“PRYNTÉ IT IN HIS NAME”: GENDER AND THE EARLY MODERN
USE OF LE LIVRE DE LA CITÉ DES DAMES

A thesis presented by

Sarah Stanley

to the Department of English

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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in the field of
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ABSTRACT

Much recent scholarship has investigated and complicated the supposed divide between the medieval and early modern periods. This thesis adds to this already vibrant discussion by studying the translation and printing in 1521 of Christine de Pizan’s *Le livre de la cité des dames*, through studying how the text was translated from French to English, from manuscript to print, and from medieval to early modern. Specifically, this project aims to write a microhistory across a perceived periodic divide, in order to complicate existing narratives of progress. The examination and criticism of this periodic divide informs a discussion of the ways in which gender is similarly restricted. This restriction, as the thesis argues, allows for false narratives of progress, while simultaneously stagnating further discussions around gender.
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A Note on the Text

Part of my project in writing this thesis has been to study the media of print and manuscript. Since I am invested in representing these textual objects as closely as possible without relying on page images, I have included many nonstandard characters, rather than modernizing character use. For Christine de Pizan’s *Le livre de la cité des dames*, I have left abbreviated words in their shorter form.

For all of the passages quoted from Anslay, I have also maintained abbreviations. While I have attempted to keep as many of the original characters as possible, there are some exceptions. Those characters that have no Unicode character reference are either put in their most modern form. For example, I have standardized all lower-case “r.” Since many scribal abbreviations are not yet supported by unicode encoding, I have used the macron as a generic indicator of abbreviation. In both cases, brackets have been placed around words that were either unclear or indecipherable.

I have cited page numbers using signature numbers, in the case of *The boke of the cyte of ladies*. For *Le livre de la cité des dames*, I used the arabic numerals written at the top of each recto page and “r” or “v” to signify recto and verso.
“Prynte it in his name”: Gender and the Early Modern Use of

*Le livre de la cité des dames*

Of the hundred-and-eighty-four texts transcribed by the *Women Writers Project* from before 1700, nearly forty are either translated from or transcribed by men. This does not take into account the innumerable other editorial interventions that occur throughout the project’s texts. This would suggest that much of early modern women’s writing was contingent upon masculine textual authority, at least as far as title page citation was concerned.¹ I argue that Bryan Anslay’s 1521 *Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes* is one such example of an early modern book that envelops women’s textuality in a veneer of masculinity. Despite the fact that its source text is Christine de Pizan’s *Le livre de la cité des dames*, the English print makes no explicit reference to the text’s female authorship. The explicitly-named men in the printer’s prologue contrast strongly with the absence of a reference to female authorship. Despite the fact that the narrator of the translated English text is purportedly female, the more obvious presence of masculine authorship obscures the female voice.

The 1521 print of Christine de Pizan’s *Le livre de la cité des dames* was the only translation available in English until Earl Jeffrey Richards’ 1982 translation, which caused some critics, such as Sheila Delany, to use this edition as the primary English version to be cited in academic articles and books.² Delany never explicitly acknowledges the implications of analyzing Christine through the lens of sixteenth-century English print by a male translator, although she does lament that Richards’ “new translation [. . .] was not available to [her] before the chapter was written” (footnote 184). Using the Anslay translation to analyze the situation and
writings of Christine de Pizan necessarily imbues the analysis with early modern biases about
gender, women’s authorship, and medieval writing.³

Recent scholarship in material studies, history of the book, and documentary editing have
caused many scholars to dig more deeply into early prints of medieval texts, such as the Anslay
translation, as textual artifacts in their own right.⁴ This important trend in recent scholarship has
allowed for inquiry into the publication and circulation of these texts, not only as mere evidence
for studying early modern literary culture, but also as a means of interrogating how early modern
readers read and understood medieval texts. Critics such as Jennifer Summit, in her Lost
Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History 1380-1589, have used these texts to
understand the phenomenon of the “woman writer,” and how technologies of print in the early
modern period impacted the circulation of women’s writing as well as the discourse surrounding
gender and literature. Issues of attribution, translation, and loss all come into play in her analysis
of women’s writing—especially that of Christine.

