

## **'Honour is the Reward of Virtue': The Claudian Translation Made for Richard, Duke of York, in 1445**

LIVIA VISSER-FUCHS

The intellectual life of Richard III's father, Richard, Duke of York (died 1460), has not received much attention from modern commentators.<sup>1</sup> His small 'collection' of books, at the most optimistic count six surviving texts, has only recently come under scrutiny as a whole.<sup>2</sup> It consists of his book of hours; two books of history; John Harding's *Chronicle* and one volume of the *Grandes chroniques* of France; one literary work: Christine de Pisan's *Cité de(s) Dames*;<sup>3</sup> and two unusual texts, the one a genealogy of the lords of Clare, Suffolk, in Latin and English, the other a classical Latin text, with parallel English translation.

Though his book of hours is the most personal and revealing item in Richard of York's library its most unusual text is a partial edition with parallel translation of a late classical political poem. From the time this text was first edited in 1905<sup>4</sup> several scholars have shed their light on the translation of part

---

<sup>1</sup> Except J. Rosenthal, 'Richard, Duke of York: a Fifteenth-Century Layman and the Church', *Catholic History Review*, vol. 50 (1964-65), pp. 171-87; A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books. Ideals and Reality in the Life and Library of a Medieval Prince*, Stroud 1997, pp. 21-29.

<sup>2</sup> L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard of York: books and the man', to appear in J. Boffey *et al.*, eds, *Recording Lives in England in the Later Middle Ages*, Proceedings of the 2005 Harlaxton Symposium. Most of the texts York owned had already been studied separately, but not together as his 'library'.

<sup>3</sup> This may of course have been his wife's rather than his.

<sup>4</sup> British Library Add. MS 11814 was acquired by the British Library in 1841 from the collection of W. Stevenson Fitch, of Ipswich. It is a small book in its original binding, 30 ff., 223x150 mm, page size 140x100 mm, one column, 25/28 lines to a page, written in a 'small spiky English book-hand' (Wright, *English Vernacular Hands*). Originally it had 26 folios, the flyleaves are taken from a liturgical ms., ff. 1-3 are empty except for scribbles on f. 3r-v; the text appears on ff. 4-26. Ff. 27-29 were added in the 16th c. and have a poem headed: 'My ladie pryncesse daughter to kyng harry the viij', signed *Per moy guillen newman an<sup>o</sup> 1525*. C.E. Wright, *English Vernacular Hands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, Oxford 1960, no. 19; J. Kirchner, ed., *Scriptura gothica libraria*, Munich and Vienna 1966, no. 56b; K.L. Scott, 'Lydgate's lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund: a newly-located manuscript in Arundel Castle', *Viator*, vol. 13 (1982), pp. 335-66, esp. 346, n. 48, and fig. 12. The only edition is E. Flügel, 'Eine mittellenglische

of Claudius Claudianus' poem 'On the consulate of Stilicho',<sup>5</sup> made with Richard of York in mind in 1445.<sup>6</sup> The historical Stilicho was an ambitious, unscrupulous and successful politician and general who flourished around 400 AD. A Vandal by birth he rose to power under Emperor Theodosius, who at his death divided the Roman Empire between his two sons, the west to the infant Honorius, the east to the weak minded Arcadius. The empire was further divided by factions attempting to rule the two young emperors. One of the players in this power game, Rufinus, was for a while the most powerful man in the east, but he lost to Stilicho early on and was murdered. Stilicho's own influence in the west and his successful defence of the empire against its neighbours was partly due to his undoubted abilities, partly to his connections

---

Claudian-übersetzung (1445) (Brit. Mus. Add. Ms. 11814)', *Anglia*, vol. 28 (1905), pp. 255-99, 421-38.

Simon Horobin, who discovered a ms. that contained probably all of Osbern Bokenham's saints' lives, has also been studying the various scribal hands found in the Claudian ms. and other mss that can be linked to Clare Priory. He distinguishes two hands in particular in the priory, both appearing, plus another one, in the Claudian; the most accomplished of these also occurs in the Bokenham collection of saints' lives, which may have belonged to Cecily Neville, York's wife; S. Horobin, 'A manuscript found in Abbotsford House and the lost legendary of Osbern Bokenham', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, vol. 14 (2007), pp. 132-64; the same, 'Politics, patronage and piety in the work of Osbern Bokenham', *Speculum*, vol. 82 (2007), pp. 932-49, and a paper given to the Early Book Society in 2007.

<sup>5</sup> The latest edition of the original: J.B. Hall, *Claudii Claudiani Carmina*, Bibliotheca Teubneriana, Leipzig 1985. The Loeb edition with translation: M. Platauer, *Claudian*, 2 vols, 1922. Also V. Crépin, *Claudian. Oeuvres complètes. Traduction nouvelle*, 2 vols, Paris [n.d.], text and translation.

<sup>6</sup> S. Moore, 'Patrons of letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 27 (1912), pp. 188-207, and vol. 28 (1913), pp. 79-105, esp. vol. 28, pp. 93-95; W.J. Fahrenbach, 'Vernacular translations of classical literature in late-medieval Britain: eight translations made directly from Latin between 1400 and 1525', unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1975, pp. 150-82; A. Goodman and D. Morgan, 'The Yorkist claim to the throne of Castile', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 11 (1985), pp. 61-69; J. Watts, 'De Consulatu Stilichonis: texts and politics in the reign of Henry VI', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 16 (1990), pp. 251-66; S. Delaney, 'Bokenham's Claudian as Yorkist propaganda', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 22 (1996), pp. 83-96; the same, *Impolitic Bodies. Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England. The Work of Osbern Bokenham*, New York and Oxford 1998, pp. 133-43; A.S.G. Edwards, 'The Middle English translation of Claudian's *De consulatu Stilichonis*', in A.J. Minnis, ed., *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, York 2001, pp. 267-76; the same, 'Duke Humfrey's Middle English Palladius manuscript', in J. Stratford, ed., *The Lancastrian Court. Proceedings of the 2001 Harlaxton Symposium*, Donington 2003, pp. 68-77, esp. 74-77; D. Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature 1430-1530*, Oxford 2007, esp. pp. 70-80.

