

Chapter 5. 'Properties', salvation and social order in late-medieval England

This chapter and the next look at 'Properties' on the next major stage of its journey through the Middle Ages. This is the later-medieval context of war, famine and plague in which noble lay patrons commission prose translations of 'Properties' into vernacular European languages; in which manuscripts of the Latin text, in whole or in part, proliferate in Europe; and in which readers and writers refer to Bartholomew as an authority on the properties of the natural world.

We saw in the last chapter that in the first half of the thirteenth century the Catholic church was facing great challenges to its authority from opponents and detractors from outside and from within. In the Friars Minor it had an evangelising brotherhood with a mandate to travel, however arduously, and committed to preaching without payment. With the papacy's support, small groups of friars made their way across Europe, across the English Channel and thence across the Irish Sea. The friars first arrived in England in 1224 and in Ireland by 1230.¹ Little more than a decade later, Bartholomew's finished work could have been available to support the Order's efforts.

The time and the manner of the first arrival and dissemination of 'Properties' in England are matters of speculation, but need to be seen in the context of the church's insistent focus upon preaching and scholarship at a time of social upheaval, when the secular and regular clergy were perceived to be performing poorly. Its reception and transmission over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries must also be seen against the background of the long-term effects of the Black Death that were undermining traditional social norms; of recurrent warfare between the kings of England and France; and of the competitive culture of Christian chivalry, with its supporting texts, that was shared by the inter-related nobility of both countries. This chapter examines how far Bartholomew's world-book could have found a ready reception among English speakers, listeners, writers and readers during these troubled times: whether they were the poor, finding solace in its homely *exempla*; or the wealthy, responding to its endorsement of a divinely ordered system of status, and to its possibilities as a material commodity.

The friars in England

We have a partisan record of the arrival of the first friars in England in the account of the English Franciscan Thomas of Eccleston (floruit 1240–50), who records, barely a generation after the event, that in the early years of the Order in England, the friars received support from clerics and laity who supplied plots

of land and recruits. Countess Loretta, 'a noblewoman who lived as an anchoress at Hackington', cherished the friars 'and discreetly exercised her influence' to obtain favour for the four Friars Minor and five lay-brothers who arrived at Canterbury in 1224.² From the start, the brotherhood of Minorites comprised a novel type of educated religious available to aid the devotions of noblewomen as well as men. Kings Henry III and Edward I gave money to the Order, and over three reigns Queen Eleanor of Provence, Queen Margaret and Queen Isabella of England founded and financed the London Greyfriars and their church.³ Favours were forthcoming from clerical and lay sources — for example, from Simon of Langton, brother of the Archbishop of Canterbury — and from Sir Henry of Sandwich, a wealthy merchant who gave land to the friars in 1225. Eccleston tells us that recruitment to the Order gathered momentum across all ranks.⁴ By 1240, when Bartholomew was completing 'Properties' in Magdeburg, at least 29 English houses had been established; the first in the west midlands, followed by the south-east.⁵

With them the friars brought their training in preaching, their knowledge of popular stories and songs, and their experience of how to communicate with people of all ranks. Whether they brought books, we do not know. There is an absence of firm information about the first copies of the Latin 'Properties' to arrive in England, when they were brought, and whether by Franciscan preachers. At the time of the friars' first arrival in England the Order was still grappling with the practical and ideological problems of absolute poverty and the use of books. It was not until the end of the century that papal directives legitimised the owning of property, including books, for the Minorites' use, bringing them into line with the Dominicans. It is reasonable to speculate that 'Properties' may have come to the notice of English readers through preachers from the continent, where it had been available for copying under the Paris *pecia* system at the end of the century.⁶ 'Properties' was a suitable, available work that met the needs of students, chaplains and preachers, providing *exempla* and stories with which to enliven their teaching. It also met the needs of scholars for a comprehensive, authoritative world book and useful compendium of sources.

The friars were initially welcomed as chaplains in the households of wealthy laity and as sympathetic pastors of the poor. These are two possible points of entry for 'Properties', both orally and as manuscripts, into wider circulation in England. One can imagine the difficulty of taking even Bartholomew's handy compendium on a long journey, but an illustration in a manuscript of Rubruck's journey to the land of the Tartars shows two friars with staves, each with a book slung on his back, suggesting that books were carried far afield in this way.⁷ It is on record that in the fourteenth century Charles VI of France gave a safe-conduct to a Minorite who had bought four books in Paris, including

'Properties', and who wanted to return with them to London.⁸ By the mid-fourteenth century, and possibly earlier, 'Properties' was a valued possession and reference work held in several private, college and monastery libraries in England. Its content was thus available to clerics of different levels of education, and to laypeople within the social networks that had access to these libraries.⁹ Thomas Eccleston records that in the 1240s lecturers were appointed at the Franciscan houses and '[g]radually the gift of learning spread abroad over the whole English province'.¹⁰ This implies the kind of network of exchange, borrowing and bequest that broadens the readership of a valued work.

Social order and disorder

There is evidence that at the time of the friars' establishment in the British Isles, events were challenging the ideal of a triple-layered organisation of society described by a fourteenth-century sermon writer: 'For in erthe byn iij degrees of folke and all schuld loue God aboue all thyng. Telynge and laborers is on of tho. Lordes and ladies is anoþer. And men and wemmen of the Churche is the thridde.'¹¹ Maurice Keen summarises the documentary evidence that conditions in late-medieval England placed strains on this system, as each estate suffered a long build-up of economic and demographic distress produced by war, taxation, famine and the long-term effects of the Black Death over the course of the fourteenth century. As the population fell, wages rose, demesnes became unprofitable to farm, and labourers and lords had to re-negotiate longstanding labour relations. In addition, as the lower ranks gained economic strength following the worst of the plague years, recorded legislation shows efforts to keep them in their place, while the regular and secular clergy, including friars, were perceived to be in decline.¹² The friars themselves came under attack for failing to live up to the apostolic ideal, and for usurping the pastoral and clerical work of the clergy.¹³ At the same time, economic changes were adversely affecting relations between landlords and their dependents. More specifically, Paul Hargreaves has examined causes and effects of tensions during the 1380s between the monks of Worcester Priory and its peasants, concluding that such tensions could be of a longstanding nature but were exacerbated by the tendency of peasants after the Black Death to appropriate chattels attached to peasant holdings, and in many cases to abscond with them. The more oppressive the conditions of tenancy, the more peasants resorted to flight. This helped to effect changes in the character of medieval property relationships.¹⁴ E. B. Fryde finds a very similar response to harsh treatment on the Norfolk estates of Margaret Beaufort: account rolls and court rolls for the 1370s to 1390s show tenants choosing to flee with the estate's chattels rather than to pay dues, to the detriment of the estate.¹⁵ The eighteenth-century chronicler of the Berkeley family and its estates in the west of England, John Smyth, records how in the mid-1380s Lord Berkeley, like many other lords of manors, turned to leasing out his lands

'instead of manureing his demesnes in each manor with his own servants, oxen, kine, sheep ... under the oversight of the reeves of the manors'.¹⁶ Under such conditions longstanding bonds between lords and labourers broke down: in response, the wealthy sought greater distinction of rank by means of new sumptuary laws, and the display of lineage through the tools and texts of chivalry and the making of parks. Enclosures for sheep-pastures and sumptuous parklands, however, caused additional suffering and resentment as tenant farmers were evicted.¹⁷

'Properties' moralised

Whether or not writers name Bartholomew, we know that 'Properties', with its affirming, normative representations of labour and reward, of lordship and the *familia*, would have fitted the social concerns of English landowners in the fourteenth century. 'Properties' preserved, and made available for preachers and readers, a fundamentally simple and understandable image of hierarchy upon which later interpretations could be based. Bartholomew's descriptions of familiar animals such as asses, oxen and bees fitted the fourteenth-century convention of depicting agricultural labour as a metaphor for Christian life on earth. They also supplied models of harsh treatment. We might wonder, but cannot prove, whether exploited workers identified, through the medium of the mendicant's sermon, with Bartholomew's accounts of the serving woman bought and sold like a beast; with the victims of bad landlords who unfairly exacted tallages; with the dog, an excellent servant to his lord, ending his days lying on the dunghill; and with the overworked, abused and unrewarded ass, who even has his rough but serviceable coat taken from him after death.¹⁸

Echoes of, and references to, Bartholomew do occur in new writings, although it is not possible to say whether writers knew the work directly. A. S. G. Edwards notes that there is a mention in the popular *Ayenbyte of Inwyt* (1340), by the Benedictine Michael of Northgate, of 'a great scholar ... called Bartholomew'.¹⁹ Baudouin van den Abeele has analysed manuscripts of sermon material, the *Stella Clericorum*, that testifies to the later use of animal *exempla* from 'Properties' and from Cantimpré's *De natura rerum* as sources for preaching.²⁰ More than half of the *Contes Moralisés* of the Franciscan preacher and writer Nicolas Bozon (d. c.1340) are thought to be based upon Bartholomew's descriptions of the properties of animals and birds in Books 18 and 12, and of everyday life in Book 6. Another of Bozon's sources, identified by Lucy Toulmin-Smith, is a 'sevenfold Treatise of the Moralities of the heavenly bodies, of the elements, of animals, fish, trees or plants, herbs, and precious stones'.²¹ This is the *Proprietates rerum moralizatae* (or *Liber moralizate*) mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 above.²² Toulmin-Smith observes that Bozon deals with 'the moral aspects of all sorts of affairs in everyday life' including social relations: 'Evidently a man of experience among various orders of society, his sympathies are manifestly on the side of

the poor against their oppression and robbery by rich masters and lords, while many of his stories are pointed against the great and powerful.' However, Bozon distributes blame or admonitions to all classes; several of the *contes* treat relations between servants and masters, admonishing faults in both high and low, but not advocating a change in the status quo.²³

