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Royal epistolary courtship in Latin? Arthur Tudor's “love letter” to Katherine of Aragon at the Archivo General de Simancas and Francesco Negri's *Ars Epistolandi*[☆]

K. P. S. JANSSEN  and NADIA T. VAN PELT 

The Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) in Valladolid contains an archival section called ‘*Capitulaciones con Inglaterra*’, which stretches from the thirteenth century to the 1630s. The section predominantly houses an extensive body of material concerned with the alliance of the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon with the house of Tudor, forged through the marriage of the *Infanta* Catalina (hereafter referred to as Katherine of Aragon) and Arthur Tudor, Henry VII's heir to the throne.¹ Among the ‘*Capitulaciones*’ a letter in Latin has been preserved that is known as the ‘*Carta del Príncipe de Gales a la Princesa de Gales declarándole su ardiente pasión amorosa*’ [Letter from the Prince of Wales to the Princess of Wales declaring his ardent loving passion].² Given the later – and recurring – controversies surrounding the consummation of Arthur's and Katherine's marriage, an amorous piece of epistolary courtship shared between the young royals in which Arthur demonstrated his ‘ardent loving passion’ for the princess, would necessarily have elicited scholarly attention. The reason it has not, is that in the 1862 first volume of the *CSP: Spain*, its editor, G.A. Bergenroth, presented a translation of a letter which can be identified as the AGS letter, which he interpreted as having been written by Perkin Warbeck to the Lady Katharine Gordon.³ Bergenroth had intensively studied the ‘*Capitulaciones*’, enabling him to date the ‘paper and the writing’ of the AGS letter to c. 1497–8. The near-contemporary endorsement found on its verso side, reading ‘*para la S. princessa de gualdes del S. príncipe de gualdes*’,⁴ was ascribed to ‘one of the Under Secretaries of [Miguel

[☆] We thank Anne van Schaik and Caspar Sundholm for their invaluable help with the transliteration and translation of the AGS letter. Further thanks is extended to Prof. John J. McGavin, Prof. Greg Walker, and Dr Wim Hüskens, and to the anonymous reviewers of *Renaissance Studies*.

¹ E.g. AGS, PTR,LEG,52,135: <<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/2207858>>.

² AGS, PTR,LEG,54,65: <<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/2208106?nm>>.

³ G.A. Bergenroth (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Spain* (London, 1862) I, #119.

⁴ AGS, PTR,LEG,54,65.

Pérez de] Almazán', dated prior to 1514, and, importantly, deemed incorrect.⁵ The reason for this is that the ending of the letter, which refers to the recipient as the 'ornament of Scotland' did not fit the biographical facts; indeed, Bergenroth wrote: 'The letter cannot have been written to the Princess Katharine of Spain. Not to speak of other great improbabilities, this sole reason is quite decisive, that a Princess of Spain who never set foot on Scotch soil cannot be called 'the brightest ornament of Scotland'".⁶ For Bergenroth, the Scottish connection could, however, be explained when reading the letter as Perking Warbeck's wooing the Lady Katharine Gordon at the Stirling court, under the approving eye of the Scottish king. The letter's content was analysed accordingly, and Warbeck's pecuniary situation was thought to have prompted him to refer to the lady's 'immutable prosperity' and 'riches'. The recipient's described beauty was thought to match the Lady Katharine's, whom Bergenroth claims was 'reported to have been very handsome'.⁷

Bergenroth's translation – not accompanied by a transcription of the original – for a long time represented the only access that scholars of Tudor History had to this letter, and Bergenroth's interpretation of the letter's content as well as its sender and recipient has therefore misdirected scholarship. In the current essay we show that reading the AGS letter in the original Latin unlocks the letter's source and reveals that, contrary to what has been assumed, the letter is not a 'declaration of love' shared between two historical people; indeed, we show it to be a sample letter copied almost completely from a book of epistolary theory written for educational purposes by Francesco Negri (Franciscus Niger, c. 1452–1523). Furthermore, we reveal that the sample letter was an example used by Negri to show readers how *not* to write a letter. In order to make possible comparisons between the two texts, we present here an edition with translation of both letters. Our evidence leads to the conclusion that the AGS letter may be of less significance as a window to the romantic lives of its sender and recipient, but we suggest that the letter as an object and its use of Negri's epistolary theory may offer important insights into educational practices in the context of the Tudor court towards the end of the 15th century.

FRANCESCO NEGRI'S *ARS EPISTOLANDI*

As the transcriptions in [Appendices 1](#) and [2](#) show, the AGS letter appears to be almost entirely copied from Francesco Negri's *Ars Epistolandi*, a book teaching the 'art' of letter writing first published in Venice in 1488.⁸ A number of

⁵ CSPS I, #119, fn 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Franciscus Niger, *Opusculum epistolarum familiarum et artis eorundem scribendi, maxime in generibus uiginti* (Venice: Liechtenstem, 1488).

manuscripts survive, in Ghent, Geneva, Augsburg, and Saint Petersburg.⁹ Furthermore, the work was printed in Latin across Europe, under various titles.¹⁰

The popularity of texts such as Negri's can be explained by the way in which teaching at schools and universities was organised. As Alejandro Coroleu has observed, 'pupils throughout Renaissance Europe spent large amounts of time reading, translating and imitating the Latin correspondence of their Italian models', but, 'They were also advised to study textbooks and manuals on Latin composition.'¹¹ Popular texts included Negri's *De modo epistolandi*, but also works by Agostino Dati (1420–78) and Gasparino Barzizza (1360–1431).¹² In 1522 Erasmus published his *De conscribendis epistolis*, following classical models, and criticising Negri for not doing the same in his text.¹³ Yet, the fact that in 1529 the London-based printer Wynkyn de Worde printed the 1501 Deventer version of the *Ars Epistolandi* in conjunction with a text by John Stanbridge,¹⁴ shows that by that time in England there was still a strong market for Negri's manual, and that a large readership had access to, and used, this work.

The *Ars Epistolandi* is organised as follows: Negri lists twenty types of letter, for each of which he first provides a definition, and subsequently offers rules to follow when writing a letter of this kind. He then offers an example letter, which he ascribes to classical authors such as Cicero.¹⁵ One of the letters in the *Ars Epistolandi*, Thomas Beebee has observed, is 'a model letter of the "*genus amatorium*"' in which Cicero is the recipient and is addressed by his friend Curius, who speaks of Cicero's virtues.¹⁶ Negri uses this example letter to juxtapose two types of '*amatoria*' letter: the first type he classifies as '*honesta*' – a letter between two men who are close friends, and whose love for one another is based, 'on a mutual occupation and a mutual love of politics'.¹⁷

⁹ Anja-Silvia Goeing, 'Paduan Extracurricular Rhetoric, 1488–1491', in Ann Blair and Anja-Silvia Goeing (eds.), *For the Sake of Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), II, 542–60, 543.

