

am attempting. He writes: 'Whatever concept of authorship one subscribes to, the act of reading or listening to receive a message from the past entails the effort to discover, through the text (or texts) one is presented with, the work that lies behind' (1989, 18). If the goal is 'the work that lies behind', then its recovery is necessarily going to be a work of reconstruction and interpretation, and what we construct and interpret can never be precisely equivalent to what left the author's hand or what is preserved for us in any surviving manuscript. It is worth recalling that the Hoccleve holographs were of little value before H.C. Schulz wrote his superb interpretation of them (1937). It is to be hoped that the new edition of the *Regiment of Princes*, drawing in part on those holographs, will assist the recovery, through reconstruction and interpretation, of Hoccleve's most famous poem.

Chaucer, Christine de Pizan,
and Hoccleve: *The Letter of Cupid*

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THIS paper needs to begin with a word of explanation, if not of apology. It started life at the Hoccleve conference as a paper on three of Hoccleve's minor translations: of the lyric on the Passion of Christ from Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de l'âme*;¹ of the chapter on the art of dying from Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* included in Hoccleve's framed narrative collection, the *Series* (ed. Furnivall 1970, 178–212); and of the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* by Christine de Pizan, hereafter *Epistre*, a translation entitled 'Epistola [*var.* Littera] Cupidinis', hereafter 'Epistola'.² It sought both to identify

¹ For an edition of the Hoccleve lyric, see Furnivall (1970, 1–8); for a fuller version, Furnivall (1897, xxxvii–xlv); for comment, Seymour (1981, xiv n. 12, 103).

² For editions of the *Epistre*, see Roy (1891, 1–27) or Fenster and Erler (1990, 35–75): the latter is used for quotation in the present work, although printed from a different manuscript that wants four of the lines of the copy in Roy. There are two editions of the 'Epistola' in Furnivall (1970, 72–91, 294–308): the latter is from a Hoccleve holograph, now San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 744, where its title is 'Epistola'. Fenster and

Hoccleve's distinctive translational strategies in these works and, more ambitiously, to claim for him as translator the same playful way with words as is revealed in a number of his minor poems, for example the *Balade to Henry Somer* (ed. Furnivall 1970, 59–60). In addition, since two of the three original texts under consideration, the Deguileville and Christine de Pizan poems, were themselves extremely witty productions, I wanted to explore the extent to which Hoccleve's translations succeeded in preserving the wit of their originals, or generating something comparable, given, as Field (1989) and Beer (1991) have noted, that tone is one of the most difficult aspects of a work to translate. The exercise was inevitably partial; no study of Hoccleve as a translator would be complete that did not refer to his *Regiment of Princes*, or to the two translations from the *Gesta Romanorum* included as elements in the *Series*. Nevertheless, given that recent studies of both works by Hasler (1990) and Simpson (1991; 1995) have identified in Hoccleve's major works authorial strategies involving an active engagement with contradiction and opposition, within structures displaying a high degree of parallelism — in the words of Anna Torti (1991, 90), 'a play of reflected images, of analogies and dissimilarities' — it seemed worthwhile to make the attempt. In the event, the exercise had to be slimmed down yet further, to a study of Hoccleve's translation of the *Epistre*. The 'Epistola' has been studied as frequently as any of Hoccleve's

Erler also use this MS for their edition of the 'Epistola' (1990, 176–203) which is used for quotation in this essay. I give quotations from the *Epistre* by line number alone; those from the 'Epistola' are by line number preceded by '(l)'. Translations from the *Epistre* are my own; Fenster and Erler also provide a translation, and see also Blamires (1992, 278–86) for a translation by Karen Pratt of extracts from the *Epistre*.

minor poems.³ Nevertheless, we do not seem to have reached critical consensus on its achievement; so there may be some justification for starting a study of Hoccleve's translations with it. The question about Hoccleve's version of the *Epistre* — as easy to put as it is hard to answer — can reduce to this: how well does it capture the wit of its original? In the absence of a translator's prologue to provide a frame for the discussion, the only way to proceed is to identify, as far as possible, ways in which Hoccleve retains, and even reinforces, the elements of his original, and ways in which he simplifies or suppresses them.

I

Christine's *Epistre*, written in 1399, walks a tightrope, and the strain of its main project, the translating of antifeminist into profeminist tropes, frequently shows: but it also exposes the antifeminist assumption as *ex post facto* rationalizing. It has a number of ways of doing this. The most obvious is to counter commonplaces about fickleness in women, and about the noble men of antiquity whom they deceived (Adam, David, Samson, Solomon, 267–70), with commonplaces about virtuous women (168–78) and noble men who held women in proper regard (223–44) and were wronged, just like women, by other men (238). This involves the setting up of two kinds of writing in opposition, the one represented in the *Epistre* by Ovid and Jean de Meun (281–94, 321–22, 365–78, 389–96), the other — though Christine does not name any of the writers she depends on for it — by such as Albertano of Brescia in

³ See in particular Mitchell (1968, 77–84), Fleming (1971), Bornstein (1981–82), Quinn (1986–87), Fenster and Erler (1990, 160–67); and brief comment in Pearsall (1977, 215–16).

the books he wrote for his sons as birthday presents.⁴ But this replacement of one unreal extreme by another does not advance the argument very far. No more does the resolution of the 'debate', between Cupid and the embedded male voices he is answering, by appeal to higher authority, in this case the image of the Virgin Mary (571–88), in much the same way as happens in the Middle English *The Thrush and the Nightingale* (ed. Blamires [1992, 224–28]).