with the imperial family: he had married Theodosius' adopted daughter, Serena, and his own daughter, Maria, became Honorius' wife.<sup>7</sup> The best known commentator on the period, the poet Claudian, was a fanatic supporter of Stilicho<sup>8</sup> and his one-sided view, supported by his talent for brilliant praise and deadly invective, shaped the later historiography of the period, particularly during the Middle Ages, when his work was well known and other sources were lacking.<sup>9</sup>

The Clare translation covers the first 413 lines of the second book (of three) of Claudian's panegyric of Stilicho, written on the occasion of the latter's first consulship in 400.<sup>10</sup> It praises Stilicho in glowing terms for what he has already achieved and pleads with him by means of various 'personages', Spain, France, Britain, Africa and Rome itself, to take on the consulship<sup>11</sup> and defend and save the empire. The section chosen by the translator focuses on Stilicho's virtues, such as *clementia*, translated 'benygnyte', *fides* or loyalty, and also justice, temperance, prudence and constancy. Stilicho, according to the poet, avoided greed, ambition, lust, pride and even 'idle talk'. The text's presentation of so many virtues in a small compass made it a perfect 'mirror for princes',<sup>12</sup> as the author himself says in his explanatory envoy: 'in which as in a mirror, princes may see their deeds'.<sup>13</sup> A text that celebrated an actual 'hero' from ancient

<sup>7</sup> He also hoped to marry his son, Eucherius, to Honorius' sister, Galla Placidia.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. J.B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, 2 vols, Dover Reprint 1958, vol. 1, ch. 5, esp. p. 113: '... [Claudian's] career as trumpeter of Stilicho's praises', and 'Claudian was a master of violent invective, and his portrait of Rufinus, ..., is no more than a caricature'; p. 119: 'The poet Claudian, who filled the rôle of an unofficial poet-laureate to Honorius, was really retained by Stilicho who patronised and paid him. His political poems are extravagant eulogies, ... in some cases his arguments were directly inspired by his patron'. J.H.E. Crees, *Claudian as an Historical Authority*, Cambridge 1908, argues that there is often a factual basis to Claudian's narrative, and is more favourable to Stilicho generally, calling him 'the last of the Romans, but ... also the first man of the new era.', p. 234.

<sup>9</sup> L.D. Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics*, Oxford 1986, pp. 143-45. Claudian remained popular as a source of political quotations until well into the 19th century, A. Cameron, *Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford 1970, pp. 424-51.

<sup>10</sup> *De consulatu Stiliconis* is sometimes called *De laudibus Stiliconis*.

<sup>11</sup> During the empire consulship was no longer an elected office, but a position of honour, granted by the emperor.

<sup>12</sup> This is particularly emphasised by Fahrenbach, 'Vernacular translations', who was not an expert on English politics of the 1440s and approached the text with a more open mind.

<sup>13</sup> Add. 11814, f. 25v, lines 9-11 (thorn and yogh modernised): In whom as in a merour / Princys may se her owtward gestys, and yf hem vyce have caught / They owyn to leve yt hastily, gret ellys dyshonour / Wyll sprunge ther off ...

history was generally thought suitable as a 'mirror', but the main merit of this text to the translator was the fact that it described a man about to overcome his temporary troubles because of his many virtues – as Richard of York was in 1445.

The translation bears the subscription 'Translated and written at Clare 1445'<sup>14</sup> and it is generally accepted that the most likely author was an inmate of a religious house at Clare, Suffolk, that is, the Augustinian friary, usually called Clare Priory, established as the first Augustinian house in England in 1248.<sup>15</sup> The foundation had a long history of patronage by Richard of York – who is himself called *patronus noster* in 1454<sup>16</sup> – and his ancestors.<sup>17</sup> Eight initials in the Claudian manuscript are historiated in colour with heraldic devices: a closed fetterlock, a falcon, a white rose and a white hind,<sup>18</sup> all badges of Richard of York. The style of the decoration of the initials and the margins relates the manuscript to productions made in the area around Bury St Edmunds or in the town itself.<sup>19</sup> The translator's dedicatory poem at the beginning and his explanatory verses at the end mention York by name. The translator was quite possibly Osbern Bokenham, but if not, he was somebody in a similar position in the friary and with a very similar level of learning and interest.

There is no doubt, then, about the poem's link to York, but what is the link? Why did the translator chose this text and what did he do with it? How competent is his translation and what is he actually 'allowing' the poet to say about York? What was the purpose of the book and for whose eyes was it meant? Why did he give the original Latin as well? On some of these questions views have been expressed. In 1905 Ewald Flügel, the editor of the text, called the translation *im ganzen treu*, 'faithful on the whole', and assumed that it encouraged York to take the throne. In view of this assumption *and* the date

---

<sup>14</sup> *Translat and wrote at Clare 1445*, Add. 11814, f. 25.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Victoria Country History, *Suffolk*, vol. 2, London 1907, pp. 127–29.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. F. Roth, *The English Austin Friars*, 2 vols, New York 1966, 1961, vol. 2, *Sources*, p. 334.

<sup>17</sup> Flügel, Fahrenbach, Watts, Edwards and Delaney all agree on this, though some of them call the place Stoke Clare and/or assume the author was a monk, through confusion with the Benedictine Abbey at Stoke Clare.

