

RICE UNIVERSITY

The Sibylline Voices of Christine de Pizan


by

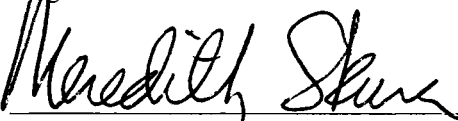
Jessica R. Weinstein

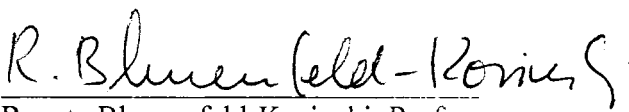
A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:


Jane Chance, Professor
English


Meredith Skura, Libbie Shearn Moody Professor
English


Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Professor
French and Italian, University of Pittsburgh

HOUSTON, TEXAS

JUNE 2006

UMI Number: 3256764

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3256764

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ABSTRACT

The Sibylline Voices of Christine de Pizan

by

Jessica R. Weinstein

The Sibyl's importance as an authorizing figure in Christine de Pizan's oeuvre is widely acknowledged but universally under-estimated. Scholars have focused almost exclusively on Christine's use of the detached and serenely wise Cumaean Sibyl, notably in the *Chemin de lonc estude* and the *Epistre Othéa*, and on close allegorized equivalents. This is to overlook the protean, cross-pollinating diversity of Christine's sibylline sources, and the variety and scope of their influence upon her writings.

Here Christine's use of sibylline characters, themes, and authority will be scrutinized in texts that exemplify radical departures from the tropes generally recognized by scholars. They show selective reshapings of polymorphous classical and medieval tradition to meet the shifting contingencies of Christine's career as a writer. Explicitly, Sibyls are invoked as authorizing precedents for her self-fashioning as a woman of wisdom and foresight in political, social, moral, and theological matters; but implicitly, sibylline attributes are also incorporated in other characters and authorial voices. Furthermore, Christine draws from the full panorama of source traditions, embodying not only wisdom and foresight but also recklessness and regret; not only serenity but also frenzy and tears; not only detachment but also polemical engagement in national destiny.

In her attack on courtly love, the *Livre du duc des vrais amans*, sibylline typologies underlie not only the unimpeachable Dame Seville but also the transgressive

Lady, whose fate evokes that of entrapped, shamed, or regretful Sibyls seen in Ovidian and later traditions. In the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France*, Christine evokes classical sibylline frenzy; calls upon the example of famous prophets who were ignored but ultimately vindicated; and she links foresight and maternal tears in an appeal to the queen, Isabel of Bavaria, to intercede as France's mother. In the Queen's Manuscript *Epistre Othéa*, Christine pursues similar goals as sibylline tutor to Isabel and the dauphin. In the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, Christine addresses national crisis by inscribing Charles VII, Jehanne, and herself in a millennial prophecy of the End of Days, assuming the voice of an Apocalyptic Sibyl of judgment and divine revelation.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my family who are probably happier than I am to see the completion of this manuscript. Second, my love and gratitude go out to a rather late arrival on the scene: my husband, John Garth, who took over the motivational whip from my *belle sœur de cœur eslit*, Nikki Seltzer. I am deeply indebted to my committee members: Jane Chance, Meredith Skura, and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, and the many mentors and friends who have guided me over the years. Special thanks are due to Thad Logan, Linda Driskill, and Christine Hoff of the Rice University English Department, as well as Angus Kennedy, Jim Laidlaw, Jeff Richards, Christine Reno, and Verlyn Flieger. Summer research funding in 2000 allowed me to deliver a paper at the Fourth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan (Glasgow, July 21-27). Subsequently published in the conference proceedings as “Horrrifying Revelations: The Disruptive Eye (I) of Seville de Monthault, Dame de la Tour,” the paper has become the basis of the first chapter of this study. On a more personal note I’d like to take a final opportunity to thank Jane for endless cups of espresso, conversation, and popcorn for dinner. Shelly and Gabe Begue, Larry Albert, Karoline Pershell, and Brandon Brison have been true-blue friends. And finally, my love and thanks go out to the Seltzer clan: Matt, Nikki, Jackson, Brennan, Wiley, and Renita. For seven years in Houston I watched their family grow and I am honored that they made me a part of it. Though we have all now moved away I cannot imagine a Houston without them.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Classical and Medieval Sibylline Tradition	7
Christine's Sibyls	11
Sibylline Attributes	14
Christine's Use of Sibylline Traditions	16
Sibylline Voices	27
Sibyls and Self-authorization	29
Outline of the Investigation	34
Notes	38
 1. Christine's Sibyls of the Tower: Omniscience and Entrapment in <i>Le Livre du duc des vrais amans</i>	 51
The Duke Narrates	54
The Lady Succumbs	61
The Lady and Dame Seville	68
The Lady as Sibyl	71
Dame Seville Intervenes	80
The Lady's Failure	86
Notes	96
 2. The Cry of the Sibyl: Compassion and Foresight in Christine's Advice to Isabel of Bavaria	 103
Isabel of Bavaria	107
<i>L'Epistre à la reine</i> : A Call to Duty in the Name of Compassion	112
Christine's Sibylline Plea to Isabel	117
Isabel as Mother to France	123
Intercession	130
<i>La Lamentacion</i> : The Sibyl's Frenzy in the Service of Reason	135
<i>L'Epistre Othéa</i> : A Mirror for the Queen	153
Notes	170
 3. Apocalypse Now: The Sibyl as Advisor to the Last World Emperor in <i>Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc</i>	 188
The Poet-Historian Becomes a Prophet	194
Prophecy and the French Monarchy	200
The Second Charlemagne Prophecy	206
Writing Jehanne into Salvation History	212
The Apocalyptic Sibyl and the Rhetoric of War	221
Apocalyptic Sibyl, Second Charlemagne, and Angelic Pope	226
Notes	236
 Conclusion	 250
 Works cited	 260

Introduction

Christine de Pizan (1364-1430?) became France's first professional female writer after the death of her husband in 1389 left her burdened with debt, paralyzed by unresolved legal issues, and with the responsibility of supporting her mother and children. It was in the course of ten years of legal battles over her husband's estate that she became aware of her social and material difficulties as a woman in a world where power was held predominantly by men; and furthermore that she realized the problems of trying to make her case heard, understood and accepted in a man's world. Thus in defending her legal rights Christine was already a "seulette à part" ["little woman alone and apart"], to borrow her later description of herself as a writer; in Earl Jeffrey Richards' gloss, she already spoke "on the sidelines," as part of a marginal, traditionally "muted" group.¹ During that decade she had written several collections of ballades, rondeaux, and virelays, but it was in 1399's *L'Epistre au dieu d'amours*, an assault on the literature and values of courtly love, that she commenced her attempt to defend women's social rights and simultaneously began developing a solution to the specific disadvantages she faced as a female writer. In due course, she expanded her campaign to take on issues in national politics.

Christine's need for authorization had been relatively significant in her early career, dominated primarily by verse written for the entertainment of a courtly society. It became acute with the *Dieu d'amours*, which criticized and mocked Jean de Meun's continuation of Guillaume de Lorris's *Le Roman de la Rose*, the much-praised thirteenth-century allegory of courtly love, on the grounds of misogyny.² As a result of her critique,

she was pitched into the highly publicized Debate of the *Rose* (1401-2), an epistolary battle with leading French humanists Jean de Montreuil, provost of Lille, and the brothers Gontier and Pierre Col, all three royal secretaries.³ The Debate, part of the broader fifteenth-century “Querelle des femmes,” signalled Christine’s entry into an intellectual arena exclusively composed of men.

It was a highly one-sided contest not just about a book, but about the authority to shape opinion — Christine attacking the preponderant authority of establishment men and of works considered canonical; her opponents seeking to deny her the authority to do so. In the *Dieu d’amours* she had dared to challenge Meun’s logic, reasoning that if all women are as foolish and “variables” [“fickle”] as he would have his readers believe, it should hardly take such grand scheming for the hero to deceive a virgin:

Et Jehan de Meun ou *Rommant de la Rose*:
Quel lonc procès! Quel difficile chose!
Et sciénces et cleres et obscures
Y mist il la, et de grans aventures!
Et que de gent supploiez et rouvez,
Et de peines et de baras trouvez
Pour decevoir sans plus une pucelle —
S’en est la fin, par fraude et par cautelle!
A foible lieu fault il dont grant assault?

[And Jean de Meun’s *The Romance of the Rose*, / Oh what a long affair! How difficult! / The erudition clear and murky both / That he put there, with those great escapades! / So many people called upon, implored, / So many efforts made and ruses found / To trick a virgin — that, and nothing more! / And that’s the aim of it, through fraud and schemes! / A great assault for such a feeble place?]⁴

Judging by the critical uproar generated by this passage, it appears that when a woman confronts a man, there is no greater insult to his pride than laughter.⁵ Gontier Col wrote Christine expressing indignation that she has dared “chargier, corrigier et reprendre”

["accuse, correct, and criticize"] Meun; he postured himself as her *lecteur* and sent her a treatise of Meun's for her edification.⁶ Positioning himself as a spokesman or ring-leader of Meun disciples, he effected to represent a kind of gentlemen's club. By suggesting that Christine was being used as a "chappe a pluie" ["cloak"] for allies who were too intimidated to engage openly in the Debate, Col revealed that he barely considered her part of his audience, a wider gentlemen's club composed of her allies and opponents but excluding the woman herself.⁷ At its worst, the attack brought opprobrium upon Christine. Quoting Cicero, Montreuil likened her attack on Meun to that of "Leuntium grecam meretricem" ["Leontium the Greek whore"] challenging "philosophum tantum" ["so great a philosopher"] as Theophrastus.⁸ The implication was that Christine had risen above her social and intellectual station as a woman.

Challenging a literary icon such as the *Roman de la Rose* or the scholars who defended it had brought outspoken criticism; but the stakes were increasingly high as Christine's oeuvre expanded to include more purely social (non-literary) critiques and political polemic. Unlike the anchorites and other mystics, beguines, and literate nuns writing in the Middle Ages, Christine, as a secular yet professional woman who dared address personal, political, and religious corruption, was unable to turn to the Church to sanction her right to adopt a public persona. In the absence of a precedent for a woman writing in the social or political arenas, Christine ran the risk of her work being ignored or dismissed as inappropriate. If she caused personal offense the loss of patronage for a writer described by Beatrice Gottlieb as "the closest thing to a career woman in the fifteenth century" could have been financially devastating.⁹ If she offended the monarchy or the Church, she risked arrest and punishment for treason or heresy.¹⁰

Gender and morality remained at the foundations of everything Christine wrote, even when she turned her eyes from courtly love literature to the politics of government and war. As a counsellor of kings, queens, and princes, through vehicles such as letters and conduct books (“Mirrors” such as *L’Epistre d’Othéa la deesse, que elle envoya a Hector de Troye quant il estoit en l’age de quinze ans* of 1400, *Le Livre de trois vertus* of 1405, *Le Livre du corps de policie* of 1405, and *Le Livre de la paix* of 1413), she urged the moral and political virtues of peace and stability under a strong monarchy; while emphasizing the monarch’s duty to listen to the needs of the populace. Gender remained an issue partly because during the long mental illness of Charles VI, Christine was attempting to advise the queen, Isabel of Bavaria, as effective ruler of France: she was trying to define a woman’s role in power. In her addresses to members of the ruling families, gender was pertinent because she was a woman intruding in the male preserves of politics and writing; Christine continually had to justify her right and her ability to assume an advisory role.

At its best, however, participation in the Debate of the *Rose* provided Christine an early opportunity not only to define her social politics but to begin building her authority as a woman writer, as David Hult observes: “To understand fully the place of this debate in the context of Christine’s career as author [. . .] requires not solely seeing it as a move to censure a noxious misogynistic discourse or to express moral indignation [. . .] but also as a strategic step in the construction of a career and the public establishment of an ‘other’ voice.”¹¹ A variety of authorizing strategies available to Christine may be briefly enumerated, broadly in terms of economic context (patronage); literary content (mythography, hagiography, borrowings from other authors, allegorical

or sibylline figures and fictional self-representation); and rhetoric (self-citation of her works, diminutive references to herself, humor, legal language, subversion of masculine discourse, prophetic discourse).¹²

In an economic context, Christine used the prestige of a patron's name to lend authority to her work, though this meant she also had to find ways of avoiding artistic and political compromise. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski has argued that she found patrons in rival ducal families in order to preserve her neutrality.¹³ Deborah McGrady asserts that Christine undermined the traditional patronage system to enhance her literary independence from her benefactors while maximizing their authorizing potential.¹⁴

In terms of literary content, critics have examined how Christine incorporated mythographic or hagiographic elements in her works, rewriting them to her own polemical ends. Critics have also investigated how she pursued the related (and often overlapping) project of remolding stories borrowed from authors such as Vincent of Beauvais or Boccaccio; and how she adapted the literary structures built by predecessors such as Boethius and Dante.¹⁵ For example, Margaret Ferguson notes that in *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405) the personified virtue Raison cites Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* as an authority but tacitly reverses his misogyny; Kevin Brownlee views the entire text of *Dieu d'amours*, which (as its title indicates) purports to be a letter from the God of Love, as a "corrective rewriting" of Cupid's speech in the *Roman de la Rose*.¹⁶ Alternatively (or additionally), Christine could orient herself in relation to the prevailing tropes of allegory, creating allegorical figures to preside over her work and instruct her, fictively, in its production. The first of these authorizing figures was the God of Love

himself; others included Minerva, whom I discuss below, and the presiding spirits of this dissertation, the Sibyls.

In terms of rhetoric, Christine's strategies of authorization included authorial self-reference, where Christine's previous works are cited by herself or by a tutelary personification, often in order to counter her own expressions of self-doubt. By the time she closed her writing career with *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* in 1429 she had written a corpus of texts that made citing alternative authorities largely redundant.¹⁷ Christine's use of diminutives for herself as a means to slip subversive ideas past the reader's guard has attracted considerable attention.¹⁸ Another strategy, as Thelma Fenster has noted in relation to *Dieu d'amours* and the dossier of Debate letters that Christine prepared in 1402, was humor, which "allowed one to utter truths that might not be said otherwise."¹⁹ Various adoptions of formalized official discourse have also been noted, from the Ciceronian (Helen Solterer) to the contemporary judicial (Maureen Curnow).²⁰ Subversions of other forms of gendered masculine discourse have been identified in Christine by Jane Chance, Lori Walters, and others.²¹

This investigation will focus on Christine's use of prophetic discourse to assert authority in a variety of ways, either in conjunction with the insertion of sibylline figures into her texts, or by adopting the sibylline voice as her own. I aim to show that the figure of the Sibyl took a dominant position at the heart of the sequence of validating voices used by Christine, sometimes sublimated in the forms of various wise female figures who are not named "sibyl" but who nevertheless wield prophetic or visionary powers. These sibylline figures provided Christine with multiple traditions of women participating in public spaces; with a claim to authority based on their exalted position and their superior

foreknowledge or wisdom; and with a means to challenge the exclusion of women from social or political debate.

The Classical and Medieval Sibylline Tradition

In incorporating the Sibyl or Sibyls into her works, Christine was drawing on a tradition which had been shaped and reformed repeatedly according to the needs of time and place, of religion and politics, since its obscure prehistoric origins in the Near East; so that by the later Middle Ages, newly revived, its hold on the literary and popular imagination was more vigorous than ever. The sibylline idea had been transmitted in three successive phases: the classical, dating back beyond 500 BCE, comprising oracular texts and various mythographical appearances; the Jewish and Christian *Sibylline Oracles*, originating in the early centuries CE but given a renewed lease of life by patristic commentators; and the new “sibylline” writings of the medieval era, produced as early as the fourth century CE and as late as the thirteenth century.²² But these phases were not distinguishable in Christine’s era, and each has a bearing on her writing.

In the earliest literary reference (c. 500 BCE), the immemorial prophetic function of the Sibyl is accompanied by other ancient features summed up by Heraclitus: “The Sibyl with frenzied lips, uttering words mirthless, unembellished, unperfumed, penetrates through a thousand years with her voice by the god.”²³ Her memory of the moment may vanish along with the ecstatic trance, yet her pronouncement, or perhaps her life, lasts a millennium. Directly exposed to divine knowledge by inspiration or possession, in an ecstatic frenzy she forecasts dreadful calamity, or as Heraclitus specifies, “many revolutions and upheavals of Greek cities, many appearances of barbarous hordes and

murders of rulers.”²⁴ The sibylline oracles acquired new political importance when they were gathered by the Romans, guarded by a college of priests, and consulted in times of crisis; but in the words of Bard Thompson, “They were not so much predictions of woes to come, like apocalyptic tracts, as explanations of what was required to avert the anger of the gods.”²⁵

The oracles were destroyed c. 408 CE by the Roman general Stilicho, but their reputation persisted into the Middle Ages partly through references in contemporary writings. From the middle of the fourth century BCE there are references to multiple *Sibyllae*. The Sibyl of Cumae in Italy was immortalized by Vergil, whose writings remained familiar throughout the Middle Ages.²⁶ The Sibyl of the *Aeneid* is the virginal and reluctant conduit of knowledge forced upon her by Phoebus Apollo (an act that some read as a metaphorical rape); she writes prophecies on oak leaves, prone to scatter to chaos in the wind. Crucially for Christine’s later purposes, in the *Aeneid* the Sibyl assumes the function of guide, leading Aeneas into the underworld via the crater of Avernus and showing him (among other things) the souls of rebels against divinely ordained authority.²⁷ In the “Fourth Eclogue” she heralds the glorious birth of a child in a verse reinterpreted by Christians as a prophecy of the birth of Christ. Another of the chief classical literary influences on Christine’s concept of the Sibyl was Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (known to her primarily through the medieval French adaptation, *Ovide moralisé*), which tells how the god Phoebus Apollo granted the same Cumaean Sibyl as many years’ life as the grains of sand she held, but not concomitant youth, for which she had failed to ask, so that she withered away, regretting her folly.²⁸ In the *Satyricon* of Petronius — which it is not impossible that Christine knew despite its general obscurity

until later in the fifteenth century — the Sibyl appears to be so shrunken that she can be kept in a bottle, reduced to a grotesque on public display.²⁹ In another story, relayed by Aulus Gellius (b. c. 125 CE) and Dionysius Halicarnassus and repeated by Christine in *Le Livre du chemin de lonc estude* (1403) and the *Cité des dames*, the Sibyl sells three books to Tarquin II (Lucius Tarquinius Superbus), last king of Rome from 534 to 510 BCE, for the price of nine in an audacious piece of hard bargaining.³⁰

Eight books of sibylline oracles, distinct from the Roman collection, were produced from the middle of the second century BCE onwards, in Greek hexameters. If Ovid and Vergil had imprinted the image of the Sibyl as a figure upon the medieval imagination, these were the repositories of her voice.³¹ One key function was to provide reviews of world history, but prophecy remained a central concern. In the oldest volume, the Jewish Book 3, the sibylline daughter of Moses claims that although most hearers dismiss her words as insane ravings, “when all things come to pass, / Ye will make mention of me; no one more / Will call me mad, but God’s great prophetess.”³² Here the tradition was infused with prophecies of a messianic king who would put all wrongs right, though he would often be preceded by the advent of a wicked ruler.³³

Crucially, the Christian authors of the later books, writing from the second century CE onwards, presented their various Sibyl figures as Gentiles and prophets of Christ; their most important contribution to the diffusion of the sibylline idea across medieval Europe being a poem attributed to the Sibyl of Erythraea in Book 8, depicting Judgment Day but yielding the acrostic “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour, Cross.” With the help of Vergil’s “messianic” “Fourth Eclogue,” the sibylline oracles came to be seen as equal in authority to the Scriptures: the Emperor Constantine was said to have cited the

Sibyls as a “foreign source” of testimony to the divinity of Christ; most influentially of all, St. Augustine proclaimed the Sibyls to be citizens of the City of God and translated the acrostic into Latin.³⁴ Thanks to this publicity boost, only the Erythraean Sibyl appears in art until the late Middle Ages.³⁵ However, another text attributed to Augustine also referred to multiple Sibyls, setting up what Bernard McGinn calls “a clear parallel between the Old Testament prophets who announced Christ to the Jews and the Sibyl who proclaimed him to the Gentiles.”³⁶ The Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro (116 to 27 BCE) had given the provenance of ten Sibyls (Persian, Libyan, Delphic, Cimmerian, Erythraean, Samian, Cumaean, Hellespontic, Phrygian, and Tiburtine) in a list that was preserved by the patristic author Lactantius.³⁷ Together the Jewish and Christian oracles, and the patristic commentaries upon them, form what McGinn has called the “inherited” strand of sibylline tradition that was current in the later Middle Ages.³⁸

Another, less influential strand consisted of new sibylline works composed during the Middle Ages and purporting to prophesy the fates of contemporary dynasties and nations. Geoffrey of Monmouth, for example, claims to cite such oracles with reference to Arthur and Cadwallader.³⁹ After 1000 CE they came mostly under the names of the Erythraean and Tiburtine Sibyls, and in relation to earlier sibylline texts they are most innovative in fiercely promoting the intertwined ideas of a Last World Emperor and the End of Days, echoing (though by now thoroughly dissociated from) the old Jewish messianic auguries. There was a Francophile version of the *Sibylla Tiburtina* in the period of the Second Crusade (1145-9), now lost; but another version from c. 1220 glorifies the French monarchy, promising that it would ultimately sire the Last Emperor.

Book 2 of the twelfth-century Erythraean oracle has been identified as part of the program of Joachim of Fiore and his followers to promote the idea that a French king would become a “Second Charlemagne” and take on the Mohammedan Antichrist (perhaps with the help of an “Angelic Pope”).⁴⁰

A final strand of the sibylline tradition in the later Middle Ages existed in folklore, and the primarily oral mode of transmission makes it impossible now to estimate the diffusion or nature of such sibylline stories and associations. A noteworthy exception is that of the Sibyl who was said to live in a cave in the Appennines of Christine’s native Italy, a legend recorded in Christine’s lifetime by Andrea da Barberino (c. 1370-c.1431) in his romance *Guerrino il Meschino*, and featured by the Provençal writer Antoine de la Sale (1388-1462?) in *Le Paradis de la reine sibylle* (1437), but undoubtedly much older than these earliest extant written references. In an interesting inversion of the Sibyl’s generally positive image in the Middle Ages, the Appennine Sibyl has been condemned to the cave for having claimed she would be the virgin mother of the coming Christ; and she is a *belle dame sans merci* who entices knights to lurid pleasures and the risk of perpetual entrapment.⁴¹

Christine’s Sibyls

Christine’s use of the Sibyls spans thirty years of writing, ending with the *Ditié*, where one unspecified Sibyl is named as validation of Jehanne’s divine mission, and beginning with the *Epistre Othéa*, in the last chapter of which the Cumaean Sibyl reveals to Caesar Augustus the existence of Christ, exemplifying the moral lesson that women’s wisdom ought not to be ignored.

In the *Chemin de lonc estude*, the Sibyl of Cumae appears as Christine's first fully developed sibylline figure and takes Christine-as-protagonist on a guided allegorical tour of heaven and earth. She functions as an analogue not only of the Sibyl in Vergil's *Aeneid*, but also of Lady Philosophy in the *Consolatio philosophiae* (c. 524) by Boethius (480-524/5 CE); of Vergil himself and Beatrice in the *Divina commedia* (1308-21) by Dante (1265-1321); and of the various allegorical personifications of virtues in Christine's other works, who nevertheless profess to a connection with the Sibyls or claim prophetic powers of their own.

In *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans* (1405), a wise governess named Seville de Monthault, Dame de la Tour, appears as the author of a letter of advice to a former charge. The same letter reappears under the same name in the *Trois vertus*, a "Mirror" of advice for Marguerite of Burgundy, the dauphin's young bride. In the *Cité des dames*, Christine makes the Sibyls the allegorical foundations of her feminine city of virtue and wisdom. She enumerates them thus:

La premiere fu de la terre de Perse et pour ce est nommee Persia. La seconde fu de Libé, si fu nomme Libica. La tierce de Delphe engendree ou temple d'Appolin, pour ce ot nom Delphica, et ceste predict lonctemps devant la destruccion de Troye, et d'elle mist Ovide en son livre plusieurs vers. La quarte fu d'Ytalie et fu nommee Cimeria. La quinte fu nee en Babiloine et fu nommee Erophile. Ceste respondi a ceulx de Grece qui lui en demandoient que Troye et Ylyon le fort chastel par eulx periroit et que Omer en escriproit mencongeusement. Ceste fu nommee Erithee pour ce qu'en celle isle demoura et la furent ses livres trouvez. La ·vj·e fu de l'isle de Samos et fu nommee Samia. La ·vij·e fu appelee Cumana et fu d'Ytalye, nee en la terre de Campaigne. La ·viij·e fu nommee Helespontine et fu nee en Helespont ou champs de Troye et flourissoit ou temps du noble aucteur Solin et de Tiry. La ·ix·e fu de Frige, pour ce fu nommee Frigica. Ceste moult parla du decheement de plusieurs seigneuries et moult au vif. Aussi parla de l'advenement du faulx prophete Antecrist. La ·x·e fu dicte Tiburtine, par autre nom nommee Albunia, de laquelle les dictiez sont moult honorez pour ce que elle escript tres clerement de Jhesu Crist.⁴²

[The first was from the land of Persia and so was named Persia. The second was from Libya and was called Libica. The third came from Delphi, was born in the Temple of Apollo, and thus was called Delphica. She foretold long in advance the destruction of Troy — Ovid even placed several of her verses in his works. The fourth was from Italy and was named Cimeria. The fifth was born in Babylon and named Eriphile; she replied to the Greeks when they asked her whether Troy and Ilium, its citadel, would be destroyed by them, a subject which Homer wrote about with so many lies. She was called Erythrea because she lived on this island, and there her books were written. The sixth was from the island of Samos and was called Samia. The seventh was named Cumana and was from Italy, born in the city of Cumae in the land of Campania. The eighth was named Hellespontus and was born on the Hellespont in the country of Troy, and she flourished in the time of the noble author Solon and of Cyrus. The ninth was from Phrygia and so was called Phrygica; she spoke a great deal about the fall of several dominions and she also spoke quite pertinently about the false prophet Antichrist. The tenth was called Tiburtina, and also by another name, Alburnia, and her statements were greatly revered because she wrote the most clearly about Jesus Christ.]⁴³

Christine follows Augustine in giving special attention to the Erythraean Sibyl, citing her acrostic and a set of prophecies of the End; and to the Cumaean Sibyl, noting the longevity she won from Apollo and her face-off with Tarquin.⁴⁴ Her list is directly based on the *Miroir historial*, Jean de Vignai's French translation of Vincent de Beauvais's encyclopedic *Speculum historiale*.⁴⁵ The only substantial difference between Christine's list and the oldest sources (Lactantius and an anonymous preface to the *Sibylline Oracles*) is in the assignation of the name "Erophile" (Herophile) to the Erythraean rather than the Cumaean Sibyl.

This instance of consistency with sources should not be taken as an indication that Christine was single-mindedly scholarly in all her statements about Sibyls. In fact, her use of sources on this matter has given rise to some confusion and disagreement. Julia Holderness argues that in the last chapter of the *Epistre Othéa* Christine mistakenly gives the Sibyl of Cumae the Tiburtine Sibyl's proper role as revelator to Augustus.⁴⁶ Karen Green, citing the *Cité des dames* reference to the Tiburtine Sibyl's special knowledge of

Christ as evidence that Christine knew what she was talking about, rejects the “blunder” theory. Instead, she sees the attribution as an artistic decision, “a judicious precisification,” on the basis of the Sibyl of Cumae’s association with Vergil and therefore with Troy, so central to the *Epistre Othéa*.⁴⁷

Discussion of such topics here will be brief; for the present purpose it is sufficient to note that Christine particularly favors the Cumaean Sibyl. It is not the chief goal of this study to excavate or hypothesize connections between these named precursors and Christine’s Sibyls, sibylline figures, or sibylline voices. Indeed, none of the figures or voices that I discuss in detail is to be equated exclusively with any single one of the named Sibyls in the textual tradition of the Middle Ages.

Sibylline Attributes

Medieval traditions about the named Sibyls show great inconsistency. Augustine himself equivocates over whether the messianic acrostic belonged to the Cumaean or Erythraean Sibyls.⁴⁸ As Green puts it, “the traditions concerning the sibyls were ambiguous and even contradictory.”⁴⁹ Gabriella Parussa confirms that “on assiste fréquemment au Moyen Age à une superposition de plusieurs sibylles dans un seul et même personnage et [. . .] il est donc parfois difficile de reconnaître de quelle sibylle il s’agit dans tel ou tel texte [. . .]” [“in the Middle Ages several Sibyls are often seen superimposed in one and the same figure and so it is difficult to identify which Sibyl is meant in any given text”].⁵⁰ Such complexities suggest considerable scope for making largely inconclusive equations between any given Christinian Sibyl and any one of the named Sibyls of tradition.

The fact that the various named Sibyls often swapped or merged their attributes suggests that these traits are best regarded independently of their possessors, as memes or significant units in cultural transmission.⁵¹ Thus, from a literary rather than an archeological point of view, instead of probing Christine's use of the named Sibyls, it seems more valuable here to investigate her use of the sibylline attributes themselves. Reference will be made to her probable sources (including those which name their own Sibyls as Tiburtine, Cumaean, or otherwise); but the focus will primarily be on how Christine uses (and sometimes combines) these sibylline traits in her construction of her own sibylline figures and voices.

From the short summary of sibylline tradition above, it is possible to isolate a basic list of such attributes. Each Sibyl may possess several of these aspects, but not all. Some traits are found more commonly than others; some overlap but some are incompatible opposites; some typically appear together in tradition. The groupings below do not necessarily reflect attested clusters and are in no particular order.

The Sibyl is female; a prophet; virginal; beautiful; mortal; longeval but progressively shrivelling with age; wise; vain and conceited; regretful.

She was once loved by Apollo; she is ravished by him. She is the object of divine possession or inspiration; she is in unmediated contact with divine knowledge. She is a reluctant conduit of knowledge; she suffers post-visionary amnesia. Her utterances are frenzied; her prophecies are confusing; they are dismissed as insane babble.

But the Sibyl's prophecies are ultimately proven true: her oracles of the future are as accurate as history. She writes texts that get lost or mixed up; she is a writer and custodian of books of wisdom. Her oracles comprise a national treasury of wisdom; they

are kept behind closed doors. She challenges even emperors; she teaches heroes and rulers. She foretells disaster; her oracles are consulted in time of national crisis; they explain how to avert divine wrath. She prophesied the fall of Troy; she was a prophet of Roman imperial power. She predicted the birth of Christ; she claimed she would be his virginal mother. She is a virtuous pagan; she is a pagan parallel to the Old Testament prophets; she is a citizen of the City of God. She records the history of the world since creation; she predicts a messianic king or Last Emperor, an Angelic Pope, and/or Antichrist; she predicts the End Days.

And finally, a miscellaneous set of contradictions. The Sibyl is a guide to the underworld or to the unearthly mysteries; she will trap the unwary underground; she is a temptress. She is an astute bargainer; she is a reckless bargainer who fails to see disastrous consequences for herself. She is associated with a cave; she is trapped in a cage or a bottle; after death she is preserved in a jar. She is an honored recluse; she is a grotesque object of public curiosity.

Christine's Use of Sibylline Traditions

Clearly, such a set of attributes furnishes great scope for selection, a flexibility which was particularly useful in the construction of the Sibyl as an authorizing figure. As Thelma Fenster has noted:

[. . .] in fact, the classical and medieval worlds knew many sibyls, and their characteristics did not necessarily remain discrete in popular — or even educated — minds. "The Sibyl" could be an amalgam of sibyls, a mixed bag of traits [. . .] that afforded medieval writers latitude in their depictions of her. Thus, if Christine patterned her represented self after the Sibyl, it is also true that she redrew the Sibyl to suit the image she held of herself and of her own possibilities. For this project, not all aspects of the

inherited sibyl figures were equally germane. But the sibyl's great age and mortality, the tradition of her books of prophecy, and above all, her emblematic voice, served the exemplary portrait Christine envisaged.⁵²

To extend Fenster's point, the Sibyl could furthermore be redrawn to suit Christine's shifting image of herself; or to be more precise, to suit the image of herself that was most valuable for her current purpose.⁵³ Therefore it is an oversimplification to state simply, as Brownlee does, that the presence of the Sibyl in the *Ditié* is "overdetermined," "singular," and "privileged" based on the cumulative effect of past appearances in the *Epistre Othéa*, the *Chemin du lonc estude*, the *Cité des dames*, the *Trois vertus*, and the *Duc des vrais amans*.⁵⁴ The "cumulative effect" is undeniably important as part of Christine's strategy of self-authorization, but it is also essential to examine how Christine's sibylline figures or voices have been individually tailor-made from multiple and varying traditions to meet the specific demands of the text in which they appear.

The Sibyl earns her place as the keystone of Christine's authorizing structure principally because her wisdom is derived from God. The *Cité des dames* follows Lactantius, Servius's fifth-century commentary on the first six books of the *Aeneid*, and Boccaccio in suggesting that the name "Sibyl" itself means "knowing the thinking of God" and that those who hold the title constitute an elect order.⁵⁵

[. . .] Quel plus grand honneur en fait de revelacion fist oncques Dieux a prophete, quelque'il fust, tant l'amast qu'il donna et ottoia a ces tres nobles dames dont je te parle? Ne mist il en elles saint esperit de prophecie tant, et si avant, qu'il ne sembloit mie de ce qu'elles disoient que ce fust pronosticacion du temps a venir, ains sembloit que ce fussent si comme croniques de choses passees et ja avenues, tant estoient clers et entendibles et plains leurs dis et escrips? [. . .] Si furent toutes nommees Sebiles et n'est mie a entendre que ce fust leur propre nom, ains est a dire "Sebile" ainsi que savant la pensee de Dieu. Et furent ainsi appelees pour ce que elles prophetisierent si merueilleuses choses que il convenoit que ce

qu'elles disoient, leur venist de la pure pensee de Dieu, si est nom d'office et non pas propre.⁵⁶

[What greater honor in revelation did God ever bestow upon any single prophet, regardless of how much God loved him, than He gave and granted to these most noble ladies whom I am describing to you? Did He not place in them such a profound and advanced prophecy that what they said did not seem to be prognostications of the future but rather chronicles of past events which had already taken place, so clear and intelligible were their pronouncements and writings? [. . .] They were all called sibyls, but it should not be taken that this was their own name, for saying "sibyl" means "knowing the thinking of God." Thus they were so called because they prophesied such marvellous things that what they said must have come to them from the pure thinking of God. Thus "sibyl" is a title of office rather than a proper name.]⁵⁷

The extraordinary clarity of their predictions, derived directly from the omniscient mind of God, is a point revisited almost immediately in Christine's account of how the Sibyl Erythraea, commissioned by the Greeks to meditate on the outcome of the Trojan War, "escript tant clerement en dictiez leurs labours, les batailles et la destruccion de Troye que ce n'estoit point plus clere chose apres le fait que devant" ["described their struggles and battles and the destruction of Troy so clearly in her poems that this last story was no more clear after the fact than it had been before"].⁵⁸ The powers of historian-prophet were often related to the idea of the Sibyl as presiding seer of Trojan, Roman, or French nationhood within the larger scheme of creation, salvation, and Christian apocalypse. Therefore, as I will demonstrate, this aspect proved especially valuable to Christine in her construction of herself as political critic and prognosticator to the Valois monarchy.⁵⁹

On the essential issue of the nature and source of sibylline wisdom, it has been observed that Christine's remodelling of the Sibyl matches the figure's wider iconographic development in later Middle Ages. Fenster asserts that the medievalization of the Sibyl slowly replaced the "older, more mysterious Sibyl, whose message required

interpretation,” with one who gained her wisdom not only through God (or a god) but also through book-learning. She identifies this transition to a “more mundane teacher or counselor” in texts such as the anonymous *Roman d’Eneas* and Bernardus Silvestris’s *Commentum super sex liberos Eneidos Virgilii* [*Commentary on the First Six Books of Vergil’s Aeneid*], both of which in the twelfth century had portrayed the Sibyl as a scholar adept in grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music, and physics.⁶⁰ The new emphasis may also be seen in Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus*, where the Erythraean Sibyl is loved by God precisely for her erudition and religious devotion.⁶¹ Eleni Stecopoulos and Karl Utti see Christine’s pursuit of this tendency as a central factor in her contemporary and subsequent success. They write:

By expelling the mythic — the fabulous — from these heroines, Christine, very much the Christian and vernacular writer of the early fifteenth century, aligns them with her own, and her readers’, reality. She effects a genuine *translatio*. By denying their deity, she reconstructs them as viable — meaningful and true — models for her age. Her authority here is scholarly, in both a profoundly medieval sense (*clergie*) and, for many readers nowadays, modern.⁶²

The adoption by Christine of quasi-judicial discourse, mentioned previously, may be seen as part of this effort to emphasize the “more mundane” and modern in her use of the Sibyls.

For Christine, the shift away from pagan mystery is prompted by gendered concerns as well as Christian piety, as Fenster observes: it allows her to emphasize and enlarge the Sibyl’s new literary aspect in order “to promote the role that women can play in public life.”⁶³ In the *Cité des dames* Christine epitomizes the literary woman as a *clergece*, the female equivalent to *clerc*, and bestows the epithet on Carmentis,

Cassandra, and Catherine. All these women combine scholarship with sibylline foresight into earthly destinies or insight into unearthly mysteries.⁶⁴ Lori Walters writes of Christine herself: “As a *clergesce* [*sic*] proposing nothing less than a fundamental revision of the presuppositions of literary composition, she was trying to secure women’s place in literary tradition and to free the literary representation of women from misogynist convention.”⁶⁵ It may further be noted that the Sibyl’s knowledge of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric — the medieval trivium — locates her in a specifically male space of learning. Earl Jeffrey Richards observes that by necessity Christine’s own attempt to invade a male sphere of learning must focus on the prevailing literary mode of the day: “[. . .] Christine needed to demonstrate her mastery of allegory, for *allegoresis* constituted historically the central tradition in medieval literary culture.” Richards argues that for Christine the issue was not only practical — in that her career was at stake — but also spiritual. By practicing her art she could make the fallen world more like the Christian ideal: “She had to show in her own writings that literary art rather than excluding one gender in favor of the other must transcend gender, for St. Paul had claimed in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew or Greek [. . .]. In salvation the soul transcended the accident of gender. Christine’s use of allegory thus attests to her attempt to show that men and women can potentially contribute equally to the field of letters.”⁶⁶ For Christine’s attempts to authorize herself as a writer, the medieval development of the Sibyl seen in the *Roman d’Eneas* and *De claris mulieribus* furnished a particularly apposite iconographic model of a book-learned woman who was both a guide or teacher and an author of advisory or educational texts.

Yet sibylline knowledge remains explicitly and irreducibly female. The fundamental reason is also the most obvious: all Sibyls are female. But the multiplicity of Sibyls in tradition adds a further dimension to the gendering of wisdom, in assigning to many women a secret knowledge that is not directly available to men. For Christine, this is the springboard for the theme of the transmission of such feminine wisdom from woman to woman. Repeatedly in her works Christine reinforces the thematic connection between knowledge and womanhood by relating the acts of teaching and mothering. For example, in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, the Cumaean Sibyl names Christine daughter and, in recognition of her dedication to study and learning, honors her with revelations of secret knowledge.⁶⁷ In the *Duc des vrais amans*, the Lady calls upon Dame Seville as a surrogate mother, consciously seeking her help as a co-conspirator in her extra-marital affair but subconsciously (as will be argued) seeking her guidance, her moral correction, and her assistance in reawakening the forgotten wisdom that the governess had taught her as a child. In the words of Maureen Quilligan, “Prophecy and motherhood, the internal ‘complex ties’ of relation between mother and daughter, are connected to a different, experientially based, secret female authority [. . .].”⁶⁸

Contrary to Fenster, Quilligan identifies this mother-daughter sibylline transmission as a survival of older mysteries into Christine’s works. She writes: “One can see in Christine’s representation of the sibyls the anti-rational but powerfully persuasive mystic-prophetic tradition of a specifically female knowledge, exercised face to face, a relational experience, situated at the liminal spaces of social boundaries — and thus both condemned and honored by society throughout the centuries in such contrary guises as the persecution of witches and the reverence for female saints.”⁶⁹ Thus, Christine’s task

in both the *Chemin de lonc estude* and the *Cité des dames* is the transmission of secret knowledge provided by prophetic female authority figures who are intermediaries with the divine.

If, as Fenster says, Christine is replacing the “older, more mysterious” Sibyl with a book-learned teacher, how can she also be promoting, as Quilligan points out, the Sibyl’s “anti-rational” and “mystic-prophetic” oral aspects?⁷⁰ In actuality, Christine celebrates the oral transmission of knowledge because it has always been the predominant method of teaching available to women; but at the same time she aims to break through the established boundary into the male province of book-learning and writing. Thus she utilizes the impetus given to the Sibyl’s status by thousands of years of (largely mystical) tradition in order to authorize her annexation of traditionally masculine (and largely rational) literary territory. Quilligan writes: “Christine appropriates the traditional wisdom of the sibyls to authorize her own bid for scripted authority, as she inserts herself into a *written* tradition. [. . .] The sibyls traditionally stand at thresholds mediating between nature and culture for both men and women.”⁷¹ The process is encapsulated in the simple idea that she is instructed by the Sibyls in the *Cité des dames* and the *Chemin de lonc estude* to write down what they tell her: to convert oral wisdom into written form.

In her newer aspect as book-learned educator, the Sibyl was also equipped for the transmission of knowledge from women to men, a point that was essential as a means of authorizing Christine to address both sexes and to argue for social change. The maternal tutor in Christine’s works teaches not only her daughters but also her sons. In the *Epistre Othéa* Hector’s literal parents are Priam and Hecuba, but his mythological or allegorical

parents are Mars, for valor in battle, and Pallas Minerva, from whom he must learn wisdom and chivalry.⁷² As Walters notes, in *Le Dit de la rose* (1402) Christine inverts Eustache Deschamps's claim in *Conseils aux dames* that loyalty is the most important quality women can learn, by constructing the abstract virtue as a female allegorical figure, Loyauté, who teaches men — thus “overturning the association of gender and teacher-pupil roles in Deschamps's poem.”⁷³ The Sibyl, too, whether appearing as a figure in her own right or incorporated in Christine's authorial persona, must also address male readers.

The examples of Loyauté and Minerva serve as reminders that Christine had many more options than just the Sibyl in her development of authorizing figures. Her explicit identification with Roman Minerva at the outset of *Le Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie* (c. 1410), and references to the goddess in the *Epistre Othéa* and the *Cité des dames*, have received particular emphasis from scholars including Jane Chance, Sandra Hindman, Helen Solterer, and Stecopoulos and Utti.⁷⁴ Chance writes: “For Christine, Minerva is a prototype for all women — the mother of Hector, self-created, wise and valorous, a self-sufficient and resourceful armor-maker who can defend herself against attack. She also fulfills the ideal role for woman, as the prudent mother who educates her children and nourishes their virtues in order to protect them from assault.”⁷⁵ Stecopoulos and Utti highlight the goddess's reputation as an icon of “feminine clerkliness,” writing: “Like Ceres, Minerva is worshipped with so overwhelming a reverence that she comes to be considered a goddess: the goddess of wisdom, that is, the ruler of classic and ultimately true, *clergie*.”⁷⁶ In the *Epistre Othéa*, Christine makes Minerva a standard bearer for a revival of French chivalry, in the *Chemin de lonc estude*

the Cumaean Sibyl reminds her of Pallas Minerva, and in the *Faits d'armes* she notes that the goddess shares her own origins (“je suis comme toy femme ytalienne” [“like you I am an Italian woman”]).⁷⁷

For all her qualities, Minerva lacks the enduring relevancy and the extraordinary mutability of the Sibyl; she is inescapably a classical divinity incompatible with Christianity — an ideal for contemplation but a fossil nonetheless. Karen Green’s justification of Christine’s apparent preference for the Sibyl of Cumae is more persuasive: “In the Cumean sibyl, who came like her from Italy, who was spoken of by Virgil, who was in turn described by Dante as his guide through the underworld, Christine found a powerful and authoritative precursor.”⁷⁸ The Sibyl represents the wisdom of God (Christianized from Apollo), was sanctioned by the Church and had been made an integral part of salvation history. In addition to wisdom derived from book-learning, she embodies wisdom derived from being a woman: her longevity and her position outside male institutions of learning allowed Christine to construct her as a woman whose knowledge is based on gendered experience. The Sibyl has the power of foresight; she represented the continuities of Trojan and Roman power and culture, and therefore (via the concept of *translatio imperii et studii*, “transference of rule and learning”) their renewal in France. As a prophetic figure with whom Christine might identify, she was an apt female divinatory analogue for the author’s father, court astrologer Thomas de Pizan. To sum up: the Sibyl’s many characteristics, conformable to so many different ends, allow her to penetrate more deeply and widely into Christine’s corpus, crucially as the author’s *alter ego* but also as a character in her own right, and as

a shaping influence behind other allegorical personifications or figures from myth, scripture, and history.

It is important to recognize that a character need not be named as a Sibyl or described as sibylline in order to incorporate characteristics from the large array of sibylline attributes at Christine's disposal. Christine counts ten named Sibyls in the *Cité des dames*, but throughout her work she introduces other female figures with sibylline qualities, especially prophecy. Loyauté and Minerva herself embody sibylline features, though neither has a claim to prophecy. Othéa and the three allegorical guiding virtues of the *Cité des dames*, Raison, Justice, and Droiture, are all blessed with prophetic powers; the latter admits to Christine: "Dieu magnifeste par moy a ses amis ses secrez" ["Through me, God reveals to His friends His secrets"].⁷⁹ The sibylline *clergeces* Catherine, Cassandra, and Carmentis, already mentioned, combine learning with supernatural insight or foresight. Christine writes of Carmentis:

Elle estoit de merueilleur engin et douee de Dieu d'especialx dons de savoir. Grant clergece estoit es lettres grecques et tant ot bel langage et venerable faconde que les poetes de lors, qui d'elle escripent, faignirent en leurs dictiez qu'elle estoit amee du dieu Mercurius [. . .].⁸⁰

[She had a marvellous mind, endowed by God with special gifts of knowledge: she was a great scholar in Greek literature and had such fair and wise speech and venerable eloquence that the contemporary poets who wrote about her imagined she was beloved of the god Mercury.]⁸¹

For her Arcadian people, forerunners of the Romans, Carmentis established the Latin alphabet and its grammar, and wrote the first laws in Italy, from which all current statutes ultimately derive; she foretold the building and glory of Rome "par inspiracion divine et par esperit de prophecie" ["through divine inspiration and the spirit of prophecy"].⁸² Thus

she conjoins divinely appointed wisdom, foresight, and book-learning with the further sibylline aspect of prophet of nationhood.⁸³

In this tendency to pull other figures into the sibylline embrace, and in this blurring of boundaries, Christine's work merely reflects the nature of her source material. The sibylline textual tradition was not a discrete item in a vacuum; it cross-pollinated with related traditions. Figures who are not Sibyls by name may take on aspects of the Sibyl and vice versa. Cassandra and to a lesser extent Sheba epitomize the phenomenon. At the end of the Middle Ages, these two prophetesses sometimes appear to be on converging paths with the Sibyl.⁸⁴ Like the Sibyl of Cumae, Cassandra is blessed and then cursed by amorous Apollo — in her case, so that no one will believe her prophecies.⁸⁵ The fact that her visions are accompanied by frenzy is a further point of crossover; another is her link to a nation's destiny. In Quilligan's view, the latter aspect of Cassandra is emphasized by Christine in the *Cité des dames* by the consecutive treatment of Sheba: "Implicit in this unusual conjunction of Sheba and Cassandra is a claim for female insight into the tragedy of history and the triumph — that out of the fall of Troy, out of Roman-Jewish politics, will come a new empire and a new 'law.'"⁸⁶ According to Margaret Ferguson, the same conjunction underscores a contrast between Cassandra and Sheba, allowing Christine to imply that her own wisdom will eventually be appreciated. The figure of Sheba, Ferguson writes,

both alludes to and "corrects" the most famous pagan figure or female prophecy: Cassandra. Like Cassandra, Sheba, Christ, and by implication de Pizan [. . .] are unappreciated and in some cases even reviled by contemporary audiences [. . .]. Unlike Cassandra, de Pizan's figures of "unappreciated wisdom" *ultimately* do receive recognition and approbation for their insights and virtues; they are carriers or "translators" of a truth that must await the future for full unveiling.⁸⁷

Classical figures relating to the history of Troy are of particular interest to Christine because France still regarded itself as the inheritor, via Rome, of Trojan power — Rome having been founded by Aeneas of Troy, and Charlemagne having been appointed Roman emperor by Pope Leo III in 800 CE. The ideas of *translatio imperii et studii* were accompanied by the ominous recognition that Paris, like Troy, might ultimately fall. For Christine, the disastrous consequences of Troy's refusal to heed the prophetic warnings of Cassandra epitomized how men can bring on catastrophe by ignoring the advice of women. Even though she is not named a Sibyl by Christine, Cassandra was a valuable source — whether as exemplar or negative exemplar — for Christine's own sibylline project.

Sibylline Voices

It follows from these examples of sibylline women not designated Sibyls that Christine need not name herself a Sibyl in order to incorporate sibylline qualities in her authorial voice. Presenting herself as a woman of political, social, moral, or theological wisdom and foresight aligned her, almost inevitably, with the sibylline tradition. For want of other significant precedents of women pronouncing in these modes, the example of the Sibyls authorized Christine to do so. While these fundamental qualities and themes are sufficient to locate Christine within the sibylline tradition, she could also select from a large armory of sibylline traits to position herself more precisely — for example, within the mystical-rational spectrum discussed above — to meet the needs of any given

project. The variety and scope of her polemical and didactic work has been well encapsulated by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski:

The most striking feature of historical and political writing is that is not confined to any one genre. From allegory to political treatise, polemic text, and religious epistle, she manages to give a variety of shapes and expressions to her political thought and historical analysis. She also writes herself into her texts in multiple ways: as witness or emotional participant; as sufferer or political advisor; as a lamenting tearful voice or a joyful celebrant. Unlike the principal chroniclers of her time, such as Froissart or Pontois, she sees her own fate as inextricably linked to that of France, indeed, she even seems to become France — the weeping widow abandoned by her loved ones — at certain moments.⁸⁸

The sibylline tradition was sufficiently mutable and multiform to authorize Christine in work with widely diverse ends and means, shifting with circumstance in the production of a vast oeuvre.

This recognition of the variety and scope of Christine's sibylline strategies demands a widening of the critical inquiry. Hitherto in Christine studies, this has largely been confined to her use of figures that she names as Sibyls, or that may conveniently be labelled "sibylline" purely because they exemplify wisdom or omniscience: the archetype being the Sibyl in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, an idealized dream figure (having progressed beyond her millennium of shrivelling mortality) who mentors Christine by acting as an allegorical guide in a dream vision.⁸⁹ Discussions of Christine's "sibylline" authorial voice have likewise been limited to consideration of only a small selection of traits from the sibylline tradition. Nadia Margolis identifies the "Sibylline Voice" as merely one of three "vocal categories" that Christine used in her epistles in a more-or-less sequential evolution. Arguing that Christine adapts these voices to specific themes and circumstances, she labels them "the Counter-Emulative," a mode of mimicry used to

adopt, adapt, and sometimes subvert the conventions of male discourse; “the Sibylline,” Christine’s highest register, “a more detached omniscient voice and more amplified discourse”; and “the Compassionate,” an urgent, mournful, even desperate register which Christine uses to appeal to the rulers of France on behalf of her stricken people.⁹⁰ While I do not wish to refute all of Margolis’s observations about the evolution of Christine’s epistolary voice, I contend that (even with regard to the letters alone) she has applied the term “Sibylline” too narrowly — and crucially that what she calls the “Compassionate Voice” is actually another register derived by Christine from sibylline tradition.

I aim to demonstrate that Christine employed the sibylline tradition and sibylline voices more generally and more polymorphously than has been recognized. The purpose of this study will not be to exhaust every avenue of inquiry, but to demonstrate variety and thus show that the way is open for further exploration. Therefore I will examine three of Christine’s most radical departures from the image of the Sibyl as exemplified in the *Chemin de lonc estude* — figures or voices that embody clear sibylline traits though they are not labelled as sibylline, and that are deployed in support of polemical and didactic goals.

Sibyls and Self-authorization

Before moving on to outlining the selection of sibylline voices that I will discuss, it is worth recapitulating the relationship between authorizing figures, authorial voice, and author in the light of what has now been said about the sibylline tradition. The *Epistre Othéa* embodies Christine’s emergent strategy of borrowing authority from a fictive figure in order to act as a political, social, or moral forecaster and advisor. When

Othéa asserts that she will advise Hector “en esperit de prophecie” [“in the spirit of prophecy”], this invented figure implicitly authorizes herself as a Sibyl, and she authorizes her letter as a vehicle for the Word of God.⁹¹ However, the process of authorization extends, by analogy, to Christine herself. As Sandra Hindman explains:

By alluding to the teaching of wisdom, an activity shared by Christine, Othéa, and the sibyl, the chapter may even intentionally merge the roles of all three women.^[92] As the Sibyl addresses the emperor, Othéa addresses Hector, and Christine addresses the present rulers of France. [. . .] It is here also that Christine makes an analogy between the appearance of the Cumaean sibyl to Augustus and her own letter when she writes that she has written “one hundred authorities.” She uses the word “authority” to refer to the entire textual structure she has created, thereby departing from the medieval notion of *auctoritas* as a supporting quotation from another source. On one level she thus presents herself, or Othéa, as the authority.⁹³

In a further development seen in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, *Le Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* (1403), the *Cité des dames*, the *Trois vertus*, and *L’Avison-Christine* (1405), a fictive version of Christine herself appears in a role subordinated to, yet authorized by, a tutelary sibylline figure. Similarly, in the *Dit de la rose*, the allegorical (non-sibylline) figure of Loyauté publicly names Christine-as-protagonist “sa belle suer de cuer eslit” [“her sister in sensibility”] and tells her that the God of Love has chosen her to oversee the establishment of “l’Ordre de la Rose” [“the Order of the Rose”] for the public promotion of women’s honor.⁹⁴

The strategy may have had its limitations, in its reliance on the creation or fictional reworking of a named authorizing figure separate from Christine-as-author, as Andrea Tarnowski argues with reference to the *Dit de la rose*:

As author and character, a poet of dreams and a committed thinker, Christine established a symbiosis of experience and imagination.

Nevertheless, the narrative *mise en scène* limits her role: it is Amour who writes the documents concerning the Order, and Loyauté who gives them to Christine. The latter's job consists wholly of spreading the good news. In later works, Christine will no longer designate others as "responsible" for her ideas, but the time to declare her own complete authority has at this point not yet arrived.⁹⁵

As Tarnowski implies, Christine could not proclaim herself as authority without undergoing this fictive apprenticeship to other authorizing figures. Quilligan rightly observes that in the *Cité des dames* Droiture, Raison, and Justice form part of a genealogy of historical figures constituting a tradition parallel to, yet separate from, the canon of male authors that Christine sought to infiltrate.⁹⁶ Having promoted this genealogy in her works, Christine was able to assume her own position in relation to her female predecessors, much as a male writer would take his place in relation to men writing before him. Throughout her career, she continued to refine the use of a sibylline genealogy as a solution to her dilemma as a woman writing in a male literary milieu, so that she eventually reached a point when she could dispense with such overt authorizing figures.

However, Christine's construction of her authority was not the clear-cut progression that Tarnowski implies. Even at the end, "her own complete authority" was founded upon her earlier apprenticeship. Thus, the proclamation "Je Christine" at the start of the prophetic exhortation of the *Ditié* is not in fact what it might seem, an outright declaration of independence from this genealogy of authorization. Rather, it is a statement of confidence in her own established reputation, within which all the preceding strategies of authorization can be taken as read. Concomitantly, even at the start of her polemical career in 1399, Christine's own authority was present in each work, borrowed

from whichever authorizing figure or tradition she invoked. The process of authorization worked both diachronically, that is cumulatively through the course of her career, and synchronically, that is analogically or associatively within each text.

Thus the entirety of Christine's literary project, though vast in scope, continues to be authorized by the image of the Sibyl converting Caesar Augustus, narrated in the single short final chapter of the *Epistre Othéa*, her first text to be validated by a sibylline figure. In this sibylline tradition, it is Augustus's conversion that determines the legitimacy of the Roman Empire, its future, and its institutions. The moment is the threshold where the pagan classical world starts to become the Christian medieval world — the point where Rome and Troy are authorized by God as the legitimizing models for France via *translatio*. From the transforming revelatory act of the Cumaean Sibyl, Christine can therefore begin to derive the authority to do far more than validate just the *Epistre Othéa*. She is also potentially authorized throughout her oeuvre to act as a social and political advisor to the royal family of France regarding the legitimacy of their rule, the nation's future direction, and the conduct or composition of its institutions in the troubled era of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) and the Great Schism (1378-1417). From the Sibyl's education of Caesar in its personal, spiritual, and political dimensions, she may claim the right to instruct France's rulers about virtue as a means of criticizing the deteriorating situation in their realm, including the decline of chivalry, the fragmentation of the monarchy, and the need for women to safeguard their reputation (*fama*). As scholars including Sandra Hindman, Marilynn Desmond, and Pamela Sheingorn have noted, the Sibyl's conversion of Augustus represents not merely the triumph of Christian enlightenment over pagan ignorance, but for Christine the triumph

of woman's word over a male audience.⁹⁷ Vitrally for Christine's project, the Sibyl (as sanctioned by Christian commentators) not only warned of disaster and called for humility or sacrifice, but also offered hope. She foretold spiritual salvation, exemplified by Christine in the conversion of Augustus in the *Epistre Othéa* and in Sheba's dream of the crucifix in the *Cité des dames*. She also offered hope in the portended arrival of the Golden Age when France should assume her imperial destiny as heir to Troy and Rome.

In using these inherited prophetic modes Christine acquires a potent authority, but she also faces the same paradox that haunts the efforts of prophets of disaster throughout myth and literature. If one's audience believes the prediction and takes the advice on evasive action, the predicted future will not therefore come to pass, and the prophecy will therefore have been false. As Lee Patterson observes, "Like Fortune and Destiny, prophecy asserts inevitability without explaining it, and its effect upon the narrative is not clarification but mystification. [. . .] The irrelevance of prophecy suggests not that men foolishly ignore good advice but rather that they are able to understand their history only retrospectively, when it is too late. Or to reverse the chronology, ignorance of the consequences is a prerequisite for action."⁹⁸ Christine attempts to sidestep the paradox. Firstly, she presents the defining precedent of Trojan history as a mirror for French history, so that France can understand its own current history as if retrospectively. Accordingly, Christine can impart knowledge of the consequences as a prerequisite for action: she can present the Trojan prophecies and the results of their failure as negative exemplars that should make it unnecessary for her own predictions about France to be ignored and hence for France to fall. As a further strategy to overcome the prophetic paradox, she binds her prophecies to cause and effect, so that their fulfillment is explicitly

conditional upon the failure of her audience to adopt the actions she advises. Thus she transforms her prophecies into reasoned counsel, effecting a *translatio* of the mystical into the rational.

Outline of the Investigation

Each chapter of this study will deal with a different text or set of texts in relation to Christine's shifting use of sibylline traditions. A preliminary discussion will establish the critical context by identifying pertinent scholarly lines of thought. This will be followed by a summary thesis of the chapter. Before commencing the discussion proper, I will identify the predominant sibylline voice or voices that Christine uses, relating them to the traditions outlined above. For convenience, each of these voices will be given a name or label that reflects its chief function and/or the iconographic tradition from which it is drawn. Secondary sibylline registers will be mentioned in the notes.

Chapter One, "Christine's Sibyls of the Tower: Omniscience and Entrapment in *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*," reconsiders the *Duc des vrais amans* as a text with not one but two sibylline voices. Rejecting the view that Seville de Monthault, Dame de la Tour, is simply a didactic cipher for Christine, I examine the governess's titles and her structural relations with her young charge to demonstrate, instead, that the two female figures represent two aspects of a single paradigm of a woman faced with the need to safeguard her reputation. Critics address Dame Seville's epithets solely as spatial superlatives for her foresight or wisdom. However, I suggest that "Dame de la Tour" establishes a parallelism with the younger Lady, kept under surveillance by her powerful husband in a home described as "un chastel ferme" [a strong castle].⁹⁹ Furthermore,

“Sebille de Monthault” introduces into this parallelism the legend of the Monte della Sibilla and other traditions of the Sibyl entrapped by her own vanity. The two female characters therefore denote the two principal responses available to women in the invidious and misogynistic context of courtly romance. Dame Sebille’s voice may be described conveniently as that of “the wise old Sibyl,” who warns of disaster and counsels how to avert it through divinely approved conduct. The younger Lady’s voice may be defined as that of “the self-entrapped Sibyl,” who has ignored her own wisdom, recklessly compromised herself in an unequal bargain, and must now wither in regret. For Dame Sebille’s role, Christine draws on further traditions of the Sibyl as an honored recluse and as a prophet whose auguries, though ignored, are finally vindicated. To illustrate the personal costs of courtly love for the Lady, Christine also invokes the tradition of the Sibyl as a grotesque on public display. By structural synthesis the two female voices imply a universal and atemporal feminine wisdom, meshing hindsight and foresight, that warns women against the dangers not only of courtly love but also of vanity and conceit.

Chapter Two, “The Cry of the Sibyl: Compassion and Foresight in Christine’s Advice to Isabel of Bavaria,” will focus on three texts in which Christine attempts to counsel the rulers of France, notably Isabel of Bavaria, about crisis and impending catastrophe: *L’Epistre à la reine* (1405) and *La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* (1410), and the *Epistre Othéa* (which, though written in 1400, was submitted to Isabel of Bavaria as part of the Queen’s Manuscript probably in 1414 and is therefore treated last here). Taking issue with Margolis’s typological distinction between the wise “Sibylline Voice” and the tearful, sometimes frenzied “Compassionate Voice,” I will argue that in

fact Christine makes a correlation between foresight and tears to authorize herself in the mold of a Sibyl of nationhood and national disaster. The authorial presence projected by Christine in these epistles draws particularly on traditions of the Sibyl's frenzy, her reluctance as a conduit of knowledge, and her capacity to address monarchs; while it is haunted by negative exemplars of failed prophets such as Cassandra. Accordingly, I refer to the authorial persona here as "the tormented Sibyl," reflecting not only her pangs of compassion for France's people, but also her anxiety that her warnings will not be heeded. The *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion* combine tears and foresight in Christine's authorial voice. By contrast, in the *Epistre Othéa* the torments of foresight are implied in the presentation of Trojan precedents for France's current situation and amplified by the pictorial project of the Queen's Manuscript, in which the tragic figures of Hector of Troy and Louis of Orléans are twinned. By further relating tears and foresight to motherhood, and by simultaneously constructing a literary image of Isabel as mother-figure to the dauphin and the nation, Christine presses the queen to show these maternal qualities herself through acts of intercession that may avert disaster.