Slightly more complex is Cupid's use of the conventions of debate to reinterpret the offered evidence. While accepting the criticisms of the antifeminist tradition, he denies their blanket application to all women, and claims that only those who go against their nature deserve the condemnation (185–92, where the terms used anticipate those used later by clerics to attack all women, 379–81). He also reinterprets the figures used by the antifeminist lobby to prove its case (267–68, 319), in much the same way as Proserpine had done in the *Merchant's Tale* (2276–2302);⁵ retitles Ovid's *Art of Love* the 'Livre d'Art de grant decevance ... et de faulce apparence' [book of the art of great deception ... and of false appearances] (377–78); and opposes the unfeigned 'semblant' of the female disciples of Christ (567) to the, frequently false, 'semblans' of male lovers (50, 53, 58, 134, 139, 526).

But there are more complex ways of deconstructing the antifeminist assumption. In the first place, the poem is so structured that a first section, concerning the active deceit of women by men and the boastful lies men tell one another about the conquests they never made, is followed by a second in which clerics, who either never had it, or are no longer up

⁴ For a detailed account of medieval pro- and anti-feminist literature, see Blamires (1992); and, for brief comment specifically on Albertano's works, Benson (1988, 884, 923), and Blamires (1992, 237–42).

⁵ In this paper, Chaucer's works are quoted from Benson (1988).

to it, traduce women by means of classical exempla, accusing women of the very vices — lying, for example (273) — of which they are themselves guilty (436). Literature and life thus connect in a striking inability of men to speak or write straight: accusation provides both pub rowdy and bookish scholar with a way of covering their tracks, as the repeated rhyme 'accuser ... excuser' (145–46, 275–76; cf. 137) implies. They also connect in the punishments which writers may bring upon themselves for their lies about women when they fall in love with women who precisely conform to and confirm the stereotypes of their imaginations. The 'vrayes histoires anciennes/ De la Bible, qui ne peut mençonge estre' [true stories of the Bible, which cannot be a lie] (600–1), can thus be used to counter male lies (280), especially the lie that women tell lies (273). Besides, those same books which portray women so unflatteringly also show men in a bad light when they record the wars in which the latter have engaged (541–44).

As strong as these patterns of contrast, of course, are the patterns of likeness that link the two sexes, by means of which Christine is able still more subtly to deconstruct the antifeminist position. These include the repetition of a limited number of phrases and figures, applied now to women by the men who write about them, now to men by Cupid: verbal echoes which demonstrate that the two sexes are not simple opposites of each other. In this connection, two Biblical images are particularly noteworthy. One, of the tree and its fruit (751, cf. Matt. 12:33), reads the fruit as male and the tree as female so as to argue for male identification with, and dependence on, the female principle (every man had a mother, 169). The other similarly twists a Biblical commonplace, the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs, to imply that the temporal primacy of the male does not imply a corresponding material superiority: considered purely in terms of material origin, the female principle is as superior to the male as its

material cause (Adam's rib) is more worthy than the material cause of man (the mud from which God formed him, 594–99). Given, moreover, a tendency of medieval thought to equate the female principle with matter and the male principle with form, it may not be completely accidental that Christine regularly describes God not as creating but as forming woman (591, 594, 603, 693), and once speaks of her as sharing the 'forme' of the Virgin Mary (581).⁶

This identification of men and women is reinforced by a number of other verbal details. 'Se desnature', for instance, is applied not only to women who act against their nature (678) but also to men who act against theirs in criticising women (181). The 'engin subtil', by means of which the 'tres loyalē' Medea helped 'faulx Jason' win the Golden Fleece (437–39) — a rewriting of the story as found in sources like Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* and in the mythographic traditions⁷ — echoes ironically the 'engin' and 'grant soubtiveté' needed to accomplish the seduction of the Rose in the *Roman* (401), as well as the sack of Troy, which functions as macrocosm to the former's microcosm (538, 541),⁸ and characterizes clerics like Ovid who have written about both (306, 340, 387–88).

These same patterns are at work even in the smallest units of the sense. Female subjects of verbs are sometimes placed after verbs, and female objects placed before verbs, where the former can be read as direct objects of an implied male subject and the latter can be read as subjects of an action

⁶ By contrast, God both 'fist et forma' the angels (193). For the opposition 'matter-form', see Blamires (1992), index *svv*; and, for recent comment on similar material in Christine's other works, Richards (1995). See also n. 14 below.

⁷ Cf Heinrichs (1990), Blamires (1992), indices *sv*. Medea.

⁸ On love and war as metaphors for each other in Christine, cf. 384–86.

involving an implied male object;⁹ possessives and pronouns can be read as referring either to men or to women.¹⁰ Admittedly, such features may not be peculiar to Christine's writing, but may generally characterize courtly French writing at the time (see further note 33 below); nevertheless, the uncertainties of interpretation to which they briefly give rise (who, that is, is doing what to whom?) prevent a simple or single reading of the text and may reveal all such readings as a form of *parti pris*.

But this obliteration of difference has the disconcerting effect of undermining the very ground on which Christine must take her stand: of deconstructing not only her opponents' arguments but also her own. The strain shows particularly in the way she has to accept the male terms of reference — that women are weak, for example — in order to construct her defence.¹¹ She is right to argue that, if woman is as weak as men claim, it takes the lover an unaccountable amount of time and effort to seduce her, and so too with the writer's telling of the story, in the *Roman de la Rose*. But, while the counterclaim that women are too weak to engage in the violent acts that men commit (warfare, for example, 641–48) argues for an innocence in women that men have lost, it may also imply that women are fatally easily deceived. Christine has to have it both ways, even as the male writers she is

⁹ E.g. 's'aucunes attrayent en tel guise' (535), where Fenster and Erler translate 'aucunes' as subject of the verb ('and if some women act deceitfully'); since the line echoes 527, 'aucunes' should probably be read as direct object ('and if they [men] deceive some women in this way').

