxton points out that his book is for "al maner peple in generally, but in especial for ladyes & gentilwymen douzters to lordes & gentilmen."¹³ La Tour Landry's manual is clearly intended for a more restricted readership — female, aristocratic, concerned with raising daughters. Caxton, through the new and

9 Caxton, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 11. All quotations are taken from this edition.

10 Caxton, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 3.

11 Blake, *William Caxton*, 30-31.

12 *Le livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry*, 2. This and all other translations placed in parentheses throughout this article are mine.

13 Caxton, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 3. *Le livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry*, 4.

democratizing medium of print, is seeking a wider clientele — male and female, aristocratic and bourgeois, concerned with raising both girls and boys.

Despite their potential shock value and the fact that many put men in a very poor light, the more sensational and bawdy of La Tour Landry's tales are faithfully reproduced, as are those describing the cruel punishments meted out to disobedient and adulterous wives. These Caxton translated in his usual close fashion, preserving the didactic tone throughout. In presenting this work, then, Caxton the moralizer found a text that would help people bring their children up to attain "worship and good renomme"; to this end, Caxton the bookseller urged them "to gete & haue this book."¹⁴ In praising his female patron at several points in the Prologue, Caxton the printer underlined the relevance of the work for women and launched a movement from manuscript to print for *querelle*-related works in England.

How Caxton felt about the way in which women were portrayed in the work we shall, of course, never know. However, his epilogue to Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers's translation *The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres* made five years before, in 1477, reveals that he was well aware of the interest that people had in the *querelle* and was not above a little of his own humour at women's expense. Woodville, he says, omitted several passages. However, the only one Caxton feels obliged to restore is Socrates's anti-feminine rant, which, as Blake points out, he places, not in the text itself, but in his epilogue.¹⁵ Caxton pretends to excuse Woodville on grounds all related to women: "som fayr lady hath desired hym to leue it out," or he was in love with "somme noble lady" and therefore afraid to include it, or perhaps his affection for all ladies prevented him. No doubt, he continues, Woodville must have realized that Socrates's comments only pertained to Greek women, for English women are "right good, wyse, playsant, humble, discrete, sobre, chast, obedient to their husbondis, trewe, secrete, stedfast, euer besy, & neuer ydle. Attemperat in speking, and vertuous in alle their werkis." But the sting is in the tail: "or atte leste sholde be soo."¹⁶ Each female virtue in this list, of course, corresponds to its opposite female vice found in the myriad misogynist catalogues of the Middle Ages. In case the reader has missed the humour, Caxton imputes Woodville's oversight to an omission in the source text, or, more preposterously, to the possibility that "perauenture [. . .] the wynde had blowe ouer the leef, at the tyme of translacion of his booke." The Chaucerian nature of this suggestion finds an echo in the disclaimer concerning Socrates's

14 Caxton, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 3.

15 Blake, *William Caxton*, 100.

16 Caxton, *The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres* [1477], 20-22.

criticism: “tarette it to Socrates and not me whiche wryteth as here after foloweth.”¹⁷ Blake suggests that Caxton, in his epilogue, explains undertaking the translation because he wanted to draw attention to his own talents, not only as a printer-publisher, but also as a translator, thus associating himself with the aristocratic Woodville.¹⁸ This may well be so. However, in highlighting the Socrates passage by isolating it within his epilogue, by suggesting that Woodville’s omission might arise from his relationship with women, and by adopting a tongue-in-cheek tone in his list of women’s virtues, Caxton is also positioning himself as a participant in the fashionable *querelle*; indeed, this question takes up no fewer than 105 out of the 165 lines of the epilogue.

Despite this seeming interest, Caxton published no more works related to the *querelle*. That responsibility passed instead to his apprentice and, as of 1491, heir to his printing shop, Wynkyn de Worde, for whom *querelle*-oriented texts seem to have been of particular and enduring interest since they span his whole career, from 1505 to 1535. In the first few years (1505-1510) after he had moved from Westminster to Fleet Street, he published three translations of satirical French texts. The first, Robert Copland’s rendering of Pierre Gringore’s *Complainte de trop tard marié*, is a verse satire in which an old narrator regrets having waited too long to marry. It went through two editions, thirteen years apart (1505 and 1518), which attests to the enduring popularity of such texts.¹⁹ The narrator’s approval of marriage rests on dubious grounds to say the least: sex without guilt, no waste of one’s seed, respect of canon law, escape from dishonest bawds, a chance to engender children instead of contracting syphilis and gout, and a wife who does all his bidding. The reasons for his regret at having married late are equally dubious: inability to satisfy his wife (the subtext being that women are sexually insatiable), to sire a dozen children, and to go out dancing and banqueting (jealously, he has to send his wife out alone). His final message is as mixed as what went before: he appears to favour marriage, but on *his* terms — one must marry young and take an obedient wife.

Copland obviously knew French very well and was a careful translator; his few mis-translations and additions are mostly attributable to the exigencies of metre or rhyme. Nor is there any major shift in the gleefully misogynist tone, or the level of language, which is colloquial and at times crude. Copying Gringore, Copland works his name into the

17 Caxton, *The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres* [1477], 24.

18 Blake, *William Caxton*, 100.

19 Gringore, *Complainte* and Copland, [*The complaint of them that be too late married*], of which only two leaves are extant. The work was reissued as *The complaynte of them that ben to late maryed* thirteen years later.

Envoy as an acronym. The two Envoys themselves, however, address different concerns. Gringore's eight-line message is secular — govern your house, avoid quarrels, order your affairs — while Copland's twenty-one line poem is religious and has little to do with the subject of women and marriage, except for one line that seems almost an afterthought: "kepe well theyr maryage & trouth plyght." This is perhaps appropriate for a translator who produced many religious texts and often expressed religious sentiments in his prologues and envoys. In another way, however, the Envoys are similar. As Cynthia Brown observes with regard to all of Gringore's envoys, this one is addressed to his readers outside his text and is phrased in stern, moralizing terms.²⁰ The same is true of Copland's. Thus, each shifts the focus away from the anti-feminine message of the poem.