Gregory Kratzmann and Elizabeth Gee demonstrate connections between collections of *exempla* made in the early fourteenth century in response to preachers' needs for sermon material. These include the Anglo-Norman *Contes moralisés* and the Latin *Dialogus creaturatum moralizatus*, and the earlier *Proprietates rerum moralizate* mentioned above.²⁴ 'Properties' is a chief source for these three works, but how directly is not clear except perhaps in the case of the *Moralizate*, which clearly has close links to the glosses in 'Properties' (see Chapter 3). It is now agreed that the *Moralizate* is a late-thirteenth-century or early-fourteenth-century abridgement of 'Properties' that highlights its Franciscan teaching, possibly in the light of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, since the author gives it a carefully organised seven-fold form.²⁵ In it, the writer has abstracted passages from 'Properties' Books 8, 4, 12, 13, 18, 17 and 16 and arranged them into seven tracts, explaining the moralised properties or *conditiones* of the heavenly bodies; elements; birds; fishes; animals; trees and plants; and precious stones. John Friedman notes the utility of its detailed index, which names the included subjects and also their *conditiones*: 'Thus the user of the LM may find an item in the work according to the letter or to the spirit.'²⁶ The *Dialogus* also has seven parts: on the heavenly bodies, the four elements, birds, fish, animals, plants, and gemstones. Like 'Properties', it had a long life. Translated into English as *Dialoges of Creatures Moralysed*, it went into print in Holland, copiously illustrated with woodcuts, in 1480 and 1530, probably for an English market and probably as a tool for preachers and as recreational reading for laity.²⁷

The writers of later works on salvation such as *Jacob's Well*, *The Littel Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Prick of Conscience*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and *Destructuorium Viciorum* may also have been indebted, knowingly or unknowingly, to Bartholomew. At least some of them seem to use the glosses as well as the column text of 'Properties'. Bartholomew's learned yet lively *exempla* found their way into recorded sermons such as those of John Bromyard, Thomas Wimbleton, John Waldeby and other popular preachers.²⁸ These and, no doubt, as yet undiscovered sources testify that while there was much new Latin and vernacular writing in later-medieval England, at the same time established Latin compendia of authorities, including 'Properties', were being preserved, owned, read and borrowed from on both sides of the English Channel, as Seymour's studies of ownership have shown.²⁹ We must conclude that their content fed into the pool of ideas available to writers, preachers and artists making new

works for their own time. As Michael Twomey points out, a reception history of a medieval compilation such as 'Properties' is not likely to reveal clear lines of derivation; it should take into account the fluidity of medieval texts and their intertextual exchanges over time.³⁰

Labouring and voyaging

The fourteenth-century Franciscan author of the sermons found in the *Fasciculus Morum* is another preacher who demonstrates that certain moralisations preserved in 'Properties' had become part of a pool of conventional imagery available to writers. He includes at least one passage that is extremely close to Bartholomew's wording, although without any such acknowledgement. Apparently echoing 'Properties' Book 13 on the sea, the preacher elaborates on the trope of the pilgrimage of the soul in his example of the person who 'has his own body for his ship in which he carries a most precious merchandise, namely his soul ... Reason, our captain, sits at the stern, which means that he must remember the wretchedness of his beginning. The mast in this ship is hope.' The world is an ocean of danger for the soul: 'Hidden rocks and sandbanks, sirens, Scylla, Charybdis, currents of pitch are the dangers at sea to be feared.'³¹

Similarly, the author of *Dives and Pauper* uses the imagery of the sea voyage to illustrate how a person, like a steersman:

... must stondyn in thee last ende of his schip & of his lyf and thinkyn of hys deth and of his ende, how mischeuouslyche & how perlyously he shal wendyn henys, & how, whiþyr, ne whanne woot he neuere; & in that maner he schal best steryn the schip of his lyf to the sykir hauene of heuene blysse.³²

The two authors just quoted may not agree about why one should sit in the stern of the boat, but their common use of the allegory shows its currency and its flexibility. 'Properties' need not have been the only available source of the idea of pilgrimage across the sea of worldly life. Indeed, it has been suggested that by the end of the century the trope of the ship of the soul was a worn cliché in the mouths of Franciscan friars.³³ At any rate, we know from maps, misericords and other graphic representations that fourteenth-century and later viewers could contemplate perdition in the forms of the siren, or of Scylla and Charybdis, whether or not they were directly acquainted with Bartholomew's work.³⁴

The parable of the vineyard, which as we saw earlier is such an important source of Bartholomew's imagery, became another well-worn but very flexible source of representations of labour, reward and lordship.³⁵ It appears as a motif in fourteenth-century devotional literature, but it also provides a setting in poems and sermons for dramatisations of labour relations between ranks. In the poem *Pearl* and in other devotional works, it becomes a vehicle for doctrines about

grace, eternal life and mystical *unio* with God.³⁶ As in Gower's *Vox Clamantis* and Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, we find the figure of the ploughman and his co-labourers the ass, the ox and the dog used to represent ideals of obedient service and the subversion of those ideals. We can see from many literary examples that the figure of the ploughman with his oxen, itself a microcosm of hierarchy, provided an extremely adaptable and powerful image that could represent the Lord and the preacher or Langland's Christian seeking Do-well; but also the ordinary labourer in the field, the oppressed labourer feeding the spendthrifts of the land.³⁷ In a late-fourteenth-century Lollard sermon, God Himself is 'an erþe tilier ... in whose teme alle Cristen men shulden draw as oxen, vnder þe softe and liȝt socke of loue'; but the preacher, though unworthy, is himself 'set here at þis tyme to dryue þis worþi teme' of parishioners with the goad of sharp sentences.³⁸ Recalling Bartholomew's vignettes of the ox and the ox-herd in Book 18, we can see how they can represent different ideals of labour from the perspective of the different estates.

Models of good behaviour ...

In the context of protracted unease following the death of Richard II in 1399 we find the writer of *Dives and Pauper*, in about 1410, drawing on 'Properties', either in the Latin form or in Trevisa's translation, for examples of proper relations between high and low. He dwells upon the mutual obligations of each and the necessity for each to maintain his place for the support of the whole social structure — it is Pauper who preaches, and Dives who learns, analogous perhaps to those of the first estate who instruct those of the second. The treatise is organised as a sequence of sermons or meditations on each of the Ten Commandments. The writer may have been a Franciscan friar, and another proper relation implicit in this treatise is that of preacher and audience. The sermon on each commandment contains colourful examples, parables and stories from the Old Testament and other sources. On the precept 'Thou shalt not kill', *Pauper* refers to Bartholomew as 'Master of Kind' when citing him on the properties of the insinuating adder:

Also flatereris ben lykenyd to a neddere þat is clepyd dipsa, whiche, as seith þe Maystir of Kende, libro xviii, he is so lytil þat þou a man trede þeron he may nout sen it, but his venym is so violent þat it sleth a man or he felyth it & he dyyth withoutyn peyne.

Also, flatterers are likened to the adder that is called *dipsa*, which, as the Master of Kind says in Book 18, is so little that a man may tread on it without seeing it, but its venom is so violent that it kills a man before he can feel it and he dies painlessly.³⁹

Later in the same Commandment, he uses an example from Bartholomew to illustrate harmony and discord in Christian life, referring back to Bartholomew's biblical source:

Tellyt þe Mayster of Kende, lib.xviii, þat þous þe harpe be wel stryngyd with stryngis mad of a schep & þer be on stryng þat is mad of a wolf set in þat harpe it schal makyn alle oþere at discord, so þat þei schul nout mon acordyn whil it is þere, & it schal fretyn on two alle þe oþere cordis. Ryȝt so, þey man or woman kepe wel alle þe comandementis as to manys syȝthe, ȝif he breke on he is gylty of alle in Godis syȝthe, as Sent Iamys seith.