¹⁰ E.g. 'et en courrous tost appaise son yre' (673), where Fenster and Erler translate 'when angry, quickly she allays her ire' (cf. Pratt [Blamires (1992, 285)]) but recognize that the phrase can also be read, as Hoccleve does, 'when her husband is angry she allays his ire'.

¹¹ This problem characterizes much writing by women in reaction to antifeminist writings: see, for example, Shepherd (1985).

challenging have done. Hence she has to work very hard to rescue Eve as symbol. It is easy enough to argue Eve's material superiority over Adam, as noted above: but such a view could easily shade into an assertion of moral as well as physical superiority, and hence imply Eve's greater moral responsibility for the Fall, a commonplace of antifeminist writing. So Christine, in arguing for Eve's innocence, very nearly turns her into a type of the gullible woman. To conceal the difficulty, she makes the meeting of Eve with the serpent a kind of antitype of the Annunciation ('et simplement de l'ennemi conceut/ La parole qu'il lui donna a croire', 608-9) [and simply conceived from the enemy the word he gave her to believe]. There is parallel if not precedent for this reading, for example in the wood block illustrations of the *Biblia Pauperum* (Henry 1987, 48); but the clear implication is usually that the antitype is more anti, so to say, than type. And elsewhere Christine has to admit that men and women were made of the same clay (749).

In much the same way, the presentation of the Virgin Mary as the archetype of womanhood leaves an unavoidable feeling, stronger in Hoccleve than in Christine, that difficult cases make hard law. In asserting the uniqueness of the Virgin Mary, Christine runs the risk of making her unavailable for purposes of comparison. In any case, she remains, in heaven as on earth, subordinate to the male principle of her son (583-84, 586-88). The antifeminist position may have been riddled with inconsistencies, but merely negating male objections point by point — accepting their inconsistent terms of reference to structure a defence — carries a danger of committing an equal and opposite error. Besides, many more men than the speaker is willing to name have a deservedly good reputation, even in France (245-58). If more good men exist than the poem is willing publicly to acknowledge, maybe more bad women do too: or maybe the whole thrust of the debate was misdirected.

These difficulties are brought into yet clearer focus by the speaker's ambiguous status as both male and divine. On the first point, Cupid's literary production shares with those of other male clerics the conviction of literature's exemplary and educational function: hence, like them, he teaches 'doctrine' (265-66, 764-67) by way of 'exemple' (246, 265, cf. below). But he must also differentiate his writings from theirs, which he does by asserting that, whereas they are all incurable liars (see above p. 32), he will have nothing to do with flattery and boasting (254-56, 755-56). On the second point, his religion stands in the same parodic relationship to Christianity as does the God of Love of the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris: which makes the more ironic Christine's criticisms of de Meun's continuation of the work, since de Meun was merely making explicit the Ovidian frame within which de Lorris was covertly operating. As in the *Roman*, this parody religion comes with commandments (73), rewards for loyal service (769-70), and heresies to be shunned (691), and with a firm grasp of niceties of religious doctrine, like the importance of intention as an element in the commission of sin (615); the difference between mortal and venial sins (707-8); the obligation to hate the sin but not the sinner (only the sins should be publicly named);¹² and the distinction between the penalty attaching to a fault and the fault itself (*pena* and *culpa*, 689).¹³ Yet this God of Love also shows, on occasion, a surprising lack of confidence in the power of his message to produce a good result in its male hearers,

¹² This is itself parodied when Cupid tells how he has refrained from naming the names of most of the men who served women honourably (254-56).

¹³ Fenster and Erler's translation misses the point of this distinction, and renders it 'through suffering or pain' (cf. Pratt 'either torments or suffering' [Blamires (1992, 286)]). Christine's 'n'en peine ne en coulpe' (689) is a version of the tag 'a pena et culpa'.

preferring not to say all he knows for fear of incurring an angry response (625–37), and trusting that what he has said will not displease any male reader (665, 746). Even the female readers, who can be expected to identify with what he is saying, have to be encouraged to act upon it: the foolish, to model themselves on the good examples, and leave the bad (in the same way that the 'deffailans' among the men were to take example from virtuous knights, 246); the good, to persevere in the course they have embarked upon (764–68). Authority deconstructs itself as tellingly here as does Chaucer's Nun's Priest.

These ambiguities were present in suspension in the *Roman*, but are much more clearly in evidence in a text which Christine may well have known, and which has to be taken into account when considering what Hoccleve made of her work, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, where we have the same drive to rehabilitate virtuous women as animated the *Epistre*, and the same God of Love controlling the process. There are differences, of course. In particular, in the Prologue to the *Legend* Cupid both self-deconstructs and is deconstructed by the voices which answer his own, including a female voice notably absent from Christine's display of verbal cross-dressing. On the other hand, Chaucer's retelling of the stories of the virtuous women of antiquity, two of whom (Dido and Medea) also reappear, in summary form, in Christine, shares with the latter a need to suppress all evidence which might permit more usual, hostile, conclusions to be drawn about their characters. Thus, both Chaucer and Christine emphasize Medea's generosity in helping Jason to win the Golden Fleece, and Jason's unworthiness in abandoning her for another woman, but carefully omit all reference to her vengeful killing of the children she had borne him. In fact, allowing for the formal differences between the two works, Chaucer's presentation of his heroines in the *Legend* has to perform a balancing act not dissimilar to the

one Christine's God of Love is engaged upon: though he gives the women little room for manoeuvre, Chaucer has to give them sufficient character to justify the feelings of sorrow he wants his narrative to generate. Similarly, though the male protagonists must be exposed as double-dealing, like most of Christine's male figures, they must display some vestiges of nobility so that the women can escape the charge of being too easily taken in by false appearance.¹⁴