De Worde's next French text, the anonymous fifteenth-century *Quinze joyes de mariage*, was rendered into English and published in 1507 without a title; de Worde re-edited it two years later as *The fyftene joyes of maryage*. It was the work of an anonymous translator, once thought to be Robert Copland although no internal evidence points to his authorship.²¹ In fact, several reasons argue against it, amongst which the most important is a difference in poetic language.²² Copland had, however, authored a similar parody, *The seuen sorowes that women haue when theyr husbandes be deade* in about 1530, although the only extant copy dates from 1565. Like Caxton, he treated the matter of the *querelle* and its relationship to printing in his paratexts. In the Prologue, the printer and "Quidam" discuss light works, like "a boke of the wydowe Edith / That hath begyled so many with her wordes."²³ Copland states his desire not to anger women, whom he has always defended (Aiiiv), and when "Quidam" enquires about a "mery bourdyng Jeest" called "the seuen sorowes that these women haue," which is "without reprofue, dishonesty or shame / That in no wyse can appayre their good name," Copland agrees to print it. In his Envoy, he says he will send his "lytle quayre" to the "good" printer Berthelet and to the "bad" printer, John Scot. Why these epithets? Berthelet, in 1530, the year *Seuen sorowes* appeared, had just inherited Pynson's position as King's printer and was thus

20 Brown, "Text, Image and Authorial Self-Consciousness," 134.

21 The French original was long thought to be by Antoine de la Sale, and indeed both EEBO and the ESTC still have the work entered under his name, but this attribution is no longer generally accepted. The French text used here is *Les .XV. joyes de mariage*.

22 Wilson suggests that Copland authored this translation; Wilson, ed., *The Batchelars Banquet [1603]*, 31. However, Erler points out, rightly, that the style of the translator's prologue is "too graceful" to be Copland's, with its evocation of spring, classical allusions, and interweaving of youth/age and spring/winter themes; Erler, "Poems and Prefaces," 461.

23 *The wydow Edyth .xii. mery gestys of one callyd Edyth the lyeng wydow whych yet styll lyueth* was a jest-book presenting both good and bad sides of women.

taking on greater importance in the world of printing; in contrast, Scot, in 1525, had pirated from Pynson an anti-feminine satire first printed in 1510, *The boke of mayde Emly[n] that had .v. husband[es?] & all cuckold[s]* [STC 7680.5]. However, I think that the appearance of the two printers here is significant for a second reason, one related to the subject of Copland's and "Quiddam's" discussion of women. In 1526, Berthelet had published *A deuoute treatise upon the pater noster*, an English translation of Erasmus's *Precatio dominica in septem portiones distribute* by Margaret Roper, who was a beacon among the learned women of her time. It was prefaced by Richard Hyrde's dedicatory letter to Roper's cousin, Frances Staverton, which constituted the first English defence of women's education. Berthelet had followed this in 1529 with Hyrde's translation of Vives's *De institutione foeminae Christianae*, which will be discussed later. From Scot's press, on the other hand, had come but one work by Christine de Pizan unrelated to the question of women, *The body of polycye*, and an ill-gotten anti-feminine satire.²⁴

The publication of *The fyftene joyes of maryage* in two editions only two years apart suggests that it was almost as popular in England as in France, where, according to Joan Crow, it was a "bestseller"; indeed, Crow continues, its "most immediate and most durable success" outside of France was across the Channel.²⁵ A parody of religious litanies like *Les quinze joies de Notre Dame*, the work comprises fifteen satirical tableaux portraying the predicament of the husband caught in marriage like a fish "dedans la nasse" (in the net). It draws on traditional misogynist themes and quotes all the usual sources. However, the husband is also sharply satirized — he enjoys suffering the woes of marriage — as are the clergy and the bourgeoisie. The bitter and cynical tone of the French work is somewhat softened in the translation by the addition of descriptive details and by the introduction of a lighter, Chaucerian humour.²⁶

The two prologues are very different. The French one serves to introduce the topic of the man "netted" in marriage and suffering all the woes of the world on account of women's perfidy.²⁷ The English one, which precedes the translation of the French "Prologue" and

24 In discussing Copland's Envoy, Utley states that "there is no certain praise of women from Berthelet before 1540," when he issued Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*; Utley, *The Crooked Rib*, 307. Utley completely overlooks Hyrde's remarkable preface to Roper's translation, *A deuoute treatise upon the pater noster* (?1526). Furthermore, because he advances the date of Copland's poem to 1525, he excludes Hyrde's Vives translation. Claiming that Copland's references to Berthelet and Scot pertain simply to their printing skills, Utley is also more tentative than I am.

25 Crow believed the translation to be Copland's and his source text the Lyons *editio princeps* of 1480-1490, or a copy of it; Crow, "The 'Quinze joyes de mariage'."

26 See Coldiron, "Paratextual Chaucerianism," and Lobzowska, "Two English Translations."

27 *Les .XV. joies de mariage*, 5.

is completely independent of it, domesticates the text with Chaucerian allusions, making this work, Coldiron argues, more accessible to the English reader and thus more sellable, a “safe commercial bet for Wynkyn de Worde.”²⁸

The third text published by de Worde in the early years of the sixteenth century is also parodic and satiric. The anonymous *Euangiles des quenoilles*, dating from the middle of the fifteenth century, was immensely popular in France: no fewer than nine printed versions appeared between 1479 and 1501.²⁹ Again, de Worde must have sensed the commercial potential for an English translation. The profoundly comic prose tale describes the meetings, on six consecutive nights, of a group of spinners, who invite a clerk to take down their “gospels” and “glosses” describing and commenting on marriage, sex, children, rural matters, old wives’ tales, superstitions, and folk remedies. The source of the comedy is the derision with which the women and their beliefs are treated, as indeed is suggested by the title with its juxtaposition of “gospel,” usually reserved for the holiest of Christian texts, and “distaves,” a symbol of womanhood but also a slang term for the penis. It leaves the reader in no doubt as to the nature of the work.