Chapter Three, "Apocalypse Now: The Sibyl as Advisor to the Last World Emperor in *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*," seeks to reveal the *Ditié* as the culmination of Christine's sibylline project of self-authorization, in which she claims prophetic pre-eminence regarding the destinies of France and humankind. The authorial persona projected here is conveniently labelled "the apocalyptic Sibyl," and is founded upon the Christian fusion of themes of revelation, national destiny, and eschatology within the sibylline tradition. I aim to demonstrate that the crux of this self-authorization process lay in finding a place within French national prophecies for the anomalous new figure of

Jehanne d'Arc. I suggest that the Marian topoi adduced by Deborah Fraioli would have been largely inadequate for validating the Maid in all her warlike, prophetic, and nationalist aspects. Rather, I contend, Christine turned for her template to the Last Emperor prophecies and, while identifying Charles VII as the prophesied Second Charlemagne who would restore French glory, she conferred upon Jehanne aspects of the Angelic Pope, a figure often allied to the king in these oracles. Christine thus locates herself in the role of the Sibyls who were often cited as the authorities for such imperial prophecies of salvation. As self-appointed advocate for the divinely ordained Jehanne, she claims implicitly to speak for God, and proceeds to exploit this authority to instruct the king on how to fulfill his imperial and holy destiny, side-by-side with the Maid, through crusade and the renewal of the Faith.

Notes

¹ Angus J. Kennedy (ed.), “‘La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France’ de Christine de Pizan,” *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon, professeur de langue et littérature françaises du moyen age et de la renaissance, par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, vol. 1 (Rennes: University de Haute-Bretagne, 1980) 180, line 1; Earl Jeffrey Richards, “‘Seulette a part’ — The ‘Little Woman on the Sidelines’ takes up her pen: the letters of Christine de Pizan,” *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, ed. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993) 139.

² It is believed that Meun wrote his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* between 1268 and 1285. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995) 1-2.

³ Montreuil occasionally served as secretary to the dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Orléans; to the dauphin; and to the king of France, Charles VI. Christine’s first modern editor, Maurice Roy, proposed that Christine had begun the Debate with the *Dieu d’amours* in 1399; it remains the first recorded criticism of Jean de Meun. However, in his introduction to his edition of the papers in the debate, Eric Hicks proposes that the *Dit de la rose* is more closely associated with the actual Debate because it was contemporaneous and deals with the same issues. Maurice Roy (ed.), *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pizan*, vol. 2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1891; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965.) iv; Christine de Pisan, Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier et Pierre Col, *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose (Bibliothèque du XVe Siècle 43)*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris: Editions Honoré Champion, 1977) (hereafter *Débat*, references by page and line); *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents*, ed. Joseph L. Baird and John R. Kane (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1978) (hereafter “Baird and Kane”); Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Didot [vols. 1-2], Champion [vols. 3-5] 1914-24).

⁴ Christine de Pizan and Thomas Hoccleve, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan’s “Epistre au dieu d’Amours” and “Dit de la Rose”; Thomas Hoccleve’s “The Letter of Cupid,”* ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (New York: E. J. Brill, 1990) 52-3, lines 389-97. Christine continues in a similar vein:

Comment peut on de pres faire grant sault?
Je ne sçay pas ne vëoir ne comprendre
Que grant peine faille a foible lieu prendre,
Në art, n’engin, ne grant soubtiveté.
Dont convient il tout de neccessité,
Puisque art couvient, grant engin et grant peine
A decevoir femme noble ou villaine,
Qu’elz ne soient mie si variables,
Comme aucuns dit, n’en leur fais si muables. (52-3, lines 398-406)

[How can one leap so far so near the mark? / I can’t imagine or make sense of it, /
Such force applied against so frail a place, / Such ingenuity and subtlety. / Then
necessarily it must be thus: / Since craft is needed, cleverness and toil, / To gull a

peasant or a noble born, / Then women mustn't have such fickle wills / As some declare, nor waver in their deeds.]

⁵ Thelma Fenster has independently noted Christine's use of humor to undermine Meun in the *Dieu d'amours* and has further examined this rhetorical strategy in the Debate letters; "Did Christine Have a Sense of Humor? The Evidence of the *Epistre au Dieu d'amours*," *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 23-36.

⁶ *Débat* 11, lines 51-2; Baird and Kane 58. The treatise Gontier Col sent Christine was *Le Tresor de maistre Jehan de Meung ou les Septs Articles de la Foi*.

⁷ *Débat* 10, lines 39-40; Baird and Kane 58. Christine's allies in the Debate included Guillaume de Tignonville, provost of Paris from 1401 to 1408; Pierre d'Ailly, former chancellor of the University of Paris, Notre Dame; and Jean Gerson, d'Ailly's successor as chancellor from 1395.

⁸ Citing Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.93, Montreuil writes: "Audies, vir insignis, et videbis pariter in contextu cuiusdam mee rescriptionis in vulgari, quam inique, iniuste et sub ingenti arrogantia nunnulli in precellentissimum magistrum Johannem de Magduno invehunt et delatrant, precipue mulier quedam, nomine Cristina, ut dehinc iam in publicum scripta sua ediderit: que licet, ut est captus femineus, intellectu non careat, michi tamen audire visum est Leuntium grecam meretricem, ut refert Cicero, que 'contra Theofrastum, philosophum tantum, scribere ausa fuit.'" ["O famous men, you will see and hear, in one of my writings in the vernacular, how unfairly, unjustly, and arrogantly some people have accused and attacked the most excellent Master Jean de Meun. I speak especially of a certain woman named Christine, who has just recently published her writings, and who, within feminine limitations, is not, admittedly, lacking in intelligence, but who, nevertheless, sounds to me like 'Leontium the Greek whore,' as Cicero says, 'who dared to criticize the great philosopher Theophrastus.'"] *Débat* 42, lines 2-10; Baird and Kane 153.

⁹ Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Blackwell: Oxford, 1985) 346.

¹⁰ Margaret Ferguson (2009) argues that in the hagiographical Book 3 of the *Cité des dames*, Christine "draws on strands of apocalyptic thinking that emerged from a cultural territory where the difference between orthodoxy and heresy was not by any means fixed, where gender as well as class often played a role in the determination of heresy, and where the boundaries of orthodoxy were repeatedly tested by women with varying degrees and types of literacy." Ferguson contrasts Christine's success in traversing this difficult territory with the cases of author Marguerite Porete and beguine mystic Na Prous Boneta, who were burnt at the stake in 1310 and 1328 respectively. Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003) 208-24.

¹¹ David F. Hult, *Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la Rose"* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1986) 187.

¹² For a general discussion of Christine's authorizing strategies, see Maureen Quilligan, "The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan and Canon Formation," *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, ed. Joan DeJean

and Nancy K. Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991) 126-43; and Susan Groag Bell, "Christine de Pizan (1364-1430): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman," *Feminist Studies* 3.3-4 (Spring-Summer 1976): 173-84.

¹³ "Christine's political savvy is also in evidence here: she cultivated patrons from the different ducal families, refusing to take sides in the frequent conflicts between them. Her principal concern was to find paying patrons and, more and more, to try and prevent the fragmentation of France caused by internal hostilities. The combination of these two goals — disparate as they may seem — in fact allowed her to preserve her neutrality and, within her literary works, play the role of a mediator." Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Christine de Pizan and Political Life in Late Medieval France," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 11 (hereafter "Political Life").

¹⁴ McGrady argues that the Queen's Manuscript (Harley 4431) "contains written and visual evidence of a changing patronage economy in which the benefactor's authority over the text is subverted in the name of the author's. In both her historical and fictional dealings with patrons Christine recontextualizes the literary artifact as an object intimately associated with the author. The dedication and several incipit miniatures in the Harley compilation disclose how the author and her bookmakers manipulate conventional patronage topoi and iconography to enhance the author's identity." Deborah McGrady, "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works," *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998) 196.

¹⁵ Studies of Christine's relationship to other authors include Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) chapter 5, 171-212; Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Décadence ou progrès? Christine de Pizan, Boccace et la question de l'âge d'or," *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92.2 (1988): 297-306; Jane Chance, "The Origins of Medieval Mythography: From Homer to Dante," *Mapping the Cosmos*, ed. Jane Chance and R.O. Wells, Jr. (Houston: Rice UP, 1985) 35-64, 151-9; Glynnis M. Cropp, "Boèce et Christine de Pizan," *Le Moyen Age: Revue d'Histoire et de Philologie* 87 (1981): 387-417; Sylvia Huot, "Seduction and Sublimation: Christine de Pizan, Jean de Meun, and Dante," *Romance Notes* 25.3 (Spring 1985): 361-373; Judith L. Kellogg, "Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio: Rewriting Classical Mythic Tradition," *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, Literary Studies East and West 1, ed. Cornelia N. Moore, Raymond A. Moody (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1989) 124-31; Judith L. Kellogg, "Transforming Ovid: The Metamorphosis of Female Authority," *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 195-214; Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Christine de Pizan and Dante: A Reexamination," *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 222.1 (1985): 100-111.

¹⁶ Ferguson 192; Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the 'Romance of the Rose.'" *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992) 242.

¹⁷ See Kevin Brownlee, "Rewriting Romance: Courtly Discourse and Auto-Citation in Christine de Pizan." *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996) 172-94.

¹⁸ Margolis states that Christine “enhanced the artful use of diminutives but did not invent it. Her most notable precursor in this respect might be the late tenth-century German nun, Hrotsvita of Gandersheim.” Nadia Margolis, “Elegant Closures: The Use of the Diminutive in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Meun,” *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 111-23, 119. See also Mary McKinley, “The Subversive ‘Seulette,’” *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992); Earl Jeffrey Richards, “‘Seulette a part,’” 139-70; Linda Leppig, “The Political Rhetoric of Christine de Pizan,” *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) 130-156.

¹⁹ “Quite to the contrary of the sober, self-righteous portrait of her that has occasionally been painted, it was she who often used humor to mock excessive seriousness when she found it in others — that is, their way of attributing too much importance to themselves or to their own interests.” Thelma Fenster, “Did Christine Have a Sense of Humor?,” 25. See also Christine Reno, “Christine de Pizan: Feminism and Irony,” *Seconda miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul quattrocento francese*, ed. Franco Simone, J. Beck, and Gianni Mombello (Chambéry and Turin: Centre d’Études Franco-Italien, 1981) 129-132.

²⁰ Solterer argues that in the Debate of the *Rose* Christine adopts the Ciceronian model governing oration and writing, in which defamation of the individual is an attack on the community punishable by stigmatization or exile: having named the *Roman de la Rose*’s misogyny as a crime harmful to the state, Christine authorizes herself as a guardian of the public good; Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1995) 151-75. Curnow argues that Christine’s style was influenced by her husband Etienne’s role as court secretary, and adds: “Given the close ties between rhetorical and legal education in medieval universities, judicial language in Christine’s works is a clear touchstone of erudition, further proof of the affinity of women for learning”; furthermore, in the *Cité des dames*, “Christine’s replies to attacks on women and her positive ideas are usually presented in this form of a legal defense: accusation or argument, reply and illustration, then judgment or conclusion.” Maureen Cheney Curnow, “‘La Pioche d’Inquisition’: Legal-Judicial Content and Style in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des dames*,” *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 157-8, 164. Ferguson (185) locates an influence in the *style curiale* or *clergiale* of the papal court as adapted by servants of French monarchy.

²¹ Margolis categorizes most of Christine’s early epistles within what she dubs “the counter-emulative mode” because “their creation pursued the parallel developments of her stylistic apprenticeship and polemical awakening, so that as she read for emulation, she simultaneously learned to rebuke by rewriting a style in such a way as to turn it back on itself”; Nadia Margolis, “‘The Cry of the Chameleon’: Evolving Voices in the Epistles of Christine de Pizan,” *Disputatio: An International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Later Middle Ages* 1 (1996): 42. Brownlee argues that to attack the *Roman de la Rose* Christine had to adopt and adapt its “courtly” and “clerkly” discourses because (1)

traditional courtly discourse (with rare exceptions such as the work of the Troubaritz) largely posited women as silent love-objects, and (2) there was an absence of female clerics challenging male authority (again, with notable exceptions, such as Hildegard of Bingen and perhaps Marie de France). Kevin Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self," 234-5, 242-3. See also Jane Chance, "Gender Trouble in the Garden of Deduit: Christine de Pizan Translating the *Rose*," *Romance Languages Annual* 4 (1993): 20-28; Richards, "'Seulette a part'"; Lori Walters, "Fathers and Daughters: Christine de Pizan as Reader of the Male Tradition of *Clergie* in the *Dit de la Rose*," *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan: Essays in Honor of Charity Cannon Willard*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 63-76.

²² Bernard McGinn, "Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages," *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 8-34.

²³ McGinn (8) cites Heraclitus (535-475 BCE), Fragment 92, as preserved in Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis*, 397a.

²⁴ Heraclitus, quoted by Plutarch. The original text is no longer extant, making the *Alexandra* of Lycophron, a Greek poet of the third century BCE, the earliest surviving text to refer to the Sibyl (in this case the Cumaean). Bard Thompson, "Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles," *Review of Religion* 3-4 (1952): 120; H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 71.

²⁵ Thompson 124.

²⁶ Vergil derived his story of Aeneas's consultation with a Sibyl in Italy from Gnaeus Naevius (c. 264-194 BC), but substituted the Cumaean for the Cimmerian Sibyl; Parke 73. On Vergil's place in medieval learning, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953) 36, 49-51.

²⁷ Vergil explains the Sibyl's ability to act as guide to the underworld by making her a priestess of Hecate and by locating her grotto on the threshold of the two worlds. For the Sibyl's reluctance see especially *Aeneid* 6.42-51, 77-80, and 98-101; the case for a rape metaphor is propounded by Susan Skulsky, "The Sibyl's Rage and the Marpesian Rock," *American Journal of Philology* 108.1 (Spring 1987): 56-80. For her virginity, see *Aeneid* 3.445, 6.45, 318, and 560; for her writing on leaves, see 3.445-6 and 6.74-6; for the descent to the underworld see 6.258ff.

²⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 14.147-53; *Ovide moralisé en prose: Edition critique avec introduction*, ed. C. de Boer (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1954) 14.4 (lines 919-972). On Christine's acquaintance with the *Ovide moralisé*, see Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984) 92.

²⁹ Petronius, *Satyricon*, 48.21-4. On medieval awareness of Petronius, see T. Wade Richardson, "Problems in the Text-History of Petronius in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Philology* 96.3 (Autumn 1975) 305; Evans T. Sage, "Petronius, Poggio, and John of Salisbury," *Classical Philology* 11.1 (January 1916) 19 and 21. For further discussion of the chance that Christine's Sibyl might be influenced by Petronian or similar traditions, see below, Chapter 1, pages 74-8.

³⁰ The three books acquired by Tarquin are reputed to be the foundation of the collection of the sibylline oracles at Rome; McGinn (9) cites Pliny, *Natural History*,

13.88, and Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 4.62. For Christine's version, see Christine de Pizan, *Le Chemin de longue étude: Édition critique du ms. Harley 4431*, ed. and trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2000) 124, lines 621-34 (hereafter *Chemin de lonc estude*, references by page and line); and Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pizan: an electronic transcription*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, 1999, Minnesota U, <<http://erc.lib.umn.edu/dynaweb/french/pizalaci>>, 2.68 (hereafter *Cité des dames*, references by part and chapter).

³¹ Indeed, Bard Thompson (127) writes that "the Sibyl, put forward as the authoress of the Christian oracles, is a voice rather than a figure."

³² Thompson 127; *The Sibylline Oracles*, trans. Milton S. Terry (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890; El Paso: Selene Books, 1991) 3.970-2.

³³ McGinn 16.

³⁴ Terry, preface, *Sibylline Oracles*, 3; Constantine (attrib.), *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*, 18; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 18.23.

³⁵ Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Collins, 1969) 336-8.

³⁶ St. Augustine (attrib.), *Contra Iudaeos, paganos et Arianos*, cited by McGinn (15) but available online; see Works Cited.

³⁷ Varro named his own sources as "Naevius in the books of the *Punic War* and Piso in his *Annals*"; Parke 72. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1.6. The number of Sibyls increased, at first to twelve, corresponding to the number of Apostles, and then to thirteen; Winifred Frey, "Sibylla Led Astray: Sibyls in Medieval Literature," *Demons: Mediators Between This World and the Other*, ed. Ruth Petzoldt and Paul Neubauer (New York: Peter Lang, 1998) 54.

³⁸ McGinn 17.

³⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966) 234.

⁴⁰ McGinn 33.

⁴¹ See Chapter 1, pages 74-8, for a full discussion of the Appennine Sibyl as a possible source known to Christine. For a discussion of the transformation of the classical Sibyl to the medieval fay, including incarnation as a lamia figure, Mélusine, and Morgan le Fay of Arthurian literature, see William Lewis Kinter, *Prophetess and Fay: A Study of the Ancient and Medieval Tradition of the Sibyl* (diss., Columbia U, 1958).

⁴² *Cité des dames* 2.1.

⁴³ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1998) 100-1 (hereafter *City of Ladies*).

⁴⁴ *Cité des dames* 2.2 and 2.3. Brownlee introduces a false distinction between the two Sibyls, stating that "Erythrea's prophecies are more exclusively religious" because she foretells Christ's life and the Second Coming, whereas the prophecies of the Cumaean Sibyl "are more exclusively political" because she predicts the history of Rome. He omits to mention the Erythraean prophecy of the Trojan War (political), and the "revelacion divine" that the Cumaean Sibyl is said to receive at Lake Avernus (religious). Christine herself observes that both were virgins and beloved of God. Kevin Brownlee, "Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*,"

Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan, trans. and ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997) 382.

⁴⁵ Karen Green, "Philosophy and Metaphor: The Significance of Christine's 'Blunders,'" *Parergon* 22.1 (2005): 122, cites Maureen Cheney Curnow, 'The *Livre de la Cité des Dames* of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition' (diss., Vanderbilt U, 1975) 184-89.

⁴⁶ Julia Simms Holderness, "Christine et ses 'Bévues': sens et portée de quelques assimilations abusives," *Au champ des escriptures*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000) 149-60. Gabriella Parussa notes that medieval authors frequently associated the Sibyl of Cumae with the prophecy of the Nativity; Christine de Pizan, *L'Epistre Othéa*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 454 (hereafter *Epistre Othéa*, references by chapter and line unless otherwise noted). On the origins of the tradition of the "Ara Coeli," the sibylline revelation to Augustus of the Christian advent, see also McGinn 21 and Green 122-5.

⁴⁷ Green 125. She explains (122): "In the *Epistre Othéa*, Christine's attribution of the revelation to Augustus to the Cumean sibyl suited her purposes. The Cumean sibyl appears in the third and sixth books of Virgil's *Aeneid* [. . .]. Here, she is placed in the context of the expedition to Troy and shows Aeneas through the underworld. Since the *Epistre Othéa* is largely devoted to stories from Troy, it was undoubtedly because of this association that Christine chose to attribute the prophecy to Augustus to her."

⁴⁸ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 10.27.

⁴⁹ Green 121.

⁵⁰ Parussa, *Epistre Othéa*, 454-5, citing J. Baroin and J. Haffen, *La Prophétie de la Sibylle Tiburtine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987) 29-30.

⁵¹ Richard Dawkins coined the word *meme* to convey "the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*," giving as examples "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches." *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: OUP, 1976) 206.

⁵² Thelma Fenster, "Who's a Heroine? The Example of Christine de Pizan," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 116.

⁵³ Numerous scholars have identified that Christine uses the Sibyl as a template for her authorial self. Scholars mostly limit their discussions of this to single texts (or, in the case of Dame Seville, two: the *Duc des vrais amans* and *Le Livre des Trois vertus*); such text-specific critiques will be discussed in the relevant chapters below. General studies of the Sibyl or Sibyls in Christine are less common, and several are discussed in passing in the course of this introduction. The most important are probably Fenster, "Who's a Heroine?," which examines the topic in relation to Christine's literary precedents and the refashioning of the Sibyl as a "staging of the self" (123); and Maureen Quilligan, who discusses sibylline figures and prophecy primarily in the *Cité des dames* but with reference to many of Christine's other works in *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's "Cité des dames"* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) especially chapter 3, "Rewriting the City: The Politics of Prophecy," and chapter 5, "The Practice of History." Other noteworthy contributions may be mentioned here. Stressing that "Sibyls and sibylline figures must be sought out be divinely designated heroes for aid," Nadia

Margolis argues that Christine therefore came to view them as passive educators who could “do nothing to communicate what they know, to the masses,” and that in *Le Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* (1403) she moved beyond the Cumaean Sibyl to adopt the more universally authorizing power of the double-gendered Tiresias; Margolis, “Christine de Pizan: The Poetess as Historian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 364. A contrary view is provided by Marilyn Desmond, who notes that in Book 2 of the *Cité des dames* “the women named tend to exemplify virtues rather than accomplishments, though in some cases, especially in the case of the Sibyls, the virtues possessed by women lead to significant accomplishments as well”; Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994) 220. Kevin Brownlee (“Structures of Authority” 380-6) counters another of Margolis’s points by discerning a career-long identification with the Sibyl culminating in the *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc* of 1429, where Christine assumes the role of Sibyl.

⁵⁴ “The figure of the sibyl has a privileged status, for her appearance here is, as it were, overdetermined as a result of her singular importance in Christine’s earlier works.” Brownlee, “Structures of Authority,” 380.

⁵⁵ “Varro quo nemo unquam doctior ne apud Graecos quidem neque apud Latinos vixit, in libris Rerum divinarum quos ad C. Caesarem scripsit pontif. max., cum de XVviris loqueretur, Sibyllinos libros ait non fuisse unius Sibyllae, sed appellari uno nomine Sibyllinos, quod omnes feminae vates sibyllae sunt a veteribus nuncupatae vel ab unius Delphidis nomine vel a consiliis deorum enuntiandis. Sious enim deos, non theous, et consilium non boulen, sed boullan appellabant Aeolico genere sermonis. itaque sibyllam dictam esse quasi theiboulen.” [“Marcus Varro, than whom no man of greater learning ever lived, even among the Greeks, much less among the Latins, in those books respecting divine subjects which he addressed to Caius Caesar the chief pontiff, when he was speaking of the Quindcemviri, says that the Sibylline books were not the production of one Sibyl only, but that they were called by one name Sibylline, because all prophetesses were called by the ancients Sibyls, either from the name of one, the Delphian priestess, or from their proclaiming the counsels of the gods. For in the Aeolic dialect they used to call the gods by the word *Sioi*, not *Theoi*; and for counsel they used the word *bule*, not *boule*; — and so the Sibyl received her name as though *Siobule* [‘Counsel of God’].” Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1.6. Boccaccio writes: “Since they were very skilled in foretelling future events and knew the decisions of the gods, they were given this name because, in Aeolic, *Sios* means ‘God’ and *byle* means ‘mind,’ and so Sibyl means as it were, ‘divine mind’ or ‘bearer of God in the mind.’ [. . .] The power of her intellect was so great, and she was so deserving in God’s eyes because of her prayers and devotion, that through her great studies, and not without divine gift, if what we read about her is true, she gained the skill to write about the future with such clarity that it seems to be the Gospel rather than fortune-telling.” Giovanni Boccaccio, *De claris mulieribus*, trans. Guido A. Guarino (New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1963) 19.41 (references by chapter and page). For a modern, albeit inconclusive, etymological examination of the word or name *Sibyl*, see Robert B. Coote, “Sibyl: ‘Oracle,’” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 5 (1977): 3-8.

⁵⁶ *Cité des dames* 2.1.

⁵⁷ *City of Ladies* 100.

⁵⁸ *Cité des dames* 2.2. In Boccaccio (19.41) this Sibyl prophesied of the destruction of Troy and the “varied fortunes” of the Roman Empire so far in advance that “it seems as if she had written a *résumé*.”

⁵⁹ The Erythraean Sibyl’s role in salvation history is most important to Boccaccio, who writes (19.42) that “she clarified that secret mystery of divine thought, the incarnation of the Son of God, which had been prophesied before by the ancients in symbols and in the obscure words of the prophets, or better by the Holy Ghost through their words, so that she seems not to have prophesied, but to have dictated (as if after His birth) a history of His life, His deeds, betrayal, capture, mockery, shameful death, the triumph of His Resurrection, Ascension, and return to the Last Judgment.”

⁶⁰ Fenster, “Who’s a Heroine?,” 117. In the *Roman d’Eneas* these new scholarly attributes appear in tandem with her role as frenzied servant of Apollo and necromancer.

⁶¹ “The power of her intellect was so great, and she was so deserving in God’s eyes because of her prayers and devotion, that through her great studies, and not without divine gift, if what we read about her is true, she gained the skill to write about the future with such clarity that it seems to be the Gospel rather than fortune-telling.” Boccaccio 19.42.

⁶² Eleni Stecopoulos and Karl D. Utti, “Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: The Reconstruction of Myth,” *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 50-1.

⁶³ Fenster, “Who’s a Heroine?,” 117-19.

⁶⁴ Carmentis (who also appears in chapter 25 of Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus*) is not only sibylline and scholarly, but also a suitably Italian model for Christine. She is described in the *Cité des dames* 1.33 and mentioned in terms of prophecy again in 2.5, just before the reference to Cassandra as “grande clergece” and “femme prophete.” The same phrase is used of the rational theological investigations of Saint Catherine, the first Christian woman to be singled out for entry into the City of Ladies, after the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene: “Comme grant clergece et apprise es sciences que elle estoit, prist a prouver par raisons philosophiques que il n’est que un seul Dieu, createur de toutes choses, et que cellui doit estre aouré et non autre” [“A well learned woman, versed in the various branches of knowledge, she proceeded to prove on the basis of philosophical arguments that there is but one God, Creator of all things, and He alone should be worshiped and no other”] (*Cité des dames* 3.3; *City of Ladies* 220). Walters (63) describes *clergesce* [*sic*] as Christine’s “own coinage,” but forms of this word are recorded as early as 897 CE; Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1883) 151.

⁶⁵ Walters 71. She also notes (69) that fellow poet Eustache Deschamps recognized and praised Christine’s appropriation of masculine clerical skills in ballad 1,242 of his *Oeuvres complètes*.

⁶⁶ Earl Jeffrey Richards, “Rejecting Essentialism and Gendered Writing: The Case of Christine de Pizan,” *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996) 101.

⁶⁷ “Fille” [“daughter”], *Chemin de lonc estude* 116, line 490; “Je t’aim, et vueil faire a savoir / De mes secrés une partie” [“I love you, and would like to teach you a portion of my secrets”] 116, lines 500-1.

⁶⁸ Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 130.

⁶⁹ Referring to the threshold scene of the allegory in the *Cité des dames* where Christine’s reading of the misogynistic Mathéolus is interrupted by her mother’s call to dinner — an act that protects her from incorporating Mathéolus’s views on women’s inferiority — Quilligan adds: “Sibylline knowledge may seem a far cry from a daughter’s domestic loyalty and attentiveness to homebound elderly parents. Yet sequence in allegory always insists that the reader make thematic connections: the sequence presented by the *Cité* implies that such female sapiential style as that of the sibyls is related to the gendering of females as persons more loyally tied to their mothers — as Christine herself is.” Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 130.

⁷⁰ Fenster, “Who’s a Heroine?,” 117, and Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 130. See also notes 60 and 69 above.

⁷¹ Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 128.

⁷² *Epistre Othéa*, chapters 13-14 and 90.

⁷³ Walters 71.

⁷⁴ Christine adds chivalry to Boccaccio’s description of Minerva. As Stecopoulos and Utti (56) note, “by extending the symbol of Minerva to armed defense; Christine depicts wisdom as strength and *real* power. This revision of the Minerva tale could thus stand as an allegory for her entire work: ‘getting wise’ to false-hoods about women’s abilities will empower women to explore and to reach their true feminine potential, that is, to complete the restoration of their rightful — indeed, humanly essential — feminine power.” See also Solterer 23-60, 151-75; and Sandra Hindman, *Christine de Pizan’s “Epistre Othéa”: Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986) 102-13 (hereafter *Painting and Politics*).

⁷⁵ Chance, “Interpretative Essay: Christine’s Minerva, the Mother Valorized,” *Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector*, trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1990) 124 (hereafter “Christine’s Minerva” for the essay but *Letter of Othea* for Chance’s translation of the *Epistre Othéa*).

⁷⁶ Stecopoulos and Utti 55-6.

⁷⁷ *Epistre Othéa*, chapter 14; *Chemin de lonc estude* 114, 116, lines 478-82; Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, trans. Sumner Willard, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999) 13.

⁷⁸ Green 125.

⁷⁹ *Cité des dames* 1.5; *City of Ladies* 13. Maureen Quilligan argues that the three sibylline guides here are deployed in response to the problem that “female writing in this period was typically couched in religious terms, but Christine’s writing was usually of a secular nature.” She writes: “Unable to appeal to a religious imprimatur, she locates her authority as a writer in various allegorical and prophetic female characters: the sibyls or the personifications of Justice, Reason, and Droiture who narrate the *Cité des dames*.” Quilligan continues, “Christine’s normal practice anticipates the secularity of later renaissance women authors — whose use of religious subject matter was to provide an

authorizing discourse for writing careers in fact carried on in secular circumstances.” Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority*, 203 and note 11.

⁸⁰ *Cité des dames* 1.33.

⁸¹ *City of Ladies* 71.

⁸² *Cité des dames* 1.33; *City of Ladies* 71.

⁸³ “De Pizan praises this woman not only for first instituting *written* laws in her country but also for inventing the Latin alphabet and syntax — that is, a grammaticized language of empire [. . .]. In de Pizan’s narrative, Carmentis symbolically harnesses both the oral and written powers of song (*carmen*) for the good of the state.” Ferguson 216-17.

⁸⁴ The *Suda* or *Suidas*, a tenth-century Byzantine Greek encyclopedia, states that the “Phrygian Sibyl” was “called by some Sarysis, by some Cassandra, and by others Taraxandra”; Ada Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon*, five vols. (Leipzig: 1928-38) s.v. *Sibylla Phrygia*, this entry trans. Jennifer Benedict for the online edition, <<http://www.stoa.org/sol/>>. Cassandra and the Sibyl are also linked in August Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l’antiquité*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1880) 151 note 3. In a survey of medieval sources ranging from mystery plays to church carvings, Georgiana Goddard King notes Cassandra’s identification as a Sibyl (occasional) and as Sheba (frequent). In perhaps the most extreme convergence of traditions, a century after Christine, Cassandra is named as a Sibyl in the *Auto da Sibila Casandra* [*Play of the Sibyl Cassandra*] (c. 1513-14) by Portuguese-Spanish playwright Gil Vicente (1456?-1537); her aunts are the Persian, Erythraean, and Cimmerian Sibyls; as bride to Solomon she plays a part normally assigned to Sheba; but she prophesies that she herself will be the virgin mother of the Christian God. Vicente probably derived some of this from a Portuguese translation by Alonso Hernández Alemán of Andrea da Barberino’s late fourteenth-century romance *Guerrino il Meschino*, which identifies the Appennine Sibyl as Cumana and the Delphic Sibyl as Cassandra, daughter of king Priam of Troy. Georgiana Goddard King, *The Play of the Sibyl Cassandra*, Bryn Mawr Notes and Monographs 2 (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1921); I.S. Révah, “L’Auto de la Sibylle Cassandre de Gil Vicente,” *Hispanic Review* 27.2 (April 1959): 170, 184-5.

⁸⁵ The gift of prophecy is “the result of a compromise with the god: the prophetess denies him her body, but must yield to the invasion of her mind by the god who bestows on her the gift of prophesy [*sic*]. This is what happened to the Cumaean Sibyl according to Ovid [*Metamorphoses* 14.132], to the Delphic priestess (according to Origen) — and to Cassandra, the *mantis kora* of Pindar (according to Hyginus). There obviously exists, within the prophetic nature, a dialectic tension between the *pure* being which alone can rise spiritually above the level of common humanity and the openness to divine *fecundation*.” Leo Spitzer, “The Artistic Unity of Gil Vicente’s *Auto da Sibila Casandra*,” *Hispanic Review* 27.1 (January 1959): 59. For further discussion of the overlapping identities of Cassandra and the Sibyl in this respect, see Skulsky 66-9. Christine does not dwell on the tension between purity and divine fecundation but suppresses it; compare Boccaccio (19.42), who readily believes that the Sibyl, greatly loved by God, lived a life of “perpetual virginity” because, despite her pagan origins, “so clear a vision of the future” could not “dwell in an unclean breast.”

⁸⁶ Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 117.

⁸⁷ Ferguson 205; see further 198-206.

⁸⁸ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Political Life," 20.

⁸⁹ The Sibyl is described as

Une dame de grant corsage,
Qui moult avoit honneste et sage
Semblant, et pesante maniere.
Ne jeune ne jolie n'yere,
Mais ancianne et moult rassise [. . .].

(*Chemin de lonc estude* 114, lines 459-63)

[“a lady of great stature, with a very virtuous and wise appearance, and a dignified manner. She was neither young nor pretty, but aged and very calm.” (*Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, trans. and ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997) 66)]

After recounting her regrettable deal with Phoebus Apollo, she says:

Et ainsi mille ans je vesqui;
Je t'ay dit comment et par qui.
Si fus si foible et enveillie
Ains que ma vie fust faillie,
Que du done je me reppenti;
Car mon corps tout anïenti
Devint, si qu'a pou nel veoient
La gent [. . .]. (122, lines 581-8)

[“Thus I lived for a thousand years: and now I have told you how and because of whom. I became, however, so weak and aged before my life was over that I regretted this gift. For my body completely wasted away to the point where people barely could see it [. . .]” *Selected Writings* 67.]

William Kinter (27) regards Christine's Sibyl in the *Chemin de lonc estude* as “merely a bas-relief symbol of wisdom and guidance.”

⁹⁰ Margolis, “The Cry of the Chameleon,” 42.

⁹¹ *Epistre Othéa* 1, line 68; *Letter of Othea* 36.

⁹² Chance (“Christine's Minerva,” 133) summarizes, “Othea's hundred fables, lessons for Hector, all center on the acquisition of wisdom [. . .] by a woman.” Indeed, Chance argues, the worthiness of the female gender as vessels of wisdom is central to Hector and consequently the dauphin's grand lesson, echoed by Hugh of St. Victor: “[. . .] le sage homme oyt volentiers de tous et apprend volentiers de chacun et lit volentiers toutes manieres d'enseignemens. Il ne despit point l'Escripture, it ne despit point la personne, il ne despit point la doctrine; il quiert indifferaument par tout et tout ce que il voit dont il a deffaulte; it ne considere point qui c'est qui parle mais que c'est que il dit; it ne prent point garde combien il mesmes scet mais combien il ne scet mie” [“the wise man listens willingly to everything and learns willingly from each, and reads willingly all kinds of teaching; he does not despise Scripture; he does not despise the individual; he does not despise the doctrine; he searches dispassionately through everything, and all that he sees, for that which he has lacked; he does not consider who it is who speaks, but what it is that he says”] *Epistre Othéa* 100, lines 35-43; *Letter of Othéa* 120.

⁹³ Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 59.

⁹⁴ *Dit de la rose* 273.

⁹⁵ Andrea Tarnowski, "The Lessons of Experience and the Chemin de Long Estude," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 183.

⁹⁶ Maureen Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 105.

⁹⁷ "Christine employs this figure of the 'Cumaean' Sibyl for the first time at the end of the *Othea* where the sibyl's function becomes a synthetic image for all of the ways women's interpretive gestures might achieve authority." Marilyn Desmond and Pamela Sheingorn, *Myth, Montage, and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa,"* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2003) 222. See also Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 58-9.

⁹⁸ Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991) 117-18. For a discussion of Troy and the late medieval imagination, see Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late Medieval France*, trans. Susan Ross Huston and ed. Friedrich L. Cheyette (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) chapter 8.

⁹⁹ *Duc des vrais amans* 70, line 105; *Duke of True Lovers* 50.

Chapter One
Christine's Sibyls of the Tower: Omniscience and Entrapment
in *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*

*Tempus erit, cum de tanto me corpore parvam
long dies faciet, consumptaque membra senecta
ad minimum redigentur onus: nec amata videbor
nec placuisse deo, Phoebus quoque forsitan ipse
vel non cognoscet, vel dilexisse negabit:
usque adeo mutata ferar nullique videnda,
voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquent.*
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*¹

Critics, recognizing symbolic significance in the name Dame Seville, have identified this figure in *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans* as a cipher for Christine de Pizan herself, and the governess's letter to the female protagonist as an omniscient authorial comment on the rest of the text's voices. Typifying this view, Sandra Hindman and Stephen Perkinson state: "Merging the voice of Seville with her own, Christine uses the thinly veiled disguise of a sibyl, a figure of female authority employed in several of her works as a sort of alter-ego." Hindman and Perkinson, with others, argue that the governess counters the stereotype of the *duenna* or old woman who serves as a libertine counsellor in courtly love literature, and thus that "By inscribing herself in the work, [Christine] gives voice to the previously mute sufferings of women at the hands of a misogynistic tradition."² Charity Cannon Willard regards the governess's letter as a kind of literary-political manifesto for the author, opining that it is impossible to "find a clearer statement of Christine's most fundamental objections to the whole concept of courtly love." Judith Laird and Earl Jeffrey Richards are in full agreement, and observe additionally: "the governess's advice corresponds so closely to Christine's own opinion that she later cited it in *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* [. . .]."³

Accordingly, Dame Seville's surname and title, "de Monthault, Dame de la Tour," have been read as straightforward metaphors of loftiness to reinforce the governess's exaltedness, omniscience, and authority. Critics see a superfluity of honorifics. Thus Laird and Richards write, "And if the name Seville (that is Sibyl) were not a sufficient guarantee of her wisdom, the profound advice offered by Seville issues from somewhere on high [. . .]. The voice we hear 'from the Tower' — Seville's and Christine's — is a polemical voice intent upon order and reason [. . .]."⁴ Likewise, Kevin Brownlee writes: "This semantically overdetermined name (which has, to my knowledge, no historical, extratextual referent) thus functions to lend yet more authority to Seville's letter [. . .] as part of Christine's authorial strategy of rewriting romance."⁵ By implication, the absence of an external source or referent for the name makes it nothing more than an unsubtle and repetitious authorial signature.

The intrusive hand of the author has also been detected in the *complainte* by the unnamed Lady, the governess's former charge, which closes what was supposed to be the story of her suitor, the eponymous "duc des vrais amans" ["duke of true lovers"]. Thus Hindman and Perkinson write: "Through the device of this double ending, in which she finally inscribes her own views in the lady's *complainte*, Christine herself has the last word in the romance." This coda, in which the Lady's moral viewpoint appears to have converged with Dame Seville's, is perceptively identified by Thelma Fenster as a feature of an underlying sibylline structure: "Even when the Lady is given voice at the end of the poem, her poetic *complainte* is meant to recall the social disaster predicted by the Dame de la Tour, making it spring to life; when the prophecy is realized, the older woman's tale reaches closure."⁶

However, critics fail to observe that the convergence of voices marks the two figures as aspects of a single paradigm, located against a background of sibylline tradition by Dame Seville's name and titles. The structural program is signalled by the governess's title "Dame de la Tour," paralleling the Lady's confinement in a castle. "Seville de Monthault" likewise indicates both omniscience and entrapment by evoking the medieval legend of the Monte della Sibilla (overlooked as an external referent by Brownlee).⁷ In the context of courtly love, the two female characters of the *Duc des vrais amans* thus denote the alternative options and outcomes available to women when their reputation is at stake. The naïve Lady, occupying the role of protagonist, takes part in a love affair with the eponymous Duke and consequently suffers shame and entrapment. In doing so, she sets aside the advice of Dame Seville, who functions as a voice of foresight or intuitive wisdom. Ultimately, the Lady learns wisdom through bitter experience. By structural synthesis the two female voices imply a universal and atemporal feminine wisdom, meshing hindsight and foresight, that warns women against the dangers not only of courtly love but also of vanity and recklessness.

As has been noted by scholars, who tend to homogenize Christine's use of complex sibylline tradition, Dame Seville recalls the Cumaeen Sibyl of *Le Livre du Chemin de lonc estude* and is rooted in the same sibylline traditions. Like the Sibyl in the *Aeneid*, she is a reclusive and venerable figure who guides the protagonist. Like the Sibylline Oracles in Rome, she also provides advice on the divinely approved courses that may turn aside disaster. Echoing widespread sibylline topoi, her wisdom is partly associated with longevity, while her predictions are dismissed but ultimately vindicated. It is convenient to label her voice as that of "the wise old Sibyl."

However, the Lady's voice is also sibylline, and may conveniently be termed that of "the self-entrapped Sibyl," who foolishly compromises herself at the urging of a male seducer and must now grow old in solitary regret, an object of public mockery. As such, she is the equivalent in courtly love literature of the Cumaean Sibyl in classical tradition, who bargained recklessly with Phoebus Apollo and withered away; and of her incarnation in later medieval tradition, the Appennine Sibyl who was imprisoned for vanity.

The Duke Narrates

The opening apology of *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans* (composed 1403-1405) echoes Christine's habitual topos of servitude and inferiority, stating that her patron is "un seigneur / A qui doy bien obeïr" ["a lord I am bound to obey"] and a man "de si bon sens / Je le sçay que son humblece / Prendra en gré la foiblece / De mon petit sentement" ["of good sense — the sort of person whose humility will take in good part the frailty of my small understanding"].⁸ However, by the time these customary civilities are expressed, the apology has already openly declared Christine's reluctance to accept the self-titled Duke of True Lovers' commission to "dictiez faire / D'amours" ["compose tales of love"] by recording his nostalgic autobiographical account. It is hardly surprising that she would have preferred not to revisit courtly love, a genre which she had attempted to debunk in 1402's *Le Dit de la rose*, a narrative reply to the Debate of the *Rose*. She now had other major works in progress in which she sought to move beyond the arena of courtly love: 1405 was also the year she completed *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, and *L'Avison-Christine*. Accordingly, she describes the Duke's commission as a distraction from "autre affaire, /

Ou trop plus me delictoie” [“another interest which gave me much pleasure”]. In this context, her emphasis on the constraints of patronage suggests conscientious dissent, and her self-deprecating praise for the Duke’s mental powers reveals itself as an ironic reversal of her actual assessment. Thus Christine immediately establishes a gloss that will ultimately topple the Duke’s narrative, allowing her to reveal the rose-colored artificiality and solipsism of his romance.⁹ Indeed, I propose that entire text of the *Duc des vrais amans* (its characters, its content, and its structure) be read as Christine’s second narrative response to the Debate of the *Rose*.¹⁰

Courtly love literature, as it is known today, originated in Languedoc in the late eleventh century but spread and thrived until the late Middle Ages. It enjoyed its apex in the troubadour poetry of the thirteenth century and under the patronage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie, Countess of Champagne. By the late twelfth century, the so-called “rules” of courtly love had been codified at Marie’s request by Andreas Capellanus in a Latin treatise, *De Amore*, often called in English *The Art of Courtly Love*. Capellanus based his rules on Ovid’s *Art of Love* and *Remedies of Love*, the first a guidebook for lovers, the second offering advice on terminating affairs and on recovering from unrequited love or a lover’s dismissal.¹¹ Borrowed by Capellanus and underpinning works such as Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun’s *Le Roman de la Rose*, Ovid’s attitude towards love is witty, bawdy, tongue-in-cheek, and frank. Courtly love literature is not always so, but it tends to be male-centered and usually either idealizes or demonizes women.¹² Love is a malady for the male lover, causing him to lose sight of reason; the only cure is in its requital by the lady. Love is experienced not through sexual intercourse but through the travails of the pursuit and the yearning for the unobtained or

the unobtainable. Thus, the logic of courtly love presupposes adultery, in spirit though not always in practice.

Capellanus justifies this seemingly amoral state of affairs by asserting that the function of love is to improve the lover-knight, who is spurred to greater courage, prowess, and social refinement (via acts of courtesy, generosity, and humility) through his faithful service to his lady. The knight of medieval romance serves his courtly lady with the obedience equivalent to that of a vassal to his lord. In 1909 Eduard Wechsler described the medieval attitude towards love as “a feudalisation of love,” arguing that the relationship between the idealized male lover and his female beloved was modelled on the relationship between a knight and his lord.¹³ In his seminal study *The Allegory of Love*, C. S. Lewis defines the four principle characteristics of Troubadour poetry as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love. He writes: “The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady’s slightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim.”¹⁴

The objective of improving the vassal-knight, Capellanus asserts, cannot be realized if love is not chosen and given freely, and are therefore incompatible with marriage.¹⁵ In a society where marriages were contracts of convenience meant to augment fortunes and secure treaties and alliances through offspring, wives were considered disposable property; marital love was regarded as a dutiful friendship, a recognition that sexual fidelity upheld legal contracts. The new courtly emphasis on tenderness and devotion stood in contrast to the often bleak, pragmatic reality of feudal marriages, and may explain why courtly love literature, for all its inequities, was most popular among high-ranking women. As Lewis notes, “Any idealization of sexual love,

in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery.”¹⁶

Capellanus’s epitome of the courtly love ethos has often been construed as a true-to-life portrait of prevailing contemporary attitudes. However, the text’s frequent inconsistencies and overstatements suggest instead that, like Ovid’s works, it was probably a sophisticated satire on the conventions it claims to espouse. The Ovidian lover was anxious, sleepless, jealous, pale, malnourished, disillusioned, and frequently close to madness or death as a result his beloved’s cruelty, scorn, apathy or infidelity; but Ovid recognized these symptoms as hyperbolic and shameful, prompting C. S. Lewis to describe the love “appetite” as Ovid’s “comic confession.”¹⁷ Other critics see the disparity between courtly love literature and actual medieval life as an idealization. Herbert Moller writes of the work of the troubadours, “Like all poetry, it was rather a projection of unconscious emotions which in cooperation with a responding public crystallized into a collective fantasy.”¹⁸ The view of courtly love literature as either satire or idealization presupposes that the medieval audience understood that life did not, could not, or should not imitate art.

Christine had vigorously questioned this supposition, most famously during her attack on the *Roman de la Rose* in *L’Epistre au dieu d’amours* and during the Debate of the *Rose* which it ignited. In her poem, the God of Love voices Christine’s belief that authors have social responsibilities towards their contemporaries and to posterity, and that as such they should be held accountable for the doctrines espoused in their works. He itemizes the literary injustices toward women: its essentialization of women as deceitful; the absurdity of the stylized Ovidian lover; and the poem’s irreverence towards natural,

honest love — in particular, marriage.¹⁹ He traces the literary “genealogy” between the misogynistic writings of Ovid and Meun to underscore the imbalance of voices represented in courtly love literature.²⁰ In doing so, the God of Love identifies the absence of female writers in this field as problematic.

In the *Duc des vrais amans*, the Duke makes the case for courtly love and thus represents the antithesis of Christine’s view. For Christine, the voice behind Dame Seville, courtly society and courtly romance operate under expectations which are mutually exclusive. In contrast, the narrative of the Duke attempts to convey a world where male-conceived, idealized literary models of the lover and the beloved may translate into real courtly society.

My analysis is not contingent on an equation between Christine’s actual commissioning patron and the figure named in this opening apology and throughout as the Duke. There is no real historical evidence regarding such an equation: the jury is out, and likely to remain so.²¹ Economic realities and social conventions meant that Christine typically wrote under commission (indeed, she began writing for wealthy patrons to cover her deceased husband’s debts), and she is likely to have done so in this instance too. It seems probable that some unidentified sponsor asked her to produce a fresh piece of work on courtly romance in the vein of earlier successes such as *Le Débat de deux amants*, *Le Dit des trois jugements amoureux*, and *Le Dit de Poissy*, composed before the Debate of the Rose cemented Christine’s gender politics. If the narrative was indeed commissioned, it is difficult to dismiss her claim that it was based on the autobiographical account of her patron. Medieval narrative does not accord with modern literary expectations: for example, through the use of superlatives (like those seen in the

Duke's descriptions of the Lady), its descriptions of lived events that are easily authenticated may appear artificial to our eyes.²² Thus, as Fenster observes, while the Duke's generic qualities make him an ideal literary foil for Christine's attempt to reveal the injustices of courtly love, they do not rule out his identification with a real-life male patron. More problematic is the fact that the Duke is ultimately cast in a negative light. On one hand, Christine was capable of manipulating the arrangements of patronage to suit her own purpose, and might indeed have departed from his brief in order to provide her own moral gloss on the events described.²³ On the other hand, unless he were either an imperceptive reader or a reformed personality eager to declare the error of his ways, her sponsor would hardly have welcomed her critical depiction of the Duke. In the light of these unresolved issues, a critical analysis of the *Duc des vrais amans* must confine itself to discussing the Duke as a literary construct irrespective of any historical veracity as a portrait. Accordingly, the relations between patron, author, and text are also viewed here as literary constructs.

The act of commissioning Christine implies that the Duke believes she will sympathize with his feelings, approve of his conduct, and faithfully recount his narrative in accordance with his own intentions; and in her opening apology she certainly gives the impression she will do so, stating:

Si lui plaist que je raconte,
 Tout ainsi comme il me conte,
 Les griefs ennuyes et les joyes
 [.]
 Et par son assentement
 Je diray en sa personne
 Le fait si qu'il le raisonne.

[He is pleased to have me recount, just as he tells me, his woeful troubles and his joys [. . .]. [. . .] With his approval, I shall in his stead recount the facts of the matter as he expresses them.]²⁴

A patron would expect no less. Furthermore, we can infer that the Duke believes his own conduct to be exemplary, in terms of the prevailing literary tradition and the ideal of the courtly lover as codified (or caricatured) by Andreas Capellanus.

Propriety within the same tradition dictates that the courtly lover should also conceal his identity and that of his beloved. By equipping himself with a romantic, dignified, and authoritative pseudonym, the “duc des vrais amans,” by referring to her only as “ma Dame,” and by omitting most other clues that might identify the pair, Christine’s patron appears to preserve not only his own anonymity but also that of his lover. The identification of the lovers as cousins (that is as relatives by blood or marriage, however far removed) who have previously seen each other “cent fois” [“a hundred times”] provides the necessary conditions for the Lady to act as hostess to the young Duke in the absence of a chaperone without dishonoring her husband.²⁵ The same conditions apply to their mutual cousin, allowing him to act as their go-between. The establishment of these relations is thus a narrative necessity, but does not compromise their anonymity. And yet to publish an account of his relationship with the Lady may be regarded as a betrayal of her which is compounded by the vanity implied in the Duke’s account of his behavior. If the lovers’ correspondence is taken at face value, the Duke would appear to have exercised no editorial discretion in the choice of materials presented to Christine for the preparation of the *Duc des vrais amans*, nor to have sought the Lady’s consent before thus publishing her expressions of emotional and social vulnerability.

The Lady Succumbs

The Duke's narrative as recorded by Christine, together with his own side of the correspondence, form a continuum which is intermittently interrupted by verse, letters, and dialogue representing the "insurgent voices" of the Lady and — in one instance — Dame Seville.²⁶ In this generically hybrid text, the women are correspondents whose epistles are unmediated by the Duke's surrounding discourse. Thus these female registers compete with the Duke's, and with each other, to fix the value and meaning of the female within courtly romance. The Lady's courtly voice is primarily bound to the Duke's idea of narrative romance. In contrast Dame Seville's didactic voice, manifest only in the form of a letter, represents a social platform exterior to the court and defies the Duke on moral grounds. The women's interruptions pierce through the Duke's romanticized memories to make clear that the dalliance which he attempts to validate has caused the Lady appalling anxiety, humiliation, and loss of honor.

The embedded sections in the voices of the Duke, the Lady, and Dame Seville, together with the surrounding narrative provided by the Duke (but retold by Christine according to her own agenda), form a text that forces the reader constantly to consider the story from different viewpoints and to recognize the limits on the vision of each protagonist. The Duke's purview is limited, self-centered, and distorted by the idealizations of courtly love. The aptly named Dame de la Tour has a clear overview of the situation, and is able to see its context, its precedents, and its probable outcomes. The younger Lady, initially vigilant, suffers a catastrophic narrowing of vision as if her sight were becoming circumscribed by the limits on the Duke's perspective or by the walls of the castle in which she comes to be confined; then with the help of Dame Seville she is

placed as it were on a mountaintop vantage-point, with the opportunity to recognize her errors, survey their consequences, and consider how to correct them.

At the outset, even when viewed through the distorting prism of the Duke's narration, the Lady is clearly possessed of a reasonably cool head, recognizing dangers to her reputation and fragile social status. She realizes early on that the overtures of her inexperienced and unmarried cousin may draw disapproving glances and encourage the speculations of loose tongues, even in the absence of any evidence of sexual or social misconduct. At the tournament which he has persuaded his father to host as a pretext for seeing her, the Lady offers courteous, although not complete, resistance to the Duke's attentions. When he requests her sleeve to attach to his helmet as a chivalric token for a jousting match, her response is sensible and cautious:

Beau cousin, certes,
Mieulx vous vault pour voz dessertes
D'autre dame avoir present
Pour qui faciés a present
Chevalerie et bernage.
Mainte dame de parage
A cy, et sans danger d'ame,
Ne peut que n'y ayés dame;
Et ce est bon a savoir.
Si devez de celle avoir
Don a sus vo timbre mettre,
Pour qui vous devez tramettre
De faire chevalerie.
Si soit vo peine merie
De vo maistresse et amie,
Non de moy.

[Fair cousin, certainly it would be better for you to have a gift for your services from another lady for whom you would soon perform chivalrous and noble deeds. Many a lady of distinction has come here and it isn't possible that you won't find a lady, and without risk to anyone — it's good to know that. It is from her that you must have a gift to place upon

the crest of your helmet, for whom you must engage in deeds of chivalry.
Let your effort be rewarded by your lady and friend, not by me.]²⁷

The lengthy advice amply demonstrates the Lady's familiarity with the social and moral codes from which she will soon begin to stray. At the last minute, however, self-control crumbles, and the Lady lets slip a dangerous near-admission of interest which amounts to an invitation to further flirtation:

Mais ne dis mie
Que refuser je vous vueille
Vo requeste, et que me dueille
De ce faire. Car feroie
Plus pour vous, et toutevoye
Ne vueil je que nul le sache.

[Mind you, I'm not saying that I might refuse your request or submit to the grief of doing so. I would do more for you, but I don't want anyone to know it.]²⁸

The young Duke appears unable to appreciate his beloved's apprehensions, revealing a disparity of social experience between them. While his beloved tries to cling to propriety despite her growing dependency on his attentions, the Duke acts on the conviction that the ideal courtly model of love may be actualized without fear of reproach. Having facilitated a month together by persuading his father to invite the Lady to stay on as a guest after the tournament, the Duke falls into the stereotype of the visibly pining lover as caricatured by Ovid and Capellanus. Yet he is dismayed when his transparent agony is correctly interpreted by others as a sign of his love for the Lady:

“[. . .] j'en perdoie coulour,
Sens, maniere, et contenance.
Si croy que mon ordonnance
(Ce peut bien estre) apperceurent

Plusieurs gens, dont ilz esmeurent
 Paroles que l'en pesa.
 Et de ce tant me pesa
 Que de dueil cuiday mourir
 Quant j'ouÿ la voix courir
 Que ma belle Dame amoie.
 [.]
 Car j'oz grant paour que pour ce
 Aler lors on l'en faisoit,
 Et ce tant me desplaisoit
 Que ne le savoie dire."²⁹

["I lost color, reason, composure, and countenance. I believe (it could well have been) that many people noticed the state I was in, about which they exchanged gossip that was taken seriously. My chagrin was so great at hearing the rumor fly, about how I loved my beautiful Lady, that I thought I would die of grief. [. . .] I feared she was being made to leave because of the gossip. So displeased was I that I couldn't express it."]³⁰

Furthermore, when he realizes that one of the Lady's retinue has reported his behavior to her husband, precipitating her departure and an increase in watchfulness that may jeopardize his hopes, the Duke displays neither contrition nor embarrassment, but only frustration and fury.

Even though the Lady displays all due concern for his downcast aspect as he escorts her home, and though the Duke is convinced that she knows he loves her, she appears to be in denial about the true nature of his feelings towards her and does not seem to recognize that her own feelings are increasingly reciprocal. Presented with an overt verbal petition on his behalf by a mutual cousin, she shifts unsteadily from outright disbelief that the Duke is lovestruck to a tacit acknowledgement that combines with dismissiveness regarding the seriousness of his state:

"Merveilles dites, beau sire
 [.]
 Mais s'il est ainsi, sans doubte

Ce fait Enfance, qui boute
 Son cuer, et trop grant jonesce,
 En amer — autre riens n'est ce.
 Si en sera en pou d'eure
 Desmeu, se Dieu vous sequeure."

["You are telling stories, fair Sir [. . .]. But if that is so, surely
 Childishness and his very great inexperience in loving are impelling his
 heart; it could not be anything else. He'll be distracted from it in no time,
 if God helps you. Pull him out of it, if you can."] ³¹

She follows this with a warning that the Duke must stay away, coupled with an
 expression of anxiety about the danger he poses to her: "Car ja a moy n'avendroit; / Et
 grant mal en avendroit / S'il estoit apperceü" ["He could never come near me, and great
 trouble could result were he seen doing so"]. ³² Yet this stance, in turn, gives way to
 frustration and anger against the informer who warned her husband about the dalliance,
 and a complaint about the surveillance she now endures:

Ne sçay comment l'a sceü
 Tel viellart, que Dieu maudie,
 Par qui ne suis tant hardie
 Qu'a homme né je parlasse.
 [.]
 [. . .] Si a fait rage
 Cellui plain de punaisie,
 Car esveillie Jalousie
 A contre moy telement
 Qu'a personne nullement
 En secret je n'oseroye
 Parler: o moy, ou que soye,
 Fault que soit li estalons,
 Et toudis l'ay aux talons,
 Car commis est pour ma garde.
 [.]
 [. . .] Si escoute
 Se que on me dit et rapporte,
 Et souvent va a la porte
 Pour gaiter qui ceans entre."

["I don't know how that spy found out — God curse him! Because of him I haven't enough courage to speak to any mortal man. [. . .] That man, filled with self-conceit, has worked my lord into a state, for he aroused Jealousy against me such that I wouldn't dare speak to anyone in secret. Wherever I may be, I must have a constant companion always at my heels, for he has been delegated as my guard. [. . .] So he listens to what people say and relate to me, and he often goes to the door to observe who comes in here.""]³³

Too naïve to recognize that she need not have returned his feelings nor have committed adultery to provoke public speculation, she is vexed that the inexperience of the Duke has led to general suspicion of her behavior. Yet her anger at her husband and her resentment of his jealousy find clearer expression here than her feelings towards her young suitor, which at this stage still seem to amount to little more than curiosity and a desire for attention.

We may infer that it is this sense of outrage over her entrapment that motivates the Lady to invite and plan the covert liaisons that follow. Some critics see her as a figure of such general kindheartedness that she gives in to her lover's suit because she does not want to hurt him. However, her actions are at least partly prompted by spite towards her husband. She seeks independence through deceit, choosing to believe that an idealized courtly love will protect her from further censure. Initially, what appeals to her is not so much the love offerings of the Duke *per se* as the idea of subverting her husband.

Her concluding words to the Duke's advocate contain mixed messages which indicate her confusion, mutability, and consequent weakness. She apparently believes she is being rational, but she is beginning to display emotional vulnerability and dependency in relation to her young suitor. One minute she signals a desire to see him, the next she expresses a wish that he stay away.

“Et quant seroit ceste espie
 Un pou cessé, il vendroit
 Nous vëoir, moult n’atendrait.
 [.]
 Si pourra prochainement
 Y venir— mais bonnement
 Croy qu’il vault mieulx qu’il s’en tiengne,
 S’il pense a moy, et n’y viengne,
 Car sicom chacun tesmoigne,
 L’amour que on ne voit s’eslongne.”³⁴

[“When the spying has ceased, he could come to see us straightaway. [. . .]
 I truly think it better that he refrain and not come now, if he’s thinking
 about my welfare. As everyone testifies, love not seen is forgotten. [. . .]
 Tell him you have so persuaded me that as long as he makes no untoward
 request, he won’t fail in his suit.”]³⁵

Here, it is the Lady who exhibits dangerous naïveté. The attractions of flattery have brought her a temporary diversion from her marriage to a jealous and often absent husband, an existence which she later characterizes to Dame Seville as “desplaisance et sans aucune joyeuseté” [“disagreeable [. . .] and without any joy at all”].³⁶ Therefore she invites a fantasy, believing that her position as love-object will grant her a detached control over meetings that follow.

Thus Christine presents the example of a woman willingly binding herself to the male construct of courtly romance and either failing to appreciate or wilfully ignoring the fact that here the maneuverability and influence of women is an illusion. The structures and conceits of courtly love, such as the key idea that the male lover’s lady-liege must be married and noble-born, falsely suggested to noblewomen that love, choice, and virtue could coincide. In fact, they rarely did so in a social echelon where marriages were primarily economic and political contracts. In the *Duc des vrais amans*, the Lady mistakes fiction for fact, precipitating her downfall. What begins as a passive-aggressive

diversion, a substitute for love, becomes actual mutual love. The control that the Lady imagined she could exercise in the courtly love narrative she creates with her cousin would have been tenuous at best, because of the disjunction between the literary trope and reality; but it vanishes completely when she finds that she does indeed love him. Marriage does not provide for a needy woman pining for her unmarried lover, nor does the fictive world of courtly love, where it is primarily the prerogative of the male suitor to suffer love as if it were a malady.