<sup>18</sup> Each device is illustrated twice, on opposite pages: on ff. 5v and 6, 9v and 10, 13v and 14, and 17v and 18 respectively. The penwork dragon on f. 26 appears only once and is probably mere decoration, not a device. Ff. 5v–6 are illustrated in *Facsimiles of Manuscripts and Inscriptions*, ed. E.A. Bond, 5 vols, 1873–94, pl. 200; f. 6 in Wright, *English Vernacular Hands*, no. 19; f. 10 in A.G. Watson, *Catalogue of Dated + Datable Mss c. 700–1600 in the Dept. of MSS in the British Library*, 2 vols, L 1979, pl. 470; f. 14 in Kirchner, *Scriptura gothica libraria*, no. 56b; 17v in Scott, 'Lydgate's lives', fig. 12; ff. 18v–19 in Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, fig. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's lives', pp. 360–66, esp. 362–63.

given in the manuscript York's designs on the throne had to be moved back in time; Flügel took Henry VI to be the vile Rufinus.<sup>20</sup> In 1975 William Fahrenbach, in his survey of translations from Latin into English made between 1400 and 1525, speaks of the 'freedom' of the translation, particularly where the Latin gets complicated and thought that Flügel had gone too far in 'suggesting that Richard might do well to consider deposing Henry just then, ..., [which] seems tactlessly insensitive to the political situation at the time'. Fahrenbach considered that York's problems by 1445 – Beaufort's appointment to a position of command in France in 1443 and above all the accusations levelled at York in 1445 about mismanagement of funds and favouritism while he was the king's lieutenant in France – were enough to explain the Claudian translation as 'an expression of confidence in Richard and an attempt to assure him that virtue will inevitably carry the day'.<sup>21</sup>

In 1990 John Watts called the translation 'earnest and accurate' and as far as the purpose of the text was concerned he wished to change the date of the manuscript to 1455 because that fitted with York's known activities; he considered that to the translator York's 'consulship' was the protectorship, which York gained in April 1454, with parliamentary consent, which was compared by Watts to the popular support that, according to the poem, Stilicho had. Today John Watts is more inclined to think that York, in the 1440's, had quite a prominent position, was less at odds with the regime than has sometimes been concluded and was merely looking to maintain his influence; he was not yet seeking the regency or the crown itself.<sup>22</sup> In 1996 Delaney did not comment on the quality of the translation and apart from strongly putting Bokenham forward as the author/translator, assumed Adam Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester and York's main accuser, to be Rufinus. She also went back to the theory that the text, however cautiously and subtly, encouraged York to remember his claims to kingship; she did not shrink from using the word propaganda, calling Bokenham 'an extremely canny propagandist'.<sup>23</sup>

A.S.G. Edwards, in 2001, without commenting on the technical quality of the translation, attempted to relate the Claudian translation to work

---

<sup>20</sup> Flügel, 'Claudian-übersetzung', pp. 422-25. R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford 1967, p. 9n, describes the translation as 'an adaptation of a classical work to modern political ends'.

<sup>21</sup> Fahrenbach, 'Vernacular translations', pp. 173-82.

<sup>22</sup> Watts, '*De Consulatu Stiliconis*', *passim*, esp. pp. 260-61; the same, 'Richard of York' in *OxfordDNB* and the same in private correspondence.

<sup>23</sup> Delaney, 'Yorkist propaganda', e.g. pp. 94-95, and – less strongly phrased – *Impolitic Bodies*, e.g. p. 140: 'The tonality here seems far more appropriate to kingship than to simple exoneration from charges of financial mismanagement'.

commissioned by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester: 'can we perhaps see in the Claudian ... an acknowledgment by Richard [of York] of Humphrey's humanist achievements that can be linked to a wish to extend a natural literary affinity into the political realm?'.<sup>24</sup> Most recently, Daniel Wakelin, in his study of the influence of humanism on English literature in the fifteenth century, concludes that the poem 'offers not only an exemplum to teach [York] but a way to describe him', but finds also that 'all that Stilicho and York share is popularity. York's other achievements and qualities remain suspiciously vague'.<sup>25</sup>

Earlier, in 1985, a convincing and useful theory had been put forward by Tony Goodman and David Morgan, who related any signs of royal pretensions in the Claudian translation merely to York's claim to the throne of Castile, which may have appeared 'especially enticing' to York in 1445, when Henry's marriage made his own place in the line of succession less interesting.<sup>26</sup>

Why did the translator chose this section of the text and what did he do with it? He made a conscious choice, and he had, judging by the Latin text, quite a good 'edition' to make his choice from.<sup>27</sup> The whole of the much longer original poem and Claudian's other political poems are likely to have been known to him,<sup>28</sup> for the surviving collections of Claudian's work from the middle of the eleventh century onwards usually contain all his political poems, the panegyrics and the invectives, together referred to as the *Claudianus maior*.<sup>29</sup> A copy of such a collection could be found, for example, at Bury St Edmunds, fifteen miles from Clare, early in the fifteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the translator himself explains that Claudian's 'othir boke clepid Claudianus in

---

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, 'Middle English translation', esp. p. 275; the same, 'Duke Humphrey's Palladius', pp. 74-77.

<sup>25</sup> Wakelin, *Humanism*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> Goodman and Morgan, 'Yorkist claim', p. 66; Fahrenbach had already pointed out that in 1445 Humphrey of Gloucester was still alive and the heir presumptive to the crown.

<sup>27</sup> The Latin text of Add. 11814 is quite good, it is the translation of this rather difficult poem that has a number of weak points, if one looks for 'proper' translating.

<sup>28</sup> The *Liber Catonianus (Disticha Catonis)* which provided Chaucer with his text of Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae* does not contain the political poems, only *De raptu*, R.A. Pratt, 'Chaucer's Claudian', *Speculum*, vol. 22 (1947), pp. 419-29; M. Boas, 'De Librorum Catoniarum historia atque compositione', *Mnemosyne*, ns, vol. 42 (1914), pp. 17-46.

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *Texts*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>30</sup> R.A.B. Mynors, 'The Latin classics known to Boston of Bury', in D.J. Gordon, ed., *Fritz Saxl 1890-1948. Knowledge and Learning: A Volume of Memorial Essays*, London and Edinburgh 1957, pp. 199-217, esp. 215. Compare Edwards, 'Middle English translation', n. 3.

Ruffinum' contains 'the vicious lyfe of Ruffyn',<sup>31</sup> suggesting that he knew at least that poem as well.