De Worde printed *The gosselles of dystaves*, translated by his apprentice Henry Watson, in 1508 or 1510.³⁰ It is a fairly accurate rendering both in content and style. Watson does not retreat from the bawdy language and ribald situations found in the original. Although he probably did not understand all the crude jokes and slang, some he executed brilliantly, using equivalent English slang terms and puns for intimate parts of the body and sex-related activities when the language allowed. He also retained the misogynist character of the original. His English “gossips” are the faithful counterparts of their French sisters, and his English clerk mirrors the mocking and condescending *clerc* who records their sayings. The ending, however, marks a slight shift. The French *clerc* accepts the gift of a young girl of his choice as payment for his service; his English counterpart refuses, although not on moral grounds. His excuse that he is too old is entirely in keeping with the irony of the original. So, too, is the final “blessing” of the kind which concludes many a Middle English romance. The greatest irony of all, that the opinions and thoughts of the women portrayed in this work can be heard only through a male voice, of course, underpins both works.

28 Coldiron, “Paratextual Chaucerianism,” 8.

29 *Les Euangiles des quenoilles* (s.l.n.d.) has been attributed to three men whose names appear in one of the manuscripts, Fouquart de Cambray, Anthoine du Val, and Jehan d’Arras, but this attribution is by no means certain; see Jay, ed., *Les Evangiles des quenouilles*, 33-34.

30 For a more detailed analysis of this translation, see Hosington, “Henry Watson.”

In the years 1520 to 1535, de Worde continued his output of works on women, both original and translated. In the former category were six; in the latter, three.³¹ The first translation was *An interlocucion, with an argument, betwyxt man and woman, & whiche of them could proue to be most excellent*, published in 1525. Its source was the fifteenth-century *Debat de l'omme et de la femme* by Guillaume Alexis, a Norman monk and satirist.³² Its popularity is attested by five editions published in Lyon and Paris between 1493 and 1520, a fact that, again, must have recommended it to de Worde. The anonymous English translator exercises some independence. Since his translation is in verse, he is subject to the usual constraints of metre and rhyme, which often necessitate additions (mostly to make the allusions more explicit) or minor omissions. Other changes are more important. Placing the debate within a frame, he moves the poem into the *chanson d'aventure* tradition in which a narrator enters a garden or orchard and overhears a confession or dialogue. He witnesses a man and woman arguing about which of them "coulede proue to be moost excellent" (Aii). As in the French poem, it seems to be the woman, since she is given the last speech within the debate. However, and this marks a crucial difference, the English narrator concludes by deferring to the "reders prudence" to decide who should be given the "laude" and "wor[l]dly magnyfycence" (Avi). This addition makes for a more ambiguous outcome.

The translator has prepared the reader for this equivocal ending in several ways. In the French, the refrains concluding the stanzas are equally divided between the man's "Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a" (very happy is he who has nothing to do with all this) and the woman's "Malheureux est qui rien n'y a" (unhappy is he who has nothing to do with all this). The English translator, however, uses only the man's refrain, although admittedly only eight out of the forty times it appears in his original, thus weakening the immediate impact of the woman's pro-feminine argument. Secondly, he adds eight lines which refer to traditionally female vices not mentioned in the original, whereas he adds only one describing male vices. Lastly, he reduces the number of ways in which men murdered St. Ursula and her 11,000 virgins on the Rhine: the twelve techniques are reduced to a "mere" four, presumably to make men seem a little less uncivilized. Given these changes and the ambiguous ending, it is hard to agree with Diane Bornstein's view that "both author and translator place themselves in the feminist camp."³³ The latter's position is ambiguous, to say the least.

31 For the English works, see Boffey, "Wynkyn de Worde and Misogyny."

32 "Le Debat de l'Homme et de la Femme, composé par maistre Guillaume Alexis" in *Œuvres poétiques de Guillaume Alexis*, 133-43.

33 Bornstein, Introduction, *The Feminist Controversy*, ix.

The next gender-related text that de Worde published, in around 1530, was *The payne and sorowe of euyll maryage*, which had been preserved in four different manuscript anthologies: Bodleian Library MS Digby 181, British Library MS Harley 2251, English College MS A.347 in Rome, and Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6, known as the Findern Anthology. In the first three, it accompanies other anti-feminist offerings, as well as works by John Lydgate, to whom the translation, not surprisingly, has been attributed.³⁴ Utley has said the *querelle* was a “passion of copyists” and these anthologies certainly bear this out.³⁵ It is difficult to know whether the source text was the thirteenth-century Latin original, *De coniuge non ducenda*, an immensely popular anti-marriage satire drawing on traditional sources, or its Anglo-Norman translation, whether the translator conflated the two, or whether he found another version now lost; it is a very loose translation and, as A. G. Rigg says, a very muddled one.³⁶ Complicating the issue is the number of variants found in the multiple manuscript versions, none of which de Worde seems to have used; none is as full as his printed text, with its addition of five final stanzas, all reiterating the vices of womankind (Aiii^v - Aiv). While they add nothing new to the traditional catalogue of vices and list of marital perils with which the narrator has been regaling the reader throughout the poem, they reinforce and generalize them, and as a result ultimately heighten the misogynist flavour of the text.

A companion piece to Robert Copland’s 1505 *Complaynt of them that ben to late maryed* is his *Complaynt of them that be to soone maryed* [STC 5729], published by de Worde in 1535 and the last of the anti-feminist texts to come from his press, although Copland claims in the Prologue that he had translated the work much earlier but kept it aside until he was more competent. His source was *La complainte du nouveau marie*, one of a group of anonymous French poems on the theme of the new bridegroom who already regrets his state. It saw three editions between c.1489 and 1495, and a fourth just after 1500.³⁷ Again, previous commercial success must have been a factor in de Worde’s decision to publish the translation. Copland perhaps believed the work to be

34 Wright attributed the translation to Copland, which Erler correctly denies, although she also questions Lydgate’s authorship, as does Boffey. See Wright, *Middle-Class Culture*, 471; Erler, “Poems and Prefaces,” 468; and Boffey, “Wynkyn de Worde and Misogyny,” 237.