Much of the discussion surrounding the early English prints of Christine's texts focus on
the issue of whether masculine printers, translators, and authors suppress Christine's authorship.
Many critics of Christine's translators, such as Jennifer Summit and Susan G. Bell have asserted
that the emphasis on masculine hands in the creation of these prints effectively erase Christine
from the texts. However, critics such as Hope Johnston and Anne E. B. Coldiron have asserted
that textual evidence supports the idea that readers of these translations knew about the original
French authorship. While it is true that early modern readers may have understood Christine as
the author of Le livre de la cité des dames, the foreword to the Anslay translation makes
Christine's textual authority entirely contingent upon masculine authorization. I contend that the
female authorship of the text is erased by the repetitions of masculine ownership and production, beginning with the printer’s assertion that the book is indeed “by Bryan Anslay” (Aa.iv.r).

The masculine voice is prevalent throughout the text, as men’s editing and appending heavily impacted the 1521 print. However, Christine’s participation in the creation of the text was at least acknowledged.⁵ However this acknowledgement does not constitute valid substantive affirmation of authorship. Anne Coldiron attempts to differentiate between acknowledgement and authorship, saying: “Christine was not deauthorized but was deracinated on several counts—gender, yes, but even more than that, out of her intellectual context, out of her originating dialectic, out of her times, out of her national place” (38). I contend that it is this deracination that constitutes Christine’s deauthorization. By being placed in the past, a different country, and a different context, the arguments she places are framed as less pressing, and less applicable to the current context, and thus her authority is undercut. Her arguments are meant to address the problems of the past, rather than applying to the current time, and thus become more like novelties than active political commentary. In isolating Christine in her own moment, the men who worked to create this text ensure that Christine’s voice is only heard as an echo.

To better understand the ways in which the history of early modern England, shaped how readers viewed the medieval past, I would like to turn to a recent trend in literary criticism that seeks to complicate the divide between the “medieval” and “modern” worlds. In his chapter “Diachronic history and the shortcomings of medieval studies,” James Simpson discusses this split, so often alluded to by scholars, “less in terms of non-negotiable periodic terms and more as human phenomena produced by specific institutional interests [. . .] in short, historicizing both the break and, more profoundly, the forms of understanding that flow from it” (Simpson 29).
Simpson’s model allows us to not simply dismiss the medieval as archaic in comparison to the supposedly “more enlightened” early modern period, and interrogate the ways in which “the logic of the revolutionary moment” (26) between medieval and modern has shaped our understanding of the past. In particular, I want to take up his call to historicize “the forms of understanding that flow from [the break between medieval and Renaissance]” in order to challenge the false narratives of progress that exist in modernity, and the over-simplified narratives about oppression and stasis that have historically been prevalent in scholarship about the middle ages.

In particular, I want to emphasize the ways in which feminism in the middle ages—and I do want to refer to it as “feminism,” rather than “protofeminism” or some other term—was undercut by the revolutionary logic of the early modern period that Simpson notes. Carolyn Dinshaw has argued that “[i]t is crucial not to regard [. . .] medieval critical gestures as ‘protofeminism’, because such a view narrows the medieval instances to mere prefigurations of what we now appreciate as the robust feminism of modernity” (24). In Christine’s case, this is a particularly relevant concern, since her text has been frequently debated as variously conservative, progressive, feminist, protofeminist, and sexist.6 I think it is important that we follow Dinshaw’s call to acknowledge historical feminisms—especially those of the middle ages—because it prevents us from inaccurately treating our views as more “progressive” or closer-to-perfect than those of the past. Additionally, it is my intent to show how the more recent impulse to assert false-progress regarding women’s issues can be found in the Anslay translation of Christine’s work. Just as the feminist “wave” metaphor implies a movement that creates an impact, but then (necessarily) recedes, Christine’s work is portrayed as progressive for its time,
but now complete in some way. It can be packaged up neatly, and its message can remain only a message for the past.