¹⁰ E.g. *Ars epistolandi* (Deventer: Richard Paffraet, 1492; Paris: Felix Baligaut, 1494?; Speier: Conrad Hist, ca. 1495; Deventer: Jacobus de Breda?, 1501); *Modus epistulandi* (Augsburg: Johann Schönsperger, 1499); *De modo epistolandi* (Venice: Cristoforo Pensi, 1505; Pesaro: Girolamo Soncino, 1509).

¹¹ Alejandro Coroleu, 'The Reception of Angelo Poliziano's Letters in Sixteenth-Century France', *Camenae*, 22 (2018), 1–9, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Mark Morford, 'Lipsius' Letters of Recommendation', in Toon van Houdt et al. (eds.), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 183–98, 185.

¹⁴ John Stanbridge, *Vocabula męri Stābrigi sua saltē editione edita* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1529).

¹⁵ Ernstpeter Ruhe, 'Normativität vs libertas: die Entwicklung der französischen Briefrhetorik im 16. Jahrhundert', *La lettre: Approches sémiotiques* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg/Suisse, 1988), 103–16, 105: 'Negri gliedert seine *ars* in 20 Kapitel, die 20 Briefftypen entsprechen, und gibt für jeden von ihnen zunächst die *regula*, die Definition und einige Regeln, die es zu beachten gilt, wenn man einen solchen Brief schreibt, um dann jeweils ein *exemplum* anzufügen, einen Musterbrief, der zumeist Cicero (oder einem anderen antiken Verfasser) zugeschrieben wird.'

¹⁶ Thomas Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The second type of ‘*amatoria*’ letter Negri refers to as ‘*turpis*’. Beebee has interpreted ‘*turpis*’ to mean ‘bad’,¹⁸ but we here propose that a more suitable, less understated translation of the word in this context would be ‘lewd or unseemly’. Indeed, not only does the sample letter in Negri’s work highlight a less elevated kind of relationship between two mythological lovers; Negri’s exemplum of the ‘*turpis*’ letter is one that warns aspiring writers about the wrong intentions with which one can write a letter (here: lewd intentions). Negri defines the ‘*turpis*’ letter in the following way: ‘*amatoria epistola qu(a)e turpis appellatur est illa qu(a)e ad aliquam amicam vel pulchram puellam scribit ab amatore suo pro amoris sui declaratione...*’¹⁹ [the kind of love letter that is called ‘unseemly’ is one written to some girlfriend or pretty girl by her lover, in order to declare his love]. And indeed, as the ‘exemplum’ letter shows, Negri’s Pyramus seeks to convince Thysbe quite forcefully to accept his love, threatening her with the fates of classical personas who did not give in to love and found themselves the worse for it.²⁰

As can be seen in the transcriptions and translations that we offer in the appendices below of both the AGS letter and the passage showing the ‘*turpis*’ exemplum from Negri’s work, minor differences can be found between the two texts, which are addressed in detail in our Textual and Critical Notes accompanying the texts (Appendix 5).²¹ Significantly, the AGS letter ends on the phrase, ‘And farewell my life, and my comfort ... farewell and farewell again’, adding a personal touch to the existing text. Furthermore, those elements in Negri’s sample letter that evoked the classics are omitted in the AGS letter, and with that, so are the threats at the address of the letter’s potential reader. It is as if the writer of the AGS letter had tried to render the text less ‘*turpis*’, although he does appear to keep ‘And may it not to you seem insufficient to yield to love, to which not just human princes, but divine ones as well, bow their heads’. Removing most of the ‘*turpis*’ elements may have made the text seem less inappropriate for anyone who did not know the sample text on which it was based, but here it should be remembered that Negri’s work was not an obscure text. It was widely used in the great institutes of learning across Europe, and would have been recognizable for what it was for the boys of the higher echelons from the late 1480s onwards.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Francesco Negri, *Opusculum scribendi epistolas Francisci Negri* (Paris, s.d./14), Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Réserve des livres rares, RES P-Z-368, fol. b 1v. <ark:/12148/bpt6k57592439>

²⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. b 2r. For Ovid’s rendering of the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, see *Metamorphoses* 4.55–166.

²¹ We use Negri, *Opusculum scribendi epistolas*, RES P-Z-368, fol. b2r. A modernized representation of Negri’s exemplum from the BnF 1495 edition of *Ars Epistolandi* is found in M. Josefa Navarro Gala, ‘Las vicisitudes de la carta amatoria en los tratados de retórica (ss. iv-xvi)’, *Críticón*, 105 (2009), 117–38. There are small but important differences between these editions. As we observe in the below, the words ‘(Et) hi(n)c’ (l. 16) in the BnF RES P-Z-368 which we transcribed, do not occur in Navarro Gala’s edition. They do, however, appear in altered form in the AGS letter, suggesting that the AGS letter is closer to BnF RES P-Z-368 than to the 1495 edition used by Navarro Gala.

The modern archivists working at the AGS have suggested an 'approximate' time range for the '*Carta del Príncipe de Gales*' between 1502 and 1533, using the year of Arthur's death as a *terminus post quem*, and as *terminus ante quem* the year of the annulment of Katherine and Henry VIII's marriage at the hand of Thomas Cranmer's, then Archbishop of Canterbury. 1533 was also the year in which Katherine formally lost her title of 'Queen', and was henceforth known as Princess Dowager of Wales.²² The archival time range is a broad one that can be narrowed down further, initially, by observing that given that by 1529 Negri's work had been widely available in cheap copies printed by Wynkyn de Worde in London, by this time the letter could no longer have been passed off as a genuine love letter within the contexts of the Tudor court and the city of London. It should therefore have been sent to the Spanish archives before that moment. Furthermore, the near-contemporary endorsement by one of Almazán's secretaries found on the verso side of the letter confirms that the inclusion of the letter in the archive was not a late archival accident, but a contemporary, deliberate act. Given Almazán's death in 1514, the endorsement most likely predates this moment.

The letter had a clear political significance to Almazán's secretaries, which can be seen from how the letter was filed. Documents filed in close proximity to the AGS letter include, a message from Henry VII to Ferdinand of Aragon, in which he refers to Katherine's dowry payment, and the alliance between the royal houses, (PTR,LEG,54,64) and a copy of a letter by Pope Julius II to Henry VII relating the reasons for the delay of the papal dispensation needed for Katherine to marry young Henry (PTR,LEG,54,66), as well as a copy of a letter from Henry VII begging the pope for the dispensation a few months later (PTR,LEG,54,67). And, like its neighbouring documents in the Spanish royal archive, 'our' letter was also identified, by Bergenroth, as a copy produced in Britain.²³ Its watermark, just about visible on the verso side of the document, appears to be a gloved hand with an open thumb, and is not unlike watermarks identified on paper used in England between 1473 and 1505.²⁴ An example found on the letter by Arthur Tudor to the Catholics Monarchs expressing his happiness at marrying Katherine (PTR,LEG,53,44,2) demonstrates that this type of paper would have been available at the Tudor court at this time.

