

Introduction

The Other Voice

Et audiatur altera pars
And let the other side be heard
Traditional oral proverb in Roman law

No other late medieval woman writer has received the attention that Christine de Pizan has garnered over the last thirty years or so. When we were in graduate school in the late 1970s, no modern English translations of her works existed, and many of her works did not yet exist in critical editions.¹ All this has changed today with numerous new editions and translations of her texts. It would perhaps not be quite accurate today to call Christine de Pizan's voice "The Other Voice," since she has become the subject of countless studies, is taught in a variety of college courses, and, as one of Judy Chicago's dinner party plates, even resides at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. But how "other" was her voice in the Middle Ages? Christine, in fact, had many voices that she brilliantly varied from genre to genre. In her early lyric poetry she spoke as a woman in love but also as a man in love; and she spoke as a bereaved woman who tragically lost her husband and missed him profoundly. It is that voice that many modern readers take to be her most "authentic" one. "Je, Christine," is a formula that appears again and again in her works, but that name, and the persona "Christine," are not always staged in the same way. Christine inhabits and deploys the name "Christine" in many different ways, creating different kinds of authority for herself. By turns, her voice is that of a widow, a historian, a preceptor, a philosopher, or a prophetess.²

One of the key moments in Christine's development as a writer, and—in somewhat anachronistic terms—as a "public intellectual," was her participation

1. Earl Jeffrey Richards's translation of *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) in 1982 (New York: Perseus) brought Christine de Pizan into the mainstream of American university curricula. Richards's French edition, with facing Italian translation by Patrizia Caraffi followed in 1997: *Le livre de la cité des dames= La città delle dame* (Milan: Luni). For bibliographical guides up to 2004, see Angus J. Kennedy, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1984); Kennedy, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide: Supplement 1* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1994); and Kennedy, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide: Supplement 2* (Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2004).

2. Jacqueline Cerquiglioni-Toulet brilliantly explored the many ways in which Christine deploys her name in her lecture "Christine de Pizan et le pouvoir du nom," *Le Moyen Français* 75 (2017): 3–17. For the establishment of these different kinds of authoritative voices see Claire Le Ninan, *Le sage roi et la clergesse: L'écriture du politique dans l'œuvre de Christine de Pizan* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), Part 1.

2 Introduction

in the Debate on the *Romance of the Rose* in 1401–1402.³ David F. Hult has translated the relevant documents of this quarrel for this series, and has shown that by voicing her strong objections to the perceived misogyny and obscenity of the *Romance of the Rose* Christine launched “an active counterassault against an entire intellectual establishment to which women were solely the object of discussion, and which greatly limited their ability to take up the subject position of speech.”⁴ Christine also made herself a speaking subject in her later allegorical works, where her voice was not so different from those of many male writers of her time, such as Guillaume de Deguileville (1295–before 1358) or Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405), who invented personas, often bearing their own names, that traveled through allegorical landscapes in order to reveal political and spiritual truths.⁵ Nonetheless, what marks Christine’s voice as “other” is her insistent evocation of women’s historical experiences and her positioning of women as full participants in the political events and the intellectual life of this world.

At the time that Christine composed the *Epistre d’Othea* (Othea’s Letter) in 1399–1400, her vast allegorical compositions still lay ahead of her.⁶ Her voice in that text is literally that of another, since, apart from the Prologue, the person who speaks is an ingenious invention of Christine, Othea, the Goddess of Prudence, representing the “wisdom of women.” The “Christine” persona, by contrast, claims to be “a poor creature / An ignorant woman of low stature, / . . . a woman unworthy / Of written learning,”⁷ deploying an almost excessive humility topos. Othea’s voice is didactic and at times ponderous, presenting extracts of mythological tales in the form of an imperative, followed by an explanatory gloss punctuated by a quote from a philosopher, and a spiritual allegory ending with a biblical quotation. The letter is addressed to the Trojan hero Hector when he was fifteen years old. The reinforcement of Christine’s own voice with so many layers of authorities—the voice of Othea, classical myth, sayings of ancient pagan philosophers and the Church Fathers, and quotations from the scriptures—creates a kind of polyphony, joining her own voice with those of a whole chorus

3. For an argument in favor of using this term in a medieval context, see Daniel Hobbins, “The Schoolman as Public Intellectual: Jean Gerson and the Late Medieval Tract,” *American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 1308–1337.

4. Christine de Pizan, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1. See also Kevin Brownlee, “Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the *Rose*,” *Romanic Review* 79 (1988): 199–221.

5. See Philippe Maupeu, *Pèlerins de vie humaine: Autobiographie et allégorie narrative de Guillaume de Deguileville à Octavien de Saint-Gelais* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009).

6. *Epistre d’Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999).

7. Prologue, vv. 52–53. The French phrase here, “*femme indigne / de sens acquis*,” uses the rare expression “*sens acquis*” for written learning. References here and henceforth are to the translation presented in this volume.

of authorities in order to fashion a figure of female authority capable of advising a prince, her recipient Duke Louis of Orléans (1372–1407). Christine thus creates a genealogy of wise counsel: Just as her father had advised King Charles V, Louis's father, so now Othea/Christine offers her own lessons for a prince in a troubled kingdom. The *Othea* thus marks an important moment in Christine's career and the development of her voice, the moment she herself sees as a point of transition: when in the *Advison Cristine* (Christine's Vision, 1405) she sums up her prodigious literary production of fifteen major works between the years 1399 and 1405, she says: "Thus I began to forge pretty things, at the beginning of a lighter nature," but then "improving my style by more subtleness and nobler subject matter."⁸

The *Othea* is indeed a "subtle and noble" text that offers us a multi-layered and extremely complicated didactic work with a challenging vocabulary and syntax. This is undoubtedly why a rigorous and accurate modern English translation of the *Othea* is still lacking.⁹ The *Othea* is a crucial text not only for an understanding of Christine's career and the mission she set for herself but also for that of late medieval mythographic and didactic literature, topics we will explore below. Still extant in some fifty manuscripts, the *Othea* was vastly more popular in the Middle Ages than her *Livre de la cité des dames* (Book of the City of Ladies) of 1405, the work that is taught most often in colleges and universities. We hope that with this new translation of the *Othea*, this intriguing text and its challenges will appeal to a new audience of students and scholars.

Life and Works of Christine de Pizan

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice in 1365 and as a small child moved to Paris when her father, Thomas of Pizan, was appointed the court physician and astrologer of King Charles V of France (r. 1364–1380). The family, landed rural nobles, hailed from Pizzano, a small town near Bologna, and Christine therefore always wrote her name as "Pizan," although earlier generations of scholars often referred

8. "Adonc me pris a forger choses jolies, a mon commencement plus legieres . . . , amendant mon stille en plus grant soubtillité et plus haulte matiere." *Le livre de l'advison Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 111. Translation in *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, trans. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 194.