The Master of Kind, in Book 18, says that even if a harp is well strung with strings made of sheep gut, if there is one string made of wolf gut set into that harp it will make all the others out of tune ... Just as, though a man or woman keeps all the Commandments well in the sight of mankind, yet if he or she breaks one he or she is guilty of breaking them all in the sight of God, as St James says.⁴⁰

In particular, the fourth Commandment, to obey one's parents, provides the writer with an opportunity to make the point that rich and poor, high and low, young and old must observe each other's needs as well as the precepts of scripture for society to be stable; worldly riches do not absolve great ones from the Commandments and do not last. To illustrate care of dependants in general, the author draws on 'The Master of Properties' for the stories of the stork and of the pelican to represent ideal relations of mutual care, dominance and subordination on the text of the Commandment 'thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother'.⁴¹

The writer goes on to create a further metaphor of society as a structure with interdependent parts, in the image of the tree unshaken by tempest. If each level of the tree holds to its allotted role, the social body will remain firm: the canopy of the tree is like the lords and great men; the tempest is that of pride and sin; the root is the commons, which must hold firm for the tree to survive.⁴² The idea of the tree's roots as that which sustains and supports the body of the tree (like the root that nourishes the plant, and the body of a beast which sustains all the limbs and members) was available in the Latin 'Properties' and in the English *Properties*, in Books 17 and 18. Besides the pelican and the tree, the stone called 'crisolite' is another created thing whose properties make it a reminder of the fifth commandment, and again the author refers to the 'Master of Kind's' words on 'crisolite' and its supposed ability to record the passage of time.⁴³ The author of *Dives and Pauper* offers the reader entry points into an interwoven set of ideas that is also a schema of salvation: pelican, stork, tree, crisolite, ageing, deference to elders and betters, passage of time, arrival at evening. For this

complex intellectual purpose the writer invokes a scholarly authority: the Master of Properties, or Master of Kind. But, while this allows us to conclude that Bartholomew had acquired a certain status among scholars, we cannot assume that he was being quoted at first hand.

The second estate had the task of protecting and ruling the realm, and some of those perceived to fail in this have been pinned down for us in caustic verse, under the guise of animals. In the late years of Richard II's reign, the unknown author of the satire *Mum and the Sothsegger* concealed criticism of the court using the bee community as an ideal of industrious citizenship in the garden of England, bothered by pests. The bees forage in a fertile landscape where labourers, beasts and birds can be seen in productive and pleasing array. In a lyrical passage the narrator describes the delights of this domain, where the franklin, 'gardynere of þis garth', keeps all in order, including his beehives. He is busy killing drones as they fly back to the hive — creatures which do not fulfil the natural function of bees but, parasitically, consume the honey. In a polemical passage on 'þe bee-is bisynes' as an example of social equity and order, the speaker cites Bartholomew on 'The bomelyng of þe bees, as Bartholomew vs telleth', in which each bee knows the others' voices, their king rules mercifully, with king and bees supporting each other, while the drones simply 'deceipuen þaym and doon no þing elles'. The franklin assures the narrator that the drones will be discovered and killed, 'As Bartholomew þe Bestiary babliþ on his bokes'.⁴⁴ This line suggests that the relevant parts of 'Properties' could have the function of a bestiary for people of this time, helping to preserve, with its details and sources, the example of the bee as virtuous, obedient and industrious and of the drone as a mere parasite. Day and Steele consider that the narrator's source is 'ultimately' Bartholomew if not directly, and that he is selective — omitting Bartholomew's description of bees that desert a weak king to join a stronger. This would be in keeping with the poet's wish to present an analogy with strong rule and loyal, industrious subjects.

... and bad behaviour

The estates' mutual dissatisfactions and distrust are recorded by chroniclers, polemicists and satirists during the fourteenth and into the fifteenth centuries — mostly from the point of view of the governing ranks. Voicing the anxieties of those threatened by peasant unrest, John Gower in *Vox Clamantis* — completed in 1381, the year of the Peasants' Revolt — surveys the three estates of Richard's realm and takes to task, at length and in detail, the first and second estates for failing in their duty and allowing the rebellion to occur: ideally 'There are the cleric, the knight, and the peasant, the three carrying on three [different] things. The one teaches, the other fights, and the third tills the fields.'⁴⁵ He depicts a nightmare vision of the commons in the form of beasts, over-running

the fertile garden of the land, from which emerged the jackdaw 'Wat' [Tyler], and John Ball.⁴⁶ In the forefront, rebellious asses 'contrary to nature' were carried away by sudden revolt, and no longer useful: 'They refused to carry sacks to the city any more and were unwilling to bend their backs under a heavy load.' They defied nature, wanting the tails of tigers, the horns of wild beasts, and the trappings of horses. An ox ran amok 'contrary to its rightful duties' and forgetful of 'its own nature'; swine and dogs rebelled, the cat no longer followed 'its natural ways' but joined with the fox in unnatural alliance with the dogs; the ranks of birds exchanged colours, calls and natures in horrible confusion, domestic and wild no longer separated. The scenes epitomise confusion of natural order, as Gower emphasises in the midst of this nightmare.⁴⁷

Gower uses a political rhetoric in which the 'natural' or 'unnatural' properties of animals serve for oblique comment on human behaviour. We know that Bartholomew, in his accounts of the properties of the bee, cow, dog, ass and ox, stresses their natural and useful properties: the ass, for example, is a melancholy, cold and dry animal, naturally heavy, slow and sluggish, stolid and uncomplaining, burden-carrying, long-suffering, used to lowly and scant food.⁴⁸ His descriptions of the ideal and 'natural' properties of the workers who were supposed to serve patiently at the bottom of society can help us to appreciate the drama of Gower's vision of the 'unnatural' ass, ox and other beasts, threatening society's very foundations. Conversely, we have better insight into Bartholomew's emphasis on the plight of the superannuated dog and ass if we consider it in the light of early Franciscan involvement with the poorest in society.

'Properties' and a noble English family

For the above writers, 'Properties' was an available work that presented an image of the created world within a divinely ordered cosmos, but that also focused attention upon the physical world in all its immense variety and significance, spiritual and material. It could appeal to both clergy and laity. While the Latin 'Properties' continued to be disseminated among clerics and held safely in abbey libraries, its earliest known associations with England place it in the south-west, at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire, in a secular household of local nobility who maintained a strong connection with the work over three centuries.

Thomas Eccleston records that some time after 1240 the Franciscan brothers at the Gloucester house (established by 1230), having parted with some ground at an earlier date, managed to regain it 'with considerable difficulty from Lord Thomas Berkeley only through the wisdom and favour of his lady'.⁴⁹ This lady was Joan, wife of Thomas I (1170–1243). As a widow, in about 1250 she 'essentially refounded' the town of Wotton-under-Edge in the neighbourhood of Berkeley Castle, earning the title *domina de Wotton*.⁵⁰ There is no evidence

that Joan employed a Franciscan chaplain or confessor, but as an interested and influential person who championed the local friars, and whose husband had given them land, she exemplifies the kind of opportunity that existed for friars to become integrated into the upper ranks of English landed society as well as with the poor of the towns — an opportunity for them to introduce their own reading material, attitudes and image of the world.

We lose sight of Joan but there is evidence that the work came into the possession of her daughter-in-law Lady Johanna Berkeley (d.1310), who married Lord Thomas Berkeley II (1245–1326) in 1267, and that it circulated back to a clerical library as a valued commemorative item. This is witnessed in a donation made to the friars before 1310, recorded in a discarded list of donations to the Ipswich Franciscan house (established 1226).⁵¹ One listed donor was *domina Johanna de Berkele*, who also left songs both sacred and secular, stories, saints' lives, glossed books of the Bible, liturgical items and *Hugonem de arca Noe* (which, as we saw in the last chapter, was a text concerning salvation, associated with a form of world map).⁵² Bartholomew stands in this list alongside other religious texts, implying high status in the library of a well-read laywoman who considered it worthy of a commemorative function. Her bequest supplements other evidence that 'Properties' may have been circulating in the west country by early in the fourteenth century.⁵³ It also situates the work within the Berkeley family, members of which continued to be patrons of learning and letters over several generations. According to Smyth, the eighteenth-century Berkeley steward and chronicler, Thomas Berkeley III (d.1361) sponsored 'an hopeful scholler' of the neighbourhood and founded numerous chapels and chantries.⁵⁴ It was under Thomas III that John Trevisa started his translation work. Thomas' first wife, Margaret, founded the grammar school at the local town of Wotton-under-Edge. In the 1390s, his son by his second wife, Thomas Berkeley IV (1352–1417), included 'Properties' among the set of prose texts considered worth the effort and expense of translation at the hands of the clerical servant, John Trevisa, whom he inherited from his father.⁵⁵ Thomas IV's daughter and heiress, Elizabeth, would continue in her family's footsteps as a patroness of letters and especially of translation.⁵⁶

In 1398 Trevisa, of Cornish birth but a long-time resident and chaplain at Berkeley Castle, completed *On the Properties of Things*, a translation of the 19 Books of 'Properties' into the local dialect of the region.⁵⁷ *On the Properties of Things* was not Trevisa's first large literary undertaking for Sir Thomas. In 1387 he had completed his translation of Higden's *The Polychronicon*, another lengthy text.⁵⁸ There is no explanatory prologue at the beginning of any of the extant manuscripts of either *The Polychronicon* or *On the Properties of Things*, and it is only at the very end of the latter that Trevisa gives us a glimpse of himself in the act of signing off: 'þise translaciouns i-ended at Berkeleye, the sixte day of

Feuerer ... the 3eere of my lordes age, Sire Thomas, lord of Berkeley, that made me make this translacioun, seuene and fourty.⁵⁹ To gain some insight into the motivations behind the repeat of such a major undertaking we are obliged to look across the Channel at similar ventures taking place there, and extrapolate from prologues supplied by continental translators of 'Properties' into Italian and French.