It appears that sometime after Arthur's death, Almazán's secretaries actively filed official documents that had been copied and subsequently sent to Spain to form a dossier of this key political period for England's alliance with Spain, and it is within this context that the AGS letter was saved as evidence. But of

²² T.E. Tomlins and W.E. Taunton (eds.), *Statutes of the Realm* (London, 1817), III, 484.

²³ CSPI I, #119, fn 9.

²⁴ Nicholas Orme, 'An Early-Tudor Oxford Schoolbook', *Renaissance Quarterly* 34: 1 (1981), 11–39, 12.

what exactly? Pivotal at this time had been the question whether Arthur and his bride had consummated their short marriage. After Arthur's death, the papal dispensation authorizing a 'lawful marriage' between Katherine and Arthur's younger brother Henry had at first been drawn up to assertively suggest that marital relations had been had,²⁵ but was later reformulated to allow for the possibility that the marriage had been consummated without stating outright that it had.²⁶ The crucial word in the papal bull was '*forsan*' [maybe],²⁷ leaving open the road for all manner of interpretation. The match was eventually made, but this choice of words would present great difficulties to Katherine many years later, when Henry was seeking a divorce from his aging wife, and hoping to produce a male heir with Anne Boleyn.

When the AGS letter was filed by Almazán's secretaries, the endorsement written on the verso side of the page '*... del S. príncipe de gualas*',²⁸ was thought to be self-evident, and did not specify *which* Prince of Wales was meant. Had the secretaries attributed the letter to Arthur written before his death, and produced it as evidence for his youthful passion? Within the context of the papal dispensation this would have seemed a powerful piece of intelligence, not amiss between the formal documents with which it finds itself surrounded. An alternative reading is that the secretaries may have attributed the letter to Henry, the *new* prince of Wales, installed half a year after his brother's death. It may be argued that a letter from the young prince demonstrating himself in favour of marrying his brother's widow could have been produced as evidence of the continued friendship between England and Spain. However, as early as July 1502 – Arthur had died in April – such arrangements had already been set into motion (e.g. PTR, LEG, 53, 57). And a love letter from Henry would not have tilted the balance regarding the question of Katherine's dowry payment, or the obtaining of the papal dispensation. It simply did not have the same level of political significance that a letter supposedly from Arthur with this content would have. Finally, there is the matter of the five year age difference between the two brothers. Given Bergenroth's dating of the paper and writing around 1497–8, when Henry was around 6 or 7 years of age, his older brother seems a more likely candidate for the letter.

Interestingly, both the person copying the letter in England, and the secretaries filing it in the royal archives in Spain either were not aware of the similarities between the letter and Negri's bestseller study-book, or it may not have served their interests to see these similarities.

²⁵ Ferdinand of Aragon explained his agreement as follows: '... although they were wedded, Prince Arthur and the Princess Katharine never consummated the marriage. It is well known in England that the Princess is still a virgin. But as the English are much disposed to cavil, it has seemed to be more prudent to provide for the case as though the marriage had been consummated, and the dispensation of the Pope must be in perfect keeping with the said clause of the treaty. The right of succession depends on the undoubted legitimacy of the marriage'. CSPS I, #370.

²⁶ CSPS I, #389.

²⁷ Thomas Rymer, *Foedera*, 3rd edn. (1741), V, 207.

²⁸ AGS, PTR, LEG, 54, 65.

Let us now turn to the question whether this letter *could* have been written by Arthur. Quite a lot is known about the prince's schooling, which was strongly influenced by humanist fashions in education. Arthur, like other schoolboys, read the classics, and his tutor Bernard André would, after concluding the prince's education, record in the *Vita Henrici Septimi* (c. 1500–02) the books with which the young prince had worked²⁹:

Hoc unum audacter affirmarim, illa aetate qua sextumdecimum nondum attingerat annum in grammatica Garinum, Perotum, Pomponium, Sulpicium, Aulum Gellium, Vallam; in poetica Homerum, Virgilium, Lucanum, Ovidium, Silium, Plautum, Terentium; in oratoria Ciceronis *Officia, Epistolas, Paradoxa, Quintilianum*; in historia Thucydidem, Titum Livium, Caesaris *Commentaria*, Suetonium, Cornelium Tacitum, Plinium, Valerium Maximum, Sallustium, Eusebium ipsum, vel memoriae partim commendasse, vel certe propriis manibus oculisque tum volutasse tum lectitasse.³⁰

[This one thing I would like to declare proudly, that when he had not yet reached sixteen years of age, he had either partially committed to memory or had certainly either considered or read, with his own hands and eyes, the following works: in grammar, Guarino, Perotti, Pomponius, Sulpicius,³¹ Aulus Gellius and Valla; in poetry, Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Ovid, Silius Italicus, Plautus and Terence; in oratory, Cicero's *De Officiis, Epistulae* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, as well as Quintilian; in history Thucydides, Titus Livius, Caesar's *Comentaria*, Suetonius, Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny, Valerius Maximus, Sallust and Eusebius].

But this list in the *Vita Henrici Septimi* is far from exhaustive. MS 360 extant in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal contains a commentary on Augustine's *City of God*,³² an 'index to the commentary' which was 'compiled by André and copied by Suetonius Skern for Prince Arthur at Beaulieu on 17 June 1500',³³ and a list of works that were written by André, many of

²⁹ Bernard André started the *Vita* 'after 22 August 1500 and set [it] aside sometime after 2 April 1502'. Daniel Hobbins, 'Arsenal MS 360 as a Witness to the Career and Writings of Bernard André', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 50 (2001), 161–98, 174.

³⁰ Bernardi Andreae Tholosatis Poetae Laureati, *Regii Historiographi de Vita atque Gestis Henrici Septimi Angliae ac Franciae Regis*: <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/andreas/1lat.html>>.

³¹ 'Pomponius' may refer to Pomponius Porphyrio, a second-century Latin grammarian, or to the Humanist Pomponius Leto. The latter reading is endorsed in: David R. Carlson, 'Royal Tutors in the Reign of Henry VII', *SCJ*, 22: 2 (1991), 253–79, 256. Carlson in the same publication reads André's reference in the *Vita* to 'Sulpicius' as 'Sulpizio' (256), thereby suggesting that André referred to the Italian Humanist by that name. Although it is possible that André could have referred to Sulpicius Apollinaris, a second-century grammarian, we here deem likely Carlson's interpretation that André when writing 'Pomponius' and 'Sulpicius' meant to indicate the Humanist thinkers.

³² Dated 1496–1510. See, Hobbins, 'Arsenal', 192.