A conscious selection implies that the translator had – quite sensibly – omitted the hero's victories in the Middle East and northern Africa of Book One, the fantastic prophecies of the rest of Book Two, and the elaborate celebrations in Rome after Stilicho had become consul, which included wild beast hunts in the circus and other matters which could not possibly be related to the duke of York. Finding a section that did could have been relatively easy, because Britain occurs rarely in Claudian's work and every mention of the island had no doubt been noticed long ago by any Englishman reading the texts with attention. No section other than the one selected by the Clare author includes Britain as more than another name in a list of distant countries.<sup>32</sup> The translator found what seemed to be the story of a great man falsely accused, which also offered the high moral and didactic tone, as well as the allegorical, illustrative material of the kind appreciated in his time.<sup>33</sup> The figures of Spain, Gaul, Britain and Africa pleading with Stilicho in all their 'national' splendour are among the most attractive – and freely translated – sections of the poem. England dressed in wool, her cheeks covered with 'iron', her feet hidden in the water and her cloak resembling the waves of the ocean, declares that thanks to Stilicho's help she no longer fears battle in Scotland or in Picardy. The fact that the original text has 'the skin of a Caledonian wild animal', not wool; that her feet are covered by her blue cloak, not the sea; and that she no longer fears the Picts, not Picardy, makes the English version the more fascinating, and very effective.

The Latin has no section heading and reads, in translation:<sup>34</sup>

Next Britain speaks. She is covered with the skin of a Caledonian wild animal, her cheeks are tattooed with iron, and as she walks her blue cloak floats behind her, imitating the colour of the ocean. 'I, too, have been saved by Stilicho when I was about to be destroyed by neighbouring peoples; the Scot raised all of Ireland against me, the sea was foaming with enemy oars. Thanks to him I no longer fear Scots arrows, nor the Picts, nor do I fear to see the

---

<sup>31</sup> Add. 11814, f. 4v.

<sup>32</sup> According to P.G. Christiansen, *Concordance to Claudianus*, Hildesheim 1988, *Britannia* occurs ten times and e.g. Spain five times in the entire corpus of texts.

<sup>33</sup> For example the embroidered robe is historical: Bury, *History*, vol. 1, p. 137, n. 4, mentions the robe (*trabea*) in which Stilicho is depicted on his consular diptych. Woven into it are images of his wife and son, similar to those described by Claudian in his poem, bk 2, lines 339–61, and in the translation, lines 375–98.

<sup>34</sup> Add. 11814, f. 16v, lines 246–55.

arrival of the Saxons along the whole coast, brought by changeable winds.

The English translation has:<sup>35</sup>

Engelonde preiseth Stilico  
Aftir her Engelonde, araied in clooth wroughte oute of shepis  
wulle,  
Which be clepid in Calcedonye monstrys of grete mervaille,  
Whos chekys be coveryd with iron harde, whos fete the water  
hideth,  
Her clothing feyneth the occian wawys, and seith: 'Ofte me hath  
defendyd,  
Nobil Stilico, from myn nere enemys, which by my marchis duelle,  
Whan Scottis had moevid ayens my pees, al wilde Irisshe londe  
And the watir brode bigan to foome with the oore of adversaryes,  
Thurgh his helpe soone it was doone, I shulde not fere bataile  
Of Scotlonde, ne of Picardy, ne fro my see banke  
I sholde nevir see me for to noye the Saxon saile with wyndes'.

Not only did the translator make a conscious and clever selection from the complete text of 'On the consulate of Stilicho', he also used it brilliantly. He had no immediate precedent to direct him; nowhere else had this text on Stilicho been re-used for didactic purposes or as a panegyric on someone else. Fragments of Claudian's work had been used before in a similar context: a few lines from his poem on 'The fourth consulate of Honorius' had been quoted in almost every mirror for princes between the middle of the twelfth and the late fourteenth century.<sup>36</sup> And, for example, in the didactic novel *Jehan de Saintré*, produced at the court of Margaret of Anjou's father, René, circa 1450, *Claudian le poete* is quoted and (mis)translated from the same text.<sup>37</sup> There is, however, one curious and much closer precedent: the *Anticlaudianus* of Alain de Lille.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Add. 11814, f. 17, lines 268-78 (punctuation, capitals, u and v, and thorn and yogh modernised).

<sup>36</sup> *De quarto consulo Honorii*, lines 299-302, which state that educating a prince means educating his people, W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Monumenta Germaniae Historiae Schriften 2, Leipzig 1938, p. 41 and n. 3

<sup>37</sup> Lines 294-95, quoted and more or less translated in Antoine de La Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. J. Misrahi and C. Knudson, Geneva 1978, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. W.F. Cornog, *The 'Anticlaudian' of Alain de Lille, Prologue, Argument and Nine Books translated, with an introduction and notes*, Philadelphia 1935, p. 51: 'This book is called Anticlaudian by reason of the material, since the matter of this book is contrary to the beginning of Claudian's theme. Whereas, in the beginning of his book Claudian introduced vices for the perverting of Rufinus, in the beginning of this book virtues are introduced for the forming of a blessed man. Wherefore that man of whom this work treats is called Antirufinus, that is, contrary to Rufinus.'

Alain wrote his book as a positive mirror image of Claudian's *In Rufinum* (*Against Rufinus*). The *In Rufinum* is – even to the modern reader and in translation – a stunning and lethal piece of abuse against Stilicho's dead enemy. It describes in a way that Chaucer would have appreciated how all the vices and evils of this world, discord, famine, disease, lust, greed, gathered together to discuss how they could best hurt and injure mankind. After various proposals have been rejected they decide that the best way to achieve their aim is to introduce Rufinus, their most talented pupil, into the imperial court to pervert the prince. The description of Rufinus is malign caricature into which Claudian introduced every possible crime, and reported as true every vile rumour that had ever circulated about his victim. Alain de Lille set out to turn the story round and create his own hero, whom he called 'Antirufinus', a man blessed with every Christian virtue to be an example to all men. Alain composed an original work to make his point, the Clare author managed to use Claudian's own text to create his image of the perfect man. He even has an echo of Alain's words:<sup>39</sup>

As the poete Claudian in his othir boke, clepid **Claudianus** in **Ruffinum**, tellith how the vicious lyfe of **Ruffyne**, conveyed with welthe for a seson, aftir his demerites cessid with gret myscheif, so *in wise contrary* in his tretys named **Claudianus De consulatu Stiliconis** it is writen how the vertuous life of this gode prince **Stilico**, al though for a tyme it were provid by wrongful tribulacion, yit it grew thurgh grete preyers to that preisyng and worshippe which in his daies nevir prince had of his degree.