9. Parussa's excellent critical edition appeared in 1999. The 1990 translation by Jane Chance contains much good information but is inadequate as a translation: *Christine de Pizan's Letter of Othea to Hector*, ed. and trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport, MA: Focus Information Group, 1990). See also the 2008 modern French translation and adaptation by Hélène Basso: *Lettre d'Othéa, déesse de prudence, à un jeune chevalier, Hector*, preface by Jacqueline Cerquiglioni-Toulet, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008).

4 Introduction

to her as “de Pisan,” believing her family to be from Pisa.¹⁰ In 1379 Christine married Etienne de Castel, a notary and secretary at Charles V’s court. By all accounts her marriage was a happy one, and within a few years the young couple had three children, of whom two, a son and a daughter, survived into adulthood. Life for the de Pizan family was prosperous as long as Charles V was alive, but after his death in 1380 their fortunes changed, for Charles VI was less generous and in 1392 fell into a state of madness that destabilized the kingdom. Thomas de Pizan died some time between 1384 and 1389, leaving no inheritance to speak of. Then, in 1389, Etienne de Castel perished in an epidemic and left the young mother of three to fend for herself. Christine, confronted by numerous debts she had been unaware of, now had to provide for her children, her mother, and a niece. Unlike most widowed women who remarried or entered religious institutions, Christine decided to become a professional writer. She probably began her career as a scribe, but soon managed to acquire patrons for her works. How unusual and daring this step was becomes clear when we think of male writers of this time period. Her contemporaries, prolific writers such as Eustache Deschamps (ca. 1340–1406/07), Honorat Bovet (1340/45–1410), or Philippe de Mézières lived from court or ecclesiastical appointments; they wrote many influential works but they did not earn their living from their writing. That Christine succeeded in her enterprise and managed to live from her literary activities, and also to become an important political voice in her troubled period, is a testament to her intellectual vigor and moral force.

Christine’s earliest works were a collection of one hundred ballads, love poetry desired by her patrons, as she herself stated. Several poems dealt with widowhood, a new topic for lyric poetry,¹¹ and it is these verses that have often been considered to be her most autobiographical. In her *Epistre au dieu d’amours* (The God of Love’s Letter, 1399) she began to think about the status of women and how they were maligned and subjugated in medieval society.¹² The years 1399–1400, when she composed the *Othea*, signaled the beginning of an extremely fertile period, which saw the creation of her long allegorical works, both in prose and verse, as well as several devotional texts. In her *Advision*, as we saw above, she describes how she composed fifteen major works in the span of five years. These include the *Livre du chemin de long estude* (The Book of the Path of Long Learning, 1402),¹³ where, inspired by the late antique philosopher Boethius and by the

10. And this in spite of such excellent early biographies as that of Philipp August Becker: “Christine de Pizan,” *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 54 (1931): 129–64.

11. See Kevin Brownlee, “Widowhood, Sexuality, and Gender in Christine de Pizan,” *Romanic Review* 86 (1995): 339–53.

12. Translated by Kevin Brownlee in Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Brownlee, *Selected Writings*, 15–29.

13. *Le chemin de longue étude*, ed. Andrea Tarnowski, with modern French translation (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2000).

great Italian poet Dante, a figure named Christine, guided by the Sibyl of Cumae, embarks on a voyage around the known world and toward the heavens; there, a tribunal of allegorical ladies tries to determine who would be the best ruler for the troubled world. Next, Christine composed the very long *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* (The Book of Fortune's Transformation, 1403),¹⁴ a universal history that features, in its first part, a veiled autobiography where she describes how, after her husband's death, she was transformed into a man. In both of these allegories political troubles throughout history play a major role. The troubles of her own times—the Hundred Years' War, the Great Schism of the Western Church, and the incipient civil war between different factions of powerful French dukes—begin to shape her writings more frequently.¹⁵ During the Great Schism, a division of the Catholic Church that lasted from 1378 until its resolution at the Council of Constance in 1417, two, and at one point three, popes struggled for power and divided Europe in the process. This crisis of spiritual and political authority caused widespread anxiety, an emotion that found its expression in many poetic and prophetic writings, including those of Christine.¹⁶ The Great Schism surfaces in several of Christine's works, beginning with the *Chemin de long estude* and the *Mutacion de Fortune*, where she indicts the Church leaders as wolves that devour their flocks. In her biography of the late King Charles V (1404), commissioned by his brother, Duke Philip of Burgundy, Christine devotes ten chapters to the Schism and demonstrates that she is familiar with the political wrangling that led to France's adherence to the Avignon faction of the papacy. Here she accuses the devil of having planted "this painful schism and poisonous, contagious plant into the bosom of Holy Church."¹⁷ In the 1405 *Advision* (which also contains a detailed autobiographical section in Part 3), Christine devotes many chapters to contemporary politics, especially the Schism, the war against the English, and the

14. *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 4 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1959–1966). The new translation of the abridged text that was published in 2017 (Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies) is entitled *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, ed. and trans. Geri L. Smith.

15. See Sandra Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othea": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986); Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Christine de Pizan and the Political Life in Late Medieval France," in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 9–24; Le Ninan, *Le sage roi et la clergesse*; and Tracy Adams, *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

16. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), chap. 5.

17. *Livre des faits et bonnes moeurs du sage roi Charles V*, trans. Joël Blanchard and Michel Quereuil (Paris: Pocket, 2013), Part 3, chap. 61. Blanchard and Quereuil translate the work previously edited by Suzanne Solente: *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, 2 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1936–1940; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine, 1977).

internal French conflicts, whose culmination as a full-blown civil war was still in the future at the time she composed the *Othea*.

Several specific political events may have inspired Christine to undertake the composition of a major didactic work for a prince in 1399: the defeat of a European alliance, led by Jean de Nevers, the son of the Burgundian Duke Philip the Bold, in the fateful battle of Nicopolis (in today's Bulgaria) against the Ottoman Turks in 1396; the French withdrawal of obedience from the Avignon pope Benedict XIII in July 1398; and the deposition of the English King Richard II and his subsequent death in 1399.