³³ *Ibid.*, 185.

which are now lost.³⁴ This list postdates 1510,³⁵ and was headed with the text ‘*Bernardi Andre(a)e Tolozatis poet(a)e laureate(a)e ac regii hystorici opera partim completa, partim incompleta, sunt h(a)ec*’.³⁶ [‘The works of Bernard André of Toulouse, poet laureate and royal historian, partially complete, partially incomplete, are these’]. Some of André’s works included in the list are overtly recorded as having been used for Arthur’s benefit. For example, Item 2 reads: ‘*Item deffensio poetarum in dyalogo ad serenissimum felicissim(a)e recordationis Arthurum principem*’. [‘Another defence of the poets in dialogue form, for the most serene prince Arthur of most happy memory’].³⁷ Some works are concerned with grammar, such as Item 4: ‘*Ad eundem grammatices examen [sic]*’.³⁸ [‘For the same, a consideration of grammar’]. Other works were dedicated to the art of writing well. For example, Item 3 appears to engage with this subject through the work of Delius Voluscus: ‘*Ad eundem de dicendi et scribendi modo <et> elegantia <;> quod quidem opusculum Delius orator et poeta egregius commentatus est*’.³⁹ [‘For the same, a small work on the correct way and refinement of speaking and writing; which the orator and excellent poet Delius surely wrote’]. Other works of rhetoric include Item 13, titled ‘*Ad eundem de modo scribendi et dicendi*’ [‘To the same, about the correct way of writing and speaking’]; Item 14: ‘*Ad eundem Praeceptiones rhetoric(a)e*’ [‘To the same, teachings in rhetoric’]; and Item 15, ‘*Ad eundem de Orthographia*’ [‘To the same, about orthography’].⁴⁰ For our purpose, the most promisingly titled item is number 16, which reads: ‘*Ad eundem Ars Epistolandi*’ [‘To the same, the art of writing letters’].⁴¹ It is unlikely that André in a piece of writing with this name, would not have borrowed from, or referred to Negri’s then fashionable work, given the humanist educational circles in which he moved. To return to the question, could Arthur have been familiar with the ‘*turpis*’ letter in Negri’s work? It seems quite likely that he had been. He may even have copied it and changed parts of it as an exercise. But could he have written it to send to Katherine?

A LETTER TO A PRINCESS?

The language of the letter would not have presented a problem for Katherine, who was fluent in Latin. She received lessons in Latin from a

³⁴ BnF, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 360, fols Tr-v. This list was presented in William Nelson, *John Skelton, Laureate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), and revisited by Francis Roth, ‘A History of the English Austin Friars (continuation)’, *Augustiniana* 16 (1966), 446–519, 457–60. We follow the more recent Hobbins, ‘Arsenal’, 196–8.

³⁵ Hobbins, ‘Arsenal’, 181.

³⁶ BnF, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 360, fol. T. Transcription of abbreviations our own.

³⁷ Hobbins, ‘Arsenal’, 196. Transcription of abbreviations our own.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 196. The suggestion that the work refers to Voluscus is from Roth, ‘A History’, 457.

⁴⁰ Hobbins, ‘Arsenal’, 197.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

female tutor by the name of Beatriz Galindo, at times referred to in the records as '*la Latina*'.⁴² Linguistic ability aside, Katherine would also have had access to the latest trends in Italian humanist learning, since her mother, Queen Isabel, 'hired Italian tutors for her children with Alessandro Geraldini – who would accompany her to England, overseeing ... [her] education'.⁴³ Katherine received Geraldini's tuition from 1492 onwards.⁴⁴ The ideals of learning informing the respective educational upbringings of Arthur and Katherine may have been similar. Yet in terms of material used by the *infanta*, Theresa Earenfight observes that Katherine's education comprised 'Christianized versions of Classical philosophy and natural science concerning medical understandings of the differences between the sexes'.⁴⁵

If the classics were presented to Katherine in a version stripped from any aspect that was deemed inappropriate for a modestly brought-up royal daughter, it is unlikely that she would have had at her disposal a text as indelicate as Negri's, considering that it contained the '*turpis*' letter. Practically speaking, there would also have been no educational benefit to Katherine's seeing the sample letter in Negri, given that she would not be expected to write a letter of the '*amatoria*' type in its '*honesta*' form, expressing the friendship between two men, nor would she have been expected by her educators to have cause to write a letter to declare her love to 'a female friend or to a pretty girl', so she would not have to be warned against writing this kind of letter. Add to this the strictness with which Ferdinand and Isabella had raised Katherine, manifested in the situation at the *infanta*'s arrival in England when she had not been willing to be presented to her new father-in-law, given that she had not yet married the prince, and it seems unlikely that a shared knowledge of or familiarity with Negri's '*turpis*' letter would have been used as an in-joke between the Prince of Wales and his betrothed.⁴⁶ Furthermore, given the delicate nature of the alliance between England and Aragon and Castile, and what was at stake, Arthur would have been carefully tutored and advised in his early correspondence with the princess. Presenting a slightly modified copy of a page from a

⁴² Theresa Earenfight, 'Raising *Infanta* Catalina de Aragón to be Catherine, Queen of England', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 46:1 (2016), 417–43, 424. An account by Alonso de Morales from 3 February 1497 lists Beatriz Galindo as one of the '*Damas y mujeres de la reina*'. Rosana de Andrés Díaz, *El último decenio del reinado de Isabel I* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2004), 158.

⁴³ Giles Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 47.

⁴⁴ Holt N. Parker, 'Women and Humanism: Nine Factors for the Woman Learning', *Viator*, 35 (2004), 581–616, 584.

⁴⁵ Earenfight, 'Raising', 424.

⁴⁶ An account of Katherine's being shielded from 'company' prior to her wedding, is found in Gordon Kipling, ed., *The Recoyt of the Ladie Kateryne* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), 6. For the 'famous clash of cultures' when 'Henry [VII] ... insisted on seeing her [Katherine] even "if she were in her bed"', see Theresa Earenfight, 'Regarding Catherine of Aragon', in Carole Levin and Christine Stewart-Núñez (eds.), *Scholars and Poets Talk About Queens* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 137–57, 146.

well-known educational bestseller would have been a colossal diplomatic mistake.

Instead, we deem it a possibility that this letter was a ‘practice’ letter, that prepared Arthur for the later letters he would write *and send* to Katherine. Extant letters written by Arthur Tudor to Katherine of Aragon are preserved in British Library Egerton MS 616,⁴⁷ from Ludlow Castle on 5 October 1499,⁴⁸ and 1 November 1499.⁴⁹ Aysha Pollnitz has recently referred to these letters as ‘the first surviving attempt made by a British prince to speak or write in the antique Latin style’.⁵⁰ Pollnitz reads the Egerton letters as ‘a chaste echo of Pliny the Younger’s second letter to Calpurnia ... or perhaps even Ovid’s *Heroides*...’⁵¹ She explains, ‘Arthur wrote to say how Catherine’s letters to him “written by [her] very own hand” evoked the princess’s presence and even embrace (*amplectus*)’.⁵² About the second of the Egerton letters Pollnitz writes:

Arthur stuffed his next letter with phrases cut raw and bleeding from the fifth book of Cicero’s *Ad familiares*: Catherine’s reply ‘showed the greatest favour to [Arthur] joined with her prudence’; he hoped that they would soon be united. He wished to ‘convince [her] that in this matter and in all others [his] devotion to [her] is eternal’ (*Princely Education*, 37).