Admittedly, we cannot be sure that Christine had read Chaucer. But other French writers contemporary with her had: Deschamps and the Duc de Berry, whom she knew personally; possibly Froissart; Oton de Granson.¹⁵ In addition, she had connections with English nobility; her son Jean was in England from 1398, first as companion to the son of the Earl of Salisbury, then briefly, after 1400, under the protection of Henry IV.¹⁶ To this indirect evidence of Christine's knowledge of Chaucer we may add evidence of other parallels

¹⁴ Christine's inversion of the commonplace equation of male with form and female with matter (above p. 34) may also be paralleled in the *Legend* (1582–85).

¹⁵ On Christine's links with Deschamps and the Duc de Berry, see Willard (1984, 45, 52, 56, 92, 100, 132, 187). On Chaucer's links with Deschamps, Froissart, the Duc de Berry and Oton de Granson, see Pearsall (1992, 68, 70–71, 130–31). Pearsall (1992, 130 n.3), thinks that Deschamps knew only of the translation of the *Roman* at the time of his poem in praise of Chaucer (for an edition, with translation, see Brewer [1978, 40–42]), though references there to Chaucer as an 'aigles' and to England as 'le regne d'Eneas' (ll. 5–6) might, in what Brewer calls an 'intensely artificial' work, provide a veiled reference to *The House of Fame*. Deschamps might also have known the *Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale* and the *Merchant's Tale*: see Thundy (1979) and comment in Ellis (1992, 134, n. 32).

¹⁶ Campbell (1925, 658–60) gives the date of 1397 instead of 1398; for correction, deriving from Laidlaw (1982), see Willard (1984, 42–43 and n. 21).

between Christine's and Chaucer's works, notably, Cupid's declaration that the books which traduce women were all written by men — had women written the books, 'aultrement fust du fait' [the outcome would have been different] (418) — and, moreover, by old men no longer able to make love (493–504).¹⁷ We can explain these parallels in one of two ways: either both writers drew independently on an, as yet, undiscovered source, or Christine was borrowing from Chaucer. Given the earlier-noted parallels with the *Legend*, the view that Christine was borrowing from Chaucer here strikes me as slightly easier to maintain: if so, she read Chaucer with a care to reproduce his ironies that she did not extend to her reading of Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*.

II

Hoccleve's version has two striking formal deviations from its original, regularly noted in earlier studies. (i) Only about half of the original appears in one form or another in the translation, and, at the same time, there are significant expansions to the text. (ii) Although the shape of the translation corresponds broadly to the shape of the original, at a few points Hoccleve translates material out of sequence. Of course, these changes may not have been intentional. On the first point, Hoccleve may have been translating from a copy in which the cuts and the additions first appeared; or he may have inadvertently omitted material from his copy by eye-skip. On the second, the scribe of Hoccleve's copy may have, deliberately or by accident, disturbed the order of his original, so that Hoccleve could not help but follow his source into error; alternatively, Hoccleve may have inadvertently disturbed

¹⁷ For the Chaucerian parallels, see ProlWBT 688–710.

the ordering of the leaves of his own copy when working with it. Good precedent exists for the former practices in many translated works; as for the latter, we have an approximate parallel in the testimony of Caxton concerning the translation of the *Dictes and Sayengis* delivered to him by Earl Rivers.¹⁸ Alternatively, the changes originate with Hoccleve's exercise of authorial prerogative. To decide the question one way or another is greatly complicated by the difficulty of determining exactly which parts of the *Epistre* Hoccleve has translated; from which copy of Christine's text;¹⁹ and where in his poem he has translated them. Clearly, we need to be cautious in what we say about the translation: nevertheless, it seems to me very unlikely that we can explain the changes as the result of accident or inattention.

Thus, for example, ll. 148–224 of the 'Epistola' translate material from *Epistre* 185–298; these lines follow on from ll. 134–36, which had translated *Epistre* 165–67. If we except cuts to *Epistre* 200–60, and the creation of additional material ('Epistola' ll. 162–63 [cf. note 19 above], 179–89), the development of what we might call the narrative line of this

¹⁸ For comment on Earl Rivers' translation, see Goodman (1991).

¹⁹ The source of Hoccleve's translation lies in one of the group of manuscripts called L by Fenster and Erler, copies of an early version subsequently revised. Thus 'et supposé qu'il en y ait [L 1–3 qu'on en trovast] de nices' (185) corresponds to 'al be it pat men fynde / o womman nyce' (l. 148); 'Je consens bien qu'elles n'ont pas les cuers/ Enclins a ce, ne a faiz de tel affaire' [L 1–3 ne a cruaute faire] (666–67), to 'wommanes herte/ to no crewelte/ Enclined is' (ll. 344–45). The lines describing how one of the twelve apostles betrayed Christ (ll. 162–63) may have been inspired by lines about the apostles found in L 1–3 but missing in other manuscripts and in Fenster and Erler (after their line 560, Roy prints the following: 'Et meisement des Apostres les fais/ Qui pour la foi porterent maint dur fais').

passage fairly represents that of the *Epistre*. In the middle of this material, however, comes the following:

O, euery man oghte han an herte tendre
 Vn to woman / and deeme hire honorable
 Whethir his shap be eithir thikke or sclendre
 Or he be badde or good / this is no fable
 Euery man woot / þat wit hath resonable
 Þat of a womman / he descendid is
 Than is it shame / speke of hire amis

A wikkid tree / good fruyt may noon forth brynge
 For swich the fruyt is / as þat is the tree. (ll. 169–77)

Line 169 derives probably from *Epistre* 168 ('car tout homme doit avoir le cuer tendre'), and thus returns us briefly to the section of the *Epistre* which was being translated immediately before the present one (as noted above, at 'Epistola' ll. 134–36). With line 173, however, we must look to *Epistre* 718 for a correspondence ('Je conclus que tous hommes raisonnables'), particularly since line 174 derives from *Epistre* 721 ('elles de qui tout homme est descendu'). Lastly, lines 176–77 come from *Epistre* 751 ('Car nul bon fruit de mal arbre ne vient'). Scribal inattention, by Hoccleve or in the copy from which he was translating, can hardly account for such a disturbance to the order of the *Epistre*.

Hoccleve, then, looks to have been acting not as scribe but rather as a *compiler* — if not as an *auctor* — in so rearranging the text of his original.²⁰ Occasionally these practices accompany, or produce, a subtle shift of meaning. Thus, when Christine positions the exemplary figure of the Virgin Mary before that of Eve, she seems to be wanting the reader to approach Eve through the grace-filled space that is the second Eve, so as to reclaim the first Eve from the attacks

²⁰ For these terms, see Minnis (1988, 94): source, St Bonaventura.

of the antifeminists. (Her presentation of Eve as mother, 605, is of a piece with her use of the mother-son metaphor elsewhere: cf. below p. 46.) Hoccleve places Eve before the Virgin Mary; slants her portrait so as to emphasize her disobedience (ll. 354, 378) and presumption (l. 355); and plays up the role of the Virgin correspondingly, so as to make her the positive of Eve's implied negative ('our lady / of lyf reparatrice', l. 403).

Nevertheless, Hoccleve's exercises of the compiler's function signify, in the main, only for the degree of familiarity with the details of the original which they suggest he must have had. In themselves they do not greatly signify, because the formal shape of the *Epistre*, elements of which have been noted above (p. 32), counts for less than what one might call its informal shape, the presentation and deconstruction of opposing points of view about women. Provided that the beginning and the ending were in their proper places so that the conventions of a letter were being properly flagged — and they are in place in the 'Epistola': cf. Fenster and Erler (1990, 167–68) — the translator had much the same licence to rearrange material in the body of his text as scribes had when copying out the tales of the 'great middle' of *The Canterbury Tales*; that same licence which the scribe of the Fairfax MS copy of Hoccleve's 'Epistola' gave himself when he reordered the text of the 'Epistola' more comprehensively than even Hoccleve had done the text of the *Epistre*.²¹ And even then, the rearrangements sometimes have the effect merely of coalescing two different versions of the one commonplace. Similarly, and given the tendency of the *Epistre* to repeat itself, cuts to the text may not signify as greatly as additions to it, and will not be regularly considered in the following analysis.

²¹ Noted by Fleming (1971, 22), following Furnivall (1892, 92).

By contrast with his cuts to the text, Hoccleve's additions to it clearly signify: a consistent pattern of additions emerges which shows him acting less as scribe and compiler, and more as *commentator*.²² In a translation the simplest patterns of commentary occur, with great regularity, when the translator provides explanatory glosses of his own for details of the text, which elucidate obscurity and reinforce meaning. Those probably occur in the 'Epistola': they certainly figure prominently, as I hope to demonstrate, in Hoccleve's translations of Deguileville and Suso. They are very likely to occur in verse translations, even when the details being translated are not particularly difficult: in such cases, as Mitchell (1968, 76–77) has noted, the need to secure a rhyme or fill out a line overrides other considerations. But the translator could function as commentator in a more complex way, interpreting the work he was translating through the lens of another work, whose details he incorporated as appropriate into the body of his translation alongside the original text. Writers with literary aspirations seem to have used the practice very regularly. Chaucer often reads one text through the lens of another: Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* by way of Boethius, Trevet's story of Constance by way of Pope Innocent III's *De Miseria Humanae Condicionis*, Petrarch's version of Boccaccio's story of Griselda through the lens of an anonymous French translation.²³ It is unsurprising, therefore, that Chaucer's work, particularly the *Legend*, should provide

²² The discussion in this paragraph means something different in its use of the term *commentator* to what St Bonaventura meant (see further n. 20 above).

²³ This use of texts to interpret or mediate other texts almost comes to be a defining feature of what Nolan (1992) has called the 'roman antique'.

for Hoccleve a gloss on the *Epistre*:²⁴ even as it may, in the *Epistre*, have acted as a gloss on the antifeminist tradition Christine was challenging. As is well known, Hoccleve refers to the *Legend* at l. 316 in the context of translated material on Medea and Dido; he also reworks its address to Dido (*Legend* 1254) into an apostrophe to the 'feithful womman ful of Innocence' who is deceived by false appearances (l. 41, cf. l. 91). But there is a difference between his use of the *Legend* and Christine's. If she cited Chaucer, Christine used him to undermine the antifeminist camp. Hoccleve uses Chaucer to reinforce a simplified version of Christine's party line, and to generate complications unrelated and even opposed to hers.