The Lady and Dame Sebille

By the time the Lady contacts Dame Sebille, she has already lost herself within the fiction of her romance. She only recalls her old, loyal governess in desperation, fearing an end to her secret meetings because the serving woman who abetted them has temporarily left her service. Aiming to re-establish Dame Sebille as a trusted companion who might facilitate her affair, the Lady writes:

Chere mere et amie, vous savez assez l'estat comment je suis gouvernee et tenue en grant subgecion et crainte et rudement menee, et que j'ay assez dure partie qui pou me fait de plaisir, et je n'ay ame a qui m'en compleindre et dire de mes secretes pensees, lesquelles ne gehiroie a ame qu'a vous, a qui riens ne celeroie ne qu'a mon confesseur [. . .]. Si aroie bien afaire de vostre ayde et bon conseil [. . .].³⁷

[Dear mother and friend, you know very well how I am governed here and held in extreme submission and fear and treated roughly, and that my lot is very hard which gives me little pleasure, and how I have not a soul to whom to complain and tell my secret thoughts. I would not reveal them to anyone but you, from whom I would conceal nothing as from my confessor [. . .]. I need your help and advice [. . .].]³⁸

The Lady's choice of confidante is the right one, but not for the reasons uppermost in her mind. Dame Seville was not merely her governess but also her moral educator. While the Lady's motives for requesting her services are wrong-headed and reckless, she could not have chosen a more discreet ear, nor an advisor more capable of guiding her in propriety and self-preservation.

Unintentionally, by contacting Dame Seville the Lady validates her as the narrative's voice of wisdom, a position supported by her former functions of nurse, confessor, and empathetic surrogate mother. These earlier roles allow Dame Seville to understand her former charge's experience with pain, self-delusion, and later (to anticipate the conclusion of the narrative) self-recognition.

Dame Seville is the product of an experiment in characterization by Christine which matches her exploration of mixed literary forms in *Duc des vrais amans*. No less than the Duke or the Lady, the former governess is presented as a real individual with a personal history; yet she also has one foot in allegorical literature, partly occupying the same sphere as Doulx Regard and Amour ["Sweet Look," and "Love"], and other such personifications that act on the decisions of the two chief protagonists; the Lady's husband and his spy, referred to as Jalousie and Danger ["Jealousy" and "Danger"] respectively, also occupy both literal and allegorical spheres.³⁹ *Seville*, a plausible name for a medieval Frenchwoman yet one with a clear symbolic resonance, similarly straddles naturalism and allegory.⁴⁰ If Christine's text is read as a ghost-written autobiographical account commissioned by a male patron, then Dame Seville may be seen as the representation of some unidentifiable female figure who almost succeeded in ending his affair.⁴¹ However, *Seville de Monthault*, *Dame de la Tour* is too reverential a name to be

the invention of a man who claims to despise this intrusive governess. Its symbolic import is evidence of Christine's hand: this is surely the invention of the writer who had indicated she was uninterested in another tale of courtly love. Dame Seville's social worth is clear from the fact that she has a title; its metaphorical tenor underscores her ability to survey the world from a morally elevated position. Devised in the wake of 1400's *Epistre Othéa* and 1403's *Chemin de lonc estude*, the sibylline reference amounts to an authorial or authorizing signature. She occupies the position of validating voice of wisdom that Christine had earlier accorded to figures such as the God of Love in the *Epistre au dieu d'amours* of 1399 and Loyauté in the *Dit de la rose* of 1402, and that she had transferred to overtly sibylline figures such as Raison, Justice, and Droiture in the *Cité des dames* of 1405.

As a sibylline figure, Dame Seville is unique in Christine's corpus. In creating her earlier manifestations of wise women to act as authorizing figures for her own views, Christine lifted them directly from classical or patristic sources and either left them little changed (as in the catalogue of Sibyls in the *Cité des dames*) or turned them into allegorical dream figures (as in the *Chemin de lonc estude*). Eleni Stecopoulos and Karl D. Utti have argued that by replacing the classical Sibyls' visionary frenzy with scholarly learning, Christine "effects a genuine *translatio*" and reconstructs the Sibyls "as viable — meaningful and true — models for her age."⁴² While these observations are true enough, the *translatio* achieved in the *Duc des vrais amans* is far more complete. The social fiction requires a level of verisimilitude unlike that in her other texts to date. This is no dream narrative; there is no allegorizing construct surrounding the text: it is a memoir,

whether fact or fiction. Dame Seville is thus an icon from ancient myth and mystical tradition reconstructed naturalistically as a fifteenth-century Frenchwoman.

The Lady as Sibyl

In addressing Dame Seville as her “chere mere” [“dear mother”], the Lady seeks to invoke a relationship like the one established in the *Chemin de lonc estude* when the Cumaean Sibyl names Christine “Fille” [“daughter”]: a hierarchy in which the pupil is the beneficiary not only of her tutor’s protectiveness but also of her teachings.⁴³ Maureen Quilligan has observed that in Christine’s works this quasi-familial female bond is the nexus of a special knowledge unknown to men: “Prophecy and motherhood, the internal ‘complex ties’ of relation between mother and daughter, are connected to a different, experientially based, secret female authority [. . .].”⁴⁴

Writing the Lady opposite Dame Seville enables Christine to suggest that on a symbolic level the two represent, in addition to a pupil–mentor pairing, something more unitary. To understand fully the sibylline model underlying the *Duc des vrais amans*, we must see Dame Seville’s role in the text as complementary to that of her aristocratic charge. The clue or key to such a reading resides in the parallelism of name and narrative between the governess’s title, *Dame de la Tour*, and her charge’s predicament as the literal Lady in the tower, the home which was earlier described as “un chastel ferme” [“a strong castle”], where she has been kept under surveillance by her jealous husband.⁴⁵ As allegorical aspects of a single woman confronted by social challenges and temptations, Dame Seville represents the wisdom that ensures survival, while the Lady represents a degree of recklessness that imperils her own personal freedom and runs the risk of social

exclusion. In terms of reader consciousness, we may view the Lady and Dame Seville as two aspects of a single paradigm of a noblewoman in courtly society, with the potential for folly or wisdom, self-destruction or self-preservation.⁴⁶

The Lady's error lies not in ignorance, but in forgetfulness. Crucially, it appears that the foresighted wisdom offered by Dame Seville is not new to the Lady: it once existed consciously but has been suppressed or forgotten. The governess's letter indicates that in childhood the Lady was well schooled in propriety and manners, and that she had been warned of the social dangers she might encounter as an adult should she fail to heed her governess's advice. Dame Seville makes clear that the Lady's current predicament and sense of priorities constitutes an aberration, a fall from wisdom: "Et comme ces dictes condicions et toutes autres manieres couvenables a haulte princece feussent en vous le temps passé, estes a present toute changee, sicomme on dit [. . .]" ["And though these qualities and all other manners suiting a high-ranking princess may have been yours in the past, you are at present completely changed, according to what people say"].⁴⁷ Employing the conventional didactic trope of the moral exemplar, the governess draws the Lady's attention to contemporary precedents of women who have been wrongly accused of impropriety and whose families have therefore suffered shame; but tellingly the governess indicates that her former pupil is already aware of these examples: "Et prenez exemple a de teles grans maistresses *avez vous veu* en vostre temps [. . .] et leurs enfans en *avez veu* reprochez [. . .]" ["Take a lesson from such great ladies *as you've seen* in your lifetime [. . .]. [. . .] and *you have seen* their children reproached [. . .]"].⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that the same rhetorical formula — the lesson as reminder of matters that are already known — appears in other writings, where Christine herself is being instructed by

sibylline figures of wisdom. For example, in the *Cité des dames*, the allegorical figure Raison, tells her about the Amazons in order to demonstrate that women are capable of governing themselves, and adds:

Belle fille et ma chiere amie, ycestes choses je te ramentois pour ce que il affiert a la matiere dont je te parloie, nonobstant que bien les saches et que toy mesmes les ayes recitees autrefois en ton *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* et mesmement en l'*Epistre Othea*. Or t'en diray ancores ensuivant.

[Fair daughter and my dear friend, I recall these things to you because they are appropriate to the subject of which I was speaking to you, although you know them well and have recited them before in your *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune* and also in your *Epistre d'Othea*. Now I will relate other examples to you.]⁴⁹

In the *Duc des vrais amans*, the Lady's condition depends all along on her understanding of behavior and her foresight regarding its consequences, or on the lack of these qualities, whether they are suppressed or neglected. She is already acquainted not only with the rules of moral and social conduct, but also with the knowledge of the outcomes for women who are seen to have transgressed. If she is personally prepared to transgress against these rules, it can only be because she has concealed this knowledge from herself. Similarly, Dame Sebille's advice against following the lure of courtly love suggests that the Lady already knows the attendant dangers: "Et pour Dieu, ne vous y decevez ne laissez decevoir!" ["For God's sake, do not deceive yourself on that score, and do not let yourself be deceived!"]⁵⁰ Long before she receives Dame Sebille's letter, the Lady's hesitation to begin the affair, and her advice to her besotted cousin to direct his affections elsewhere, support the view that at the outset she is equipped with the requisite wisdom to act properly, if she so chooses. Dame Sebille thus provides a timely reminder of

something already known but forgotten. Her sibylline voice is also a reiteration of the Lady's intuitive voice of conscience. Thus, the Lady's own inner voice is sibylline.

The primary objection to this proposition, undoubtedly, is the fact that she clearly she does not occupy the august position that the Sibyl usually holds in Christine's works, and which Dame Seville certainly maintains within the relatively naturalistic frame of the *Duc des vrais amans*. Generally, Christine's portrayals and invocations of the Sibyl depend on the key medieval image of her as a messenger of Christ's two advents (via Vergil's "Fourth Eclogue"), revered by theologians and philosophers such as Augustine, Abelard, Isidore, and Servius, who wrote that "Sibyl" meant "dei sententia" ["wisdom of God"].⁵¹

However, the voice of the Lady in the *Duc des vrais amans* chimes with a contrary note that can be heard in a number of late classical writings in which the Sibyl is reduced, confined, and dishonored, in step with the decline of the Roman religion, before the restoration of her honor by Christian writers. The image of the Sibyl straitly confined for reasons associated with her age, her knowledge, or both, may be traced from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which Christine knew well via the *Ovide moralisé*, through the *Satyricon* of Petronius and *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, which she knew at least by reputation, but it is also discernible in the contemporary folklore of Christine's native Italy.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and of course in the *Ovide moralisé*, we see the Sibyl of Cumae telling Aeneas how she had bargained with Apollo for eternal life but in her haste had forgotten to request everlasting youth: vanity had clouded not only her negotiation skills but also her foresight and reason. Now, after seven hundred years of

ageing, beauty, vitality, and vanity have left her, but knowledge remains. She is doomed to wither away. Her life has become a horror for her because she knows it can never regain its former meaning. Her enduring voice (“voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquent” [“still by my voice shall I be known, for the fates will leave me my voice”]) suggests that her tragic burden is the ineluctable understanding that she has condemned herself to the inhumanly long sentence that she is serving.⁵²

Petronius’s *Satyricon* portrays the Sibyl of Cumae at a later stage of her degeneration, long after she has guided Aeneas through the underworld and bargained with King Tarquin over the oracles of Rome. By now her earlier predictions have been fulfilled, and an unnatural lifespan without matching youthfulness has left her a specter of her former self. A Roman boasts, “I saw the Sibyl of Cumae with my own eyes. She was hanging in a bottle and when the boys asked her, ‘What do you want, Sibyl?’ she said, ‘I want to die.’”⁵³ The Sibyl longs for death, presumably still far-off. Hanging in the bottle (*ampulla*), she is suspended in a living death; but escape from life, the quietus of actual death, still eludes her. The image represents a two-fold articulation of the horror implied by Ovid: the sight of a once-great seer trapped in a bottle and the Sibyl’s recognition of what she has become and what she will be. Whereas once the world and its future lay open to her omniscient view, now she has been virtually forgotten by time and culture. She is no longer able to command the treasuries of empires, and her social value has shrunk with her size. She must endure being reduced to an object of idle inspection for curiosity-seekers, an uncanny amusement on display. In a moment as disillusioning as the wizard’s unveiling at the end of Frank L. Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, the act of witnessing

the entrapped Sibyl undermines her value as an archetype of female wisdom. Even her enduring voice is reduced to expressing her single wish for oblivion.

The grotesque image of the Sibyl in the bottle, not adumbrated by Ovid, has been classified along with the “more rational” references by Pausanias and Lucius Ampelius to her mortal remains being kept in a flask or in an iron cage suspended from a pillar.⁵⁴ In the *Cité des dames* Christine notes that the burial place of Almathea, the Cumaean Sibyl, was shown to visitors for a long time after her death.⁵⁵ In all these instances, even after her eventual death the Sibyl is again the object of curiosity. However, the bottle image also pulls towards ancient, widespread, and enduring traditions of the entrapment of supernaturally knowledgeable figures, also seen in Arabian stories of djinns imprisoned in flasks and in *Asinus Aureus* or *The Golden Ass*, in a casual allusion to a Sibyl in a lamp.⁵⁶ According to Tacitus, Petronius had visited Cumae; and we may suspect that he derived his image of the Sibyl from oral traditions heard there which might well have tended in this direction.⁵⁷ Similarly, R.A. Pack imputes to Apuleius “the belief that she was confined, like a ‘captive demon’ or a ‘bottle imp,’ in a flask [. . .] or a round iron cage [. . .], reluctantly immortal and much attenuated by age [. . .].” He also compares the practice of lychnomancy, in which a boy in a trance would gaze into a lamp and relate the images of future events he saw there.

The image of the confined Sibyl recorded in these various forms in classical Latin literature was largely lost from book-learning during the Middle Ages. It cannot be ruled out that Christine had access to *The Golden Ass*, which Boccaccio owned and had mined for his *Decameron*, or even that she knew the rarer *Satyricon*.⁵⁸ However, the notion that she might depict the Sibyl as an entrapped victim of her own unstable knowledge does

not depend on her intimacy with these texts. Clearly, a general tendency existed in the classics and in contemporary Middle Eastern literary exotica.

Furthermore, the tendency appears to have been resurrected or sustained in a still-productive Christian context in the contemporary folk tradition of the Appennine Sibyl. As Christine knew, the Appennines are associated with the Tiburtine Sibyl in the *Ovide moralisé*, where before she will interpret a dream for the Roman senators she leads them out of the sinful city up onto “le Mont Appenin” [“the Appennine mountain”].⁵⁹

However, the Sibyl and the Appennines have less august associations together in a medieval legend recounted by Andrea da Barberino in his popular late fourteenth-century romance *Guerrino il Meschino*, employed by Antoine de la Sale in *Le Paradis de la reine sibylle* (1437), and very possibly known to Christine, whose father was a graduate of Bologna, in the lap of the Appennine range. The story may be regarded as an extension of the same classical motif of a Sibyl who is not venerated for her age and her wisdom, but marginalized because of them. It presents the Cumaean Sibyl as having vainly set herself up as a rival to the Virgin Mary by representing herself as the future virgin mother; subsequently denounced, she is entombed in a cave within the Monte della Sibilla of the Appennines until the Day of Judgment.⁶⁰ In one variation on the Appennine legend, the Sibyl’s desire for knowledge becomes a lust for carnal knowledge and she is burdened with the reputation of temptress: knights are induced by this underworld queen to spend an orgiastic year with her, but if they overstay the limit they are trapped forever.⁶¹ The Appennine Sibyl therefore falls broadly into the medieval literary category of the villainized old woman whose knowledge and independence are devalued by being presented as (partly or primarily) sexual, like Chaucer’s semi-comical Wife of Bath.

Vanity, implicitly or explicitly, seems to be the downfall of the confined Sibyl in all her incarnations. The tenor of these traditions is that the Sibyl, by excelling intellectually, has transgressed social boundaries and gendered expectations. By exercising power over powerful men, she has fallen into an excessive regard for herself, into vanity and hubris. In order to prevent her from thus threatening the power or security of men, she must be contained, reduced, and humiliated. The Sibyl in these traditions is either locked out of sight or imprisoned in full view where the disfiguring blemishes of great age — an appropriate corollary for her great wisdom — serve both to punish her and to warn other women not to emulate her actions. The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, the *Satyricon*, and *The Golden Ass* thus express wisdom and regret in terms that exploit physical pain so that the female body becomes a tableau for writing against the social dangers of women possessing power over men.

The legend of the Appennine Sibyl and its antecedents are applicable, in asymmetric but complementary ways, to both Dame Seville and the Lady in the *Duc des vrais amans*. Her mountain dwelling suggests a “historical, extratextual referent” and source for Dame Seville’s surname “de Monthault” that has been overlooked by Christine scholars. Dame Seville’s age and wisdom, together with the fact that she has now lost the advisory influence she formerly exercised in relation to a powerful family, echo salient characteristics of these reduced Sibyls. However, in direct opposition to classical and medieval precedents, sibylline and otherwise, Christine rejects misogynistic models which villainize or carnivalize age. For Ovid’s Cumaean Sibyl, the physical decline of old age is a punishment for vanity; for Ovid’s *duenna* or her equivalents in courtly love tradition (such as La Vieille in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*), this corporeal decline

is the outward badge of a cynical wisdom associated with age and disillusionment, and sets them apart from the younger women who are the objects of the lover's sexual desire. Fenster rightly identifies Dame Seville as Christine's response to these "cynical, opportunistic" figures prevalent in courtly love literature.⁶² Christine makes no reference to the governess's physical status at all, while Dame Seville herself discourses only on matters of good or wise conduct. Whereas Meun's *La Vieille* counsels young women to use beauty to their advantage, Dame Seville warns her charge not to place faith in anything but her own virtue. The governess acts as a Sibyl whose age is a measure of her experience; her knowledge of the future is based on that experience, not on second sight. Her roles as wife and mother underscore a knowledge that is grounded not merely in intimate familiarity with courtly culture, but in the eyewitness experience of what it is to be a woman marginalized by the visions of love, chivalry, and order that form the Duke's *raison d'être*.

However, it is the Lady who bears the greater, more punitive burden of comparison with sibylline figures from the alternative tradition that spans Petronius, Apuleius, and the Appennines. The Lady's error is a delusive vanity, as Dame Seville forthrightly points out:

prenez garde qui vous estes et la haultece ou Dieu vous a eslevee, ne ne vueillés vostre ame et vostre honneur pour aucune fole plaisance mettre en oubli, et ne vous fiez es vaines pensees que plusieurs joennes femmes ont qui se donnent a croire que ce n'est point de mal d'amer par amours, mais qu'il n'y ait villenie, [. . .] je suppose bien et pense les raisons qui peuent mouvoir une jone dame a soy encliner a si faite amour. C'est que jeunece, ayse, et oyseuse lui fait penser: "Tu es jone; il ne te fault fors que plaisance. [. . .] Ce n'est point de mal quant il n'y a pechié. Tu feras un vaillant homme.[. . .]" [. . .] certes, je dis que c'est trop grant folie de soy destruire pour accroistre un autre, poson que vaillant en deust devenir!⁶³

[consider who you are and the high position to which God has elevated you, and do not consent to forgetting your soul and your honor for some foolish hint of pleasure. Do not place your confidence in those vain thoughts that many young women have who bring themselves to believe that there is no harm in loving in true love provided that it leads to no wrongful act [. . .]. I can well imagine and envisage the reasons propelling a young lady to incline herself toward such a love: youth, ease of situation, and leisure make her think, “You are young, pleasure is all you need. [. . .] There is no evil in it when there is no sin. You will make a man valorous. [. . .]” I say that it is a very great folly to destroy oneself in order to enhance another, even if we suppose that he may thereby become valorous!]⁶⁴

The Lady is already scarred emotionally; in due course she will shrivel physically, having been cut off not only from her illicit lover but also from the healthy and proper life of a wife with a loving husband and family.

Dame Seville Intervenes

Christine emphasizes the distance that has grown between the moral positions of the Lady and Dame Seville through the form, tone and content of the latter’s letter which, in its Latinate language and homiletic mode, directly contrasts with the poetic verse and courtly dialogue of the Lady and the Duke. It stands apart from, and above, the maelstrom of emotions and the tangle of consequences in which the Duke and the Lady are caught. Dame Seville’s advice — on guarding one’s reputation, on protecting one’s children from rumor of illegitimacy, on setting a good example to the lower ranks, or on the dangers of trusting servants with compromising information — is perfectly pertinent to the Lady’s specific situation, yet it also has a wider applicability to the lives of all noblewomen.⁶⁵ Writing from the position of witness, Dame Seville invokes the fates of abandoned mistresses to suggest the disillusionment awaiting the Lady should she

continue to excite the courts with rumors. The governess counters the Lady's complaint of marital duress by employing the same imagery of bondage to expose her fantasy of freedom as a self-woven net of lies: desire against the marriage bed enslaves the female participant so that if she seeks solace from a suffocating marriage, she finds herself unwillingly consumed by her new desire; effectively, one prison is substituted for another. The governess's advice to the Lady to safeguard her honor from accusations of infidelity applies to "toute femme, soitte povre ou riche" ["every woman, whether poor or rich"].⁶⁶ Dame Seville's letter is a stern reminder that, contrary to the ideas of courtly love, all women — no matter how noble, how honorable — are susceptible to vanity and all of its catastrophic consequences. Thus the letter constitutes a concise Mirror for princesses, akin to the advice Christine offers women in the *Livre des trois vertus*. Indeed, in this latter text, Dame Seville's letter is reproduced wholesale under the rubric, "Ci apres s'ensuivent les lettres que la sage dame puet envoyer a sa maistresse" ["[Here follows] an example of the sort of letter the wise lady may send to her mistress"].⁶⁷ While the *Duc des vrais amans* would lose its moral fulcrum if the letter were removed, the epistle itself has a didactic value that extends beyond the narrative.⁶⁸ The letter's form, tone and content, and its degree of independence from the narrative, therefore mark Dame Seville's letter as an expression of Christine's views as author.

The Lady's decision to contact her gives Dame Seville a pivotal role in the narrative's linear progression: like the Sibyls whose entrance separates the first two books of the *Cité des dames*, she breaks the text into distinct segments. After the appearance of her long letter, the Duke's version of events is exposed to constant scrutiny.⁶⁹ The reader is forced to reassess the Duke's self-portrait as a *vray amant* [true

lover]. In thematic terms, her letter also forces a reassessment of the entire courtly narrative — hitherto centred on desire and its consummation — in terms of propriety, honor, and prudence. Consequently, the entire cultural and literary edifice of courtly love comes into question, and Dame Seville becomes the principal voice and vehicle for Christine's literary polemic against the tradition. Dame Seville's letter also introduces or restores sibylline wisdom and foresight to the Lady's consciousness, impelling her to reinterpret the events in which she is a key player — as it were, to re-read the *Duc des vrais amans* from a different perspective.

The infrequency and impermanence of the Lady's wisdom accord with one of the oldest recorded aspects of the classical Sibyl, who only has access to prophecy when she is inspired by a divine presence but remembers nothing of her vision of the future once the oracular trance has left her. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil embodies this instability in a physical process: the Sibyl writes her predictions on oak leaves, which are prone to scatter to the winds blowing through her caves at Cumae. Thus the *Duc des vrais amans* accords not only with allegorical literary tropes but also with classical sibylline tradition in that the Lady's wisdom is an external faculty, permanently incorporated not within her but in Dame Seville. This faculty of wisdom is only available when Dame Seville is personally on hand, as she was in her former role as governess, or when the Lady is in possession of her advisory letter. Without the wiser woman's governing presence, direct or by proxy, the Lady forgets the wisdom that protected her in her youth. Now that she has erred, she demands the governess's presence to solve her problem, telling her: "Si vouldroie que feussies pres de moy; je vous diroie de bien gracieuses choses, lesquelles je ne vous escrips mie, et pour cause. Si aroie bien afaire de vostre ayde et bon conseil

[. . .]" "[[. . .] I would like you to be near me; I would tell you about some very charming things, which I am not putting into writing for you, for good reason. I need your help and advice [. . .].”⁷⁰

In a literal as opposed to an allegorical reading, the Lady’s decision to contact her former governess is such a happy miscalculation as to suggest that, in truth, she is acting not on her conscious desire for a new co-conspirator but on the suppressed or neglected memory of what Dame Seville is really like: a staunchly moral yet caring figure. If the Lady remembers the former services of Dame Seville accurately, she must recognize intuitively that the governess will advise her to terminate the affair and return to her proper role as an aristocratic wife. In this view, the appeal to Dame Seville enacts both a conscious urge to facilitate the romance and an unconscious desire to receive cautionary counsel. It amounts to an unspoken acknowledgement that the Lady requires the kind of moral correction that she experienced as a child. Evidencing a degree of trust and respect that seems otherwise lacking in her adult life, the Lady reaches into her past in a subconscious attempt to circumvent a dire future predetermined by the falsehoods and inequalities of courtly love. Christine implies that when she receives Dame Seville’s letter the Lady possesses the self-knowledge that might allow her to rectify her errors and save her from further self-destruction. In order to escape the sibylline punishments of humiliation, confinement, and exclusion, the Lady must learn to listen to her own intuitive voice, embodied in Dame Seville.

Yet by embodying in the absent Dame Seville the virtues needful to the Lady, Christine underscores the latter’s deep-seated inability or reluctance to take personal responsibility for her own actions. The Lady does not require Dame Seville’s wisdom to

confirm what consequences her indiscretions may bring. However, rather than recognize and act upon the wisdom that she absorbed from her governess in childhood, she turns back once again to the source of the wisdom, implicitly seeking rescue. As the Duke recounts, after the receipt of her governess's advice the Lady exclaims:

“Hé, que pleust a Nostre Sire
Que tousjours eust o moy esté
Celle: le bien admonnesté
M'aroit; si ne feusse mie
Par mal conseil endormie!
Mais au fort je m'en retrairay
Et a son conseil me trairay,
Car bien voy le peril amer
Qui est en la vie d'amer.”

[“Alas! would that it had pleased Our Lord that the Dame de la Tour might have remained with me: she would have counseled me to do the right thing, and I would not have been lulled by bad advice. But, in the end, I will ceased this and follow her counsel, for I can see clearly the harsh peril to one's life that comes from a life of love.”]⁷¹

Having reached into the past and obtained sibylline advice, the Lady is faced with a clear choice as the agent of her destiny: either she must incorporate Dame Seville's prudence or she must reject it in order to satisfy lust. Without Dame Seville's physical presence, the Lady must strive consciously to re-internalize the wisdom represented (and re-presented) by her mentor in the letter.

By keeping the two women apart, Christine isolates the Lady from direct third-party intervention that would be the moral equivalent of her husband's strategy of surveillance, diminishing her ability to make her own choices. Instead, the onus rests solely on the Lady to take responsibility for her own actions. Dame Seville has retired to care for her own family since her usefulness as governess expired when her charge

married; now the illness of her own daughter provides an unimpeachable excuse for declining her former patron's summons.⁷² When she writes, "je ne la pourroie laisser nullement" ["I could not leave her under any circumstances"] in reference to her real daughter, Dame Seville categorically refuses to aid in the Lady's affair, but she does not abandon her adoptive daughter.⁷³ The invocation of her own maternal duty implies that, concomitantly, the Lady must mother herself, or rather reincorporate the maternal (and sibylline) wisdom learned in childhood. Christine implies that the physical presence of Dame Seville would effectively close the affair, but that without it the Lady's resolution is liable to waver — the good advice abandoned, and the wisdom submerged once more beneath reckless urges. Overdetermining the importance of Dame Seville to her former charge, Christine equates the Lady's neglected intuition with her inability to re-incorporate the moral code outlined in Dame Seville's letter.

To possess such a letter allows the Lady to become a close reader, both of the letter itself and of the events described in the *Duc des vrais amans*. With each rereading, the Lady may be able to take a step away from her solipsistic perspective and become more capable of viewing herself objectively, of seeing herself as others see her and thus measuring the damage to her reputation. Christine implies that as long as the Lady keeps the letter she retains a hold on the wisdom that she is attempting to reincorporate, counterbalancing the character flaws that make her vulnerable to the Duke's attentions.

The Lady's reaction to Dame Seville's letter is to write the Duke and call off their affair. She calls on him to protect her honor (the substance of his very first pledge to her) by staying away. Clearly, the governess's letter has succeeded in showing the Lady the seriousness of her situation and the urgent need to extricate herself. Her response is so

immediate that it seems instinctual: she is restored to a pre-existing set of values and sense of self. She explains to her lover, “fole Amour, qui plusieurs deçoit, et la nisse pitié que j’ay eue de voz complaints, m’ont mencee a oublier ce de quoy il me devoit souvenir sans cesser: c’est assavoir, mon ame et mon honneur. [. . .] Et voy bien que quelconques se boute en tele fole amour que il n’est mie maistre de soy” [“Foolish Love, who deceives many, and the unguarded pity that I had for your laments, have led me to forget what I should keep in mind unceasingly: my soul and my honor. [. . .] I can see that whoever throws himself into such foolish love is hardly master of himself”].⁷⁴ Viewed as a speculum into her own past, or as a fresh response to the narrative of the *Duc des vrais amans* in the light of Dame Seville’s counsel, the Lady’s letter to the Duke becomes a cognizant response to the dangers of courtly love.

The Lady’s Failure

However, she remains unwilling or unable to take responsibility for her own actions. She indicates that her decision has been determined not by her heart but by her conscience: “Car quant en ceste amour je me mis, je ne me donnoie garde des perilz ou je me fichoie, mais ceste sage dame m’a ouvert les yeulx de raison [. . .]” [“For when I gave myself to this love, I took no notice of the perils into which I was flinging myself. But this wise Lady has opened my eyes to reason [. . .]”].⁷⁵ In other words, her rational faculty, which was first created under her governess’s tutelage, has now been reactivated by Dame Seville. However, the Lady makes clear that she considers herself the pawn of external forces: “fole Amour” [“Foolish Love”] and its quasi-allegorical opponent, Dame Seville. The Lady effectively surrenders responsibility for her actions and undermines her

efforts to close the affair by simultaneously insisting that her heart is not in accord with her conscience and declaring her undying and undivided love for the Duke. Her attempt at closure still places her within the fiction of courtly romance, as she now imagines herself the self-sacrificing victim not of love but of social decorum.

The Lady's failure to take responsibility is embodied, disastrously, in her decision to forward Dame Seville's letter so the Duke may read it for himself, as she explains: "affin que vous voyez quel cause me meut a m'en retraire" ["so that you may understand the reason impelling me to withdraw"].⁷⁶ The act shows that the voice of her conscience remains extrinsic to her, and that she cannot say in her own words what now needs to be said. Symbolically, by forwarding the letter she sends away the self-critic. She signals her renewed exposure and vulnerability to the Duke's blandishments, and now must inevitably lose the battle to rationalize her emotions.

With one tear-stained letter, the Duke manipulates his way back into her life. Thereafter accepting the Duke's continued advances, the Lady accepts the combustibility of her impetuous actions. Writing against her censoring self and in disregard of Dame Seville's advice, she reiterates her description of the internal conflict between heart and head, but now restores the primacy of her feelings:

Mon vray, loyal, tres doux et bel ami, voir est que comme je feusse espouentee de mon honneur perdre (que je doy ressongner sur toutes choses, de ce admonnestee par les lettres, comme vous avez peu veoir, de la Dame de la Tour, a qui j'en sçay bon gré, car je sçay bien qu'elle l'a fait pour mon grant bien), vous escrips derrenierement en mes letres, malgré mon cuer, ce que je vous manday en ycelles [. . .].⁷⁷

[My true, loyal, very sweet and fair love, the truth is that as I was frightened to lose my honor (which I must care about above everything, having been advised in this matter by the Dame de la Tour's letter, as you have seen, to whom I am grateful, since I know she counseled me for my

own good), I wrote to you what I did in my recent letter despite my feelings [. . .].⁷⁸

There are no further communications between the Lady and Dame Seville. It is as if the Duke, by convincing the Lady to trust only in love and in her lover, effectively excises the governess's presence and wisdom from the remainder of the *Duc des vrais amans*.

The rest of the narrative illustrates the gendered inequalities of courtly love, mobility, and social reputation. Once the affair has been exposed, the Duke dedicates himself to a life of combat, promising the Lady that he would be willing to die rather than be responsible for any further doubts cast upon her reputation. His involvement in the crusades removes him from court and from his beloved, and places him in personal peril; but the compensation, in terms of the honor he accrues, is commensurate with the discomforts and dangers he undergoes. He is participating in a conventional redemptive narrative of male maturation, so that even his father (a brooding, critical presence in the early pages of the *Duc des vrais amans*) would probably accept that combat and years spent as a prisoner of war have turned a boy into a man.⁷⁹

The remaining narrative belongs explicitly to the Duke but implicitly to Christine. Through the Duke's eyes we learn of the continuation and demise of his relationship with the Lady over the next ten years. Yet through the very act of accepting his commission as ghost writer, Christine allows him to reveal his on-going conceit. Even in retrospect, seeking to present himself as a model figure of an ageing lover, he still apparently believes that his private ambitions and pride cannot compromise his beloved. His adoption of a pseudonym might have been taken for a sign of modesty, but the specific choice of title is thoroughly self-aggrandizing. While the Duke displays an awareness that

the Lady has suffered dishonor as a consequence of his own actions, his love for her is less constant than his enduring grudge against Dame Seville. He holds the governess personally responsible for interrupting his love affair and for challenging his authority over his beloved (an authority which, as her vassal under the terms of the courtly love contract, the Duke is not supposed to possess). Thus, he recalls how despair and frustration led him into a fury of rage:

Et Dieux scet, quant la lisoie,
Se la vielle maudissoie
Qui la letre ot envoyee!
La voulsisse avoir noyee
Mais qu'il n'en deüst plus estre!

[God knows, as I read it if I didn't curse the old woman who had sent it! I would gladly have drowned her, would that act have eradicated this situation.]⁸⁰

Although Christine appears to grant the Duke closure on the affair when he announces, "Et ycy mon dit deffine" ["And here I end my tale"] at line 3557, the text continues with 562 additional lines presented as excerpts from the lovers' correspondence.⁸¹ The bulk of this correspondence is in the voice of the Duke, but the Lady's gradual disillusionment is apparent as she comes to suspect that she has been replaced in his affections by another woman.⁸² By concluding the series of lamentations with the Lady's *complainte* against the Duke and his version of events, Christine gives her the final word on the affair. It is the Lady's voice which ultimately disrupts and effectively concludes both the Duke's narration and the *Duc des vrais amans* as a whole.

It is uncharacteristic of Christine's works for a protagonist to reject sibylline advice, as the Lady ultimately does. In other texts, the most prominent relationship

between a protagonist and a sibylline figure is the tutor–pupil bond between Christine’s fictionalized version of herself and an authorizing presence such as the Cumaean Sibyl of the *Chemin de lonc estude* or the guiding trio of the *Cité des dames*. However, in rejecting sibylline advice, the Lady takes her place alongside the figures from history and myth who court disaster by ignoring the prognostications of prophets, as Priam of Troy ignored that of Cassandra. In the Lady of the *Duc des vrais amans*, as in her treatment of her counterparts from the past in these dream visions, Christine is presenting a negative exemplar. Thus the Lady’s final function in the text is to stand as a warning to the reader not to emulate her behavior, just as the examples of ruined and disreputable aristocratic women cited by Dame Seville in her letter were meant to deter the Lady herself from her reckless course.

Thus the Lady’s *complainte* not only contradicts the Duke’s testimony, but also presents a mirror of Dame Seville’s admonitions. The loss of her governess (firstly as a young woman and secondly in her bid to reincorporate Dame Seville as a member of her household) fractures the Lady’s sense of self, her sense of duty to the self; and, as Dame Seville feared, the Lady is now “toute changee.”⁸³ She has recklessly brought about the hypothetical situation against which the governess warned her, becoming exactly like one of those prior negative exemplars of extra-marital romance and unchecked vanity. She has broken every vow she made to herself, plunging herself into precisely the situation that she detested and feared. Trapped within her tower, trapped by the carelessness of her past, she laments not merely the loss of love, but the loss of true freedom. The Lady has grown unconfident, fearful, suspicious. She no longer controls her position in her household, and she is faced with the need to discard, wilfully, the power she perceives the

Duke's love grants her. Fleeing rumors, her confinement displaces her social significance. No longer belonging to the court, no longer belonging to her self, she is left with bitter wisdom and regret. Her cage is self-welded, her future fixed. She is no longer fit to occupy a venerated position in society where she could act as a positive exemplar to other women. She has to be shut away from society because, according to Christine, her disrespectful actions bring shame upon her entire household; now, life moves on without her. Simultaneously, in her very absence from her proper place of honor, she serves as a negative exemplar for other women not to repeat her errors. Furthermore, she has recognized at long last the hypocrisies of courtly love, embodied in its conventional allegorical form as Love itself. Addressing not her lover, but Love itself, the Lady's *complainte* is a personal tract renouncing courtly love and attacking the institution with all its codes, its inherent illusions and its entrapments. However, she does not entirely spare herself and her lover, the players who have blindly permitted courtly love to mold their behavior. Thus she admits that she has foolishly sacrificed her freedom and reputation for a code of behavior which is anything but honorable. She recognizes the Duke in his true light, as the more active — and less damaged — practitioner of the code that has reduced her to misery. His new love serves as a painful reminder of her insignificance, signalling his emergence from the affair unscathed while at the same time stripping her of all lasting consequence.

Accepting that the attraction which drew her towards disaster was fatuous, she regards the moment when she met her lover as the moment when her life effectively came to an end:

Et c'est ma mort
 Quant fais devant ma veüe
 Venir cil par qui peüe
 Suis de dueil, et qui meüe
 A grief remort
 M'a, dont mon cuer se remort [. . .].⁸⁴

[Well I should die / When I summoned and received / Him by whom I feel
 upheaved / In sorrow, and who achieved / Remorse in my / Purpose,
 which made my heart sigh [. . .].]

Yet of course the Lady is not truly dead; rather, she is caught in what she now regards as a living death, and which began at the very point when she erred. Christine thus presents the Lady's punishment in terms of an existence extended beyond a span that would be proper; the trope evokes the sibylline fate of supernatural longevity without concomitant youth that the Sibyl endures in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as recounted in the *Chemin de lonc estude*. The Lady's miscalculation of consequences therefore echoes the Sibyl's failure to ask for youth to match Apollo's love-token of extra centuries of life. For both the Lady and Ovid's Sibyl, the wisdom of experience has been achieved at the cost of extended suffering brought about by her own foolishness.

The Lady's torment arises from her comprehension that the destruction of her "bon los" ["good reputation"] is self-wrought: that for her, despite the best efforts of Dame Seville, self-knowledge has arrived too late.⁸⁵ As she writes in her *complainte*, addressing Amour,

Car de toy fus deceüe—
 Or vient il a ma sceüe—
 A tart suis apperceüe.

[I was by you deceived — / Now this knowledge I've conceived — /
 Though tardily, I've perceived.]⁸⁶

The masculine discourse of courtly love provided only the most distorted parody of women's experience, as Christine indicates in her assault on Ovid and Jean de Meun in the *Epistre au dieu d'amours*:

Mais se femmes eussent li livre fait,
Je scay de vray qu'aultrement fust du fait,
Car bien scevent qu'a tort sont encoulpees.

[If women, though, had written all those books,
I know that they would read quite differently,
For well do women know the blame is wrong.]⁸⁷

Indeed, by the time she was writing the *Duc des vrais amans*, Christine's output was becoming an attempt to compensate for this distortion of female experience. The extremity of the position is epitomized by her strategy in this text: hijacking a male narrative in order to sabotage the masculine discourse of courtly love.

The *Duc des vrais amans* is astute in its depiction of infidelity and the social exclusion it incurs for the female party. In misogynistic nightmares, such as those embodied in the tradition of the confined Sibyl, women's power and wisdom are associated with cuckoldry. Any addition in women's power, independence, and immunity from confinement or punishment is a threat to men in that is perceived (subliminally or otherwise) as increasing the likelihood of female infidelity, endangering a man's ability to know his wife's child is his own, and hence undermining the entire patrilinear system of property. Christine's attitude to these social rules and punitive measures is pragmatic rather than idealistic: she does not condemn the system, but shows how it functions and how women may best deal with its realities. These authorial attitudes are explicit in Dame Seville's letter, but implicit in the Lady's progress from innocence to experience.

The Lady, who previously knew about infidelity through courtly love literature and (as Dame Seville's letter informs us) has also witnessed how the mere rumor of unfaithfulness has devastated the lives of contemporary women, has now come to know such consequences by experience. Christine demonstrates that if one fails to learn as a witness (Dame Seville's method) or by incorporating values one has been taught by those older and wiser (as the Lady attempted to do in her youth and on receipt of her governess's letter), one must learn the hard way.

As the *Duc des vrais amans* progresses from the flurry of correspondence surrounding Dame Seville's admonitory letter and on to the Lady's final *complainte*, we witness the Lady's revelation that she has been betrayed by the tradition of courtly love, by her lover, and worst of all by herself. Her progress is reflected in her governess's symbolic names and titles. The Lady who rebelled against wisdom was forced by her husband into virtual imprisonment as a "Dame de la Tour"; her governess's letter afforded her for the first time with an overview, as if from a mountain height ("de Monthault"), which, however, she rejected; now, her belated recognition that only self-reliance protects virtue places her simultaneously in the position of the wise Sibyl looking down from her mountain and the confined Sibyl registering her own loss. In naturalized form appropriate to Christine's genre, her predicament matches that of Ovid's Sibyl, who predicts in *Metamorphoses*:

The time will come when lengths of days will shrivel me from my full form to but a tiny thing, and my limbs, consumed by age, will shrink to a feather's weight. Then will I seem never to have been loved, never to have pleased the god. Phoebus himself, perchance, will either gaze unknowing on me or will deny that he ever loved me. Even to such changes shall I come. Though shrunk past recognition of the eye, still by my voice shall I be known, for the fates will leave me my voice.⁸⁸

The Lady no longer feels the blessings of divine Love, and faces the loss of her youth and beauty without the compensations of an unblemished marriage. Fated to live with her social disgrace and with emotional scars that time does not heal, the Lady indicates that Love, or rather her love for the Duke, has become her captor, and she laments:

Dont je suis a mort conquise,
 [.....]
 Ne plus ne m'aime ne prise.
 Et de s'amour suis esprise
 Ou que je soie,
 Car sans repentir avoye
 En lui mise l'amour moye.⁸⁹

[I'm his mortal conquest; / [.....] / No more he loves me the best. / Yet with his love I'm obsessed / Where'er I flee, / For in him quite shamelessly / I've placed my love, all of me.]⁹⁰

The walls of her husband's keep are only physical accompaniments to the spiritual imprisonment that she has wilfully embraced against all good advice. Thus, not only under a divine curse but also confined, she occupies a position analogous to that of the Sibyl in the post-Ovidian tradition typified by Petronius and Apuleius; and similarly, as a negative exemplar, she is an object of curiosity for the prurient and a deterrent for those more willing to learn than she was herself.

The Lady has no recourse to action except to write her *complainte*, addressed neither to her confidante Dame Seville nor her former lover, but to an abstraction, Love itself. As with the Sibyl who foresees in *Metamorphoses* that her voice will survive her body, the Lady's consolation must be her message. Christine, recounting the Lady's experience, is able to challenge fifteenth-century literary notions of courtly love and what it means for women.

Notes

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 14.147-53; for a translation, see the end of this chapter.

² Sandra Hindman and Stephen Perkinson, "Insurgent Voices: Illuminated Versions of Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre du Duc des vrais amans*," *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994) 223, 224. On Dame Seville as a contrast to the *duenna* or Jean de Meun's *La Vieille*, compare Kevin Brownlee, "Rewriting Romance: Courtly Discourse and Auto-Citation in Christine de Pizan," *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996) 179; and Thelma Fenster, Introduction, in Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma Fenster (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995) 21.

³ Charity Cannon Willard, "Lover's Dialogues in Christine de Pizan's Lyric Poetry from the *Cent Ballades* to the *Cent Ballades d'Amant et de Dames*," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 4 (1981): 174-5; Judith Laird and Earl Jeffrey Richards, "*Tous parlent par une mesmes bouche*: Lyrical Outbursts, Prosaic Remedies, and Voice in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de duc des vrais amans*," *Christine de Pizan and the Medieval French Lyric*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998) 111.

⁴ Laird and Richards 119, 121.

⁵ Brownlee, "Rewriting Romance," 181. Thelma Fenster also feels that the governess's name is "a transparent and overdetermined reference to the loftiness of the wise Sibyl." Fenster, Introduction, *Duc des vrais amans* 21.

⁶ Fenster, Introduction, *Duc des vrais amans* 27.

⁷ Brownlee, "Rewriting Romance," 181.

⁸ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma Fenster (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995) (hereafter *Duc des vrais amans*, references by page and line). Translations refer to Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers*, trans. Thelma Fenster and Nadia Margolis (New York: Persea, 1991) (hereafter *Duke of True Lovers*, references by page).

⁹ *Duc des vrais amans* 67, lines 4-5; *Duke of True Lovers* 47.

¹⁰ Helen Solterer sees the *Chemin de lonc estude* as Christine's prime narrative (as opposed to polemical) response to the unresolved Debate. She writes: "In the passage from the *Querelle* to the *Chemin* we can detect the makings of Christine's most ambitious response to the defamatory character of magisterial writing about women. The key is this: if a polemical mode cannot succeed in countering the public defamation of women, then she will oppose it in another mode. Put another way, if Christine's rhetorical occupation of the public sphere does not rid it of defamatory, socially destructive language, then she will forge another language to do so." Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1995) 164. However, I would argue that even though the *Chemin de lonc estude* was written first, it pointed in an essentially new, political direction, with a far broader focus than the Debate issues; whereas Christine used the *Dit de la rose* and the *Duc des vrais amans* specifically in order to finish saying what she had begun saying in the Debate itself.

¹¹ Ovid was translated into French by Chrétien de Troyes (1159-91), the grandfather of Arthurian courtly romances.

¹² Regarding Capellanus's focus on the male, Marcia Colish writes: "Two reasons are possible for this asymmetry, both of which can be documented in Andreas's advice: the idea that the woman is essentially passive, and the idea that she is intrinsically superior to him and thus able to confer benefits that she possesses and he lacks." Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400-1400* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) 185.

¹³ Eduard Wechssler, *Das kulturproblem des Minnesangs*, vo. 2 (Niemeyer: Halle, 1909) 177. Alfred Jeanroy augments Wechssler's study, observing that the paradigm is evidenced by the language employed by the male lover, who addresses his beloved as *midons*, the etymological equivalent not of "my lady" but of "my lord." Alfred Jeanroy, *La Poésie lyrique des Troubadours*, vol. 1 (Toulouse/Paris: Privat-Didier, 1934) 91.

¹⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: OUP, 1936) 2.

¹⁵ Colish 184-5.

¹⁶ Lewis 13.

¹⁷ Lewis 7.

¹⁸ Herbert Moller, "The Meaning of Courtly Love," *Journal of American Folklore* 73 (1960): 41.

¹⁹ During the Debate, Christine added Jean de Meun's indiscriminate use of indecent language — specifically in relation to the naming of male genitalia — to her list of complaints.

²⁰ "Genealogy" is Kevin Brownlee's term (240).

²¹ Maurice Roy's identification of the figure as John of Bourbon has been debunked by Charity Cannon Willard, *The Writings of Christine de Pizan* (New York: Persea, 1993) 37-8.

²² Fenster, Introduction, *Duc des vrais amans* 17. Evelyn Birge Vitz notes key techniques of characterization that produce this air of fiction even in the autobiographical writings of Abelard: "Character, in the medieval period, appears to have been conceived more as a list than as a *gestalt*, or pattern: it was a set of juxtaposed traits — vices and virtues — which were among themselves, either compatible or incompatible, either at war or at peace with each other, but which did not have complex inter connections or constitute an organic whole, with some mysterious unity." Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire* (New York: New York UP, 1989) 17. Birge Vitz (15) also enumerates some of the "extravagant terms" that distinguish medieval narrative from modern: "Abelard's constant use of superlatives like *supreme* and *nominatissimam* (the most famous), verbs like *preminebam* (I was the foremost), constructions like *tanto/ut* (so much/that) and *tanto/quanto amplius* (the more/all the more) indicates that he is continually *measuring* himself and the events of his life (and, here, Heloise) against other men (and women) and their lives. Abelard certainly did not invent such constructions or such considerations: far from it. Indeed, it is impressive how common — in fact, how dominant — differentiation by magnification (by size, or height) is in medieval art." Of particular interest for an understanding of the *Duc des vrais amans* is Birge Vitz's comment (13) on superlatives in the portrayal of Abelard's relationship with Heloise: "They are attempting [. . .] to 'exhaust' love, as an experience; to be 'great lovers'; to fulfill completely the term 'lover' by continually

adding to, heaping ever higher the amount of love enjoyed." In other words, they aim for their real experience to meet all the criteria of a literary model.

²³ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Christine de Pizan and Political Life in Late Medieval France," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 11. See also Deborah McGrady, "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works," *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilynn Desmond (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998) 196.

²⁴ *Duc des vrais amans* 68, lines 25-7, 37-40; *Duke of True Lovers* 47.

²⁵ *Duc des vrais amans* 74, line 220; *Duke of True Lovers* 50. Compare: "Et souvent a lonc sejour / La vëouye, et fors cel jour, / Garde je ne m'en donnoye" ["I often used to see her for long periods of time but, except for that day, I had paid no attention"] (*Duc des vrais amans* 74, lines 235-7; *Duke of True Lovers* 51).

²⁶ I take this phrase from Hindman and Perkinson.

²⁷ *Duc des vrais amans* 94, lines 879-94; *Duke of True Lovers* 63.

²⁸ *Duc des vrais amans* 94, lines 894-99; *Duke of True Lovers* 63.

²⁹ *Duc des vrais amans*, 111-12, lines 1449-58 and 1465-8.

³⁰ *Duke of True Lovers* 74.

³¹ *Duc des vrais amans* 130-1, lines 2063, 2069-75; *Duke of True Lovers* 85.

³² *Duc des vrais amans* 131, lines 2080-2; *Duke of True Lovers* 85.

³³ *Duc des vrais amans* 131, lines 2091-100, 2104-6; *Duke of True Lovers* 85-6.

³⁴ *Duc des vrais amans* 132, lines 2121-3 and 2128-33.

³⁵ *Duke of True Lovers* 86-7.

³⁶ *Duc des vrais amans* 170, lines 15-16; *Duke of True Lovers* 111.

³⁷ *Duc des vrais amans* 170-1, Letter 4.6-19.

³⁸ *Duke of True Lovers* 110-11.

³⁹ *Duc des vrais amans* 91 (line 797), 182 (Letter 6.1), 31 (line 2093), 134 (line 2211); *Duke of True Lovers* 61, 122, 86, 87.

⁴⁰ Attempts have been made to identify Dame Seville with actual fifteenth-century women; see Thelma Fenster, "Who's a Heroine? The Example of Christine de Pizan," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 126, note 23.

⁴¹ If indeed we accept Christine's pledge to be reporting faithfully the events dictated by the Duke, then we might question the Duke's wisdom and motive in naming his Lady's governess, an act which would potentially unmask the identity of both lovers. However, the name is plainly an invention, and no one's anonymity would have been compromised by it.

⁴² Eleni Stecopoulos and Karl D. Utti, "Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: The Reconstruction of Myth," *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992) 51.

⁴³ *Chemin de lonc estude* 116, line 490.

⁴⁴ Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 130.

⁴⁵ *Duc des vrais amans* 70, line 105; *Duke of True Lovers* 50.

⁴⁶ The recorded actions of Dame Seville, scant as they are, serve primarily to support the exposition of the Lady's moral progress. She represents a life lived honorably and wisely, and is therefore an impeccable moral exemplar for her charge to emulate; but there is no need to assume that in the past she has overcome similar moral obstacles, let alone that she has been led into the same temptations. The two women represent aspects of a single female paradigm — age and youth, sibylline wisdom and sibylline vanity — within a particular social and moral framework; but they should not be seen as incarnations of one woman seen at different ages. Dame Seville should not be imagined as a veteran of amorous follies, imparting her bitterly won wisdom to prevent the Lady falling into a trap that is familiar from personal experience. Indeed, Dame Seville seems to act in accordance with her own precepts, and there is no indication that she has ever done otherwise. While the governess's intimate knowledge of the consequences of inappropriate love may raise the question of where her authority and wisdom originate, the answer is plain enough from her homiletic letter, with its observations about generalized patterns of behavior combined with references to contemporary examples of errant noblewoman.

⁴⁷ *Duc des vrais amans* 173, lines 57-60; *Duke of True Lovers* 113.

⁴⁸ *Duc des vrais amans* 173-4, lines 81-3, 86-7; *Duke of True Lovers* 114 (my italics).

⁴⁹ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pizan: an electronic transcription*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, 1999, Minnesota U, <<http://erc.lib.umn.edu/dynaweb/french/pizalaci>>, 1.17 (hereafter *Cité des dames*, references by part and chapter); *City of Ladies* 43.

⁵⁰ *Duc des vrais amans* XX, lines XX; *Duke of True Lovers* 114.

⁵¹ "Delius inspirat vates Apollo fatidicus. et sic ait 'Delius', ut 'nunc Lyciae sortes', id est Apollineae. bene autem Sibylla quid sit expressit 'magnam cui mentem animumque Delius inspirat vates': nam, ut supra diximus, Sibylla dicta est quasi siou boulê, id est dei sententia." Maurus Servius Honoratus, *In Vergilii carmina comentarii*, ed. Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen (Leipzig, 1881) 6.12.

⁵² Ovid, *Metamorphoses* vol. 2, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1916) 14.153; see notes 1 above and 88 below. Compare *Ovide moralisé: poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle publié d'après tous les manuscrits connus*, ed. C. de Boer (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1938) vol. 5, book 14, lines 919ff.

⁵³ "Mam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere et cum illi pueri di cerent: Σιβυλλα, Τι Θξλειξ; respondebat illa: αποθανειν θελω." Petronius, *Satyricon*, ed. Konrad Müller (München: E. Heimeran, 1961) §48 lines 21-4. This translation: Petronius, *Satyricon*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000) 35.

⁵⁴ "But the Cumaeans had none of this woman's oracles to show, though they do point to a stone water-pot of no great size in the sanctuary of Apollo where they say the Sibyl's bones are lying." Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, ed. T.E. Page, E. Capps, and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1935) vol. 4, 10.12.8, 434-7. Also compare St Justin (attrib.), *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 37. See R.A. Pack, "The Sibyl in a Lamp," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 87 (1956): 190-1.

⁵⁵ “Elle fina ses jours en Siché et le tombel d’elle fu par lonctemps monsté” [“She ended her days in Sicily and for a long time afterward her tomb was shown to visitors”] (*Cité des dames* 2.3; *City of Ladies* 104).

⁵⁶ “Ecce iam vespera lucernam intuens Pamphile: ‘quam largus,’ inquit, ‘imber aderit crastino’ et percontanti marito, qui comperisset istud, respondit sibi lucernam praedicere. quod dictum ipsius Milo risu secutus: ‘grandem,’ inquit, ‘istam lucerna<m> Sibyllam pascimus, quae cuncta caeli negotia et solem ipsum de specula candelabri contuetur” [“As it was now evening, Pamphile, beholding the lamp, said, It will rain abundantly to-morrow. And on her husband asking her how she knew that to be the case, she answered, That this was predicted to her by the lamp. At this, Milo, laughing, said, We nourish in this lamp a great Sibyl, who sees from the candlestick, as from a watchtower, all that is transacting in the heavens; and therefore, surveys even the sun itself” (Lucius Apuleius, *Apulei opera quae supersunt (I): Apulei Platonici Madaurensis. Metamorphoseon Libri XI*, ed. R. Helm (Leipzig: Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1907) 2.11; Lucius Apuleius, *Golden Ass or The Metamorphosis, and other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London: R. Triphook and T. Rodd, 1822; Frome, Somerset: Prometheus Trust, 1997) 35). Pack suggests a scribal error for a correct reading “istam <in> lucerna” and renders the meaning as: “That’s a mighty Sibyl of yours that we’re keeping in the lamp.” Pack 190. See also Campbell Bonner, “The Sibyl and Bottle Imps,” *Quantulacumque: Studies Presented to Kirsopp Lake* (London: 1937) 1-8.

⁵⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 16.18-19.

⁵⁸ Thirty-eight manuscripts of *The Golden Ass* survive from the fourteenth century or earlier, mostly in Italy; D. S. Robertson, “The Manuscripts of the Metamorphoses of Apuleius,” *Classical Quarterly* 18.1 (January 1924): 27-42; 18.2 (April 1924): 85-99. Medieval scholars who knew Petronius intimately were not many, but they included John of Salisbury (in *Policraticus*, used by Christine in *Le Livre du corps de policie*) and Vincent of Beauvais (whose work she also used). It has been argued that Salisbury (c. 1110-80) derived his knowledge from a manuscript of the relevant section of the *Satyricon* which he saw in France, perhaps at the Benedictine Abbey at Fleury, and that this was the MS “rediscovered” by the Italian antiquarian Poggio Bracciolini c. 1419-22. See T. Wade Richardson, “Problems in the Text-History of Petronius in Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” *American Journal of Philology*, 96.3 (Autumn 1975) 305; Evans T. Sage, “Petronius, Poggio, and John of Salisbury,” *Classical Philology*, 11.1 (January 1916) 19 and 21.

⁵⁹ “Et pour ce que les ditz senateurs ne savoient que icellui songe signifioit, mais moult s’en merveillèrent et disoient que c’estoit signifiance de quelque grant merveille lors prochainement advenir au monde, ilz firent venir à eulx la dicte Sibile, qui moult estoit belle et de très sage contenance et aussi belle langagiere, et luy recitèrent leur dit songe en la priant qu’elle le leur voulsit exposer ce que ce povoit estre et signifier. A quoy elle leur respondit qu’il n’appartenoit mie faire la dicte exposicion en lieu si plain de vices comme estoit cellui où ilz estoient, mais qu’ilz montassent sur le Mont Appenin, et là leur en diroit elle son advis. Et quant ilz y furent montez, elle leur dist que par icelle advision vouloit nostre Seigneur Dieu tout puissant manifester la diversité des mondains empires et les mutacions de toutes generacions.” [“And because these senators did not know what the dream meant, yet were most amazed by it and said that it signified some

great marvel to come on earth, they summoned the aforesaid Sibyl, who was extremely beautiful and had a very wise visage and beautiful speech, and recounted their dream to her, begging her to reveal to them what it might be and mean. At which she answered them that it was not appropriate to provide this revelation in a place as iniquitous as the one they were in, but that they should go up on the Appennine Mountain, and there she would tell them her counsel. And when they had gone up, she told them that by this vision out almighty Lord God wished to manifest the diversity of earthly empires and the changefulness of all generations.”] *Ovide moralisé en prose, Edition critique avec introduction*, ed. C. de Boer (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954) 351. Compare *Ovide moralisé: poème*, vol. 5, book 14, lines 1181-88.

⁶⁰ The Appennine legend overlaps in two key respects with Arthurian tradition: first, the Sibyl in question is also known as *fata Alcina*, a name which identifies her as the sister of *fata Morgana*, or Morgan Le Fay; second, her entombment in a mountain cave evokes the fate of Merlin. William Lewis Kinter, *Prophetess and Fay: A Study of the Ancient and Medieval Tradition of the Sibyl* (diss. Columbia U, 1958) 46-7 and 47 note 1. Regarding the association of both the Tiburtine and the Cumaean Sibyls with the Appennines, compare the general comments above, Introduction, pages 14-15, on the tendency of named Sibyls in the source traditions to swap or merge key attributes.

⁶¹ Bernard McGinn, “*Teste David cum Sibylla*: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages,” *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 22.

⁶² Fenster, Introduction, *Duke of True Lovers* 24.

⁶³ *Duc des vrais amans* 173, 175-6, Letter 5.71-77, 131-134, 134-136, 152-154.

⁶⁴ *Duke of True Lovers* 113-16.

⁶⁵ The Lady has orchestrated all the subterfuge of the meetings with the Duke. She has involved more people than she seems to realize, and thus has opened herself up to rumor and gossip. All this contradicts her initial wisdom and is pinpointed by Dame Seville when she outlines the pitfalls of such affairs.

⁶⁶ *Duc des vrais amans* 174, line 88; *Duke of True Lovers* 114.

⁶⁷ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1989) 1.27.1-2 (hereafter *Trois vertus*, references by book, chapter, and line); Christine de Pisan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or the Book of the Three Virtues*, ed. Sarah Lawson (London: Penguin, 1985) 98 (hereafter *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, references by page).

⁶⁸ The significance of Dame Seville’s letter in the context of the *Trois vertus* is discussed by Liliane Dulac, “The Representation and Functions of Feminine Speech in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre des Trois Vertus*,” trans. Christine Reno, *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, 18-21.

⁶⁹ Of the eight letters which disrupt the Duke’s narration, Dame Seville’s letter to the Lady is by far the longest, occupying fully 284 lines and outweighing the lovers’ combined correspondence by 17 lines.

⁷⁰ *Duc des vrais amans* 170, Letter 4.16-19; *Duke of True Lovers* 111.

⁷¹ *Duc des vrais amans* 182, lines 3207-15; *Duke of True Lovers* 122.

⁷² It may also be the Lady’s moral malady that precludes Dame Seville’s return. In the *Trois vertus*, Dame Seville’s epistle is presented as an example of a letter that a

governess could write to her charge when it would compromise her own situation to stay in the service of a woman who does not heed her advice. Christine suggests that the Lady's lapse into immorality has constructed symbolic and real social obstacles that thwart the Lady's efforts to re-employ Dame Seville.

⁷³ *Duc des vrais amans*, 171; Letter 5.11-12; *Duke of True Lovers* 111.

⁷⁴ *Duc des vrais amans* 182, Letter 6.1-11; *Duke of True Lovers* 122.

⁷⁵ *Duc des vrais amans* 183, Letter 6.16-18; *Duke of True Lovers* 122.

⁷⁶ *Duc des vrais amans* 183, Letter 6.15-16; *Duke of True Lovers* 122.

⁷⁷ *Duc des vrais amans* 189, Letter 8.1-7.

⁷⁸ *Duke of True Lovers* 127.

⁷⁹ After complaining that "Enfance encore / Me tenoit ou temps de lore"

["Childhood still [holds him] it its grip"] (*Duc des vrais amans* 69, lines 61-2; *Duke of True Lovers* 48), the Duke expresses his boyish fear of his father:

Adont sus la court quarree
Mon seigneur mon pere estoit,
Qui durement enquestoit
Ou le jour alé estoie.
Et moy, qui fort me hastoie
Pour ce que je le craignoie
Et son yre ressongoie,
L'avisay a sa fenestre.

Bien le voulsiesse ailleurs estre! (*Duc des vrais amans* 80, lines 430-8).

["Milord my father was above the courtyard, asking insistently where I had gone that day. And I, who was pressing forward hurriedly because I feared him and dreaded his anger, saw him at his window. Oh how I wished he were elsewhere!" (*Duke of True Lovers* 55)]

⁸⁰ *Duc des vrais amans* 184, lines 3234-38; *Duke of True Lovers* 123.