My goal is to use Anslay’s Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes as a case study, demonstrating the ways in which early modern ideas of medieval women’s texts have shaped our understanding of women's history. In particular, I wish to add to Jennifer Summit's claim that “representations of English letters and women writers share important features with the work, publishers, and translators who materially shape the work of women writers” (7). It is my belief that Christine’s text and its subsequent translation and printing are a record of how narrativizing—effectively, editing—has changed the ways that women are represented into modernity. Editions and translations that fail to account for the untranslatability of period sequester the ideas of the past to the past; they fail to represent how intellectual movements often live beyond their prescribed start- and end-dates. Translations like Anslay’s have created progressive narratives that preclude useful discussions of feminism across time. I will show how “literary change is messy, involving dead ends, unconnected likenesses, strange failures of appropriation” (Coldiron xiii), and how the overarching narratives that erase this messiness have been turned into narratives that oversimplify women's relationship to the public sphere and create false narratives of progress in the modern world. I argue that this process happens through processes of translation: across languages and nationalities, across media, and across period. These translations have left gaps in how we understand both medieval history and the current state of feminism.

Christine’s text is largely invested in creating a literary space for women that is literalized through her cité des dames. While she describes her city in terms of its “cloison,” “combles des tours,” and “haulx dongions” she is obviously interested in how the city can keep things out. The
Anslay text, I argue, is invested not in the city’s defensive potential, but rather in its capacity to seclude and cloister women, maintaining them as a discrete population. Like the feminist “wave” metaphor, Anslay’s metaphor of the city serves to provide a definitive beginning and ending to the discussion of misogyny and women’s advocacy. These were problems, but they have been addressed already.

In her overview of women’s participation in the *querelle des femmes*, Joan Kelly discusses the principles of early feminist writing:

“early feminists focused on what we would now call gender. That is, they had a sure sense that the sexes are culturally, not just biologically formed. Women were a social group in the view of early feminists. They directed their ideas against the notions of a defective sex that flowed from the misogynous side of the debate and against the societal shaping of women to fit these notions” (Kelly 7).

Christine fits this mold of feminist writer, discussing how institutions and “authority” create woman, and directly challenging this view. Her city did not seek to replicate the essentialist notions of previous texts about women, but instead sought to group various women together in the same city to increase their collective potential. I contend that Anslay’s text actually undid this work, whether intentionally or not, and served to reinscribe the notion that women were not a social group with diverse components. By reappropriating Christine’s image of the self-defensive city to one of a male-defended city, Anslay and his collaborators effectively turn women into the “other” women, by homogenizing and enclosing them.

This enclosure is enacted through translations across language, media, and time. Anslay’s translated text inadequately recontextualizes Christine’s writing for sixteenth-century England,
and thus makes the text inaccessible for his audience; it is written by a linguistic and temporal other, and can therefore not be fully understood. It reverses the paradigm that Christine begins to set up, in which women are able to separate themselves from disenfranchising systems, to one in which men are able to shut women off in a singular place. The city of Christine’s imagining becomes less like a populated metropole, and increasingly like a cloister, as I will discuss later. The various masculine hands in the production of the 1521 print all contribute to the enclosure of Christine within a small space in literary and cultural history. Anslay still casts a shadow on medieval scholarship, as this act of retroactively cloistering women has been enacted repeatedly by those who study medieval women. Only recently have scholars begun to study medieval women’s writing within the larger context of literary culture, rather than as a separate phenomena.

My project contains two primary texts—Christine’s Livre de la cité des dames and Anslay’s Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes—and therefore cannot be considered a comprehensive history of women in literature between the medieval and early modern periods. And in many ways, my argument is not meant to be comprehensive. By focusing on two texts—the first medieval text and its early modern translation—this study hopes to examine a single narrative that both complicates and supports the existing understanding of medieval/early modern periodization. My study will apply Bruno Latour’s call “to follow new connections” to the study of period:

“Another notion of the social [. . .]. It has to be much wider than what is usually called by that name, yet strictly limited to the tracing of new associations and to the designing of their assemblages. This is the reason why I am going to define the
social not as a special realm, or a particular sort of thing, but as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling” (7).

Where Latour wishes to study the social, I wish to study the concept of “period”—specifically literary periods. I wish to closely examine one connecting line—from Christine’s manuscript to Anslay’s print—and the many lines (literary, material, historical) that feed into the larger connection across period. Specifically, I will discuss how these lines, and the scholarly discussion around them, have impacted discussions surrounding gender. By grouping together many separate phenomena and narrativizing them under the guise of “period,” we have ignored major aspects of women’s history.