In 1393 ambassadors from Hungary had arrived in Paris to ask for help against the Turks' advance in the Balkans. Although Charles VI promised them aid, in the end only the Duke of Burgundy committed himself—or rather his son—to the military campaign to assist King Sigismund of Hungary. The complete defeat of the European forces, countless deaths, and the imprisonment of scores of knights led to soul searching among the survivors and to laments and reproaches by those who had counseled against the expedition. Philippe de Mézières, with whom Christine was acquainted, offered a searing indictment of the French forces in his *Epistre lamentable and consolatoire* (A woeful and consolating letter) addressed to the Duke of Burgundy in 1397.¹⁸ He believed that only a complete moral and spiritual reform of French chivalry could save it from extinction. The *Othea*, with its moral glosses and spiritual allegories addressed to “the good knight” and “the good spirit,” could be seen as a response to Philippe's exhortations.

In the year before Christine began to compose the *Othea*, one of the major crises caused by the Great Schism erupted in Paris. When Clement VII, the pope supported by the French, died in 1394, the French king insisted that peace should be made in the Church and that no new pope should be elected for the Avignon faction until negotiations with the Roman pope, Boniface IX, could lead to his abdication and an election of a new pope. However, through various machinations, the Spanish cardinal Pedro de Luna had himself quickly elected as Benedict XIII, and all hopes for a resolution of the Schism were dashed. Louis of Orléans, the dedicatee of the *Othea*, was much involved in the negotiations to get Benedict XIII to step down. After a few years the stalemate between the French monarchy and the tenacious pope came to a head, when several ambassadors departed for Avignon in order to persuade the pope once more to abdicate. These ambassadors were two uncles of Charles VI, the dukes of Berry and Burgundy, and the king's brother, the much younger duke Louis of Orléans. Despite being confronted by such an illustrious group, Benedict XIII remained deaf to the French entreaties.

18. Philippe de Mézières, *Une épître lamentable et consolatoire adressée en 1397 à Philippe le Hardi, duc de Bourgogne, sur la défaite de Nicopolis, 1396*, ed. Philippe Contamine and Jacques Paviot (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 2008).

The pope's stubborn refusal led the French to withdraw obedience from Benedict XIII through an elaborate edict published on July 27, 1398.¹⁹ This withdrawal, which had serious financial and political repercussions for the Avignon papacy, was a huge event in Paris and, given Christine's close relations with the court, she surely must have known that Louis of Orléans was one of the frustrated ambassadors. The advice that Othea gives to Hector in the areas of diplomacy would have come in handy in the critical years before 1399.

The Hundred Years' War began in 1337 because the English King Edward III, as a grandson of the French King Philippe le Bel, wanted to claim the French throne.²⁰ The English still possessed a fief on the continent, the duchy of Guienne in southwestern France, and when Philippe occupied that area, the conflict that was to last until 1453 began. The French lost a number of major battles, notably at Crécy in 1346 and at Poitiers in 1356, when King Jean le Bon was taken prisoner and was liberated only through payment of a huge ransom. In 1360 the French surrendered the large region of Aquitaine to the English in the Treaty of Brétigny. When Christine and her family arrived in France, hostilities were at a low ebb. Indeed, almost the entire period between 1364, when Charles V, Jean le Bon's son, assumed the throne, and 1399, had been relatively peaceful. The Truce of Leulinghem, concluded between the French and the English in 1389, was still holding. But 1399 brought a series of calamitous events: King Richard II, who in 1396 had married Charles VI's seven-year-old daughter Isabelle,²¹ was brutally deposed by the Lancastrians, and Henry IV took his place. Richard died under mysterious circumstances a few months after his deposition. Henry IV, for his part, was determined to resume the war with France.

This particular crisis touched Christine personally, as her son was in England at the time. In 1398 the Earl of Salisbury had met Christine on one of his

19. For details see Howard Kaminsky, "The Politics of France's Subtraction of Obedience from Pope Benedict XIII, 27 July 1398," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115, no. 5 (1971): 366–97. The withdrawal of obedience came to an end in 1403, but not before Benedict was imprisoned in his palace in Avignon. Louis tried to act as a mediator, and at that time the conflict with the House of Burgundy grew until it reached the tragic outcome of Louis's assassination on the order of the Duke of Burgundy in 1407. For details on the events of this period see Noël Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme d'Occident*, vol. 3 (Paris: Picard, 1901), chap. 3.

20. There are hundreds of studies of this conflict. See, for example, Anne Curry, *The Hundred Years War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

21. Such a marriage would not be consummated until the bride was at least twelve years old. Philippe de Mézières was a strong advocate of this marriage, which he hoped would bring lasting peace to France and England. See his *Epistre au roi Richart II*, in *Letter to King Richard II: A Plea Made in 1395 for Peace between England and France*, ed. and trans. G. W. Coopland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975).

embassies to Paris in connection with the marriage of Richard II and Isabelle.²² He had taken Christine's son Jean with him as a companion to one of his own sons. About a year later, the Earl of Salisbury was executed by the citizens of Chichester for leading an uprising in support of the deposed Richard II, and King Henry IV took charge of Christine's son. Christine despaired of seeing him again but managed to negotiate his return, a strategy which cost her several manuscripts, as she put it in the *Advision*.²³ One of these works was the *Epistre au dieu d'amours* (adapted in 1402 by Thomas Hoccleve as *Cupid's Letter*); another one was the version of the *Othea* that features a dedication to "a king" and which was translated into English by Stephen Scrope around 1440. James L. Laidlaw argues persuasively that this king was Henry IV, whom, in the *Advision* (in 1405, once her son was safely back in France!) she labels a usurper, but to whom she gives some praise in the dedication—or, as Laidlaw puts it, "she used a minimum of fulsome phrases, just enough to secure Henry IV's good will."²⁴ Christine's plan succeeded, and her son returned to France in 1402. Thus the *Othea* had a critical function in Christine's own life and in that of her son. But its wider function was to provide expert chivalric, moral, and spiritual leadership to a country confronted by multiple crises.

Thus, in the years after 1398 Christine's engagement with public life progressed on several fronts. Just when she had finished the *Othea* she became a player in the acerbic intellectual debate on the *Romance of the Rose*. Composed by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun between 1228 and 1270, this text was one of the most popular of the Middle Ages, featuring an allegorical quest for the love of a rosebud. It was the second part by Jean de Meun that gave rise to the debate between, on one side, Jean de Montreuil (1354–1418), provost of the city of Lille, and the brothers Pierre and Gontier Col, and, on the other, Christine and Jean Gerson (1363–1429), the powerful chancellor of the University of Paris. At stake was the morality of the work, since Jean de Meun had created a number of fictional characters, such as the Jealous Husband or the Old Woman, into whose mouths he put discourses that could be interpreted as immoral and misogynistic.