The Clare author turned the Stilicho text into a long, consistent ode to York's virtuous life and a proclamation of the certainty that, whatever his problems at the time the translation was made, his reward would follow. The undoubted theme of the book is this certainty that virtue will be rewarded, and the reward of virtue is 'honour' or 'worship', unspecified. That honour is the reward of virtue was a mix of two closely related Aristotelian concepts. In his *Ethica Nicomachea*<sup>40</sup> Aristotle had in one place called happiness the reward of virtue, in another honour. This was summarised, conflated and passed on by St Thomas Aquinas,<sup>41</sup> who was the first to use the Latin word *merces*, as well as *praemium*,

---

<sup>39</sup> Add. 11814, f. 4v; my italics, punctuation and capitals, the bold letters have been touched in red in the ms.

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1, 8 (1099a); 4, 3 (1123b), e.g. *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols, Princeton 1984, vol. 2, pp. 1737, 1773. It is difficult to put Aristotle's argument in one catchy phrase, but see Aquinas, next note.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, q. 2, art. 2: *Videtur quod beatitudo hominis in honoribus consistat. Beatitudo enim, sive felicitas, est praemium virtutis, ut philosophus dicit in I*

for 'reward'. *Merces* was picked up by the Clare translator, who used it seven times in the refrain of his final poem. Significantly the main words of the refrain, *honor est merces virtutis*, are written in large lettering diagonally across the outside of the (back)<sup>42</sup> cover of the book;<sup>43</sup> this phrase is obviously the key to the translator's view of the text.

In York's day the close link between honour and virtue was a well known theme of chivalric and didactic literature. In the many mirrors for princes created at the Burgundian court in the fifteenth century it is an almost standard feature. The idea was supported and illustrated by the story of the two Roman temples of Honour and Virtue: the temple of Honour, it was said, could only be entered through that of Virtue.<sup>44</sup> 'Honour' could also be taken to mean 'nobility', and thus the Thomist concept became an argument in the contemporary controversy about whether a man could only be noble through his birth, or also by merit, that is virtue. 'Honour' could also mean 'office', the position awarded by the prince to his courtiers, which was only legitimate if the recipient was 'virtuous'.<sup>45</sup> Not all these connotations may have been in the English translator's mind.

It is difficult to gauge how well informed the translator really was and how able to use the material correctly. It is not clear whether his Latin was not particularly good, or whether his 'mistakes' were not mistakes, but conscious changes. There was, of course, a vast difference between the Latin of the

---

*Ethic. Sed honor maxime videtur esse id quod est virtutis praeium, ut philosophus dicit in IV Ethic. Ergo in honore maxime consistit beatitudo.* (It seems that man's happiness consists in honors. Happiness is "the reward of virtue," as the Philosopher says. But honor most of all seems to be the reward of virtue, as the Philosopher also says. Therefore happiness consists principally in honor); q. 4, art. 1: *Sed id quod est praeium vel merces virtutis, est beatitudo, ut patet per philosophum in I Ethic.* (But the prize or reward of virtue is happiness, as Aristotle shows.); translation from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise On Happiness*, trans. J.A. Oesterle, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964, pp. 15, 41.

<sup>42</sup> It may also have been on the front cover.

<sup>43</sup> No previous commentator has remarked on this.

<sup>44</sup> Valerius Maximus, *Acta et dicta memorabilia*, 1, 1, 8. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, bk 5, ch. 12; Martin Le Franc, *L'Estrif de Fortune et Vertu*, ed. P.F. Dembowsky, Geneva 1999, p. 183: '*Les anciens a Vertu et a Honneur temples firent en telle guise que en cil de Honneur entrer on ne poent sans passer par Vertu, par ce voulans entendre que honneur ne desert qui a vertu ne sert. Honneur est le loyer de Vertu, ....*' Very similar phrasing in Diego de Valera, *Ung petit traicte de noblesse*, edited in A.J. Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist. The Concepts of noblesse and chose publique in Burgundian Political Thought*, Groningen 1981, pp. 235-83, esp. 243-44, 279; and in Guillebert (or Hue) de Lannoy, *L'Instruction d'un jeune prince*, in C.G. van Leeuwen, *Denkebeelden van een Vliesridder*, Amsterdam 1975, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> On this matter e.g. B. Sterchi, *Über den Umgang mit Lob und Tadel. Normative Adelsliteratur und politische Kommunikation im burgundischen Hofadel, 1430-1506*, Turnhout 2005, *passim*, esp. ch. 4.

church or administration and the convoluted language used by Claudian. And what did the Clare author know about Roman life, culture and history?<sup>46</sup> If he had known more about the historical Stilicho he would probably not have used him as an exemplum,<sup>47</sup> but he simply had no other information at his disposal, and he would probably not have been interested if he had. It has been pointed out<sup>48</sup> that he had no problem accepting pagan gods and goddesses and mythological heroes, and must have been quite familiar with them.<sup>49</sup> He used words such as 'Phebus', 'the Muses ix', 'Mownte Palatyne' easily,<sup>50</sup> and was able to explain the temperate zone of the earth,<sup>51</sup> who 'Tritonia' was,<sup>52</sup> that *elevacio manuum* means 'praying' (*devocio*),<sup>53</sup> and that Latin *fasti* means public records, 'the volume of Rome which conscript fadris shewith'.<sup>54</sup>

More significant than his learning and his learned notes, however, is the fact that his marginal comments are most numerous in one particular, to him crucial, section of the text: where Stilicho seems to claim he has been slandered and Rome denies that he has been. It is impossible to give all the details but again the translation bears only overall resemblance to the original. The Latin text mentions terrible portents and evil deeds done in the east, and Rome explains to Stilicho that those things only affect the East, that news of them is not taken seriously, and no report reached her. Claudian's at first sight vague references are all to the 'unmentionable' consulship of the Grand Chamberlain of the East, Eutropius, a eunuch and ex-slave, which created a scandal at the time. His holding office was an unheard of 'violation of tradition'<sup>55</sup> which tainted the office of consul itself and this was the reason why Stilicho tried to

---

<sup>46</sup> It has been pointed out that the learned comments in the margin are in a hand different from that of the text itself (*ex inf.* Simon Horobin); the comments could be by the author, the text by a scribe.