From clôture to cloystre: Translation across language

Translation itself is central to many of the discussions surrounding feminism and its history. As Margaret Ferguson notes, “[t]ranslation across geopolitical borders is a central facet of feminism in its modern incarnation; translation and cultural appropriation, with their attendant political ambiguities are also central to earlier feminist thinkers” (“Feminism in Time” 8). This is especially the case since Christine’s work involves translating and reappropriating many sources that were explicitly misogynistic. Additionally, works other than simply Le livre were translated into English both before and after Anslay’s Boke of the cyte of ladies. Simply from looking at how Christine’s corpus was treated after the original manuscript was made, it becomes obvious that the earliest instances of feminist writing were contingent upon translation for their words to be understood and interpreted.
Critics, such as Gayatri Spivak, have explicitly discussed gender and its relationship to feminism. Feminist analyses of translation are particularly relevant when taking into account Hope Johnston’s analysis of the *Boke of the cyte of ladyes* as it relates to female power and kingship in Henry VIII’s court. Spivak’s discussion of feminism and translation focuses more on the task of translating itself—specifically, how to translate as a feminist. She emphasizes that the translator must “surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text” (405) so that the translation can be true not only to the “logic” of the text, but also its “rhetoric [that . . .] work[s] in the silence between and around words” (399). It is through acknowledging the richness of a given text’s discourse that a translation becomes truly feminist. Through the omission of context and rhetorical cues, the translation can deliberately misunderstand or undervalue the points that the original text makes. The rhetoric of Christine’s text is enriched by its genre, its literary predecessors, and original audience. In failing to acknowledge these literary contexts, Anslay makes Christine’s argument less relevant and impactful. A successfully feminist translation would endeavour to reconcile logic with rhetoric, by updating, contextualizing, and revising the content, prioritizing the argument and rhetoric above a literal translation of the words. As I will argue through the following analysis, Anslay does not abide by Spivak’s principles, and creates a decidedly not-feminist text.

Translation from one language into another can often be a contentious process, involving loss of meaning and context that allows for differing interpretations. Emily Apter describes this as an “effect of the non-carry-over (of meaning) that carries over nonetheless (on the back of grammar), or that transmits at a half-crooked semantic angle, [that] endows the Untranslatable with a distinct symptomology. Words that assign new meanings to old terms, neologisms, names
for ideas that are continually re-translated or mistranslated, translations that are obviously incommensurate [. . .], these are among the most salient symptoms of the genuine Untranslatable” (Apter 35). In terms of the translation from Christine’s to Anslay’s text, this untranslatability manifests itself as a change in the content and tone of discussions surrounding women in the cité and Cyte. In particular, I will focus on a topic I brought up earlier: how the translated text sequesters women and the discussions surrounding them to one discrete place, rather than opening a wider platform for discourse. The “untranslatables,” or at least those things that resist simple translation into English, in Christine’s text will be discussed in this section.

It is important to note, however, that not all misleadingly-translated passages are necessarily a result of resistance in the language. Jane Chance notes, in a discussion of Anslay’s translation, that Christine’s text is quite obviously misrepresented through the use of punctuation that was not present in Le livre. The Anslay translation “makes it sound as if it is Christine who is remiss (rather than male writers) in her blame of male writers for misogynous attacks on women” (Chance 161).

Several scholars have discussed the status of the French language in sixteenth century England. It is both associated with status, as its long history of being spoken by nobles created associations between French and status, but was also somewhat stigmatized in England because of the 100 years war, and tensions between France and England. Margaret Ferguson notes, in a discussion of the England’s attitude toward French, that “English characterizations of French during the fifteenth and particularly sixteenth centuries [. . .] exhibit a strange paradox: the language is seen both as effeminate and as hypermasculine, with true English masculinity emerging ideologically, through a sexualized rhetorical grid, as a “middle of the road”
phenomenon” (Ferguson 161). When understood in the context of *Le livre de la cité des dames*, French becomes the perfect language for expressing the femininity of the author as well as the more masculine characteristics that some of her characters display. However, since the hyper-masculinity and -femininity of the French is often framed in negative terms (too violent or too delicate), it is likely that the androgyny of the language and the text itself could be seen as positive. If English others French by complicating the gendered valences of the language, so too must it other *la cité des dames* for its gender nonconformity.