22. For details of these events see James L. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury, and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36, no. 2 (1982): 129–43.

23. This is how Christine speaks of her anguish about her son's situation and her strategy to get him back in the *Advision Cristine*: "Le roy Henri, qui encores est, qui s'atribua la couronne, vid desditz livres et dictiez que j'avoie ja plusieurs envoiez comme desireuse de lui faire plaisir, audit conte." The king invites Christine to come to England but she is not "tempted" to go, and instead sends some of her books: "Et a brief parler, tant fis a grant peine et par le moien de mes livres que congié ot mon dit filz de me venir querir par de ça pour mener la, qui encore n'y vois" (112–13). This return is also the subject of *Autres Balades XXII*, in *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886–1896; reprint, New York: Johnson, 1965), 1:232–33.

24. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan," 140. This version exists in the British Library manuscript Harley 219, a mid-fifteenth-century copy of the original Christine sent to Henry IV.

At one point during the debate Christine collected a selection of the letters that had flown back and forth between the debate participants in a dossier that she presented to Charles VI's wife, Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, an act that made her known and also promoted the anti-misogyny stance that came to full fruition in her *Book of the City of Ladies*.²⁵ Here, in a by now famous pro-woman move, Christine assembled hundreds of women from the past and from her own age to show how much they had contributed to the achievements of civilization and to the spread of the Christian faith. Inspired by Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women*, a book she could read in the original Latin as well as in the translations by Laurent de Premierfait,²⁶ Christine did not hesitate to reinterpret existing stories and chronicles in order to highlight women's intellectual and political power. Boccaccio had not dealt with Christian women, so Christine turned to the thirteenth-century chronicler Vincent of Beauvais and combed his vast histories of the early Church to find examples of saintly women who, through their piety and constancy, would support the arguments she used in her fight against misogyny.²⁷ Right after the *City of Ladies*, Christine composed a kind of continuation to it, a didactic treatise addressed to all classes of women, *Le livre des trois vertus* (The Book of the Three Virtues).²⁸ During this time Christine also became a publisher of her own works by copying and assembling her works into beautiful volumes for specific patrons, such as Louis of Orléans, Duke Jean of Berry, and the queen, whose splendid manuscript found its way to England late in the Hundred Years' War and is now known as British Library Harley 4431.²⁹

Christine's literary activity became more and more overtly political as the crises in France deepened. In 1407 she composed another didactic work, the *Livre du corps de policie* (The Book of the Body Politic),³⁰ addressed to the French dauphin Louis of Guienne (d. 1415), which drew on ancient history for exemplary tales, but did not return to the abundant use of classical mythology of the

25. See Rosalind Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), for Christine's defense of women across most of her oeuvre.

26. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Christine also used Boccaccio's *Decameron*, not yet translated into French in 1399; Laurent de Premierfait's translations, both done for Jean de Berry, date from 1401 to 1409.

27. See Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "'Femme de corps et femme par sens': Christine de Pizan's Saintly Women," *Romanic Review* 87 (1996): 157–75.

28. *Le livre des trois vertus*, ed. Eric Hicks, introduction and notes by Charity Cannon Willard (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1989).

29. On this manuscript, see *Christine de Pizan: The Making of the Queen's Manuscript*, <<http://www.pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk>>. See also Gilbert Ouy, Christine Reno, and Inès Villela-Petit, *Album Christine de Pizan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 316–43.

30. *Le livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Champion, 1998).

Othea. As the French factional strife escalated after the assassination of Louis of Orléans,³¹ Christine's voice turned more urgent and even desperate. In 1410 she tried to persuade the warring dukes to make peace in her *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* (Lamentation on the evils that have befallen France),³² and the 1412–1413 *Livre de paix* (Book of Peace)³³ is a further plea for peace in France. Finally, after the French defeat at Agincourt in October 1415 and the English invasion of France, Christine seems to have retired to the convent of Poissy not far from Paris, where her daughter was a nun. In her 1418 *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* (Letter on the Prison of Human Life), Christine turned her back on the strife of this world by offering consolation to those women who had lost loved ones at Agincourt. They should seek hope in the afterlife and no longer count on any blessings in this earthly prison of human life.³⁴ Only in 1429 a ray of hope appeared: Joan of Arc burst on the scene, trying to crown the French King Charles VII, disinherited in 1420 through the Treaty of Troyes, which assured that the English king Henry V would succeed as monarch of France. When Charles VI and Henry V both died in 1422, Henry VI became king of France, leaving the French king Charles VII to wander around France, dispossessed. On July 27, 1429, Joan succeeded in having Charles VII crowned, and just two weeks later Christine wrote a celebratory poem in her honor, the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (The Poem about Joan of Arc). In Joan, Christine saw the fulfillment of her twinned dreams: a woman with a divine mission whose intervention in a hundred-year old conflict brought about peace—or so she thought, for Christine did not live to see Joan's brutal execution at the stake on May 30, 1431.³⁵ The English did not completely leave French territories for another twenty years.

31. For a lively account of this event see Eric Jager, *Blood Royal: A True Tale of Crime and Detection in Medieval Paris* (New York: Little, Brown, 2014); see also Bernard Guenée, *Un meurtre, une société: L'assassinat du duc d'Orléans, 23 novembre 1407* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

32. Translated in Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Brownlee, *Selected Writings*, 224–29. Also included in the edition and translation by Josette A. Wisman of Christine de Pizan, *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life with an Epistle to the Queen of France and Lament on the Evils of Civil War* (New York: Garland, 1984).

33. *The "Livre de la paix" of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (The Hague: Mouton, 1958); *The Book of Peace by Christine de Pizan*, ed. and trans. Karen Green, Constant J. Mews, and Janice Pinder (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

34. See Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Two Responses to Agincourt: Alain Chartier's *Livre des Quatre Dames* and Christine de Pizan's *Epistre de la Prison de la Vie Humaine*," in *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan, Glasgow 21–27 July 2000, Published in Honour of Liliane Dulac*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy et al., 3 vols. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2002), 1:75–85. See also *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life*, ed. Wisman.

35. Kevin Brownlee, "Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*" in Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Brownlee, *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, 371–90. See also *Le ditié de*

Christine de Pizan and Classical Mythology

No medieval writer encountered classical mythology in its pure or “naked” form, that is, without commentaries or interpretations that often crowded the margins of the manuscript pages that transmitted Ovidian tales, or the epics of Virgil or Statius. These explanatory textual accompaniments usually offered several different layers of possible interpretations for mythical tales: the historical, which saw ancient kings and queens in the pagan gods and goddesses; the physical, in which the sun, wind, and other natural phenomena were represented by divine figures such as Helios or Aeolus; the astrological, which saw the pagan gods figured in the starry constellations; and finally the moral, which looked for lessons on good and evil in the deeds of mythological characters.³⁶ All of these interpretive possibilities surface in the *Othea*.

Throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages a further strand of interpretations transformed ancient myths: many commentators grafted Christian meanings onto the tales of pagan antiquity, using images such as the “gold of the Egyptians,” which, for Saint Augustine, meant that Christian writers were allowed to use pagan materials as long as they employed them in the service of Christian truths.³⁷ One of the most influential late antique writers who dealt with classical mythology was Fulgentius (d. ca. 533), who wrote in his *Mythologies*: “once the fictional invention of lying Greeks has been disposed of, I may infer what allegorical significance we should understand in such matters.”³⁸ In the twelfth century, the preferred images for the interpretation of ancient myths in medieval Latin sources were those of the covering or the veil, items that needed to be removed in order for the true meaning of the myth to emerge. Images of trees whose bark had to be stripped away, or fruit whose peel had to be removed to allow access to the true inner meaning, were also popular; in fact, Christine invokes the image of the fruit and its peel in the gloss to chapter 82 of the *Othea*.³⁹

Jehanne d'Arc, ed. and trans. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1977).

36. Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York: Pantheon, 1953; reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), chaps. 1–4.

37. Paule Demats, *Fabula: Trois études de mythographie antique et médiévale* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), 39–40. See also below, 26.

38. Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, *The Mythologies*, in *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, edited and translated by Leslie G. Whitbread (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 13–102, at 45.

39. See Marie-Dominique Chenu, “Involucrum: Le mythe selon les théologiens médiévaux,” *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 22 (1955): 75–79; and Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

In addition to commentaries and annotated manuscripts, a medieval writer could also use collections of mythological tales and interpretations. Handbooks such as those of Arnulf of Orléans, who wrote around 1180, or John of Garland, active in Paris in the early thirteenth century, attempted “through allegory to uncover the hidden truths of the Ovidian fables.”⁴⁰ In the vernacular tradition the most important work for the transmission of ancient Ovidian fables was the vast translation and interpretation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the *Ovide moralisé* (The Moralized Ovid), composed in verse between 1316 and 1328 by a Franciscan friar.⁴¹ This poem of 72,000 lines featured not only translations of the many tales of the *Metamorphoses* but also of parts of Ovid’s *Heroides*, a collection of fictional letters, supposedly written by mythological heroines to the lovers who abandoned and mistreated them. Through the *Ovide moralisé* their stories became part of the vernacular canon. The many thousands of verses devoted to the different levels of historical, moral, and spiritual interpretations provided a huge storehouse for future writers such as Guillaume de Machaut (1300–1377), Jean Froissart (ca. 1337–1410), and Christine, who drew freely on the materials offered by the anonymous fourteenth-century poet. She did not slavishly follow the interpretations offered by the *Ovide moralisé*, but used its materials in creative ways, rewriting and reorganizing as she saw fit in the new context of the *Othea*. Another author who moralized ancient myths was Évrart de Conty, with his glosses in the *Eschechs amoureux moralisés* (The moralized chess game of love; ca. 1390–1400). This work is a massive encyclopedia/mirror for princes, which presents itself as a commentary on an allegorical poem itself inspired by the *Romance of the Rose*. Conty had been the court physician of Charles V and was certainly acquainted with both Christine’s father, Thomas de Pizan, the court astrologer, and Christine herself. His extremely involved interpretive strategies may have

40. Frank T. Coulson, “Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the School Tradition of France, 1180–1400: Texts, Manuscript Tradition, Manuscript Settings,” in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. James C. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 59. See also Arnulf of Orléans, *Allegorie super Ovidii Metamorphosin*, ed. Fausto Ghisalberti, in “Arnolfo d’Orléans: Un cultore d’Ovidio nel secolo XII,” *Memorie del reale istituto lombardo di scienze e lettere* 24 (1932): 157–234.

41. *Ovide moralisé*, ed. Cornelis de Boer, *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam: Afdeling Letterkunde*, vols. 15, 21, 30, 36–37, 43 (Amsterdam, 1915–1938); for which see Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and Its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), chap. 3; Ana Pairet, *Les mutations des fables: Figures de la métamorphose dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 2002); and Marylène Possamaï-Pérez, *L’Ovide moralisé: Essai d’interprétation* (Paris: Champion, 2006).

shaped some of the *Othea's* interpretations, and he and Christine frequently share similar expressions.⁴²

The *Ovide moralisé* offers many different interpretations of each Ovidian story, and does not follow a consistent pattern that would be repeated from section to section. In the *Othea*, by contrast, Christine consistently adopts a tripartite division that seems more reminiscent of Biblical exegesis, a technique she describes herself in her biography of Charles V when she praises the king for the many translations from Latin into French he commissioned, including the Bible “that he had translated in three manners or styles, to wit: the text, then the text together with glosses, and then allegorized in another manner.”⁴³ This description sounds very much like the compositional technique she followed in her own *Othea* four years earlier. A further text that may have suggested this pattern to Christine was Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus*, composed around 1340,⁴⁴ which unlike the *Ovide moralisé* segmented the text into interpretable portions, not unlike Christine’s *textes*. However, Christine’s *textes* are not mere narrative excerpts but her own compositions, written deliberately as imperatives. That is, Christine draws a lesson from a given myth even before she interprets it explicitly: thus she offers an exegesis of texts she herself had created. In her earlier lyric poetry she had already frequently used myths in a very personal way, as an analogy or parallel to the experiences of the lyrical “I” that enunciates the poem. But now, in a moralizing mode, she draws lessons on chivalric and spiritual virtues and vices from these stories: it is important to note that she has *Othea* speak as an authoritative moralist already in her *textes*. The “conative” or advisory function of the imperative has been described by the linguist Roman Jakobson, who

42. Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, vol. 3, *The Emergence of Italian Humanism, 1321–1475* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), vol. 3, 228–44. The date of this text has not been established with certainty. De Conty died in 1405, and he must have been very old since he was already teaching at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris in 1353. For details of his life, see Françoise Guichard-Tesson, “Évrart de Conty, auteur de la *Glose des echecs amoureux*,” *Le Moyen Français*, 8–9 (1982): 111–48. See also the edition of Évrart de Conty’s work by Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy: *Le livre des eschez amoureux moralisés* (Montreal: CERES, 1993).