'Properties', power and prestige

In 1309, only about 60 years after the original was written, Vivaldo Belcalzer had made an abridged Italian version of 'Properties' in the dialect of Mantua for his patron, Guido Buonalcosi.⁶⁰ In 1372, the work had been translated into French for Charles V by his chaplain, Jean Corbechon. At roughly the same time as the English project was under way (before 1391), an anonymous provençal translator produced the *Elucidari de las proprietatz de totas res naturals*, a translation of 'Properties' into the local béarnaise dialect of Toulouse spoken in the northern part of Foix. The recipient was Gaston 'Phébus', Comte de Foix (d.1391), a young boy at the time.

Lords of their domains

The prologues and illustrations that accompany these translations reveal a new and secular conception of the work among noble readers and patrons of the fourteenth century. Michel Salvat concludes that Belcalzer's aims, stated in a prefatory dedication to his Italian patron, were both theological and political: the first was to put into the vernacular the writings of saints and philosophers in support of the doctrine of Aristotle, the Platonic doctrine being erroneous and contrary to the faith; his second was to transmit the treasury of wisdom to the rich and powerful who had to govern themselves as well as all their subjects. Jean Corbechon in the prologue to his translation of 'Properties', the *Livre des propriétés des choses* made for Charles V, stresses the notion of wisdom informed by knowledge as a necessary adjunct of government. Like Belcalzer, he states that among all human perfections that the royal heart ought to wish for, the desire for *sapience* ought to hold first place. Like the exemplars Solomon, Ptolemy, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Theodosius and the studious Charles himself, a sovereign must acquire *science et sapience* in order to rule with wisdom and justice. In both Italy and France there had come into existence the concept of a ruler who ought to make himself a 'détenteur de la science' to rule his subjects with authority, and that 'Properties' was seen as a means to that end.⁶¹ Donal Byrne concludes from the evidence of illustrations in the béarnais manuscripts that the provençal family of Foix valued knowledge about 'all the matter of nature', and that nature, wisdom and philosophy could form a unified concept for them.⁶² The original copy of Charles V's *Propriétés des choses* is lost, but Byrne offers a reconstruction of its frontispiece which, with the textual additions

of the translator, reveals, he says, 'a new conception of the meaning and use of the encyclopedia, as well as a concerted attempt to draw this authoritative work into the orbit of royal aims and aspirations'. Byrne suggests that the works translated for Charles formed a systematic program of learning, in which *Propriétés* represented the world of nature, now knowable by Charles as it was by Solomon.⁶³

As Maurice Keen notes in his discussion of European chivalric culture, the historical sages referred to in the prologues, such as Solomon, and the Worthies, who included Charlemagne, Arthur, Alexander and Julius Caesar, 'symbolised the significance of a story that was emphatically unconcluded, reminding men at once of the example of the past and that the history of chivalry was still a-making'. Keen adds that in order to understand that story and its immediate implications, an individual needed not only prowess and lineage but also acquaintance with a wide range of associated literature, religious, courtly and historical.⁶⁴

Belcalzer likens his patron to the Nine Worthies, one of whom was Alexander the Great, legendary pupil of Aristotle. This indicates that Bartholomew's inclusion of many references to Alexander and to Aristotle made it a work that could support a materialistic and heroic image of the world as well as a symbolic and moralistic one, for patrons with chivalric interests. A fourteenth-century codex in the British Library, in which 'Properties' Book 15, on peoples and places, is bound together with extracts from the Alexander literature, illustrates such an association. It appears to be a personal and miniaturised compilation of wisdom literature that begins with a copy of Book 15, followed by an extract from Honorius of Autun's *imago mundi*, and extracts from the Alexander literature then available.⁶⁵

The English and the French

The later life and literary achievements of Gaston de Foix may help us to understand this valuation and this concept, and thus to be able to appreciate what 'Properties' could have had to offer him and, by extrapolation, other magnate patrons such as Thomas Berkeley. From what we know of Gaston's life, his recorded devotion to hunting was more than just recreational. The hunting treatise that he wrote consists of two parts, the practical *Livre de chasse* and the devotional *Livre d'oraisons*, which suggests that he found spiritual edification as well as physical satisfaction in his domination of the natural environment of his estates.⁶⁶ Reconstructions of extensive pleasure-parks such as the 2000 acres of Hesdin in northern France, created in 1288, suggest that such a domain could have encompassed a wide variety of terrains and habitats, including vineyards, like a mini-creation. The theory and management practices of estates were similar across European chivalric culture. The typical English hunting park averaged

about 200 acres, and contained coppiced woodland, dense woodland, open pasture with pollarded trees and vistas, ponds and rivers, all designed to protect but also reveal the many animals enclosed within the banked perimeter.⁶⁷ For a nobleman of either country wishing to be seen to possess the full knowledge in practice and also in the form of written authority, 'Properties' would have provided references to ancient authority and covered the necessary ground. Books 17, 18, 13 and 12 treat the flora and fauna likely to be encountered in the lord's domains, including domestic animals and birds, wild game, horses and hounds. Bartholomew includes chapters on the animals and birds of ventry included by Gaston in his treatise (for example deer, hare, badger, otter); on the care as well as the physical and moral properties of hounds and horses; on different kinds of hawk and their capabilities; and on timber trees and crop plants. A glance at the *tabula* of 'Properties' would be enough to show a secular lord, even if he had little Latin, that this work held useful facts about the plant and animal life, terrains and waterways over which he aimed to keep his dominion. Nevertheless, the way Bartholomew draws noblemen's secular contacts with the material world into the theological domain could have helped to sanctify for them their everyday lives, environments and status.⁶⁸

In Book 6 of 'Properties', Bartholomew is explicit about the duties and mutual obligations of lords and servants, and the need for lordship to maintain peace, order and good governance.⁶⁹ John Trevisa makes these chapters resonate for a fourteenth-century secular lord:

And þe fore ristful lordshchipe is i-ordeyend ... For wiþoute a lord myzte not þe comyn profit stonde siker neiþir saaf, compenye of men myzte not be pesible, nothir esy, nothir quyete. For 3if powere and myzte of ristful lordes were bynome and itake away, þanne were malis free and godenesse and innocence neuer siker. So seiþ Isidir.

There is much more on this theme, with further citations from Isidore of Seville, St Gregory, St Ambrose and the Bible to support it. Bartholomew asserts, independently of his sources, that obedience to a lord is an ordained means by which people learn to obey God:

Kende bringiþ forþ alle men iliche in powere and in myzt, but for diuers worthinesses þe despensacioun of Goddis word settiþ som men tofore oþir þat hy þat dredriþ not þe ristwisnesse of God may drede þe punyschinge of mannes strengþe.⁷⁰

It does not seem surprising that those who could see in these words authorisation for their own position as 'set before others' would want this book to circulate among their associates. In this same chapter on the good master, Bartholomew also presents a parallel between the situation of people, where God's dispensation

sets some before others, and the situation of animals, birds and other creatures such as bees:

'Therefore Ambrosius seip þat among bestis kende settiþ hem tofore þat beþ most noble and most strong, and makeþ hem kinges, dukes, and leders of oþir, as it farith among bestis and foules and also among been.'⁷¹

While the clerical or monastic reader could have understood the bees to refer to themselves under their clerical leaders, the secular landowner could have seen in these words a reassuring vision of the ranks of creation over which he or she ruled, bees after all being one of the exploitable creatures on an estate.

We might infer from the cross-Channel examples given by Corbechon and Belcalzer that Berkeley had a similar perception of the writings of the learned and wise as a source of power to be annexed for temporal purposes. Berkeley has been described as the most important baronial castle in the area in the fourteenth century.⁷² Removed as they were from London and holding sway over the western port of Bristol, the Berkeley family wielded great power in their domains. Like Gaston de Foix, Thomas Berkeley IV was a great huntsman. According to John Smyth, 'hee and his brothers have kept out four nights and days together with their nets and dogs in hunting of the fox ... and with this delight of hunting this lord began and dyed'.⁷³ The keeping of hounds, hawks and horses, the buying of land to create new deer parks, and 'sea furnitures in a sumptuous manner' kept for 'delight and recreations' on the river Severn, all indicate both means and leisure. Smyth styled him 'Thomas the Magnificent' in response to his lifestyle and expenditures. Thomas was made Admiral of the Fleet in Bristol, acquiring in effect a private navy. Ralph Hanna notes that his mercantile activities included wool-trading and probable piracy in the Bay of Biscay.⁷⁴

The English and French were at war at the time of the vernacular translations of 'Properties'. Nevertheless they shared a chivalric culture expressed in hunting, heraldry and a body of literature. It is arguable that a highly important function of the English translation was the matching of Charles's achievement, the countering of Corbechon's interpretation, and the reclamation of Bartholomew for England, especially its south-west midlands. Trevisa already knew from Higden's use in the *The Polychronicon* of material from Book 15 of 'Properties' that Bartholomew had presented the English from the comfortable point of view of a compatriot. The compiler had included the story of Britain's Trojan origins and the descent of its kings from Brutus, and of St Gregory's comparison of its children to angels; and the importance to the south-east English of Canterbury, the site of St Augustine's arrival and of the shrine of Thomas Becket. Kent was the only named part of England singled out by Bartholomew, and Trevisa is fluent in rendering the enthusiastically first-hand account of 'þe plenteouseste

corner of þe world, ful ryche a londe þat vnneþe it nedeþ helpe of any londe'.⁷⁵ Trevisa's rhythmical alliteration may reflect a clerical reverence:

Kent is a prouynce in Ynglonde vpon þe Brutissh ecean, þe chief cite þereoffe hatte Canterburye. And þe londe bereþ wele corne and fruyte and haþ many woodes, and is mooste with welles and ryuers and is noblicche yhiste with hauens of þe see, and ryche of ricchesses and chief in holsomnes of heuene.⁷⁶

Trevisa is fluent, too, in rendering Bartholomew's full and fulsome treatment of the English rose: 'Among alle floures of þe worlde þe flour of þe rose is chief and bereþ þe prys, and þefore ofte the chief partie of man, þe heed, is crowned with floures of rose, as Plius seith ...' For the pious reader these words could evoke the image of the martyrs crowned, or of the Virgin; but also an image of Englishness that would grow in political significance.⁷⁷ Trevisa did not need to add or subtract anything in his translation of Bartholomew's accounts of Britain, of Kent, or of the rose. Corbechon, on the other hand, working on the *Livre des propriétés des choses* during the Hundred Years' War, had been obliged to make certain changes. Besides the addition at the end of Bartholomew's chapter on the lily, stating that it was doubly superior to all other flowers, he criticises Bartholomew's biased opinion concerning Brittany and modifies the statement on the German origin of the name of France, to accommodate a Trojan hero for the French genealogy.⁷⁸ Trevisa's *Properties* can help us to feel something of the complex dynamics of territorial allegiance at that time. For example, as we read the warmly approving account of Brittany in Book 15, we can imagine its emotive force for people like the Cornishman Trevisa and the people of the Bristol area, who might well feel kinship with Cornwall and Wales and the other Celtic provinces. In Trevisa's words, Bartholomew states that Brittany ('þe lesse Bretayne') is really an offshoot of Britain ('þe more Bretayne') so that the Bretons are in fact Britons of a slightly inferior quality: 'And þeise þis Bretayne be worþi and noble in many þinges, 3it may noust the douster be pere to þe modir.'⁷⁹

The Berkeleys and the king

Hanna notes that Berkeley was expelled from his court post in the conflict between Richard and the Appellants and that this conflict followed him to Gloucestershire.⁸⁰ In spite of Richard II's attempts to make an alliance with Charles VI and his second marriage to the French princess Isabel in 1396, hostilities were to be renewed by Henry V in 1415. Richard II's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, with his military library and deep distrust of the French, was one English nobleman who opposed peace negotiations.⁸¹ Berkeley may well have had similar views reflected in Trevisa's translation of 'Properties'. The record of Thomas IV's troubles with local lawless men in the king's pay shows the

effects of the factionalism being generated at this stage of Richard II's reign, and Trevisa's own involvement in support of his lord. Richard II visited Berkeley in 1386 and may have had a particular interest in it as the place where his great-grandfather Edward II had died, but the visit may have been a tense one for both guests and hosts. In the 1380s, as Trevisa was working there as chaplain and translator for the Berkeley family, Richard was enlisting support from the people further north, especially in Cheshire, and favouring the city of York after his quarrel with London.⁸² Patronage was a means of giving support to dependents and legitimising aspirations to leadership in society. When Berkeley commissioned from his chaplain translations of Higden's *Polychronicon* and Giles of Rome's *De Principe* he was not only satisfying his own thirst for knowledge; he was also enhancing his reputation at a time when he was being challenged in his domains by the rise of the favourites of King Richard II. To be seen to honour a writer could add greatly to a lord's prestige; it was part and parcel of the process of image-building.⁸³

Trevisa's first translation made for Thomas Berkeley IV in 1386, that of the *Polychronicon*, encompassed the history of Britain and the role in it of legendary and recent Worthies. Berkeley too could have sought to project an image of himself as a worthy man of learning, building a library of books to support his wisdom and skill as a military lord. *Properties* arguably had a place as an informational work in Berkeley's library complementary to that of the *Polychronicon*. Ralph Hanna, discussing the question of the 'usefulness' of Trevisa's texts, points to the comprehensive nature of the main items in the Trevisan translation program (Higden's *Polychronicon* 1386, *De regimine principum*, *Properties* 1398):

Trevisa provided Thomas with a complete analysis of the created world, which placed man among all 'things' (*Properties*); a complete depiction of human activity (in Higden's universal history); and a model for the exercise of control over the world (*De regimine*) ... such works offer models for success and failure in the world.⁸⁴

Or, to extrapolate from Elizabeth Salter's discussion of late-medieval poetry, whereas the *Polychronicon* can be said to present a 'typological' account of creation and peoples down the ages, *Properties* presents a 'structural' image of the world predicated upon the doctrine of promise, fulfilment and reward.⁸⁵ At the same time, the manuscript Arundel 123 allows us to infer that fourteenth-century readers could associate 'Properties' Book 15, the wisdom of Aristotle, and the Worthies Alexander and Julius Caesar. It suggests that Bartholomew's account of the properties of things could support a quantitative and material, as well as qualitative and moralised, image of the world.

Richard Firth Green suggests that the books that Trevisa (and later John Walton under the patronage of Thomas IV's daughter Elizabeth) translated for the

Berkeley family were the very titles that a nobleman would have needed to instruct him in history, in military practice and chivalric ethos, and in the principles of good government.⁸⁶ Sometime between *The Polychronicon* (1386, from the Latin universal history compiled by Ralph Higden c.1350) and *On the Properties of Things* (1398), Trevisa also translated the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (a source of Arthurian matter basic to the chivalric ideal), probably *De Regimine Principum* of Giles of Rome, and Fitzralph's *Defensio Curatorum*. It is instructive to compare this list with the library of the king's uncle, Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, which included *The Polychronicon* and *De proprietatibus rerum* in Latin; *De Regimine Principum*; Vegetius' *De Re Militari*; epics, romances and poetry and Mandeville's *Travels* in French.⁸⁷ The comparison indicates that the known canon of works translated by Trevisa under the patronage of Berkeley embraced subjects appropriate for a secular nobleman asserting local dominance and promoting a chivalric image of sound learning and lineage.

John Trevisa, a cleric himself, may well have been interested in testing the capabilities of the language for works that combined a devotional with an informational purpose. Waldron sees Trevisa as the introducer of a new genre of faithful prose translation of non-canonical works of historical and scientific information, within a possibly continuous, Alfredian tradition in western England of providing useful learning for nobility.⁸⁸ In the 1380s and 1390s, the Cornish-born Trevisa was an innovator, trying out his adopted Gloucestershire vernacular for new purposes, and striving to convey underlying meaning by using the familiar and, at times, colloquial language of his circle.⁸⁹

It seems important to keep in mind, however, that in spite of Trevisa's care to translate the Latin accurately, giving sense for sense, the vernacular must have imposed a late-fourteenth-century interpretation upon the original. His transformation of *natura* into 'kynde', for example, turns the meaning away from that of divine intermediary towards something more mundane, that of breeding or generation. The situation at Berkeley presents a fascinating parallel with that in London, where Chaucer was using the south-eastern dialect to translate Latin literature and present it in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Richard's court. In Chaucer's work the concept of nature appears as something different again: 'the noble goddess of kind' presiding over the birds in *The Parlement of Foules* is a mythologised and firmly gendered figure far removed both from Trevisa's 'kynde' and Bartholomew's *natura*.⁹⁰

The very provincialism of the Berkeleys suggests a reason for their eagerness for translations and for their appreciation of the Latin 'Properties' as a suitable subject. To Berkeley's desire to exert patronage, and his apparent pride in the English language, could have been added a local inability to take advantage of existing French translations. Trevisa interpolates the comment in *The Polychronicon* that in all the grammar schools of England children are being

taught not in French but in English; the disadvantage being that now 'childern of gramerscole conneþ no more Frensch þan can here lift heele ... Also gentil men habbeþ now moche yleft for to teche here childern Frensch.'⁹¹ This suggests a linguistic divide between the south-west (and Trevisa cites schoolmasters with Cornish names) and the Westminster court which, with its French tutors, visitors, books and later queen, was still to some extent bilingual. The French translation made by Corbechon for Charles V in 1372 may have set a precedent for the English translation of 20-odd years later and, according to Michael Seymour, in educated and courtly circles where there was a growing demand for vernacular books, the *Livre des propriétés des choses* was beginning to establish itself.⁹² Nevertheless, a picture emerges of the Berkeley translation project as a regional undertaking, taking a stance on the appropriateness of English prose for serious English writing, within the context of a general and growing demand by laypeople for devotional and utilitarian literature in the vernacular. At this point in the journey of 'Properties' as it lived on in popular and courtly cultures of late-medieval England, we can see patron and chaplain in a regional setting, responding to challenges that were both linguistic and political.