Pollnitz concludes: ‘The surviving letters [the Egerton letters] were the first of a series that Arthur wrote to confirm the ratification of the marriage treaty and to urge Catherine’s departure for England’, and that ‘For Arthur, the study of Latin grammar and rhetoric had courtly and diplomatic utility. It enabled him to pursue a dynastically advantageous alliance by demonstrating that, when it came to good letters, England was no cultural backwater’.⁵³

We propose that whereas the Egerton letters borrow from, or find themselves inspired by classical rhetoric, and show a relative independence from the authors whose phrases occur in the letters – interweaving these with the letter writer’s own words and message – the AGS letter may represent an earlier phase in learning the craft of letter-writing. During this phase, someone, perhaps Arthur, almost entirely copied the example letter, and only made very minor changes to it. This was presumably not done with the intention of sending this letter, but purely as a school exercise. The thought of the AGS letter as a schoolroom

⁴⁷ BL Egerton MS 616: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Egerton_MS_616&index=468.

⁴⁸ BL Egerton MS 616, fol. 14r.

⁴⁹ BL Egerton MS 616, fols. 16r, 17r.

⁵⁰ Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), 36.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36–7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 37.

exercise may be supported by its lacking the usual attributes of a letter sent to a recipient: it does not contain a salutation, nor is a location or date provided at the closing of the letter, and the letter is not signed. In these characteristics, the AGS letter differs from the Egerton letters. After all, the latter exemplify Arthur's use of an elaborate salutation, for example, when he writes, *'Ill(ustrissi)ma atque excell(enti)ssima D(omi)na Sponsa mea carissima'* ['Most illustrious and most excellent Lady, my dear spouse'].⁵⁴ By this time a marriage by proxy had taken place, allowing for this type of address. The Egerton letters also show Arthur signing off formally. On 5 October, he ends with *'amantissimus sponsus Arthurus princeps Walli(a)e'* ['your most loving spouse Arthur Prince of Wales'] as well as formally including his position as Duke of Cornwall and status as the King's eldest son.⁵⁵ The AGS letter, by contrast, ends on a simple *'Valé'* ['Goodbye']. If the AGS letter represents Arthur's learning how to write in the early stages of his education, this may also explain the occurrence of the phrase *'totius Scoti(a)e maximum ornementum'* ['greatest jewel of all of Scotland'], which had been the main reason for Bergenroth to dismiss the idea of Arthur as the writer of the letter, as he thought that, 'a Princess of Spain who never set foot on Scotch [Scottish] soil cannot be called "the brightest ornament of Scotland"'.⁵⁶ Indeed, Arthur, as we see in the Egerton letters, translated 'prince of Wales' as *'princeps Walli(a)e'* by the time his education had thus far progressed that he was able to send letters to Katherine in Latin. It is, however, possible that an early practice letter written as an exercise to prepare for later, actual, correspondence, might contain a mistake in a part of the letter that he had not copied, but that he had composed in Latin himself. Other possible explanations for the inclusion of *'totius Scoti(a)e maximum ornementum'* may be that a practice letter that was not to be sent did not need to be addressed to Katherine at all; this would not necessarily mean that it did not contribute to the letter-writing practice that prepared Arthur for later letters to Katherine. Finally, the *'turpis'* genre of the copied and modified sample letter may also be considered here: given that this was essentially a bad, lewd, or unseemly letter, it is possible that addressing it to someone other than the intended recipient of a 'good' letter may have been part of the lesson.

SOME THOUGHTS

From 1490/1491 onwards, Arthur was taught by *magister* John Rede.⁵⁷ Bernard André started tutoring Arthur Tudor in 1496. Three years later, Arthur was able to compose fluent letters in beautiful Latin, as the Egerton letters display. At this stage, we are unfortunately unable to prove that the AGS letter was also written by Arthur, although it very well could have been, as we have shown in the above.

⁵⁴ BL Egerton MS 616, fol. 16r.

⁵⁵ BL Egerton MS 616, fol. 14r.

⁵⁶ CSPS I, #119, fn. 9.

⁵⁷ Carlson, 'Royal Tutors', 259.

What we can suggest is that given the way in which Humanist curricula were designed, and students starting off by copying sample letters before beginning to compose their own, in combination with the reference found in André's index of works to an '*Ars Epistolandi*', we could tentatively suggest that if the letter had been written by a young boy at the Tudor court, the years 1496 or 1497, early in André's career as court tutor, or just before, during John Rede's final efforts as Arthur's tutor, may not be unrealistic. But this is just conjecture; further research may be able to provide more conclusive answers.

What we can conclude is that the AGS letter provides a fascinating insight into popular humanist educative trends, and the texts that were used to facilitate learning. It also helps us remember how widely-shared these trends and lesson materials were, that young people across Europe would be familiar with similar works, and would continue to be informed by these works as they grew up and engaged in real correspondences. The letter also illuminates the practice of copying sample letters and making small changes to them as a means of practice. Furthermore, it shows that students were made aware of moral differences in various kinds of writing, which made them sensitive not only to the build-up of letters, and choice of words, but also to the reasons for writing a letter.

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APPENDIX 1

Transcription of Archivo General de Simancas, PTR,LEG,54,65

1. Non sine causa effectum est nobilissima domina ut omnes in te coniunctos oculos
2. habeant: te ament: te mirentur: te obseruent. Cum enim ex una parte consi-
3. derant duplicem illam virutem tuam: qu(a)e te semper adeo illustravit: ut nullus
4. sit qui suauiores morum institutiones pr(a)e se ferat. Cum diuitias secundamq(ue) semper
5. ac facilem fortunam admirantur: qu(a)e tibi et generis nobilitatem: et nobilitatis or-
6. namenta subiecit. Ex altera subito parte occurrit singularis illa et diuina potius
7. q(uam) humana formositas que te merito non in hoc seculo natam: [[de]] sed de c(a)elo pro-
8. lapsam testatur. Conspiciunt enim faciem illam tuam serenissimam: qu(a)e etiam nu-