43. Solente, ed., *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs*, 2:43: “[Charles V] fist [...] *translater de latin en François tous les plus notables livres, si comme la Bible en .iii. manieres, c’est assavoir: le texte, et puis le texte et les gloses ensemble, et puis d’une autre maniere alegorisée.*” Christine repeats this same account in her *Livre de de la paix* from 1412–1413: “*fist translater par tres souffisans clerks maistres en theologie tous les plus notables livres, tant de la sainte escripture comme autres. Si comme la bible en .iii. volumes, c’est assavoir le texte, et puis le texte et les gloses ensemble, et puis d’une autre maniere alegorisee*” (Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, 283.) See also *Le Livre des faits et bonnes moeurs*, trans. Blanchard and Quereuil, 245. We will return to this point below.

44. Petrus Bersuire [Berchorius], “The ‘Ovidius moralizatus’ of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation,” trans. William Donald Reynolds (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1971).

states that an imperative, unlike other verb forms, is not subjected to verification because its value derives from the authority of the speaker.⁴⁵ Christine further buttresses this authority through the citations from philosophical and scriptural authorities.

Christine skillfully interweaves Ovidian myths of metamorphoses, a major component of the *Othea's* content, with the myth of the Trojan origin of the French monarchy: as she reminds Louis of Orléans in the Prologue, he comes from ancient Trojan stock. The Trojan War itself was popularized by two widely read Latin texts, ostensibly written by Dares and Dictys, claiming to be eyewitnesses to the Trojan War, but in fact dating from late antiquity.⁴⁶ In medieval French culture the Trojans became part of a myth of national origins. The concept of *translatio imperii*, or the transfer of empires, was a bedrock of medieval political thought. Beginning in Latin chronicles in the seventh century, the story of the Trojan origins of the French was transmitted in a variety of texts, including such vernacular romances as Benoît de Sainte-Maure's twelfth-century *Roman de Troie* (Romance of Troy).⁴⁷ In the mid-fourteenth century, a prose version of this romance was included in the second redaction of the early thirteenth-century *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à Cesar* (Ancient History up to Julius Caesar),⁴⁸ a compilation, mostly in prose, of stories drawn from ancient history and one of Christine's major sources for ancient historical events. The story appears as well in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* (Great Chronicles of France).⁴⁹ It was here that Christine found the version she adopted in her own works: that after the fall of Troy, when the Trojans were dispersed all over Europe, Hector's son Francio founded France. In other versions, Francio was the Trojan King Priam's nephew and not his grandson, as he is for Christine. In making Hector the father of Francio and thus of the French nation, Christine showed that she had a specific political agenda in the *Othea*: to make a plea for national unity founded upon the noble Trojan origins of the French. In the *Chemin de long estude* Christine recounts that

45. Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963), 214–20.

46. *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, trans. R. M. Frazer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966).

47. Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, 6 vols. (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1904–1912).

48. *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, édition partielle by Marijke de Visser-van Terwiga, 2 vols. (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995 and 1999). This edition, however, does not include the Troy material.

49. *Les grandes chroniques de France*, ed. Jules Viard, 9 vols. (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1920–1937). See Jacques Krynen, *Idéal du prince et pouvoir royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age, 1380–1440: Étude de la littérature politique du temps* (Paris: Picard, 1981), 245–51; Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, trans. Susan Ross Huston, ed. Fredric L. Cheyette (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), chap. 8; and Hindman, *Painting and Politics*, 34–38.

Francio was the noblest of the Trojan princes, and that he settled in Gaul, a region that subsequently changed its name to France in his honor (ll. 3576–80).⁵⁰ The story also appears in the *Mutacion de Fortune* and in her biography of Charles V, where Christine makes it clear that France as a nation was founded with the coronation of Francio's direct descendant, the legendary King Pharamond (Part 1, chap. 5). In the *Advision* Christine offers an original interpretation of the Trojan War when she attributes its cause to Lady Opinion, the allegorical character that dominates Part 2. Lady Opinion claims that "I was the cause of the death of Hector, for I made him believe that he should not beware of Achilles who was constantly lying in wait for him, and who in the end killed him" (79). Here we find one of Christine's famous auto-citations, for what Lady Opinion says here is precisely what Othea had said in chapter 85 to warn Hector: "Beware of Achilles!"

The *Othea* represents the first articulation of the Trojan myth in Christine's oeuvre, a myth she will exploit for its political value in many subsequent works that deal with questions of national origin and national unity. It is thus in the context of the *translatio imperii* that we have to understand the Trojan stories and their moral and spiritual interpretations in the *Othea*.

Genre, Allegory, and Textuality in the Othea

In order to consider the *Othea's* genre, its use of allegory, and its incorporation of sources, it is useful to begin with a description of the manuscripts and their idiosyncratic format. As rigorous and as repetitive as is the organization of individual chapters in the *Othea*, this very rigor and repetition mark a disconcerting and disorienting phenomenon that Liliane Dulac accurately described as "breaks or fissures in meaning" (*ruptures de sens*). The three textual sections of each of the one hundred chapters represent three very different, very disparate literary traditions, which Christine successfully welds together into a single work. This fusion of different textual traditions is as astounding and complicated as it is provocative. By the same token, the text's editor, Gabriella Parussa, called the work a "hybrid, composite text that always changes course" (*texte hybride, composite, déroutant*, 16)—and here lies the challenge of the *Othea*. Its textually hybrid or composite nature—arguably its essential feature, and one that might perhaps be called, more neutrally, its textual heterogeneity—is seen in the strict divisions among the individual sections explicitly devoted to text, gloss, and allegory, a division complicated by the addition of illuminations (expanded from six in the earliest manuscript to one hundred and one in subsequent versions). These later copies, executed under Christine's direct supervision, enrich each chapter with

50. In the *Advision*, Christine allows for a second explanation of the name "France": she plays on the meaning of the word "franc" (=free) by stating that the country was called France "pour la grant liberté" (the great freedom) that its founders established there (8).

its own highly detailed colored illumination, which suggests that Christine from the outset deliberately and consciously exploited the textual heterogeneity of the *Othea* through the contrast with a fourth visual level. Whether the illuminations of the manuscripts illustrated under Christine's supervision offer a political program remains an open and much debated question, but the *Othea* also survives in many other manuscripts copied and illuminated after Christine's death, with different iconographic programs from the manuscripts done under her control, a phenomenon which implies that later scribes and readers took their cue from Christine's intention to play off the different sections of the text against each other. With this physical description in mind, let us first turn to the question of genre.