'Properties' in London

Over time, both the French and English translations of 'Properties' became perquisites of the educated and affluent in London as well as the west country. Ralph Hanna and, more recently, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton open up the question of how the translation became better known in the metropolis among literate laity, including merchants and lawyers.⁹³ Hanna surmises that on the accession of Henry IV, Thomas Berkeley resumed his duties at court and his business affairs in London. He argues that Berkeley supplemented his rural living by urban activities in Bristol and London, and that his agent in London (and legatee) was one Robert Knolles, probably related to the alderman and grocer Thomas Knolles in London, and the grocer and merchant William Knolles in Bristol where Berkeley also had shipping interests.⁹⁴ Berkeley's contact with the merchant Robert Knolles shows that his business network extended beyond his own rank. His business activities, contacts and possession of a house in London enabled him to disseminate among other magnates, who met there from time to time on court matters, literary works translated under his patronage. As evidence, Hanna cites an early manuscript of *On the Properties of Things*, now British Library Additional Manuscript 27944, dated to before 1410 and written in a western dialect by three scribes, one of them ('Scribe D') a prolific westerner whose hand has also been identified in copies of works by Gower and Chaucer.⁹⁵ Similar scribal evidence from a manuscript of Trevisa's *Polychronicon* leads Hanna to conclude that a taste for Trevisan translation existed among the circle of magnates who patronised contemporary courtly verse, and who were Berkeley's parliamentary colleagues. Berkeley's activities in London included active

publicising of his sponsored works among these colleagues and the book trade, and efforts to promote the commissioning of copies.⁹⁶ The active involvement of Scribe D in Berkeley's projects, and the purchase of *On the Properties of Things* by a wealthy lawyer, Thomas Chaworth (1380–1459), supports this view.

Chaworth, of Wyverton, Nottinghamshire, another regional landowner with London connections, commissioned the sumptuous manuscript which is now Columbia University Manuscript Plimpton 263 in about 1440. Chaworth, then, had access to the Berkeley exemplar either personally or through his London agent, the merchant Richard Thorney, and considered it worth the expense of having it copied and embellished. While the record shows that Chaworth inherited his title, was a keen huntsman, the owner of coalmines in Derbyshire, and a Member of Parliament for 40 years, there is nothing in his known library to suggest that he was a scholarly or religious man; rather, that he was a lawyer and man of business. He bequeathed two copies of the *Polychronicon* and some legal works.⁹⁷ His copy of *On the Properties of Things* is not mentioned in his will but it evidently stayed in the family, since the Chaworth manuscript passed to Sir Thomas' kinsman and executor Richard Willoughby at the time of his death, and was later used by Wynkyn de Worde as a copy text for the printing of *On the Properties of Things* in Westminster in 1495.⁹⁸

To sum up this chapter: there are some safe conclusions to be drawn from fragmentary and diverse forms of evidence about the role and reception of 'Properties' in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Bartholomew's accounts of the properties of things entered the pool of popular preaching and devotional material in England, and began to be diffused in written and in oral form before the end of the thirteenth century. The friars provided a channel for communicating ideas about penance and salvation through their preaching, but how far they used 'Properties' directly cannot well be demonstrated. However, it is arguable that some images and ideas are common to both 'Properties' and some of the sermon and devotional literature of the later Middle Ages, and that preaching was one mechanism for their dissemination through different ranks of society. People from all three estates could have imbibed Bartholomew's imagery with or without a clear idea of its source.

Preserved manuscripts in academic settings and in lay libraries testify that 'Properties' had status as a religious authority in the centuries after it was compiled, among the mendicants and also among scholars of other orders who required a moralised or factual compendium of knowledge. More lavish manuscripts of translations of 'Properties' show that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries lay people from the upper layers of society in France, Italy and England, especially, became its owners, patrons and re-writers. In appropriating the compilation they were also taking possession of the authorities within it and, in effect, helping to preserve and pass on the written body of

knowledge that encompassed salvation, history and worldly wisdom. It was the economic, social and political patronage of the work as a prestigious possession that propelled 'Properties' and its compiler into the secular sphere and into noblemen's libraries in the later Middle Ages.

While Bartholomew's sub-textual images of pilgrimage, labour and salvation continued to be meaningful for readers, preachers and writers long after his own time, lay noblemen and women continued to find in the work's allegorical depth and moral authority validation for their secular interests and values. As it was commodified by the wealthy and powerful, the conception of 'Properties' expanded and changed to meet the needs of a range of readers scarcely envisaged by Bartholomew. Publicised involvement with the work imbued the nobleman with both the spiritual *gravitas* and the worldly wisdom seen as necessary for good lordship. Moreover, the idea of the universe as a hierarchical system in which everything has its appointed place suggested, for the comfortably-off, a fundamental stability in the *status quo*. A well-made book that endorsed such an image of the world and society was itself a desirable piece of property. It is safe to assume that for patrons such as Thomas Berkeley and Thomas Chaworth, the English word 'property' implied not only a moral or physical attribute but also the family estate, the ships, the coalmines, the London house and the library.⁹⁹

'Properties' reflected and reinforced belief in the right and duty of lords to hold sway over the 'things' of their demesnes, even if in reality they were leasing out those demesnes and losing control over their peasant labour. Reciprocal obligation between the levels of society was an ideal which the powerful could at least acknowledge (if not put into practice) through their patronage of books of wisdom such as 'Properties', in Latin or the vernacular. This compilation's value to noble patrons lay, arguably, in the fact that it was a ready-made compendium of received wisdom on a multitude of 'things', reflecting the diversity of creation itself. But it also presented an image of the world as the centre of an ordered, hierarchical cosmos, validating the ideal of a clearly-differentiated society ruled by those of highest rank.

NOTES

- ¹ Bartholomew gives us an idea of the remote and fabulous aura surrounding Ireland, an almost mythical island, as hard to reach as Paradise itself: DrP, Bk 15, cap lxxx *De Hybernia*, p.666; cap cxii *De Paradiso*, p.682. It is thought that friars travelled to Ireland from England, establishing houses there in the 1260s: Fitzmaurice, E. B. (OFM), and A. G. Little, eds, *Materials for the History of the Franciscan Province of Ireland*, Vol.9: Manchester University Press, 1920. See Lidaka, 1997, p.395; Moorman, 1968, pp.171–6.
- ² Sherley-Price, pp.1, 15–8. See Cotton, Charles, *The Grey Friars of Canterbury*, Manchester: The University Press, 1924, pp.1–18 for accounts of the arrival of the first friars in England, and documentation of their good relations with clergy and noblewomen in Canterbury.
- ³ Sekules, Veronica, “Women's piety and patronage” in *Age of Chivalry*, edited by Nigel Saul, 120–31, London: Collins and Brown, 1992, p.123; see Cotton, p.37, on Queen Isabella's support of the Canterbury Greyfriars.
- ⁴ Sherley-Price, p.36.
- ⁵ The friaries in or near Hereford, Bristol, Gloucester, Leicester, Nottingham, Salisbury and Stamford were all established before 1230, and at Ipswich before 1236: Moorman, pp.171–2.
- ⁶ See Rouse, R. H. and Rouse, M. A., “*Ordinatio and Compilatio*” in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, edited by M. Jordan and K. Emery Jnr., 113–34, London: Notre Dame, 1992, pp.287, 300; Lidaka, 1997, pp.398–405.
- ⁷ Corpus Christi College, Cambridge Ms 66, f.67, Rubruck's *Itinerarium terrae Tartarorum*: see Little, 1937, p.66 and Plate 21.
- ⁸ Se Boyar, p.186.
- ⁹ Lidaka, 1997, p.393; Seymour, 1974, “English owners”.
- ¹⁰ Sherley-Price, pp.41–2.
- ¹¹ Quoted by Fletcher, Alan J., *Preaching, Politics and Poetry in Late-Medieval England*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998, p.146, from Ms Bodley 95, f.97v.
- ¹² Keen, Maurice, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, London: Allen Lane, 1990, pp.27–47.
- ¹³ The Benedictine Matthew Paris (d.1259), in his *Chronica maiora*, records that two friars sent as envoys by the pope in 1247 came ‘concealing the rapacity of the wolf under the wool of the sheep’, adopting secular dress, behaviour and occupation, and spurning the Franciscan hospice recently built at St Albans: Vaughan, Richard, *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life*, Stroud: Alan Sutton & Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 1993, pp.8, 19–24; see Robbins, Russell Hope, ed, *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, for poems expressing hostility to the friars: for example, “On the Minorites” (1382), pp.157–68; Lydgate's “Advice to the several estates” p.232.
- ¹⁴ Hargreaves, Paul V., “Seignorial reaction and peasant responses: Worcester Priory and its peasants after the Black Death”, *Midland History* XXIV (1999): 53–78.
- ¹⁵ E. B. Fryde, *Peasants and Landlords in Later Medieval England*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1996, pp.248–9.
- ¹⁶ John Smyth, *The Lives of the Berkeleys* (1883), quoted in Keen, Maurice, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, London: Methuen, 1973, p.194; Saul, Nigel, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981, pp.19–21, examines this situation in context.
- ¹⁷ Fryde, pp.191–203.
- ¹⁸ DrP, Bk 6, cap xi *De ancilla*, p.243; cap xv–xix *De seruo* to *De domino et dominio malo*, pp.249–56; Bk 18, cap xxvii *De alii proprietatibus canum*, pp.1039–41; cap vii *De asino*, pp.994–8.
- ¹⁹ Edwards, 1985, p.123.
- ²⁰ Van den Abeele, Baudouin, “Bestiaires encyclopédiques moralisés: quelques succédanés de Thomas de Cantimpré et de Barthélemy l'Anglais”, *Reinardus: Yearbook of the International Reynard Society* 7 (1994): 209–28. *Stella clericorum* is extant in a set of manuscripts from central Europe dating from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries, specifically destined for use by preachers and representing a strain of animal allegory different from that of the bestiary.
- ²¹ Toulmin-Smith, Lucy, “English popular preaching in the fourteenth century”, *The English Historical Review* VII (1892): 24–36, pp.27–34: ‘Out of the 145 titles or subject sections in the book no less than about eighty-five owe their suggestion to passages or notions drawn from Bartholomew's work.’ Hill, Betty, “British Library Manuscript Egerton 613–1”, *Notes and Queries* 223 (1978): 394–409, p.407, notes