<sup>47</sup> Stilicho's death resembled York's, at least in some versions of the story of the latter's end: he was tricked into leaving sanctuary and executed!

<sup>48</sup> Fahrenbach, 'Vernacular translations', pp. 161-62.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Bokenham's use of classical figures, e.g. the quotation from his life of St Mary Magdalen given by Wakelin, *Humansim*, p. 67, where he says he will pray for God's support only and then proceeds to mention all the classical deities on whom he will *not* call.

<sup>50</sup> However, the temple of Janus of which the doors were closed only when peace reigned throughout the Roman empire, is translated as if the Italian town of Genua 'is bounde to peese', f. 19, line 313.

<sup>51</sup> Add. 11814, f. 6, opposite line 10.

<sup>52</sup> Add 11814, f. 21, opposite line 367: *Pallas Tritonia Minerva > dea sapientia*, 'Pallas Tritonia Minerva = the goddess of wisdom'.

<sup>53</sup> Add. 11814, f. 23, opposite line 410.

<sup>54</sup> Add. 11814, f. 17, line 266.

<sup>55</sup> Bury, *History*, vol. 1, p. 127.

excuse himself: he did not want to share a title with such a man. Rome praises him for not mentioning this horror to Roman ears, and not polluting the senate by such stories. She adds that others, that is the people of the East, should repent and expiate their guilt.

The translator, perhaps through ignorance, but more likely deliberately, assumed that Stilicho was complaining that he himself had been slandered. In the English text the figure of Rome herself puts his mind at rest: she has no report of that, 'of credens nevir cam letter / the to accuse',<sup>56</sup> and she praises him for keeping silent about the slight done to him and not taking revenge. These lines are highlighted by the marginal note *deo gracias Ricarde* opposite the first one and repetition marks opposite the next six lines.<sup>57</sup> Rome's remarks about expiation are also freely interpreted by the translator and taken to mean that if there was no crime – and York, of course, had committed no crime – there need be no pardon. These lines are further marked by the words *no treason, no pardon* in the right margin.<sup>58</sup> The translator also introduced the name of Rufinus into his text, even though Rufinus is not mentioned here in the original text and is not even remotely relevant to Claudian's story at this point.

The emphasis on, and probably conscious mistranslation of, this section seem to indicate that the only thing the translator had in mind was York's reputation. The words 'steined my worshippe', 'sclaunder' and 'rebukys' are the translator's own words, interpreting the Latin according to his own wishes. York himself, when protesting to the accusations against him, called them 'slandorous language' (sclaudereux langaige),<sup>59</sup> and spoke of 'his worship hurte' and 'his grete hurt and sclaunder'.<sup>60</sup>

So much for the translation and its inherent qualities. The questions of the text's intended readership, the physical format of the edition *plus* translation and its purpose, all go together. By the nature of the text its intended audience cannot have been large. Given that Claudian's language is far from simple, who would have understood the Latin? The book as a whole is not a pamphlet inciting York to strong political measures, but merely an exhortation not to be put off by a bad press, and who would have been interested to read about the duke's virtuous life and the comforting maxim that the 'good ones' will be

---

<sup>56</sup> Add. 11814, f. 19, lines 324–25.

<sup>57</sup> Add. 11814, f. 19, lines 325–30.

<sup>58</sup> Add. 11814, f. 20, lines 341–42.

<sup>59</sup> In his petition to Henry VI, probably December 1445, quoted in Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p. 52: '... he hath understande to his greet hevynesse that certain sclandereux langaige hath bee saide and reported ...'.

<sup>60</sup> In his refutation of the allegations made by Bishop Moleyns, probably 1446, printed in M.L. Kekewich *et al.*, eds, *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, Stroud 1995, pp. 180–83, esp. 180, 181.

rewarded? Richard of York himself, perhaps some friends and relations, and the learned inmates and occasional visitors of Clare Priory. Various commentators have theorised about the existence of an East Anglian circle of neighbours and relatives who shared an interest in religion and literature. One of their 'providers' was Osbern Bokenham of Clare, and Lydgate and perhaps John Meetham may be loosely linked to them. They flourished until the civil war temporarily divided their ranks.<sup>61</sup> In the 1440s this circle of friends could have been served by a single copy of the Claudian translation and it is likely that we possess this only copy. The manuscript appears not to have left Suffolk:<sup>62</sup> in 1841 it was acquired by the British Library from the well known and infamous antiquary William Stevenson Fitch, of Ipswich,<sup>63</sup> who managed to obtain parts of local, aristocratic collections<sup>64</sup> and supplied many manuscripts and documents to, among others, Sir Thomas Phillipps.

The Latin text was perhaps included not so much as an 'authority' to support the translation, but as a demonstration, or perhaps merely a suggestion, of the cleverness of the translator and a semblance of 'proof' of what he had done with the original. He must have known that most people – except perhaps his learned brethren – would not be able to understand the Latin properly or realise that his translation was excessively 'free' at times, but it suited his purpose; he was not a learned editor working for a university press.