The *Othea* survived in some fifty manuscripts, some no longer extant, according to the list published by Gabriella Parussa in 1999.⁵¹ Many of these manuscripts have since been digitized by the British Library and by Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, making it easy to consult and compare them. When one lists the dedicatees of manuscripts executed under Christine's control (some now lost), one is confronted with an original, closely knit readership drawn from the highest echelons of France and England, and this during a lull in hostilities during the Hundred Years' War. These first readers included:

- Louis, Duke of Orléans (the younger brother of Charles VI and sometime regent during his periods of mental illness that began in 1392). BnF, f. fr. 848, with only six illustrations, represents the earliest manuscript of the text and is dedicated to him.
- Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (Charles VI's uncle and sometime regent, and founder of the Burgundian branch of the House of Valois). Only copies of this manuscript survive, and all of these present a dedication, not to Louis of Orléans, but to Philip himself.
- Henry IV, King of England.⁵² Only copies of this manuscript survive, the earliest of which dates from the mid-fifteenth century, British Library, Harley 219.
- John of Berry (also Charles VI's uncle, and after Louis of Orléans's murder in 1407, the head of the Armagnac or Orléanist faction). The version dedicated to John is preserved in a copy in Oxford's Bodleian Library, ms. Laud misc. 570, which probably served as

51. Besides Parussa's discussion of the manuscripts, it is helpful to consult the recent exhaustive codicological study of Christine: Ouy, Reno, and Villela-Petit, *Album Christine de Pizan*.

52. See above, 8, for details on how the dedication to Henry IV came to be.

the basis for the Middle English translation done around 1440 by Stephen Scrope. John also acquired Paris BnF f. fr. 606 shortly after the assassination of Louis of Orléans.

- The French queen Isabeau of Bavaria (Charles VI's wife, who repeatedly attempted to mediate between the rival Armagnac and Burgundian factions, particularly after Louis of Orléans's murder). The utterly stunning luxury manuscript dedicated to her, British Library Harley 4431, called "The Queen's Manuscript," and dating from 1410–1412, is the basis for the critical edition by Gabriella Parussa used for the translation here.

In view of these readers and of the political rivalries between them, it would seem logical to identify the genre of the *Othea* as a "mirror for princes." In fact, the work is about an ideal of knighthood based on lessons from classical sources, the Church Fathers, and the Bible. Indeed, in one later manuscript, BnF, fr. 1186, dated 1482, the *Othea* is followed by a treatise entitled *The Duties of Kings and Princes* (*Devoirs des rois et des princes*). In one other early manuscript, BnF f. fr. 1187, the *Othea* is followed by the Middle French translation of Cicero's *On Old Age* (*De senectute*) done by the early French humanist Laurent de Premierfait, Christine's contemporary and also active at the royal court; it is entitled *Tully's Book on Old Age* (*Le Livre de Tulle de vieillesse*), since Cicero was commonly referred to as Tully until the end of the Renaissance. These scattered indications, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, suggest that the *Othea* was composed with an intention to reconcile the competing political factions of the day under an ideal of enlightened Christian knighthood. Gabriella Parussa argues in the same vein that the *Othea* was written in the sincere hope of convincing this first circle of readers to restore peace and justice and to stop the internecine bickering for the sake of the common good.⁵³ Her insights suggest that the *Othea's* political dimensions went beyond any one single event, but addressed a general crisis in the wake of events in the 1390s such as "The Ball of the Burning Men" (*Le bal des ardents*) on January 18, 1393, or the catastrophic defeat of a Crusader army at Nicopolis between September 25 and 28, 1396.

"The Ball of the Burning Men," also sometimes called "The Ball of the Wild Men" (*Bal des sauvages*), speaks volumes about the young Louis of Orléans (born in 1372) to whom the *Othea* is dedicated. Held at the royal court, it was a masquerade ball—or, more precisely, a *charivari* (a French folk custom with deep pagan roots in which invited guests make a lot of noise on the eve of a wedding to scare off evil spirits)—that went terribly wrong. The King and several noblemen dressed up as wild men in highly flammable costumes made of linen, soaked in

53. On this point see Parussa, *Epistre d'Othea*, 85.

pitch covered with feathers and stalks of flax, in order to create the impression of their being shaggy savages. Some accounts, such as that of the chronicler Jean Froissart, relate that Louis of Orléans held up a torch to identify one of the revelers and that a spark fell—igniting several of the dancers, who died in misery from their burns. Louis of Orléans was blamed for the disaster and ultimately forced to do public penance: he ended up donating money to build a memorial chapel for the victims at the Celestine monastery on the banks of the Seine across from Notre-Dame (whose only modern trace is found in the name of a street there, *Le Quai des Célestins*). And it is this Louis of Orléans, a highly literate and cultivated, if also perhaps impetuous young man, whom Christine seeks to counsel in the *Othea*. He would later, in December of 1405, become the political ally of the Queen—an alliance concluded virtually at the same time that the *Book of the City of Ladies* was written.

The fact that the advice given to the ideal knight Hector comes from a woman should also not be overlooked, for it anticipates and corresponds to a predominant current running through Christine's subsequent prose writings: enhancing the position of Isabeau of Bavaria as one of the three regents governing France during her husband's mental illness. When Christine "feminizes" her writings, her intentions are profoundly and directly political, specifically creating a rationale for female regency.⁵⁴ The third part of *The Book of the City of Ladies* begins with an illumination showing how the Virgin Mary is ushered into the nearly completed City: this scene is schematically based on the entry of the queen into Paris, specifically the entrée of Isabeau of Bavaria to Paris on August 22, 1389, which Christine, living in Paris at the time, must certainly have personally witnessed and which Jean Froissart describes in his *Chroniques* (magnificently illustrated in a manuscript from 1470–1472 in BL Harley 4379).⁵⁵ The implicit analogy between the Virgin Mary and the Queen of France is anything but gratuitous: just as Christ shares his kingdom with his Spouse, so too does the King of France, the possessor of Christ's Crown of Thorns sometimes used in coronation rituals, share his kingdom with his Spouse. For this reason Christine also invokes early queens of France who had served as regents: Fredegund, the queen

54. See Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Political Thought as Improvisation: Female Regency and Mariology in Late Medieval French Thought," in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, ed. Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 1–22; and Richards, "À la recherche du contexte perdu d'une ellipse chez Christine de Pizan: La 'coagulence regulee' et le pouvoir politique de la reine," in *Christine de Pizan, La scrittrice et la città / L'écrivaine et la ville / The Woman Writer and the City: Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale Christine de Pizan, Bologna, 22–26 settembre 2009*, ed. Patrizia Caraffi (Florence: Alinea, 2013), 93–112. See also Tracy Adams, "Christine de Pizan, Isabeau of Bavaria," *French Historical Studies* 32:1 (2009): 1–32; and Adams, *The Fight for France*.