⁸¹ *Duc des vrais amans* 197; *Duke of True Lovers* 131.

⁸² Of the first nine ballads, only two belong to the Lady. She is granted two of the three *virelays* and none of the four *rondeaux* that conclude the Duke's presence in the text.

⁸³ *Duc des vrais amans* 173, Letter 5.59.

⁸⁴ *Duc des vrais amans* 197, lines 20-5; *Duke of True Lovers* 146.

⁸⁵ *Duc des vrais amans* 172, Letter 5.27; *Duke of True Lovers* .

⁸⁶ *Duc des vrais amans* 213, lines 17-19; *Duke of True Lovers* 146.

⁸⁷ Christine de Pizan and Thomas Hoccleve, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*:

Christine de Pizan's "Epistre au dieu d'Amours" and "Dit de la Rose"; Thomas Hoccleve's "The Letter of Cupid," ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (New York: E. J. Brill, 1990), lines 417-19 (hereafter *Dieu d'amours* or *Dit de la rose*, references by page and line); translations are from the same edition, where they appear on the facing page.

⁸⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 14.147-53; for the original Latin, see the epigraph of this chapter.

⁸⁹ *Duc des vrais amans* 216, *Complainte* 113-122.

⁹⁰ *Duke of True Lovers* 149.

Chapter Two
The Cry of the Sibyl: Compassion and Foresight
in Christine's Advice to Isabel of Bavaria

*Hahay mais pour quoy ne a qui dis ie ces paroles quant je scay que nen seray pas creue. caar ne
pourront entrer es corages endurcis sicomme on dist le fol ne croit jusques il prent / mais
abondance de voulente le me fait dire / comme tendre mere a ses enfans mais ce me desconforte
que ia me semble en y a dentrez en obstinacion qui trop est chose perverse helas iay grant paour
que semblable ie soye a cassandra la sage fille duroy*
— Dame Couronnée in Christine de Pizan, *L'Avison-Christine*¹

Presenting her typology of the authorial registers of Christine's epistles, Nadia Margolis defines the "Sibylline Voice" of the *L'Epistre d'Othéa la deesse, que elle envoya a Hector de Troye quant il estoit en l'age de quinze ans* (1400) as the "detached, omniscient" vehicle of feminist and nationalist goals, matching Christine's presentation of the Sibyl herself as a "prophet of national glory."² In *L'Epistre à la reine* (1405) and *La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* (1410), according to Margolis, Christine had "begun turning toward a more frenetic, circumstantial voice" to address France's griefs; she distinguishes this from the "Sibylline Voice," labelling it Christine's "Compassionate Voice" and further characterizing it as "lachrymose." Thus she discerns in the more poised tone of the inscribed letter in *Le Livre de la paix* (1413) "the last sibylline echo" after the aforementioned epistles, adding, "Because her crying out in these last may have marked her an insurrectionist, calling her own political loyalty into question, the *Book of Peace* epistle [. . .] helped to re-professionalize her image as a serious author rather than to consign her to the ranks of irrational, unstable women."³

To paraphrase Margolis's rather stern paternalistic view, in this inscribed letter Christine pulled herself together and stopped playing Cassandra. Yet in the same essay, Margolis concedes that in the *Lamentacion* Christine "maintains a presence of mind sufficient to cite historical female exempla" and uses a uniquely feminine voice that,

while “solitary” and “uninvited,” is also “daring” and “helpless yet powerful.”⁴ Others have found it unnecessary to see a polarization in Christine’s work between figures such as weeping Cassandra and the wise Sibyl. For example, Marilynn Desmond and Pamela Sheingorn see in the *Epistre Othéa* “an evocative relationship among the sibyl and the female figures of learning and prophecy treated [. . .] such as Io, Diana, and Cassandra.” When named by Dame Couronnée, the sibylline personification of French history in *L’Avison-Christine* (1405), Cassandra represents the fear that her lessons (i.e. the lessons of French history) will be ignored, or as Roberta Krueger terms it “the anxiety of instruction.”⁵

While Krueger sees this anxiety as an intrinsic but negative aspect of the attempt to teach, Margarete Zimmermann sees the emotionalism of the *Lamentacion* as a positive, pragmatic polemical strategy which locates the epistle in a wider context of emergent medieval political writings: it contains, she writes, “both a ‘voice crying in the desert’ and the voice of an incisive Cassandra — both stances typical of speakers in political pamphlets.”⁶ Mary McKinley regards the tears of the *Lamentacion* as a function of pity, “a laudable, moral reaction to the political situation,” and pinpoints their strategic utility: “Her appeal to the women of France to follow her example and cry underscores the value of those tears. And [. . .] it prepares the way for her final appeals to the queen and, above all, to the Duke of Berry.”⁷ Similarly, Linda Leppig regards the tears as “true to her objective” and to the genre of the *complainte politique*, meant to embody the people’s reaction to the (often dire) impact of historical upheaval.⁸

This chapter will contend that by correlating foresight with tears, and strategically deploying them in combination in her authorial voice, in her imagery, and in her

argument, Christine draws on key aspects of the Sibyl as prophet of nationhood and national disaster in order to warn her queen of impending crisis. By rejecting Margolis's distinction between the "Compassionate Voice" of the *Epistre à la reine* and *Lamentacion* and the "Sibylline Voice" of the *Epistre Othéa*, I propose to reveal the continuities and interconnections of voice and fable that Christine employs in her efforts to fashion herself as Isabel's moral conscience and political advisor. In the context of Christine's on-going identification with the Sibyl, the frenzy and tears of the *Epistre à la reine* and (more overtly) the *Lamentacion* authorize her in the tradition of the reluctant seer who is tormented by anxiety that her warnings will be ignored. However, by using her own tears to represent the tears of French mothers for their children, she authorizes herself as their advocate to threaten France's rulers with shame for failing to act against disaster. Protective maternal pity is associated with foresight, and Christine carefully constructs a literary image of Isabel as mother to the nation in order to urge her to demonstrate these same qualities. The need for traditionally masculine modes of power is upheld — particularly in the *Lamentacion*'s address to the duke of Berry — but the key to peace is located in the wisdom that men can only derive from women. The same mood of lament and anxiety motivates the program of the Queen's Manuscript *Epistre Othéa*, where Christine uses the Trojan disaster to warn of the dangers threatening contemporary France, and where she incorporates the lamenting, anxious figures of those who foresaw the fall of Troy but went unheeded. Here the queen is urged to accept Christine's maternal wisdom of foresight and pity, and for the sake of France to exercise the same qualities in educating the dauphin.

Common to the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion* is a voice most conveniently labelled as that of the “tormented Sibyl.” In uttering its dire warnings about disasters befalling the state, this mode combines two registers identified by Margolis as incompatible: tearful lamentation and rational guidance. In the *Epistre Othéa*, Christine does indeed separate the two aspects, embodying tearful lamentation in the fables of the doomsaying women of Troy and rational guidance in the presiding sibylline figure of Othéa; however, by structural synthesis she projects her own authorial presence as that of the tormented Sibyl.⁹

In function, this voice or presence draws authority from the Sibyl’s roles as a prophet of national catastrophe (seen in classical authors such as Plutarch); as advisor on how to assuage divine wrath (cemented by the Roman habit of consulting the sibylline oracles in time of crisis); and as revelator of salvation history (enshrined in the medieval Sibylline Oracles, which weighed national destinies in the scales of divine justice).¹⁰ In its correlation of torment and foresight, Christine’s tormented Sibyl continues a tradition already present in the most ancient extant image of the Sibyl, that of Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE), but in terms of her own reading it doubtless draws on Vergil’s *Aeneid*, where the Cumaean Sibyl’s prophetic knowledge is forced on her by the god Phoebus Apollo and is accompanied by signs of frenzy.¹¹ In order to express Christine’s predicament as a solitary woman foretelling disastrous outcomes, the tormented Sibyl also echoes the reluctant prophet crying into a void, unheard or simply disbelieved — a marginalized figure like Cassandra, whose prescient cries could have averted the fall of Troy.

Isabel of Bavaria

Isabel of Bavaria was queen of France from 1385 to 1422, a time of economic crisis, famine, plague, and civil and spiritual unrest — all devastating impacts of the threat of English invasion coupled with the rivalry between the ducal houses of the royal family. Isabel's unprecedented power, as the wife of a king chronically indisposed, provided Christine with the opportunity to address the effective ruler of France as one of her own sex. However, little has been written on the relationship between Christine and Isabel, a critical omission that may be attributed to a retrospective but lasting series of libels on the queen's character.

Contemporaries of Christine such as Michel Pintoin the Monk of Saint-Denis, the Juvénal des Ursins, and Jean Froissart repeatedly characterize Charles VI's German-born French queen as self-interested, lazy, unscrupulous, extravagant, immoral, and generally uninterested both in the affairs of France and in the education of her children.¹² Her notoriety has persisted through the centuries.¹³ Six hundred years later, Isabel is known most notoriously for her alleged affair with her brother-in-law, Louis of Orléans, and for claims that she swindled France to support a lavish lifestyle and her Bavarian relatives. Despite their combined efforts, Isabel's modern biographers, Jean Verdon (1981), Jean Markale (1982), Marie-Veronique Clin (1999), and Philippe Delorme (2003), have not succeeded in dispelling the unflattering image they have independently concluded to be the result of fabrication, political propaganda, hearsay, and the unreliability of Isabel's contemporary court chroniclers, whose writings too often reflect the polemical prejudices of civil war and a growing class consciousness.¹⁴ Even modern scholars who have sought to re-assess the role of medieval women have swallowed such attacks more or less whole.

Despite the queen's high-profile and extraordinary political authority, scholars often dismiss Isabel in a few paragraphs, discussing only her infamy. This attitude is apparent in Christine scholarship, affecting for example the work of Charity Cannon Willard and going uncorrected by Deborah Fraioli, although Thelma Fenster has sought to correct the picture by adducing the work of historian Rachel Gibbons.¹⁵ Even the diminutive "Isabeau," often preferred by historians in order to distinguish the queen from her daughter, Queen Isabelle of England (wife of Richard II), continues a history of inadvertent misrepresentation, having acquired enduring derogatory force through its use in a satirical 1406 pamphlet, *Le Songe véritable*.¹⁶

In 1405, when Christine wrote the *Epistre à la reine*, many were beginning to doubt Isabel's loyalty to the French national good, in the light of her apparent self-interest and nepotism, coupled with her German origins. Isabel does not appear to have fallen out of public favor until that year, however, and there is no evidence that the more damning allegations against her were in circulation when Christine composed her plea. On May 27, the Augustinian friar Jacques Legrand had delivered a sermon before Isabel and Charles criticizing her court for its extravagant fashions and general moral corruption. Historians frequently interpret the sermon as proof of Isabel's alleged frivolity and adultery with Orléans. And yet the Monk of Saint-Denis's record of the sermon indicates that Legrand's personal attack against the queen was limited to her introduction of fashions he deemed unseemly for court.¹⁷ The *Songe véritable* openly attacks the queen in four stanzas where Fortune claims to have taken away in a single year the good reputation she has graciously granted Isabel.¹⁸ In 1405 the queen was indeed becoming tarred by her association with Orléans, who was guilty of increasing

taxation to further his territorial and political ambitions and to maintain his love of luxury and leisure.¹⁹ Yet there is no mention of adultery with Isabel until the stubborn allegation first surfaced in 1420s Burgundian propaganda.²⁰ The establishment of an official mistress for Charles around 1405 and Isabel's removal (with the royal children) to Vincennes could not have made the queen appear sympathetic to her husband's mental illness. To many, Isabel must have appeared to be the antithesis of a proper queen, wife, or mother whose principal duties were to support her husband and secure him an heir.²¹ Yet in the light of the king's erratic behavior, the mistress, Odette de Champdivers, freed Isabel from her conventional domestic duties so that she could better conduct the governmental duties that her husband could no longer consistently manage.²²

The portrait of the queen that emerges from Christine's writings contrasts drastically with the descriptions left by the chroniclers. From the start of her writing career till she retired to Poissy in 1418, she constructed a literary image of Isabel of Bavaria as an ideal for women, for the royal family, and for France. To Christine, the queen could potentially embody all the virtues of biblical, historical, and mythical heroines as a contemporary female figurehead. In book 2, chapter 68 of *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, Dame Justice names Isabel of Bavaria as "la noble royne de France [. . .], a present par grace de Dieu regnant, en laquelle n'a raim de cruauté, extorcion ne quelconques mal vice, mais tout bonne amour et benignité vers ses subgés" ["the noble queen of France [. . .] reigning now by the grace of God, and in whom there is not a trace of cruelty, extortion, or any other evil vice, but only great love and good will toward her subjects"].²³ This description assures her place among Christine's premiere citizens of the city of ladies. Thelma Fenster dismisses suggestions (by scholars including Charity

Cannon Willard) that the description of Isabel here merely represents flattery of the queen as a patron, arguing rather that it is the product of Christine's "wholly legitimate concerns for the *appearance* of the royal house in the eyes both of its subjects and of foreigners [. . .]." ²⁴ As Fenster suggests, Christine aims to shore up the queen's reputation (*fama*) because it was an essential factor in the strength of the monarchy. It may further be observed that Christine's praise, tacitly acknowledging the existence of an anti-Isabel animus, could also serve as a warning to the queen herself to nip such criticisms in the bud by modifying her own behavior and that of her courtiers.

The counterweights that Christine employs in the *Cité des dames* against the queen's critics are twofold: her own established reputation as author of the biography of Charles VI's revered father and the allegorical authority of the sibylline Justice and the Virgin Mary. According to the logic of the text, Isabel earns her residency in the city by serving Justice through good governance and conduct, but it is Mary to whom all residents owe their allegiance. By including Blanche of Castile, mother of France's patron saint Louis, in the heavenly city, Christine reinforces an analogy between Mary, the Queen of Heaven, and Isabel as intercessionary mother of the French people; an analogy only incipient here, but which emerges fully in the *Epistre à la reine*.

While Christine might not have known of Charles's present relapse when she wrote the *Epistre à la reine*, she knew that the king's mental state was unreliable and that his illness rendered him prone to conspiracy theories and belief in sorcery and, in turn, vulnerable to the agenda of anyone capable of manipulating his weaknesses. Surely, with friends such as Guillaume de Tignonville, the current Provost of Paris, Christine must also have been aware that Isabel had proven herself a capable politician.

The scope of Isabel's potential authority was unparalleled among other queens of the high Middle Ages. Whereas European queens of the eleventh and twelfth centuries had tended to rule with their husbands as co-sovereigns, other queens of the fourteenth century served as ceremonial props whose real power rested not in law-making but in pillow-talk.²⁵ In contrast to her contemporaries, Isabel's authority was institutionalized by royal ordinance and (in practice) unaffected by France's tradition of Salic Law.²⁶ In 1392 Charles VI suffered the onset of what is now believed to have been paranoid schizophrenia. The following year he ordained that, in the event of his death or confinement, the tutelage, guardianship, and government of the royal children should be granted to Isabel and the dukes of Berry, Burgundy (John the Fearless), Bavaria (Isabel's brother, Louis), and Bourbon.²⁷

In July 1402, Charles both increased and confirmed the power already bestowed upon the queen. In addition to her responsibility for the royal children, Isabel was given explicit authority to act in the king's name during his confinements. However, because her husband's mental instability made him susceptible to suggestions of conspiracy, Isabel's authority was periodically redefined, and in April 1403, the king stated that all court decisions in his absence must be obtained by a majority vote of a new Regency Council. However, Isabel was its leader, and the new ordinance does not necessarily imply that the king distrusted his wife. Rather, it appears that by 1403 the *ad hoc* government established in 1393 was viewed to be a potential liability as Charles showed no signs of permanent recovery and his absences from state were lengthier. With the king confined to his quarters for months at a time, Isabel was faced with the responsibility of maintaining public confidence in the stability of the kingdom.

For Charles, persistent ducal rivalries left the queen as the only person he trusted to protect the interests of the immediate royal family and to serve as an effective intermediary between the quarrelling dukes. Indeed, the queen's early interventions into the dukes' affairs reveal that she possessed an aptitude for politics and was well-suited for the highly unorthodox role she was to play in French history.²⁸ Before the unexpected emergence of Jehanne d'Arc in 1429, Isabel was the most visible of a small handful of women who utilized their positions to influence, either directly or indirectly, the government of Paris.²⁹

L'Epistre à la reine: A Call to Duty in the Name of Compassion

Such was Isabel's position when Christine addressed her in 1405, pleading for the queen to intervene between the dukes of Burgundy and Orléans. The political crisis was precipitated when Charles, on one of his occasional appearances at court that summer — during most of which he was unwell — summoned the dukes to a council.³⁰ Burgundy received his summons in Douai on July 26 and planned to enter Paris on August 19 with 2,700 men-at-arms. Unsure of Burgundy's intentions, Orléans and Isabel agreed to remove the royal children, including the dauphin, Louis of Guyenne. On August 17, they left Paris under the pretence of a hunt, but made for Melun, sending word for the dauphin and her other children to be brought to them as quietly and quickly as possible. However, Burgundy intercepted the dauphin's party, intimidated the escorts with a show of arms, and took the children back to Paris.

Although Burgundy made a theatrical show of asking the dauphin if he would like to travel to Paris to visit his father, the child's consent merely whitewashed an unlawful

seizure: the dauphin was legally under the guardianship of Isabel, and only a direct order from Charles could have superseded her wishes. Orléans interpreted the seizure of the dauphin as the start of a coup. Burgundy began an elaborate campaign to justify his actions. He surrendered the dauphin on August 19 to the guardianship of the duke of Berry (who was declared the Captain of Paris two days later) and declared that he had been acting in good faith for the king having learned that the royal children had been suspiciously taken from Paris without the knowledge of Charles or the royal princes of blood.³¹ In letters of September 8, Burgundy accused Orléans of conspiring to annul the marriages of his daughter Marguerite to the dauphin and of his son Philip to the princess Michelle. He declared that he had taken action in order to prevent the alleged annulments as he knew that they would be against the king's express desire.³²

During September Burgundy and Orléans engaged in a campaign of mutual slander and defied prohibitions against gathering forces. The duke of Berry consolidated troops in Paris to protect the royal family and requested that Isabel return there, presumably both for her safety and (since Charles had yet to recover from his relapse) as a show of the royal family's solidarity and political strength, but despite going personally to Melun he was unable to persuade her.³³ She remained outside Paris, demanding that the royal children be returned to her.

On October 5, 1405, Christine de Pizan wrote to Isabel pleading for her intervention in the ducal standoff.³⁴ Christine had begun her own career as advisor to the rulers of France five years previously via the invented figure of Othéa, goddess of Prudence. As a goddess who speaks with the sibylline spirit of prophecy, Othéa instructs her pupil Hector in virtuous conduct and good governance. The hundredth and final fable

presented for his edification in *Epistre Othéa* tells how the Cumaean Sibyl converted Caesar Augustus to Christianity with a revelation of the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ. The parallels between the *Epistre Othéa*'s inner fiction and outer function have often been noticed. As Sandra Hindman sums up, "By alluding to the teaching of wisdom, an activity shared by Christine, Othéa, and the sibyl, the chapter may even intentionally merge the roles of all three women. As the sibyl addresses the emperor, Othéa addresses Hector, and Christine addresses the present rulers of France."³⁵ Thus, the Sibyl assumes a complex role from the very outset of Christine's program of advice for rulers, and is inextricably bound up with the position of the author herself.

The Cumaean Sibyl's advice to Caesar, that a good ruler will listen to good advice even if it comes from a woman, underpins Christine's efforts to carve out a space for herself in the male arena of political advice. Unlike Christine, the most prominent political thinkers of her time frequently had direct access to the monarch and the princes of blood through their vocations, whether as royal secretaries and advisors or as representatives of the Church. Men could also promote their ideas from the pulpit: as Eric Hicks notes, "a sermon is heard by many, a book is read by few."³⁶ Thus what separates Christine from her male counterparts is not necessarily her views but the immediacy of their impact, the forums in which she could express them, and the size of her potential audience. It was this hurdle that she sought to overcome at crucial junctures for France by addressing the queen or the duke of Berry directly.

Kate Langdon Forhan has closely examined Christine's work in the context of the widespread use of the medieval Mirror or *speculum*, the genre in which attempts to induce just rule had become enshrined.³⁷ The founding condition of the Mirror was the

paradox that while the law, as a reflection of divinely ordained justice, applied as much to the king as it did to his subjects, the king could not be coerced to obey it because he was the holder of divinely ordained earthly supremacy. Efforts to keep kings within the law therefore focused not on punishing them or altering the terms of their office, which was considered sacrosanct and inviolable, but on teaching them virtue as individuals so that they would exercise their powers justly.³⁸ The Mirror drew its titular metaphor from the concept of self-examination or self-reflection, combined with the idea that the student would learn to mirror the exemplars presented in the work.³⁹ Among the prescribed exemplary characteristics were the cardinal virtues temperance, fortitude, prudence or practical wisdom, and justice. The ideal prince was described as a lover of wisdom (*sapientia*), because such love reflects a commitment and respect for virtue.⁴⁰ By Christine's day, medieval thinking had provided the Mirror with a further series of regular characteristics, including the convention that the author express his humility in proffering the wisdom of the ancients to his social superiors.⁴¹ Crucially, John of Salisbury's Mirror, *Policraticus* (1159), had reoriented the concept of the ruler as the "head" of the body politic, the hierarchical social structure whose every part served the needs of the whole as a living organism; in this view, cooperation brought essential mutual benefits.⁴² In the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion*, as will be seen, Christine modified this image for her own purposes, and in part to reflect her own distinctively female vision.

In the first letter that Christine had written to the queen, the dedication accompanying the *Epistres du debat sus le Rommant de la Rose* (February 1, 1402), she had not sought to guide Isabel but to gain royal approval for her own social politics,

namely her defense of women and condemnation of literature devaluing the female sex. The dedicatory letter was more than a frontispiece to the documents on the Debate of the *Rose*. By deferring to the queen as head and guardian of the female sex, Christine had attempted to trump the men ranged against her in the Debate — provost of Lille Jean de Montreuil and royal secretaries Gontier and Pierre Col — with the royal seal of approval implied in Isabel's acceptance of the dossier. However, although she had ceremoniously deferred to the queen's "saige et benigne correction" ["wise and benign correction"] to be her guide as she continued to champion their sex, Christine had not sought at that point to press Isabel into action.⁴³

In the *Epistre à la reine*, by contrast, Christine is actually asking Isabel to act, and her letter is an official complaint, even if it shows great caution and works largely through implication. Thus, she adopts the role of moral, political, and spiritual advisor to the queen, partly deriving the authority to do so from the precedent of the tradition of medieval Mirrors. She may additionally validate her position by presenting an image of the queen as her most brilliant and agreeable pupil, anticipating a royal seal of approval for her own role as tutor. Furthermore, Christine may authorize herself on the basis of common ground between herself and the queen, asserting that as women the two share political objectives. Certainly, Christine relies on Isabel's powers as queen to authorize her own unusual and precarious position as a woman writer attempting to influence both social behavior and politics.

Christine's Sibylline Plea to Isabel

In her adoption of sibylline authority, however, Christine breaks with this convention, responding to the greater urgency of the current national crisis by handing down advice to the queen as if from a superior position. Thus she is able to warn the queen to set aside immediate political needs and personal urges and view the current crisis in the context of higher and longer-term considerations of her sacred royal duty and France's divine imperial expectations. Blunt insubordination would undoubtedly backfire, but the *Epistre à la reine* constructs a sibylline authority by cautious implication. As will be seen, five years later in the *Lamentacion* Christine assumes the role with greater confidence, but she could not have done so without having taken the first tentative steps in that direction in the 1405 letter. Thanks to the enduring reputation of the Sibyls in the fifteenth century, Christine has no need to name herself a Sibyl. Her claims to foresight and insight regarding national destiny and salvation already locate her squarely in the primary traditions of sibylline wisdom.

The sibylline context extends to Christine's own work, not only the *Epistre Othéa* but also the *Cité des dames* and, most strikingly, the book she is thought to have begun immediately afterwards, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, also produced in 1405. Here, in a medieval Mirror, or as Susan Dudash calls it "a guidebook of prescriptive action," Christine offered advice to women of all ranks beginning with "roynes, princepses et haultes dames" ["the queens, princesses, and great ladies"].⁴⁴ The queen assuredly knew of the book, which had been presented to Marguerite of Nevers, daughter of the duke of Burgundy and child bride of the dauphin.⁴⁵ Reason, Droiture, and Justice reappear from the *Cité des dames*, where it had been established that their knowledge comes from God

and that they have sibylline foresight. These three “revered mentors” address Christine as their “studious daughter,” commanding her to take up her pen and write once more. Crucially, as will become apparent, the advice she issues on their sibylline instruction matches that contained in the *Epistre à la reine* with remarkable fidelity; the letter might be regarded as an epistolary epitome of the book.

But in the *Epistre à la reine*, as in the later *Lamentacion*, Christine adds an important additional marker to identify her voice specifically as that of the tormented Sibyl: her tearful register. The vocal note is far from alien to the central stock of sibylline traditions, where it is suggested on the one hand by the Sibyl’s reluctance to become the vehicle of divine knowledge and her frenzy at the moment of prophecy, and on the other hand by the catastrophic tenor of many of her predictions. Additionally, the tearful register invokes a range of reluctant prophets, from Old Testament figures such as Jeremiah and Jonah to classical seers such as Cassandra, whose example lends force to Christine’s warnings.

The image of reluctance is a recurrent feature in prophecy that helps lay to rest any impression that the prophet is speaking from a desire for self-aggrandizement. As Joël Blanchard observes, “The poet’s speech is the refusal of any attempt to flatter.”⁴⁶ On the contrary, the reluctant prophet projects an image of painful submission to an overriding duty to the truth and to the interests of the audience or the nation. In the *Epistre à la reine*, Christine maintains a formal tone of supplication, referring to Isabel as “vous” and frequently referencing her own inferiority, in keeping with the conventions of advice to medieval rulers. But while upholding the established order in this manner, she simultaneously identifies the same hierarchy as the very reason why she feels forced to

breach protocol with such an urgent appeal for action. Not daring to imply that Isabel has consciously chosen to turn a blind eye to her people, Christine indicates only that the queen has been left dangerously uninformed regarding the griefs befalling the populace. She does not attempt to supplant the proper role of the queen's official advisors, but makes clear that she aims only to supplement their advice by establishing herself as a witness and spokeswoman for the masses. Therefore, Christine offers, the queen's elevated position creates a need for someone to act as witness to their misery:

Tres haute dame et ma tres redoubtéé, non obstant que vostre sens soit tout adverti et advisié de ce qu'il appartient, toutesfoiz est-il vray que vous, seant envostre trosne royal avironné de honneurs, ne povez savoir fors par autrui rappors les communes besoignes tant en parolles comme en faiz, qui queurent entre les subgiez.⁴⁷

[Most worthy and revered lady, even though your sound judgment may be aware and well advised of what the proper action is, it is nonetheless true that you, seated in royal majesty and surrounded by honors, can only know by the report of others, either in word or in deed, the common needs of your subjects.]⁴⁸

The implication is that it is the shared duty of the wise subject and the righteous sovereign to overcome this hierarchical barrier — as well as any personal reluctance — in order to ensure the complaints of the people are heeded.

Thus Christine's tearful frenzy here and in the *Lamentacion* is more than simply an apt emotional accompaniment to the painful knowledge she must impart. Despite the doubts underpinning Margolis's view of these epistles, it is emphatically not irrational. Anger over the incipient French disaster has led to sorrow but not despair, and nowhere in the *Epistre à la reine* or the *Lamentacion* does Christine indicate that sorrow has led her astray from reason. Her tears also work as an emphatic device to startle the reader and to urge acceptance of her message. Furthermore, they imply an empathic identification

with the people of France, who weep amid the crippling consequences of war, so that even though the *Epistre à la reine* is not technically a *complainte* (because it does not proceed by listing grievances), it nevertheless constitutes a lament on behalf of the ordinary masses:

[. . .] haulte dame, ne vous soit grief oïr les ramentevances en piteux regrais des adoulez supplians françoys, à present reampliz d'affliccion et tristesse, qui à humble voix plaine de plours crient à vous leur souveraine et redoubtée dame, prians pour Dieu mercy que humble pitié vueille monstrar à vostre begnin cuer leur desolacion et misere [. . .].⁴⁹

[. . .] worthy lady, let it not displease you to hear recalled the piteous complaints of your grieving French supplicants, at present oppressed by affliction and sorrow, who with humble voice drenched in tears cry out to you, their sovereign and esteemed lady, begging mercy for the love of God that humble pity reveal to the kindness of your heart what desolation and misery is theirs [. . .].⁵⁰

Not only bearing witness to suffering but also delivering, as it were, the cries and tears of her lamenting people to the queen for her consideration, the *Epistre à la reine* demonstrates Christine's determination to harness her tears in the service of her attempts at admonitory counsel.

Specifically, it is with the widowed mothers of France that Christine identifies, with whom she weeps, and for whom she speaks as "seulette a part." As Bernard Ribémont has noted, mothers occupy the symbolic heart of the *Epistre à la reine*.⁵¹ It is with them that she joins her voice to decry the state into which they and their children will fall. For these innocents the writing is on the wall, in modern English parlance, or as Christine tells Isabel: "Et certes, noble dame, nous veons à present les apprestes de ces mortelz inconveniens qui ja sont si avanciez que tres maintenant en y a de destruis et desers de leurs biens, et destruit-on touz les jours de piz en piz, tant que qui est crestien

en doit avoir pitié” [“Surely, most noble lady, we already see the effect of these mortal judgments, which are already sufficiently present that right now there are those who are ruined and deprived of their property, and more and more are ruined all the time so that any Christian ought to take pity on them”].⁵²

At the prospect of the ultimate catastrophe, the English invasion that will breach not only France’s borders but also the very sanctity of her nationhood, the *Epistre à la reine* depicts Christine’s fellow mothers and their children in a prophetically charged tableau of horror and sorrow:⁵³

Helas, et qu’il convenist que le pouvre pueple comparast le pechié dont il est innocent! Et que les povres petiz alaittans et enfans criassent apres leurs lasses de meres vesves et adoloues, mourans de faim et elles, desnüées de leurs biens, n’eussent de quoy les appaisier, lesquelles voix, comme racontent en plusieurs lieux les Escriptures, percent les cieulx par pitié devant Dieu juste, et attrayent vengeance sur ceulz qui en sont cause!]⁵⁴

[Alas, it would become necessary for the poor people to pay heavily for a sin of which they were innocent and for poor little nurslings and other small children to cry after their weary mothers, widowed and grief-stricken, dying of hunger, who, deprived of their possessions, would have nothing with which to comfort them so that their voice crying out to God, as the Scriptures tells us in several places, would pierce the Heavens piteously before a just God to draw justice on the heads of those who were the cause of it all.]⁵⁵

The joint utterance of the innocents of France constitutes a lament that will reach the ears of God himself, and Christine predicts that those responsible (mentioning no names) will be called to account.

In effect, through her depiction of women weeping in the face of coming catastrophe, and additionally through her sibylline identification with their plight, Christine implies that mothers’ wisdom includes a form of foresight, activated by

compassion for their children. In keeping with the author's pervasive application of sibylline themes and functions, all wise mothers who look to the future of their offspring are inheritors of the wisdom of the Sibyls of the past. Subtle traces of the association with motherhood may be discerned in sibylline tradition, despite the repeated assertions of the Sibyl's virginity. Her foresighted frenzy comes when she is filled with divine breath, or (in the words of Leo Spitzer) it is "the result of a compromise with the god: the prophetess denies him her body, but must yield to the invasion of her mind by the god."⁵⁶ Whether by analogy or by substitution, the idea of fecundation is evoked in both cases. But even setting aside the sexual implications of these traditions, the notion of a maternal sibylline wisdom accords with Christine's more overtly sibylline works from *Le Livre du chemin de lonc estude* onwards, where sibylline figures refer to her as daughter as they share their secret wisdom with her. It lies behind the comment by Dame Couronnée in the *Avision-Christine* that despite the fear that her sibylline advice will not be believed, "abondance de volente le me fait dire / comme tendre mere a ses enfans" ["My great longing forces me to speak them, however, like a tender mother to her children"].⁵⁷ Maureen Quilligan discerns the same idea as a constant in the *Cité des dames*: "Prophecy and motherhood, the internal 'complex ties' of relation between mother and daughter, are connected to a different, experientially based, secret female authority [. . .]."⁵⁸ In the *Epistre à la reine* Christine may be seen promoting the same ties in her intense empathy with the mothers of France, and furthermore in her attempt to forge an empathic connection with Isabel.

Isabel as Mother to France

Thus it is on the grounds of motherhood that Christine appeals to the queen in 1405, reconfiguring Isabel as mother not only to the royal children, but to France as a whole. The immediate contingency for doing so was perhaps Christine's recognition that the queen must make what she perceived as a significant concession in order to enter Paris and intervene between the factions of Burgundy and Orléans.⁵⁹

Et ma redoubtée dame, à regarder aux raisons de vostre droit, posons qu'il soit ou feust ainsi que la dignité de vostre haultesse se tenist de l'une des parties avoir [esté] aucunement blecée, par quoy vostre hault cuer feust mains enclin que par [vous] ceste paix feust traictiée. O tres noble dame, quel grant scens c'est aucunefoiz, mesmes entre les plus grans, laisser aler partie de son droit pour eschiver plus grant inconvenient our attaindre à tres grant bien et utilité.⁶⁰

[And, noble lady, considering the question of your rights, let us suppose that the dignity of your position may be considered to have been injured by one of the contenders, whereby your noble heart might be less inclined to work for this peace. O most noble lady, what great good sense it is occasionally, even among the very great, to sacrifice a part of one's rights to avoid a greater misfortune or to gain a superior advantage!]⁶¹

Christine cautiously couches this specific advice in implication rather than assertion.

However, it seems most likely that the sacrifice of rights referred to was an acceptance of the seizure of the royal children and the duke of Berry's refusal to return them to her governance outside of Paris.⁶² Even if Isabel feared that conceding to the dukes' demands would compromise her legal authority over the royal children, her authority as the king's stand-in was virtually ineffective if she was not in a position to oversee the actions of the government.⁶³ Christine indicates sympathy with Isabel's inclinations — to hold her position lest her authority be undermined in the eyes of the public and the court councillors, and to ensure the safety of her children by removing them from the control of

the dukes. However, she cautions Isabel that it is dangerous and irresponsible to let her actions as queen be governed by personal feelings, whether about herself or about her children.

This constitutes an audacious piece of advice to give to a queen, but Christine carries it off with aplomb by subordinating the trope of the body politic, common in the Mirror tradition, in favor of another medieval metaphor for society, the family, and by placing Isabel at its head. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski has noted that in Dame Couronnée of the *Avision-Christine* (1405) Christine pioneers the popular depiction of France as a mother figure, but it is important to distinguish her method in the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion*, where the mother figure, Isabel, is functionally differentiated from the metaphorical family, her nation.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, in *Le Livre du corps de policie* (also 1405), Christine thoroughly explored the motif of the body politic.⁶⁵ In her assessment, class distinctions serve to control the body politic as they assure that each member of society contributes specialized skills and knowledge to the performance of the whole. Her view of social hierarchy, as Forhan emphasizes, is “functional” and “does not constitute a belief that class or rank determines the value of a person.”⁶⁶ She advocates a system where social status defines duty, and where duty both defines and limits power; her central message for government is that it should function for the common good. Christine implores all those in power to exercise their duties of rank by demonstrating an ability and willingness to listen both to the counsel of learned advisors and to the complaints of the people. However, she feared the consequences of a government fragmented among political institutions and competing regional rulers more than she feared a strong monarchy’s potential for despotism: if the people and the aristocracy were

to lose faith in the inherent power of the king, anarchy would ensue. Christine deploys the imagery of the body politic at the outset in the *Epistre à la reine*, where she describes the queen as as “la medecine et souverain remede de la garison de ce royaume à present playé et navré piteusement et en peril de piz” [“the medicine and sovereign remedy to cure this realm, at present sorely and piteously wounded and in peril of worse”], but she quickly shifts her focus to the alternative social metaphor of the family.⁶⁷

In depicting France as the queen’s family, Christine was astutely creating a metaphorical extension of her real grounds for power: a queen’s informal access to the king, his counsellors, and the royal heir was dependent on her roles as wife and mother. The familial metaphor retains the sense of hierarchy and reciprocal duties inherent in the philosophy of the body politic. However, as Linda Leppig has noted with reference to the *Lamentacion*, it also establishes a means of “evoking a paternalistic government and appealing to the more immediate human emotion of love for one’s kin, which renders the princes’ behavior even more reprehensible, since they are destroying their own ‘children.’”⁶⁸ Additional advantages accruing from the metaphor of nation as family may be observed: it allows Christine to construct the idea of maternal foresight as part of the very basis of society; it permits her to claim a bond of symbolic, gendered kinship between Isabel, herself, and all other French mothers; it provides the key to writing the Bavarian-born Isabel into French history; and it enables Christine to re-emphasize the need for sons to learn wisdom from their mothers. Additionally, unlike the body politic image, the family metaphor has the scope to indicate Isabel’s peculiar position — as queen to a king who was often mentally incompetent to perform as head of state — which required her not only to be mother to the nation but to act as its father.

Christine appeals to the queen's maternal self-image in an attempt to close a significant divide between Isabel and her subjects: her foreign origins. The *Epistre à la reine* inscribes Isabel into a national history by effectively reminding her that, even though she is German-born, as mother of the dauphin she is French by blood. Therefore Christine is not pleading with her "pour terre estrange, mais pour vostre propre lieu et naturel heritaige à voz tres nobles enfans" ["on behalf of a foreign land but for your own place and the natural inheritance of your most noble children"].⁶⁹ The love that naturally exists between a mother and her son may thus be projected onto the imagined relationship between Isabel and France.

An idealized version of the mother-son bond locates Isabel's office as queen in terms of imperial and sacred destiny, the conceptual and prophetic territory of the Sibyl. Holding Queen Blanche up as the archetypal French queen, Christine invites Isabel to view her own choices in the same terms. The comparison between the two women evidences Christine's understanding of Isabel's institutionalized powers. Until the early eighteenth century, when the institutional power of European queens began to regain substance, Isabel of Bavaria was one of only five French queens to play an official role in government; Blanche of Castille was another. In the *Cité des dames* Christine describes Blanche as a queen who "tant noblement et prudemment gouverna le royaume de France tant que son filz fu mendre d'aage que oncques mieulx par homme ne fu gouverné" ["governed the kingdom of France while her son was a minor so nobly and so prudently that it was never better ruled by any man"].⁷⁰ Displaying the most admirable qualities — "tres grant savoir, prudence, vertus et bonté" ["great learning, prudence, virtue, and

goodness”] — Blanche “maintint sa terre et gouverna par grant ordre de droit et de justice” [“ruled and governed her land with great order of law and justice”].⁷¹

Christine has no need to underline the parallels between Isabel and Blanche, who only became French by marriage and by bearing the royal scion yet was eventually *de facto* ruler of France.⁷² What better model for the guardian of the modern-day dauphin, Louis of Guyenne, than the mother of France’s own Saint Louis? Christine recalls how Blanche defended her right to serve as Louis’s regent by shaming France’s dissenting barons with a demonstration of the dauphin’s vulnerability, and how she implicitly warned them of her power to persuade him against them as he came of age. As Blanche once took the infant Louis into her arms, declaring, “Ne voyez-vous vostre roy? Ne faitez chose dont quant Dieu l’ara conduit en aage de discrecion il se doye d’aucun de vous tenir pour mal content” [“Don’t you see here your king? Do not do anything to make him displeased with you when he has reached the age of discretion”], so Isabel must exercise her ordained power to look after her son’s interest in the name of France and the king.⁷³ The exemplar of Blanche unites France’s past with its present and future: Isabel is not simply asked to recognize herself as a parallel to the ideal queen; the aim is to persuade her to bring the same sanctity and wisdom to bear on the current crisis. If Isabel is to fulfill her potential within French history, Christine implies, she must equal Blanche’s sanctified actions by defusing the ducal contentions.⁷⁴

Thus, in her bid to avert the political and humanitarian calamity she foresees, Christine presents an alternative sibylline vision in which France’s future is emblazoned with the glorious and sacred iconography of the legendary past. She draws the queen’s attention to the “laurels” that could be accorded to her by God, country, and history,

emphasizing that the “perpetuelle memoire de vous ramenteue, recommandée et louée es croniques et nobles gestes de France doublement couronnée de honneur seriez avec l’amour, graces, presens et humbles grans merciz de voz loyaulz subgiez” [Isabel will be “perpetually remembered and praised in the chronicles and records of the noble deeds of France, doubly crowned with the love, gratitude, and humble thanks of your loyal subjects”].⁷⁵ Inscribed into the chronicles by which France defines and validates itself, Isabel will be immortally linked with a grateful nation.

This emphasis on reputation and legacy reflects an awareness that the queen’s personal and political isolation was compounded by the suspicion in which her people held her.⁷⁶ The *Epistre à la reine* implicitly acknowledges public concern that Isabel was uninterested in the well-being of the common people, that she may have been guilty of financial impropriety, that she might fail in her duties as queen regent, and in particular that her true allegiance perhaps lay with Bavaria. Ostensibly, Christine’s aim here is to bolster the efficacy of one of the tools of medieval power she had identified in the *Trois vertus*: the ruler’s good reputation among the lower orders of society, which may be employed as “escu et deffense contre les murmures et rapors de ses envieux mesdisans” [“shield and defense against the rumors and reports of her slanderous enemies, and can negate them”].⁷⁷ However, in effect she also exploits the queen’s anxiety over these public image problems as leverage in her appeal for emergency action.

Christine’s portrayal of Isabel as mother of France, and of wisdom and pity as the very essence of motherhood, heaps up the dishonor that the queen stands to reap if she presides over the predicted “honteuse effusion de sang” [“shameful effusion of blood”].⁷⁸ Nothing less than the fate of France is at stake as the tormented, sibylline Christine makes

her “plourable requeste” for the queen to display her own maternal compassion. She writes: “qui seroit si dure mere qui peust souffrir, se elle n’avoit le cuer de pierre, veoir ses enfans entre-occire et espendre le sang l’un à l’autre [. . .]?” [“where is the mother so hardhearted, if she didn’t have a veritable heart of stone, who could bear to see her children kill each other, spilling each other’s blood [. . .]?”]. Against the exemplary Blanche, Christine ranges counter-examples (none of them French) whose shortcomings as queens and dereliction of duty have left them branded by history as “diffamées, maudites et dampnées” [“blamed, cursed, and damned”]. The mere exercise of supreme power can be self-defeating, as Christine illustrates with the example of Alexander the Great’s mother, Olympias, whose resentful subjects ultimately turned on her. The mother of the nation needs the people’s love and trust to ensure peace, justice, and the status quo which upholds her own position. Jezebel is “faulse”; and all queens who have failed in their duties are “perverses, crueuses et ennemis de nature humaine” [“perverse, cruel, and enemies of human nature”].⁷⁹ In the *Cité des dames*, Jezebel is a perversion of feminine nature, a rare example of the falseness and changeability of women. With Brunhilde and Athalis, she takes her place in history alongside Judas Iscariot. The classification of such women as “unnatural” in the *Cité des dames* and the *Epistre à la reine* arises from the fact that they have abrogated their marital or familial feminine duties.⁸⁰ By implication, Isabel must avoid any similar breach of duty in relation to the French people if she is to guard her reputation.

Intercession

Instead, Christine defines the role that Isabel must fill as a version of motherhood sanctified not only by Blanche but by the Virgin Mary: “moyennerresse” or feminine intercessor. This is the role in which a medieval queen could use her privileged access to mollify the king or bring about peaceful solutions to discord. The point is driven home with a barrage of complimentary titles such as “pourchacerresse de paix et cause de la restitution du bien de vostre noble porteur et de leurs loyaux subgez” [“the instigator of peace and the restorer of the welfare of your noble offspring and of their loyal subjects”].⁸¹ Christine invokes the example of Esther to demonstrate how God has elected to save his chosen people through the actions of a woman; the “Esther Topos” was the prime scriptural model of queenly intercession.⁸² Locating the French people as God’s elect in parallel to the biblical Hebrews, the analogy urges Isabel to recognize that her queenship, like Esther’s, is confirmed by God and comes with divinely ordained responsibilities.

It is noteworthy that the honors Christine predicts for Isabel are masculine ones. Christine was clearly aware that the straightforward feminine ideal of intercessor did not match Isabel’s circumstances: she could not intercede with a husband crippled by psychotic episodes. John Carmi Parsons writes that in the iconography of medieval queenship,

The queen’s idealization as a virtuous maternal figure complementing the king as ruler and lawgiver reflects the prevalence in medieval male writings of constructs that identify the male with culture and the female with nature—that patriarchal equation among whose oldest daughters is the cliché that “if the king is law, the queen is mercy.”⁸³

Isabel, however, had been given constitutional powers to compensate for Charles's absence, and thus had to play a double role, as both "law" and "mercy"; she must also possess strength and reason. Accordingly, the uniquely feminized noun *moyennerresse* is underscored with virtues often either traditionally masculine or feminine. Christine expects Isabel to demonstrate not only the Christian Virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the Cardinal Virtues of justice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence, but also the classical Princely Virtues of clemency, magnanimity, glory, and fame that medieval Mirrors usually reserve for men.⁸⁴ In a moment reminiscent of her description of her own transformation into a man in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, Christine implies that Fortune has forced Isabel to become both man and woman, king and queen. She is prepared not only to recognize the queen's partial symbolic regendering, but also to validate it as praiseworthy.

Yet apart from this unorthodox gesture towards down-to-earth realities, Christine's overall thrust is to steer the queen towards the ideal maternal virtues of *moyennerresse*. The metaphorical relationship between a queen and her people is most definitively sealed in the dimension of the sacred by the invocation of the prime intercessor, Mary, as Christine writes: "Tres haute dame, mais que mon langaige ne vous tourne à ennuy, encores vous dis-je que, tout ainsi comme la royne du ciel, mere de Dieu, est appelée toute saige et bonne royne mere et conffortarresse et advocate de ses subjez et de son pueple" ["Very good lady, may my words not displease you if I say further that just as the Queen of Heaven is called Mother of God by all Christendom, any good and wise queen should be called mother and comforter and advocate of her subjects and her people"].⁸⁵

In a defining passage on the sanctity of motherhood, Christine charts the relationship between God and the maternal virtues in a fashion that closely evokes the idea that the sibylline qualities are divinely bestowed gifts. For women in general and for noblewomen especially, motherly wisdom and compassion are derived directly from God. In Christine's hierarchical social view — matched metaphorically by the image of the family under the moral guidance of the mother — the qualities are innate in women but more abundant in a noble lady:

Helas, honnourée dame, doncques quant il avendra que pitié, charité, clemence et benignité ne sera trouvée en haute princesse, ou sera-elle doncques quise? Car, comme naturellement en femenines condicions soient les dictes vertus, plus par rayson doivent habonder et estre en noble dame, de tant comme elle reçoit plus de dons [de] Dieu. Et encores à ce propos qu'il appartient à haute princesse et dame estre moyennerresse de traictié de paix [. . .].⁸⁶

[Alas, great lady, if pity, charity, clemency, and benignity are not to be found in a great princess, where then can they be expected? As these virtues are a natural part of the feminine condition they should rightfully abound in a noble lady, inasmuch as she receives a greater gift from God, so it is to be expected that a noble princess or lady should be the means of bringing about a treaty of peace [. . .].]⁸⁷

In the question “ou sera-elle doncques quise?” [“where else can they be expected”], Christine indicates that in her view the social hierarchy must involve education of the lower orders by example. The very same advice is dispensed by the sibylline figures in the *Trois vertus*, where they advise noblewomen that “il n'est riens que les subgiéz et le peuple tire tant en exemple comme ce que faire voit a son seigneur ou a sa dame” [“nothing influences the common people so much as what they see their lord and lady do”].⁸⁸ Christine implies that France's welfare depends on Isabel showing precisely these divinely bestowed gifts of pity, clemency, charity, and benignity. Furthermore, she

suggests, according to the divinely appointed order of things it would be against nature for the queen not to exemplify them.

However, the *Epistre à la reine* also offers reassurance that Isabel would not fail. As Christine indicates: “Tres excellante et ma tres redoubtée dame, infinies raisons vous pourroient estre reccordées des causes qui vous doivent mouvoir à pitié et à traictié de paix, lesquelles vostre bon scens ignore mie” [“Most excellent and mighty lady, endless reasons could be stated that should move you to pity and to sue for peace, of which your good judgment makes you well aware”].⁸⁹ In the context of the underlying notion that mothers’ wisdom includes a form of foresight activated by maternal compassion, it follows that Isabel herself already possesses the qualities she needs to aid her subjects.

The corollary to this equation of motherhood with foresighted wisdom and compassion is that men inherently lack those same qualities. According to the underpinning rationale of the *Epistre à la reine*, this explains why France now finds itself at the very brink of disaster: the nation has been pushed there by men, whose inability to anticipate the consequences of their rivalries is compounded by a pitilessness towards those who suffer as a result. Christine categorizes this tendency as natural in origin but damnable if pursued, noting of the ducal quarrel, “chose est assez humaine et commune mesmement souventefoiz vient entre pere et filz aucun descort, mais dyabolique est et seroit la perseverance en laquelle [. . .]” [“it is a human and common enough thing, for discord often arises between father and son, yet it were the devil’s work to persevere therein”].⁹⁰ Since it is the sons who take control of the family, who pass on the inheritance, the difficulty for family and nation is plain.

Emphasizing women's capacity as intercessors to counteract disruptive and violent masculine disagreements, Christine presents the further exemplars of Bathsheba, who soothed the angry David, and of the Roman matron Veturia, who interceded with her exiled and vengeful son Coriolanus to dissuade him from leading a military assault on Rome. Christine suggests that the queen may adopt a similar posture to confront the dukes: she must display her tears to her "sons" in order to quell their dissensions. In her praise for the moderating role of women in the *Epistre à la reine*, Christine repeats specifically for Isabel the advice that she has issued to noblewomen in general in the *Trois vertus*.⁹¹ The image she constructs of the idealized Isabel matches the one she defines in the *Trois vertus*, an embodiment of divine feminine virtues that counters the damnable bellicosity of men: "Et qu'avient il de tel princepce? Il avient que tous les subgiéz, qui la sentent de tel savoir et bonté, affuient a elle a reffuge, non mie seulement comme a leur maistresse, mais ce semble a leur deesse en terre, en qui ilz ont souveraine esperance et fiance; et elle est cause de maintenir la contree en paix" ["And what happens to such princesses? All the subjects feel her to be of such knowledge and goodness that they pledge themselves to her, not only because she is their mistress, but because she seems to them a goddess on earth in whom they have the highest hope and faith, and she is the cause of the country remaining at peace"].⁹²

In the long term, she intimates, it is incumbent upon Blanche, Isabel, and all mothers not merely to share their gendered wisdom with their daughters, but to strive also to impart to their sons a sense of justice. As Bernard Ribémont has noted, "Elle doit, par ses qualités maternelles de douceur 'naturelle,' convaincre ses enfants que la discorde ne peut durablement régner au sein du groupe issu du même sang" ["She must, by her

maternal qualities of ‘natural’ gentleness, convince her children that discord cannot reign permanently within a group of one blood”].⁹³ What Ribémont fails to observe is the larger sibylline theme interwoven with the idea of women’s wisdom in Christine’s works. Feminine virtue, it may be seen, is relatively ineffectual in a world where men determine the affairs of many. In order to effect widespread change for the better, some part of that wisdom must be instilled in men. Broadly speaking, the process has its epitome in the Cumaean Sibyl’s act of guiding Aeneas. Elsewhere, in the *Cité des dames*, Christine enshrined the idea of women as civilizers of an otherwise barbaric world in the quasi-sibylline Carmentis, who gave the forebears of the Romans their alphabet and first statutes, prompted by the realization that without these they would be little better than beasts: “Et comme elle eust trouvez les hommes du pays comme tous bestiaux, escript certaines lois es quelles elle leur enjoignoit a vivre par ordre de droit et de raison selon justice” [“After discovering that the men of that country were all savages, she wrote certain laws, enjoining them to live in accord with right and reason, following justice”].⁹⁴

La Lamentacion: The Sibyl’s Frenzy in the Service of Reason

In the *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France*, an open letter dated August 23, 1410, Christine put into action the view expressed in the *Epistre à la reine* that women must use their foresight and compassion to teach men the ways of peace. Now the duke of Berry takes the place of the queen as the target for Christine’s most stringent sibylline advice. The horrors witnessed in 1405 had returned to torment France’s poor. Indeed, to judge by Christine’s heightened tone of grief and anger, their severity now matched some of her worst predictions (though the full-scale English invasion she feared was still five

years away). As she repeats even more forcefully her warning that the actions and inactions of those in power will determine the fate of France, the strains of prophetic frenzy are unmistakable.

The peace that had been reached a week after she wrote the *Epistre à la reine* had been short-lived. Isabel had presided in the king's absence over the Royal Council at Vincennes on October 12, 1405, where John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, and Louis of Orléans were ordered to disband their forces. But the assassination of Orléans by Burgundy on November 23, 1407, had reopened a national fault-line. Quickly excluded from government, Burgundy fled for Flanders and began a campaign to clear his name, though he had confessed to the duke of Berry.⁹⁵ In 1408 John Petit argued before the council that Burgundy had acted out of loyalty to the king by ridding France of a tyrant guilty of numerous crimes, and in 1409 he was pardoned.⁹⁶

The aged duke of Berry, Charles V's last surviving brother, had abandoned his long-standing neutrality on April 15, 1410, to form the League of Gien, an alliance including Charles d'Orléans and Charles's father-in-law, the count of Armagnac (whose name was later used as a label for the Orléanists). The League contended that Burgundy, almost casually reinstated into government, was guilty of usurping the crown's power and holding the king hostage. In August, the duke of Berry had moved to his headquarters in Poitiers to prepare for the League's march on Paris.

Extravagant tears and solitary mourning mark the *Lamentacion* even more strongly than the *Epistre à la reine* as Christine bears witness to ever more cruel instances of a nation's suffering. Her utterances range in register from sombre prayers to despondency. Christine portrays herself as almost overcome by weeping. Despite her

efforts at self-composure, tears flow from her cheeks on to her page, smearing the ink and erasing her words even as she writes, so that even expressing her pity and her fears is a struggle.⁹⁷ The image suggests anxiety that emotion will cloud her message, but its ultimate effect is to demonstrate Christine's refusal to be silenced, since each word constitutes a victory over erasure.

However, it is this "lachrymose" imagery that underpins Margolis's attempt to differentiate typologically between the detached and omniscient "Sibylline Voice" that Christine uses elsewhere and the frenzied or frenetic "Compassionate Voice" that she uses in the *Lamentacion* and the *Epistre à la reine*. To restate Margolis's view in brief, it is the "Sibylline Voice" that Christine uses in support of nationalist or feminist goals; whereas the "Compassionate Voice," at its extreme, is liable to have been recognized by Christine as potentially marking her as an irrational, unstable woman or even an insurrectionist.⁹⁸

Yet the distinction is a false one.⁹⁹ As a "seulette a part" ["little woman alone and apart"], Christine underlines her detachment from the situation she now describes and the people she addresses, even while she demonstrates that she cannot detach herself from the pity of war. Though intermittently blurred by tears, her vision of contemporary affairs approaches omniscience, spanning every echelon of French society, and is complemented by her vision of eternal judgment. The 1405 and 1410 letters are "circumstantial" (Margolis's word) in that they are written to meet specific contingencies, but Christine consistently presents current circumstance in the context of what she considers a higher, divinely ordained moral order. Looking to France's past and surveying its future, always with the goal of strengthening the monarchy and building on continuities sanctified by history and by God, Christine acts as a prophet of nationhood even while she weeps for

her country. Furthermore, as has already been seen in the *Epistre à la reine*, by associating tears and pity so closely with motherhood, the tearful Christine was constructing a voice fit to speak specifically for them. Indeed, in Christine's understanding, frenzied tears and foresight are attributes shared by the Sibyl and mothers *per se*. It is therefore more appropriate to consider Christine's expressions of tearful compassion as a facet of her sibylline role.

The role of tormented Sibyl draws on the biblical antecedents of Jonah and Jeremiah. As Earl Jeffrey Richards has observed, the comparison of Paris to Nineveh evokes the story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet who was commanded by God to warn the Assyrian imperial capital of the disasters consequent upon its wickedness. It may be added that Christine is most likely to have interpreted the prophet's name as "mourning," after St. Jerome.¹⁰⁰ Richards further identifies references to Jeremiah, who warned Jerusalem about the threat posed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. The city's miseries are said to be the result of the national sins, but the prophet offers hope for the people of God if they repent these sins and amend their behavior. Among a series of parallels Richards has identified between the *Lamentacion* and Jeremiah's *Lamentations* are the respective images of Christine and Jerusalem as solitary, weeping widows.¹⁰¹ As he argues, this reinforces her prophetic status; but it may additionally be noted that the image seals the link between Christine's own compassionate foresight and the tearful wisdom of the mothers of France, whose husbands are either absent or dead. It may also constitute another appeal to the queen to show foresight and pity as mother to the nation. Jeremiah's lament should be the queen's lament; whereas he was ignored, she is in a position to be heard and heeded.

Nineveh constitutes a positive exemplar of a city that took heed of Jonah's prophecy, emended its ways, and averted catastrophe, an achievement that Christine celebrates (always with an eye on fifteenth-century France) in the *Avision-Christine*:

o sage roy de ninive bien conseilles qui creus le prophete Jonas quant dieu
par lui te manda que pour les pechiez de toy et de ta cite tu avoies encouru
sentence de destruccion dedens .xl. iours mais lors te repetant batant ta
coulpe en ieunes plours et afflictions toy et tous tes subgiez iusques aux
bestes mues par trois iours criant a dieu mercis vestus de sacs cendres sur
testes tant te humilias que dieux ot pitie de ta contricion si que ton
humilite espargna sa vengeance par bon apaisement

[Oh wise, well-advised king of Nineveh who believed the prophet Jonah when through him God declared to you that within forty days you would be punished with the sentence of destruction for your sins and the sins of your city! But then you and all your subjects — all the way down to the mute beasts — penitent, beating your head, fasting, with tears and afflictions, cried to God for mercy for three days. Clothed in sack cloth, ashes on your heads, you so humbled yourself that God took pity on your contrition and your humility spared his vengeance through beneficial appeasement.]¹⁰²

Jerusalem, by contrast, stands as an awful precedent for the tormented Sibyl: Jeremiah's warning was ignored and the city was sacked.

However, the underlying negative exemplar for tearful prophecy may be Cassandra, famous as the prophetess who tried to avert the downfall of Troy. The Cassandra described in the *Cité des dames* is a marginalized scholar, royal intercessor, and acute prognosticator whose grief mounts at each poignant realization of the cruelty of fate:

comme celle pucelle [. . .] sceust en esperit ce qui estoit a avenir aux
Troyens, tousjours estoit en tristece. Et quant elle savoit la grant prosperité
de Troye plus flourir et estre en grant magnificence dés avant que la
guerre commençast que Troyens orent, puis aux Grieux, tant plus celle
plouroit, crioit et faisoit grant dueil, regardant la noblece et richece de la

cité, ses beaulx freres si renommez, le noble Hector qui tant avoit de pris,
 elle ne se povoit taire du grant male qui lui estoit a avenir. Et quant elle vit
 la guerre encommencier, adonc enforçy son dueil, si ne finoit de crier,
 braire et timmoner son pere et ses freres pour Dieu que ilz feissent paix
 aux Griex ou que sanz faille par celle guerre seroient destruis.¹⁰³

[since this maiden [. . .] knew in her mind what would happen to Troy, she
 was sad at all times. When she realized that Troy's great prosperity would
 wax and flourish in great magnificence before the start of the war which
 the Trojans would subsequently fight against the Greeks, she wept and
 lamented and mourned all the more. Viewing the nobility and richness of
 the city and thinking of her fair brothers who were so famous, especially
 the noble Hector who had so much merit, she could not remain quiet about
 the enormous evil which would befall him. And seeing the start of the war,
 she redoubled her grief and could not cease from lamenting and wailing
 and trying to incite her father and brothers for the gods' sake to make
 peace with the Greeks — for otherwise, she knew, they would, without a
 doubt, be destroyed by this war.]¹⁰⁴

This 1405 portrait provides a template for Christine's self-fashioning as the tormented
 Sibyl, first in the contemporary *Epistre à la reine* and more overtly five years later in the
Lamentacion. In these two epistles, in contrast to the *Epistre Othéa* (as will be seen),
 Christine does not spell out Trojan parallels. But it was scarcely necessary to do so.
 France had built its foundational myth on the idea of *translatio imperii*, the transference
 of imperial power from Troy via Rome: Troy was France's universal exemplar; therefore
 Christine, prophesying disaster for fifteenth-century France, occupies Cassandra's
 position by analogy.

Cassandra's stubborn indomitability holds an inspirational message for Christine.
 The frenetic register of Cassandra in the *Cité des dames* is so unbearable to her ill-fated
 father and brothers that they beat her and lock her away so that the sounds of her
 incessant wailing cannot be heard. Cassandra's grief over her country's fate and her futile
 determination to overcome her own curse as an unheard seer can scarcely be contained.¹⁰⁵

Cassandra's greatest attribute is not that she sees the truth. It is that despite her dismissal as an irrational, even insignificant woman, she nevertheless speaks. And speaks. And speaks. For both Cassandra and Christine silence is inconceivable because it would amount to a defeat not merely physical, but spiritual and moral. The start of the Trojan War compounded Cassandra's grief ("enforcy son dueil") as surely as the continuing Burgundian–Armagnac conflict and impending threat of English invasion (far worse, French collaboration with the English) provoked Christine to amplify her own dissenting register.¹⁰⁶ However, Cassandra also (fittingly) holds a warning for Christine: she must avoid replicating her precursor's failure. Her echoic register of tearful lamentation signals her recognition of the risk that, just as Cassandra's forecast was ignored by the rulers of Troy, so her own urgings may now be disregarded by the rulers of France.