35 Utley, *The Crooked Rib*, 61. He also attributes the translation to Lydgate; Utley, *The Crooked Rib*, 66.

36 Rigg, *Gawain*, 103.

37 The version used here is “S’ensuyt la Complainte du Nouveau Marié. Nouuellement imprimé à Paris,” in *Recueil de poésies françoises*, 4:5-17. Two other similar poems are *La complainte douloureuse du nouveau marie* and *La complainte du nouveau marie*, neither translated into English.

by Gringore, for he copied that author's use of an acrostic of his name in the final stanzas (Biv^{r-v}), as he had in the *Complainte de trop tard marie*.³⁸

The opening lines of the French poem set the aggressive tone of the work with a repetition, in the first line, of the notion of marriage as a fish net, "Dehors, nassiez, de ceste nasse" (Out, you netted men, from this net), a key image in the .XV. *joies de mariage*; this is followed by three imperatives also starting with "Dehors." It takes Copland twenty-seven lines of his own anti-marital musings before launching into the translation (Aii). Although keeping and indeed extending the series of imperatives, starting each line with "Go," he does not reproduce the image of the fish net. He nevertheless follows the rest of the text quite accurately, bewailing the servitude of marriage and the wife's successful berating of her husband, while the outcome is the same: the husband loses the day. At the end of the poem, however, he adds another three stanzas of his own, reiterating all that has gone before (Biv-Biv^v). Copland's translation, then, not only reproduces the misogynist character of his original, but reinforces it by the addition of six and a half stanzas all deploring the married man's predicament.

Although de Worde, as mentioned above, published the most translations about women, four other early printers also waded into the waters of the *querelle*. In 1521, Henry Pepwell, on behalf of the Earl of Kent, published a translation of Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames*, entitled *The boke of the cyte of ladyes*, produced by Brian Anslay, Yeoman of the Cellar to Henry VIII. Here, at last, was a work written by a woman about women. Yet in his verse prologue Pepwell expresses caution because it tells of the excellence of gentlewomen, and "it is the guyse / Of people lewde theyr prowesse to dyspyse" (Aai^v). The subtext, presumably, was that people might not buy the book. His fear, no doubt, was not without reason. As seen above, most popular texts concerning women came down firmly on the side of satire and defamation rather than encomium and defence. However, the Earl of Kent told Pepwell to publish the translation, for "[he was] euer dylygente / Of ladyes (abrode) to sprede theyr royall fame." Thus, the debate over women's praiseworthiness opens up before the work even begins and serves to announce its importance. Now, the Earl may well have been an enthusiastic supporter of women, like his uncle Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, discussed above on page 45, but it helped that his mother was Woodville's sister, and Woodville had translated Christine's *Prouerbes moraulx* and owned the signed and lavish manuscript containing the *Cité des dames*

38 The STC entry has "P. Gringore?"; the ESTC more cautiously has "Sometimes attributed to Pierre Gringore." EEBO lists the work as his, but the *Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue* does not.

that Christine had originally presented to Isabeau of Bavaria (now British Library MS Harley 4431). The Woodville family still owned it.

Despite his comments in the prologue about spreading women's fame, Pepwell omitted Christine's name from the title page of his book, replacing it with the translator's. Such omissions were very frequent in early printed translations, and Christine, in fact, suffered the same fate at the hands of her first French printers.³⁹ Moreover, several factors argue against this omission being intentional. Pepwell probably thought the author's identity clear enough since Anslay retained every single one of Christine's twenty-six self-references, some written in full but the majority reproducing the abbreviated form found in both the Harley 4431 and Royal 19.A.XIX manuscripts: *Xpine*.⁴⁰ He may also have thought Christine sufficiently well known in England since, in addition to four manuscript translations of her other writings, three printed translations already existed — two by Caxton, the *Morale prouerbes of Christyne* (1478) referred to above and *The boke of fayttes or armes and of chyualrye* (1489), and one by Scot, *The body of polycye* (1521), which mentions her name twice. Lastly, the woodcut Pepwell chose to introduce each of the book's three parts reminds readers of its female authorship, illustrating Christine's opening description of herself reading alone in her study and coming across Matheolus's misogynist *Lamentations*, which depresses her but will inspire her to write a corrective account of women.

The question of the potential audience for a book by a woman about women is further complicated by another factor in Pepwell's prologue. Several recent critics have demonstrated how the printer turns it into a guide for young gentlemen by prefacing it with his comments on its relevance to a male readership.⁴¹ He does indeed, as Summit says, turn Christine's critique of misogyny into a "meditation on printing, class, and patronage."⁴² His account of his exchange with the Earl of Kent is meant as a reminder of Caxton's with Earl Rivers; Pepwell is thus demonstrating that he is following in the

39 For a discussion of Christine's fate at the hands of both French and English early printers, see Brown, "The Reconstruction of an Author," 215-35. Brown maintains that the latter, with the exception of Caxton, gave her works greater anonymity. For a discussion of Christine's self-authoring, see Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, chap. 1.

40 From internal evidence provided by collating the two manuscripts and Anslay's translation, it is safe to say that British Library MS Royal 19.A.XIX most certainly served as his source text. However, the references to Christine in the text are the same in number and placement in both the Harley and Royal manuscripts.

41 Of these critics, Summit offers the most persuasive argument in her chapter entitled "*The City of Ladies* in the Library of Gentlemen: Christine de Pizan in England, 1450-1526," in *Lost Property*, 93-107.

42 Summit, *Lost Property*, 97.

worthy footsteps of the founding printer of translations from French. All this is intended to counter any disaffection on the part of potential “lewd” anti-feminine readers. Despite his professed ambivalence, Pepwell must have chosen Christine’s text in part because of the contemporaneous popularity of writings about women in France and England.