The word 'propaganda' is often used too easily of a certain kind of medieval text. There is no doubt that Richard of York and his supporter/author felt very strongly about the accusations of 1445, but there is no reason to believe that the 'Rufinus' whom the Clare author kept permanently in the background of the story like an evil genius – though Claudian had not – refers to a specific individual. None of the text must be taken literally to that extent. There was no Theodosius, Honorius or Arcadius in mid-fifteenth-century England, there was just a prince that Stilicho had been and still was loyal to. Rufinus is not Suffolk, Somerset or Moleyns, but the 'enemy', all opponents of York. The description of Rufinus was excessive, he was evil incarnate, not a real person, and so Alain de Lille had used him, but in

---

<sup>61</sup> Moore, 'Patrons'; Edwards, 'Transmission'; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, pp. 28-29; Horobin, 'Politics', pp. 942-49.

<sup>62</sup> Wakelin, *Humanism*, p. 74, n. 44, discusses the scribbled names on f. 3r-v, and adduces some evidence that they are Cambridgeshire and Essex names. They are Thomas, William and John 'Astun', perhaps of Outwell, Cambs.; William Newman, who wrote the additional verse on ff. 26v-29 (see n. 3, above), may be of Harlow, Essex.

<sup>63</sup> See J.I. Ingham, *The Postmaster of Ipswich: William Stevenson Fitch, Antiquary and Thief*, Ipswich 1997; the same, 'William Stevenson Fitch' in *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Ham House, Surrey, and Helmingham Hall near Ipswich.

the Clare translation Rufinus' vices are not actually listed, but merely hinted at by listing York's virtues instead. The situation of 1445 was a short-lived crisis and soon to be dwarfed by the far more momentous events of the next decade; the Claudian translation represents a flash picture of one specific moment in time and such brief glimpses of the hopes and expectations of one short period are difficult for later commentators, with their hindsight and too great knowledge, to interpret correctly and simply.

It is most likely that the Clare translator assumed that York wished to be reinstated as the king's lieutenant in France, an appointment that would also mean his reputation was still intact. Whatever the historical Stilicho may have done or desired – and it is thought he took the regency of the two young emperors upon himself – the translator in the 1440s could not possibly have been thinking of York as regent for Henry VI, because the situation in which this became an option had not yet arisen, and the crown of England was even further from the Clare author's mind – as it was from York's. There is no need to assume that the translator had any supreme English office, such as the regency or kingship, in mind. One textual indication is that the word 'consul', to him, was probably linked to 'counsel' and 'counsellor'. He twice uses the word 'consulers',<sup>65</sup> when he has to explain the robes of a consul and the Latin word, i.e. *consul*, is not actually given in the text.

Recent research on York's position in the 1440s<sup>66</sup> suggests that it is unlikely he already harboured serious intentions concerning the crown, let alone allowed his servants to put such claims on paper. In fact, it is only the allegorical figure of Spain<sup>67</sup> that could be suspected – in the translation, not in the original – of voicing anything like such claims. The Latin has, in translation:<sup>68</sup>

Everything that I have ever asked of Stilicho he has granted me, and he has only refused honour for himself. Once he was able to refuse the consulship at the hands of an emperor, his father-in-law; now he refuses it also from his son-in-law. If he refuses to accept it from the world he rules, as its guardian, at least let him accept it from the imperial court, as its kinsman.

The translator rather had his way with this section, too.<sup>69</sup> First he headed it: 'Spayne compleyneth that Stilico wil not rule' and continued:

---

<sup>65</sup> Add. 11814, f. 6, line 5; f. 21, line 356.

<sup>66</sup> John Watts in the *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>67</sup> Spain is clothed in 'reede clothe powdrid with golde beemys', while the Latin has 'golden Tagus [the river] woven into her shining robe'. This could be a reference to the heraldic colours of Castile (red and gold, because of the gold castle on a red field).

<sup>68</sup> Add. 11814, f. 15v.

<sup>69</sup> Add. 11814, f. 16, lines 251-56.

Alle my desires evir unto me Stilico til now hath grauntyd,  
 Which to no thyng is envious founde but to his own worshippe.  
 His fadir lawe, themperour, from sceptres he might have putte,  
 And have contemptyd his sonne in lawe, which emperour also  
 was.  
 Yf he nyl rule of worlde which wolde be rulyd by hym,  
 As nere kynnesman yit lete him take rule of themperours hous.

This again bears little relation to the original text, in which Spain merely adds her voice to the other pleas to Stilicho to become consul. She in particular does so because the dead emperor, Theodosius, was a Spaniard and therefore his son, Honorius, the emperor whom Stilicho served, was Spain's 'kinsman'. The translation, in so far as it can be called a translation, sounds much more suggestive, with its repeated use of word rule 'Stilicho wil not rule', 'rule of worlde', 'rule of themperours hous', and, most curious of all, the mistranslation: 'his father-in-law, the emperor, from his sceptre he might have put and have contemned his son-in-law'. This is the translator's own invention and only he knew what he really meant, but it is relevant that in late 1444 Richard of York had begun to take an interest in his claim to the Castilian throne derived from his grandmother, Isabel, daughter of Pedro I of Castile. This claim was advertised and maintained by his son, Edward IV, until 1467, and never quite forgotten by the house of York.<sup>70</sup> Only in this direction did York harbour any illusions about kingship in the mid 1440s, and as we know from Osborn Bokenham's *Life of St Mary Magdalene* the inmates of Clare Priory knew the details of this claim.<sup>71</sup>

The theory that the book had a limited audience is supported by another poem produced at Clare Priory, in 1456, the 'Dialogue between a Layman and a Friar', which has a claim to being included in York's 'library'.<sup>72</sup> This, too, sings the praises of Richard of York while at the same time celebrating York's family, the friary itself and the earlier lords of Clare. This, too, is very cleverly composed, edited in a Latin and an English version on the same sheet of

---

<sup>70</sup> Goodman and Morgan, 'Yorkist claim', *passim*, esp. p. 66. The claim is spectacularly visualised in the so-called Philadelphia Roll, Philadelphia Free Library MS Lewis E 201, where at the top Edward IV's horse trappings include the arms of Leon and Castile with those of France, England and Brutus, and at the foot of the roll the three lines of descent, yellow for England, blue for France and red for Castile and Leon make colourful frames about the names of Richard of York and all his children; illustrated in Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, pls VIII a and b.