Yet the anguish represented by her cries and prayers should not be mistaken for irrationality or despair. Christine's tears perform a sequence of functions in a polemical argument to achieve action from her audience. First, although the underlying sentiment is clearly genuine, the author's weeping is a dramatic construction to grab Berry's attention. Her lamentation is unstoppable, bold, and loud, and it allows her to command her audience to listen. Secondly, once the attention is engaged, the tears guarantee the accuracy of her vision by echoing those of past tormented prophets such as Cassandra, about whom she writes in the *Cité des dames*: "mieux leur vaulsist l'avoir creue, car tout ce leur advint que predict leur avoir, si s'en repentirent a la parfin, mais ce fu trop tart pour eulx" ["it would have been better for them if they had believed her, for everything which she had predicted happened to them, and so finally they regretted not having listened, but it was too late for them"].¹⁰⁷ The authorizing precedent of such long-vindicated figures

allows Christine effectively to declare, “I told you so!” *before the event*. Implicitly but clearly, if her tears in the *Lamentacion* go unheeded, Paris will risk the same fate as Troy. A third function of the tears is to elicit compassion. Presenting her own tears, she demands tears from her audience. But passive pity is not enough, and therefore the fourth and final function of the tears is to galvanize her audience to join in her program for action: “Qui a point de pitié la mette en œvre, / Veez-cy le temps qui le requiert!” [“Whoever possess any pity should put it to work now. Now is the time when it is needed!”].¹⁰⁸ This opening exhortation of the *Lamentacion* epitomizes Christine’s own view that tears, far from being an impediment to effective action, are a catalytic force for good. Thus, in expressing her grief at the current situation, she seeks to shape the future.

Christine is deploying rational arguments. In support of the implicit legendary and literary exemplar of Troy, she explicitly invokes a case from the contemporary history that is validated by recent witness: the internecine conflict of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines that had wracked Italy since the twelfth century:

Car ne seras-tu pas acomparée de cy en avant aus estranges nacions, là où les freres germains, cousins et parens par faulse envie et convoitise s’entreocient comme chiens? Ne diront-ilz en reprouchant: “Alez, alez, vous françois, qui vous vantiez du doulz sang de voz princes, non tyrans, et nous escharnissiez de noz usaiges de Guelfes et Guibelins! Or sont-ilz nez en vostre terre. La semence y est germée, que jà n’y fauldra, les pais y sont venuz. Or abaissiez voz cornes, car vostre gloire est defaillie!”¹⁰⁹

[For will you not be compared from now on to strange nations where brothers, cousins, and relatives kill each other like dogs out of envy and greed? Will they not say by way of reproach: “Here you go, you French, boasting of the gentle blood of your princes, not tyrants, and you berate us Guelfs and Ghibelins for our customs! Now these same customs are born in your country. The seed has germinated, everything is complete and your provinces have now come to the same point. Now you can lower your horns, for your glory is destroyed!”]¹¹⁰

At stake is the national reputation, identified as a matter of divine significance by the biblical allusion to the horns as a symbol of glory.¹¹¹ As an immigrant from Italy, Christine has a valuable sense of perspective, a vantage-point from which she may regard both her native land and her adoptive country with both passion and objectivity. She may have expected Isabel, as a fellow immigrant, to be capable of applying a similar duality of perspective. Reminding her French readers of their own condescending and scornful reaction to the Italian squabbles, she then invites them to share her vantage-point and consider how France's bickerings must look from abroad. While appealing to her readers' patriotism, Christine also imbues her argument with all her personal grief for Italy. The strategy thus epitomizes her equation of reason and tears.

Her predictions are no mere assertions about the unknowable future, but conditional statements, eminently persuasive deductions based on a chain of cause and effect: if you continue to act thus, she warns, this will follow; if you alter your course, disaster may be averted. This model of prophecy — as the revelation of futures contingent on choices made in the present — accords with the *Epistre Othéa*, where the sibylline figure of Othéa must train the young Hector to become the hero that she has foreseen him as. Similarly, in the *Lamentacion* Christine assumes the Sibyl's authority to provide her addressees with active moral choices, each promising either an assurance of hope or impending disaster designed to unseat any apathetic listener.

Pursuing her earlier familial metaphor for French society as a whole, Christine indicates that if Isabel is the natural mother of France, then the aged duke, as the last surviving brother of Charles V, is effectively the nation's father and protector (the king's inability to fulfill this role is taken as read). Therefore when Berry is urged to come to

Paris, it is not as partisan head of the League of Gien but as a figure capable of unifying the warring factions. Each time Christine proclaims his nobility, she recalls his former wisdom, neutrality and history of intervention between the princes of blood. The tears of those whom Berry is obliged by rank to protect are reminders that his efforts must not be for personal gain; in serving France, he serves the royal family.

Thus, even though Christine only refers to the queen twice, the symbolic role of Isabel is paramount. She is the keystone of the social structure in which Berry exists. The duty of intercession that was pressed upon her in the *Epistre à la reine* is now an example for the duke to emulate. Even though at one point the queen appears oblivious to her country's troubles, at another she represents the standard behind which Berry might rally the citizenry. On the other hand, it is made clear that Isabel could mobilize the masses against the dukes themselves: a reminder to Berry that authority and power over France still reside with the immediate royal family.

Omitting a formal *salutatio* so that she can address not only Berry but all those responsible for France's deterioration, Christine takes up a position of arbiter of righteousness for the whole kingdom. Throughout, she speaks out against those who have neglected their inherent civil duties — the nobles, the knights, and the *clergie* (scholars and churchmen) — demanding peace, reform, and universal prayer. The fulfillment or failure of these duties is viewed not in terms of personalities or politics, but in terms of souls and salvation.

First, Christine warns the noble princes that fratricide is against nature. She argues that the princes are “ennemis par accident” [“enemies by accident”]; that only the loss of

reason (which, in Aristotle, distinguishes man from beast) could turn kin against kin; and that they have defiled their heritage by allowing greed to transform them into serpents:¹¹²

Je mesbahiz et en complaignant dis: 'O! Comment puet-ce estre que cuer humain, tant soit la Fortune estrange, si puist ramener homme à nature de tres devorable et cruele beste? Où est doncques la raison qui lui donne le nom de animal raisonnable? Comment est-il en le puissance de Fortune de tellement transmuier homme que convertiz soit en serpent, ennemi de nature humaine?'¹¹³

[I am stunned and cry out plaintively: 'Oh, how is it possible that the human heart can turn a man into a devouring and cruel beast, even if Fortune behaved strangely toward him? Where is Reason that gives him the name of a 'reasonable' animal? How can it be in the power of Fortune to change man so much that he is transformed into a serpent, the enemy of human nature?']¹¹⁴

Describing the serpent as the "ennemi de nature humaine" ["enemy of human nature"], Christine places the princes' transgressions in the context of primal biblical evil.¹¹⁵ She implies that those who continue to support civil unrest will make themselves enemies of God.

Now Christine broadens the scope of her attack. In a second apostrophe, she rebukes the attendant knights who would follow France's blind princes into the ignoble fray of a fool's battle. Arguing that no knight who has sworn to protect France may claim the backing of God if he takes up arms against his countryman, Christine once more measures the national crisis in moral and religious terms. Having refuted the *chevalerie's* claim of righteousness, she then denies them the earthly chivalric prize of reputation by ruling out the prospect of true glory in this internecine strife. Instead of laurels for the victor, she predicts that shameful "noires espines" ["black thorns"] will crown the victory.¹¹⁶

In her third address, having likened France's princes to biblical serpents and warned their vainglorious knights of God's judgment, Christine turns to those ultimately responsible for the moral well-being of the nation. Thus she calls for action from the university scholars and church officials to put an end to the war by interceding through service and prayer.¹¹⁷ In the *Cité des dames*, Christine had dared to imply criticism of cupidity in the Church, but only by omitting the details: "Et pareillement je te dis des papes et des gens de Sainte Eglise, qui plus que autre gent doivent estres parfaits et esleus, mais quoyque au commencement de la crestianté fussent sains, depuis que Constantin ot douee l'Eglise de grans revenues et de richces, la sainteté qui y est! Ne fault que lire en leurs gestes et croniques!" ["Let me also tell you about the popes and churchmen, who must be more perfect and more elect than other people. But, whereas in the early Church they were holy, ever since Constantine endowed the Church with large revenues and riches, the holiness there! You only have to read through their histories and chronicles [. . .]"].¹¹⁸ In the *Lamentacion*, she is more direct. The Sibyl's role in the history of the Church authorizes her to make such criticisms.

Defining the *clergie* as members of the "conseil du Roy" ["council of the king"] and "saiges de ce royaume" ["wise people of the kingdom"], Christine ranks their duties to the monarchy alongside their duties to God. Likewise, later in the *Lamentacion* she describes the princes in terms of their duty to the faith and the Church, as

[. . .] ceulx qui estre seullent pilliers de foy, sousteneurs de l'eglise, par quel vertu force et savoir est tousjours soustenue et pacifiée, et qui entre toutes nacions sont nommez les trez chretiens acroisseurs de paix, amis de concorde [. . .].¹¹⁹

[[. . .] those who should be the pillars of faith, supporters of the Church, through whose virtue, power, and wisdom it has always been sustained

peacefully, and who among all nations are called the most Christian peacemakers, friends of concord [. . .].¹²⁰

Thus Christine invests the princes, like the *clergie*, with responsibilities both religious and governmental. In the name of the king (as his council and kin), in the name of France, and in the name of God, she calls upon the *clergie* and the princes to work together to avert disaster.

As Christine addresses each estate, she measures their actions in the scales of salvation; the very soul of the nation is at stake. Civil war is characterized as a violation of nature, nobility, and Christian righteousness, ideas expressed in the *Epistre à la rein* but delivered with considerably greater force now. By depicting civil discord as unholy, Christine reiterates the view expressed in the earlier epistle that quarrels between kinsmen may be “humaine et commune” [“human and common”] at the outset but if pursued they become “dyabolique” [“devilish”].¹²¹ Against such sins, in the *Lamentacion* Christine later invokes “la loy divine qui commande paix” [the divine law which calls for peace”].¹²²

The queen, at the apex of the hierarchy that Christine has described, does not escape criticism, though it necessarily takes a different form. Where the *Epistre à la reine* was dutifully submissive, the *Lamentacion* is impatiently forthright, demanding: “He! Royne couronnée de France, dors-tu adès?” [“Oh, crowned queen of France, are you asleep?”].¹²³ Stopping just short of asserting that Isabel is consciously ignoring the needs of the realm, Christine proposes that she must be unaware that civil strife endangers her figurative children. Mary McKinley sees this brusque wake-up call as an insult to Isabel inserted to please Berry.¹²⁴ However, even while Christine issues the strident alert to

Isabel, she also magnifies the queen, as she had in the 1405 letter, as mother to the national familial hierarchy and as the key to peace:

Ne vois-tu en balance l'eritage de tes nobles enfans? Tu, mere des nobles hoirs de France, redoubtée princesse, qui y puet que toy, ne qui sera-ce qui à ta seigneurie et auctorité desobeira, se à droit te veulx de la paix entremettre?¹²⁵

[Do you not see that your noble children's inheritance hangs in the balance? You, mother of France's noble heirs, respected princess, who else can do anything in the matter but you? Who would dare to disobey your power and authority, if you truly want to intervene for the sake of peace?]

In the context of such expressions it is difficult to accept that the wake-up call is condemnatory. On the contrary, it may be viewed as an act of dutiful love, akin to the awakening of Christine by her mother from nightmares induced by reading the misogynist Mathéolus in the *Cité des dames*.

Christine provides the duke of Berry with four sibylline visions. Three visions portend the future of a France where civil war is not averted. The first describes a battlefield shamefully “couvrans de sang, de corps mors et de membres” [covered in “blood, dead bodies and severed limbs”].¹²⁶ The second imagines the social consequences of war: famine leads to popular rebellion and lays the land barren and open to invasion — the foreigners are waiting in the wings to “check mate” the French. She foresees

Famine pour la cause du decipement et gast des biens qui y sera fait, et la faulte de cultiver les terres, de quoy sourdront rebellions de peuples par estre des gens d'armes estrangiez et privez trop oppressez, mengiez et pilliez de çà et de là subversion es citéz par oultrageuse charge, où, par neccessitez de finances avoir, convendra imposer les cytoiens et habitans [. . .].¹²⁷

[Famine because of the inevitable plundering and destruction of all goods; non-cultivation of the fields which will cause rebellions by the people who are brutalized and robbed by the military, oppressed and pillaged from all sides; uprisings in the cities because of the outrageous taxes that will be levied on the citizens and inhabitants in order to raise money [. . .].]¹²⁸

The third sibylline vision warns of the disgrace of France's honored ancient heritage through the loss of her international reputation. However, one final vision imagines a France whose future is safeguarded through the duke of Berry's intercession and leadership. It promises that Berry will be remembered by a shower of epithets if he helps settle his country's turmoil.

Through a parallelism of terms, Christine seeks to position Berry in the pivotal peacemaking role that she had urged on Isabel herself in the *Epistre à la reine*. When Christine tells Berry, "Saisy la bride par grant force et arreste ceste non honorable" ["Take the bridle forcefully and stop this disgraceful army"], she echoes her command to Isabel in the same text to "tenir la bride" ["take the reins"] which are rightfully hers.¹²⁹ Both the duke and the queen are noted for their history of intervening for peace; both are described as being of noble blood and noble nature; both are here invested with the symbolic authority of parents to the French people.

The *Lamentacion* thus locates Berry within the same familial metaphor used in the 1405 letter to epitomize French society, to urge a quasi-maternal role upon Isabel, and to unite her with the nation's mothers in a gendered communion of foresight and compassion. The effective absence of the defunct king, scarcely noticeable in the *Epistre à la reine* because the focus there was on maternal intercession, is readily apparent in 1410, where Christine refers to the abstractions of crown and kingdom but promotes Berry himself to the role of father to the French people. She implores the duke:

[. . .] te avance avec la langue de correccion vers tes enfans, se tu les vois mesprendre, si comme bon pere, et les pacifie en les reprenant, si que tu dois et bien t'appartient, leur enseignant raisons d'une partie et d'autre comment, quel que soit leur discord, eulx, qui doivent estre pilliers, deffense et sousteneurs de la noble couronne, et targes du royaume qui onques ne leur meffist ne ne doit comparer ce que ilz s'entredemandent [. . .].¹³⁰

[[. . .] come to your children speaking to them like a good father who wants to correct his children who have done wrong. Bring peace to them even while reproving them, as is your function, explaining to both sides that whatever may be the reason for their discord, they have to be the pillars, defenders, and supporters of the noble crown and shield of the kingdom that has never done them any harm, and that this more important than anything they may want from each other.]¹³¹

In McKinley's view, Christine's appeal to "Qui a point de pitié" ["whosoever possesses pity"] at the start of the *Lamentacion* is the opening salvo in a rhetorical strategy to invite the duke to assume the position of effective head of government:¹³²

If, and only if, the duke responds to the plea for pity and action, he takes the place of "qui" and assumes his hierarchically appointed place at the head of the document. [. . .] The duke's place in the document would then represent metaphorically the place he coveted in the body politic: the head.¹³³

However, McKinley fails to observe that Christine's metaphor is not that of the body politic, with its single head, but of the nation as family, headed by both father and mother. Taking care not to encourage Berry to usurp the privileges of the immediate royal family, Christine is careful to anchor his authority in his familial bond with the king, and to indicate its limits and its associated duties.¹³⁴ The conjoining of Isabel and Berry as symbolic mother and father to France argues against McKinley's claim that the *Lamentacion* seeks to exploit their differences, as does Christine's insistence on the duke's allegiance and obedience to the king and queen.

Berry's subordination is made plain. Even though the duke is in the foreground as the principal addressee, the queen towers in the background. Christine invokes Isabel as the royal figure who naturally possesses the ability to inspire her subjects' trust and devotion; who could unite all factions of the populace; and who can therefore have the greatest impact (next to the king) on the state of the nation. Stating that no one would dare disobey Isabel's power and authority if she exercises her right to enforce demands, Christine insists that the queen must construct herself as a model ruler so that she may protect the future of her heirs by serving as motherly intercessor between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs. Once more, Christine inscribes Isabel into France's national heritage, naming her the "Royne couronnée" ["crowned queen"] and "mere de nobles hoirs de France" ["mother of France's noble heirs"].¹³⁵ She encourages Isabel to rally disenfranchised members of society — women who stand to lose husbands, sons, brothers and fathers — to take a proactive stand to put an end to their suffering by joining their queen in an effort to shame those who abuse their positions.¹³⁶

As in the *Epistre à la reine*, Isabel becomes the figurehead for the "dames, damoiselles et femmes du royaume de France" ["ladies, maidens, and women of the French realm"].¹³⁷ To illustrate the power of collective reasoning and establish the ability of common women to effect change, Christine invokes the example set by the Sabine women in the *Cité des dames*. According to Christine's history, the Sabine women were responsible for stopping the war between their Sabine fathers and brothers and their Roman husbands. Although the Sabine women were kidnapped and ravished by the Romans who desired wives, these noble women steeled themselves to their plight. Having lived with their husbands peacefully and borne them children, they could not

support their fathers' and brothers' belated attempt to restore their honor through bloodshed. They had invested in their new community and now stood to lose all the men they had ever loved in fratricidal strife. The wise Sabine queen rallies her subjects and together they storm the battlefield, purposefully dishevelled with their babies crying in their arms. Similarly, in the *Lamentacion* they cry "Ayez merci de noz chiers amis et parens, si faites paix!" ["Have mercy on our dear friends and relatives and make peace!"].¹³⁸

In the Sabines, vivid examples of women's bravery, sense of duty, and power to intercede in the affairs of men, Christine constructs an active, empowered equivalent of the weeping, foresighted mothers of France. The exemplar depicts the peace symbolism of motherhood transformed into an effective tool to end war. Just as the Sabine women rallied behind their leader, Christine asserts, Isabel's subjects are waiting to follow the queen if she hoists the standard. Christine's cries have sounded through the streets of Paris, gathering "devotes femelettes" ["devout women"] with members of the *clergie* and king's council in a symbolic army to oppose war itself.¹³⁹ Implicitly, Berry may either join as the queen's lieutenant, and lead France to peace, or oppose as figurehead of the League of Gien, and propel the country into chaos.

Counterbalancing the image of the population united under a common leadership, Christine warns that they might otherwise turn into an embittered and violent rabble. Any action by Berry for personal gain against the monarchy's interests could feed the canker of insubordination, she hints. If the people lose faith in their leaders, Christine's sibylline visions of mayhem and destruction will become a reality. No matter how frenzied Christine's register, it represents not the cry of a mob but the lament of the innocent.

There is no trace of insurrection here, no demand for representative government, merely a call for the voice of the people to be heeded.¹⁴⁰ The *Lamentacion* channels that voice rationally through lament and prayer, concluding with a final vision of a France united against its external enemies.

L'Epistre Othéa: A Mirror for the Queen

Christine's final attempt to mobilize Isabel and the aristocracy against impending crisis was the Queen's Manuscript (dated by scholars between 1410 and 1415), and in particular its illuminated version of the *Epistre Othéa*.¹⁴¹ Christine had previously dedicated copies of this Mirror to at least four different patrons: Louis of Orléans in 1401, Philip the Bold in 1403, the duke of Berry, and Henry IV of England in 1404.¹⁴² Three English translations in the fifteenth century and some forty-seven extant copies in French make the *Epistre Othéa*, in all likelihood, Christine's most popular work during her lifetime.¹⁴³

The *Epistre Othéa* is made up of one hundred *textes*, each accompanied by a *glose* and an *allegorie* to epitomize, respectively, the worldly, corporeal virtues of the good knight and the contemplative virtues of the good spirit. In each chapter, Othéa, Christine's pseudo-classical goddess of Prudence, instructs Hector in lessons of wise government and spiritual growth by taking him on a visionary crash course through France's founding cultural mythologies. The exemplars are figures from the *Histoire*

ancienne jusqu' à César — an abridgement of Trojan, Theban, and biblical history based on the works of Ovid, Vergil, and Statius.

Hector's guide, Othéa, is an invention by Christine but like the Sibyls of the *Cité des dames*, the Cumaean Sibyl of the *Chemin de lonc estude*, and the Sibyl who in the *Epistre Othéa* converts the Emperor Augustus to Christianity, she procures her authority from her ability to see into the future. In the Queen's Manuscript version, a program of illustrations updates the text in the light of events since 1400, focusing the message and underlining its claims to prophecy.¹⁴⁴

With regard to the final chapter, Sandra Hindman argues for the interpretation of Augustus — the model for an ideal French monarch — as an exemplar for Charles, the dauphin, and Orléans.¹⁴⁵ But I would contend that Christine believed every male member of the royal family could profit from Augustus's example. We can state with reasonable certainty that the Queen's Manuscript was accessible by the dauphin, Isabel, and Charles.¹⁴⁶ But we should not underestimate the prestige in owning any book, much less a vast collection specially commissioned and richly decorated with gold leaf. While the readership of illuminated manuscripts was limited, it is also clear from their impact on the wider visual arts that such manuscripts were not kept locked away. The Queen's Manuscript would have been regarded as a royal treasure, though no records indicate how many members of the royal family, foreign dignitaries, or perhaps prominent members of the University were granted access to it.¹⁴⁷ Christine believed that only a strong monarchy supported by a united royal family could govern the duchies of France effectively, and therefore it is reasonable to suggest that she viewed the project as a concentrated effort to reach out to the entire royal family.

Whatever its wider audience, however, the Queen's Manuscript *Epistre Othéa* deserves special attention as a unique project destined and designed for the queen. In her dedication to the Queen's Manuscript, Christine tells us explicitly that the entire collection was commissioned by and for Isabel:

Si l'ay fait, ma dame, ordener
Depuis que je sceus qu'assener
Le devoye a vous, si qu'ay sceu
Tout au mieulx et le parfiner
D'escripre et bien enluminer,
Dès que vo command en receu,
Selons qu'en mon cuer j'ay conceu
Qu'il faloit des choses finer
Pour bien richement l'affiner
A fin que fust apperceü
Que je mets pouoir, force et sceu,
Pour vo bon vueil enteriner.¹⁴⁸

[Thus I have had it made, my lady,
Ever since I knew that I was
To dedicate it to you, to the very
Best of my ability and to complete
Writing and decorating it well,
As soon as I received your command
According to what I conceived in my heart
That these things should be completed
In order to refine it richly
So it could be seen
That I am using my power, strength and knowledge
To fulfil your good wishes.]¹⁴⁹

On one level, the *Epistre Othéa* provided Isabel with a Mirror, visually enhanced to represent contemporary politics, to use for the instruction of the dauphin. Focusing on the miniatures' function in substituting Louis of Orléans for Hector as a tragic princely exemplar for the dauphin, Hindman states that the combined visual project and written text "asks Isabeau of Bavaria to practice good queenship, while it puts forward her son,

Louis of Guyenne, as a future ruler.”¹⁵⁰ But on another level, the Queen’s Manuscript *Epistre Othéa* was a Mirror for the education of Isabel, a means for one woman to impart special wisdom to another. As the author and as the voice behind Othéa, Christine has two pupils: Isabel and by proxy Isabel’s pupil, the dauphin.

Thus, I propose that the *Epistre Othéa* embodies three principal strategies in relation to Isabel. First, Christine presents the text to Isabel just as Othéa presents the letter to Hector so that by learning the same lessons as him, the queen may come to combine the active and contemplative virtues in exemplary rule. Secondly, Christine inscribes contemporary France into the sibylline history of Troy, using the tragic image of the assassinated Louis of Orléans to depict Hector, so that the past of legend and the past of memory combine to validate her warnings about the future. Thirdly, Christine furnishes exemplars of wise women and clerks to urge Isabel to teach virtues including obedience, wisdom, and compassion to her son, and to encourage him likewise to be a ready pupil.

The notion of Isabel as Christine’s pupil is enshrined in the manuscript’s illuminations, one of which self-consciously depicts the queen receiving the book from Christine in a parallel to the Hector–Othéa relationship. In lessons on the need to achieve effective and peaceful rule, as vital to Isabel now as they would ultimately be to the dauphin, Christine does not construct a gendered dualism as in the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion* (where peace is a feminine goal) but instead contrasts corporeal and spiritual qualities. Hector’s battlefield is physical and moral; he must face challenges of the body and vices of the spirit if he is to become the embodiment of chivalry and nobility. The Princely Virtues are identified as a heterogeneous and often conflicting

group: fame and glory, aspects of the good knight, are treated as possible threats to the good spirit's clemency and magnanimity. For instance, the death of the Persian king Cyrus at the hands of the Amazon queen Thamaris teaches the good knight to be wary of Fortune and overweening pride. The negative example of Laomedon, the founding king of Troy who brought about his own destruction through his lack of magnanimity, cautions the good knight that he must not let offense cause war. Although the *Epistre Othéa* singles out individual acts of heroism and honor as worthy examples for Hector, true to Christine's overriding philosophy it is concord rather than military glory that is ultimately prized.

In the *Epistre à la reine*, as we have seen, Christine instructs Isabel that circumstances frequently demand she embody the roles of both king and queen. In the *Epistre Othéa*, a similar lesson for the queen may be observed in the exemplar of Diana, virgin goddess of the hunt, who mixes femininity with military strength. But the fate of Actaeon holds a lesson for Isabel too. The huntsman, who embodies the carnality and idleness of the bad knight and bad spirit, is transformed into a stag so that he cannot boast he has seen Diana naked and is then slaughtered unwittingly by his retinue. Othéa uses their mistake to warn that "Oysiveté engendre ignorance et erreur" ["Idleness engenders ignorance and error"].¹⁵¹ Implicitly, Isabel cannot afford to be idly occupied with leisurely pursuits — widely regarded as one of her flaws — if she is to represent Charles in council and in public.

To further stress the moral complexities underlying the duties of royalty, Christine introduces a symbolic genealogy for Hector. No longer simply the son of Priam and Hecuba, Hector also has mythical parents, Mars and Pallas Minerva, from each of whom

he has inherited corporeal and spiritual qualities. Like Mars, Hector must show valor by battling his country's enemies and his own vices. Like Pallas Minerva, he must show chivalry and be a wise politician who contemplates the welfare of his people.¹⁵²

Through the addition of illustrations depicting Hector as Louis of Orléans, Christine stamped an already prophetic text with the proof of its own accuracy. Even in its original presentational copy form of 1400, the text moves beyond categorization as a mere courtesy book or Mirror into a sibylline tract on political destiny — both personal and national. Christine had named Louis of Orléans as the *Epistre Othéa*'s first patron, and in a cautionary prologue had signalled that he was treading on dangerous ground with his brother, Charles VI.¹⁵³ As the king's paranoid episodes became lengthier and more frequent, rumor had spread that Orléans sought to exploit his brother's affections when he was at his most vulnerable. In effect, Christine advised Orléans to remember that Charles remained his sovereign despite his illness. Likewise, Othéa's principal lesson to Hector is one of obedience; her second is the price of disobedience.¹⁵⁴ Christine expects her audience to remember that Hector's act of defiance against his father-king and his refusal to listen to the portentous counsel of his wife and sister were to lead him to his death. Thus, even though Hector is not visually equated with Orléans in the 1400 edition, Christine had nevertheless used Hector's example to warn him of the consequences of rebellion. As Hector faced death in the disastrous Trojan War, so Louis of Orléans had been tempting fate by inviting civil discord.

By the time she was completing the Queen's Manuscript, Christine knew her Cassandra-like warnings had gone unheeded. Despite her prayers, pleas, and instructions, her political interventions had been unsuccessful. In the wake of the assassination of

Orléans in 1407, Othéa's promise to Hector that she speaks of his actions and resulting death "En esperit de prophecie" ["In the spirit of prophecy"] must have seemed retrospectively an eerie prognostication, and her lessons, like Othéa's, predestined to fail.¹⁵⁵

The miniatures added for the Queen's Manuscript several years after the assassination portray Hector as Louis of Orléans.¹⁵⁶ The lavish visual accompaniment, produced under Christine's direction, takes the original 1400 text further into the realm of political prophetic writing. Acting like marginalia or footnotes in a *roman à clef*, the pictorial commentary helps further to define and delimit the possible readings of the text. Idealized as Hector, the duke of Orléans is portrayed as an exemplar of a wise politician, and his visual presence in the manuscript serves as an urgent reminder to its readers — especially Isabel, the dauphin, and the duke of Berry — that the fate of France depends on their wise rule. However, at the same time the representation of doomed Hector by the image of assassinated Orléans casts a wholly contemporary shadow of death and betrayal to remind the queen of the urgency of her duties.

The catastrophe of the Trojan War, constantly evoked by the presence of Hector, is interwoven throughout the *Epistre Othéa*. Isabel received the Queen's Manuscript at a time when her right to intervene in politics might have enabled her to help deliver Paris from its spiral of self-destruction. The fate of Troy is a warning on the future of France. According to Christine's *glose*:

Ylÿon fu le maistre dongion de Troye et le plus fort et le plus bel chastel
qui oncques fust fait dont histoires facent mencion; mais non obstant ce fu
il pris et ars et vint a neant, [. . .]. Et pour ce que tieulx cas aviennent par la
muableté de Fortune, veult dire que le bon chevalier ne se doit orgueillir
ne soy tenir seur pour nulle force.¹⁵⁷

[Ilium was the master dungeon of Troy, and the strongest and most beautiful castle that ever was made of which histories make mention; but notwithstanding it was taken and burned and came to nothing, [. . .]. And because such cases happen through the mutability of Fortune would indicate that the good knight should not be proud or hold himself certain because of any strength.]¹⁵⁸

Interpreted in a contemporary context, Ilium stands in for Paris — as Nineveh had in the *Lamentacion* — as the grand city now precariously teetering at the top of Fortune's wheel.

In the fables of the Gorgon and her nemesis Perseus, Christine infuses the same issue with her fear of civil violence and political corruption. In a wholesale reworking of the myth in her *glose*, she suggests that Medusa can be taken to represent

Une cité ou ville qui jadis souloit estre de grant bonté, mais par les vices des habitans devint serpent et venimeuse, c'est a entendre que mains maulx faisoit aux marches voisines, come de tout rober et piller, et les marchans et autres trespasans estoient pris et retenus, et mis en destroite prison, et ainsi estoient muez en pierre.¹⁵⁹

[a city or town which formerly used to enjoy great bounty; but, through the vices of the inhabitants, it became a serpent and venomous, that is to say, that it did much harm to their neighbors in the marshes, as in entirely robbing and pillaging, and the merchants and the others passing by were taken and held and sent to a destroyed prison, and thus were they changed into stone.]¹⁶⁰

The shield of the hero Perseus becomes the medieval mirror, the *speculum*, a symbol of self-enlightenment representing not only the good knight's introspection but also his refusal to be lured by pleasures of the flesh:

Perseus se mira en son escu, c'est a dire en la force chevalerie, et ala combatre contre celle cité, et la prist et lui osta le pouoir de plus mal faire. Et aussi pot estre une dame moult belle et de mauvais affaire qui par sa couvoitise maint desnua de leur avoir, [. . .]. Pour ce veult dire au bon

chevalier que il se gard de regarder chose mauvaise, qui a mal le puist
attaire.¹⁶¹

[Perseus saw himself reflected in his shield, that is to say, in strength and chivalry, and journeyed to fight against that city and took it and took the power from it to do greater evil. And therefore a very beautiful lady but of wicked dealings might exist, who, through her covetousness, deprives many of what they own. [. . .] For this intends to say to the good knight that he guard himself well from gazing at evil things, which might attract him to evil.]¹⁶²

If Isabel received the Queen's Manuscript in January 1414, then Christine would have expected the fable of the Gorgon to remind the queen of her close encounter with mob violence during the Cabochien revolt of 1413 when the royal family had been, for all intents and purposes, held prisoner.¹⁶³ No longer did the populace fear the consequences of openly criticizing the monarchy. France's mercantile class proved that it was willing to put force behind verbal discontent. The queen's duty, therefore, is to model herself after Perseus so that she may guide the citizens of Paris to reflect upon the evils which have arisen from their tempestuous natures.

For Isabel, the process of learning will be concluded by her transformation from pupil to teacher; she will abandon the position of Hector, the pupil, and assume Othéa's function, teacher to the prince. In this reconfiguration, Christine refuses the popular notion that the queen was too self-interested to interact with the royal children. Instead, by suggesting that Isabel must embody the pedagogic wisdom expressed by wise women and clerks in the *Epistre Othéa*, she offers her a place in the ranks of the *clergeces*, the female educators (such as Carmentis, Cassandra, and Catherine) who are praised so highly in the *Cité des dames*. Christine emphasizes that an enlightened form of self-

interest — Isabel's pursuit of her right not only to intercede with Charles but also to guide the dauphin without regard to the ducal factions — may ensure a strong monarchy.

The political ascension of the dauphin and his growing independence from Isabel must be considered a chief concern of Christine's educational program, especially if we accept James Laidlaw's revised suggestion that the Queen's Manuscript was presented to Isabel not in 1410 or 1411 but on New Year's Day 1414.¹⁶⁴ The dauphin had reached the age of majority on January 22, 1410 (his thirteenth birthday, but the beginning of his fourteenth year — the legal age of majority). Isabel received her special copy of the *Epistre Othéa* at a time when influence over Louis of Guyenne was desirable not only to the queen and the royal council but to private citizens and representatives of entire towns. Many sought his favor and protection in lieu of the king or Isabel. By 1411 the dauphin was starting to explore his potential for political independence. By 1413 he was gaining a reputation as a just politician dedicated to ending the prolonged Burgundian–Armagnac conflict; and in that year Christine finished the *Livre de la paix* and dedicated it to him in recognition of his efforts in concluding the Treaty of Auxerre (August 22, 1412).¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, during this period the teenaged heir began to test his freedom and authority, much to the displeasure of Burgundy, Isabel, and the Parisians. In his first act of insubordination towards Isabel, in February 1413, the dauphin refused to reinstate his private chancellor.¹⁶⁶ During the height of the Cabochien control of Paris, riotous citizens burst into Guyenne's household during a late-night ball in order to abjure his behavior. A spokesman for the Cabochiens rebuked him for straying from the example set by his mother, the "venerable" queen.¹⁶⁷ The rebels taunted Guyenne, claiming that his right of

primogeniture could be revoked by the king; and indeed it seems Isabel herself may have threatened her son with disinheritance on several occasions.¹⁶⁸

In the fable of Troilus, the *Epistre Othéa* presents the education of the prince as a matter of prophetic counsel on how to avoid unwise choices and avert their disastrous consequences. King Priam's youngest son, Troilus embodies the callowness of a child prince and the dangers which may arise if that child does not respect experienced counsel. According to Othéa, Priam's sages and priests warned the king, through their wisdom and interpretation of writings and prophecies, not to let Paris pursue Helen; but Troilus rashly accused them of cowardice and encouraged his father to ignore their advice. As the fifteenth-century reader of the *Epistre Othéa* would certainly have deduced, Christine is suggesting that the Trojan War resulted from the arrogance of a child. Thus, the *allegorie* concludes, "La terre est maudite dont le prince est enfant" ["The land is cursed where the prince is a child"].¹⁶⁹ Troilus and Priam are negative exemplars for the dauphin and the queen, respectively. On the one hand, the child must not be arrogant and must listen to the advice of his elders. On the other hand, the adult must not let an inexperienced child countermand wiser courses of action. Repeatedly, Christine lectures the good knight to respect and to recognize wisdom regardless of its source; to develop the skill of listening with humility, attention, and grace; and to learn from the lessons of history. Gendered aspects of these lessons are especially relevant for the dauphin's education by Isabel: the *Epistre Othéa* also urges men to recognize women as sources of special wisdom; to set aside their own prejudiced sense of superiority in order to learn from them; and to see in history how often men's failure to do so has led to

disaster. Accordingly, Christine's examples warn Isabel of the difficulties she will encounter while attempting to influence her son.

In the *Epistre Othéa* Christine seeks to convince her patrons that her foresighted advice is just, wise, and authoritative, yet at every juncture she implies an underlying recognition that her counsel may fall on deaf ears. The recognition is inscribed in the sibylline presentation of Hector's life and death. Both the reader and Hector are forced to reflect on his demise: Othéa speaks of the women who mourn him and then in Chapter 90 reveals to Hector himself the details of his death.¹⁷⁰ Although Othéa tells him he must learn how to become the hero that he is destined to be, the death that she foresees for him is immutable: from the reader's perspective it has occurred in ancient history and the visions with which the goddess instructs him are records of the completed past. For Hector, no amount of lessons will avert death; on the contrary, each lesson brings death a little closer simply through the passing of time. Thus Othéa is engaged in a Sisyphean struggle that she knows will fail. The process is self-consciously mirrored in a series of negative exemplars which provide Hector with a vision of a disaster resulting from a figure's inability or unwillingness to incorporate her teachings. Such paradigms, which seem to anticipate their own failure to impart wisdom, are evidence of what Roberta Krueger calls Christine's "anxiety of instruction."¹⁷¹ In Krueger's words, the *Epistre Othéa* "dramatizes the problematic transmission and reception of moral doctrine" with fables of wise women and clerks whose counsel — such as that of Amphiaraus to Adrastus not to start a military campaign or of Hector's clerkly brother Helenus to Paris not to pursue Helen — is ignored.¹⁷²

The authorial anxiety suffered by Christine clearly relates to the uphill struggle of women to establish their own authority as sources of wisdom. As Krueger writes:

Christine refutes the misogynists' charges of women's intellectual deficiency and proves by historical example that women have been and can be learned teachers and virtuous models of good government. But she also shows how women's teachings have often tragically failed either to transform human perceptions or to influence historical events. In Christine's gallery of neglected founding mothers, unheeded wives, marginalized female prophets or scholars, rejected governesses, and saintly martyrs we may see reflections of her tenuous sometimes painful position as a moralist whose own disciplined life, transcendence of suffering, and deep concern for human relations doubtless differed from the less restrained existence of some members of the royal and Burgundian courts.¹⁷³

Like Dame Seville de Monthault (the "rejected governess" that Krueger has in mind) whose charge in *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans* ultimately fails to incorporate her moral doctrine, Othéa proves to be an inadequate educator, not through any fault of her own but through Hector's arrogant unwillingness to heed wise council when it runs counter to his ambition.

Christine's anxiety that her own lessons will be ignored by her readers, the rulers of France, is successfully masked in Othéa's demeanor, which maintains the calm authority also ascribed to the Cumaean Sibyl in the *Chemin de lonc estude*:

Une dame de grant corsage,
Qui moult avoit honneste et sage
Semblant, et pesante maniere.¹⁷⁴

[a lady of great stature, with a very virtuous and wise appearance, and a dignified manner.]¹⁷⁵

The fact that this is a cover-up is most strikingly reflected in one of the “anxious lessons” that most closely concerns Hector himself: the bowdlerized fable of Cassandra. Although she is Hector’s brother, Othéa states only that Cassandra “fu fille au roy Priant” [“was a daughter to the king Priam”]. For Hector, this is plainly redundant information. For the reader, it amounts to a glaring omission, severing the connection between Cassandra and Hector’s fate. The air-brushing of history or legend extends to the very aspects for which Cassandra has become a byword and which Christine would be expected to place center-stage: her tormented prophecies and their failure to avert disaster. As Christine would have known, Apollo bestowed upon Cassandra both the gift of prophecy and the curse that none would believe her.¹⁷⁶ But her fable in the *Epistre Othéa*, as Jane Chance observes, is an example of Christine’s “radical” reinterpretations of women in classical myth that function “to demonstrate their learning or their roles as educating and virtuous models.”¹⁷⁷ The *glose* states only that Cassandra was not capable of lying and, as Gabriella Parussa has noted, transforms her prophetic connection with divine knowledge into mere pious devotion at the temple:

[. . .] les dieux servoit, et let temple honoroit, et pou parloit sans neccessité; et quant parler lui couvenoit ja ne deist chose qui veritable ne fust, ne en mençonge onques ne fu trouvee.¹⁷⁸

[She served the gods and honored the temple, and spoke little without cause. And when she felt it appropriate to speak, she only said things which were true; she was never found lying.]¹⁷⁹

Cassandra’s reticence is remarkably at odds with the account given by Christine in the *Cité des dames*, where Hector’s tormented sister “ne finoit de crier, braire et timmoner son pere et ses freres pour Dieu que ilz feissent paix” [“could not cease from lamenting

and wailing and trying to incite her father and brothers for the gods' sake to make peace"].¹⁸⁰ Indeed, it is tempting to see in the *Epistre Othéa*'s emphasis on her reticence an acknowledgement that here Othéa and Christine themselves are holding something back.

It is left to Andromache to embody openly the anxiety of the tormented sibyl, perhaps because as Hector's wife (a relationship that is noted prominently) she incorporates the intercessionary role that Christine prescribed for princesses, queens, and all noble women. Andromache uses tears and extravagant mourning in an attempt to dissuade Hector from his entering battle, but he refuses either to believe in her prophetic dream or to be moved by her torment:

[. . .] la nuit devant qu'il fu occis vint a la dame en avision que se le jour Hector aloit en la bataille sanz faille il y seroit occis, dont Andromacha a tout grans souspirs et pleurs fist son pouoir que il n'alast en la bataille; mais Hector ne l'en volt croire et il y fu occis.¹⁸¹

[[. . .] the night before he was killed, there came to the lady in a prophetic dream that the day that Hector would go into battle, without fail he would be slain. For which Andromache, with many a great sigh and tear, used her power so that he not go into battle, but Hector would not believe her, and there he was slain.]¹⁸²

The outcome is known at the outset, inscribed in the circularity of the narrative, where the first temporal marker ("devant qu'il fu occis") anticipates the last ("et il y fu occis"). The possibility of Hector heeding Andromache's advice and choosing not to go into battle is thus an entirely abstract notion, in keeping with the overall tenor of the *Epistre Othéa*.

However, it would be an error to imagine that Christine held a wholly pessimistic view of her text as a redundant exercise in pedagogy and prophecy. Andromache is an

exemplar of womanly wise counsel, combining sibylline foresight with compassion;

Hector is a negative exemplar to men not to ignore that counsel:

Pour ce dit que le bon chevalier no doit du tout despriser les avisions sa
femme, c'est a entendre le conseil et avis de sa femme, se elle est sage et
bien condicionnee, et mesmement d'autres femmes sages.¹⁸³

[Therefore, that the good knight should not entirely dispraise the prophetic
dreams of his wife, that is to understand, the counsel and advice of his
wife, if she is wise and well conditioned and especially of other wise
women.]

Thus the failure of past pupils to heed their advisors' counsel only reinforces the wisdom
of acting on Othéa's advice now. The lesson on how to avoid disaster is paradoxically
predicated on the inevitability of Hector's fate.¹⁸⁴ Christine's exegesis on the *Epistre*
Othéa relies on the reader's recognition that Othéa is a Sibyl whose prophecies have
already become history, who can truly say:

comme deesse je sçay
Par science, non par essay,
Les choses qui sont a venir [. . .].¹⁸⁵

[as goddess I know
By science, not trial and error,
The things which are to come [. . .].]

As Marilyn Desmond and Pamela Sheingorn write, "In the *Epistre Othéa*, the future
perfect of Hector's death in the mythic past allows the reader to use that mythic past to
negotiate the ethical demands of the present."¹⁸⁶ In other words, the anticipation of
Hector's death heightens the significance of the lessons that he fails to learn, and this
anticipation makes the *Epistre Othéa* a more effective conduct book for the reader. As
wise Aristotle says to his royal pupil Alexander the Great in the *glose* to Chapter 90,

where Othéa tells Hector of his own death to come: “Tant que tu croiras le conseil de ceulx que usent de sapience et qui loyaument t’aiment, tu regneras glorieusement” [“As long as you believe the counsel of those who use wisdom and who love you loyally, you will reign gloriously”].¹⁸⁷

Christine’s efforts to construct herself as sibylline advisor to the French monarchy, through the *Epistre à la reine*, the *Lamentacion*, and the Queen’s Manuscript *Epistre Othéa*, combined intellectual complexity with varying proportions of emotive force. However, her program of royal counsel did not end with her addresses to Isabel of Bavaria, but was to attain its apogee later, in *Le Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, in which the target of her wisdom is Isabel’s last-surviving son, King Charles VII. As will be seen, the sibylline register used in this 1429 poem is almost entirely distinct from the mode employed in the texts discussed above. The advent of the Maid of Orléans would vindicate Christine’s faith in women, and would also inspire in her an unprecedented confidence in prophecies of France’s imperial destiny. Accordingly, the tears of the tormented Sibyl give way, in this final work, to the declamatory tones of the apocalyptic Sibyl, predicting a pre-eminent role for her nation in the fulfillment of earthly destiny.

Notes

¹ "Ah, but why or to whom do I say these words when I know that I will not be believed? For just as they say that the fool believes not until he receives, so these words cannot enter into hardened hearts. My great longing forces me to speak them, however, like a tender mother to her children. It disconcerts me that some seem to have become obstinate, a very perverse thing. Alas, I fear I resemble Cassandra, the wise daughter of King Priam [. . .]." Christine de Pizan, *L'Avison-Christine*, ed. Mary Louise Towner (1932; New York: AMS, 1969) 106; *Christine's Vision*, trans. Glenda K. McLeod, *Garland Library of Medieval Literature* 68, Series B (New York: Garland, 1993) 39.

² Margolis sees the same figure in the inscribed letters in *Le Livre des trois vertus* and *Le Livre de la paix*. Nadia Margolis, "'The Cry of the Chameleon': Evolving Voices in the Epistles of Christine de Pizan," *Disputatio: An International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Later Middle Ages* 1 (1996): 51 (hereafter "Cry of the Chameleon").

³ Margolis, "Cry of the Chameleon," 54-5.

⁴ Margolis, "Cry of the Chameleon," 57.

⁵ Roberta Krueger, "Christine's Anxious Lessons: Gender, Morality, and the Social Order from the *Enseignements* to the *Avison*," *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 35. As elsewhere, I use "history" here in its widest sense, comprising not only the past but also the present and future (a practice incorporated, of course, in the Sibylline Oracles).

⁶ Margarete Zimmermann, "Vox Femina, Vox Politica: The *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France*," *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) 119-20.

⁷ Mary McKinley, "The Subversive 'Seulette,'" *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) 163.

⁸ Linda Leppig, "The Political Rhetoric of Christine de Pizan," *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) 143-4.

⁹ The prophetic, detached, and omniscient sibylline voice of Othéa herself, devised in 1400, is the forerunner of the Cumaean Sibyl as portrayed by Christine in the *Chemin de lonc estude* (1403). She has her source in the Cumaean Sibyl who guides Aeneas in Vergil, but the influence of Dante's Beatrice is also apparent in the non-linearity of her guided tour through history, and in the emphasis Christine places on penitence and redemption.

¹⁰ The Sibyl is said to have typically predicted "many revolutions and upheavals of Greek cities, many appearances of barbarous hordes and murders of rulers." Heraclitus (535-475 BCE), quoted by Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis*, 9. The sibylline oracles of Rome "were not so much predictions of woes to come, like apocalyptic tracts, as explanations of what was required to avert the anger of the gods"; Bard Thompson, "Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles," *Review of Religion* 3-4 (1952): 124.

¹¹ *Aeneid* 6.42-51, 77-80, and 98-101. See Susan Skulsky, "The Sibyl's Rage and the Marpesian Rock," *American Journal of Philology* 108.1 (Spring 1987): 56-80.

¹² On the contrary, Rachel Gibbons has uncovered only one contemporary reference which questions Isabel's commitment to the education of the royal children. She also points out that Isabel's daughters continued to visit her after their marriages, suggesting a loving bond. Rachel Gibbons, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France (1385-1422): The Creation of an Historical Villainess," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 58-9 (hereafter "Creation").

¹³ In 1831 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley expressed the views of contemporaries in describing the decline of Parisian government in her short story, "Transformation": "at length [I] reached what had long been the bourne of my wishes, Paris. There was wild work in Paris then. The poor king, Charles the Sixth, now sane, now mad, now a monarch, and now an abject slave, was the very mockery of humanity. The queen, the dauphin, the Duke of Burgundy, alternately friends and foes — now meeting in prodigal fest, now shedding blood in rivalry — were blind to the miserable state of their country, and the dangers that impended over it, and gave themselves wholly up to dissolute enjoyment or savage strife. [. . .] The Duke of Orléans was waylaid and murdered by the Duke of Burgundy. Fear and terror possessed all Paris. The dauphin and the queen shut themselves up; every pleasure was suspended." Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, "Transformation," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th edition, vol. 3, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: Norton, 1993) 852-3.

¹⁴ No English-language translations of these modern biographies exist. Indeed, there exists an English-language void concerning Isabel which has only recently begun to be filled by R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392-1420* (New York: AMS Press, 1986) and Rachel Gibbons, "Creation," 51-73 and "The Queen as 'social mannequin': consumerism and expenditure at the court of Isabeau of Bavaria, 1393-1422," *Journal of Medieval History* 26.4 (2000): 371-395 (hereafter "Social Mannequin"). For modern biographies in French, see Jean Verdon, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1981); Jean Markale, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Payot, 1982); Marie-Véronique Clin, *Isabeau de Bavière: La reine calomniée* (Perrin, 1999); Philippe Delorme, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2003).

¹⁵ Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984) 150 (hereafter *Life and Works*); Deborah Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2000) 58; Thelma Fenster, "Who's a Heroine? The Example of Christine de Pizan," *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003) 121.

¹⁶ According to biographer Marcel Thibault the substitution of "Isabeau" for "Isabel" or "Ysabel" (the French transliteration of the German "Elisabeth") originated as an affectionate diminutive, possibly used by close family and friends, until hijacked by an anonymous Parisian poet for *Le Songe véritable*. Here, Raison challenges her:

Toy, Royne, dame ysabeau,
Envelopée en laide peau
Se devers moy bientost ne viens
Je te toul Bray trestous les tiens [. . .].

[You, queen, Lady Isabeau

Enveloped in ugly skin,
If you do not come soon to me,
I shall take all of yours away from you.]

“Le Songe Véritable: pamphlet politique d’un parisien du XVe siècle,” *Mémoires de la Société de l’Histoire de Paris et de l’Île-de-France*, vol. 17, ed. Henri Moranvillé (Paris, 1890) 276. Marcel Thibault, *Isabeau de Bavière: la jeunesse, 1370-1405* (Paris: Perrin, 1903). See also Rachel Gibbons, “Creation,” 53.

¹⁷ Legrand held the queen responsible as a role model for the court, but he seems to have freely conceded that she was unaware of the scandalous reputation of her courtiers: when he was reprimanded for the free tone with which he had addressed Isabel, he offered to present her with proof of her court’s corruption. Le Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique du règne de Charles VI*, ed. M.L. Bellaguet (Paris: Crapelet, 1839-52) vol. 3, 269-71; Famiglietti 42.

¹⁸ The anonymous poet behind the *Songe véritable* charges Hémon Raguier, Isabel’s ex-argentier, with the financial state of the queen’s household, but the poet also takes Isabel to task for fiscal abuse witnessed by the public. The personification of Experience charges the queen with financial extravagance and reiterates the public misconception that she had sent secret funds to her relatives in Bavaria. Monies had been discovered en route from France to Bavaria by the city of Metz (in an incident recorded by the Monk of Saint-Denis) and had been interpreted as further proof that Isabel sought to drain the French treasury because she loved her German relatives more than her adoptive homeland. In fact, the “secret” funds referred to in the pamphlet were probably the monies sent to Louis of Bavaria on July 22, 1405, in return for annual revenues from five Bavarian dominions.

¹⁹ It was popularly believed that the entire proceeds from the recent tax (levied by Parlement in March 1405 and estimated by the Monk of Saint-Denis at 800,000 ecus) had been appropriated for the personal consumption of Orléans. Famiglietti 39-40.

²⁰ Burgundian propagandists fabricated an affair to gloss the assassination of Louis of Orléans in 1408 by John the Fearless as a lover’s revenge. In the poem “Le Pastoralet,” Burgundy murders Orléans to avenge the cuckold Charles VI who is being driven mad with jealousy and blood-lust. Isabel’s alleged adultery exonerates Burgundy. Famiglietti 45; “Le Pastoralet,” *Chroniques relatives à l’histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*, ed. J. M. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels: 1873) vol. 2.

²¹ Birth records alone prove that Isabel did not abandon her wifely duties to Charles despite his illness, which began in 1392: she bore him three children before that date, but nine more afterwards, a total of 12 children in 21 years.

²² Contemporary court chroniclers agree that Charles had become a danger to himself and those around him. He wore soiled garments, destroyed tapestries with the royal insignia, and refused Isabel’s presence and claiming not to recognize her. At one banquet, after recklessly joining in a masquerade dressed as a wood savage, he narrowly escaped being burnt to death when a spark ignited the performers’ hemp and pitch costumes. Four of the six performers died. Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 2, 404, and vol. 14, 93; Famiglietti 15; Catherine Bearne, *Pictures of the Old French Court: Jeanne de*

Bourbon, Isabeau de Bavière, Anne de Bretagne. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900) 171-6; Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1979) 504-5.

²³ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pizan: an electronic transcription*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, 1999, Minnesota U, <<http://erc.lib.umn.edu/dynaweb/french/pizalaci>>, 2.68 (hereafter *Cité des dames*, references by part and chapter). English translation *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1998) 212 (hereafter *City of Ladies*).

²⁴ "Christine would certainly have heard the rumors about Isabel and Louis, yet she gives the queen an honored place in the *Cité des dames*. At first reading, the entry has a generic flavor; but then its denials of any crimes on Isabel's part, followed by assurances that she loves her subjects, begin to sound like rebuttals of quite pointed, though unarticulated, accusations against the queen that Christine's readers would certainly have known [. . .]." Fenster 121. For a contrasting opinion, see Willard, *Life and Works*, 143.

²⁵ See Lois L. Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High Medieval Queen: the Esther Topos," *Power of the Weak*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995) 138.

²⁶ In 1409, Isabel became the first French queen to control a treasury independent from the king's. Rachel Gibbons argues that her accounts reflect the size of her family and political and social responsibilities; Gibbons, "Social Mannequin," 375-6, 380-7, 393.

²⁷ Orléans had been named regent of the dauphin in a separate document.

²⁸ As early as 1401, Isabel began using her influence to serve her husband in his absence by reining in the ducal houses. However, she also promoted personal agendas (by arranging marriages). Famiglietti 23-28.

²⁹ Blanche of Navarre, second wife of Philip VI, continued to influence the court as queen-dowager for more than forty years after her husband's death until her own in 1398, an iconic figure of queenly virtue. Charles VI admired her and sought her advice. Valentina Visconti, duchess of Orléans, was later resented for her campaign to renew the inquiry into the 1407 assassination of her husband, Louis of Orléans, by John the Fearless. She earlier became suspect in the eyes of the people because the king relied on her company during his illness. It was said that even when Charles did not recognize his queen, he would sit with the duchess for hours. Catherine Bearne writes: "Her voice seemed to have a strange fascination for him, and he would do anything she wished. [. . .] The populace [] chose to attribute her influence to magic; they said she came from Lombardy, where it was practised to a great extent; that her father himself was a magician." Bearne 147-8, 180-2.

³⁰ Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 3, 270-4.

³¹ In fact, the queen had told and been aided by her brother Louis of Bavaria, the king's cousin, Edward duke of Bar, and Jean de Montaigu, the king's *grand maître d'hôtel*.

³² Burgundy's daughter, Marguerite, stood to become the next queen of France. Although the legal age for the marriage of girls was 12, marriage contracts could be annulled if it could be proven that consummation had not taken place.

³³ Famiglietti 46-51.

³⁴ No written account either direct (a household inventory) or indirect (a chronicle or the letter of a third party) has been discovered which would indicate conclusively that Christine's letter reached the queen. Of the six extant copies (BnF, fr. 580, BnF, fr. 604, Chantilly, Condé 493, Brussels, Bibliothèque royale IV 1176, BnF, fr. 605, and Oxford, All Souls 182) only B.N. f. fr. 580 has been identified by Charity Cannon Willard as an autograph manuscript but none can be definitively traced to Isabel's library.

Nevertheless, codicological evidence provided by the Queen's Manuscript (the BL Harley 4431) has allowed scholars to argue persuasively that Isabel did indeed receive Christine's letter. Gianni Mombello and Sandra Hindman suggest independently that the *Epistre à la reine* reached Isabel and was thus considered unnecessary for inclusion in the Queen's Manuscript — the most lavish collection of Christine's work, produced explicitly for Isabel. As Angus Kennedy has shown, X-rays of this autograph manuscript reveal that the text of the *Epistre à la reine* has been carefully erased from the collection, where it once appeared on three columns, now blank (quire 34 fol. 255a-c), prior to the *Epistre à Eustache Morel* (which begins on fol. 255d). Since the collection was produced in Christine's scriptorium and was often corrected by her own hand, the omission of the *Epistre à la reine* must have been known to her and was probably her decision. Hindman suggests that the initial inclusion of the text was an oversight by Christine, as Isabel had received her copy in 1405. Similarly, James Laidlaw, concluding on external and internal evidence that the Queen's Manuscript was completed not in 1410 or 1411 as he previously argued, but in late 1413, suggests convincingly that the *Epistre à la reine* was removed because of Christine's lifting of mood after four years of Burgundian control of Paris. Celebrating John of Bourbon's siege of Soubise (November 21-23, 1413) with what Laidlaw argues is the hasty inclusion of the *Encore aultres balades*, Christine felt free to praise the Armagnac duke without fear of censure. In late 1413 she would not have felt the need to "repeat the pleas" she had addressed to Isabel in 1405. Charity Cannon Willard, "An Autograph Manuscript of Christine de Pizan?" *Studi francesi* 27 (1965): 452-57; Sandra Hindman, "The Composition of the Manuscript of Christine de Pizan's Collected Works in the British Library: A Reassessment," *The British Library Journal* 9 (1983): 93-123 (hereafter "Composition"); Gianni Mombello, "La tradizione manoscritta dell'*Epistre Othéa* di Christine de Pizan: Prolegomeni all'edizione del testo," *Memorie dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, series 4, vol 15 (Torino: Accademia delle Scienze, 1967) 286-306; Angus J. Kennedy, "Editing Christine de Pizan's *Epistre à la reine*," *The Editor and the Text*, ed. Philip E. Bennett and Graham A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP with the Modern Humanities Research Association, 1990) 78-9; J. C. Laidlaw, "The Date of the Queen's MS: London, British Library, Harley MS 4431," forthcoming in *Christine de Pizan: Une voix féminine lyrique, politique et didactique*, ed. Roman Reisinger (Salzburg: Verlag Mueller-Speiser).

³⁵ Sandra Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's Epistre Othéa: Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986) 59 (hereafter *Painting and Politics*).

³⁶ Such were the advantages of Nicole Oresme (*De moneta*, 1355), Philippe de Mézières (*Songe du vieil pèlerin*, c.1389), Pierre Salmon (*Réponse à Charles VI et*

Lamentation au roi sur son état, 1409), and Jean de Montreuil (*A Toute la chevalerie* and *Contre les Anglais*, c.1406-1417). Alain Chartier, a poet and a politician who chose to exert influence on public affairs through the vernacular (*Quadrilogue invectif* 1422), was both a graduate of the University of Paris and a faithful secretary to Charles VII. Jean Gerson, both an eminent theologian and statesman, had the choice to address issues affecting the royal family either through writing or through oration (*Vivat rex* and *Veniat pax*, sermons delivered before the court in November 1405 and November 1408, respectively). Jacques Krynen, *Idéals du Prince et Pouvoir Royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age, 1380-1440* (Paris, 1981), 184-99; Eric Hicks, "The Political Significance of Christine de Pizan," *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) 11.

³⁷ Kate Langdon Forhan, "Reflecting Heroes: Christine de Pizan and the Mirror Tradition," *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis (New York: W. De Gruyter, 1994) 189-96 (hereafter "Reflecting Heroes"); Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002) 27-44 (hereafter *Political Theory*).

³⁸ The logic of the exercise rested, like so much in medieval thought, on classical precepts: among them, Aristotle's notion of virtue as a state of moral character that can be acquired and entrenched through repeated practice. As Kate Langdon Forhan notes, medieval political theorists respected Aristotle in this regard, alongside Plutarch and Seneca, partly because all had tutored princes; but other models included Cicero and Boethius. In the words of Cary J. Nederman, "The conclusion universally reached [. . .] was that the ruler whose moral character was well-formed could always and forever be expected to judge in accordance with the law and to obey just statute in all things, precisely because his disposition towards virtue led him to conform his conduct to the justice inherent in the law." Forhan, "Reflecting Heroes," 190-1, and *Political Theory*, 32-4; Cary J. Nederman, "Conciliarism and Constitutionalism: Jean Gerson and Medieval Political Thought," *History of European Ideas* 12.2 (1990): 193-4.

³⁹ See further Forhan, *Political Theory*, 30-1.

⁴⁰ Charity Cannon Willard, "Christine de Pizan: From Poet to Political Commentator," *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 29.

⁴¹ By the fifteenth century, too, the founding classical concepts and exemplars in the Mirror had been enriched by the new humanistic understanding of classical learning, promoted by patrons such as Charles V and his brothers (notably the duke of Berry), who commissioned translations of Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Livy, and others.

⁴² For discussion of the body politic in relation to Christine, see particularly Forhan, *Political Theory*, 36-7, 45-75.

⁴³ "[. . .] Les presens epistres, esquelles, ma tres redoubtee dame — s'il vous plaist moy tant honnourer que oïr les daigniez —, pourrez entendre la diligence, desir et voulenté ou ma petite puissance s'estent a soustenir par deffenses veritables contre aucunes oppinions a honnesteté contraires, et aussi l'onneur et louenge des femmes [. . .]. [. . .] Si suppli humblement Vostre Digne Haultesce que a mes raisons droicturieres, non obstant que ne les sache conduire et mener par si beau langage comme autre mieulx le feroit, y vueilliez adjoûter foy et donner faveur de plus dire se plus y sçay. Et tout soit

fait soubz vostre saige et benigne correction.” [“In these letters, my most awesome Lady, if you deign to honor me by listening to them, you can understand my diligence, desire, and wish to resist by true defenses, as far as my small power extends, some false opinions denigrating the honor and fair name of women [. . .]. Thus, your worthy Highness, I petition it in as fine a language as another might, and permit me to enlarge upon it, if, in the future, I am able to. May all this be done under your wise and benign correction.”] Christine de Pisan, Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier et Pierre Col, *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose (Bibliothèque du XVe Siècle 43)*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 1977) 5-6, lines 20-9, 37-42; Baird and Kane 65-6.

⁴⁴ Susan J. Dudash, “Christine de Pizan and the ‘menu peuple,’” *Speculum* 78 (2003): 806; Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1989) 1.1.67 (hereafter *Trois vertus*, references by book, chapter, and line); Christine de Pisan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or the Book of the Three Virtues*, ed. Sarah Lawson (London: Penguin, 1985) 32 (hereafter *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, references by page).