that a reference to the badger and his quarrel with the fox, very similar to Bartholomew's description, reappears in Bozon.

²² See Chapter 2, note 2.

²³ Toulmin-Smith, pp.33–4.

²⁴ Kratzmann, Gregory, and Elizabeth Gee, *The Dialoges of Creatures Moralysed*, London and New York: E. J. Brill, 1988, pp.5–25.

²⁵ BN Lat. 3332 f.7v: *Incipit liber de moralitatibus corporum celestium, elementorum, avium, piscium, animalium, arborum sive plantarum et lapidum preciosorum qui vel que in veneranda Scriptura vel alias autentice sub signa et eleganti misterio pulcheriformiter continetur.*

²⁶ Friedman, John B., "Peacocks and preachers: analytic technique in Marcus of Orvieto's 'Liber de moralitatibus, Vatican lat. MS 5935'" in Clark and McMunn, eds, 179–96. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p.185.

²⁷ Kratzmann and Gee, pp.48–50. A related line of enquiry would concern the absorption of BA's teaching into early modern printed works that used animals and plants to discuss human morality, such as emblem literature; see Klingender, pp.354, 489–94. See also Van den Abeele, Baudouin, and Christel Meier, eds, *Moraliserte Enzyklopädie im Wandel von Hockmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit*, Munich, 2002, pp.279–304.

²⁸ Owst, G. R., *Preaching in Medieval England*, Cambridge University Press, 1926, p.192, p.65. There is much research still to be done on uses made of 'Properties' in sermons and sermon notes as yet unpublished: Lidaka (personal communication).

²⁹ Seymour, 1974, "English owners"; Seymour, 1974, "French readers".

³⁰ Twomey, 1999, p.331.

³¹ Wenzel, Siegfried, *Fasciculus Morum: a Fourteenth Century Preachers' Handbook*, Pennsylvania State University, 1989, pp.572–5.

³² Barnum, Priscilla Heath, ed, *Dives and Pauper*, Oxford: The Early English Text Society, 1976, p.273: Commandment IX, cap viii.

³³ Goodridge, J. F., ed, *Langland: Piers the Ploughman*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959, p.333 n.4.

³⁴ For example, a carved misericord in St Botolph's church at Boston, a Lincolnshire fishing port, reminds church-goers of the siren and her deadly songs: see Remnant, G. L., *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969, p.25. The Hereford world map clearly features the siren: see Harvey, 1996, p.8.

³⁵ AV, *Matthew* 20:1–16; Sears, pp.80 foll.

³⁶ See Eldredge, Laurence, "Imagery of roundness in William Woodford's 'De sacramento altaris' and its possible relevance to the Middle English 'Pearl'", *Notes and Queries* 223 (1978): 3–5.

³⁷ Barney, 1973; Dolan, 1994: both Barney and Dolan examine the question of why and how the ploughman came to be a heroic figure in some late-thirteenth-century English writings, tracing back the authority of the labourer to the religious symbolism of the preacher as sower, cultivating human society with the ploughshare of the tongue.

³⁸ This sermon demonstrates how 'knights, priests and ploughmen are categories that may blur under the eye of moral interpretation': Fletcher, p.227.

³⁹ Barnum, Commandment V, Chap. iii, p.5.

⁴⁰ Barnum, Commandment V, Chap. xii, p.29.

⁴¹ Barnum, Commandment IV, pp.308–9. Edwards, 1985, p.123, notes a striking similarity to Trevisa's translation of the relevant passages in *Properties* Bk 12, cap ix *De cichonia*, p.619, and cap xxx *De pellicano*, p.636.

⁴² Barnum, Commandment V, Chap. xxvii, pp.357–8.

⁴³ Barnum, Commandment IV, Chap. xxvii, p.358 line 54. On the properties of crisolite Bartholomew simply says, in Trevisa's words, that a type of *crisolitus* called *crisolentus* 'is ycoloured as golde, and is wel faire in sight in þe morwetyde, and þanne as þe day passeþ his colour wexeþ dym (*Properties*, cap xxviii *De crisolito*, p.841). The passage of the day as a constant reminder of the passage of life was one of the key lessons taught by the parable of the vineyard, reinforced by Bartholomew in Bks 6, 9, 13 and 17 and elsewhere, as discussed in Chapter 3 above.

⁴⁴ Day, Mabel, and Robert Steele, eds, *Mum and the Sothsegger*, London: The Early English Text Society, 1936, pp.52–8. Pace the editors who state that Bartholomew does not mention the killing of the drones (Introduction p.xxv), he does so in Bk 18, cap xii *De ape* (DrP pp. 1013–9).

⁴⁵ Stockton, Eric W., ed, *The Major Latin Works of John Gower: The Voice of One Crying and the Tripartite Chronicle*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962, Bk III, chap. i, p.115 foll. In Books III and IV, Gower reproves the secular clergy, monks, nuns and friars. In Bks V and VI, he deals with men and women of the second estate, and lawyers.

⁴⁶ Stockton, Bk I, chaps i-xvi, pp.51-79. That Gower is referring to the events of 1381 is confirmed by the next event in the dream, the appearance of 'a certain Jackdaw' known as a Wat, assuming the rank of command over the mob, and of John Ball, and the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury; *ibid* pp.65 foll.

⁴⁷ Stockton, Bk I, pp.54–64: 'O what an astonishing thing, when the puny fly tried to surpass the crane in its powers of flight! ... This was the day when everywhere the weak man terrified the strong ... This was the day when the mighty oak suddenly fell, easily uprooted by an ordinary straw.'

⁴⁸ DrP, Bk 18, cap vii *De Asino*, pp.994–8.

⁴⁹ Sherley-Price, pp.37–8.

⁵⁰ Hanna, Ralph III, "Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage", *Speculum* 64 (1989): 878–916, pp.889–901.

⁵¹ Humphreys, K. W., *The Friars' Libraries*, London: The British Academy and the British Library, 1990, p.212. The list survived as the flyleaf for an early fifteenth-century manuscript, now Suffolk Record Office Ms HD 1043/1.

⁵² Humphreys gives the entry as follows: *Domina Johanna de Berkele per fratrem J. de Berwam dedit 11 legendas et chori temporale et sanctorum et istorias 13 Matheum cum glosis Alquini mangni[sic] doctoris 14 Passionarium summam(?) que dicitur Ad omne genus hominum 16 Stelle manentes 17 Benedictus 18 Barlam cum vita Kentigarii 19 Hugonem de arca Noe 20 de proprietatibus rerum 21 primam partem Bible 22 quartum Medie ville et 23 breuiarium.*

⁵³ Hill, p.409.

⁵⁴ Cited by Salter, Elizabeth, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.105, p.311 n.28.

⁵⁵ Hanna, 1989, p.890. The fullest and most recent study of Trevisa's life and work is Fowler, D. C., *The Life and Times of John Trevisa Scholar*, University of Washington Press, 1995.

⁵⁶ Green, pp.144–55. In 1393 Elizabeth Berkeley married Richard Beauchamp, fifth Earl of Warwick, whose coat of arms adorns a deluxe copy of Trevisa's translated *Polychronicon*, now BL Add. Ms 24194: Waldron, Ronald, "John Trevisa and the use of English", *Proceedings of the British Academy* LXXIV (1988): 171–202, p.178. The signature of a later Richard Beauchamp, bishop of Salisbury (d.1481), occurs in a luxury copy of *Properties*, now Pierpont Morgan Library Ms M875, f.6: Seymour, 1975–88 vol.3, p.23. Genealogical information on the Berkeley family is from Gibbs, Vicary, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom*, Vol.2, London: St Catherine's Press, 1912, pp.123–45.

⁵⁷ The absence of Trevisa's known copy-text has led to speculation upon its nature and origins: see Seymour, 1974–88, vol.3, p.1; Lidaka, 1988, p.73.