9. bilosum posset illustrare c(a)elum. Conspiciunt sidereos illos oculos tuos: qui om(n)e(m) penitus
10. intuendo possunt amouere dolorem: ac luctuosos animos in summum gaudium tra-
11. ducere. Conspiciunt diniq(ue) candida colla: paruos lapillos facile superantia: mirantur
12. castigatam frontem: purpureum iuuet(a)e lumen: flauos crines: onmniaqu(e) penitus me(m)-
13. bra decora: qu(a)e conspiciendo: non possunt non laudare: laundando non amare: ama(n)do
14. deniq(ue) non obseruare. Hinc ego inter ceteros equales meos satis fortunatus: et fortasse
15. etiam fortunatissimus futurus: si amorem tuum consequi meritis fuero: cum tales con-
16. ditiones tuas animo complector: non solum ad te amandam: colendam: et obserua(n)dam
17. impellor: sed pro te etiam emori rogor: nec vigilans nec dormiens quiescere possum: me
18. infelicem esse existimans cum nobilitati tue placere non possim: in qua solum omnes
19. spes meas constitutas esse volui. Verte igitur nobilissima domina et anima mea in
20. me oculos tuos: et hunc tibi seruulum a primo conspectu dicatum pientissime suscipi-
21. as. Non enim huma(na) res sed diuina potius est amor: nec tibi parum videatur amori
22. parere: cui non solum humani Principes: sed et diuina quoq(ue) colla subiecere. Quare no-
23. bilitati tue supplico mihi adhe<re>re velit: quem sibi sentiet in omnibus q(uam)libentissime para-
24. tum: dum fuerit h(a)ec mihi vita sup(er)stes: et Vale a(n)i(m)a mea meum q(ue) solamen ac totius Sco-
25. ti(a)e maximum ornamentum Vale et iterum Vale[inverted punctus versus]

APPENDIX 2

Transcription of Negri's 'Turpis' Letter: BnF, Département Réserve des Livres Rares, RES P-Z-368 (fol. B2r)

1. No(n) sine ca(usa) effectu(m) e(st), suauissima Thysbe, ut o(mn)es in te p(o)p(u)li n(ost)ri con-

2. iu(n)ctos oculos h(ab)eant, te ame(n)t, te mirent(ur), te obiserue(n)t. Cu(m) eni(m) ex
3. una p(ar)te (c)o(n)sidera(n)t duplice(m) illa(m) v(ir)tute(m) tua(m) q(uae) te s(em)p(er) adeo illustravit
4. ut null(us) sit q(ui) p(rae)stantiore(m) doctrina(m) p(ro)fiteat(ur), nec suauiiores moru(m)
5. instituto(n)es p(er) se ferat. Cu(m) diuitias secunda(m)q(u)e s(em)p(er) ac facile(m) fortuna(m)
6. admira(n)t(ur) q(uae) tibi (et) g(e)n(er)is nobilitate(m) (et) nobilitatis ornamenta subie-
7. cit. Ex altera subito p(ar)te occurrit sing(u)laris illa (et) diuina poti(us) (quam)
8. hu(m)ana formositas q(ue) te merito no(n) i(n) hoc s(ae)c(u)lo nata(m) sed de c(a)elo p(ro)-
9. lapsam testat(ur). Co(n)spiciu(n)t e(n)i(m) facie(m) illa(m) tua(m) serenissima(m) q(uae) etia(m) nubi-
10. losu(m) poss(e) illustrare c(a)elu(m). Co(n)spiciu(n)t sydereos illos oc(u)los tuos q(ui)
11. o(mn)e(m) penit(us) i(n)tue(n)do possu(n)t amouere dolore(m) ac luctuosos a(n)i(m)os in
12. su(m)mum gaudiu(m) traducere. Co(n)spiciu(n)t deniq(u)e ca(n)dida colla parios
13. lapillos facile sup(er)a(n)tia, mira(n)tur castigata(m) fronte(m), purpureu(m) iuue(n)te
14. lumen flauos crines o(mn)iaq(ue) pe(n)it(us) me(m)bra decoraq(ue) (c)o(n)spicie(n)do, no(n)
15. possu(n)t no(n) laudare, lauda(n)do no(n) amare, ama(n)do deniq(ue) no(n) obser-
16. vare. (Et) hi(n)c ego i(n)ter ceteros equales meos satis fortu(n)at(us) ado-
17. lesce(n)s (et) fortasse etia(m) fortu(n)atissim(us) futur(us) si amore(m) tuu(m) co(n)sequi
18. merit(us) fuero, cu(m) tales (c)o(n)dito(n)es tuas a(n)i(m)o (c)o(m)plecto, no(n) solu(m) ad te a-
19. ma(n)da(m), cole(n)da(m) (et) observanda(m) i(m)pello, (sed) (pro) te etia(m) amoris cogor nec
20. vigilans nec dormiens q(ui)esce(re) possu(m) ita vt cu(m) ex vna p(ar)te me socii
21. felice(m) appelle(nt), q(ua)r(e) cu(m) satis ho(n)esta v(ir)tute no(n) mediocris quoq(ue) ac-

22. cessit (et) fortu(n)a. Ego t(ame)n poti(us) me infelice(m) existime(m) cu(m) tibi placere
23. no(n) possi(m) i(n) qua solu(m) o(mn)es spes meas (c)o(n)stituas e(ss)e(m) volui. Uerte
24. ig(itu)r ali(quan)tulu(m) benignissimos in me ocellos tuos v(ir)go pudicissima, et
25. hu(n)c tibi seruulu(m) ab ineu(n)te etate dicatu(m) pie(n)tissi(m)e suscipias, non e(n)i(m)
26. hu(m)ana res (sed) diui(n)a poti(us) (est) amor nec tibi pa(rum) videat amori p(ar)ere
27. cui no(n) solu(m) hu(m)ani pri(n)cipes (sed) (et) diuina quoq(ue) colla subicere. Et
28. cave ne fortasse amore(m) despicias, tui mali ca(usam) sis meme(n)to Daph-
29. nes, memento Siri(n)gis qua(rum) alt(er)a Phebi, altera v(er)o Panis amore(m)
30. sp(er)ne(n)s curdelit(er) vita(m) finire, tu aut(em) t(a)les fugie(n)s Penelope(m) imitare
31. q(uae) amoris sui (c)o(n)sta(n)tia(m) viro serua(n)s felicissimos dies vixit mihiq(ue)
32. adhareas que(m) tibi senties in o(mn)ibus (quam)libentissime paratu(m) (quae) ad
33. honore(m) et pudiciam tua(m) facere videant(ur), du(m) fuerit hec mihi vita.
34. \[title of next chapter/(superstes. Uale.