⁴⁵ Louis of Guyenne had married Marguerite in August 1404. Charity Cannon Willard speculates that Burgundy may have commissioned the *Trois vertus* for his daughter, to whom it is dedicated, on the occasion of her wedding. She was a mere eleven years old at the time of the marriage, and her education would henceforth have been the queen’s responsibility. Willard further suggests that the book was completed after the summer 1405 controversy over the courtly fashions mentioned by Jacques Legrand, because it appears to carry veiled references to the scandal. The duke paid Christine twice for books, first in February 1405 and again in November 1407; only the biography of Charles V is named. Charity Cannon Willard (ed.), *The Writings of Christine de Pizan* (New York: Persea, 1994) 101, 142; *Life and Works*, 146, 149-50. She cites Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pisan 1364-1430: étude biographique et littéraire* (Paris: 1927).

⁴⁶ Joël Blanchard, “‘Vox Poetica, Vox Politica’: the Poet’s Entry into the Political Arena in the Fifteenth Century,” *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. and trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York: Norton, 1997) 366.

⁴⁷ “Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre à la reine*,” ed. Angus J. Kennedy, *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92.2 (1988): 254-5, lines 18-22 (hereafter *Epistre à la reine*, references by page and line).

⁴⁸ Christine de Pizan, “Letter to the Queen of France, Isabel of Bavaria,” trans. Charity Cannon Willard, *Writings* 270 (hereafter *Letter to the Queen*).

⁴⁹ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 22-27.

⁵⁰ *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁵¹ Bernard Ribémont, “Christine de Pizan et l’image de la mère,” *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*, ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000) 153-4.

⁵² *Epistre à la reine* 257, lines 120-8; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁵³ Christine recognizes that continued civil discord and the resulting famines, plagues, and economic crises will render the country open to further foreign invasion: “[. . .] et puis, qu’il venist par de costé estrangiers aucuns qui du tout les persecutassent et saississent leur heritaiges? Et ainsi, tres haute dame, povez estre certaine, couvendroit

qu'avenist ainsi de cest persecucion, se la chose aloit plus avant, que Dieux ne vueille! Car n'est mie doubte que les ennemis du royaume, resjouiz de ceste aventure, vendroient par de costé a grant armée pour tout parhonnir." ["And if then it should happen that foreign enemies should come to persecute them everywhere and seize their heritage! And, mighty lady, you may be quite certain that it would come about if an end were not put to this affair. May God forbid, for there is no doubt that the kingdom's enemies, overjoyed by this turn of events, would rush in with a great army to destroy everything."'] (*Epistre à la reine* 256-7, lines 99-108; *Letter to the Queen* 272). These words would probably bring to mind the recent English incursion into Flanders, which had indirectly led to the current stand-off between Burgundy and Orléans. Famiglietti 41.

⁵⁴ *Epistre à la reine* 257, lines 109-115. Quilligan also sees this warning in oracular terms, stating that Christine "prophesies the foreign conquest of France if the queen fails to make peace between the warring barons." Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's "Cité des dames"* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 268.

⁵⁵ *Letter to the Queen* 272.

⁵⁶ Compare Vergil's depiction of the Sibyl prophesying at Cumae, *Aeneid*, 6.45-51; Ovid's story of her deal with Apollo, *Metamorphoses*, 14.132; and Christine's own account, drawn from the *Ovide moralisé*, in *Le Chemin de longue étude: Édition critique du ms. Harley 4431*, ed. and trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2000) lines 547-82 (hereafter *Chemin de lonc estude*). The rivalry of the Appennine Sibyl and the Virgin Mary may also be viewed as evidence of the confusion between holy inspiration and divine impregnation. Leo Spitzer, "The Artistic Unity of Gil Vicente's Auto da Sibila Casandra," *Hispanic Review* 27.1 (January 1959): 59. He adds: "Eduard Norden, who in his book *Aeneis, Buch VI*, commenting on the phrase *plena deo*, supposedly used of the Cumaean Sibyl by Vergil in an unpreserved version of his *Aeneid*, points to the use in antiquity of *erôtika onomata* in reference to prophetesses: the act of prophesying was seen as an act of love of the god Apollo (with Pausanias the Erythraean Sibyl called herself *gynaika gametén*, the married wife of the god), as fecundation by the god (Servius built on this belief his etymology of the name Cumae, the seat of the Cumaean Sibyl: *Cumas vocarunt . . . a gravidae mulieris augurio quae graece enkyos [= 'pregnant'] dicitur*, and Lucan says of the Pythian priestess: *hoc ubi virgineo conceptum est pectore numen*)."

⁵⁷ *Avision* 106; *Christine's Vision* 39.

⁵⁸ Quilligan 130.

⁵⁹ When Raimond Thomassy first published the *Epistre à la reine* in 1838, he suggested that the letter had been commissioned by Louis of Orléans. As evidence, he proposed that Christine would probably have needed Orléans' support to get the letter through the defensive lines surrounding Paris. Clearly, Orléans stood to gain politically from Isabel's return to Paris — the move Christine implies she must take — because without the queen he had little advantage in council over Burgundy, whereas Isabel's sense of duty to blood meant that as the king's brother he could rely on her solidarity in the role of regency council head; Famiglietti 40. It is also true that Christine's professional relationship with Orléans dated back to 1401 (when she dedicated a copy of the *Epistre Othéa* to him). However, Christine now had reasons to prefer the

Burgundians. Her son had been refused a position in Orléans' household but offered one in that of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, shortly before the latter died in 1404. Christine had begun to write commissioned works primarily for the Burgundian family after this appointment. All in all, it is more reasonable to propose that Christine used Orléans as a conduit for her message to the queen because her own agenda (averting civic violence) overlapped with his (maintaining his power against Burgundy).

⁶⁰ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 53-9.

⁶¹ *Letter to the Queen* 270-1.

⁶² It is unlikely that the duke of Berry was now using the royal children as a bargaining chip. As captain of the city he was qualified to judge whether the queen's demands warranted risking their removal across Burgundy's troops. In the *Trois vertus* (1.9) Christine makes clear that she regards it as a necessity for the noblewoman to stay the hand of justice for the sake of peace; she advises that if a powerful subject commits a crime, even against the majesty of his lord, the lady must demonstrate pity and avoid the spilling of blood.

⁶³ The modifications made to Isabel's authority in 1403 assured that she could not enforce actions which did not receive the majority approval of the Royal Council. Consequently, if Isabel was going to serve as intercessor between Burgundy and Orléans she would have to put aside her demand that the dauphin be taken out of Paris. Furthermore, if the councillors and royal princes of blood were not willing to come to her, she would have to consider a return to Paris for the sake of the people.

⁶⁴ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Enemies Within/Enemies Without: Threats to the Body Politic in Christine de Pizan," *Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 26., ed. Paul Maurice Clogan. Rowman and Littlefield, 1999, 3.

⁶⁵ The *Corps de policie* was dedicated to the eight-year-old Louis of Guyenne, who was living with the duke of Burgundy.

⁶⁶ Forhan, *Political Theory*, 62.

⁶⁷ *Epistre à la reine* 254, lines 13-15; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁶⁸ Leppig 146-7.

⁶⁹ *Epistre à la reine* 254, lines 15-17; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁷⁰ *Cité des dames* 1.13.

⁷¹ *Cité des dames* 1.13, 2.65.

⁷² Blanche's husband Louis VIII died when her son was only eleven years old.

⁷³ *Epistre à la reine* 256, lines 92-4; *Letter to the Queen* 271.

⁷⁴ In the sibylline advice handed out in the *Trois vertus* (1.9), Christine states that women are by nature peacekeepers, offering Queen Blanche as an exemplar.

⁷⁵ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 50-53; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁷⁶ Noting that "Christine's involvement with Isabel remains underexplored by modern scholars," Fenster (121-123) discusses Christine's view of the queen's *fama* in relation to several texts.

⁷⁷ The *Trois vertus* adds that it is the noblewoman's duty to convince her husband that he needs to be loved by his people if he wishes to reign in peace and glory. *Trois vertus* 1.8, 1.17.20-1; *Treasure of the City of Ladies* 49, 71.

⁷⁸ *Epistre à la reine* 255, line 45; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁷⁹ *Epistre à la reine* 256, lines 85-8; *Letter to the Queen* 271.

⁸⁰ *Cité des dames* 2.49.

⁸¹ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 47-9; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁸² Sermons addressed to noblewomen used Esther simultaneously as a model of wifely obedience and as an inspiration to women to serve as peaceful intercessors in worldly as well as domestic affairs. Two narrative traditions inform the medieval model of the Esther Topos found in the Vulgate: Hebrew and Greek. The Hebrew version emphasizes God's providence, but Christine favors the Greek model, which emphasizes Esther's heroism by underlining the dangers of approaching her husband King Ahasuerus unbidden and by celebrating the transformation of women's physical weakness into power. Likewise, in the *Cité des dames* (2.32), Christine writes of Esther as "noble, sage, bonne et belle et de Dieu amee" ["noble, wise, and good maiden [. . .] beloved of God"] (*City of Ladies* 145). She describes how Esther adorns herself and approaches the king in a piece of theatre that is meant to appear unstudied: a show of feminine humility and yet, paradoxically, a demonstration of the ability of women to occupy a traditionally male political space. See Huneycutt 126-146.

⁸³ John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally Beth MacLean (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995) 147.

⁸⁴ Kate Langdon Forhan has remarked on Christine's unorthodox use of masculine virtues. She writes: "In her search for defenders of peace, it is significant that the idealized characteristics of knighthood have been extended by Christine both to a physically weak and non-militaristic king in *Charles V*, and to a queen, Isabeau of Bavaria." Forhan, *Political Theory*, 146-7; see also chapter 6 generally.

⁸⁵ *Epistre à la reine* 256, lines 95-9; *Letter to the Queen* 271-2.

⁸⁶ *Epistre à la reine* 256, lines 67-74.

⁸⁷ *Letter to the Queen* 271.

⁸⁸ *Trois vertus* 1.10.62-4; *Treasure of the City of Ladies* 53.

⁸⁹ *Epistre à la reine* 257, lines 140-2; *Letter to the Queen* 273.

⁹⁰ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 30-2; *Letter to the Queen* 270.

⁹¹ "[. . .] Laquelle chose est le droit office de sage et bonne royne et princepce d'estre moyenne de paix et de concorde, et de travaillier que guerre soit eschivee pour les inconveniens qui avenir en peuent. Et ad ce doivent aviser principaulment les dames, car les hommes sont par nature plus courageux et plus chaulx, et le grant desir que ilz ont d'eulx vengier ne leur laisse aviser les perilz ne les maulx qui avenir en peuent. Mais nature de femme est plus paoureuse et aussi de plus doulce condicion, et pour ce, se elle veult et elle est sage, estre puet le meilleur moyen a pacifier l'omme, qui soit." ["This work is the proper duty of the wise queen and princess: to be the means of peace and concord, to work for the avoidance of war because of the trouble that can come of it. Ladies in particular ought to attend to this business, for men are by nature more courageous and more hot-headed, and the great desire they have to avenge themselves prevents their considering either the perils or the evils that can result from war. But women are by nature more timid and also of a sweeter disposition, and for this reason, if they are wise and if they wish to, they can be the best means of pacifying men."] *Trois vertus* 1.9.52-61; *Treasure of the City of Ladies* 51.

⁹² *Trois vertus* 1.9.74-8. *Treasure of the City of Ladies* 52.

⁹³ Ribémont 153-4.

⁹⁴ *Cité des dames* 1.33; *City of Ladies* 71.

⁹⁵ Royal ordinances the next year stripped Burgundy's authority over the dauphin and precluded any chance that he might become regent, by stipulating that upon Charles VI's death the dauphin would succeed as king regardless of his age.

⁹⁶ The basic syllogism of John Petit's tract of March 8, 1408, is as follows: it is permissible and meritorious to kill a tyrant; Louis of Orléans was a tyrant; therefore, Burgundy acted honorably by killing him. The argument was technically flawed (Louis was not a king and could not therefore be considered a tyrant) and has been described by historian Richard Vaughan as "one of the most insolent pieces of political chicanery and theological casuistry in all history." Nevertheless the ploy appealed to the king's paranoia. The tract, later circulated throughout France, claimed Orléans had tried several times to poison the king, had used black magic to influence him, and had made a pact with Henry of Lancaster. For fear of further violence Burgundy was officially pardoned with the Treaty of Chartres on March 9, 1409. Those present — including the king, the queen, the dauphin, and the duke of Berry — formally accepted his claim that he had conspired to assassinate Orléans for the good of France. Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless: The growth of Burgundian power* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002) 77; Charity Cannon Willard, "The Manuscript of Jean Petit's Justification: Some Burgundian Propaganda Methods of the Early Fifteenth Century," *Studi Francesi* 38 (1969): 271-80.

⁹⁷ Christine describes herself "estraignant à grant paine les lermes qui me veue troublent et comme fontaine affluent sur mon visage, tant que avoir puisse espace de escrire ceste lasse complainte, dont la pitié de l'eminent meschief me fait d'amerer gouttes effacier l'escripture" ["restraining with great difficulty the tears that obscure my vision and run like a fountain over my face, so that I will be able to write this sad complaint; the pity for the great misfortunes causes me to erase my writing with bitter drops"]; "'La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France' de Christine de Pizan," ed. Angus J. Kennedy, *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon, professeur de langue et littérature françaises du moyen age et de la renaissance, par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, vol. 1 (Rennes: University de Haute-Bretagne, 1980) 180, lines 1-4 (hereafter *Lamentacion*, references by page and line); "The Lamentation on the Evils that have Befallen France," trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York: Norton, 1997) 227.

⁹⁸ Margolis, "Cry of the Chameleon," 51.

⁹⁹ Margolis appears later to indicate a realization that her typological distinction may be doubtful. Referring to the *Epistre à la reine* and laments like it (by implication the *Lamentacion*), she writes: "Such pieces continue to intrigue scholars by a systematic, learned argumentation delivered without any sacrifice of emotional intensity." Nadia Margolis, "The Poem's Progress: Christine's *Aultres Ballades* no. 42 and the Fortunes of a Text," *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*, ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000) 252.

¹⁰⁰ Jerome's gloss is *dolens*, "complaining." Jérôme, *Commentaire sur Jonas*, ed. and trans. Yves-Marie Duval (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985) 286.

¹⁰¹ “Christine opens her *Lamentacion* by using the same term for herself that she earlier coined to speak of herself as a widow in her famous poem, ‘Seulete suy et seulete veuil estre’ (I am a lonely little woman and I want to be a lonely little woman) — the widow of the lyric poem recalls the widow at the beginning of Jeremiah’s Lamentations, ‘quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo: facta est quasi vidua domina gentium’ (how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become a widow! she that was great among the nations) — thus again associating the biblical widowed city sitting alone to her own position as a lonely widow lamenting the political calamities of her time.” Earl Jeffrey Richards, “French Cultural Nationalism and Christian Universalism in the Works of Christine de Pizan,” *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 85.

¹⁰² *Christine’s Vision* 40.

¹⁰³ *Cité des dames* 2.5.

¹⁰⁴ *City of Ladies* 106-7.

¹⁰⁵ “Mais de toutes ces paroles ne faisoient compte ne point ne l’en creioient. Et toutesvoies comme celle qui moult plaignoit, et a bon droit, celle grant perte et ce dommage, ne s’en pouvoit taire, par quoy maintes foiz en fu batue de son pere et de ses freres qui disoient que fole estoit. Mais pourtant ne s’en tut mie, ne pour mourir ne s’en teust ne souffrist de leur dire sanz cesser, parquoy convint, se paix vouldrent avoir, qu’en une chambre lointaine de gens l’enfermassent pour oster sa noise de leurs oreilles.” [“But they paid no attention to her words and did not believe in the least. When, however, she would grieve — and rightly so — over the great loss and destruction, for she simply could not stay quiet, she would be beaten by her father and brothers who claimed she was crazy. But she would nevertheless not be still; she would neither remain silent nor put up with their talk in order to avoid death. For this reason, if they wanted to have any peace, they had to shut her up in a room far away from people in order to get her racket out of their ears.”] *Cité des dames*, 2.5; *City of Ladies* 107.

¹⁰⁶ *Cité des dames*, 2.5.

¹⁰⁷ *Cité des dames*, 2.5; *City of Ladies* 107.

¹⁰⁸ *Lamentacion* 180; *Lamentation* 225.

¹⁰⁹ *Lamentacion* 182, lines 3-11.

¹¹⁰ *Lamentation* 227.

¹¹¹ *Psalms* 75, line 10. See also Richards 87-8.

¹¹² *Lamentacion* 184, line 16; *Lamentation* 229.

¹¹³ *Lamentacion* 180, lines 4-9.

¹¹⁴ *Lamentation* 225.

¹¹⁵ *Lamentacion* 180, line 9. *Lamentation* 225.

¹¹⁶ *Lamentacion* 180, line 86. *Lamentation* 225. Margarete Zimmermann argues that Christine undertakes a “radical redefinition of the concepts of *victoire*, *gloire*, and *renommee*” to suggest that Christine’s “reversal of the emblems of victory and triumph into those of shame and mourning point to a radical questioning of war.” For more on Zimmermann’s views concerning Christine’s developing political views in the *Lamentacion* see Zimmermann 113-127, and especially 121, 180.

¹¹⁷ *Lamentacion* 180, lines 120-1. *Lamentation* 226-7.

¹¹⁸ *Cité des dames* 2.49; *City of Ladies* 169.

-
- ¹¹⁹ *Lamentacion* 183, lines 3-7.
- ¹²⁰ *Lamentation* 228.
- ¹²¹ *Epistre à la reine* 255, lines 30-2; *Letter to the Queen* 270.
- ¹²² *Lamentacion* 183, line 9; *Lamentation* 228.
- ¹²³ *Lamentacion* 181, line 14; *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹²⁴ Mary McKinley (158-9) suggests that the rhetorical emphasis of “seulete” is there to manipulate the duke so that he can assume the symbolic role of head of government.
- ¹²⁵ *Lamentacion* 181, lines 16-19; *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹²⁶ *Lamentacion* 180, line 33; *Lamentation* 225.
- ¹²⁷ *Lamentacion* 180, lines 46-51 (“l’eschec et mat” 180, line 52).
- ¹²⁸ *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹²⁹ *Lamentacion* 183, lines 9-10; *Lamentation* 228. The earlier phrase (181, lines 14-15; *Lamentation* 226) reads: “Et qui te tient que tantost celle part n’affinz tenir la bridé et arrester ceste mortel emprise?” [Who keeps you from snatching the reins and stopping this deadly enterprise?”].
- ¹³⁰ *Lamentacion* 183, lines 13-19.
- ¹³¹ *Lamentation* 228.
- ¹³² *Lamentacion* 180; *Lamentation* 225.
- ¹³³ McKinley 158.
- ¹³⁴ First, Christine honors Berry by establishing his blood relationship to the immediate royal family, stating that he is “le plus noble oncle qui aujourd’hui vive, comme de trois roys, de six ducs et de tant de contes” [“the noblest of the uncles that are still alive, uncle of three kings, six dukes, and many counts”]; *Lamentacion* 182, lines 23-4; *Lamentation* 227. When she states that Berry must come to Paris “reconforter la cité adolée” [“to comfort the city in pain”], she implies that his authority comes from experience and age (*Lamentacion* 183, line 13. *Lamentation* 228). Berry represents all that remains of the age of Charles V. And Christine hopes that the duke can harness his relative likeness to his brother to serve his nephews as a father figure, whose bearing Christine hopes will recall the wisdom of the king she idealized.
- ¹³⁵ *Lamentacion* 181, lines 14-17; *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹³⁶ *Lamentacion* 181, line 16; *Lamentation* 226. Christine continues, “Plourez doncques, plourez, batant les paulmes à grans criz, si que fist en cas pareil jadiz la dolente Argine. Dames, damoiselles et femmes du royaume de France” [“Cry therefore cry, ladies, maidens, and women of the French realm, clap your hands with great cries as did the sorrowful Argia with the ladies of Argos in similar circumstances”] and “Assurez doncques, peuples, devotes femelettes, criez misericorde pour ceste grief tempest!” [“Try to prevent this, people, devout women cry with pity for this grievous storm!”]; *Lamentacion* 181, lines 4-6 and 31-2, *Lamentation* 226, 227.
- ¹³⁷ *Lamentacion* 181, line 6; *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹³⁸ *Cité des dames* 2.33; *Lamentacion* 181, lines 12-13; *Lamentation* 226.
- ¹³⁹ *Lamentacion* 181, line 31; *Lamentation* 227.
- ¹⁴⁰ In her discussion of the political rhetoric of Christine’s *Lamentacion*, Linda Leppig describes the *complainte* as the people’s “legitimate means to rightfully demand and receive redress” from the king or prince, who is expected to respond to the concerns

of his subjects “as a matter of *droit* — justice.” She adds: “Such an expectation is grounded in the perception of the prince as *droiturier* — the authority dispensing justice as part of his duties.” Comparing Christine’s address to the duke of Berry in the *Lamentacion* with the satirical *complainte* delivered by a “delegation of women” to the god of love in the *Epistre au dieu d’amours*, Leppig writes: “upon receiving this *complainte* the god of love promptly issues an ordinance calling men to task and prescribing rules of proper behavior toward women.” Leppig 130-156; see especially 148.

¹⁴¹ James Laidlaw concludes that the Queen’s Manuscript was presented on New Year’s Day 1414, rejecting his previous suggestion of late 1410 or early 1411; J. C. Laidlaw, “Christine de Pizan — A Publisher’s Progress,” *Modern Language Review* 82 (1987): 62-4 (hereafter “Publisher’s Progress”). Angus Kennedy (78-9) has dated it as 1410. Others such as Sandra Hindman (“Composition,” 93-123) argue that it may have been completed as late as 1415. For further implications of the dating question, see note 34 above.

¹⁴² In the *Avision-Christine*, Christine describes how she sent expensive manuscripts of her books to England in a ploy to have her son, Jean de Castel, returned to France. He had been in the service of the Earl of Salisbury as a companion to his son when the earl was executed in January 1400 for championing Richard II’s right to the English throne. Richard’s successor, Henry IV, accepted the sixteen-year-old at his court and attempted to use his hold over Jean to lure Christine to England as court poet. Christine viewed Henry IV as a usurper but knew she was on dangerous ground as long as her son remained in his care. Pretending to accept Henry’s offer by forwarding copies of her books, she convinced Henry to send Jean back to France to accompany her on the journey to England; they never crossed the Channel: “[. . .] a brief parler, tant fis a grant peine — et de mes livres me cousta — que congié ot mon dit filx de me venir querir par de ca pour mener la, qui encoure n’y vois [. . .]” [“To be brief, I did so many things— not without great forfeit, it cost me several of my manuscripts— that I obtained leave for my son to come and fetch me to lead there, [a place] I still have not seen”] (*Avision-Christine* 3.11; *Christine’s Vision* 121).

¹⁴³ The dedication most frequently found in the surviving copies is that to Louis of Orléans. See Gianni Mombello, “Per un’edizione critica dell *Epistre Othéa* di Christine de Pizan,” *Studi Francesi* 8 (1964): 401-17; 9 (1965): 1-12.

¹⁴⁴ The *Epistre Othéa*, the *Cité des dames*, and the *Chemin de lonc estude* are respectively items 17, 29, and 19 of 30 in the Queen’s Manuscript.

¹⁴⁵ Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 136.

¹⁴⁶ It is worth remembering that Charles V, like his father, was an avid collector of books, and that he commissioned many translations of foreign works into French. His collection, containing some 900 volumes, became the foundation of what is now the Bibliothèque Nationale. Alexander Sterligov writes: “It was at the French court that the tradition of learned patronage and love for books first appeared. This tradition was initiated by John the Good, continued by the “wise king” Charles V [. . .] and flourished under Philip the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy, and, of course, under Jean, the Duke of Berry, whose name is often mentioned in connection with this notable period in the history of illumination. The role of Paris as the arbiter of fashion was consolidated under

the Valois princes; the patronage of the court and of the aristocracy, who did not want to lag behind, attracted artists to Paris from other countries.” Sterligov, “Western European Illuminated Manuscripts in the National Library of Russia,” in Tamara Voronova and Alexander Sterligov, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts of the 8th and 16th Centuries in the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg*, trans. Mireille Faure (Bournemouth, England: Parkstone Press, 1996), 20.

¹⁴⁷ We can, however, sketch a history of the ownership of the Queen’s Manuscript and its eventual acquisition by the British Library as part of the Harleian collection in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, it appears that the occupation of France by the English meant that France was raided of many treasures. We know that some time between 1422 and 1435, the Queen’s Manuscript crossed the Channel for good. Following the death of Charles VI in 1422, John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford (also known as John Plantagenet, 1389–1435), became regent of France. His second wife, Jacqueline (also known as Jacquetta of Luxembourg), signed one of the blank leaves (fol. C (I)) and inscribed her motto, *Sur tous autres*, under her name and in the lower margin of one of the text pages (fol. 387). Anthony Wydeville, her son by her second husband the first Earl Rivers, Richard Wydeville, also inscribed his motto and translated Christine’s *Proverbs moraulx* into English. Although it appears that the manuscript entered the library of the Harley family via the heirs of Henry Cavendish, the Duke of Newcastle (whose signature and motto may also be found in the manuscript), it is interesting to note how close the Queen’s Manuscript came to the immediate royal family of England. Jacquette was also the mother of Elizabeth Woodville who in 1464 became queen consort to Edward IV.

¹⁴⁸ Christine de Pizan, “Premierement prologue adreçant a la royne,” *Oeuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1886; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965) vol. 1, xv, lines 49-60.

¹⁴⁹ My thanks to Angus Kennedy who suggested alterations to this translation.

¹⁵⁰ Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 132.

¹⁵¹ Christine de Pizan, *L’Epistre Othéa*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 69, line 45 (hereafter *Epistre Othéa*, references by chapter and line). *Christine de Pizan’s “Letter of Othea to Hector” Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Interpretative Essay*, ed. and trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1990) 94 (hereafter *Letter of Othea*, references by page).

¹⁵² If Minerva may seem in some respects to represent the wisdom that preserves peace (like the women in the *Epistre à la reine* and the *Lamentacion*) she also represents the kind of wisdom that makes a good military leader.

¹⁵³ Presented to Louis of Orléans either in 1400 or 1401 and identified by Christine Reno and Gilbert Ouy as an autograph, the earliest surviving copy of the *Epistre Othéa* is BnF, fr. 848. Unlike later editions such as the copies in the Duke’s Manuscript (BnF, fr. 606, 835, 836, 605, believed to have been completed shortly after the assassination of Louis of Orléans in 1407) and the Queen’s Manuscript (BL Harleý 4431, proposed dating 1411 or 1413), BnF, fr. 848 is a short manuscript of only twenty pages illustrated by only six uncolored drawings in pen and ink. The first drawing, a presentation scene, depicts Christine at the court of the duke of Orléans; his coat of arms has been incorporated into the hanging behind his chair. For a discussion of the text as an autograph see Ouy and Reno, “Identification des autographes de Christine de Pizan,”

Scriptorium 34 (1980): 227. For a description of layout of the text, its flaws and signs of Christine's inexperience as a producer of manuscripts see Laidlaw, "Publisher's Progress," 41.

¹⁵⁴ The idea of obedience is present at the very outset, when obedience is defined as love and presented as the essential duty of the good pupil. Before the young Hector may become Othéa's hero he must accept her authority as counsellor and seer: in the *Epistre Othéa*, to love Othéa (as Christine phrases it) is to embrace her teachings. She tells him:

je sçay qu'a tous jours seras
Le plus preus des preus et aras
Sur tous autres le renommee,

Mais que de toy je soye amee [. . .]. (*Epistre Othéa* 1, lines 50-53)

[I know that always you will be / The most expert of all the expert and will have / Above all the others renown, / Provided that I be loved by you. *Letter of Othea* 36.]

¹⁵⁵ *Epistre Othéa* 1, line 68; *Letter of Othea* 36.

¹⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis of the visual evidence in support of this mirroring see Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 41-51.

¹⁵⁷ *Epistre Othéa* 97, lines 6-10, 11-14.

¹⁵⁸ *Letter of Othea* 117.

¹⁵⁹ *Epistre Othéa* 55, lines 19-26.

¹⁶⁰ *Letter of Othea* 83.

¹⁶¹ *Epistre Othéa* 55, lines 26-31, 32-4.

¹⁶² *Letter of Othea* 83.

¹⁶³ Concerning Christine's reaction to the civil revolt of 1413, Christine Reno writes: "The Cabochian uprising, in short, was viewed by [Christine] as being linked with imminent military and political defeat at the hands of the British." Reno, "Christine de Pizan: 'At Best a Contradictory Figure,'" *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 171-91, 173.

¹⁶⁴ Laidlaw, "Publisher's Progress," 62-4.

¹⁶⁵ Charles officially ended the government's neutrality in 1411 by lifting the ban on taking up arms to serve Burgundy. Two months later, acting in the king's name Guyenne declared the dukes of Orléans and Bourbon rebels together with the counts of Alençon and Armagnac and the lord of Albert. Despite these drastic measures, Guyenne was more interested in ending the conflict than he was in partisanship; for example, the young duke's intercession saved the life of rebel Armagnac Robert de Fontenay. After the Peace of Pontoise on August 1, 1413, Guyenne sent Charles d'Orléans violet garments (the dauphin's official color) because he did not want Orléans to return to Paris wearing mourning clothes; he had been prone to making a display of his grief and resentment over Burgundy's pardon by wearing black. Clearly, Guyenne wanted the subject of Louis of Orléans's assassination closed.

¹⁶⁶ Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chronique*, ed. Louis Douët d'Arcq (Paris: Société de l'histoire de la France, 1857-62), vol. 2, 334-5.

¹⁶⁷ Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 5, 28-30. After the revolt of April 28, 1413, Louis of Guyenne was required to move into the Hotel Saint-Pol where the king and

queen were already residing. The gates of the city were closed so that he could not leave. Elyon de Jacquerville, leader of the butchers and Captain of Paris, and Eustache de Pavilly were two of the Cabochiens who frequently chastised and intimidated Guyenne.

Burgundy and the Cabochiens had taken advantage of Charles's fear of conspiracy and mob violence to convince the delusional king that they could protect him from the Armagnacs if given the authority to do so. Consequently, Charles initially gave them his full support to the extent that the dauphin would face a charge of treason if he attempted to hinder them or evade the restrictions which had been placed upon him.

¹⁶⁸ The validity of this claim has not been proven. It seems likely that the statement was meant to be humiliating propaganda. Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 5, 30.

¹⁶⁹ *Epistre Othéa* 80, lines 26-7; *Letter of Othea* 104.

¹⁷⁰ Judith L. Kellogg has attempted to discern a structure for the one hundred "fables" of the *Epistre Othéa*. She writes: "Fables 1-4 are intended to illustrate the four cardinal virtues, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice; 6-12, the planetary deities; 13-15, the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity; 16-22, the seven deadly sins; 23-24, the twelve articles of the Apostle's Creed; and 35-44, the Ten Commandments. In fables 45-89, virtues and vices are more randomly presented, though certain loose thematic groupings are distinguishable. With fable 90, the announcement of Hector's death, the tone changes and the last ten fables draw the rest of the *Othéa* together by building up to the event that has informed the work from the beginning: the birth of Christ." Kellogg, "Christine de Pizan as Chivalric Mythographer: *L'Epistre Othéa*," *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England*, ed. Jane Chance. (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1990) 103.

¹⁷¹ Krueger 35.

¹⁷² Krueger 21.

¹⁷³ Krueger 36.

¹⁷⁴ *Chemin de lonc estude* 114, lines 459-61.

¹⁷⁵ Christine de Pizan, "The Path of Long Study," trans. Kevin Brownlee, *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (New York: Norton, 1997) 66.

¹⁷⁶ Gabriella Parussa points to sections of the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* and the *Ovide moralisé*, Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* and his *De genealogica deorum gentilium*. Parussa, *Epistre Othéa*, 410

¹⁷⁷ Jane Chance, "Christine's Minerva, the Mother Valorized," *Christine de Pizan's "Letter of Othéa to Hector,"* ed. Chance, 129.

¹⁷⁸ *Epistre Othéa* 32, lines 8-12.

¹⁷⁹ *Letter to Othéa* 65.

¹⁸⁰ *Cité des dames* 2.5; *City of Ladies* 107.

¹⁸¹ *Epistre Othéa* 88, lines 6-12.

¹⁸² *Letter to Othéa* 111.

¹⁸³ *Epistre Othéa* 88, lines 12-16; *Letter to Othéa* 111.

¹⁸⁴ References to Hector's death appear in the fables of Penthesilia, Patroclus and Achilles, Hector, Cassandra, and Andromache.

¹⁸⁵ *Epistre Othéa* 1, lines 46-8; *Letter of Othea* 36.

¹⁸⁶ Desmond and Sheingorn (4) also note that the temporal unpredictability of the text, arising from the rejection of linear chronology in the interaction between Hector and his lessons from the mythical past, forces the reader to privilege the text's contemporary political and spiritual ramifications.

¹⁸⁷ *Epistre Othéa* 90, lines 23-5; *Letter of Othea* 112.

Chapter Three
Apocalypse Now: The Sibyl as Advisor to the Last World Emperor
in *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*

*Are prophecies fulfilled because of their far-seeing diagnosis
or because of the response they evoke in action?*

— Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*¹

Every prophet is a child of that age to which he delivers his message. If he were not he would gain no hearing and miss his object, which is not to win posthumous fame, but to move his fellow-countrymen. But he is also in advance of his age, or he would be no prophet. He has a message for all time. When the same conditions recur, the same fears and hopes recur, the same moral dangers and difficulties, for human nature is much the same in all ages; and therefore the same warnings and exhortations are needed by a nation.

—Thomas Fletcher Royds, *Virgil and Isaiah*²

It has been recognized that Christine herself assumes the role of Sibyl in her final work, *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*. Deborah Fraioli writes that “Christine appears prophetic herself” because straight after her exposition she endorses Jehanne’s mission as divine (huitains 10-12); the March 1429 Poitiers Conclusions of theologians on the issue appear later (huitains 29-30) as support for Christine’s own conclusions.³ Seeing her emergence in a prophetic role as she writes of a crusade to come (huitains 42-3), Kevin Brownlee states, “Christine has become a new, Christian sibyl with regard to Joan. She speaks with the voice of an authoritative — and authentic — female prophet.”⁴ He rightly views this as the logical conclusion to her lifetime’s oeuvre of using Sibyls as authorizing figures, though he does not give the idea the attention it deserves.⁵

Deborah Fraioli notes that another essential component in the process of Christine becoming a Sibyl is the invocation of pre-existing prophecies (notably in huitain 31) that were now being related to Jehanne, particularly as a result of the deliberations of the Poitiers council on the question of the divinity of the Maid’s mission. She writes: “The collected prophecies [. . .] offer Christine verification from the past of Joan’s mission and

new promises about her mission for the future. They also allow Christine to find her own voice as a prophet through which she announces these future events to her reader.”⁶

Whereas Fraioli passes over the Sibyl’s presence in huitain 31 in order to focus on the partly forged prophecies of Merlin and Bede, Anne Lutkus and Julia Walker see further significance accruing to Christine in the ordering of the prophets in the stanza.⁷ They argue that she gives the Sibyl the lead role between the supporting acts of Merlin and Bede so that by association, more than five hundred years later, the seers also endorse Christine’s own role as a Sibyl (not a personal name but “a style always given to a woman”). While all this is true, however, Lutkus and Walker take no account of the fact that in medieval prophetic tradition Merlin and the Sibyl went together much as Fred and Ginger do in the twentieth-century musical.

Earl Jeffrey Richards, on the other hand, unites the Sibyl and Bede as “two figures with impeccable credentials in the scheme of salvation history” and places the *Ditié* squarely in the broad category of sacred or salvation history, in which the Sibyl had played such a major role since her adoption by the early Christian patristic scholars.⁸ Pointing out that Christine draws a comparison between the war with England and the story of Cain and Abel by referring to the blood of the slain crying out from earth, Richards writes: “Christine, rather than calling for vengeance against foreign invaders, is trying to view the Anglo-French conflict in light of biblical typology. [. . .] The struggle for France — for the nation, *pro patria* — becomes simultaneously the struggle for the true Faith, *pro fide*.”⁹

Jehanne’s role is crucial, as Richards recognizes: “Christine is working quite openly here with categories borrowed from salvation history and transforms a French

national hero into a hero of the Universal Church [. . .].”¹⁰ However, he does not name the central tradition by which Christine was attempting to write contemporary events into the pages of salvation history. As Fraioli has shown, this was the “Second Charlemagne Prophecy,” according to which the king of France would become the Last World Emperor, the opponent of Antichrist in medieval Christian eschatology.¹¹ Fraioli observes that in the *Ditié* Charles VII’s recognition as the Second Charlemagne is conditional upon the fulfillment of Jehanne’s own prophesied achievements. However, in order to locate an analogue for Jehanne’s role in redeeming sinful France from the defeat and destruction predicted in sibylline and other prophecies, Fraioli looks outside the Second Charlemagne Prophecy itself to Robert Blondel, Eustache Deschamps, and Charles d’Orléans, whom she collectively labels as “the French patriotic poets.”¹² The patriotic poets called for the restoration of the symbols of the monarchy through action and prayer; but they named the Virgin Mary as the agent of that redemption. Within this context, Fraioli argues, the *Ditié* places Jehanne in the position of Mary *vis à vis* the salvation of France.¹³

Taking these somewhat fragmentary critical observations as my starting point, I intend to reveal the *Ditié* as an artistically unified claim to unrivalled prophetic authority regarding national and earthly destiny. The key to the success of this self-authorizing project lay in inscribing Jehanne, an anomalous new figure, within existing prophetic traditions of French nationhood. I suggest that the iconography of the Virgin would not fully achieve this: Mary was not a key player in the Last Emperor prophecies, nor was her intercessionary function an adequate template for the warlike Jehanne. I propose that Christine audaciously but judiciously conferred upon the Maid some of the spiritual functions of the Angelic Pope, a prophesied ally of the Last Emperor. Mapping the

“Second Charlemagne Prophecy” over the literary image of Jehanne and Charles as an inseparable and portended pair, Christine can therefore place herself in a role equivalent in authority to that of the Sibyls reputed to have issued the original apocalyptic prophecies. By speaking as advocate for Jehanne and adopting the Maid’s voice of judgment and prophecy, Christine implicitly claims to speak for God, publishing his judgments in a series of admonishments, promises, and predictions that take their place as part of salvation history. I will examine Christine’s attempt to tutor Charles to accept Jehanne and follow the Maid’s lead, which forms part of this self-authorization project; and her effort to teach him the virtues of kingship, which forms the culmination of the self-appointed role of royal counsellor she had begun with 1400’s *Epistre Othéa*.

After a brief historical orientation, the chapter will progress in six sections. The first will explain how Christine sets about establishing herself as a prophetic figure in the *Ditié*. In order to explain the value of this strategy, the second section will demonstrate the importance of divinatory traditions to the Valois monarchy. The third section will focus in on the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, within which Christine was specifically locating Charles VII. The fourth section turns to Jehanne, and Christine’s efforts to inscribe her in salvation history through scripture and medieval prophecy, old and new. The fifth section shows how these efforts aid Christine in her self-authorization as Sibyl, allowing her to set a national political agenda. The final section shows the endpoint of these strategies, a sibylline prophecy in which Charles as Second Charlemagne and Jehanne in a role echoing that of the Angelic Pope move from crusade to a millennial renewal of Christendom on earth.

The voice of what may be titled “the apocalyptic Sibyl” dominates the *Ditié*. Her register, by turns uplifting and ominous, is invoked whenever Christine offers hope of salvation, threatens judgment against the unrighteous, and calls the righteous to arms in the name of a final, divinely ordained, and just kingdom. It draws on the voice recorded in the medieval Sibylline Oracles, notably the twelfth-century Erythraean oracle used by the millennialist Joachim of Fiore to promote the Second Charlemagne Prophecy.¹⁴ Most of Christine’s description of the Erythraean Sibyl in *Le Livre de la cité des dames* is germane to her program in the *Ditié*. This Sibyl predicted the destruction of Troy and the rise of Rome — viewed in French cultural mythology as France’s imperial precursors. Her messianic acrostic was a key text in salvation history; and she not only foresaw the advent, death, and resurrection of Christ but also his return on the Day of Judgment when “Roys, princes et toute gens seront devant le juge qui donnera a chacun sa desserte” [“Kings, princes, and all people will stand before the Judge who will reward each soul according to its merits”].¹⁵ This is not to say that Christine identifies specifically and solely with the Erythraean Sibyl: various subordinate sibylline registers support the dominant apocalyptic mode in the poem.¹⁶

The *Ditié* followed a lengthy retreat by Christine from political writing. Against a backdrop of national disaster, she had composed only two works since 1413. France’s deepening internal troubles under Charles VI and Isabel of Bavaria had been an open invitation to England. Henry V’s victory at Agincourt on October 25, 1415, left Normandy in English hands and many of the French nobility either dead or held captive for ransom. Two months later Louis of Guyenne died; when the death of his brother John followed in April 1417, the last surviving son of the king and queen, Charles of Touraine,

became dauphin.¹⁷ Isabel's attempt to strengthen the political power of the immediate royal family through a royalist party governed by the dauphin was thwarted by the Armagnacs. Historians speculate that the Armagnacs were behind King Charles's determination to put an end at long last to the scandals of the queen's household. Following the revival of public rumor akin to the scandal of 1405, she was stripped of her authority and sent into a prolonged exile at Tours from April 1417. Isabel only regained her privileges by joining forces with John the Fearless that November, adopting the Burgundian propaganda that both the king and dauphin were being held as prisoners by the Armagnacs in Paris. Setting up a rival parlement in Troyes and issuing letters throughout France, she abolished numerous taxes, leaving the king's Armagnac government in Paris unable to finance an internal war while attempting to repel the growing English presence in Normandy.¹⁸ After a personal reconciliation, the king welcomed her back into Paris on July 14, 1418.

The dauphin proved a bigger thorn in Charles VI's side than Isabel. Charles of Touraine had inherited his elder brother's resentment of the duke of Burgundy, and in 1419 conspired to assassinate him, breaking a peace-keeping oath he had sworn to the king and prompting the Burgundians to go over to the side of the English. The dauphin had also unlawfully assumed the title of regent, an act akin to treason that suggested he had no confidence in his father's ability to rule. On January 17, 1420, Charles VI issued a letter in council declaring the dauphin unfit to govern. By royal ordinance he was disinherited and fully stripped of his titles. When, on her husband's instruction, Isabel and Philip the Good, now duke of Burgundy, signed the Treaty of Troyes with Henry V on May 21, 1420, the princess Catherine was given in marriage to the English king and it

was agreed that after the death of Charles VI, Henry and all of his heirs were to inherit the titles of king of England and France. In the meantime, Henry was given the official title of regent, though he remained primarily in England. After the deaths of both Henry V and Charles VI in 1422, the throne passed to the infant Henry VI, whose uncle, the Duke of Bedford, became guardian of England and regent of France.¹⁹ Isabel lived in retreat as queen dowager of France until her death in 1435, but much of her wealth had been seized by the English, and her powers and influence had evaporated. By 1428 the English held all of northern and eastern France to the Loire.

During this long period of upheaval, Christine's only writings comprised *L'Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* (1418), a morally didactic prose letter consoling Marie of Berry, duchess of Bourbon, for her bereavements at Agincourt and the recent death of her father, the duke of Berry; and *Les Heures de la contemplation* (1420), a translation from Latin explicitly aimed at alleviating the suffering of the human soul through a recognition of the glory of Christ.

The Poet-Historian Becomes a Prophet

Self-exiled at Poissy, but motivated by events at Orléans, Reims, and Poitiers that were being heralded as signs promising France's divine redemption, Christine took up her pen again in 1429 to write of Jehanne d'Arc and address the monarchy one last time on issues of kingship, good government, unity, and faith.

She broke her eleven-year silence with the proclamation, "Je Christine," of *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, an autograph as bold as the rebus signature of 1402's *Le Dit de la rose* had been coy.²⁰ With these two words, she announces that she will not be hiding

behind allegorical or oracular figures and countless citations of antiquarian authorities that served to authorize her didactic voice in her Mirrors. In the *Aeneid*, the Cumaean Sibyl's answers issue from the Euboean cavern through "one hundred mighty mouths."²¹ In the *Epistre Othéa*, in a move that reflected her anxiety to provide validation for her own advice, Christine had transformed this image of chthonic transmission into "one hundred authorities":

Cent auctoritez t'ay escriptes,
Si ne soient de toy despites,
Car Augustus de femme apprist
Qui d'estre aouré le reprist.

[One hundred authorities I have written to you; / If they are not despised by you. / For Augustus learned from a woman, / Who taught him about being worshipped.]²²

In the *Ditié*, however, she dispenses with open invocations of the Sibyl or the fictional Othéa, and explicitly names herself as author and authority. Christine's long-standing reputation as a poet, historian, and educator of the aristocracy, established in works such as *Le Livre des fais bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (1404), the *Cité des dames*, *La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* (1410), and *Le Livre de la paix* (1413), could sanction the historical accuracy and credibility of her text. Furthermore, as she demonstrates in the *Ditié*, she is a witness deeply invested in the events on which she writes.

Yet her voice is demonstrably that of a Sibyl even from the opening lines, firstly in an image of Christine's separation from the life of the world; secondly in the use of prophetic tropes; and thirdly in a paean to renewed hope which evokes the messianic "Fourth Eclogue" of Vergil. An initial exposition describes how she has confined herself

“tristement en cage” [“sadly to a cage”] at the “abbaye close” at Poissy following her bitter departure from Paris, now occupied by the Burgundians in “la traïson” that had begun on May 29, 1418, and that had driven the dauphin into exile.²³

In Christine’s presentation of these events of the recent past I would tentatively identify tropes commonly used to prophesy the future. A key feature of medieval prophecy was the *lusus naturae* [“sport of nature”], a freakish occurrence which was frequently presented as an omen of the political upheaval or supernatural intercession being predicted. The trope may be evoked in Christine’s presentation of the dauphin’s exit from his own capital, an event almost unspeakably bizarre:

Charles (c’est estrange chose!),
Le filz du roy, se dire l’ose,
S’en fouy de Paris de tire [. . .].²⁴

[“Charles (how strange this is!) / the King’s son — dare I say it? — / fled in haste from Paris [. . .].”]

In this context, perhaps, the announcement soon afterwards of the current year (“L’an mil CCCXXIX”) may be viewed as rather more than merely annalistic, but as an evocation of another prophetic trope, the chronogram, by which the dates of events to come were written into the text in words that on closer inspection are revealed as sequences of Roman numerals.²⁵

The striking similarities between the *Ditié* and the messianic “Fourth Eclogue,” which orisoned “the last age of the song of Cumae,” have not been fully examined by Christine scholars. Both poets wrote with a sense of having been dispossessed of their homes in time of civil strife; Italy alone had seen twelve separate civil wars in the century before 31 BC.²⁶ Both poets begin their verse with talk of change and “loftier strains.”²⁷

The spiritual release of Christine from her depression is a recovery of hope: “Mais or changeray mon langage / De pleur en chant [. . .]” [“I shall change my language from one of tears to one of song”].²⁸ For Vergil, this renewal of hope is embodied by the return of Astraea, or Justice, to Earth; in the *Ditié*, Justice figures as a return of the sun, or the renewal of the Valois dynasty symbolized by Jehanne’s achievements. Each poet begins with a bold proclamation, not to be challenged, that the sun smiles in the heavens because of what is happening on earth.²⁹

L’an mil CCCCXXIX
 Reprint à luire li soleil
 Il ramene le bon temps neuf
 Qu’on [n’]avoit veü de droit oil
 Puis long temps, dont plusers en dueil
 Orent vesqu; j’en suis de ceulx.
 Mais plus de rien je ne me dueil,
 Quant ores voy ce que [je] veulx.³⁰

[In 1429 the sun began to shine again. It brings back the good, new season which had not really been seen for a long time — and because of that many people had lived out their lives in sorrow; I myself am one of them. But I no longer grieve for anything, now that I can see what I desire.]

The desire expressed by Christine is the same as that recorded by Vergil: the wish to witness political change. Both poets appeal for the inspiration to write accurately about this change. Crucially, both the “Fourth Eclogue” (as the patristic scholars interpreted it) and the *Ditié* are to be seen as eulogies to a divine intervention in the history of the world, unexpected and fateful; and as auguries of salvation and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Before Christine can predict the king's miraculous future in terms of apocalyptic prophecy, she must first confirm the miracle that has already taken place, by bearing witness and recording it as history:

tel miracle voirement
Que, se la chose n'yert notoire
Et évident quoy et comment,
Il n'est homs qui le peiist croire[.]³¹

[such a miracle that, if the matter were not so well-known and crystal-clear in every aspect, nobody would ever believe it]

In both *Le Livre du chemin de lonc estude* and the *Cité des dames*, she had returned to the idea that sibylline prophecy was so clear that it was indistinguishable from history, whether it was read before or after the event. In the *Ditié*, she aims to achieve a similar effect by making history and prophecy into a seamless whole. Beginning as it were *in medias res*, with one miracle confirmed (Jehanne's victory at Orléans), the poem can identify the present as simply the threshold of the miraculous destiny that now awaits Charles and Jehanne.

Christine begins the *Ditié* with a proclamation of Charles's kingship as self-evidently right, invoking only the supernatural agency of God (embodied in Jehanne's intervention) to prove her case. Christine declares her allegiance to Charles, twice referring to him as the king's son and rightful heir to the French throne (huitains 1 and 5).

C'est que le degeté enfant
Du roy de France legitime,
Qui long temps a esté souffrant
Mains grans ennuiz, qui or aprime,
Se lieva ainsi que vers prime,
Venant comme roy couronné
En puissance tresgrande et fine,

Et d'esperons d'or esperonné.³²

[The reason is that the rejected child of the rightful King of France, who has long suffered many a great misfortune and who now approaches, rose up as if towards prime, coming as crowned King in might and majesty, wearing spurs of gold.]

l'on cuidoit
Que ce feust com chose impossible
Que ton pays, qui se perdoit,
Reusses jamais. Or est visible-
Ment tien, [que] qui que nuisible
T'ait esté, tu l'as recouvré!
Cest par la Pucelle sensible,
Dieu mercy, qui y a ouvré!³³

[[. . .] it was believed quite impossible that you should ever recover your country which you were on the point of losing. Now it is manifestly yours for, no matter who may have done you harm, you have recovered it! And all this has been brought about by the intelligence of the Maid, who God be thanked has played her part in this matter!]

Christine's reference to Charles as "le degeté enfant / Du roy de France legitime" in huitain 5 denies Henry VI's right to the French throne by refuting not only the Treaty of Troyes, but also Charles VI's prior decision to disinherit his son. However, rather than embarking on a legal or theological assault on the politics that exiled the dauphin, she offers an immediate image of the newly crowned prince, whom she imagines is preparing a siege on Paris ("Venant comme roy couronné / En puissance tresgrande et fine, / Et d'esperons d'or esperonné").³⁴ Long before her detailed description of the July 17 coronation (huitains 47-9), in huitain 14 she asserts his incontestable recovery of the crown, and in huitain 5 she also does so symbolically by depicting him riding in spurs of gold. Christine is careful to underline both Jehanne's and God's roles in bringing about this glorious turn of tides. Both the inner heart (Christine's personal sense of liberation)

and the outer universe (the symbolic sun and the heavens) bear witness to the spectacle of coronation.

Prophecy and the French Monarchy

The *Ditié*'s polemical reliance on prophecy and "proofs" of Jehanne's divine purpose constitutes an attempt to target Charles VII through his superstition, his vanity, and the urgency of his need for validation as monarch in the eyes of the French and the English.³⁵ Faith in prophecy in the Middle Ages was such that when consciously constructed as propaganda it could be used to puppeteer powerful individuals, and to sway the masses. This was the corollary of a view of prophecy in which, as Marjorie Reeves explains, "Divine providence, it was believed, used human agencies and prophecy was often a call to men to involve themselves in the working out of God's purposes in history."³⁶ By shaping the view of divine providence, propagandists could therefore direct human action to their own ends. Statesmen and clergy could capitalize on prophecy's accessibility, popularity, and air of incontestability. The vogue for prophecy and the hunger for knowledge that it sought to satisfy ran through the whole of society. The uneducated masses had their own oracular traditions, but lacking direct access to the arcane texts of Greek and Latin and the commentaries of the Church that were said to shape and illuminate the universe, the citizenry in town and country must have anxiously received prophecy that came down by word of mouth from the court elite. Whether refashioned, reinterpreted, or blatantly forged, prophecy had become an indispensable part of the political machine of the Middle Ages, capable of manipulating emotions and

opinions irrespective of class lines and national boundaries. It furnished a script from which those capable of reaching others could argue private and public agendas validated by their interpretation of ancient authorities. The Hundred Years War provided the stage upon which these malleable scripts were often rewritten and recited.

Despite the fact that she was writing from Burgundian-occupied territory, textual evidence in the *Ditié* suggests that Christine had access to copies of the Poitiers Conclusions, Jehanne's *Lettre aux Anglais*, and other royalist propaganda. Her apparent intimacy with the circulating prophecies discussed by royal counsellors and theologians at Poitiers but not published in the formal Conclusions suggests that the abbey at Poissy was not entirely cut off from communications with Chinon, the king's residence.³⁷ Furthermore, Christine was intimately familiar with the Valois kings' predilection for divination and astrology. Her father's position as royal astrologer had put her in a perfect position not only to have the measure of court gossip, but also to know the current esoteric and scientific trends.³⁸ Charles VII still subscribed to the fashion of employing astrologers as court advisors, first promoted in European courts in the thirteenth century.³⁹ His grandfather, Charles V, had pursued this trend to the extent that his court, in the words of Edgar Laird, was "perhaps more closely associated with the practice of astrology, as well as with the debates for and against its use, than any other in medieval Europe."⁴⁰

The appointment of Thommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzanno (later Thomas de Pizan) as astrologer to Charles V has been depicted by Charity Cannon Willard as part of a quasi-scientific trend rather than as a sign of undue superstition. She writes: "In the fourteenth century, astronomy was by far the most advanced branch of scientific

knowledge, astrology was near the peak of its prestige, and few were capable of distinguishing between the two.”⁴¹ Indeed, Thomas de Pizan’s expertise had combined the scientific and the esoteric: he had not only been an astrologer but also a medical graduate of the prestigious University of Bologna, which was considered a center of pioneering humanistic philosophy and of book production.⁴² His appointment had been grounded in Charles V’s growing distrust in “conventional beliefs in God’s will ordaining events” in the face of major misfortunes: notably his own chronically poor health and the Battle of Poitiers in 1356 which saw humiliating defeat for France and the capture of his father, John II, by the Black Prince, who in the early years of the Hundred Years War had sought to put a Plantagenet on the French throne.⁴³ Accordingly Charles V had marked his own reign with a distinct move away from the influence of the clerics of the University of Paris, who seemed unable to explain such setbacks. His promotion of a more secularized government by investing France in the intellectual climate of the University of Bologna was partly an attempt to look beyond the Church to the contemporary sciences for supernatural assurances of the Valois right to the throne.⁴⁴

However, the royal search for validation has an undeniably religious dimension; furthermore, faith in prophecy was by no means considered inconsistent with faith in God. Willard sees evidence of Charles V’s search for supernatural, quasi-scientific certainties in a number of translations commissioned during his reign, in which editorial glosses and insertions underlined the dynastic title of the Valois through supernatural tokens. Yet while the additions cited by Willard may bypass the issue of ecclesiastical or papal endorsement, they unambiguously invoke the divine in support of the monarchy. Raoul de Presles’s prologue to Augustine’s *De civitas Dei* claimed a miraculous origin

for the French royal lily; the insertion of *Le Traité de sacre* (*Treatise on Consecration*) into a translation of Guillaume Durand's *Rationale divinarum officiorum* (*Rationale of Divine Offices*) asserted that divine authority was conferred upon the king during coronation by anointing him with the *saint ampoule*, the vial of holy oil kept at Reims.⁴⁵ The patriotic poets had been equally keen, as Fraioli notes, to promulgate "the belief [. . .] that the symbols of the monarchy — the fleur de lis, the 'cris de guerre,' and especially the coronation ceremony — were of divine origin."⁴⁶ Charles d'Orléans had said God himself had ordered the French to carry the fleur de lis on their national shield, and Robert Blondel wrote that the Virgin Mary put the symbol there.⁴⁷

With her own reference to the fleur de lis, however, Christine is careful to indicate that the goodwill of God is contingent on a history of faithful service by the French crown:

Car par les graces qu'Il lui donne
 Il appert comment Il l'apreuve,
 Et que plus foy qu'autre part treuve
 En l'estat royal, dont je lix
 Qu'oncques (ce n'est pas chose neuve!)
 En foy n'errerent fleurs de lix.⁴⁸

[For all the blessings which God bestows upon it demonstrate how much He favors it and that He finds more faith in the Royal House than anywhere else; as far as it is concerned, I read (and there is nothing new in this) that the Lilies of France never erred in matters of faith.]

These lines, immediately prefacing her direct address to Charles, explicitly announce that it is not his singular graces which have earned him divine favor. Charles is subordinated to his office, to God, and to God's servant, Jehanne. It is the history of the office of king of France, not the present incumbent, that has won God's favor for the nation. In this,

Christine was intimating a view upheld at the Poitiers council by Jacques Gelu, Archbishop of Embrun, in his *De puella aurelianensi dissertatio*, written for Charles after the victory at Orléans, which had argued that if God is glorified by the faithful service of a king, a people or a kingdom, he will particularly involve himself in protecting them.⁴⁹ Although the *Ditié* is undeniably underscored by politics, the cardinal virtue of faith dominates as Christine looks towards establishing the poem as a prophecy within the canon of salvation history.

Among the divine symbols of Valois power, the *saint ampoule* played the most crucial role after the Treaty of Troyes of 1420 had fully disinherited Charles of Touraine and his heirs in favor of England's Henry V. Following the deaths in 1422 of Henry and then Charles VI, the English had been able to crown Henry VI "King of France," with Burgundian support, using French sacramental objects housed in the Parisian cathedral of Notre Dame. The French royalists disputed not only Henry's claim but also the disinheriting of the dauphin, on theological grounds: due to the fallibility of man, only God could disinherit a royally conceived heir. With Notre Dame and its treasures in English hands, the dauphin was forced to support his claim to the French throne by way of other validating symbols — notably, as Regine Pernoud and Marie-Véronique Clin emphasize, the "irreducible symbol" of the *saint ampoule*.⁵⁰ A second validating symbol was Reims itself, the traditional location for French coronations; if this was upheld, the crowning of Henry in Paris must be invalid.

But now the Valois propagandists had found a third symbol of validation: Jehanne d'Arc. Here was a living sign verifying Charles's claim in supernatural and religious terms: a sign which they could use to rally massive popular approval for their cause.

Crucially, Jehanne herself claimed mystical powers that amounted to prophecy. She had heard God's will and had come to deliver his message about the destiny of France and what must be done to achieve it.

The dauphin's personal susceptibility to prophecies made him ripe for the influence of the prophesying Maid. Historian Malcolm Vale speculates that Yolande of Aragon, Charles's mother-in-law, may have headed (at least theatrically) a political faction that sought to introduce Jehanne at court in order to seduce Charles into taking decisive action against the English and, in the process, increase Yolande's political influence.⁵¹ Referring to Jehanne's courtly reception on February 23 by Charles at Chinon (where the nature of her mission was first examined), Vale writes: "To introduce a prophetess to the impressionable Charles could have been a stroke of something approaching political genius."⁵²

That Jehanne had succeeded in marching with him deep into English territory to Reims was interpreted as a further signal that God supported Valois dynastic claims. It is reasonable to speculate, therefore, that his propagandists staged her triumphal parade with the dauphin through the streets of Reims as a public spectacle that authorized his coronation as Charles VII while promoting Jehanne as a divine agent sent to secure his recovery of the throne. At least initially, the merger proved to be advantageous on both sides. Jehanne needed Charles to fulfill her divine mission: he would be the heir of the re-united France. Charles and his advisors (who urged him to take decisive action against the English and the traitorous Burgundians) needed Jehanne and the air of mysticism and hope that surrounded her in order to re-ignite the public's patriotism.

Together, the king and the Maid were able to mount a platform that had been raised high by centuries of prophetic expectation. From there, they could survey wider possibilities than anyone could have imagined before, and rally support far more successfully. In 1429, the *clergie*, the aristocracy, and the Third Estate were looking with desperation for signs of relief and change promised by popular prophecies circulating throughout Europe that foretold the end of earthly history in terms of the Last Days, the brief but blissful reprieve from sufferings that would precede the reign of the Antichrist. With her name and mission sanctioned by the published conclusions of the council at Poitiers (March 11 to 24, 1429) and the astonishing May victory at Orléans behind her, Jehanne's success was interpreted by the populace as confirmation that this Golden Age was approaching.

The Second Charlemagne Prophecy

The *Ditié*, dated by Christine on July 31, 1429, appears to be the first text to map the Second Charlemagne Prophecy over the literary image of Jehanne and the newly crowned Charles VII, son of Charles VI, as an inseparable and portended pair.⁵³ The prophecy derived from the Byzantine oracular writings of the mid-fourth century attributed to the Tiburtine Sibyl. The Sibyl had foretold that the Greek Emperor, Constans, would reign for 112 years (by some accounts 129), enjoying peace, plenty, and the ultimate triumph of Christendom; as the Last Emperor, Constans would lead a crusade to Jerusalem and destroy the infidel before surrendering his earthly kingdom to God and awaiting the arrival of the Antichrist. Early theologians had believed that the Antichrist would not come while the Roman Empire lasted; hence, the Carolingian kings'

self-proclaimed revival of Roman power had been interpreted as a sign that the Last Days had been averted. During the First Crusade (which established the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099), the idea of the Last Emperor had circulated through Europe. In 1095 Ekkehard of Aura had noted a prophecy conflating the Last Emperor with a resurrected Charlemagne, and during the following century the circulation of newer Sibylline Oracles credited to both the Tiburtine and Cumaeen Sibyls added to the expectations.⁵⁴ By the late fourteenth century, the devastating effects of the Hundred Years War and of the Black Death had further fuelled the rise of millennialism. Accordingly, the figure of a human champion emerged from a “desire for a human triumph in history struggling with the conviction that only divine intervention can overcome the inherent evil in Man.”⁵⁵ Every aspirational European ruler wondered if he would be the prophesied Last Emperor.