⁵⁸ Fowler, 1995, provides (pp.248–51) a list of mss of the Trevisa canon; Lawler, 1983; Waldron, 1988, "Trevisa"; and Edwards, A. S. G., "John Trevisa" in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, edited by A. S. G. Edwards, 133–46, Rutgers University Press, 1984, assess his literary achievement.

⁵⁹ *Properties, Complecio tocius operis*, p.1396.

⁶⁰ Rhodes, Dennis E., *Vivaldo Belcazar and the Mantuan Dialect in the Early 14th Century: A Study of BM Ms Add. 8785 with the edition of Bks I, II and XV*, unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 1956.

⁶¹ Salvat, p.393, defines *sapience* as a mixture of knowledge and wisdom: 'à la fois science et sagesse'.

⁶² Byrne, 1981, pp.98–9; see also Byrne, Donal, "The Boucicaut Master and the iconographical tradition of the Livre des Propriétés des Choses", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 92 (1978): 149–64, for insights given by ms illustrations into fourteenth–fifteenth-century French interpretations of BA.

⁶³ Byrne, 1981, pp.97–104, lists the 13 extant illustrated mss of Corbechon's *Livre des propriétés des choses*, from which he deduces an archetypal frontispiece. Each of these mss passed through the libraries of French and Burgundian royalty within the first years of the translation: that is, of Charles V and VI; the House of Orléans; the House of Burgundy; Philip the Bold; and Jean Duc de Berry and his grandson who between them owned four copies of the work in Latin and in French. See Seymour, 1974, "French readers".

⁶⁴ Keen, Maurice, *Chivalry*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, p.123.

- ⁶⁵ BL Ms Arundel 123, British Museum, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the British Museum: Part I The Arundel Manuscripts*, New Series vol.1, 1840, pp.29–30, describes the first item in the codex (ff.1r–23r) as deriving from Isidore of Seville 'and others': *Geographia universalis, ordine alphabetico compilata ex Isidori Hispalensis Originibus, aliisque*. It has a close affinity with DPR, Bk 15 (see Note 83 below). See Appendix A: British Library Manuscript Arundel 123, the contents of the codex.
- ⁶⁶ Tilander, Gunnar, *Gaston Phébus, Livre de Chasse*, Karlshamn, 1971; on the fifteenth-century English translation of Gaston's work by Edward Duke of York, brother of Henry V, see Gray, Douglas, ed, *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp.145–8, 450.
- ⁶⁷ Landsberg, Sylvia, *The Medieval Garden*, London: The British Museum Press, 1995, pp.22–7: Hesdin 'incorporated villages, and was of the same order of size as the great royal Clarendon and Woodstock Parks in England, already founded by Henry I'; 38 English vineyards are recorded in the Domesday Survey.
- ⁶⁸ In the later-fifteenth-century context of English enclosures being enforced by lords for sheep-pasture and parkland (see Fryde, pp.185–208), we find Sir John Fastolf, who lists a copy of the French *Propriétés* in his library in 1450, building himself a palace covering five acres: Twomey, 1999, p.358.
- ⁶⁹ DrP, Bk 6, cap xviii *de bono Domino sive dominio*; cap xix *De malo domino siue dominio*, pp.253–6.
- ⁷⁰ *Properties*, Bk 6, cap xviii *De bono domino*, pp.317–20.
- ⁷¹ Loc.cit.
- ⁷² Saul, 1981, p.258.
- ⁷³ Salter, 1988, pp.105, 311 nn.28–30.
- ⁷⁴ Hanna, 1989, pp.906–7.
- ⁷⁵ DrP, Bk 15, cap xiv, *De Anglia*, pp.631–2.
- ⁷⁶ DrP, Bk 15, cap xxxv, *De Cancia*, p.642.
- ⁷⁷ DrP, Bk 17, cap cxxxvi, *De rosa*, pp.913–5.
- ⁷⁸ Byrne, 1981, pp.100–1; cf. *Properties* Bk 17, *De lilio*, pp.980–2 and Bk 15, *De Francia*, pp.758–9.
- ⁷⁹ *Properties*, Book 15, cap xxviii, *De Britania* (sic), pp.740–1. Waldron, Ronald, "Trevisa's 'Celtic complex' revisited", *Notes and Queries* xx (1989): 303–7, discusses this aspect of the translation project.
- ⁸⁰ Hanna, 1989, pp.882–3; 907–8.
- ⁸¹ M. Keen, 1973, p.289.
- ⁸² M. Bennett, 1992.
- ⁸³ Saul, 1981, pp.166, 176–7. See also Fowler, D. C., "New light on John Trevisa", *Traditio* 18 (1963): pp.289–317, on Trevisa's likely involvement in a larger pattern of violence occurring in Gloucestershire during this period.
- ⁸⁴ Hanna, 1989, p.898, n.50. Higden uses Book 15 of 'Properties' almost verbatim as the first, scene-setting section of the *Polychronicon*; one of his sources is thought to have been the fourteenth-century copy of Book 15 now extant in BL Ms Arundel 123, ff. 5–21r: Taylor, John, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulph Higden*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966, pp.53–7, 82–3. Higden rearranges Bartholomew's text so as to begin with the description of Paradise, leading into the four rivers and the provinces of Asia. He also includes an extract from Priscian's *De orbis dimensione* on Julius Caesar's project to measure the world, which an earlier reader had added to that source (see Appendix A below).
- ⁸⁵ Salter, Elizabeth, "Medieval poetry and the figural view of reality" in *Middle English Literature. British Academy Gollancz Lectures*, edited by J. A. Burrow, 121–40: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.125.
- ⁸⁶ Green, pp.144–55: 'A list of their [Berkeley] translations reads almost like a prospectus of works essential for the formation of a basic aristocratic library.'
- ⁸⁷ Scattergood, 1983, pp.34–5.
- ⁸⁸ Waldron, 1988, "Trevisa", pp.176–7; for Trevisa's presentation of translation issues affecting himself and Berkeley, see Waldron, Ronald, "Trevisa's original prefaces on translation: a critical edition" in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, edited by E. D. Kennedy, R. Waldron and J. S. Wittig, Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988. See also Coss, Peter, "Aspects of cultural diffusion in medieval England: The early romances, local society and Robin Hood", *Past and Present* 108 (1985): 35–79, pp.42–3.
- ⁸⁹ Waldron, 1988, "Trevisa", p.177: 'The dialect of the two earliest manuscripts of the *Polychronicon* is assigned to the immediate neighbourhood of Berkeley by the *Linguistic Atlas*'; Seymour, 1975–88

vol.3, pp.38–9: ‘Trevisa’s spelling habits ... reflect at an exact date (1394–8) the language of a man born c.1340 at Trevisa, Cornwall and living at Berkeley.’

⁹⁰ Robinson, F. N., ed, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Oxford University Press, 1957, pp.310–8, line 672.

⁹¹ Cottle, Basil, *The Triumph of English*, London: Blandford Press, 1969, p.20.

⁹² Seymour, 1975–88, vol.3, p.10.

⁹³ Hanna, 1989; Kerby-Fulton, Kathryn, “The Medieval Professional Reader and Reception History, 1292–1641” in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work*, edited by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo, 7–13, University of Victoria, B. C., 2001.

⁹⁴ Hanna, 1989, p.908 and n.73; on a Thomas Knolles (1395–1435) of London involved in book production, see Thrupp, Sylvia, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)*, University of Chicago Press, 1948, pp.351–2. Coss, 1985, pp.41–2, sees the civil service as a ‘major constituent’ of the cultural life of London at this time.

⁹⁵ Hanna, 1989, p.909 and n.75. See also Kerby-Fulton, 2001, p.12.

⁹⁶ Hanna, 1989, p.910 and nn.77, 79; Hanna points out that, since such a large ms would only be copied in response to a purchaser’s order, Berkeley could do no more than bring his copy to London, show it to acquaintances and await requests for use of the copy. Plimpton Ms 263 is a lavish workshop-produced ms of *Propertius* apparently made for Sir Thomas Chaworth, who also owned a translation of the *Polychronicon*. Lawton, Lesley, “The illustration of late medieval secular texts, with special reference to Lydgate’s Troy Book” in Derek Pearsall, ed, *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, 41–69, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983, p.xi, deduces from mss illustrations that books were ‘one of the recognized ways of holding capital in a portable and negotiable form’.

⁹⁷ Holt, J. C. & Anne Wedgewood, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439–1509*, London, 1936, pp.175–6.

⁹⁸ Mitchner, R. W., “Wynkyn de Worde’s use of the Plimpton Manuscript of De Proprietatibus Rerum”, *The Library* vi (1951): 7–17. See also Holbrook, Sue Ellen, “The concept of vernacularity in de Worde editions of 1495–96” in *Vernacularity: The Politics of Language and Style*, The University of Western Ontario, Medieval and Renaissance Seminar, 1999, <<http://www.uwo.ca/modlang/MedRen/conf99/abstracts/holbrook.html>>

⁹⁹ The English word ‘property’ could at this time mean ‘The fact of owning a thing (1380+); ‘That which one owns’ (1300+); ‘An attribute or quality belonging to a thing or person ... an essential, special or distinctive quality’ (1303+): OED.