Anslay makes some significant changes in his translation, which sometimes result in a shift away from Christine’s stern praise of women and condemnation of clerics. For example, he undermines two statements that women are the equal of men and fit to play a role in society, but makes much of a third, that women must remain chaste, and he adds some strategies of accommodation that are in direct conflict with Christine’s: exploiting one’s natural female ability to flirt, to make oneself pretty, or to enter into foolish relationships. Christine’s accommodations, as Sheila Delany observes in her perspicacious comparison of the author with Virginia Woolf, are centred on the relationship between wife and husband and, born of practical necessity, that of author and patron.⁴³ But these aspects of her work are not obvious in Anslay’s translation.

Sometime between 1525 and 1530, another printer, Richard Fawkes, published an English rendering of a French work entitled *A lytell treatyse of the beaute of women newly translated out of Frenshe in to Englyshe*. It was reprinted in 1540 by Robert Wyer. Unfortunately, no comparison with the original can be made here because all my attempts to trace the French source have failed.⁴⁴ The anonymous translator, Chaucer-like, issues a disclaimer protesting his own lack of sexual experience; although commissioned by a “gentyman” to translate the work, he “had neuer the usage / womens beaulte in body”; he will therefore simply follow the “sentence” of the French book.⁴⁵ Female beauty is glorified on the grounds that it inspired Troilus’s love for Criseyde, Paris’s for Helen, Achilles’s for Polyxena, and Tristan’s for Isolde. The anti-feminine nature of the work is clear: all these loves are adulterous or disastrous, or both. Moreover, true female beauty requires traditional female qualities and must meet traditional aesthetic criteria, all of which are drawn from misogynist works. Finally, beauty is found in many women, virtue in few, yet beauty without virtue is worthless. The work obviously sits squarely in the mode of anti-feminine works being put out by the early English printers.

43 Delany, *Writing Woman*, 181-97.

44 The *Index Aureliensis*, III, 393, indicates the source as “Les Beaultez appartenantes a femme pour estre dicte belle” in Montaignon’s *Recueil de poésies françoises*, 299. However, this is incorrect. The works printed there are “Le louange et beauté des dames” (7:287) and “La beauté des femmes” (7:299). Neither is the source text.

45 *A lytell treatyse of the beaute of women newly translated out of Frenshe in to Englyshe*, lines 5, 12-13, and 22.

The three remaining texts in the group of *querelle*-related translations from medieval sources which made their way into print are all found in two Chaucerian anthologies: Richard Pynson's 1526 *The boke of Fame made by Geffray Chaucer: with dyuers other of his workes* and William Thynne's 1532 *Workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed, with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before*. Earlier compilers of manuscript anthologies, as Julia Boffey and John Thompson have shown, concentrated on works with secular themes, and particularly on those dealing with questions of love; the poems they chose were either authentically Chaucerian or "neo-Chaucerian."⁴⁶ The early printers of such poetic anthologies follow suit. Thus, Pynson includes an anonymous translation, the *Letter of Dido*, and Sir Richard Roos's translation of Alain Chartier's *La belle dame sans mercy*; Thynne includes Roos's translation and another by Thomas Hoccleve, the *Epistre de Cupide*.

Pynson never actually attributes the *Letter of Dido* to Chaucer, but he does claim that *La belle dame sans mercy* was "translate out of Frenche in to Englysshe" by the poet (dii^v). Perhaps he was simply following the pattern of the earlier Chaucerian anthologies which had included both works as authentic. Perhaps he found the two translations fitted into the overall theme of the anthology: the *Letter of Dido*, which actually contains echoes of Dido's speech in the *House of Fame*, laments unfaithful love and abandonment, while the *Belle dame sans mercy* treats of unrequited love in a courtly setting. On the other hand, as one recent critic has pointed out, he was also gathering works together that would sell.⁴⁷ These two Chaucerian-type translations could not but help the cause. Indeed, Julia Boffey in her detailed discussion of the *Letter of Dido*, calls Pynson "more opportunistic than innovative."⁴⁸

We do not know who translated the *Letter of Dido* from a French metatext of Ovid's *Heroides*, Octavien de Saint-Gelais's *Les xxi epistres douide*, composed in the 1490s. Nor do we know for certain which edition of this work the English translator used, although Julia Boffey strongly suggests that it was Antoine Vérard's *Les XXj epistres douide translates de latin en francoys par reuerend pere en dieu monseigneur leuesque dangouleme*, published in Paris between 1500 and 1503. On the other hand, we do know that the English translator can not have been Pynson himself, since the translator mentions in his prologue that his French is inadequate because he has never been to France. Pynson, of course, was a Frenchman. Whoever the translator was, his aim seems to have been to

46 Boffey and Thompson, "Anthologies and Miscellanies," 280.

47 Forni, "Richard Pynson," *passim*.

48 Boffey, "Richard Pynson's *Book of Fame*," 341.

make Dido even more sympathetic to an English audience than Chaucer's Dido in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women*, although he obviously had these portraits in mind. More than his original author, the translator emphasizes Dido's predicament as victim by omitting potentially damaging information about her, making changes to her character, and emphasizing the extent of Aeneas's betrayal, which, he says in his prologue, makes him so angry that his hand shakes and quakes, and he calls upon Fame to trumpet the man's infamy (fiii^v). In short, his portrait is much closer to Ovid's than to Chaucer's.

Yet the translator's envoy contains a more mixed message. He warns women to avoid Aeneas-like faithless men, but also to be more attuned to social conventions governing their behaviour: should they "subdue" themselves to love — and he quickly adds, "As thus I meane unto a good entent" — they must "neuer consent / To do that thing whiche folkes may reprove" (fv^r). Implicit is a criticism of Dido, as of all women who give their love to men and risk loss of reputation, a traditionally unforgivable act. Given this envoy and the tone throughout the translation, more moralizing than that of its French source and at the same time closer to that of Chaucer's poems, the placement of this text in the anthology may point to Pynson's understanding of the work as a moral interpretation of the story of Dido. Indeed, he links it and the work immediately following, Lydgate's "Prouerbes," by saying, "Thus endeth the letter of Dydo to Eneas and here foloweth a lytell exortacion, howe folke shulde behaue them selfe in all companyes." This, together with its relationship to Chaucer's *House of Fame* and, in a larger context, the *querelle des femmes*, would help make the anthology as commercially successful as those being sold by other English printers.