Consequently, as Marjorie Reeves notes, “racial aspirations” became affixed to the Second Charlemagne Prophecy so that, through numerous revisions and recontextualizations, its allure lay not merely in the renown of Charlemagne’s lineage and historical legacy — embodied in the whole Charlemagne Cycle or Matter of France — but in his refashioning as the forefather of a racial elect equal in the status to the biblical Hebrews.⁵⁶ This nationalist tendency was echoed in the work of the patriotic poets to establish the divine origins of the French monarchic symbols. By the late fourteenth century, two variants of the prophecy had become prevalent. Pierre Dubois (1250-1320), in his *De recuperatione Terre Sancte*, had linked French royal lineage to Charlemagne in order to assert that the Last Emperor must be French.⁵⁷ Franciscan Jean of Roquetaillade (c. 1310-c. 1365) had believed that the Antichrist’s reign would be brief

and would be followed by a millennium of prosperity and peace under an Angelic Pope and a French king once more elected Holy Roman Emperor.⁵⁸

We can see how seductive and easy it must have been for royal propagandists to refashion the already polemical Second Charlemagne Prophecy so that it appeared retrospectively to have heralded Charles VII's rise against the English. Originally understood as the birthright of Charles VI (the first French monarch to reign as "Karolus filius Karoli"), the prophecy was not so much redesigned by Valois lobbyists as it was redesignated so that Charles VII took the place of his father. Hence, we find royal lobbyists positing Charles VII simultaneously as the subject, the beneficiary, and the pawn of polemical prophecies and other royalist propaganda.

Christine launches her poetic attempt to influence the king by exploiting Charles's sense of betrayal over being doubly disinherited by his parents. She begins in huitain 16 by referring to Charles as "roy de France," "Charles, filz de Charles." Her further references look back at France's legendary foundations and forward towards its prophesied destiny, asserting Charles's right of dynastic succession not only to the Valois throne but also to the crown of the Roman emperors; and his predicted election as Last Emperor:

Car ung roy de France doit estre
Charles, filz de Charles, nommé,
Qui sur tous rois sera grant maistre.
Propheciez l'ont surnommé
"Le Cerf Volant," et consommé
Sera par celui conquereur
Maint fait (Dieu l'a à ce somé),
Et en fin doit estre empereur.

[For there will be a King of France called Charles, son of Charles,
Who will be supreme ruler over all Kings. Prophecies have given

him the name of “The Flying Stag,” and many a deed will be
accomplished by this conqueror (God has called him to this task)
and in the end he will be emperor.]

In the prophecy of the “Cerf Volant” or “Flying Stag,” dating back to the reign of Charles V, the French king encounters a stag wearing a collar inscribed *Caesar hoc mihi donavit* [“Caesar gave me this”].⁵⁹ Together with the reference to “Karolus filius Karoli,” the allusion symbolically bridges the conceptual gap between Charles as king of France and as emperor. Christine appeals to Charles’s desire to believe that, despite the humiliation brought upon him and his heirs by the Treaty of Troyes, he is destined by prophecy to rule France in a new era heralded by his military union with Jehanne. Here she maps the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, with its sibylline origins, onto the image of Charles VII, having first established that Jehanne is a crucial element in his imperial destiny.

It is in relation to this portended role for the king that Christine, extending her sibylline role from prophet to guide, resumes her self-appointed position of tutor to the French monarchy. Effectively, Christine was placing herself in the tradition of the advisory powers claimed by the ancient Sibylline Oracles of Rome. Housed at the Capitol, Tarquin’s sibylline texts, also called the *Libri Fatales*, or simply *Libri*, were guarded within temple walls and consulted only at the Senate’s “express order” to ascertain how the wrath of the gods might be assuaged.⁶⁰ The political or even religious function of the Sibylline Oracles was not to reveal the future, but “to provide counsel and help in calamities, where the ordinary rites were of no avail.”⁶¹ Christine’s direct instruction, prognostication, and historical interpretation of past, present, and future events combine to create a text that praises Jehanne in a effort to influence Charles. Her status as a former court familiar and favored poet licenses her didactic tone; her father’s

role as court astrologer had paved the way for her own efforts to prophesy for the king; she was the author of the official biography of France's beloved Charles V the Wise, and her attention now would allow Charles VII to bathe in his grandfather's reflected glory, rather than in his mad father's disgrace. The role she offers him in the *Ditié* could hardly be more flattering: not merely a strong, merciful king capable of unifying France, but one who — if he follows her advice — will become the world emperor of the end times that many thought imminent.

Written in direct address immediately after Christine has named Charles as the Second Charlemagne, huitains 17-19 focus on Charles as God's elect monarch, but acknowledge the fallibility of human nature:

Tout ce est le prouffit de t'ame.
Je prie à Dieu que celui soles,
Et qu'Il te doint, sans le gref d'ame,
Tant vivre qu'encoures tu voyes
Tes enfans grans, et toutes joyes
Par toy et eulz soient en France!
Mais en servant Dieu toutesvoies,
Ne guerre [plus] n'y face oultrance!

[All this is to the profit of your soul. I pray to God that you may be the person I have described, and that He grant you long life (to nobody's harm), so that you may yet see your children grown up; I pray too that all joy come to France because of you and them! But, as you serve God always, may war never cause havoc there again!]⁶²

The idea that a prophet must pray for her predictions to come true presents an apparent paradox. However, it may carry a trace of the ancient view of sibylline prophecy, in which the seer took on the voice of the god during her prophetic trance but emerged from it personally unaware of the divine knowledge that she had imparted. More significantly, there is a clear precedent for the sentiment within Christine's own works, in the *Epistre*

Othéa, where it is necessary for Othéa to teach Hector how to become the hero he is prophesied to be (even though she knows he will ultimately fail to incorporate her teachings).⁶³ Prophecy, in this example, does not make free will redundant, but rather urges the submission of the will to the exigencies of achieving the predicted state of future affairs.

Although thirty years had passed since Christine presented the *Epistre Othéa* to Louis of Orléans, its other messages resurface in the *Ditié* relatively unchanged. The first lesson is that neither Charles nor Augustus should be treated as a god, nor should they believe their powers to be derived from their own divinity. Rather, in each case Christine, as sibylline counsellor to princes, states that a ruler receives his glory through the will and divine omniscience of Jesus Christ to whom he owes allegiance and respect.⁶⁴

Second, by indicating that kings and queens of France receive their elect status and good fortune because of their unerring faith in God (“En foy n’errèrent fleurs de lix” [“the Lilies of France never erred in matters of faith”]), Christine implicitly urges Charles to accept the miracle of the Maid as a sign that God supports the French campaign against the English.⁶⁵ Likewise, in the *Epistre Othéa*, Augustus recognizes the true nature of earthly authority only when he has observed something greater than his self-assumed power: the vision of the Madonna and Child revealed to him by the Cumaean Sibyl. Through his show of humility in the act of conversion, Augustus asserts his worthiness as a Christian leader.

As a third subtext in both the *Epistre Othéa* (the dedicatory letters) and the *Ditié*, Christine’s extensive praise and prayer for her patrons and for Charles do not constitute mere obligatory commendation.⁶⁶ Honoring kingship and nobility, the poet reminds the

royal patron of the responsibilities that power entails. Each prayer in the *Ditié* is a challenge to Charles to live up to the duties of good kingship. For example, Christine writes:

Et j'ay espoir que bon seras,
Droiturier et amant justice,
Et [tres] tous autres passeras,
Mais qu'orgueil ton fait ne honnisse;
A ton pueple doulz et propice,
Et craignant Dieu, qui t'a esleu
Pour son servant (si com premisses
En as), mais que faces ton deu.

[I hope that you will be good and upright, and a lover of justice and that you will surpass all others, provided your deeds are not tarnished by pride, that you will be gentle and well-disposed towards your people, that you will always love God who elected you as His servant (and you have proof of this) on condition that you do your duty.]⁶⁷

Here, Charles is the equivalent of the *Epistre Othéa*'s Hector or Augustus. Of course, the careful reader realizes that Christine need not write such a plea if she had no doubt of Charles's loyalties and abilities. In the *Epistre Othéa*, Augustus, humbled by his vision and the wisdom of the Sibyl, learns to hear advice; he accepts that truly inspired wisdom may come from unexpected sources — even women.

Writing Jehanne into Salvation History

The bold new incorporation of Jehanne in the long-established divine plan of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy requires considerable support. However, Christine was largely able to turn to evidence already presented or produced at Poitiers. The generally secular prophecies represented in *huitain* 31 and the Old Testament exemplars of *huitains*

23-5 had been weighed at the council as historical evidence supporting the authenticity of Jehanne's divine mission. Christine's contemporaries looked to Esther, Judith, and Deborah as exemplars of female intercession — evidence that God favored women as saviours of his elect people. Several documents circulating at Poitiers or afterwards rely on this biblical typology to raise Joan to a near-saintly status within salvation history. *De quadam puella*, commonly attributed to Jean Gerson, lists Deborah, Judith, and Esther as women who saved God's elect.⁶⁸ Gelu's *Dissertatio* lists Judith and Esther as women who effected God's vengeance. *De mirabili victoria*, also attributed to Gerson and believed to have been written in May 1429, names Judith and Deborah.⁶⁹ Christine's invocation of the three Hebrew women echoes her own *Cité des dames*, where Raison had successively told of Judith and Esther, only omitting the full story of Deborah "pour brieffté" ["for sake of brevity"].⁷⁰ Christine's aim is to emphasize Deborah and Esther's intercessionary roles as "dames de grant pris, / Par lesqueles Dieu restora / Son pueple" ["women of great worth, through whom God delivered His people from oppression"].⁷¹ Christine also urges a trio of male biblical precursors for Jehanne, comparing her to Moses because both led their people out of evil; to Joshua because he too overthrew a city at arms; and to Gideon, because he also rose from utter obscurity to lead God's army against idolaters and invaders.⁷² Indeed, Jehanne's military feats evoke the achievements of the biblical men more closely than those of the three women; yet her acts are still more astonishing than the men's because she is only "une femme — simple bergiere" ["a woman — a simple shepherdess"].⁷³

According to the logic of the *Ditié*, Jehanne's victories against such heavily stacked odds can only be explained as the result of special divine favor of a magnitude

previously unseen even in scripture. Whatever the aforementioned biblical champions have achieved with God's help, "Plus a fait par ceste Pucelle" ["He has accomplished more through this Maid"].⁷⁴ *De quadam puellam* and Gelu's *Dissertatio* had each pointed to Israel as the precedent for God's favor towards a particular people. The *Ditié* goes further even than equating France with Israel: by insisting that the Maid's achievements are all the more astounding because of their magnitude and because of her sex, Christine asserts that God now favors Jehanne — and by extension the French crown and her people — more than he favored the Israelites.⁷⁵ A model of service and faith, Jehanne seeks to unite the elect people of the medieval prophecies under their true and rightful king so that together they may fight their true enemies: the English and the infidels.

For Christine, the task of establishing Jehanne's authority hangs partly on locating the Maid at the junction of political and theological destinies, partly on stitching history and prophecy together, and partly on authorizing her own voice in the *Ditié*. The Poitiers council, where Jehanne's mission had been probed by clerics and promoted by propagandists, formed the necessary prologue to Christine's own efforts. If Christine is to speak credibly with the voice of a seer, she must pursue her polemical agenda in the context of the activities surrounding Poitiers, so that her variation of the Second Charlemagne appears to flow seamlessly from the official and popular narrative history of Jehanne. Success will mean that her prophecy is as much a part of Jehanne's narrative history — a conglomeration of existing prophetic texts, royalist propaganda, and oral rumor — as her faithful account of Charles's coronation and the siege of Orléans.

In her description of the Poitiers interrogation and its conclusions, Christine is at pains to underline the rational case for accepting that Jehanne's mission is divinely ordained:

[.....]
Son fait n'est pas illusion,
Car bien a esté esprouvée
Par conseil (en conclusion,
A l'effect la chose est prouvée),

Et bien esté examinée
Ainçois que l'on l'ait voulu croire,
Devant clers et sages menée
Pour enscher se chose voire
Disoit, ainçois qu'il fust notoire
Que Dieu l'eust vers le roy tramise.
[.....]⁷⁶

[Her achievement is no illusion for she was carefully put to the test in council (in short, a thing is proved by its effect), and well examined, before people were prepared to believe her, before it became common knowledge that God had sent her to the King, she was brought before clerks and wise men so that they could find out if she was telling the truth.]

Writing in July, Christine enjoyed one advantage that the theologians and propagandists in March had lacked: hindsight.⁷⁷ Here, she conflates two distinct steps necessary for the confirmation of Jehanne's divine mission, only the first of which had been achieved at Poitiers. The Maid had indeed been "examinée" there to establish that she was pure in mind and body, but Christine's observation that "A l'effect la chose est prouvée" is sleight of hand: as far as the counsellors were concerned the theological nature of her mission remained unproven until the victory at Orléans.⁷⁸ But from Christine's perspective in the *Ditié*, Jehanne has already worked her promised miracle, and furthermore has gone on to facilitate the coronation at Reims. Christine can therefore set

out a compelling case that Jehanne has already been witnessed as the embodiment and fulfillment of several prophecies.

Prophecy and those who prophesy appear at the very fulcrum of the *Ditié* in order to endorse both the divinity of Jehanne's mission and the authority of Christine's text.

Huitain 31 reads:

Car Merlin et Sebile et Bede,
Plus de V^e ans a la virent
En esperit, et pour remede
En France en leurs escripz la mirent,
Et leur[s] prophecies en firent,
Disans qu'el pourteroit baniere
Es guerres françoises, et dirent
De son fait toute la maniere.⁷⁹

[for more than 500 years ago, Merlin, the Sibyl and Bede foresaw her [Jehanne's] coming, entered her in their writings as someone who would put an end to France's troubles, made prophecies about her, saying that she would carry the banner in the French wars and describing all that she would achieve.]

Fraioli, noting that this huitain occurs between two allusions (one explicit, the second implicit) to the Poitiers Conclusions, argues that it indicates Christine knew the prophecies of Merlin and Bede had been weighed there as evidence in relation to Jehanne.⁸⁰ In the *Ditié*, Christine appears to imply that a sibylline prophecy was also presented.⁸¹

The selection of authorities may seem an odd assortment. Yet examples of medieval texts citing Merlin and the Sibyl side-by-side are abundant; Christine herself had previously linked the two in the *Chemin de lonc estude* and *L'Avison-Christine* (1405).⁸² Merlin and Bede were mentioned together so often in the Middle Ages that they

were occasionally mistaken for each other.⁸³ Christine's list is entirely in keeping with prophetic authorization formulae as described by Michael Curley:

No political prophecies circulated for long anonymously in the Middle Ages without some attempt being made to foist them on an authoritative figure. From their very origins such utterances were regularly (but rarely correctly) ascribed to the sibyls, Methodius, Gildas, Merlin, Cadwalader, Bede, Thomas à Becket, Saints Bridget and Hildegard, Joachim, and many others whose legendary or actual prominence lent great rhetorical force to those partisan political prophecies which circulated under their names.⁸⁴

Christine's choice of names, therefore, places her poem at the intersection of the supernatural and the political, at that point where divinely inspired authorities can be recruited to justify worldly objectives and where worldly objectives are revealed as part of a divine plan. In other words, they locate the *Ditié* in the present tense of salvation history.

The combination of Merlin, Bede, and the Sibyl goes beyond simple reduplication, by building foundations for Jehanne in oracles which are diverse in nature (respectively magical, theological, and divinely inspired) and which derive from the chief currents or tributaries of medieval European culture — Arthurian romance, Christian scholasticism, and the classical world. Bede, as the editor of the Vulgate and author of bible commentaries and works of science (*De rerum natura*, written before 725; *De temporibus*, 703; and *De temporum ratione*, 725) and history (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 731), lends intellectual weight to the concepts of salvation history with which Christine is dealing; as the tutor of Alcuin, the Anglo-Saxon who became chief doctrinal advisor to Charlemagne, he suggests by association an admirable precedent of the English serving French imperial power.⁸⁵ Merlin's prophecies, often essentially

political in character, appear in late medieval collections alongside others with an eschatological bias, and sometimes appear little different from the more calamitous auguries of the Sibyl.⁸⁶ Mention of the Sibyl herself in the *Ditié* is particularly significant in respect of salvation history, because it was to her (more specifically, the Tiburtine and Cumaean Sibyls) that the Second Charlemagne Prophecy was generally attributed.⁸⁷

In this list of authorities, Christine was citing oracles purportedly about Jehanne that had been forged or altered during and after Poitiers in order to unite her in the popular imagination with Charles's cause.⁸⁸ One of the so-called Merlin prophecies appears to have been known beforehand: Jehanne had apparently been asked at Chinon about the tradition of a girl (*puella*) who would come "ex nemore canuto" — interpreted as meaning "from the Bois-Chenu," the oakwood near her native village of Domrémy — to dry up the sources of evil with her breath.⁸⁹ The text originated in the *Prophetiae Merlini* of Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1130), the principal source for the British medieval prophetic tradition.⁹⁰ Valois royalists, seeking English or British texts which could be reinterpreted to deny Henry IV's claim to the French throne, seized on the twelfth-century Merlin Prophecies, but adapted them to fit their needs more perfectly.⁹¹ From versions of "Ex nemore canuto" designed for circulation, they removed references to London, Winchester, and the girl's sulphurous footprints that were topographically or typologically undesirable.⁹² The useful line about the girl from the oakwood was also grafted on to copies of a section from another part of Geoffrey's Merlin prophecies, beginning "Ascendet virgo," which was itself adjusted and given a rather liberal French gloss.⁹³ "Ascendet virgo," finally, seems to have been the basis for a completely new prophecy composed by the propagandists, a 16-line poem beginning "Virgo puellares."⁹⁴

The idea of forging or reappropriating prophecies was not new. Christine's citation of Bede refers to an oracle that actually first appeared in the mid-fourteenth century, in the Prophecy of John of Bridlington, ascribing predictions about the Black Prince to the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon scholar; Charles's supporters had now refabricated its chronogram as a reference to the current year so that its allusion to a girl (*puella*) carrying a banner would appear to denote Jehanne, La Pucelle — the reading that Christine accepts in the *Ditié*.⁹⁵ If sibylline prophecies were indeed discussed at Poitiers they, too, would count as forgeries on some level. The Sibylline Oracles that were known in the Middle Ages were not the originals held at Rome, but forgeries by Jewish and then Christian writers. The Second Charlemagne Prophecy itself was the eleventh-century product of a *fabulosum confictum* ["fabulous counterfeit"] that quickly became attached to so-called sibylline predictions.⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that if sibylline prophecies were not in fact discussed at Poitiers, the *Ditié*'s reference to the Sibyl would itself be a baseless fabrication by Christine, practicing a time-honored prophetic technique. However, in the nature and scale of her ambitions as a poet it is Vergil himself that she sought to emulate. He succeeded so thoroughly in emulating oracular verse that the "Fourth Eclogue" had later been accepted (after the patristic scholar Lactantius and the Roman emperor Constantine) as an actual augury of the coming of Christ. In order to achieve Christine's goals, the *Ditié* should assume the oracular form it imitates without provoking skepticism or debate; it should undergo an artistic transubstantiation from poetry into prophecy. Its success, while not on a Vergilian scale, may be measured by the fact that in its earliest surviving manuscript form the *Ditié* appears alongside several of the Poitiers prophecies, as if Christine had the same authority as Merlin.⁹⁷

As prophet of Jehanne, Christine was as keen as the Poitiers propagandists not only to place the Maid in the context of old oracles, but also to repel the chief criticisms that were being launched against her. Regarding the most visible problem, Jehanne's use of male attire, the *Ditié*'s citation of the Merlin prophecies reinforces points already implied in the earlier references to Esther and Judith. The two biblical heroines had previously been named in *De quadam puellam* as examples of women who dressed in a manner (seductively) that would have been morally reprehensible had it not been done in pursuit of their divinely ordained tasks as saviours of God's chosen people.⁹⁸ In the gloss provided by Valois propagandists, the Merlin prophecy "Ascendet virgo" had been expanded specifically to counteract the criticism of cross-dressing by describing a virgin who would ride in arms and hide her gender, an act which it equates with the virtue of virginity.⁹⁹ The Merlinesque pseudo-prophecy "Virgo puellares" surrounds the virgin dressed in men's clothing with extenuating and validating references to her divine mission and the fleur de lis, placing Jehanne once more in the zone of salvation history where dynastic and religious agendas intersect.¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that while "Virgo puellares" helps to promote the Maid as "a kind of feminine Mars" (in the words of Fraioli), the *Ditié* nowhere suggests a precedent for Jehanne in the Amazon warriors whom Christine had praised previously in *Cité des dames*. Citing Merlin is enough to enlist the Poitiers prophecies against critics of Jehanne's masculine garb, and the *Ditié* attributes her military success not to a matching Amazonian love of arms but solely to the agency of God.¹⁰¹

In order to construct Jehanne as a figure worthy of royal, ecclesiastical, and secular consideration, Christine also had to counter the allegations of heresy and sorcery

against the Maid that had arisen since her first emergence on the political stage, circulated both by French clerics skeptical of her claims to be God's agent and by English propagandists bent on undermining her inspirational influence. The citation of prophecies might potentially have added to the aura of sorcery attaching to Jehanne and her rumored miracles. However, in her reference to Bede, Christine associated prophecy with science and theology, rather than sorcery. More radically, by citing the Sibyl and Merlin, Christine harnessed pre-Christian paganism and Dark Age necromancy in a combination which nullified the magical attributes of the two figures. In his literary confederacy with the Sibyl, Merlin had largely lost his strictly sorcerous associations; as William Kinter writes: "Generally speaking, when the Sibyl and Merlin appear together, they do not cast spells, but warn of things to come."¹⁰²

The Apocalyptic Sibyl and the Rhetoric of War

In the *Ditié*, Merlin, the Sibyl, and Bede do not appear (as such oracles had at Poitiers) as principal evidence in the case for Jehanne, but as secondary evidence: from the post-Orléans perspective, prophecy has merged with history, faith has been matched by proof. The three oracular figures were now involved not only in eschatological prophecy, but also in Johannic prophecy. Accordingly, the fusion of the mystical and the rational permits Christine now to begin constructing her own eschatological prophecy surrounding Jehanne — a forgery, but no more so than those before it — sanctioned not only by the trio of oracles, but also by history, which has emphatically endorsed their powers of foresight. Supported by Bede and Merlin, and with the precedent of the Sibyl, Christine can now assume for herself the role of apocalyptic Sibyl.

She draws further support for the role from Jehanne herself through an act of literary imitation. The pro-war rhetoric of Christine's apostrophes to the English invaders, to the disloyal subjects who have denied their true king, and to the rebellious cities of France (occurring intermittently between huitains 37 and 57) stands in stark contrast to earlier works such as the *Lamentacion* and *L'Epistre à la reine*, which presented war emphatically as a cause of grief and suffering. In her apostrophe to the English, Christine is at her most unforgiving and graphic:

Si rabaissez, Anglois, voz cornes
 Car jamais n'aurez beau gibier!
 En France ne menez voz sornes!
 [.....]

[.....]
 Vous irés ailleurs tabourer,
 Se ne voulez assavourer
 La mort, comme voz compaignons,
 Que loups pevent bien devourer,
 Car mors gisent par les sillons!

[And so, you English, draw in your horns for you will never capture any good game! Don't attempt any foolish enterprise in France [. . .]. Go and beat your drums elsewhere, unless you want to taste death, like your companions, whom wolves may well devour for their bodies lie dead among the furrows.]¹⁰³

However, as Fraioli has observed, Christine's use of martial polemic in the *Ditié* follows the precedent set by Jehanne in her widely circulated *Lettre aux Anglais*, written on March 22, 1429.¹⁰⁴ The direct address, the unyielding call to surrender, the threat of force in the apostrophe to the English provide undeniable echoes of the Maid's own language.¹⁰⁵ The comparison suggests a further analogy between the *Ditié* and the *Lettre aux Anglais*. Jehanne's sudden shifts from first person to third person in her references to

herself (“actendez les nouvelles de la Pucelle” [“wait for the word of the Maid”], “je sui chief de guerre” [“I am commander of the armies”]) appear to indicate a multiple view of herself as a subjective participant in history and as an object in God’s plan.¹⁰⁶ The process is paralleled by the absorption of Jehanne’s voice into Christine’s in the *Ditié*, where the two women, author and protagonist, are effectively subsumed beneath the divine will, as if the distinction between the messengers were of no consequence in comparison to the divine message itself.¹⁰⁷ Jehanne’s letters are testimony to her belief that she spoke and acted for God, that she was both the messenger and the agent of an ordained destiny. They speak of the re-taking of Paris with all the assurance and theological authorizations of prophesy. The *Lettre aux Anglais* states:

vous ne tendrez point le royaume de France [de] Dieu, le Roy du ciel, fils sainte Marie; ains le tendra le roy Charles, vray heritier; car Dieu, le Roy du ciel, le veult, et lui est revelé par la Pucelle; lequel entrera a Paris a bonne compagnie. Se ne voulez croire les nouvelles de par Dieu et la Pucelle, en quelque lieu que vous trouverons, nous ferrons dedens [. . .] at aux horions verra on qui ara meilleur droit de Dieu du ciel.

[you shall never hold the kingdom of France from God, the King of Heaven, the son of St. Mary: but King Charles, the true heir will hold it; for God, the King of Heaven, wishes it so and has revealed this through the Maid, and he will enter Paris with a goodly company. If you do not wish to believe this message from God through the Maid, then wherever we find you we will strike you there [. . .] and in the exchange of blows we shall see who has better right from the King of Heaven.]¹⁰⁸

Her letter to the duke of Burgundy outlines in similarly prophetic style the peril facing him if he resists.¹⁰⁹ By absorbing into the *Ditié* the rhetoric with which Jehanne had stated her claim to be the conduit of God’s will, Christine is able to claim the authority to issue not merely her own admonishments, praise, and promises — as she has done with

increasing confidence through the course of her career since the Debate of the *Rose* — but now Jehanne’s as well.¹¹⁰ By extension, Christine implicitly claims to speak God’s will.

However, her focus is not the English. After only two huitains she ceases addressing them directly, referring to them in the next merely as third parties who are “sue” [“done for”].¹¹¹ Echoing the *Lettre aux Anglais*, Christine does not condemn the English to eternal damnation, but is content to see them expelled from France by the Maid:

Si est tout le mains qu’à faire ait
Que destruire l’Englecherie,
Car elle a ailleurs plus son hait
C’est que la Foy ne soit perie.

[And yet destroying the English race is not her main concern for her aspirations lie more elsewhere: it is her concern to ensure the survival of the Faith.]¹¹²

Christine’s overriding focus remains the faith and the French. Kennedy and Varty observe that the attack on the English is primarily a negative means of expressing national identity; an idea taken up by Solterer, who equates casting out the invaders with “calling a French community forcibly into shape.”¹¹³ In other words, Christine aims to unify France by promoting, through her diatribe against the English, a more pressing form of alterity than that created by the continuing ducal rivalry. As already noted, Richards sees her depiction of the Anglo-French conflict in terms of a “biblical typology” including reference to Cain and Abel.¹¹⁴ We may therefore regard the war, through Christine’s eyes, as a moral matter pertaining to the state of the French soul. Far more

than a cathartic release or a boast of victory, Christine's condemnation of the English serves as a vivid reminder to the French of the depths to which they have sunk.

For much of the rest of the *Ditié*, Christine addresses the various French parties with what Solterer views as a return to the "invective" writing she had first attempted during the Debate of the *Rose*, matching the "rhetoric of praise" celebrating Jehanne's achievements with a "rhetoric of blame" delivering "another stinging rebuke" to the French nobility.¹¹⁵ Warnings to rebellious French subjects and prayers for the innocent are couched between stanza after stanza describing the futility and folly of resistance: lines that may evoke, in this sibylline context, the scene in Vergil where the Cumaean Sibyl shows Aeneas the rebels in Hades. But Christine depicts Jehanne's military sweep as a purging of the sinful that should demonstrate God's wrath to all who still deny Charles's divinely appointed kingship. Here she echoes Jehanne, who had told the duke of Burgundy that by continuing to assert their right to the French throne and its kingdom, the Burgundians and their English allies were pursuing a war against God.¹¹⁶

Yet Christine has expressed the conviction that God favors the French people, not merely the Valois dynasty. Underscoring all her warnings is a call for penitence. Her moralizing recalls the view she expressed in the *Lamentacion*: civil war is unnatural and turns men into beasts and serpents without reason, for if men had reason they would not presume to defy God's will. Thus, despite its bloody imagery and its taunts of retribution, the program of the *Ditié* moves (still in step with the *Lettre aux Anglais*) towards establishing peace through faith, the reconstruction of France, and an insistence on obedience to God. Though the insurrectionist Parisians have opposed God's will, she avoids labelling them heretics. Repeatedly, Christine emphasizes a willingness to forgive

those among the French who have been swayed by the false promises of the rebels and the invaders.¹¹⁷ Unlike the English, whom she condemns as fit for carrion because of their invasion, Christine's compatriots are merely "tremal conseillié" ["ill-advised"] and by implication can learn the error of their ways: they are, as it were, stray sheep who may be returned to Charles's faithful flock.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile Christine reassures the faithful that their valor and suffering will not go unrewarded. This is a just and divine war, and she reminds them that "qui se combat pour droiture Paradis gaingne" ["whoever fights for justice wins a place in Paradise"].¹¹⁹ The assurances form part of a wrenching sequence of 360-degree turns in which Christine predicts an accounting — on earth but directed by heaven — for the enemies and supporters of Charles: destruction on the one hand, mercy on the other.

Apocalyptic Sibyl, Second Charlemagne, and Angelic Pope

This eschatological apportioning of divine justice is the last of a series of factors that combine now to propel Christine into her most fully fledged sibylline role, as the *Ditié's* apocalyptic Sibyl, seer of the world's destiny, damnation, and salvation. As Brownlee has recognized, she uses the weight of her entire corpus of sibyls to authorize her voice in the *Ditié*.¹²⁰ More immediately, however, Christine's self-promotion to Sibyl of the apocalypse has been in construction since the poem's Vergilian opening, through its insistence on contemporary politics as a crux of sacred history, its conjuration of the Poitiers prophecies, to its absorption of Jehanne's voice and beyond. It is only as a consequence of all these factors that Christine may publish her own political and religious vision as if it were prophecy.

The precise moment that the voice of the apocalyptic Sibyl first speaks plainly may be pinpointed. She turns her attention outside the borders of France and beyond the immediate crisis to prophesy that the campaign in France will end in a holy crusade. With the same stroke, Christine begins to reintroduce the idea that Charles V is the prophesied Second Charlemagne, part of whose program had always been the defeat and conversion of the infidels.¹²¹

In prophesying crusade, Christine follows the lead not only of an entire canon of millennial literature but also of Jehanne. In the *Lettre aux Anglais*, the Maid herself had proposed a joint crusade to the English if they would quit France without further violence. Emphasizing faith as a commonality, she had suggested that a war against the Turks was more honorable than a war between Christians

Vous duc de Bedford, la Pucelle vous prie et vous requiert que
vous ne vous faictes mie destruire. Si vous lui facites raison,
encore pourrez venir en sa compaignie, l'ou que le Francois
feront le plus bel fait que oncques fu fait pour la chrestienté.

[You, Duke of Bedford, the Maid prays you and requests that you cause
no more destruction. If you will settle your account, you can come to join
her company, in which the French will achieve the finest feat ever
accomplished in Christendom.]¹²²

The Maid had spelled out the same idea unequivocally in a letter of July 17, the day of Charles's coronation, by extending the offer of a joint crusade to the rebellious Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy.¹²³ Taken together, Jehanne's letters have been seen by Kennedy and Varty as evidence that she considered a joint crusade between the French and the English as a political and spiritual means to bring peace between warring

Christian nations — a solution which (as Fraioli observes) dates back to the fourteenth-century writings of Saint Catherine of Siena.¹²⁴

Christine herself may have hinted at the idea of Christian unification and crusade earlier in the *Ditié* with the reference in huitain 15 to the “grant chose solempnée” [“great and solemn task”] awaiting Charles. Now, however, she puts Jehanne center-stage in the campaign, writing:

En Christianté et l'Eglise
Sera par elle mis concorde.
Les mescreans dont on devise,
Et les herites de vie orde
Destruira, car ainsi l'acorde
Prophecie, qui l'a predit,
Ne point n'aura misericorde
De lieu, qui la foy Dieu laidit.

[She will restore harmony in Christendom and the Church. She will destroy the unbelievers people talk about, and the heretics and their vile ways, for this is the substance of a prophecy that has been made. Nor will she have mercy on any place which treats faith in God with disrespect.]

Des Sarradins fera essart,
En conquerant la Saintte Terre.
Là menra Charles, que Dieu gard!
Ains qu'il muire, fera tel erre.
Cilz est cil qui la doit conquerre.
Là doit-elle finer sa vie,
Et l'un et l'autre gloire acquerre.
Là sera la chose assovye.

[She will destroy the Saracens, by conquering the Holy Land. She will lead Charles there, whom God preserve! Before he dies he will make such a journey. He is the one who is to conquer it. It is there that she is to end her days and that both of them are to win glory. It is there that the whole enterprise will be brought to completion.]¹²⁵

Thus Christine posits the end of the Anglo-Burgundian and Anglo-French conflict as the locus for Charles's most significant tasks — but crucially they are tasks in which Jehanne plays a joint and equally illustrious role. When Christine writes of the survival of the Faith (huitain 45) using the voice of the apocalyptic Sibyl, she requires both the king and the Maid to perform their proper functions in the full program entailed.

It is particularly striking that Christine asserts Charles and Jehanne have been not merely elected but prophesied as the pair who will oust all infidels and reconquer the Holy Land. Harking back to her recruitment of the Poitiers prophecies of Bede, Merlin, and the Sibyl, she presents the future into which she is now inscribing Jehanne as something previously predicted. Perhaps her forecast of crusade is indeed prompted by Jehanne's own prediction in the *Lettre aux Anglais*. However, although it is difficult to see a compelling reason for her not to cite the illustrious, blessed Maid as the authority, Christine certainly does not seem to want to do so: the statement “car ainsi l'acorde / Prophecie, qui l'a predit” [“for this is the substance of a prophecy that has been made”] is impersonal and passive.

Critics have looked elsewhere, not to prophecy but to contemporary literature, to identify analogues for the role that Christine gives Jehanne. Fraioli notes that in a prayer from 1414 Christine had pictured the Virgin Mary as intercessor between the French and God, an idea she shared with the patriotic poets Blondel and Charles d'Orléans; she adds: “The emphasis in the *Ditié* on the virgin, Joan of Arc, who saves through the grace of God, brings to mind more explicitly than elsewhere the Virgin Mary. It is surely no coincidence that Christine uses the term “beneurée” to refer to Joan of Arc.”¹²⁶ The comparison with Mary is instructive, especially for the early huitains of the *Ditié*.

However, it only works up to a point. It fails to account for references to Jehanne going on crusade, acting as a great reformer, or being crowned.

Is it possible, therefore, to identify a prophecy — an oracle that Christine might reasonably expect others to recognize as predicting a crusade by a figure such as Jehanne within the context of ideas of a Second Charlemagne? The answer, it seems, is a qualified yes. There existed, indeed, no body of texts originating in the past and interpreted in the present to prophesy Jehanne's future as a female Christian warrior beyond the French national crisis. However, for the purposes of writing the Maid into Charles's future, Christine had at her disposal a tradition that placed alongside the Second Charlemagne a great ally, often springing from poverty but always becoming a great earthly redeemer, reformer, and crusader. Accordingly, she now expands her prophecy to include Joan as a substitute for the Angelic Pope, the blessed figure who, according to the canon of millennial prophecy, would accompany the Last Emperor (in Francophile texts, the Second Charlemagne) to Jerusalem.

The notion of Angelic Pope, Angel Pope, or *pastor angelicus*, though it left no mark on apocalyptic ideas in the first millennium CE and never became part of official papal propaganda, was widespread in late medieval Europe. It sprang partly from dissatisfaction with the papacy as a corrupt and worldly institution, giving rise to calls, from the late twelfth century onwards, for the papacy to divest itself of the trappings of kingship; to abandon its attempts to rival the Holy Roman Emperor; and to focus on internal reform.¹²⁷ The Angelic Pope developed from the ideas of the millennialist abbot Joachim of Fiore, and was colored by his vision of the ideal role of the papacy “as a ‘suffering servant,’ an institution whose providential destiny was not to resist persecution

with the weapons of this world, but to suffer, preach and inspire in the coming crisis,” as Bernard McGinn says.¹²⁸ In a world seeking validation of major crises in terms of God’s grand plan for his creation, McGinn argues, it was inevitable that a figure as important as the Pope would be expected to have a role alongside the Last Emperor in the End Days.¹²⁹ And in the tumultuous hundred years leading up to the crisis Christine was currently witnessing, the End Days had been regarded as very imminent.

The Angelic Pope and his grand crusading program first appear in Franciscan occultist Roger Bacon’s *Opus Tertium* (1267-8).¹³⁰ From a Francophile viewpoint, it was natural that the Angelic Pope should be affiliated with France against the Hohenstaufens, Holy Roman Emperors until 1250. The *Liber de Flore* (1304-5), spuriously attributed to Joachim, projected that the first of four Angelic Popes would be aided by a French king from the line of Pippin, the first Carolingian monarch and father of Charlemagne, who would be crowned Emperor, bring an end to the Schism, and take Jerusalem.¹³¹ As McGinn says, “Significantly, it was the Francophile versions of the Last Emperor which combined most readily with the completed version of the papal myth [. . .].”¹³² The Avignon Papacy (1305-78) followed by the Great Schism (1378-1414) naturally lent force to the idea of an Angelic Pope in France; one anthology of prophecies (rounding up the Sibyls, Merlin, and the other usual suspects) conflates the idea of the Angelic Pope with the Avignonese popes, but on the whole it was dissatisfaction with them that contributed to the counter-image of a *pastor angelicus*.¹³³ Prophecies compiled by the Joachimist Jean of Roquetaillade in the mid-fourteenth century featured the Angelic Pope arising from poverty (he would be mendicant Franciscan friar) and uniting with the

French king to carry out the millennial campaign as co-crusader and prime reformer

(*Reformator*):

Together with the French king he will carry out the great programme, visiting Greece and Asia and bringing all, even Turks and Tartars, under their rule. Peace will be made in Italy, all schism ended, and the clergy drastically reformed. He will then leave the political role to the French king 'of the race of Pipin', who will execute the mandates of the *Reformator* throughout the world. He himself will be wholly occupied with the spiritual power. After the conversion of the Jews he will transfer the Holy See from Rome to Jerusalem. [. . .] The New Jerusalem will be constructed but no secular ruler allowed therein for fear of contaminating the clergy. Then there will be such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Paradise will seem to have descended again. [. . .] There will be one empire embracing the whole earth, unbelief will exist no more, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.¹³⁴

Thus, by introducing Jehanne as a figure embodying the divine sanction for French national aspirations, Christine was placing her in a niche that had already been carved out within the context of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy.

Christine's reference to Jehanne as "bergiere" ["shepherdess"] evokes both the austere origin of the Angelic Pope with his final role as pastor. As the *Ditié*'s substitute for the figure, Jehanne will become the spiritual guiding light of a united Church ("En Christianté et l'Eglise / Sera par elle mis concorde" ["She will restore harmony in Christendom and the Church"]).¹³⁵ Her final mission to Jerusalem is described in terms which strongly suggest the prophesied idea of universal peace at the End of Days:

Là sera la chose assovye.
[.....]
Si croy que Dieu ça jus la donne,
Afin que paix soit par son fait.

[It is there that the whole enterprise will be brought to completion.
[. . .] I believe that God gives her to us here below so that peace may be
brought about through her deeds.]¹³⁶

In the light of these parallels with the role of Angelic Pope, it is possible to observe a double meaning in Christine's comment in the selfsame *huitain* that in comparison to all brave men Jehanne "doit porter la couronne" ["must wear the crown"].¹³⁷ This is more than simply a crown of "sainthood" or "honor" (as Fraioli offhandedly suggests), yet on the other hand it cannot be intended to suggest a challenge to Charles's regal authority.¹³⁸ Rather, in addition to its metaphorical role, the reference imprints in the poem the image of papal coronation, as a testament not only to the courage Jehanne has already demonstrated but also to the deeds she will accomplish during her spiritual reign.¹³⁹ It is not necessary to imagine that Christine was incorporating the full picture of the *pastor angelicus* from apocalyptic prophecy into the *Ditié* to see that she was appropriating elements that allowed her to place Jehanne, a peasant girl, on an equal footing to Charles, the king who would be the Second Charlemagne. It is a radical but logical development both of Christine's ideas of female strength, dignity, and authority, and of Jehanne's astonishing impact on the French imagination from the moment she stepped into the limelight. We cannot determine how far Christine might have developed her vision for Jehanne if matters had transpired differently at the gates of Paris, but the notion that a woman could become Angel Pope was not without precedent. The Milanese Guglielmite movement of the late thirteenth century has been located by McGinn within the same apocalyptic traditions, and in the visionary figure of Maifreda (or Manfreda) it provides an example of a woman who inspired similar hopes to those Christine placed in Jehanne — and whose fate was just as sad:

From about 1300 some sectarian leaders came to see themselves in the role of the *pastor angelicus* who would purify the Church. Perhaps the most unusual of these was the version found in a small Milanese group that honored the memory of one Guglielma (died 1282) as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. One of their number, named Manfreda, was hailed as the *vicaria sancte Guillelme*, the “vicaress of Guglielma,” that is, the Holy Spirit. Along with a College of Cardinals she was to celebrate Mass and to convert the Jews, heathens and false Christians. Manfreda and her group were burnt in 1300.¹⁴⁰

Understood in the light of comparisons to the Angelic Pope tradition, once Jehanne and Charles have fought side by side to defeat the infidels and conquer the Holy Land, their roles will diverge. Like the Universal Monarch whom Christine had envisioned in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, Charles, the Second Charlemagne, must govern not only France but all nations, now united by a single faith and forming an earthly kingdom figured as the New Roman Empire. Jehanne’s role, implicit in her shadowing of the role of *pastor angelicus*, will be to oversee the reform and unification of the Universal Church.

Giving Jehanne such an integral part in the *Ditié*’s version of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy is not mere wish fulfillment, but a necessity if Christine is to continue to assert her program of tutoring Charles (following the earlier huitains which outlined the virtues required of him as a public servant) by sublimating his success and his authority to the Maid. Reinforcing their shared destinies, she constructs the courageous, virtuous, and inspirational Maid as a model for the king. The last huitains of the *Ditié* should be viewed not only as an attempt to quell further insurgence but also as a set of implicit instructions to Charles on the virtues of peaceful and merciful reunification and on how he should conduct the business of reconstruction.¹⁴¹

The final role that Christine gives herself as apocalyptic Sibyl in the *Ditié* is advisory, recalling both Othéa and the Cumaean Sibyl in the *Epistre Othéa*. Christine’s

eyes are not fixed on the resplendent future, but remain focused on the exigencies of July 1429. In order to return to the immediate priority, the reunification of France that must precede Charles's imperial destiny, the *Ditié's* references to Jehanne and Charles as crusaders give way to the prophesied siege of Paris. As Lutkus and Walker emphasize, Christine was at pains to convince Charles not to abandon Jehanne in her mission to retake Paris by undermining her military advancements with detours and delays (designed to conceal from the Maid Charles's two-week truce with Burgundy).¹⁴² Even though Christine reminds his French subjects that Charles would be justified in continuing to use force to recover his dominions, her anticipation of final peace and unity recalls her longstanding repugnance for civil violence. Christine's last apostrophe, directed at France's rebel towns, combines prayer, promise, and a gloss on recent events to assure the people that Charles is "si debonnaire / Qu'à chascun il veult pardonner!" ["so magnanimous that he wishes to pardon each and everyone"]. The message is underscored by the assertion that Charles's mercy is ensured only through Jehanne, acting as God's intercessor.¹⁴³

Notes

¹ Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: OUP, 1969) 135.

² Thomas Fletcher Royds, *Virgil and Isaiah: A Study of the Polio with translations, notes and appendices* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1918) 24.

³ Deborah Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2000) 115 (hereafter *Early Debate*).

⁴ Kevin Brownlee, "Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*," *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover: UP of New England, 1989) 146.

⁵ Brownlee (140-3) observes that just as Jehanne's life is "doubled" by prophecies of it, so Christine's voice is "doubled" by the prophetic voices she invokes.

⁶ Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 109.

⁷ Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 61-8. A. D. Lutkus and J. M. Walker, "PR Pas PC: Christine de Pizan's Pro-Joan Propaganda," *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) 153.

⁸ Earl Jeffrey Richards, "French Cultural Nationalism and Christian Universalism in the Works of Christine de Pizan," *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 86.

⁹ Richards (88) refers to echoes of the Vulgate (*Genesis* 4.10) in huitain 51.

¹⁰ Richards 87-8.

¹¹ Fraioli believes that Christine may have modelled her utilization of the Second Charlemagne on its prior use by Eustache Deschamps in his 1392 ballad *Sur ce qui doit advenir*, written in relation to Charles's elder brother Louis. Deborah Fraioli, "The Literary Image of Joan of Arc: Prior Influences," *Speculum* 56 (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1981), 827. Auguste Henri Édouard de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (ed.), *Oeuvres Complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, vol. 1 (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1878; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966) 184.

¹² Fraioli, "Literary Image," 811 note 2.

¹³ Fraioli, "Literary Image," 821-8.

¹⁴ Bernard McGinn, "Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages," *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 33.

¹⁵ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pizan: an electronic transcription*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, 1999, Minnesota U, <<http://erc.lib.umn.edu/dynaweb/french/pizalaci>>, 2.2 (hereafter *Cité des dames*, references by part and chapter). English translation *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1998) 102 (hereafter *City of Ladies*).

¹⁶ Christine appears first as a celebrant of new millennialist hope in a mode closely modelled on Vergil's "Fourth Eclogue," associated with the Cumaeen Sibyl and understood by St. Augustine as a prophecy of Christ's advent. But Christine also acts as a historian binding past and present into a continuous narrative with the prophetic future — like the Erythraean Sibyl in the *Cité des dames* who foresaw earthly history as if with the clarity of hindsight, and "semble avoir dit et composé en brief les misteres de la foy

crestienne et non mie avoir predit les fais a avenir" (*Cité des dames* 2.2) ["seemed to have expressed and composed in brief the mysteries of the Christian faith and not to have predicted things yet to happen" (*City of Ladies* 102)]. The Cumaean Sibyl in the *Cité des dames* (Almathea) is also relevant for Christine's project as the ordained advisor to Roman emperors until the end of the world. (Compare: "Dieu donna si grant grace a une seule femme que elle ot sens de conseiller et aviser non mie seulement un empereur a son vivant, mais si comme tous ceulx qui le monde durant estoient a avenir a Romme et tous les fais de l'empire" ["God bestowed such great favor on a single woman who possessed the insight to counsel and advise not only one emperor during his lifetime but also, as it were, all those who were to come in Rome as long as the world lasts, as well as to comment upon all the affairs of the empire"] *Cité des dames* 2.3; *City of Ladies* 104. Likewise the *Ditié* implicitly recalls the importance of the Sibylline Oracles consulted by the Romans in time of crisis.

¹⁷ Louis, duke of Guyenne, died on December 18, 1415. John, duke of Touraine, died on April 5, 1417.

¹⁸ R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392-1420* (New York: AMS Press, 1986) 184.

¹⁹ Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, had refused Henry V's request that he assume the position of regent of France. Shortly after Jehanne's victory at Orléans, Burgundy was named regent and was given a share in the governing powers of Bedford (his brother-in-law) so that the English nobleman could focus on military matters.

²⁰ Christine de Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediæval Languages and Literature, 1977) (hereafter *Ditié*, references by huitain, or for editorial citations "Kennedy and Varty," references by page). There are two complete fifteenth-century manuscripts versions of the *Ditié* and one incomplete which dates either from the late fifteenth century or the sixteenth century. Christine indicates her authorship in *Dit de la rose* (lines 645-50) thus:

S'aucun en veult le nom savoir,
Je lui en diray tout le voir:
Qui un tout seul cry crierait,
Et la fin d'aoust y mettroit,
S'il disoit avec une yne,
Il sauroit le nom bel et digne.

["If someone wants to know her name / I'll tell the truth of it complete: / If he would say a single cry, / Then add the month of August's end, / And if he said it with an een / He'd know the fine and worthy name."] Christine de Pizan and Thomas Hoccleve, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre au dieu d'Amours" and "Dit de la Rose" / Thomas Hoccleve's "The Letter of Cupid,"* ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990).

²¹ "Excisum Euboicae latus ingens rupis in antrum, quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum, unde ruunt totidem voces, responsa Sibyllae. [. . .] At Phoebe nondum patiens, Aimmanis in anire bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat os rabidum, fera corda domans fingitque premendo. ostia iamque domus patuere ingentia centum [. . .]." ["The huge side of the Euboean rock is hewn into a cavern, whither lead a hundred wide mouths, a hundred gateways, whence rush as many

voices, the answers of the Sibyl [. . .] The prophetess, not yet brooking sway of Phoebus, storms wildly in the cavern, if so she may shake the mighty God from off her breast; so much the more he tires her raving mouth, tames her wild heart, and moulds her by constraint. And now the hundred mighty mouths of the house have opened of their own will, and bring through the air the seer's reply [. . .]" *Aeneid* 6.42-81.

²² Christine de Pizan, *L'Epistre Othéa*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 340, chapter 100 (hereafter *Epistre Othéa*); *Christine de Pizan's Letter of Othea to Hector*, trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1990) 124.

²³ *Ditié*, huitain 2. Christine's daughter and the princess Marie were already in residence at the abbey at Poissy when she joined them there.

²⁴ *Ditié*, huitain 1.

²⁵ *Ditié*, huitain 3.

²⁶ Vergil's father's land was confiscated to settle members of Augustus's army after the defeat of Julius Caesar's murderers in 42 BCE. The confiscations prompted the small-scale Perusine War, and larger conflict was only narrowly averted. The *Eclogues* were probably published between 39 and 38 BCE, and *Eclogues* 1 and 9 reflect the ongoing discord as well as Vergil's dissatisfaction with the loss of his family property. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) 764.

²⁷ Compare "Fourth Eclogue" line 1, "Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus" ["Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain"], to *Ditié* huitain 2, "Mais or changeray mon langage / De pleur en chant [. . .]" ["But now I shall change my language from one of tears to one of song [. . .]"].

²⁸ *Ditié*, huitain 2.

²⁹ "Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis actas; / magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo. [. . .] tuus iam regnat Apollo." ["Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. [. . .] Thine own Apollo now is king!"] "Fourth Eclogue," lines 4-5, 10.

³⁰ *Ditié*, huitain 3.

³¹ *Ditié*, huitain 11.

³² *Ditié*, huitain 5.

³³ *Ditié*, huitain 14.

³⁴ *Ditié*, huitain 5.

³⁵ Jehanne's polemic and her military actions are difficult to separate; here, I refer to her desire to lead Charles in a holy crusade and her plan for continued military actions which would undermine his treaties with England. For the *Ditié* as a series of "proofs," see Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 103-4. On the issue of Charles' withdrawal of support from Jehanne, see Régine Pernoud and Marie-Véronique Clin, *Joan of Arc: her story*, rev. and trans. Jeremy Duquesnay Adams, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). They write, "The changing mood is reflected in the king's itinerary. In contrast to the swift march to Reims, he now took thirty-six days to cover the ninety miles from Reims to Paris. This funereal pace must have been torture for any warrior, especially Joan, who expected to enhance the élan that the French troops shared. [. . .] Impelled toward the conquest of Paris, Joan did not know that Charles VII already had committed himself to avoiding a battle for the city" (73). Despite its inherent sense of chivalry and

duty, Jehanne's letter to the Duke of Burgundy dated July 17, 1429, evidences the degree to which Jehanne was isolated from Charles's politics. Her presence at the coronation was ceremonial — perhaps a response to public expectation. Jehanne may have been a sign of Valois power, but she was allowed little agency in matters of diplomacy. Her concern over the princes' fighting is insightful, but the letter suggests Jehanne's ignorance of actual politics. Likewise, Jehanne's letter to the people of Reims suggests that both she and the citizenry were unhappy with the king's truce.

³⁶ Reeves vii.

³⁷ Fraioli (*Early Debate* 104) writes: "To explain this circumstance, we can look to the princess, Marie de France, the king's sister, who was in residence at that time in the abbey, or to the contact Christine may have maintained with the Valois chancellery after the death of her son, Jean de Castel, who had followed Charles into exile and who served as a royal secretary until his death in 1425."

³⁸ Willard emphasizes the Pizan family's intimacy with daily activities at court, noting the detail with which Christine is able to describe royal portraits, ambassadorial visits, and such matters in 1404's *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*. Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984) 24.

³⁹ The fashion for royal astrologers was first promoted by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Alfonso the Wise of Spain (Willard 20).

⁴⁰ Edgar Laird, "Christine de Pizan and Controversy concerning Star-Study in the Court of Charles V," *Culture and Cosmos: A Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural Astronomy* 1.2 (1997): 35.

⁴¹ See Willard 17.

⁴² Willard (24, 30) suggests that Thomas may have even served as the "scientific advisor" in charge of acquisitions to the royal library, and she speculates that his familiarity and influence with the library could account for Christine's connections to the growing Paris book trade.

⁴³ Willard 20-22. The Valois (beginning with Philip VI the Fortunate) had ruled France since the death in 1328 of the last Capetian king, Philip IV the Fair, who had left no direct male heir. His daughter, Isabella, had married Edward II of England, and Edward III of England was therefore Philip's grandson. France's Salic Law, compiled in the early sixth century, prohibited women from inheriting property, or the throne. This prevented the throne from passing through marriage of a woman to a foreigner, but was contested by the English.

⁴⁴ Willard (22) writes: "Thomas de Pizan [. . .] could bring with him not only the fruits of his intellectual training at Bologna but also his experience as a public servant of the Venetian Republic. The king could consult him about his ever more debilitating afflictions, take courage in Thomas' astrological predictions, and discuss with him scientific questions for which he could not find satisfactory explanations in Paris."

⁴⁵ Willard 22.

⁴⁶ Fraioli, "Literary Image," 821-2.

⁴⁷ Fraioli ("Literary Image" 822 note 49) cites Charles d'Orléans, "Complainte de France, 4," *Poésies*, 1.259, and Robert Blondel, *Complanctus bonorum Gallicorum*, in *Les Oeuvres de Robert Blondel*, ed. Alex Héron, 1 (Rouen: 1891) 88, 123.

⁴⁸ *Ditié*, huitain 12.

⁴⁹ The *Dissertatio* was probably composed before the coronation at Reims; Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 89, 93.

⁵⁰ Pernoud and Clin 64.

⁵¹ Yolande was also Charles VII's cousin once removed, since she was the wife of Louis II, duke of Anjou (the son of Louis I, younger brother to Charles V). She had been one of the women who examined Jehanne's virginity at Tours. Yolande's second son, René of Anjou, was married to the daughter of Charles, the Duke of Lorraine, who held as one of his fiefs the duchy of Bar, in which Domrémy (Jehanne's home) was located. In February 1429, Jehanne visited Charles of Lorraine at Nancy to request the assistance of René and his men-at-arms. Malcolm Vale speculates that Yolande's encounter with Jehanne gave rise to the idea that Jehanne could be manipulated as a vehicle to influence Charles, and he suggests that Yolande may have been influenced by the contemporary prophecies of Marie Robine, who had foretold the salvation of France by a virgin bearing arms; M.G.A. Vale, *Charles VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974) 50. See also N. Valois, *Jeanne d'Arc et la Prophétie de Marie Robine* (Paris: Mélanges Paul Fabre, 1902) 453-67; Fraioli, "Literary Image," 819; Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 278-9.

⁵² Vale 50-3. See also André Antoine Thomas, *Jean Gerson et l'éducation des dauphins de France* (Paris, 1930) 193.

⁵³ Deborah Fraioli finds it difficult to accept Christine's text as the first literary attempt to unite Jehanne with Charles in a crusade reminiscent of the one promised by the "Second Charlemagne Cycle." Although she cannot produce other texts which pre-date the *Ditié*, she suggests that Christine may have stumbled upon the idea via her extensive access to written sources. Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 58.

⁵⁴ Reeves 299-302. On the Last Emperor and the Second Charlemagne, see Reeves 306-19, 320-31.

⁵⁵ Reeves 299.

⁵⁶ Reeves 295-331.

⁵⁷ Reeves 320.

⁵⁸ Reeves 401-15.

⁵⁹ Jean Juvénal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI*, in *Nouvelle Collection de Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France*, vol. 2, ed. Joseph François Michaud and Jean Joseph François Poujoulat (Paris: Didier, 1857) 343-4. Eustache Deschamps links the flying stag not only with the French monarchy but also with the Cumaean Sibyl in her role as prophet of the incarnation and the apocalypse:

Je, Sebile, prophete, la Cumayne,
Qu'en .xii. vers parlay de Jhesu Crist
Par avant ce qu'il preist char humaine
En la Vierche qui nostre rachat fist,
Et fut tout voir ce que ma bouche dist.
Aussi sera la clause derreniere
Des corps lever, vueil reciter mon dit
Du cerf volant a la teste legiere.

[I, Sibyl, prophet of Cumae, Who spoke in twelve lines of Jesus Christ Before he took human form In the Virgin which redeemed us And all that my mouth spoke was true. So will the last clause be Of the resurrection of the body, will say my song Of the flying stag with adolescent antlers.]

Auguste Henri Édouard de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (ed.), *Oeuvres Complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, vol. 2 (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1878; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966) 9-10; Michael Bath, *The Image of the Stag: Iconographic Themes in Western Art* (Baden Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1982) 83. See also Bath, "The Legend of Caesar's Deer," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 9 (1979): 53-66. Variants of the Cerf Volant prophecy may also be found in Froissart's *Chroniques* — Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Henri Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels: V. Devaux, 1867-1877; Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967) 10.69-71 — and in the Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis, contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, vol. 6, ed. M.L. Bellaguet (Paris: Crapelet, 1839-52). See also Kennedy and Varty 63-5.

⁶⁰ John Pollard, *Virgil and the Sibyl: The Fourteenth Jackson Knight Memorial Lecture (Delivered 29 October 1981)* (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1982) 7.

⁶¹ Mayor, Joseph. B., "Sources of the Fourth Eclogue," *Vergil's Messianic Eclogue*, eds. Joseph B. Mayor, W. Warde Fowler, and R. S. Conway (London: John Murray, 1907) 91. Bard Thompson writes: "It is important to note that the Sibylline collection was consulted in times of disaster and misfortune. [. . .] Thus, in one very significant respect, the oracles differed in their original design from the purpose to which they were put later by the Fathers. They were not so much predictions of woes to come, like apocalyptic tracts, as explanations of what was required to avert the anger the anger of Gods. As Pliny put it (*Historia Naturalis* XI.35), they were not *vaticinia* but *remedia Sibyllina*" (Bard Thompson, "Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles," *Review of Religion* 3-4 (1952): 124).

⁶² *Ditié*, huitain 17. Kennedy and Varty (65) note that emending *face* to *faces* provides an alternate reading, "May you never wage war to the death there again!" which is appropriate to the second-person address of the previous line.

⁶³ Othéa announces Hector's death in chapter 90 of the *Epistre Othéa*. See footnote 109 for a parallel in a letter to the duke of Burgundy where Jehanne writes both as prophet and as a humble servant unaware of God's will.

⁶⁴ For explicit examples, see *Ditié*, huitains 12, 15, and 19.

⁶⁵ *Ditié*, huitain 12.

⁶⁶ Christine praises Charles in *Ditié*, huitains 15-20 and 59-60. The message echoes that in the "Fourth Eclogue," where Vergil reveres his patron C. Asinius Pollio, governor of the poet's native Cisalpine Gaul.

⁶⁷ *Ditié*, huitain 18.

⁶⁸ [Jean Gerson?], *De quadam puellam*, trans. H.G. Francq, "Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and other Memoirs in Defence of Joan of Arc," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 41 (1971); rpt. in Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 201.

⁶⁹ Pierre Lanéry d'Arc, ed., *Mémoires et consultations en faveur de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris: 1889) 578, cited in Fraioli, "Literary Image," 814; [Jean Gerson?], *De mirabili victoria*, trans. H.G. Francq, "Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and other Memoirs in

Defence of Joan of Arc," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 41 (1971); rpt. in Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 210.

⁷⁰ *Cité des dames* 2.32; *City of Ladies* 147.

⁷¹ *Ditié*, huitain 28. The *Ditié* makes no mention Deborah's prophetic powers, referred to in the *Cité des dames* 2.40.

⁷² Richards 86.

⁷³ *Ditié*, huitain 25.

⁷⁴ *Ditié*, huitain 28.

⁷⁵ On comparisons between the French and the people of Israel in *De quadam puellam*, see Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 27, 93, 204.

⁷⁶ *Ditié*, huitains 29-30.

⁷⁷ I do not intend to suggest, as Anne Lutkus and Julia Walker have argued, that she falsified the date of the *Ditié* so she could pretend she had written it before the events it describes. Lutkus and Walker (147) propose that Christine "uses a fictive date to address a factual conflict, perhaps in the hope of affecting the outcome of that conflict or of reinterpreting the significance of that outcome." Examining the text in relationship to the events of July, August, and September of 1429, they conclude that Christine consciously constructs herself "as the sibylline voice of past, present, and future French history." Employing a fictive date would, as Lutkus and Walker suggest, posit the text of the *Ditié* as a written prophecy in and of itself, for Christine seems to anticipate events and demonstrate knowledge which they believe she could not have had as early as July 31, 1429. Specifically, they address the developing discord between Jehanne and Charles on the issue of taking Paris. However, scholars such as Angus Kennedy see no reason why we should not, in fact, accept the date Christine has given us. He responds: "ne serait-il pas préférable, plus logique et plus vraisemblable de conclure tout simplement que le *Ditié*, écrit à la fin de mois de juillet 1429, serait l'un des premiers textes à signaler ce désaccord entre le roi et Jeanne? Même si je ne vais pas jusqu'à proposer cette solution moi-même, elle a au moins le mérite de rester fidèle à la datation fournie par Christine, et pourrait sembler plus plausible que la solution beaucoup plus radicale offerte par nos deux collègues [Lutkus and Walker]." ["Would it not be preferable, more logical and more realistic to conclude quite simply that the *Ditié*, written at the end of the month of July 1429, would have been one of the first texts to signal this disagreement between the king and Jehanne? Even if I do not go so far as to propose this solution myself, at least it has the merit of remaining true to the date provided by Christine, and would seem more plausible than the much more radical solution offered by our two colleagues." Angus J. Kennedy, "La date du 'Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc': Réponse à Anne D. Lutkus et Julia M. Walker," *Au Champs des Écritures: III Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan*, ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez, and Phillippe Simon (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000) 760. Kennedy's response focuses on what he labels (761-2) as Christine's "structures mentales" such as "l'habitude de dater ses écrits". He continues (764-5): "la datation est chez Christine une seconde nature, un réflexe, un geste automatique faisant partie des habitudes et des structures mentales du public lettré de son temps [. . .]. Quand Christine date son poème [the *Ditié*], elle semble le faire sans arrière-pensée, d'une manière si naturelle, si instinctive que sa datation (ici comme ailleurs) semble faire partie tout simplement de sa façon de faire habituelle" ["for Christine, providing a date is second

nature, a reflex, an automatic gesture that is part of the mental habits and structures of the literate population of her era [. . .]. When Christine dates her poem, she seems to do so without any hidden motive, in a manner so natural and so instinctive that her dating (here as everywhere) seems simply to form part of her habitual way of working"]. On the issue of falsification, Kennedy concludes that it is difficult to argue for a sudden change of habit without evidence of other fictive dates employed by Christine in her corpus. On the issue of time and access to knowledge, see further 759-770.