55. Reproduced at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Entr%C3%A9e_d%27Isabeau_de_Bavi%C3%A8re_dans_Paris.jpeg>.

of Chilperic, and Blanche de Castille, the queen of Louis IX. In her biography of Charles V, *Les fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (*The Deeds and Good Conduct of the Wise King Charles V*), commissioned by Philip the Bold before his death in 1404, Christine twice uses a neologism, *coagulence* (“gestation, fertility; harmony”), first to describe the dormant fertility of a seed in winter waiting to sprout in spring, which she compares to a child waiting to emerge from the mother’s womb, and second to describe the order and “regulated harmony” governing all business in the court of Jeanne of Bourbon, Charles V’s queen.⁵⁶ When Christine speaks of “regulated harmony” emanating from Queen Jeanne’s court, she has a very specific fact in mind: Jeanne was the granddaughter of the Capetian monarch Philip III, the Bold (d. 1285), and her marriage to Charles V represented the physical reunion of the Capetian and Valois dynasties. In a similar move in the next generation, the marriage of Charles VI to Isabeau of Bavaria, a princess of the House of Wittelsbach-Ingolstadt, represented a renewed reunion between the French monarchy and the Holy Roman Emperor, for the mother of Charles V himself, Bonne de Luxembourg (born as Jutta von Luxemburg) was an Imperial princess and the sister of the Emperor Charles IV. Politically, the Queen’s Court played a vital strategic role in late medieval Europe: for Christine’s first noble and royal readers, Minerva advises Hector in the *Othea* much as Isabeau of Bavaria sought to advise Louis of Orléans as co-regent.

The entire *Othea* is structured according to the rhetorical topos of *sapientia et fortitudo*: wisdom and military valor, incarnated by the classical goddess Pallas/Minerva, who, despite her two different names in the *Othea*, is one and the same,⁵⁷ with “Pallas” being associated with wisdom and “Minerva” (whom *Othea* also calls “Hector’s mother”) with *chevalerie*, that is, military strength and valor.⁵⁸ In his classic study of the influence of medieval Latin literature on the

56. “We see in the nature of trees during different seasons strange operations, just as in winter the production and fertility is taken from the fruit to come, engendered by the sun’s strength in the earth’s womb, nourished in the root moistened by the necessary wetness, a time which can be compared to the infant in the womb of the mother” (“*nous veons en la nature des arbres en diverses saisons operacions estranges, si comme en yver est prise leur pregnacion et coagulence du fruit à venir engendré des vertus du soleil ou ventre de la terre, nourri en la racine attempée par moisteur couvenable, le quel temps se peut comparer à l’enfant ou ventre de sa mere*”) (*Les fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Solente, 1:32 [chap. xii]); “In what order, in what regulated harmony in all things was governed the court of that most noble lady, the Queen Jeanne de Bourbon” (“*En quelle ordre, en quel coagulence regulée en toutes choses estoit gouvernée la court de la tres noble dame, la royne Jehanne de Bourbon*”), *Ibid.*, 1:54–56 [chap. xx].


57. “[U]ne mesmes chose”: Gloss 14; ed. Parussa.

58. See Andrea Tarnowski, “Pallas Athena, la science et la chevalerie,” in *Sur le chemin de longue étude.... Actes du colloque d’Orléans, juillet 1995*, ed. Bernard Ribémont (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 150. Christine plays with the goddess’s twofold nature—represented by her Greek and Latin names (Pallas and Minerva, respectively)—in many subsequent works.

vernacular literatures of Europe, Ernst Robert Curtius identified a wide range of rhetorical commonplaces which attest to a continuity between medieval Latin and vernacular cultures.⁵⁹ In fact, the commonplace of *fortitudo et sapientia* is also biblical. It is found in Job and Ecclesiastes, texts frequently commented upon by the Church Fathers and as a result widely disseminated in sermons for the next millennium.⁶⁰ At the same time, as Barbara Newman has demonstrated, there was a long-standing Christian veneration of the divine wisdom as a feminine aspect of God.⁶¹ In the entry on *fortitudo* (“strength, valor”) in the *Manipulus florum* (“A Handful of Flowers,” an early fourteenth-century thematically organized—actually indexed—Latin florilegium made up of over six thousand citations from the Church Fathers, essentially designed as a shortcut to help preachers in search of “quotable quotes”), Christine would have found a frequently cited comment by Saint Ambrose: “For where there is wisdom, there is virtue, there is constancy and strength” (*Ubi enim sapientia, ibi uirtus, ibi constancia et fortitudo*).⁶² For these reasons, the advice given by Othea, spokeswoman for wisdom, to Hector, representative of valor and Trojan ancestor of Louis of Orléans, would have been understood by the original public for the text within the context of the symbiosis of wisdom and strength. Othea herself is the voice of wisdom, of *sapientia*, speaking to Hector as the representative of military valor, and in the allegory of the entire work, *mutatis mutandis*, Christine takes on the role of the spokeswoman

59. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953; reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 167–76. Among these commonplaces, Curtius identified the importance of “fortitudo et sapientia” (“strength [or valor] and wisdom”—a cliché which survives in the saying that the pen is mightier than the sword). Curtius argued that this commonplace originated with Virgil, and that it was enshrined in medieval culture in a remark by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae* (“Etymologies,” the standard encyclopedia in Europe for over a millennium): “For men are called heroes as though worthy of the skies and of heaven because of their wisdom and strength” (“*Nam heroes appellantur viri quasi aëri et caelo digni propter sapientiam et fortitudinem*”). See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarium sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), I.39.9.

60. Job 12:12–13: “In the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days prudence. With him is wisdom and strength” (“*in antiquis est sapientia et in multo tempore prudentia, apud ipsum est fortitudo et sapientia*”). Ecclesiastes 9:16: “And I said that wisdom is better than strength: how then is the wisdom of the poor man slighted, and his words not heard?” (“*et dicebam ego meliorem esse sapientiam fortitudine quomodo ergo sapientia pauperis contempta est et verba eius non sunt audita*”).

61. Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), chap. 5: “Sapientia: The Goddess In 

62. Ambrose, *Epistulae et acta*, ed. Otto Faller (Vienna: Hoelder-Pincher-Tempsky, 1968), 1.45, ll. 34–41. We have consistently consulted the original Latin of Thomas Hibernicus, *Manipulus florum* at Chris L. Nighman’s website, *Digital Medievalist* <<http://web.wlu.ca/history/cnighman/>>. We have also repeatedly consulted the online Brepols Library of Latin Texts at <<http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=LLT-O>> in order to verify Christine’s Latin quotations.