The same argument can also, of course, explain why Pynson and Thynne included a translation of the *Belle dame sans mercy*, made between 1450 and 1460. Alain Chartier's debate poem, composed in 1423 to 1424, presents a courtly conversation between a suffering lover and his disdainful lady, overheard by a narrator who, identifying with the lover, describes himself early in the poem as "Le plus dolent des amoureux" (the saddest of lovers; 4) because "La mort me tolly ma maistresse" (death robbed me of my lady; 6).⁴⁹

Roos introduces his translation with four stanzas of his own in which he describes having been given the work as a penance, presumably on account of a crime committed against Cupid and his followers (dii^v). He settles down to work in a "lusty grene

49 Chartier, *The Poetical Works of Alain Chartier*, ed. Laidlaw. Line references are provided parenthetically in the text above.

valey / Full of floures to se a great plesaunce.” This opening clearly echoes Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*. The translation itself, however, quite closely follows the action as described in the original, as well as its unquestionably mocking tone, ironic treatment of the narrator, and portrait of the lady as reasonable, since she eschews the erotic interpretation of chivalric love and, indeed, its rhetoric.

At the end of the work, significant differences between Chartier’s poem, Roos’s translation, and Pynson’s version are nevertheless apparent. Chartier’s Lady has the final word, telling the Lover that his feelings will never be requited (761-68): she returns to the dance, he goes to his death (771-84). The narrator tells all male lovers to reject such braggarts and flatterers but directs his final admonishment towards women, “En qui Honneur naist et asemble” (in whom honour originates and resides; 793), not to be as cruel as the lady in the poem, who well deserves her name of “La belle dame sans mercy” (800). “Ne soyés mie si crüelles, / Chascune ne toutes ensemble” (do not be so cruel, not singly or all together), he concludes (795-96). This is rendered quite differently: “do no such cruelte, / Namely, to hem that have deserved grace” (Aaai). The English suggests, rather, that the Lover deserved better treatment. This is made even clearer in the translator’s epilogue, where he pleads that “no trew man be vexed, causelesse, / As this man was, which is of remembraunce” (Aaaiii).

Pynson’s “Envoy de l’imprimeur” (Printer’s Envoy) brings an even more different ending to the story. His six stanzas are moralizing and religious. Addressed to “lusty galondes of hote corage,” they register disapproval of the Lover and all like him, who deceive women “with ther fayned and paynted eloquence” and deprive them of their “best iewell / As [their] good name & fame & chast vertue” (ciii^v). Lovers must not be too bold, unless it is within “spousayle in honeste,” while “feruent loue” must be reserved only for God. The tone is completely contrary to that of both Chartier’s poem and Roos’s translation, while men, not women, are clearly singled out for disapprobation.

Thynne, in producing his Chaucerian anthology *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer* in 1532, used both Pynson’s text and a manuscript version comprising a collection of six poems, now known as Longleat House MS 258. The placement of *La belle dame* alongside four of Chaucer’s poems in this manuscript, together with its inclusion in Pynson’s edition, would largely explain his belief in Chaucer’s authorship. Perhaps a penchant for love poetry also played its part, for he prints for the first time six amorous pieces, one of which is Hoccleve’s translation *The Letter of Cupid*.⁵⁰ However, it is also not insignificant that these six poems are all associated with the *querelle*, and thus the possibility

50 The other five works are Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*; *The Flower of Courtesy*; *The Assembly of Ladies*; *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, or a Praise of Women*; and *The Remedy of Love*.

cannot be excluded that Thynne — or Godfray, his printer — had an eye to the market value of such works. Whatever his motivation, Thynne could not be accused of copying Pynson's work indiscriminately. In the case of *La belle dame sans mercy*, for example, he showed a marked preference for the ending offered in Roos's manuscript version, which he reproduces exactly.

Thomas Hoccleve's translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre de Cupide*, done in 1402, three years after the original, is a fictional and quasi-legal letter supposedly written by Cupid in response to criticisms by women of male deceit and slander. Cupid finds for the women, banishing from his court all men found guilty of these two crimes. It was one of the first responses in the *querelle de la Rose*, in which Christine took to task Jean de Meun's anti-feminine comments. Many critics have remarked that Hoccleve's work is an adaptation rather than a translation, a slippery distinction that is of no particular value for this or, in fact, for any work. His debt is obviously to Christine, although he makes substantial changes, domesticating the text by moving the action from France to England, lowering the social level from courtly to bourgeois, adding or omitting lines or whole passages to arrive at a poem that is half the length of the original, and so on. Of particular interest, however, are his treatment of Christine's comments on women, his own interpolations on the subject, and their relationship to Chaucerian texts.