APPENDIX 3

Translation of Archivo General de Simancas, PTR,LEG,54,65

1. Not without cause has it come to pass, most noble lady, that all keep their eyes fixed on you,
2. that they love you, that they marvel at you, that they take notice of you. For on the one hand
3. they closely regard that twofold virtue of yours, which has always made you so famous that
4. there is none who carries themselves with a gentler disposition of behaviours. For they admire your riches and your favourable
5. and easy fortune, which have brought both nobleness of birth and the ornaments of nobleness
6. under your sway. On the other hand, suddenly that singular and divine
7. (rather than human) beauty presents itself, which rightfully testifies that you were not born in this world, but

8. fell from heaven. For they admire that most radiant face of yours, which could also
9. clear up the cloudy sky. They admire those starry eyes of yours, which by their piercing gaze
10. can remove all pain, and move sorrowful hearts to the highest happiness.
11. And finally they admire your pale neck, which easily surpasses puny marble. They marvel
12. at your smooth brow, the blushing glow of youth, your golden hair, and each and every
13. graceful limb, which when looking they cannot help but praise, when praising they cannot help but love, when loving
14. finally they cannot help but esteem. Hence I am quite fortunate among my peers, and may perhaps
15. even be the most fortunate in the future – if by then I have proved worthy of pursuing your love, when I accept such
16. conditions of yours in my heart, I am driven to not just love you, worship you and attend to you,
17. but I am even bound to die for you, and neither waking nor sleeping can I rest,
18. and I count myself unhappy since I cannot please your nobility, upon which I have wished
19. to found all my hopes. Therefore, most noble mistress, my life, turn
20. your eyes towards me, and accept me as your humble servant, I, who from the first look have been most loyally devoted to you.
21. For love is no human matter, but rather a divine one. And may it not to you seem insufficient to yield to love,
22. to which not just human princes, but divine ones as well, bow their heads. Therefore I beg your
23. excellence to stick with me, who will feel himself most freely at your disposal in all things.
24. So long as my life endures, it is yours. And farewell my life, and my comfort, and the greatest
25. jewel of all of Scotland, farewell and farewell again.

APPENDIX 4

Translation of Negri's 'Turpis' Letter: BnF, Département Réserve des Livres Rares, RES P-Z-368 (fol. B2r)

1. Not without cause has it come to pass, sweetest Thysbe, that all among our people keep their
2. eyes fixed on you, that they love you, that they marvel at you, that they take notice of you. For on

3. the one hand they closely regard that twofold virtue of yours, which has always made you so famous
4. that there is none who professes a more excellent learning, or carries themselves with a gentler
5. disposition of behaviours. For they admire your riches and your favourable and easy fortune,
6. which have brought both nobleness of birth and the ornaments of nobleness under your
7. sway. On the other hand, suddenly that singular and divine (rather than
8. human) beauty presents itself, which rightfully testifies that you were not born in this world, but fell
9. from heaven. For they admire that most radiant face of yours, which could also
10. clear up the cloudy sky. They admire those starry eyes of yours, which
11. by their piercing gaze can remove all pain, and move sorrowful hearts to the
12. highest happiness. And finally they admire your pale neck, which
13. easily surpasses Parian marble. They marvel at your smooth brow, the blushing glow of
14. youth, your golden hair, and when admiring each and every graceful limb and charm they cannot
15. help but praise, when praising they cannot help but love, when loving finally they cannot help but
16. esteem. And hence I am quite a fortunate youth among my peers,
17. and may perhaps even be the most fortunate in the future – if by then I have proved
18. worthy of pursuing your love, when I accept such conditions of yours in my heart, I am driven to not just love you,
19. worship you and attend to you, but I am even driven to love for you, and neither
20. waking nor sleeping can I rest, so that on the one hand my companions
21. call me happy, because not insignificant good fortune is added to a rather honest virtue.
22. I, on the other hand, consider myself to be unhappy, if I cannot please you,
23. upon which I have wished to found all my hopes. Therefore,
24. turn your most friendly little eyes of yours towards me a little, most virtuous maiden, and

25. accept me as your humble servant, I, who from the beginning of my life have been most loyally devoted to you, for
26. love is no human matter, but rather a divine one, and may it not to you seem insufficient to yield to love,
27. to which not just human princes, but divine ones as well, bow their heads. And
28. take care to not, perhaps, look down on love, and not to become the cause of your own destruction – consider Daphne,
29. consider Syrinx, of whom one spurned Apollo's love, and truly the other Pan's,
30. and who cruelly ended their lives, but rather flee such a fate and imitate Penelope,
31. who, maintaining the constancy of her love for her husband, lived the happiest of days, and
32. stick with me, whom you may feel most freely at your disposal in all things, which
33. should be done for your honour and virtue, so long as my life endures,
34. \[title of next chapter\]/ (it is yours. Farewell.

APPENDIX 5

Textual and Critical Notes

Notes on the transcription: the AGS letter (henceforth: PTR,LEG,54,65) shows a tendency to use 'a' and 'ae' interchangeably. Both letters similarly use 'u' and 'v' alternately. In both cases, the respective transcriptions adhere to the spelling used in the original letters. Any abbreviations that have been completed for the purposes of the transcription have been marked using the system of brackets and symbols established in the so-called 'Leiden Conventions', and use the 'correct' spelling following modern orthographic conventions.

Nobilissima domina/ suauissima Thysbe: the opening phrases of the two letters display a distinct difference in tone. While PTR,LEG,54,65 uses the highly formal *nobilissima domina*, the Negri letter uses *suauissima Thysbe*. The Latin *suavis* is generally used to indicate sweetness and pleasantness, which may serve to underscore the *turpis* character of the Negri letter.

Populi nostri: this phrase, which appears in the Negri letter, is absent from PTR,LEG,54,65. This could suggest that the latter's writer and recipient were not regarded as being of the same people – which may tentatively be taken to mean that the letter was indeed written by Arthur himself, who was likely expected to make a foreign dynastic marriage.

Praestantiorum doctrinam profiteatur, nec: this phrase from the Negri letter is absent from PTR,LEG,54,65. This is particularly interesting, because the reference to "great learning" would be highly applicable to Katherine of Aragon, had she been the intended recipient.

Prae se/per se: PTR,LEG,54,65 reads *prae se*, while the Negri letter prints *per se*. Interpretatively, this makes little difference.

Paruos lapillos facile superantia/parios lapillos facile superantia: the meaning of this phrase in PTR,LEG,54,65 is unclear. The Latin *paruos* generally refers to size, and we might therefore see this as a reference to jewellery that may be translated as “the little rocks it wears” – although the latter part of the phrase is absent from the Latin. The Negri letter, however, refers not to *paruos lapillos*, but to *parios lapillos* – Parian marble. Parian marble was famous for its white colour, and would be an apt metaphor to use when describing the fashionable pallor of someone’s neck. For this reason, the phrase used in PTR,LEG,54,65 has been translated as “punny marble”.

Membra decora: quae/membra decoraque: a small but notable difference. PTR,LEG,54,65 praises the recipient’s “each and every graceful limb”, before turning to use a relative clause; the Negri letter refers to “each and every graceful limb and charm”.