The process of simplification can be seen most easily in the central issue of male-female relationships. Christine's Cupid had allowed for virtue in men, and had acknowledged that men might be more virtuous than he was giving them credit for. In particular, he had come up with two figures especially worthy of commendation, Hutin de Vermeille and Oton de Granson (225–44). Hoccleve, who moved the action of the poem from France to England (l. 16) and the date of composition from 1399 (795–96) to 1402 (l. 476), could therefore have provided ready equivalents for these figures for his English readers, as he would later do in the *Dialogue* with his account of the Duke of Gloucester.²⁵ He does not do so:²⁶ moreover, he offers a straightforward condemnation of

²⁴ Chaucer's shadow falls similarly, if to a lesser extent, over Hoccleve's translation of the Deguileville poem.

²⁵ For the *Dialogue* see Furnivall (1970, 130–35), especially ll. 554–616, 631–37, 703–14.

²⁶ See Bornstein (1981–82) for a similar account of the reasons for their suppression; Mitchell (1968, 81) thinks their suppression a consequence of an English public's unfamiliarity with them (but see above n. 15 on de Granson, named in Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus*).

male duplicity which owes more to Chaucer's presentation of the male protagonists of the *Legend* than it does to the *Epistre*; which suppresses all Christine's qualified praise of virtuous men; and which adds material of its own to blacken them still more thoroughly (notably, a number of speeches much livelier than anything Christine produced for her male figures). Thus, though Hoccleve retains Christine's Biblical metaphor of the tree and its fruit to explain the intimate relations of the sexes (ll. 176–77), he returns the image on two other occasions, for which the *Epistre* provided no direct authority, to its more traditional religious and moral context, so as to insist on the duplicity of men: men are a bad soil in which 'trouthe' will never grow (l. 321), and they are 'crope and roote of gyle' (l. 17).²⁷ Just such a reading of the Biblical image also occurs in the *Legend* (1368, 2395).

In much the same way, the women operate within a simpler frame of reference than in the *Epistre*. One of the distinctive features of the *Epistre*, from the very outset, was its universalizing of the situation. Though the work tacitly addressed noblewomen, it found all women, married and single, noble and bourgeoisie alike (11–12, cf. 404), implicated in the unjust accusations men made against them. Likewise, although a debauchee might well seek the company of worthless women (330–35, 507–12), these are not directly identified by class. The principal metaphor for the relation of the sexes to each other is not one of class, but rather of family: man should be to woman as a son is to his mother (169, 729, 754). Hoccleve uses this metaphor once, but changes it dramatically. Christine had written 'aux meres bien ressembellent les fieulx' [sons resemble their mothers] (754); for this Hoccleve gives us:

²⁷ The same metaphor is used to describe the women's complaint as a 'seed' (l. 11).

Take heede / of whom thou took thy begynnyng
 Lat thy modir be mirour vn to thee
 Honore hire / if thou wilt honurid be. (ll. 178–80)

As with his rewriting of the metaphor of the tree and its fruit, which immediately precedes the comment under consideration in both texts, Hoccleve insists upon reading Christine's words through a moral lens, in this case that of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:12), so as to imply that men need reminding of their duties, and that women exist to remind men of what they lack morally. Christine's idea of sons resembling their mothers as the fruit resembles the tree becomes, in the 'Epistola', a metaphor, common in Hoccleve's other works but not found in the *Epistre*, of an image seen in a mirror:²⁸ a metaphor too familiar nowadays from the pages of theorists to require comment. Indeed, Hoccleve's translation preserves the sense of a domestic context, so important as an element of Christine's thinking, only negatively: hence his added cynical comment, put into the mouth of an unsuccessful lover, that no man can fail if he have time enough, unless 'on maddying he be so deepe brought / Pat he shende al / with open hoomlynesse', since women don't like that sort of thing (ll. 131–33); hence too the 'old prouerbe seid ... in englissh' which warns men not to foul their own nests (ll. 183–89).

In much the same way, Hoccleve dilutes the force of Christine's arguments by making class a significant element of the poem. Where Christine, as we saw, represented all women as complaining at the wrongs done them, Hoccleve allows only the gently born a voice ('ladyes of honor and reuerence / And othir gentil wommen', ll. 9–10). These are set in a frame which Hoccleve received from the *Heroides* through

²⁸ For comment on this metaphor in Hoccleve see Torti (1991) and Simpson (1991).

Chaucer's *Legend*: acting in accordance with their courtly status, they are moved by 'pitee' (l. 43), set their false lovers in 'the weye / Of blisful loue' (ll. 47–48), and are promptly abandoned and publicly shamed by them. They are not permitted any other ground for their actions than 'pitee' (l. 72). Yet, even though they have given their bodies to be shamed by their lovers (l. 68), and might expect to share with them the 'ful greet repreef' due to both for their actions (l. 70), they are not allowed even that ground of their own to stand upon: they deserve not blame but thanks because they can help to meet men's needs (ll. 76–77).²⁹ Christine, by contrast, in a passage that Hoccleve does not translate, allows them more room for manoeuvre: they have the power to give men joy ('la riens ... qui plus fait a tout homme de joye', 726–27: compare the men in Hoccleve, who are given 'ioie and teene' by Cupid himself, l. 242). Almost inevitably, in Hoccleve the women who deceive men are explicitly — as they were not in the *Epistre* — lower class figures:

They [women] wiste / how sotilly / they [the men] kowde assaille
 Hem / and what falshode in herte they mente
 And tho Clerkes / they in hir daunger hente ...
 This ladyes / ne gentils nathelees
 Weren nat they / þat wroghten in this wyse
 But swich filthes þat wern vertulees. (ll. 255–57, 260–62)

Once the men have had their way with the mistress, it seems, they only have eyes for the barmaid (ll. 50–55): but these know better than the upper-class ladies what the men are up to, and beat the men at their own game. Interestingly, Hoccleve deconstructs his own deconstruction of Christine at this point, since these lower-class girls are credited with the

²⁹ For a different reading of these lines, which finds in them ironies akin to those of *MerT*, see Bornstein (1981–82, 8).

same quality to entrap their suitors as courtly romance regularly assigns to nobly-born women: 'daunger'. The picture is not an encouraging one, though: the greater the freedom of manoeuvre, the greater the wickedness, the lower the class.