Christine’s section on the “princeces et dames de france” necessarily calls attention to the ways in which French women are, to an extent “untranslatable” in this new context. In Anslay’s English translation, Christine asks, “Madame ſythe that ye haue remēbred this lady is in my tyme and are entred to the fame [pouir] of ladys of Fraunce abydyng in that coûtre. I pray you that it pleafe you to faye ſomewhat of them that ye ſeeme ought to be ſayd + yf ye think ſit be good that they maye be harboured in our cyte” (R.i.r., emphasis mine). Anslay necessarily distances himself from the women being described, by placing them not in *this*, but *that* country. However, in this process, he denies the possibility of contemporary women of his country being spoken of as possible residents of the city of ladies. Through his literal translation, Anslay forces Christine’s text to remain an artifact of a different place and a different time.

The issue at stake in Anslay’s translation of this passage is twofold: first, it disallows the possibility of *English* women becoming residents of the city of ladies, and others the present residents of the city. And secondly, it sets up a further us-and-them binary that the masculine author-translator can speak across in order to bolster his authority. The first issue at hand is obvious. Christine’s text contains many references to French women, explicitly stating their
French nationality. However, she does not reference any Englishwomen, so in translating her work, Anslay alienates his female English audience from the subject matter at hand. It remains a Frenchwoman’s book, not their book. Additionally, since the French and their language were somewhat derided in other forms of literature, the high population of French women in the Cyte of Ladyes may give an English reader pause.

Additionally, by framing the potential residents of the city as explicitly othered, Anslay undoes much of Christine’s work in creating a unifying space for women. While Christine does reinforce stratification through her organization of the city, she still insists that this is a place for “toutes femmes foyent grandes moyennes ou petites” (79r). However, Anslay’s translation, by decontextualizing Christine’s original, positions the speakers as gatekeepers who decide whether or not certain women can enter the city. Christine asks, “fil vous eft [advis] que bon foit que il en y ait de hebergees en nostre cite” (66r). While Anslay remains faithful to the original, the context that Christine gives—that she herself is a French woman living in the time of some of these ladies—positions her less as a gatekeeper and more as a supplicant asking for advice. By distancing the English-speaking narrator from the French women being discussed, Anslay frames Christine as being closer to the three celestial women than her fellow earthly women. Where Christine, in *Le livre de la cité des dames*, creates a community of women by positioning herself as a fellow woman. However, in Anslay’s print Christine becomes more similar to the masculine authorities that she fights against in *Le livre*, and the admission-process for the city is masculinized. This creates a tension between Christine’s original imagined community, which joins women together, and Anslay’s city, which turns them against each other.
The tensions become even more complicated once we note that Anslay’s translation uses a surprising amount of anglicized French words throughout his translation. Jennifer Summit notes that Anslay’s translation is “unusually faithful to Christine’s original” (93), presumably because it practically functions as a word-for-word translation, rather than a free translation. However, Anslay’s replication Christine’s francophone diction and syntax in an English work does not necessarily indicate his faithfulness to Christine’s meaning. Anslay’s translation relies upon francophonic, and often obscure words, instead of using more common English ones. Often, he finds the simplest cognate to stand in for the French word; this leads to confusing or oversimplified phrases in his English version. I argue that the obfuscation that occurs through Anslay’s translation contributes to the enclosure of women within the text. For example, the chapter containing Christine’s discussion with the three ladies over the status of women in argument is titled “Demande xp̃ine a raïfon pourquoy ce eft que femes ne fiéent en fiége de plaidoirie et Responce” (10r). Anslay’s translation perfectly replicates the diction and syntax of Christine’s original, however his translation (“Xp̃ine demaundeth of Reaſon wherefore it is that women fytteth not in the fyege of pleadynge” (Ff.1.)) fails to capture the meaning of many of the French words.

The most obvious oversimplification is Anslay’s translation of “plaidoirie” to simply “pleading.” This English translation fails to capture the connotations of the French word, which certainly implies a public or structured debate, more than the English “pleading” does. This is not to say that the English reader could not eventually make sense of the phrase, however it clearly obscures Christine’s intent: to argue for the presence of women in legal and public debate.\textsuperscript{11} Anslay’s translation, at most, indicates that women have a desire to “plead,”
which—while it does have legal connotations in English—also can be used in more private and personal contexts. Additionally, Anslay’s translation of “siege” to “syege” obscures the meaning further, since the meaning “syege” as “see” or “official seat” is competing with the more common use of the word.