<sup>71</sup> See Goodman and Morgan, 'Yorkist claim', p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> The picture at the top of the roll, of the layman asking questions about the friary and its patrons, and the friar answering them, was probably painted in the same area as the Claudian marginal decoration, Scott, 'Lydgate's Lives', p. 356n.

vellum.<sup>73</sup> This, too, has no significant political content, even though by the time it was made the duke of York had shown some of his intentions and been regent once. The roll follows the line of the lords and ladies of Clare from the foundation of the friary to the 1 May 1456. When explaining York's descent from Lionel of Clarence, 'Kyng Edwardis son the third was he', its tone is merely informative, not suggestive, and Lionel is only included because he married Elisabeth, daughter of William de Burgh, Earl of Ulster and Lord of Clare. York himself receives high praise; the Latin reads (my translation):

From them [Richard of Cambridge and Anne Mortimer] Richard was born, sweet smelling like spikenard, who is called duke of York by right of his father. His sword shines forth, he is glorious in his titles and war triumphs. Nature gave him many talents, and fortune adorned him with great gifts. May he also have the blessing of a long life, happy and virtuous, and be redeemed at the end.<sup>74</sup>

The English has:

But hir son Richard which yet liveth, is  
Duke of Yorke by discent of his fadir  
And hath Marchis londis by right of his modir.

It is possible the Latin is so much more elaborate because the flowery words came more easily to the author in that language – at least one combination of words is borrowed directly from a classical source.<sup>75</sup> There is no indication of any political double meaning, neither in the Latin itself, where, one could argue, it would be hidden from the eyes of illiterate<sup>76</sup> laymen or the uninitiated, nor in the simple English statements. The roll was purely informative. Closely comparable is the so-called Rous Roll, made by John Rous (c. 1411-1491),

---

<sup>73</sup> *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, gen. ed. A.E. Hartung, 9 vols, New Haven, Conn., 1967-93, vol. 3, VII, ed. F.L. Utey, no. [38]; the full edition by W. Dugdale, *Monasticum Anglicanum*, 1835 edn, vol. 8, pp. 1599-1600, is the best, many others are riddled with errors. See also A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, "Richard liveth yet": an old myth', *The Ricardian*, vol. 9 (1991-93), pp. 266-69; the same, *Richard III's Books*, pp. 3, 23, 25, 146n, 148, fig. 50, pl. III.

<sup>74</sup> *Ut nardus redolens quinimmo Ricardus / Hinc nascebatur, patris qui jure vocatur / Dux Eboracensis, cujus praefulgurat ensis / Bellorum titulis gloriosus atque triumphis. / Cuique natura donavit munera plura / Et fortuna suis hunc pinxit dotibus amplis; / Gratia succurrat, quod longo tempore vivat / Foelici vita virtutibus et redimita.*

<sup>75</sup> *cujus praefulgurat ensis*; the combination of words is so rare that it must derive from Statius, *Thebais*, book 7, lines 501-02: *Quem non permoveas? Longae tua iussa cohortes expectant, multoque latus praefulgurat ense ....*; or from Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, book 3, line 119: *strictoque vias praefulgurat ense.*

<sup>76</sup> In the medieval sense of 'not knowing Latin'.

chaplain of Guy's Cliff near Warwick between 1477 and 1485.<sup>77</sup> Rous was an antiquarian who wished to inform people about the place he loved and to do so he had carefully collected and studied historical material and brought it together in a twenty-four feet long roll with sixty-six pictures and accompanying text; he made a Latin as well as an English version and part of the information celebrated the earls of Warwick, his lords and patrons, and their ancestors. It is not necessary to conclude from the similarities that the makers of these two rolls ever met each other or saw each other's work. What they did share was a love of the place they lived in, an interest in history and scholarship to match, an admiration for the Latin language and a healthy desire to please their patrons.<sup>78</sup>

We have learned that in the 1440s, possibly within the literary circle of local gentry and intelligentsia which flourished in East Anglia, York was considered learned enough to appreciate an unusual edition with translation of a difficult Latin text. His person and his patronage of Clare priory inspired scholarly writers in the 1440s and 1450s to sing his praises in a unique way – for what he had achieved, not for what he should have been. The neat little book with the Claudian translation, decorated with York's devices and full of praise and comfort, may have been the focus of a formal visit to Clare Priory,<sup>79</sup> or perhaps it was a New Year's gift in 1445-6 – it is not known where York spent the Christmas period, but he was in England.<sup>80</sup> Both the Claudian and the Clare Roll may have remained in Clare Priory to inform and amaze visitors.

It was many years after the crisis of 1445, in the late 1450s, that York appeared to be ready to claim his full birthright. Also in the 1450s he acquired a fashionable but simple book of hours for personal use – it contained many prayers he could say while mass was celebrated by his own priest at his own portable altar and it offered private, but clear and conscious references to important 'royal' saints, such as St Edward the Confessor, St George and the Three Kings of Cologne. While praying to them he could think his own thoughts, but even in this most private book he did not go as far as changing his coat of arms to the 'hole armys of Inglonde with owte any dyversyty',<sup>81</sup> which he did display in 1460, openly and deliberately, when he returned from Ireland and proceeded to claim the crown itself.

---

<sup>77</sup> *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, vol. 9, XXI, ed. E.D. Kennedy, no. [78]; *A Catalogue of English Medieval Rolls of Arms, Aspilogia*, I, ed. A.R. Wagner, London 1950, pp. 116-20.

<sup>78</sup> See also A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard III's books: ancestry and 'true nobility'', *The Ricardian*, vol. 9 (1991-93), pp. 343-58, esp. 350-52 and nn. 41, 45.

<sup>79</sup> The Rous Roll was perhaps shown to Richard III and his family in Warwick in 1483, Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, p. 146; Pietro Carmeliano's Latin 'Life of St Katherine' was presented to Richard in 1484/5, as a New Year's gift, *ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *York*, p. 51.

<sup>81</sup> *Gregory's Chronicle*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden, n.s. 17 (1876), p. 208; Johnson, *York*, p. 214.