⁷⁸ By urging the king to let Jehanne "go to Orléans to show there the sign of divine aid," the counsellors were effectively ratifying her claims before Jehanne had proved anything. To avoid embarrassment if the siege turned out to be a disaster, the conclusions were carefully worded to distance the Church from the king's desire to support Jehanne. Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 50-4; translation 206-7. The Conclusions appear in their original form in Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris: 1890-1902) vol. 1, 685-6; and Jules Quicherat, *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, vol. 3 (Paris: Renouard, 1849) 391-2.

⁷⁹ *Ditié*, huitain 31.

⁸⁰ The "register" of proceedings at Poitiers no longer exists; see Charles T. Wood, "Joan of Arc's Mission and the lost record of her interrogation at Poitiers," *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) 19-29. Fraioli writes (*Early Debate* 61) that in the register's absence, "It is from a tantalizing but elusive huitain in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié* that we have our most precise information on the prelates' search at Poitiers for written sources predicting the Maid." Fraioli notes that contemporary sources differ over where the Bede prophecy was adduced in support of Jehanne, but prefers the evidence of the *Ditié*, writing: "Christine, who adheres closely to her sources, places this huitain [31] between two huitains clearly referring to Poitiers, as if the prophecies were uncovered at the Poitiers hearing."

⁸¹ In "Literary Image" (817-18 note 36) Fraioli appears to rule out the idea that the Sibyls had been discussed at Poitiers, asserting: "The view that Joan of Arc had been heralded in sibylline literature was not articulated until the summer of 1429 in a treatise written by a cleric of Speyer, entitled *Sibylla francica*." This treatise has been dated to July-September; Quicherat, vol. 3, 422. Later, in *Early Debate* (61) Fraioli is more cautious: "The Sibyl's impact at Poitiers is undocumentable." However, she cites evidence (*Early Debate* 17) that the Sibyls may have been mentioned during the earlier theological deliberations about Jehanne at Chinon at the beginning of March 1429: a record of a letter shortly afterwards from Jean Girard, one of the dauphin's counsellors who had been present, seeking the theological opinion of Jacques Gelu, Archbishop of Embrun, and citing the Sibyls (along with Deborah and Judith) as precedents for Jehanne's mission.

⁸² Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan's Le Chemin de longue étude: Édition critique du ms. Harley 4431*, ed. and trans. Andrea Tarnowski (France: Letters Gothique, 2000) lines 2185-99, and *L'Avison-Christine*, ed. Mary Louise Towner (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1932; rpt. New York: AMS, 1969) 1.23. In Layamon's *Brut*, Merlin is cited as authority by an messenger from God who addresses Cadwallader, king of the Britons, in a dream; Cadwallader himself cites the Sibyl in

support of Merlin, perhaps because she combines the human world and the divine: "For Merlin the wise hit seide mid worde / al of mine for[th]-fare & of mire unimete care / and Sibillie tha wise a bocken hit isette / that ich scal iuullen mines Drihtes wille" ["Wise Merlin has spoken of my death and my great sorrow, and the knowing Sibyl has written it down in books that I will fulfill my Lord's will"]. Layamon, *Brut: Edited from British Museum Ms. Cotton Caligula A. IX and British Museum Ms. Cotton Otho C. XIII (Lines 8021-end)*, ed. G.L. Brook and R.F. Leslie, vol. 2 EETS Ser. 277 (New York: OUP, 1978) lines 16064-7; Layamon, *Layamon's Brut: A History of the Britons*, trans. Donald G. Bzdył (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989) 297. Among the thirteenth-century twinnings of the Sibyl and Merlin listed by Reeves are *Expositio super Sibillis et Merlino*, spuriously attributed to Calabrian mystic Joachim of Fiore; Albert of Stade's *Annales Stadenses* (1250), quoting from prophecies of Merlin and the Erythraean Sibyl; Oxford philosopher Roger Bacon's *Opus Majus* treatise, sent to the Pope in 1267, citing "prophetias Sibyllae, et Merlin et Aquilae, et Sestonis, Joachim et multorum aliorum"; predictions by the Parman prophet Asdente in 1282 attributed to Joachim, Merlin, the Sibyls, and others; and the *Liber de Temporibus* (1286?) of Albert Milioli of Reggio, citing Methodius, the Sibyls, Michael Scot, and Merlin. Reeves 47, 51-3, 56 note 4, 57, 93, 224 note 2, 521.

⁸³ Kennedy And Varty (68).

⁸⁴ Michael J. Curley, "The Cloak of Anonymity and 'The Prophecy of John of Bridlington,'" *Modern Philology* 77 (1980): 363-4. For Bede as oracular authority, see also the fourteenth-century "When Rome is Removed to England": "Busk ye wyell, Berwyk, be blyth of this wordis, / That Sant Bede fand in his buk of the byg bergh" ["Prepare yourself well, Berwick, be glad of these words that St. Bede conceived in his book of the big city"]; *Poems of Political Prophecy*, ed. James M. Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings* vol. 1 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996) 15. Dean also compares "The Prophecie of Beid," *The Whole Prophecies of Scotland, England, France, Ireland and Denmarke* (Edinburgh: A. Hart, 1617) A5r-A6v, and "The Prophesies of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng," Appendix II of *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. James A. H. Murray, EETS o.s. 61 (London: Trübner, 1875) 52-61.

⁸⁵ Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition (Oxford: OUP, 1971) 189.

⁸⁶ Reeves 93, 94, 252-3 note 5; Dean 1. William Kinter notes that in Jacques de Guise's *Annales Hanoniae*, "Merlin's prophecy follows the Sibyl's. Both are calamitous in nature; both warn of the sufferings to be visited upon the Belgians. They could, in fact, be interchanged without trouble." William Lewis Kinter, *Prophetess and Fay: A Study of the Ancient and Medieval Tradition of the Sibyl* (diss., Columbia U, 1958) 20-1.

⁸⁷ Reeves 301-2, 328.

⁸⁸ For more on prophecies refashioned to refer to Jehanne d'Arc, and the resurgence of prophecy in general, see Fraioli, "The Literary Image," 817-8, and *Early Debate*, 55-68. The "Merlin Prophecies" were discussed at Jehanne's Trial of Rehabilitation by Pierre Miget and Jean Bréhal; Quicherat vol. 3, 233, 339-44.

⁸⁹ She told her trial inquisitors in February 1431 that she had been asked about such a prophecy "quando ipsa venit versus regem suum" ["when she came before the king"]. Quicherat, vol. 1, 68.

⁹⁰ Dean 1.

⁹¹ The Prophecies of Merlin were included a few years later in Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae* (1136) but were also frequently circulated independently. It was logical that such prophecies in the Merlin tradition should be pressed into service by the French, since they often referred, however cryptically, to the long-standing conflict between England and France. Christine may also have known a thirteenth-century French prose romance known as the *Prophécies de Merlin*, alleged to have been a translation from Latin by an Italian, Richard d'Irlande, for the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II; Lucy Allen Paton, "Notes on Manuscripts of the Prophécies de Merlin," *PMLA* 28.2 (1913): 127.

⁹² The two versions of the Latin "ex nemore canuto" prophecies may be compared in Fraioli, "Literary Image," 818-19 notes 38 and 40, where they are reproduced from Acton Griscom, *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York: Longman, 1929) 390-1 and Marie-Joseph Belon and François Balme, *Jean Bréhal, Grand Inquisiteur de France et la réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1893) 70-1.

⁹³ Fraioli, "Literary Image," 818 and note 37, and *Early Debate*, 62-3, 63 note 36. See *Historia Regum Britanniae* 397 and Charles de Roche and Gustave Wissler, "Documents relatifs à Jeanne d'Arc et à son époque, extraits d'un manuscrit du XV^e siècle de la Bibliothèque de Berne," *Festschrift Louis Gauchat* (Aarau, 1926) 38.

⁹⁴ Merlin was not credited as the author or source for "Virgo puellares" but the fraud is described by Mathieu Thomassin in the *Registre delphinal*, a compilation of documents commissioned in 1456; Quicherat, vol. 4, 305; Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 64-5, and "Literary Image," 819-20, 828-9.

⁹⁵ Cf. huitain 31, "Disans qu'el poureroit baniere [. . .]." An early July letter states that a Bede prophecy was uncovered at Paris, but the *Ditié* implies it was found at Poitiers; Kennedy and Varty 68; Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 61, 62 and note 30.

⁹⁶ Reeves 301-2, quoting Ekkehard of Aura; see 308, note 74, and 325-6 for another example of reappropriation, in which a single Erythraean oracle was used in the space of a century and a half to identify the Last Emperor's diabolical enemy successively as Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) and (in a work written 1378-90) as a yet-to-be-born Frederick III.

⁹⁷ The codex (Berne MS 205), compiled by royalist Nicolas du Pleissy, also contains Jehanne's *Lettre aux Anglais* and the Poitiers Conclusions; Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 123-4; Kennedy and Varty 2-3.

⁹⁸ Jehanne was seen as violating a prohibition in Deuteronomy 22.5 against cross-dressing, defined as an abomination before God. Pope Pius II recorded the Poitiers examiners' concern over Jehanne's male attire: "They found in her no trace of deceit or guilt or evil intent. The only difficulty was her dress" (Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 40, 52).

⁹⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth's original says: "Ascendet virgo dorsum sagitarii / Et flores virgineos obfuscabit" ["A virgin ascends the backs of the archers / and obscures the flower of her virginity"] but the French gloss in Berne MS 205 states: "Que vne virge sera qui cheuauchera en armes contre le dos des anglois archiers et son sexe et la fleur de sa virginite tendra secrez" ["There will be a virgin who will ride in arms against the back

of the English archers and will keep secret her sex and the flower of her virginity”] (Fraiori, “Literary Image,” 818 and note 37, and *Early Debate*, 62-3, 63 note 36).

¹⁰⁰ Fraiori, *Early Debate*, 64-6, and “Literary Image,” 820. The Latin text is recorded in Quicherat (vol. 4, 305).

¹⁰¹ Of the Amazons, Christine had written: “Si s’allèrent tant delictant en ycellui mestier d’armes que elles acurent par force moult leur pays et leur regne tant que partout ala leur hault renommee [. . .]” [“They so delighted in the vocation of arms that through force they greatly increased their country and their dominion, and their high fame spread everywhere [. . .]” *Cité des dames* 1.16; *City of Ladies* 41.

¹⁰² Nevertheless, as Kinter indicates (19-20), the Sibyl and Merlin also acted in consort as harbingers of doom. Their presence as prophets in the *Ditié* inevitably sounds a lugubrious warning amidst the paeans to the imminent golden age of the Last Days.

¹⁰³ *Ditié*, huitains 40-1.

¹⁰⁴ Fraiori, *Early Debate*, 117. Christine’s *Autre Ballades* 29-31 also openly express an anti-English animus. However, the *Lamentacion* of 1410 reserves its vivid depiction of bloodshed for a commentary on internecine loss of French lives; in warning of the possibility of an opportunist invasion by the English, Christine is not fulminating against the external enemy but presenting a further caution to the French on the evils and dangers of civil war. The uncharacteristically caustic tone of these apostrophes has also been noted by Helen Solterer, “Flaming Words: Verbal Violence and Gender in Premodern Paris,” *Romantic Review*. 86.2 (1995): 371, and by Richards (87).

¹⁰⁵ The *Lettre aux Anglais* urges: “Roy d’Angleterre, et vous, duc de Bedford [. . .] faictes raison au Roy du ciel; rendez a la pucelle, qui est cy envoiee de par Dieu, le Roy du ciel, les clefs de toutes les bonnes villes ques vous avez prises et violees en France. [. . .] Et entre vous, archiers, compaignongs de guerre [. . .] alez vous ent en vostre país, de par Dieu; et se ainsi ne le faictes, actendez les nouvelles de la Pucelle qui vous ira voir briefment, a vos bien grans dommaiges [. . .].” [“King of England, and you, duke of Bedford [. . .] render your account to the King of Heaven. Surrender to the Maid, who is sent here from God, the King of heaven, the keys to all of the good cities that you have taken and violated in France. [. . .] And those among you, archers, companions-at-arms [. . .] go back to your own countries, for God’s sake. And if you do not do so, wait for the word of the Maid who will come visit you briefly to your great damage [. . .].”] Pernoud and Clin, 33, 249.

¹⁰⁶ Pernoud and Clin 33, 34, 249.

¹⁰⁷ Some scholars argue that Jehanne’s pronoun shifts are simply evidence of an editorial hand; see Fraiori, *Early Debate*, 78. Karen Sullivan believes that the transcripts of Jehanne’s trial indicate that she “struggled with the interrogations because she did not belong to the clerical culture, [though] they do not make clear to what culture she did belong.” Sullivan continues: “In different places throughout the text, Joan cited a chivalric code, a children’s saying, and a parish prayer, but she spoke no language that could consistently be identified with that of knights, children, or parishioners. Her speech, like her character, contained within it elements from various populations, both aristocratic and plebeian, both masculine and feminine, and both sacred and secular, but in its combination of all of these elements it remained anomalous to all of them.” Karen Sullivan, *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999) xxiii;

see also pages 36, 89, and 138. For a translated transcript of the trial, see *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, ed. W. P. Barrett (London: Routledge, 1931).

¹⁰⁸ Quicherat, vol. 1, 241; Pernoud and Clin 34, 249-50.

¹⁰⁹ "Et vous faiz à savoir de par le Roy du ciel, mon droicturier et souverain seigneur, pour vostre bien et pour vostre honneur et sur voz vie, que vous n'y gaignerez point bataille à l'encontre des loyaulx François [. . .]" ["I must make known to you from the King of Heaven, my rightful and sovereign Lord, for your good and for your honor and upon your life, that you will win no more battles against loyal Frenchmen [. . .]"]. In contrast, Jehanne also writes as a simple Christian, promising the duke of Burgundy she will pray for him and signing her letter: "A Dieu vous commens et soit grade de vous, s'il lui plait [. . .]" ["I commend you to God; may He guard you, if it pleases Him [. . .]"]. Quicherat, vol. 4, 127; Pernoud and Clin 34, 67-8, 253-4.

¹¹⁰ Jehanne is discussed as "prophet-figure" and Christine as "prophetic voice" by Stephen Nichols, "Prophetic Discourse: St. Augustine to Christine de Pizan," *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. Bernard S. Levy (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 89 (Binghampton: 1992) 70.

¹¹¹ *Ditié*, huitain 51.

¹¹² *Ditié*, huitain 45.

¹¹³ Kennedy and Varty 13-15; Solterer 372.

¹¹⁴ Richards 87-8.

¹¹⁵ Solterer 371.

¹¹⁶ Jehanne had told the duke of Burgundy: "tous ceulx qui guerroyent ou dit saint Royaume de France, guerroyent contre le roy Jhesus [. . .]" ["all those who wage war against the aforesaid holy kingdom of France are warring against King Jesus [. . .]"] (Quicherat, vol. 5, 127; Pernoud and Clin 67, 254).

¹¹⁷ See especially huitains 41-3, 51, 53-8.

¹¹⁸ *Ditié*, huitain 55.

¹¹⁹ *Ditié*, huitain 38.

¹²⁰ Brownlee 380.

¹²¹ *Ditié*, huitains 15-16.

¹²² Pernoud and Clin 34, 250.

¹²³ Jehanne told the duke of Burgundy: "[. . .] la Pucelle vous requiert de par le Roy du ciel, mon droicturier et souverain seigneur, que le roy de France et vous, faciez bonne paix ferme, qui dure longuement, pardonnez l'un à l'autre de bon cuer, entièrement, ainsi que doivent faire loyaulx christians; et s'il vous plaist à guerroyer, si alez sur les Sarazins" ["[. . .] the Maid calls upon you by the King of Heaven, my rightful and sovereign Lord, to make a firm and lasting peace with the king of France. You two must pardon one another fully with a sincere heart, as loyal Christians should: and if it pleases you to make war, go and wage it on the Saracens"] (Quicherat, vol. 5, 126; Pernoud and Clin 67, 253).

¹²⁴ Kennedy and Varty 70; Fraioli, *Early Debate*, 79.

¹²⁵ *Ditié*, huitain 42-3.

¹²⁶ Fraioli, "Literary Image," 826. Compare also huitain 22:

Pucelle de Dieu ordonnée,
En qui le Saint Esprit réa
Sa grant grace [. . .]
[.]
N'onc requeste ne te véa.
Qui te rendra assez guerdon?

[“Maiden sent from God, into whom the Holy Spirit poured His great grace [. . .] never did Providence refuse you any request. Who can ever begin to repay you?”]

¹²⁷ McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” *Church History* 47.2 (1978): 157. Since Christine’s use of some of the features of the Angelic Pope is indirect and falls far short of encompassing the full, tangled complex of medieval apocalyptic conceptions, I leave aside the Antichrist figures against whom he and the Last Emperor were often ranged.

¹²⁸ McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 158.

¹²⁹ McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 157.

¹³⁰ Reeves 47; McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 161.

¹³¹ Reeves 194, 320-1; McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 165.

¹³² McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 165.

¹³³ Reeves (94 note 4) refers to this Cambridge manuscript (Corpus Christi College, 404) made at Bury St. Edmunds, England, in the fourteenth century. One later compilation of prophecies (the first to be printed in France, in 1522) features an indisputably French Angelic Pope, from Limoges; Jennifer Britnell and Derek Stubbs, “The Mirabilis Liber: Its Compilation and Influence,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986): 126, 128.

¹³⁴ Reeves 417; see also McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 170.

¹³⁵ *Ditié*, huitain 42.

¹³⁶ *Ditié*, huitains 43-4.

¹³⁷ *Ditié*, huitain 44.

¹³⁸ Fraioli, *Early Debate* 120.

¹³⁹ The Angelic Pope is later pictured being crowned by an angel in illustrations added in 1469 to a fourteenth-century Telesphorus prophecy; Reeves 173.

¹⁴⁰ McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 169 and note 51. For more on the Guglielmites see “WomanSpirit, Woman Pope” in Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995) 182-223. Margaret Ferguson discusses similar cases of female mysticism in the fourteenth century, including that of the beguine Na Prous Boneta, also burned at the stake in 1328. She writes: “I surmise that de Pizan knew, by oral report or by reading, words spoken by women who were *like* Na Prous Boneta in many respects but chiefly because they claimed *direct* rather than mediated access to the ‘holy spirit’ and because they defied male ‘judges’ in order to preach their views to an audience.” She adds that in her suppression of heretical female precursors from the *Cité*, perhaps Christine “is at once veiling and foreshadowing a ‘truth’ too dangerous to speak in the present time through her narratives of female saints and their dismembered bodies.” Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido’s Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003) 211, 222.

¹⁴¹ *Ditié*, huitain 57-60.

¹⁴² According to the terms of the truce, which began shortly after Charles's coronation, Charles was to delay military action for a two-week period, at the end of which the duke was to cede Paris. However, as Régine Pernoud has shown, the agreement was nothing more than Bedford and Burgundy's attempt to gain time to gather reinforcements. Jehanne's letters clearly indicate that she had no knowledge of any such terms. For example, in the letter she wrote to Burgundy after Charles's coronation, she expresses her dismay that the duke did not attend the ceremony and emphasizes that the two must reconcile. See Lutkus and Walker 147-50 and Régine Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, trans. Edward Hyams (New York, 1982) 128-9.

¹⁴³ *Ditié*, huitains 57, 59.

Conclusion

Christine de Pizan's strategic deployment of sibylline tradition emerged as a solution to the problem of how to authorize her works and her views without adequate precedents as a female writer usurping and subverting traditionally male discourses. Scholars concur that the Sibyls who appear in the works she wrote in the prolific years 1399-1405 perform this requisite function of authorization. However, as this study has shown, critics have largely disregarded many of the complexities of sibylline tradition upon which she drew, and they have underestimated both the range and scale of her sibylline project.

As is widely recognized, the nature and extent of the problem of authorization became clear to Christine after she challenged the validity of *Le Roman de la Rose* in the Debate of the *Rose*: her male opponents, royal officials and academics, made clear that authority was their inherent privilege, not hers. Her works during these years reveal an on-going dethronement of male authority, with her gradual realization that male authorizing figures were inadequate for the task of countering such attitudes and that she could not establish female authority by immediately deferring to male voices. This realization is evident from the authority figures used in key texts of these years. The God of Love presides over *L'Epistre au dieu d'amours* (1399) but in *Le Dit de la rose* (1402) he cedes center-stage to his female emissary, Loyauté. In *Le Livre du chemin de lonc estude* (1403) the Sibyl of Cumae has no male superior apart from God himself, as Christine looked particularly to Boethius's Lady Philosophy and Dante's Beatrice for precursors of female authority. In *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405) Christine draws authority from a sibylline trio, Raison, Justice, and Droiture.

It is less generally observed that the choice of specifically sibylline figures relates directly to Christine's attempts to redefine female knowledge and wisdom. She found the presentation of women's consciousness in the writings of men — and most pressingly, in courtly love literature — inadequate, unfair, and often downright mendacious. To compensate for and counteract these failings, she focused on the sagacity and learning that women transmit to one another. In *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans* of 1405, for example, she began to express female wisdom as something hitherto scarcely represented in books and which must therefore be acquired either at first hand, through the psychological, sociological, and physical experience of being a woman, or at second hand, through the oral transmission of other women's experience. By now, in the *Cité des dames*, Christine was promoting the exemplars of learned women such as Cassandra, Carmentis, and Catherine, each of them a *clergece* (in the term she used to parallel the male *clergie*), that is, a scholar with sibylline powers to see beyond the immediate. The Sibyls themselves constituted the ideal authorizing figures: they were the pre-eminent personifications of a specifically female mental power, and in their plurality they suggested a body of knowledge that was available to women as a group but not to men. By tailoring a medieval tradition grounded in the works of patristic writers — notably Augustine in his *De civitas Dei* — who had sanctioned the Sibyls as prophets elected by God to play key roles in pre-Christian and early Christian history, Christine could speak of the Sibyls' revered status without fear of accusations of heresy. Christine inscribes herself alongside the Sibyl of Cumae or the sibylline figures of the *Cité des dames* as a fictional witness and writer, asserting her own direct contact with them through dream allegory. As they teach her and speak to her through prophecy, Christine accredits her

work and her role as author by asserting that the process of writing has been an apprenticeship to divinely sanctioned beings.

Scholars have also underestimated the variety of Christine's sibylline sources and strategies. The polymorphous sibylline traditions available meant that Christine was also able to employ sibylline exemplars to illustrate not only the value of women's wisdom but also, paradoxically, the social price a woman might pay in gaining wisdom. Not only could the Sibyl be a figure of foreknowledge, but in the alternative, post-Ovidian tradition exemplified by Apuleius and Petronius and in Christine's day by Andrea da Barberino, she was also a figure imprisoned, regretful, withering, and shunned by the outside world. In the *Duc des vrais amans* Christine expanded that dichotomy into the story of two women in a full-blown narrative akin to an epistolary novel. The opposed pairing of the women, and their foundations in the experiential dichotomy of foreknowledge and regret, constitute a strategy so innovative and unusual that it has gone unrecognized.

Sebille de Monthault and the Lady of the *Duc des vrais amans* exhibit the unrecognized dangers of courtly love and the high cost women might pay in acquiring wisdom. Between them, they reflect aspects of the confined Sibyl — the ancient and shrivelled Sibyl of Cumae who has acquired unmatched wisdom but has become a side-show; a woman whose knowledge of the future is unprecedented but who looks back on her own past with misery. Surveying the future from the high vantage-point of long experience is Dame Sebille. Wise with age, she represents Christine's vision of a redeemed *duenna* or *entremetteuse* who refuses to be trapped in a cage of disgrace: a reclamation of the old woman from her reviled position in misogynist courtly literature.

Having lived a respectable life, Dame Seville is able to take her place in a figurative tower of enlightenment and grace. In counterpoint to her, and looking backwards with regret from a cell at what has passed, is the Lady. Here Christine matches her subversion of the *duenna* topos by overturning the figure traditionally accorded the most fulsome praise in courtly love literature: the object of the knight's love. While demonstrating that old women can be wise as well as virtuous, Christine simultaneously underlines the devastating cost a young woman might pay in acquiring experience in the terms laid down by courtly love. The decisive moment is the transition from girlhood to womanhood when a young lady is first confronted by a choice that puts her social virtue on the line: in Christine's view it is this test of virtue, not the acquisition of sexual experience or physical maturity, that defines entry into womanhood. Making the wrong choice, the Lady gains wisdom but only through shame. Like the caged Sibyl of Cumae who forgot to ask Apollo for eternal youth, the Lady has lived to regret the foolishness of her adolescent behavior. Alone, she will age as a pariah from respectable society under the guard of her jealous husband. Yet she maintains a sibylline function: her lamenting voice is a warning to all those in danger of following in her footsteps. The narrative of the *Duc des vrais amans* demonstrates the knife-edge choices that might dictate which of its female protagonists' fates a woman can share.

In the queen of France, Isabel of Bavaria, Christine found a woman of almost supreme importance caught on a similar knife-edge; a woman whom she could hope to guide, using a sibylline rhetorical strategy, towards the exercise of wisdom and foresight. Isabel's private life began to be widely viewed as shameful and morally suspect after 1405, with allegations of financial excess and fraud to which, later, claims of marital

infidelity were added; yet France, in the hands of a crazed king, desperately needed her to be a figurehead. Working now on a vastly more ambitious canvas than she had been in the *Duc des vrais amans*, Christine attempted to forge between herself and the queen a sibylline tutor–pupil relationship analogous to the one she had depicted between Dame Seville and the Lady; the relationship may also be viewed as the reification of that which Christine portrays between the Cumaean Sibyl and herself in the *Chemin de lonc estude*, in which she had outlined the requisite qualities of a good ruler. In the Queen's Manuscript *Epistre Othéa*, probably presented to Isabel in 1414, she created a Mirror for the education not only of a prince (the dauphin) but also of the queen: a conduct book addressing Isabel's unique needs as effective ruler. At the same time, Christine's aim was to make the queen play the part of a Dame Seville, wisely exercising her responsibility for the dauphin's education but also acting as a surrogate parent to her people.

However, in *L'Epistre à la reine* of 1405 and *La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* of 1410 Christine established an alternate, urgent register for her sibylline polemic. Previously, her allegorical, sibylline figures had claimed authority through their prophetic powers and had spoken in a generally omniscient tone, abstracted from the real world which they discussed. As self-portrayed in her own fictions, Christine had learned from the wisdom of these beneficent figures and, when she was distraught, from their supernatural calm; thus she could act as their representative or messenger. Now, urgently addressing Isabel and the royal family, Christine did not claim authority on the basis of divinely ordained tutelage, but on her position both as an enlightened subject and as a witness to the horrifying consequences of war.

The register of tearful sibylline anxiety that Christine adopted to address the queen and the aristocracy should not be seen as a self-defeating sign of self-pity or irrationality. Rather, it must be recognized as an eloquent means to achieve multiple and interrelated ends. It conveys both Christine's grief over the impact of the current national crisis and her foresighted fear for France's future. Furthermore, the register of the tormented Sibyl expresses an acute anxiety that her advice will go unheeded, inscribing Christine in the tradition of reluctant seers such as Jeremiah, Jonah, and Cassandra. Yet by the same token, since those seers had ultimately been vindicated, the register is a means to impress upon Christine's addressees the folly of dismissing her own warnings.

The strength of Christine's polemic depends on the counterbalancing of her frenetic register with the alternative prospect of a future in which the nobility of France have heeded her wisdom, and saved the nation from its crisis. Christine's predictions of disaster are rational, because they are based on her evidence as a witness well-versed in historical precedent and past human failings; and they are conditional, because they offer a better future through a vision of morally responsible human action. As it was in the *Duc des vrais amans*, here Christine's principal, proto-humanist case is that taking responsibility for one's actions can vastly improve one's fate.

The crux in these texts is not simply that Christine correlates tears with foresight; it is also that the correlation rests on the presentation of foresight as intrinsically and actively female or, more specifically, maternal. Thus Christine's tears also constitute a display of empathy with the suffering populace as embodied by its mourning mothers, who foresee the onset of disaster and seek to protect their children. The tearful register supports her appeal for the nation's leaders to pity the masses; but in particular it lays

claim to a mutual link with Isabel. Christine depicts the queen as mother to the nation, a sympathetic guardian and intercessor, in order to urge her to demonstrate the same empathy, to put an end to the endemic abuse of power, and to halt France's resultant plunge into disgrace. In the idealized literary image constructed by Christine, Isabel represents not simply a model of sibylline wisdom and virtue, but specifically one who could pronounce and act on a national scale in the present, and decisively shape the future. Christine's sibylline philosophy here may be summed up as the conviction that only female wisdom and foresight, either directly applied by women such as Isabel or imparted by them to men, can curb the natural male tendency to strife.

Christine's last work and final piece of advice to the monarchy, *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (1429), features her most ambitious sibylline strategy: the practical application of pre-existing prophecy to validate herself as oracle of a millennial French destiny. The king, Isabel's son Charles VII, is depicted as the portended "Second Charlemagne" or "Last Emperor," who will save France and unify Christian nations in a crusade to Jerusalem, surrender his terrestrial kingdom to God and await the coming of Antichrist for a final contest. This in itself is not a daring strategy: such conflation of imperial ambition with divine ordination were common currency in the salvation history of late Middle Ages; but in the *Ditié* the fulfillment of Charles's destiny depends on him following Christine's advice and accepting Jehanne d'Arc as his ally.

The Maid of Orléans is portrayed as the subject of auguries reviewed and recalibrated by royalist counsellors at Poitiers to unite the demoralized French against the English invaders. However, Christine goes further by demanding that Charles treat Jehanne not as a political expedient but as an ordained equal who must share leadership

in war and crusade and their aftermath. Christine's reference to "Sebile" as a prophet of Jehanne cements the Maid within the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, usually attributed to the Cumaean or Tiburtine Sibyl. The obstacle Christine faced in promoting Jehanne in politics and religion was akin to her own professional challenge as a secular woman writer entering a polemical debate: there was no precedent for a woman excelling in either field. Scholars have argued that Christine attempts to validate the Maid as part of the national destiny by using imagery associated with the Virgin Mary, but such a thesis has its shortcomings: Mary had no active role in the Last Emperor prophecies, and her prime function of *entremetteuse* scarcely matches Jehanne's martial role. A fresh reading of the *Ditié* in the context of the millennial oracles of the day yields evidence that Christine constructed her image of Jehanne using aspects of the Angelic Pope, a portended ally of the Last Emperor.

Christine thus uses the power of Jehanne's image as a living prophecy to promote her own political agenda and alter the fate of the nation. By promoting Jehanne and Charles as interdependent figures within the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, she matches herself with the Sibyls who first issued that prophecy. In contrast to her previous practice, by referring here to "Sebile" Christine is therefore not simply deferring to a higher authority, but assuming her mantle. Furthermore, through an audacious adoption of the rhetoric used by the Maid in her *Lettre aux Anglais*, Christine implies that, like Jehanne, she herself is a channel for God's judgment and prophecy. Effectively assuming the role of the Sibyl within salvation history, Christine overleaps her long-standing goal of validating her texts and her position as a respected author.

Christine de Pizan was dismissed by the nineteenth-century French historian Gustave Lanson as “un des plus authentiques bas-bleus qu’il y ait eu dans notre littérature”¹ [“one of the most authentic bluestockings there has been in our literature”] and as the first in a dreadful and mediocre female lineage. Perhaps more surprisingly, she has also been criticized in terms not much less prejudiced by those who value many of her qualities, such as Nadia Margolis, who is troubled by her “frenetic register” (a mode for which a Freudian of the early twentieth century might have used the word “hysteria”). As I have shown, a fuller understanding of Christine’s sibylline strategies demonstrates the polemical value of her compassionate and frenzied voice and of the armory of registers that she constructed from traditions of the Sibyls.

Christine fought consistently to transform the way women were viewed by men and the way women viewed themselves. As France’s first woman of letters, Christine challenged the widely held notion that women were not capable of understanding philosophy and political theory. As a historian and mythographer, she reorganized and recast biblical, classical, and national chronicles in order to valorize women, and in the process to authorize her own project. In a sense, she rebuilt the ground that she stood upon. Her reforging of the sibylline traditions is absolutely central to her enterprise, and careful examination reveals the extent to which she continued to reinvent and expand her sibylline strategies. At the outset, Sibyls stepped out of dream allegory to instruct her. By the end of her life, Christine had invested herself with sibylline qualities so fully that she became more than the Cumaean Sibyl’s “sister in sensibility”; she could counsel the highest powers passionately yet rationally, through the figurative modes of vision and prophecy, as if she were the Sibyl herself.

Notes

-
- ¹ Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Hachette, 1909) 167.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Apuleius, Lucius. *Apulei opera quae supersunt (I): Apulei Platonici Madaurensis. Metamorphoseon Libri XI*. Ed. R. Helm. Leipzig: Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1907.
- . *Golden Ass or The Metamorphosis, and other Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Thomas Taylor. London: R. Triphook and T. Rodd, 1822; Frome, Somerset: Prometheus Trust, 1997.
- Augustine, St. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Ed. and trans. George E. McCracken, William M. Green, David S. Wiesen, Philip Levine, Eva Matthews Sanford, William McAllen Green, and William Chase Greene. 7 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957-72.
- Augustine, pseudo-. *Contra Iudaeos, paganos et Arianos. Patrologia Latina*. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Migne, 1844-55 and 1862-5. Vol. 42. 1117-30. Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1995. < <http://ets.umd.umich.edu/p/pld/>>.
- Baird, Joseph L., and John R. Kane (eds.) *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1978.
- Barrett, W. P. (ed.) *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*. London: Routledge, 1931.
- Blondel, Robert. *Les Oeuvres de Robert Blondel*. Ed. Alex Héron. 2 vols. Rouen: Société de l'Histoire de Normandie, 1891-3.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *De claris mulieribus*. Trans. Guido A. Guarino. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1963.
- Christine de Pizan. *L'Avison-Christine*. Ed. Mary Louise Towner. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1932. New York: AMS, 1969.
- . *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards. New York: Persea, 1998.
- . *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*. Trans. Sumner Willard, ed. Charity Cannon Willard. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999.
- . *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers*. Trans. Thelma Fenster and Nadia Margolis. New York: Persea, 1991.
- . *Le Chemin de longue étude: Édition critique du ms. Harley 4431*. Ed. and trans. Andrea Tarnowski. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2000.

- Christine de Pizan. "Christine de Pizan's *Epistre à la rein*". Ed. Angus J. Kennedy, *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92.2 (1988): 253-264.
- . *Christine's Vision*. Trans. Glenda K. McLeod. *Garland Library of Medieval Literature* 68, Series B. New York: Garland, 1993.
- . *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*. Ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty. Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediæval Languages and Literature, 1977.
- . *L'Epistre Othéa*. Ed. Gabriella Parussa. Geneva: Droz, 1999.
- . "'La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France' de Christine de Pizan." Ed. Angus J. Kennedy. *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon, professeur de langue et littérature françaises du moyen age et de la renaissance, par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*. Rennes: University de Haute-Bretagne, 1980. Vol. 1, 177-185.
- . "The Lamentation on the Evils that have Befallen France." Trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. New York: Norton, 1997. 224-9.
- . *Letter of Othea to Hector*. Trans. Jane Chance. Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1990.
- . "Letter to the Queen of France, Isabel of Bavaria." Trans. Charity Cannon Willard. *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Charity Cannon Willard. New York: Persea, 1994. 269-73
- . *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pizan: an electronic transcription*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards. 1999, Minnesota U. <<http://erc.lib.umn.edu/dynaweb/french/pizalaci>>.
- . "The *Livre de la Cité des Dames* of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition." Ed. Maureen Cheney Curnow. Diss. Vanderbilt U, 1975.
- . *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*. Ed. Suzanne Solente. Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1936.
- . *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*. Ed. Thelma Fenster. Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995.
- . *Le Livre des trois vertus*. Ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks. Paris: Champion, 1989.
- . "The Path of Long Study" (selections from *Le Chemin de lonc estude*). Trans. Kevin Brownlee. *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. New York: Norton, 1997.

- Christine de Pizan. "Premierement prologue adreçant a la royne." *Oeuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pisan*. Ed. Maurice Roy. Vol. 1. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1886. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965.
- and Thomas Hoccleve. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre au dieu d'Amours" and "Dit de la Rose"; Thomas Hoccleve's "The Letter of Cupid."* Ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler. New York: E. J. Brill, 1990.
- , Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier et Pierre Col. *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*. Bibliothèque du XVe Siècle 43. Ed. Eric Hicks. Paris: Editions Honoré Champion, 1977.
- Cicero. *De natura deorum*. Ed. and trans. H. Rackham. London: Heinemann, 1933.
- Constantine. *Oration of Constantine to the Assembly of the Saints. The Life of Constantine by Eusebius, together with the Oration of Constantine to the Assembly of the Saints and the Oration of Eusebius in Praise of Constantine*. Trans. S. Bagster. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2nd ser., vol. 1. New York, 1890.
- Deschamps, Eustache. *Oeuvres Complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*. Ed. Auguste Henri Édouard de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (vols. 1-6) and G. Raynaud (vols. 7-11). 11 vols. Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1878-1903. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966.
- Dionysius Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus*. Ed. and trans. Earnest Cary. 7 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1937-63.
- Froissart, Jean. *Oeuvres*. Ed. Henri Kervyn de Lettenhove. 25 vols. Brussels: V. Devaux, 1867-1877. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967.
- Gelu, Jacques. *De puella aurelianensi dissertatio*. Ed. Pierre Lanéry d'Arc. *Mémoires et consultations en faveur de Jeanne d'Arc*. Paris: 1889.
- Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*. Ed. Acton Griscom. New York: Longman, 1929.
- Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin, 1966.
- [Gerson, Jean?]. *De mirabili victoria*. Trans. H.G. Francq. "Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and other Memoirs in Defence of Joan of Arc." *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 41 (1971): 58-80. Rpt. in Deborah Fraioli. *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*. Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2000. 209-12.
- [———?]. *De quadam puellam*. Trans. H.G. Francq. "Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and other Memoirs in Defence of Joan of Arc." *Revue de l'Université*

- d'Ottawa 41 (1971): 58-80. Rpt. in Deborah Fraioli. *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*. Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2000. 199-205.
- Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*. Ed. Ernest Langlois. Paris: Didot (vols. 1-2), Champion (vols. 3-5) 1914-24.
- . *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. Charles Dahlberg. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Jérôme. *Commentaire sur Jonas*. Ed. and trans. Yves-Marie Duval. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985.
- Justin, pseudo-. *Cohortatio ad Graecos*. Ed. Miroslav Marcovich. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990.
- Juvénal des Ursins, Jean. "Histoire de Charles VI." *Nouvelle Collection de mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*. Ed. Joseph François Michaud and Jean Joseph François Poujoulat. 2 vols. Paris: Didier, 1857. Vol. 1, 335-569.
- Lactantius. *Divine institutes*. Trans. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003.
- Layamon. *Brut: Edited from British Museum MS. Cotton Caligula A. IX and British Museum Ms. Cotton Otho C. XIII*. Ed. G.L. Brook and R.F. Leslie. 2 vols. New York: OUP, 1978. Vol. 2, EETS Ser. 277.
- Layamon. *Layamon's Brut: A History of the Britons*. Trans. Donald G. Bzdył. Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989.
- Lycophron. *Alexandra*. Ed. G. W. Mooney. London: G. Bell & Son, 1921.
- Monstrelet, Enguerrand de. *Chronique*. Ed. Louis Douët d'Arcq. 6 vols. Paris: Société de l'histoire de la France, 1857-62.
- d'Orléans, Charles. *Poésies*. Ed. Pierre Champion. 2 vols. Paris: Champion, 1923.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Frank Justus Miller. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1916.
- Ovide moralisé en prose: Edition critique avec introduction*. Ed. C. de Boer. Amsterdam: North Holland, 1954.
- "Le Pastoralet." *Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*. Ed. J. M. Kervyn de Lettenhove. Vol. 2. Brussels: 1873.
- Pausanias. *Description of Greece*. Ed. T.E. Page, E. Capps, and W. H. D. Rouse. London: William Heinemann, 1935.
- Petronius. *Satyricon*. Ed. Konrad Müller. München: E. Heimeran, 1961.

- Petronius. *Satyricon*. Trans. Sarah Ruden. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.
- Pliny. *Natural history*. Ed. and trans. H. Rackham, W.H.S. Jones, and D.E. Eichholz. London: William Heinemann, 1938-1962.
- Plutarch. *De Pythiae oraculis. Moralia*. Ed. F. C. Babbitt. Vol 5. London: William Heinemann, 1936.
- Poems of Political Prophecy*. Ed. James M. Dean. *Medieval English Political Writings*. Vol. 1. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996.
- Religieux de Saint-Denis. *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys, contenant lerègne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*. Ed. M.L. Bellaguet. Six vols. Paris: Crapelet, 1839-52.
- Quicherat, Jules-Étienne-Joseph. *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*. 5 vols. Paris: Jules Renouard, 1841-9. New York: Johnson, 1965.
- Servius Honoratus, Maurus. *In Vergilii carmina comentarii*. Ed. Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen. Leipzig, 1881.
- Silvestris, Bernard. *Commentary on the first six books of Virgil's "Aeneid."* Trans. Earl G. Schreiber and Thomas E. Maresca. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1979.
- "Le Songe Véritable: pamphlet politique d'un parisien du XVe siècle." *Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France*. Ed. Henri Moranvillé. Vol. 17. Paris, 1891.
- Suidae Lexicon*. Ed. Ada Adler. 5 vols. Leipzig: 1928-38. Online edition at <http://www.stoa.org/sol/> (various editors and translators).
- The Sibylline Oracles*. Trans. Milton S. Terry. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890. El Paso: Selene Books, 1991.
- Tacitus, Publius Cornelius. *Annals 13-16*. Ed. and trans. John Jackson. London: William Heinemann, 1937.
- Thomas of Erceldoune. *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*. Ed. James A. H. Murray. EETS o.s. 61. London: Trübner, 1875.
- Vergil. *Aeneid*. Ed. Gavin Douglas. Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club edition, 1839.
- The Whole Prophecies of Scotland, England, France, Ireland and Denmarke*. Edinburgh: A. Hart, 1617.

Secondary Sources

- Ayroles, Jean Baptiste Joseph. *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*. 5 vols. Paris: 1890-1902.
- Bath, Michael. *The Image of the Stag: Iconographic Themes in Western Art*. Baden Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1982.
- . "The Legend of Caesar's Deer." *Medievalia et Humanistica* 9 (1979): 53-66.
- Bearne, Catherine. *Pictures of the Old French Court: Jeanne de Bourbon, Isabeau de Bavière, Anne de Bretagne*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900.
- Beaune, Colette. *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late Medieval France*. Trans. Susan Ross Huston and ed. Friedrich L. Cheyette. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.
- Bell, Susan Groag. "Christine de Pizan (1364-1430): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman." *Feminist Studies* 3.3-4 (Spring-Summer 1976): 173-84.
- Belon, Marie-Joseph, and François Balme. *Jean Bréhal, Grand Inquisiteur de France et la réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*. Paris: Lethielleux, 1893.
- Blanchard, Joël. "'Vox Poetica, Vox Politica': the Poet's entry into the Political Arena in the Fifteenth Century." *Études littéraires sur le XVe siècle*. Milan: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1985. 39-51. Rpt. in *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. and trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. New York: Norton, 1997. 362-370.
- Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate. "Christine de Pizan and Political Life in Late Medieval France." *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*. Ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady. New York: Routledge, 2003. 9-24.
- . "Enemies Within/Enemies Without: Threats to the Body Politic in Christine de Pizan," *Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 26. Ed. Paul Maurice Clogan. Rowman and Littlefield, 1999. 1-15.
- . *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.
- Bonner, Campbell. "The Sibyl and Bottle Imps." *Quantulacumque: Studies Presented to Kirsopp Lake*. London: 1937. 1-8.
- Bouché-Leclercq, August. *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*. 4 vols. Paris: 1879-82.
- Britnell, Jennifer, and Derek Stubbs. "The Mirabilis Liber: Its Compilation and Influence." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986) 126-49

- Brown-Grant, Rosalind. "Décadence ou progrès? Christine de Pizan, Boccace et la question de 'l'âge d'or.'" *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92.2 (1988): 297-306.
- Brownlee, Kevin. "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the 'Romance of the Rose.'" *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception*. Ed. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992. 234-61.
- . "Rewriting Romance: Courtly Discourse and Auto-Citation in Christine de Pizan." *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996. 172-94.
- . "Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*." *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens. Hanover: UP New England, 1989. 131-51. Rpt. in *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*. Trans. and ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. New York: Norton, 1997. 371-90.
- Chance, Jane. "Christine's Minerva, the Mother Valorized." *Christine de Pizan's "Letter of Othéa to Hector"*. Ed. Jane Chance. Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1990. 121-134.
- . "Gender Trouble in the Garden of Deduit: Christine de Pizan Translating the Rose." *Romance Languages Annual* 4 (1993): 20-28.
- . "The Origins of Medieval Mythography: From Homer to Dante." *Mapping the Cosmos*. Ed. Jane Chance and R.O. Wells, Jr. Houston: Rice UP, 1985. 35-64, 151-9.
- Clin, Marie-Véronique. *Isabeau de Bavière: La reine calomniée*. Paris: Perrin, 1999.
- Colish, Marcia L. *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400-1400*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.
- Coote, Robert B. "Sibyl: 'Oracle.'" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 5 (1977): 3-8.
- Cropp, Glynnis M. "Boèce et Christine de Pizan." *Le Moyen Age: Revue d'Histoire et de Philologie* 87 (1981): 387-417.
- Curley, Michael J. "The Cloak of Anonymity and 'The Prophecy of John of Bridlington.'" *Modern Philology* 77 (1980): 361-9.
- Curnow, Maureen Cheney. "'La Pioche d'Inquisicion': Legal-Judicial Content and Style in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des dames*." *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 157-72.

- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Pantheon, 1953.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: OUP, 1976.
- Delorme, Philippe. *Isabeau de Bavière: épouse de Charles VI, mère de Charles VII*. Paris: Pygmalion, 2003.
- Desmond, Marilynn. *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994.
- , and Pamela Sheingorn. *Myth, Montage, and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa"*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2003.
- Dronke, Peter. *Hermes and the Sibyls: Continuations and Creations*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Dudash, Susan J. "Christine de Pizan and the 'menu peuple.'" *Speculum* 78 (2003): 788-831.
- Dulac, Liliane. "The Representation and Functions of Feminine Speech in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de Trois Vertus*." Trans. Christine Reno. *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 13-22.
- Famiglietti, R. C. *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392-1420*. New York: AMS Press, 1986.
- Fenster, Thelma. "Did Christine Have a Sense of Humor? The Evidence of the *Epistre au Dieu d'amours*." *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 23-36.
- . "Who's a Heroine? The Example of Christine de Pizan." *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*. Ed. Barbara K. Altman and Deborah L. McGrady. New York: Routledge, 2003. 115-28.
- Ferguson, Margaret W. *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
- Forhan, Kate Langdon. *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002.
- . "Reflecting Heroes: Christine de Pizan and the Mirror Tradition." *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis. New York: W. De Gruyter, 1994. 189-96.

- Fraioli, Deborah. "The Literary Image of Joan of Arc: Prior Influences." *Speculum* 56. Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1981. 811-30.
- . *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*. Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2000.
- Frey, Winifred. "Sibylla Led Astray: Sibyls in Medieval Literature." *Demons: Mediators Between This World and the Other*. Ed. Ruth Petzoldt and Paul Neubauer. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 51-64.
- Gibbons, Rachel. "Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France (1385-1422): The Creation of an Historical Villainess." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 51-73.
- . "The Queen as 'social mannequin': Consumerism and Expenditure at the Court of Isabeau of Bavaria, 1393-1422." *Journal of Medieval History* 26. 4 (2000): 371-395.
- Godefroy, Frédéric. *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*. Vol. 2. Paris: F. Vieweg, 1883.
- Gottlieb, Beatrice. "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century." *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor John H. Mundy*. Ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple. Blackwell: Oxford, 1985. 337-64.
- Green, Karen. "Philosophy and Metaphor: The Significance of Christine's 'Blunders.'" *Parergon* 22.1 (2005): 119-36.
- Hicks, Eric. "The Political Significance of Christine de Pizan." *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992. 7-15.
- Hindman, Sandra. *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986.
- . "The Composition of the Manuscript of Christine de Pizan's Collected Works in the British Library: A Reassessment." *British Library Journal* 9 (1983): 93-123.
- , and Stephen Perkinson. "Insurgent Voices: Illuminated Versions of Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre du Duc des vrais amans*," *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994. 221-231.
- Holderness, Julia Simms. "Christine et ses 'Bévues': sens et portée de quelques assimilations abusives." *Au champ des escriptures*. Ed. Eric Hicks. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000. 149-60.
- Hornblower, Simon, and Antony Spawforth (eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. Oxford: OUP, 1998.

- Hult, David F. *Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la Rose."* New York: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Huneycutt, Lois L. "Intercession and the High Medieval Queen: the Esther Topos." *Power of the Weak*. Ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995. 126-46.
- Huot, Sylvia. "Seduction and Sublimation: Christine de Pizan, Jean de Meun, and Dante." *Romance Notes* 25.3 (Spring 1985): 361-373.
- Jeanroy, Alfred. *La Poésie lyrique des Troubadours*. Toulouse/Paris: Privat-Didier, 1934.
- Kellogg, Judith L. "Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio: Rewriting Classical Mythic Tradition." *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends. Literary Studies East and West* 1. Ed. Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1989. 124-31.
- . "Christine de Pizan as Chivalric Mythographer: 'L'Epistre Othéa.'" *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England*. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1990. 100-124.
- . "Transforming Ovid: The Metamorphosis of Female Authority." *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*. Ed. Marilyn Desmond. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998. 195-214.
- Kennedy, Angus J. "La date du 'Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc': Réponse à Anne D. Lutkus et Julia M. Walker." *Au Champs des Escriptions: III Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez, and Phillippe Simon. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000. 759-70.
- . "Editing Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre à la rein.'" *The Editor and the Text*. Ed. Philip E. Bennett and Graham A. Runnalls. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP with the Modern Humanities Research Association, 1990. 70-82.
- King, Georgiana Goddard. *The Play of the Sibyl Cassandra*. Bryn Mawr Notes and Monographs 2. Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1921.
- Kinter, William Lewis. *Prophetess and Fay: A Study of the Ancient and Medieval Tradition of the Sibyl*. Diss. Columbia U, 1958.
- Krueger, Roberta. "Christine's Anxious Lessons: Gender, Morality, and the Social Order from the 'Enseignements' to the 'Avison.'" *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*. Ed. Marilyn Desmond. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998. 16-40.
- Krynen, Jacques. *Idéals du Prince et Pouvoir Royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age, 1380-1440*. Paris: 1981.

- Laidlaw, Jim C. "Christine de Pizan — A Publisher's Progress." *Modern Language Review*, 82 (1987): 37-75.
- . "The Date of the Queen's MS: London, British Library, Harley MS 4431." Forthcoming in *Christine de Pizan: Une voix féminine lyrique, politique et didactique*. Ed. Roman Reisinger. Salzburg: Verlag Mueller-Speiser.
- Laird, Edgar. "Christine de Pizan and Controversy concerning Star-Study in the Court of Charles V." *Culture and Cosmos: A Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural Astronomy*. 1.2 (1997): 35-48.
- Laird, Judith, and Earl Jeffrey Richards. "Tous parlent par une mesmes bouche: Lyrical Outbursts, Prosaic Remedies, and Voice in Christine de Pizan's 'Livre du duc des vrais amans.'" *Christine de Pizan and the Medieval French Lyric*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998. 103-31.
- Leppig, Linda. "The Political Rhetoric of Christine de Pizan." *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992. 130-156.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford: OUP, 1936
- Lutkus, Anne D., and Julia M. Walker. "PR Pas PC: Christine de Pizan's Pro-Joan Propaganda." *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*. Ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996. 145-60.
- McGinn, Bernard. "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist." *Church History* 47.2 (1978): 155-73.
- . "Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages." *Women of the Medieval World*. Ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985. 7-35.
- McGrady, Deborah. "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works." *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*. Ed. Marilynn Desmond. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998. 195-214.
- McKinley, Mary. "The Subversive 'Seulette.'" *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992. 157-70.
- Mâle, Emile. *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*. London: Collins, 1969.
- Margolis, Nadia. "Christine de Pizan: The Poetess as Historian." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 361-75.

- Margolis, Nadia. "'The Cry of the Chameleon': Evolving Voices in the Epistles of Christine de Pizan." *Disputatio: An International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Later Middle Ages* 1 (1996): 37-70.
- . "Elegant Closures: The Use of the Diminutive in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Meun." *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 111-23.
- . "The Poem's Progress: Christine's *Aultres Ballades* no. 42 and the Fortunes of a Text." *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*. Ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis. Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000. 251-262.
- Markale, Jean. *Isabeau de Bavière*. Paris: Payot, 1982.
- Mayor, Joseph B. "Sources of the Fourth Eclogue." *Vergil's Messianic Eclogue*. Ed. Joseph B. Mayor, W. Warde Fowler, and R. S. Conway. London: John Murray, 1907. 87-138.
- Moller, Herbert. "The Meaning of Courtly Love." *Journal of American Folklore* 73 (1960): 39-52.
- Mombello, Gianni. "Per un'edizione critica dell'*Epistre Othéa* di Christine de Pizan." *Studi Francesi* 8 (1964): 401-17; 9 (1965): 1-12.
- . "La tradizione manoscritta dell'*Epistre Othéa* di Christine de Pizan: Prolegomeni all'edizione del testo." *Memorie dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*. 4.15 (1967): 286-306.
- Nederman, Cary J. "Conciliarism and Constitutionalism: Jean Gerson and Medieval Political Thought." *History of European Ideas* 12.2 (1990): 189-209.
- Newman, Barbara. *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995.
- Nichols, Stephen. "Prophetic Discourse: St Augustine to Christine de Pizan." *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*. Ed. Bernard S. Levy. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 89 (Binghampton: 1992): 51-76.
- Pack, R.A. "The Sibyl in a Lamp." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 87 (1956) 190-1.
- Parke, H.W. *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

- Parsons, John Carmi. "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England." *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*. Ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally Beth MacLean. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995. 147-77.
- Paton, Lucy Allen. "Notes on Manuscripts of the Prophécies de Merlin." *PMLA* 28.2 (1913): 121-139.
- Patterson, Lee. *Chaucer and the Subject of History*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991.
- Pernoud, Régine. *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*. Trans. Edward Hyams. New York, 1982.
- , and Marie-Véronique Clin. *Joan of Arc: Her Story*. Rev. and trans. Jeremy Duquesnay Adams. Ed. Bonnie Wheeler. New York: St Martin's Press, 1998.
- Pinet, Marie-Josèphe. *Christine de Pisan 1364-1430: étude biographique et littéraire*. Paris: 1927.
- Pollard, John. *Virgil and the Sibyl: The Fourteenth Jackson Knight Memorial Lecture (Delivered 29 October 1981)*. Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1982.
- Quilligan, Maureen. *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's "Cité des dames"*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.
- . "The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan and Canon Formation." *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*. Ed. Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991. 126-43.
- Reeves, Marjorie. *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachinism*. Oxford: OUP, 1969.
- Reno, Christine. "Christine de Pizan: 'At Best a Contradictory Figure.'" *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. 171-91.
- . "Christine de Pizan: Feminism and Irony." *Seconda miscellanea di studi e ricerca sul quattrocento francese*. Ed. Franco Simone, J. Beck, and Gianni Mombello. Chambéry and Turin: Centre d'Études Franco-Italien, 1981. 129-132.
- , and Gilbert Ouy. "Identification des autographs de Christine de Pizan." *Scriptorium* 34 (1980): 221-38.
- Révah, I.S. "L'Auto de la Sibylle Cassandre de Gil Vicente." *Hispanic Review* 27.2 (April 1959). 167-93.
- Ribémont, Bernard. "Christine de Pizan et l'image de la mère." *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*. Ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis. Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000. 150-61.

- Richards, Earl Jeffrey. "Christine de Pizan and Dante: A Reexamination." *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 222.1 (1985): 100-111.
- . "French Cultural Nationalism and Christian Universalism in the Works of Christine de Pizan." *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. 75-94.
- . "Rejecting Essentialism and Gendered Writing: The Case of Christine de Pizan." *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996. 96-131.
- . "'Seulette a part' — The 'Little Woman on the Sidelines' takes up her pen: the letters of Christine de Pizan." *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*. Ed. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993. 139-70.
- Richardson, T. Wade. "Problems in the Text-History of Petronius in Antiquity and the Middle Ages." *American Journal of Philology* 96.3 (Autumn 1975): 290-305.
- Robertson, D. S. "The Manuscripts of the Metamorphoses of Apuleius." *Classical Quarterly* 18.1 (January 1924): 27-42; 18.2 (April 1924): 85-99.
- Roche, Charles de, and Gustave Wissler, "Documents relatifs a Jeanne d'Arc et à son époque, extraits d'un manuscrit du XV^e siècle de la bibliothèque de la ville de Berne." *Festschrift Louis Gauchat*. Ed. H. R. Sauerlander. Aarau: 1926. 329-52.
- Roy, Maurice (ed.) *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pizan*. Vol. 1. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1891. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965.
- Royds, Thomas Fletcher. *Virgil and Isaiah: A Study of the Pollio with translations, notes and appendices*. Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1918.
- Sage, Evans T. "Petronius, Poggio, and John of Salisbury." *Classical Philology* 11.1 (January 1916): 11-24.
- Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. "Transformation." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed. M. H. Abrams. 6th ed. Vol. 3. New York: Norton, 1993. 851-62.
- Skulsky, Susan. "The Sibyl's Rage and the Marpessan Rock." *American Journal of Philology* 108.1 (Spring 1987): 56-80.
- Solterer, Helen. "Flaming Words: Verbal Violence and Gender in Premodern Paris." *Romantic Review* 86.2 (1995): 355-378.
- . *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture*. Los Angeles: U of California P, 1995.

- Spitzer, Leo. "The Artistic Unity of Gil Vicente's Auto da Sibila Casandra." *Hispanic Review* 27.1 (January 1959): 56-77.
- Stecopoulos, Eleni, and Karl D. Utti. "Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: The Reconstruction of Myth." *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 48-62.
- Stenton, Sir Frank. *Anglo-Saxon England*. 3rd edition. Oxford: OUP, 1971.
- Sterligov, Alexander. "Western European Illuminated Manuscripts in the National Library of Russia." *Western Illuminated Manuscripts of the 8th and 16th Centuries in the National Library of Russia, St Petersburg*. Tamara Voronova and Alexander Sterligov. Trans. Mireille Faure. Bournemouth, England: Parkstone Press, 1996. 7-28.
- Sullivan, Karen. *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.
- Tarnowski, Andrea. "The Lessons of Experience and the Chemin de Long Estude." *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*. Ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady. New York: Routledge, 2003. 181-198.
- Terry, Milton S. Preface. *The Sibylline Oracles*. Ed. Terry. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890. El Paso: Selene Books, 1991. 1-4.
- Thibault, Marcel. *Isabeau de Bavière: la jeunesse, 1370-1405*. Paris: Perrin, 1903.
- Thomas, André Antoine. *Jean Gerson et l'éducation des dauphins de France*. Paris: 1930.
- Thompson, Bard. "Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles." *Review of Religion* 3-4 (1952): 115-36.
- Tuchman, Barbara W. *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1979.
- Vale, Malcolm G.A. *Charles VII*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1974.
- Valois, Noël. "Jeanne d'Arc et la Prophétie de Marie Robine." *Mélanges Paul Fabre: Études d'histoire du moyen âge*. Paris: 1902. 453-67.
- Vaughan, Richard. *John the Fearless: The growth of Burgundian power*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002.
- Verdon, Jean. *Isabeau de Bavière*. Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1981.
- Vitz, Evelyn Birge. *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire*. New York: New York UP, 1989.

- Walters, Lori. "Fathers and Daughters: Christine de Pizan as Reader of the Male Tradition of *Clergie* in the *Dit de la Rose*." *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan: Essays in Honor of Charity Cannon Willard*. Ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 63-76.
- Wechssler, Eduard. *Das kulturproblem des Minnesangs*. Niemeyer: Halle, 1909.
- Willard, Charity Cannon. "An Autograph Manuscript of Christine de Pizan?" *Studi francesi* 27 (1965): 452-57.
- . "Christine de Pizan: From Poet to Political Commentator." *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. 17-32.
- . *Christine de Pizan: her Life and Works*. New York: Persea, 1984.
- . "Lover's Dialogues in Christine de Pizan's Lyric Poetry from the *Cent Ballades* to the *Cent Ballades d'Amant et de Dames*." *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 4 (1981): 167-80.
- . "The Manuscript of Jean Petit's Justification: Some Burgundian Propaganda Methods of the Early Fifteenth Century." *Studi Francesi* 38 (1969): 271-80.
- . *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*. New York: Persea, 1993.
- Wood, Charles T. "Joan of Arc's Mission and the lost record of her interrogation at Poitiers." *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*. Ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996. 19-29.
- Zimmermann, Margarete. "Vox Femina, Vox Politica: The 'Lamentacion sur les maux de la France.'" *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margaret Brabant. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992. 113-127.