Another added comment has the effect of identifying Hoccleve's voice, even briefly, with the male speakers in the 'Epistola'. Clerics have been sounding off, says Cupid, about the wickedness of women in the 'wikkid bookes' they write about them (l. 197). If, as seems likely, this detail recalls the book of 'wikked wyves' which the Wife of Bath's fifth husband read for pleasure (ProlWBT 685), it shows Hoccleve operating, like Christine, to undermine the antifeminist camp: not the subject-matter of the books is wicked but the intent of the authors. Later in the work, though, when the clerics are still sounding off about 'wommannes crabbid wikkidnesse' (l. 324), the speaker suddenly changes tack, with an apostrophe to the women:

O, / womman / how shalt thou self cheuyce
 Syn men of thee / so mochil harm witenesse
 Yee / strah / do forth / take noon heuynesse
 Keepe thyn owne / what men clappe or crake
 And some of hem shuln smerte / I vndirtake. (ll. 325–29)

The passage has no equivalent in the *Epistre*, nor in the *Legend*, though, as already noted, the latter was used in the 'Epistola' for passages of direct address to women (above p. 45). Its closest affinities are with the self-deconstructing *envoy* at the end of the *Clerk's Tale*, another work which praises women for their constancy in the face of male deceit and for their passive acceptance of the arbitrary exercise of male power. Here, undermining his own earlier identification of (lower-class) women and (immoral) action, Hoccleve allows all women the same power he formerly granted only to those of lower class, working in precisely the opposite direction to Christine, who read all women, so to say, from the top down.

Admittedly, the men don't have things all their own way. Unexpectedly, and by contrast with Christine's presentation of them, Hoccleve's narrative generates something approaching sympathy for them. In this context we may note the force of a repeated rhyme 'refuse ... muse', taken from *Epistre* 149–50. When first used (ll. 123–24), this rhyme speaks of the lady's refusal to accede to the suitor's 'musings', which provokes a cynical outburst against her (see above, p. 47); when used the second time, it speaks of the hapless suitor, for all his 'musings', being forced to accept 'the foulest slutte/ in al a town' (237–38). To complete the process of his humiliation, he is punished for his 'wrong ymaginacioun' against women (l. 235) — a quality he shares with Jean de Meun (l. 284), rather as Christine's Ovid shared with false lovers their 'soubtiveté' (above, p. 34) — by being driven to desire the favours of the town slut 'as thogh shee were a duchesse or a qweene' (l. 240). Given, as we have seen, that Hoccleve's poem is much more class-conscious than Christine's — the men go after the ladies first — the picture of the frantic lover conjuring Helen's beauty out of a brow of Egypt is as sad as it is funny. It also, paradoxically, reinforces the sense that, in love and out of love, men are victimized by their own imaginations, even as they respond to this victimization by making victims of women. (Christine, unsurprisingly, does not consider the way men's imaginations can trigger their relationships.) As another sign of sympathetic engagement with the male perspective, observe how the false lover, once he has abandoned his noble mistress, hastens to find and confide in his friend: till he can do so, 'his herte is on a lowe' (l. 61), as it would be if he were in love (ll. 239, 241). The model for this figure of the male confidant, who reappears later in the 'Epistola' (ll. 92–99), is not Christine

but probably Chaucer (in his *Troilus*).³⁰ Christine has her man swapping playful stories not with a single friend but with numbers of companions in semi-public gatherings (taverns and courts: even the king's chambers, 108 ff). Her uncomplicated view of the homosocial bonding of dukes and lords, and, presumably, of the bonding between women as they come at the outset of the poem to appeal for justice, like the widows at the start of the *Knight's Tale*, simply does not allow for the loneliness of desire, nor for the pressure to confess, that the 'Epistola' fleetingly articulates.

In Hoccleve, then, the sexes are fairly rigidly confined within pre-determined roles, and isolated. What unites them turns out to be very different from the 'soutiveté' with which Christine was willing to credit them: quite simply, it is sin, from which 'vnnethes any' are free, men as well as women (ll. 379–97). Adam and Eve provide our basic role models, and they are in a 'semblable' case (l. 390) only because of sin: contrast Christine's use of the word 'semblable' to describe the relationship between men and women (731) and their cardinal role models, Mary and Christ (583). One gets the feeling that Christine is slightly embarrassed by questions of sin, and unwilling to find bad faith in anyone except the 'ennemi' of humankind (609). In the same way, since she wants to keep Mary as available as possible as an emblem of womankind, she tacitly identifies Mary with her divine election *by the mere fact of her creation*. Hoccleve, by contrast, makes Mary's election almost conditional on her superhuman absence of vice and fullness of virtue (ll. 404–5), which he describes in terms borrowed from the prologue to the *Prioress's Tale* (ll. 407–13, cf. PrT 460, 481–82). In this extremely orthodox reformulation of the *Epistre*, men are

³⁰ Other echoes of *Troilus* probably include ll. 17 (Tr II.348, V.1245), 24 (Tr III.1148, V.1435), 99 (Tr II.328, V.777).

utterly dependent on Mary's mercy: should that fail, 'farwel the ioie of man' (l. 415, a phrase which recalls the earlier-noted power of Cupid to bring 'ioie & teene'). Consequently, we should honour the Virgin 'and othir wommen alle / for hir sake' (l. 419).