Opinions on the way in which Hoccleve handled Christine's defence of women have differed over the years, starting with Hoccleve himself. In his *Dialogue with a Friend*, written in 1420, he denies that he attacked women in his poem: he was merely reporting the words of others, but he will make amends. This is surely a fictional device, probably borrowed from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. Early critics like Mitchell and Fleming described both the *Letter of Cupid* and its original as feminist.⁵¹ Bornstein, in contrast, denounced the translation as a parody of feminism, with Hoccleve manipulating both style and content and thus undermining Christine's serious arguments.⁵² McLeod questions this interpretation. While recognizing that Hoccleve's departures from Christine's text often weaken her defence of women and reduce the subtlety of her arguments, she calls the translation a "refraction" of Christine's text, which shifts its focus from women's worth to a conventional defence of female chastity.⁵³ McLeod is certainly right in this assessment. The innovative qualities of Christine's text are sadly lacking in Hoccleve's translation. In a close and perceptive analysis of original and translation that also makes

51 Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve*; Fleming, "Hoccleve's 'Letter of Cupid'"

52 Bornstein, "Anti-Feminism."

53 McLeod, *The Reception of Christine de Pizan*, 11-24, esp. 12.

points of comparison between Hoccleve's poem and Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, Mahoney argues that although the translation is "more conventional, and, inevitably, rather more patriarchal, than Christine's *Epistre*," the charge of parody is not justified. It is not unsympathetic to women; it criticizes male hypocrisy and deception, as well as literary misogyny; and it is "true to Christine's purpose and intent, despite [Hoccleve's] patriarchal viewpoint."⁵⁴ Finally, Mary Carpenter Erler reminds us of Sheila Delany's discussion of different forms of ambiguity in Chaucer's *Legend* and Christine's *Cité des dames* and suggests its relevance to Hoccleve's translation, whose anti-feminism is hard to prove or disprove.⁵⁵ Delany, whose approach is perhaps best suited to assess the work, argues that Chaucer's grasp of the multifariousness of reality prevents him from writing unambiguous praise of women: the complexity of the issue demands irony. Christine's grasp of the multiple facets of women's nature forbids her accepting the one-sided, misogynist concept of women advanced by clerics and writers; the answer is to present the other side of the picture. Hoccleve, then, may well be adopting, with his humorous, ironic, and teasing treatment of women and his sometimes caustic translation of Christine's own inevitably one-sided picture of misogyny, a similar mode of ambiguity.

The final two works to be discussed here mark a distinct move away from the continuing interest in medieval works related to the *querelle* and point to another stage in its development, namely, the humanist discussion of women. Here, too, English printers demonstrate their interest in the subject, although many of the works appear after the end of the period examined here. The author of the first translation was Richard Hyrde, who had penned the ground-breaking defence of women's learning mentioned above on page 48. Five years later, in 1527, he turned his hand to another defence of women's learning, but one which differed in several ways, namely, Juan Luis Vives's 1524 *De institutione foeminae Christianae*, commissioned by Catherine of Aragon. Once again, the text, entitled *A very frutefull and pleasant boke called the Instructio[n] of a Christen Woma[n]*, was printed by Thomas Berthelet. Its popularity is attested by the frequent editions and re-issues that followed, in 1531, 1539, 1540, and six more times before the end of the century.

Hyrde prefaces his translation with a dedicatory letter also addressed to Queen Catherine, in which he defends women's education. He blames men for women's faults. They complain about women even though they have it "in theyr owne handis [. . .] to teache them and bryng them up better"; yet they neglect to do so by depriving them of

54 Mahoney, "Middle English Regenderings," 415, 421.

55 Erler, "Thomas Hoccleve," 165-67; Delany, "Rewriting Woman Good."

education (Aii^v). But he is also realistic enough to recognize that the problem is too widespread to be swiftly remedied; in the meantime, his contribution is to make Vives's work available in English (Aiii). Vives's dedicatory letter, however, strikes a different note. He explains the brevity of his text: a similar one for men would take far longer because they are occupied at home and abroad; women, he adds condescendingly, have "no charge to se to, but [their] honestie and chastyte" (Bii). Although recognizing the value of educating women, Vives focuses above all on its contribution to making them chaste, with extremely proscriptive recommendations for behaviour (women should not venture out alone, should keep their thoughts private, and be modest and pious) and reading (women must not read romances or any independent interpretation of biblical and classical authors).⁵⁶ While Hyrde, and also Erasmus and More, all believe that educating a woman makes her more virtuous and a better wife, Vives dwells unduly on this one supremely feminine aspect of her virtue: chastity. In this respect, he hardly moves beyond the Church Fathers, especially Jerome, although he is also influenced by more enlightened works like Rodriguez de la Camara's *Triumph of Woman*, while his emphasis on education, however proscriptive, belongs in the humanist camp. Yet running through his work like a leitmotif is the unchanged and unchanging belief that women are lesser mortals, destined to live in obedience, silence, and chastity. And this Hyrde faithfully imparts.

English translation of Erasmus's works concerning women and marriage is limited in this early period to his *De conscribendis epistolis, matrimonii encomium* of 1518, which Richard Taverner translated as *A ryght frutefull Epystle . . . in laude and prayse of matrimony*. It was printed by Robert Redman, probably in 1536. Containing the germ of Erasmus's ideas concerning the right way in which to raise daughters to be good Christian wives, more fully developed in his 1526 *Institutio christiano matrimonii*, the work was published in a letter-writing manual as an example of persuasive declamation. However, persuade the clergy it did not. Erasmus was accused of preferring wedlock to celibacy, a charge he denied. Although he went so far as to say that "an euyll wyfe is nat wont to chaunce, but to euyll husbondes" and that no man has a "shrewe to his wyfe, but thrughe hys owne defaute" (Dii^v), he remained strictly traditional in other ways, offering his opinion that a wife's expected role is to be resolutely domestic and uniquely attuned to the needs and desires of the husband (Cvi), supplying a catalogue of virtuous women, and portraying the ideal young wife as "chaste, sobre, demure, godly, hauyng an aungels face, with fayre

56 In 1527, Vives included similar proscriptions for wives in his manual for young men, translated in 1555 by Thomas Paynell as *The office and duetie of an husband*.

landes” (Dx). All this, and even the ironic way in which the final qualification is dropped in at the end, echoed medieval texts. Taverner was a careful translator, making few mis-translations, additions, and omissions, and certainly not shifting the perspective or tone. Thus, like Hyrde, he contributed to publicizing the humanist debate over women in England by making it available to a wider audience through his English translation.