The layers of reading comprehension required by this passage effectively masks Christine’s original meaning. In the process, the women of whom Christine speaks are removed from the public, and enclosed in a space where “pleading” is more relevant than judicial, and public defenses. Even if this is simply a side effect of Anslay’s translation style, it creates a disconnect between women as subjects who can engage in “pleading” and women who are subjects, with clearly defined legal and public rights. Christine’s original addresses the fact that women cannot engage in political or legal discussions in the public sphere, and Anslay’s translation misunderstands this point. He refuses to acknowledge the possibility that women could engage in legal discussions, and changes the meaning of Christine’s original argument. His translation creates the sense that women have never been allowed in the public sphere, nor have they wished to engage in it in the same way that men traditionally do.

The linguistic removal of women from public spaces that is enacted by Anslay’s translation occurs most literally in his discussion of the city itself. Christine describes the foundation of her city as “un certain edifïce en maniere de la cloſture dune cite” (4v). Once again, Anslay relies on English cognates for his translation, rather than finding words that more adequately capture Christine’s meaning. In this case, Anslay simply translates this as “a certayne buyldynge made in the manere of a cloylfire of a Cyte” (Ff.1.r). Middle French uses of the world “closture” or “clôture” imply delimiting fortifying structures, much more than its English
cognate “cloister”. *Le Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* defines “clôture” as “ce qui entoure e délimite un endroit et en interdit l’accès” (cloture, subst. fém.). Anslay applies the word “cloyſtre” despite the fact that it does not typically imply fortification, but rather religious seclusion in English. This explicitly aligns women’s defense with religious purity and seclusion for spiritual purposes. I do not necessarily think that Christine would oppose the idea that defense of women and religion are closely connected. Indeed, much of her text is devoted to encouraging women to subscribe to religious ideals. However, by removing the defensive aspects of “clôture” in favor of more religious and pious images, Anslay’s text flattens the portrayal of women until they become tame and manageable.

**New Media Encounters in Pepwell’s Paratext**

Marshall McLuhan’s “The Medium is the Message” made important assertions about the impact of media upon the way in which content was understood and delivered. He describes “content” as “the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watch-dog of the mind” (18). While many of his assertions in this piece are quite antithetical to those I would like to make regarding medieval and early modern history, his thesis that media is just as, if not more important than the message itself is important for understanding Henry Pepwell’s print version of *The Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes*.12

Alan Liu, whose chapter “Imagining the New Media Encounter” offers some apt critiques of McLuhan’s writings on media, discusses the ways in which media interact. The “new media encounter” he describes involves two types of media—one old and one new—coming into contact. In particular, he is interested in how we discuss these moments of contact. His first
point, “Narratives of the new media encounter are identity tales in which media at once projects and introjects ‘otherness’” (Liu “New Media Encounter”), is particularly relevant to the interactions between manuscript and print in *Le livre de la cité des dames* and its translation. In this figuration, the manuscript is othered as “feminine,” while the printed text is masculinized, but simultaneously others itself by calling attention to the new ways that it could impact the reception and circulation of literary works. The manuscript is othered because of its association with “old media,” whereas the printed text is othered as “new media.” Just as many of our new technologies make us feel as if “the future is now,” new media calls attention to its otherness by serving as the harbinger of progress. So in many ways, the “new media encounter” between print and manuscript in the Anslay text serves to reinforce the false sense of progress evoked in the translation.

While it is difficult to point to places where the medium changed the message in the body of Anslay’s translations, additions made by Henry Pepwell, the book’s printer, demonstrate how the new medium of print influenced how the text was received and discussed. In her study of translation of medieval French defense-of-women poetry into English, Anne E. B. Coldiron notes that printers’ “paratextual work, often even more than the work of verbal translation in the poems themselves, reshaped this popular, sometimes controversial material” (4). This is especially obvious in the printer’s prologue, where print as a medium is discussed explicitly and at length (see Appendix A for a full transcription of the printer’s prologue).