Hoccleve thus, finally, endorses what Fleming (1971, 21) called Christine's 'essay in anti-antifeminism', but at the price of reinstating the very courtly positions, now applied to the Virgin Mary, which both Christine and her translator had understood to be another form of male fiction designed to deny the idealized female a voice and the capacity for action. Consequently, Christine's irony, which Hoccleve's translation has more or less preserved up to this point, disappears; so too does the sense of woman as a physical object (Christine's word for it was 'riens') with powers and desires of her own. Hence Hoccleve's ending, which idealizes women for their constancy (l. 447) and virtue (ll. 455–57, 461) by way of the exemplary virgin martyr St Margaret (ll. 421–27; her constancy is noted ll. 424, 433). But this puzzling choice of virgin martyr carries a final sting in the tail.³¹ St Margaret, possibly a rewriting of a reference in the *Epistre* to St Nicholas (704), provides the occasion for obvious humour as Cupid has hastily to deconstruct the offered example: not her virginity but her constancy makes her exemplary, since 'ay We werreie ageyn chastitee' (l. 431). But this back-peddalling has the effect of detaching virginity from woman's exemplary function (seen most notably in the case of the Virgin Mary, l. 398) so as to expose the 'Epistola', like the *Epistre*, for the exercises in funambulism that they both are. However constructed, and regardless of who does the constructing, the

³¹ For another explanation of the figure of St Margaret, see Fenster and Erler (1990, 163).

ideal woman turns out to be as slippery a shape-changer as the antifeminist lobby made her actual incarnation out to be.

A few observations are worth making, in conclusion, about the style of the translation. It approximates closely to Hoccleve's style generally. In particular, it reveals a preference for inversions of normal word order (patterns of auxiliary and infinitive; verb and direct object; especially auxiliary and past participle) in excess of what we find in the poetry of his contemporaries, even allowing for the need to distort word order in order to secure rhyme — where Hoccleve makes much use of the pattern infinitive-auxiliary — and in places where a normal word order would have been perfectly possible.³² Hoccleve probably owes this style, at least in the 'Epistola', to Christine, who regularly practises it.³³ Other features of Hoccleve's versification already noted, like repeated rhymes and phrases, may also represent a response to the *Epistre*.³⁴ Unlike the uses Christine makes of such rhymes and of syntactic distortions to deconstruct the antifeminist position, though, I think these elements function

³² E.g. 'spoken been' (l. 22), 'the man the pot hath' (l. 50), 'be waar sholde' (l. 212), 'felle can' (l. 234), 'him kepte' (l. 308).

³³ A particularly arresting example is 'quand decevoir l'omme et tempter la vient' (354) [when a man comes to deceive and tempt her]. Whether all such instances of Christine's practice should be read as a personal affectation or as a simple reflex of courtly French style I cannot be sure, though since Bruins (1925, 111–16) has distinguished Christine's practice from that of her contemporary Deschamps in respect of her readiness to follow the word order past participle-auxiliary, and from that of Froissart in respect of her readiness to follow the word order subject-noun object-verb, it may be that these, and other features noted earlier, actually characterize Christine's style. For argument in support of Christine's influence on fifteenth-century English prose, see Bornstein (1977), and comment in Ellis (1986, 116, n. 23).

³⁴ See Fenster and Erler (1990, 171) for comment on other possible debts of Hoccleve's versification and language to Christine.

more simply in the 'Epistola', as markers of the elevated, courtly style to which Hoccleve is aspiring.³⁵ Hoccleve's vocabulary is similarly elevated with words lifted direct from the French and not generally explained, including some, like 'entalentid' (l. 338, cf. 'entalenté', 566) which had only just appeared in English.³⁶ Alongside them, of course, we have the much more vigorous, and memorable, colloquialisms uttered by male speakers in the 'Epistola'. The two kinds of speech can neatly sum up Hoccleve's unbalanced, but distinct, achievement in the work.

³⁵ Cf. remarks on style in Chaucer's *Melibee* by Ellis (1986, 109–10).

³⁶ MED sv. The only previous example, in Chaucer, translates Latin 'afficiant'.

Hoccleve and ... Feminism? Negotiating Meaning in *The Regiment of Princes*

Catherine Batt

THE greater part of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* is ostensibly a straightforward enough digest of received wisdom on the governance of kings, written for Prince Henry, possibly in 1411.¹ Yet the poem performs a curious balancing-act between an explicit and rigorous conservatism — as evidenced, for example, in its declared attitude to Lollardy — and something rather more individualistic, even wayward, in tone. The background to the *Regiment* proper is a long Prologue (constituting over two thousand lines of a text which runs to a total of 5439 lines), in which the Hoccleve character,

¹ References to the poem, by line number and in the text, are to Furnivall's edition (1897). The poem must have been written after the burning of the Lollard John Badby as a heretic, 5 March 1410, for Hoccleve refers to this event in the poem (286) and before 20 March 1413, when Henry IV died, for in line 816 he is 'þe kyng'. For a narrowing-down of the date to 1411, on the basis of further internal evidence and documentation of the delayed payment of Hoccleve's annuity, see Burrow (1994, 18) and Pearsall (1994, 387–88).

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Edited by Catherine Batt

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