Et hinc: the abbreviated *et* in the Negri letter is absent in PTR,LEG,54,65, which here begins a new sentence. For the relevance of this difference for the textual tradition from which PTR,LEG,54,65 originated, see note 17.

Adolescens: this word appears only in the Negri letter.

Complector/complecto: PTR,LEG,54,65 prints the passive *complector*, while the Negri letter uses the active *complecto*. Both versions are grammatically possible, and the difference does not affect the interpretation of the letter.

Et observandam impello(r): PTR,LEG,54,65 here reads *impellor*, while the Negri letter reads *impello*. The former, with its passive form, appears to make more grammatical sense.

Emori rogor/amori cogor: The meaning of these phrases is very different: while the author of PTR,LEG,54,65 proclaims himself willing to die for the recipient, the Negri letter states that he is simply driven to love. As the phrases look similar, this may be accidental.

Ita ut cum ex vna parte me socii felicem appellent, quare cum satis honesta virtute non mediocris quoque ac accessit et fortuna: this phrase appears only in the Negri letter.

Me infelicem esse existimans/Ego tamen potius me infelicem existimem: a slight grammatical difference between respectively, PTR,LEG,54,65 and the Negri letter, likely caused by the absence of the preceding phrase in PTR,LEG,54,65.

Cum nobilitati tue placere non possim/cum tibi placere non possim: PTR,LEG,54,65 refers to the recipient’s nobility; the Negri letter leaves out such honorifics.

Verte igitur nobilissima domina et anima mea in me oculos tuos/Uerte igitur aliquantulum benignissimos in me ocellos tuos virgo pudicissima: once again, PTR,LEG,54,65 addresses the recipient as a noble lady, as well as the sender’s heart, while the Negri letter refers to her as a most virtuous maiden. The Negri letter also uses various embellishments, pleading with the girl to turn her eyes towards him just a little (*aliquantulum*), using the diminutive *ocellos* for her eyes, and calling them most friendly (*benignissimos*). All of these flourishes are absent in PTR,LEG,54,65.

A primo conspectu/ab ineunte etate: PTR,LEG,54,65 refers to devotion from the first look, while the Negri letter uses “from the beginning of my life”. The difference may be due to the fact that the mythological Pyramus and Thisbe grew up as neighbours, while this need not have been the case for the author of PTR,LEG,54,65 and its intended (or imagined) recipient.

Nec tibi parum videatur amori parere: cui non solum humani Principes: sed et diuina quoque colla subiecere/nec tibi parum videat amori parere cui non solum humani principes sed et diuina quoque colla subicere: this phrase appears to be a prelude to the mythological references that follow in the Negri letter, but are omitted in PTR,LEG,54,65 – hence the references to both humans and gods yielding to love. The wording is somewhat vague, but by encouraging the recipient not to feel like she is above “yielding to love”, the author seems to be implying that he hopes she will sleep with him, without necessarily expecting anything more, like marriage. This interpretation may be supported by the author’s later statement that he will do anything to protect the recipient’s virtue (*paratum quae ad honorem et pudiciam tuam facere videantur*), without overtly promising marriage, which would make sense within the context of a letter that is considered *turpis*. Note that PTR,LEG,54,65 employs a passive form of the verb (*videatur*), while the Negri letter uses an active form (*videat*). Interpretatively, this makes little difference.

Et cave ne fortasse amorem despicias, tui mali causam sis memento Daphnes, memento Siringis quarum altera Phebi, altera vero Panis amorem spernens crudeliter vitam finire, tu autem tales fugiens Penelopem imitare quae amoris sui constantiam viro seruans felicissimos dies vixit: these seemingly threatening mythological references are absent from PTR,LEG,54,65.

Quare nobilitati tue supplico mihi adherere velit/mihique adhaereas: PTR,LEG,54,65 once again references the recipient’s nobility, while the Negri letter omits such comments.

Quem sibi sentiet/quem tibi senties: likely an error by the author of PTR,LEG,54,65. While he declares that he himself feels himself wholly devoted to the recipient, the Negri letter instead prints a reassurance, and claims that she may feel that that he is wholly devoted to her instead.

Quae ad honorem et pudiciam tuam facere videantur: this phrase only appears in the Negri letter, and seems to suggest that the author is willing to marry the recipient in order to save her virtue, if only she would be willing to sleep with him. However, this is not overtly stated, and the fact that he previously encourages the recipient not to feel like she is above yielding to love (*nec tibi parum videatur amori parere*) suggests that the remark may simply be intended to overcome her resistance.

Et Vale anima mea meum que solamen ac totius Scotiae maximum ornamentum: this reference to PTR,LEG,54,65’s recipient, which is not derived from the Negri letter in any way, has been translated as “You, the brightest ornament of Scotland, farewell, farewell” in Bergenroth’s translation of what can be identified as PTR,LEG,54,65 (CSPS Vol. 1, No. 119). Bergenroth used the phrase in his argument against Katherine of Aragon as the recipient of the letter, and indeed, as observed above, the Egerton letters show Arthur Tudor signing off with ‘princeps Walli(a)e’ for Prince of Wales. However, if PTR,LEG,54,65 represents an earlier practice letter, it is not unlikely that he made have made a mistake in the parts of the letter that he had composed himself, or that the practice letter was not addressed to Katherine, although still preparing Arthur for later correspondence with her.

Vale et itenū Vale: PTR,LEG,54,65 follows this phrase with an inverted punctus versus. This may stand for a stop or pause. The Negri letter contains no such abbreviation, and furthermore limits itself to *vale*.

[*Title of the next chapter*]/: in the Negri letter, the final words of the letter are printed on the same line as the title of the next chapter. These read: *lame(n)tatoriu(m) genus caput septimu(m)* – “The genre of lamentations, seventh chapter”. This title is followed by a closing parenthesis ‘(’, likely in order to more clearly distinguish between the two.

Abstract

The Archivo General de Simancas in Valladolid has preserved a letter attributed to Arthur Tudor, categorized as ‘declarándole su ardiente pasión amorosa’ [declaring his ardent loving passion]. Its recipient has been thought to be Katherine of Aragon. The lack of scholarly interest in this letter is remarkable, but may be caused by its having been calendared in the nineteenth century as written by Perkin Warbeck. In what follows we unlock the mystery of the AGS letter by returning to its original Latin. We reveal that it very closely follows an exemplum from Francesco Negri’s educational bestseller *Ars Epistolandi*, first published in 1488. Interestingly, Negri used the exemplum to show readers how not to write a letter, and categorized it as ‘turpis’, or, ‘lewd’. We present here an edition with a translation of both the AGS letter and Negri’s sample. Our evidence suggests that ‘Arthur’s letter’ is not a declaration of love to send to a recipient, but a school exercise in line with Humanist training. As such, it may not provide a window to Arthur’s passionate nature, but it does offer important insights into educational practices in the context of the Tudor court towards the end of the 15th century.