Redman did not publish any other works connected with this debate. However, Taverner’s dedicatory preface to Thomas Cromwell illustrates how texts were not chosen haphazardly by either translator or printer. Erasmus’s discussion of marriage had turned his epistle, in Diarmaid MacCulloch’s words, into a “hand-grenade lobbed into Europe’s controversies” in the years following its publication.⁵⁷ Indeed, it had incurred the wrath of the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the approval of the Protestants, on the other. Taverner states his intention clearly: he has translated this work for people to understand the “blynd superstition” of those who vow perpetual chastity (that is, the Catholic clergy, male and female), the “rote and very cause original of innumerable myscheues” (Aii). Here, then, is translation playing a role in polemic. But the pertinence of the dedicatee is of equal note. Cranmer, in 1530, lost his university fellowship because he married; he was then engaged by Henry VIII to help forge the Act of Supremacy facilitating the royal divorce and remarriage, and in 1533, although officially a priest committed to celibacy, he himself remarried.⁵⁸

These two translations are Janus-like in nature: they mark the end of the period of medieval texts about women, although retaining certain elements of such texts, and they open up a new era of printed works on the subject. Berthelet, who published the first two humanist translations on women, continued in 1540 with Thomas Elyot’s *Defence of Good Women* [STC 7657.5] and David Clapam’s translation of Cornelius Agrippa’s *De beatissimae annae monogamia*, entitled *The commendation of Matrimony* (reprinted in 1545) [STC 201]; he followed these obvious successes with Clapam’s translation of Agrippa’s *Declamatio de nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus*, a seminal text in the humanist debate on women and one whose influence would be felt for two hundred years: *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of vvoman kynde* [STC 203.5].⁵⁹

57 MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 647-48.

58 Translators and printers relied heavily on patronage and their choice of patron or dedicatee was often made according to the perceived relevance of the text. It is therefore surprising that only five of the texts in the present corpus mention patrons or dedicatees. Less surprising, given the nature of the texts, is that of these five only two are women: Caxton’s patron, Elizabeth Woodville, and Hyrde’s dedicatee and patron, Catherine of Aragon.

59 Hosington, “*De laude mulierum*” and “On the Glory of Women.”

With these early printers, one might say that the floodgates of writings on women were opened. Obviously the reading public was greater and more socially and culturally diverse than in the years before print. As a result, the fare they were offered was also more varied. Joining the ranks of medieval misogynist satire and courtly love debate, which in England found their way into print via translation, were more serious works on women like Christine's *Cité des dames* and humanist discussions of marriage and women's education. Translation thus played a role in this development, paving the way for works composed in English from the 1530s on. Some statistics at this point are not without significance in assessing this role. In the period from 1484 to 1535, translations account for fourteen out of twenty published works related to women, whereas in the next thirty years, for example, they account for only sixteen out of thirty-eight. Not, of course, that this development is limited to *querelle*-related works, for the path to vernacular and native writing in many genres had almost always passed through the portal of translation. Also revealing are the changes in the types of texts being translated. Between 1484 and 1535 there were eight anti-feminine satires; this number drops to three in the ensuing thirty years, foreign works being replaced by English ones. On the other hand, colloquies or dialogues increased from one to three, while treatises went from two to four, presumably under the influence of humanism. Interestingly, while there were no specifically religious works in the earlier period, these rose to four between 1535 and 1560, all from Protestant Germany.

In the early years of printing, when books were hard to come by and printers had to rely on foreign imports, Continental models of anti-feminine satire and works about women were made available to a wider readership by translators and printers whose motives were certainly mixed. Some, like de Worde, saw anti-feminine texts as a means of making money; others, like Berthelet, detected new avenues opening up alongside these texts, reflecting a different attitude which emanated from the humanists' belief in the importance of educating women and their more enlightened view of marriage. In the 1540s, the *querelle*, as seen above, moved into a new phase, with the printing of English original works as well as translations. Yet the old co-existence of serious works like Elyot's *Defence* (1540) and anti-feminine satires like the anonymous *Schole house of women* (1541), Robert Vaughan's *A Dyalogue defensyue for women* (1542), and Edward Gosynhyll's *Mulierum Pean* (1542) persisted. As Utley said long ago about these new works, rather than the creation of a new ideal, they were "the pouring of old wine into new bottles."⁶⁰ That "old wine" was largely created by translators and printers, toiling in

60 Utley, *The Crooked Rib*, 89.

the vineyard of Continental writings and bringing home for a new readership works that dealt with the perennially popular theme of women.

The original texts and translations expressing these views span close to four hundred years, from the twelfth-century *De coniuge* to the 1535 English rendering of the *Complainte du nouveau marie*; they vary in provenance, mode of expression, and genre, and were written for very different audiences. The translators demonstrate equally varying ways of dealing with them. Some heighten the misogyny; some seem to show more sympathy towards women; some remain ambiguous in their stance; yet others shift the perspective of the work by intervening in paratexts. Five demonstrate a clear debt to Chaucer, with their naïve narrators and disclaimers of any knowledge of love or women. The two humanist translations promise a more balanced attitude. Yet all these texts have their origins in one long, shared anti-feminine tradition. Perhaps one should not be surprised by this. As Sheila Delany says in writing about an even more profuse group of texts stretching throughout and beyond Europe and into the twentieth century, she suspects that “the literature of sexual politics will be with us as long as the social relations exist that make it possible.”⁶¹ Indeed, the sexual politics that governed the lives of the wives and daughters of kings, small land-owners, merchants, and humanist scholars are revealed only too clearly in these texts and translations, from satire to treatise, from epistle to manual, in comic and serious mode, in muted defence and mocking attack. But never do they find a stronger voice than in the *Cité des dames*, the only work written by a woman about women’s conditions to arrive on the shores of England in the early years of printing. Yet even here an educated female voice, like those of the illiterate spinners in the *Euangiles des quenoilles*, is articulated through the words of a man, in this case those of a translator; and that voice can be turned to male advantage, as demonstrated in the printer’s prologue. Both translation and printing were, thus, a two-edged sword in the development of the *querelle* in early modern England, making old and new texts about women available, but at the same time serving to perpetuate the literature of sexual politics.

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61 Delany, *Writing Woman*, 21.

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