Looking to Pepwell’s treatment of print and written word, we see that there is tension between print and manuscript, especially in terms of circulation. In the first stanza, Pepwell describes the impact that printing the text will have on the work itself:
“¶So nowe of late came in my custodye
This forefayd boke by Bryan Anflay.
Yoman of the feller with the eyght kynge Henry
Of gentylwomen the excellence to say
The which I lyked but yet I made delay
It to imprefs for that it is the guyle.
Of people lewde theyr prowes to dylyffe.”

Here, imprint opens work up to criticism and envy, more than the circulation of works through handwritten manuscripts. Print has the potential to bring works to audiences that will receive it negatively, which Pepwell notes as being at least somewhat different from ordinary circumstances. In Alan Liu’s construction, this medium “others” itself by calling attention to the dangers associated with print. However, this statement also carries with it the underlying assertion that with print circulation has the potential to bring the text in contact with those who will receive it positively. Print may be framed as dangerous and foreign at first, but indeed, printing allows the text to enter into a new arena of status and prestige.

Much like Anslay’s previously-discussed use of francophone English words, the translation from print is intended somehow increase the status of the object in order to forward masculine literary communities. Pepwell’s description of the Earl of Kent’s patronage shows how print is transformed from a dangerous object to one that bestows “royall fame”:

“But then I shewed the forefayd boke
Unto my lorde the gentyll Erle of kente
And hym requyred theron to loke.
With his counfayle to put it in to prente

And he forthwith as euer dylygente

Of ladyes (abrode) to fprede theyr royall fame.

Exhorted me to prynte it in his name.”

The status of the book is not only linked to its imprinted-ness, but also to its status as an object of masculinity. The textual object, as it is (hand)written, is not enough to bring women a good reputation. Instead, it must be systematically printed and standardized, under the name of a man, in order to be of any use to women. And while the assumption is that the book will increase the good reputation of women, the explicit naming of the Earl of Kent shows that women are not the only ones meant to benefit from the “fame” associated with print. Indeed, the explicit focus on masculinity throughout the printer’s prologue reveals a greater investment in masculine textual capital than in that of women.

Jennifer Summit, whose interest in the paratexts in early prints of Christine’s works closely aligns with mine, notes the ways in which this process of printing appropriates women’s literature as the basis of a new mode of masculine literature:

“Pepwell’s aim in the prologue is to convince a new breed of courtiers of the utility of printed texts like his own for their advancement. He thus promotes and fulfills a pattern of reception whose development runs from Scrope and Worcester through Caxton and Pynson, by taking the literature that Christine shaped for a new community of literate women, and turning it into the basis of a literary culture of men” (97).
The process of appropriating women’s literature to reinforce masculine literary culture creates the “lost woman writer” so prominent in Summit’s analysis, but it also traps women within the confines of masculine literary culture, as the objects of literary study rather than as the creators of literature themselves.

The translation from manuscript to print also replicates typographically, what Anslay’s English version does to Christine’s cite. The decorative initial capitals throughout the text—specifically, the “w” and “a”—contain the faces of men who look onto the words that follow, as if monitoring this space that was originally intended for women. Additionally, printed copies are more unified, regularized, and constrained than multiple copies of manuscripts, as the printed book is meant to make the same copy many times over. The printed book standardizes the production mechanisms, and in so doing the possibility for variation is lost. Some scholars have asserted that this variation was often detrimental for the female author, and, as Susan Schibanoff claims, made female writers “particularly sensitive to the specific cultural agency which retains immediate control over their art: the jongleurs, scribes, translators, and others who convey their texts to audiences” (476). However, it is apparent that this problem is equally present in printed works, if it is not exacerbated by it. The material necessities for making printed books acted as a barrier for women wishing to participate in textual production, much more than more localized scribal production would have.¹³

In addition to closing off women from the production process, printing seems to have an implied masculine audience. According to the printer, the arguments contained within the book are ultimately secondary to the "worthynesse" that the masculine reader will attain by engaging
with the book. Pepwell’s prologue primarily focuses on the ways in which engagement with literary culture can improve men’s intellectual lives:

“The kyndly entente of euery gentylman
Is the furtheraunce of all gentynelle.
And to procure in all that euer he can.
For to renewe all noble worthynelle,
This dayly is fene at our eye expresse.
Of noble men that do endyte and rede.

In bokes olde theyr worthy myndes to fede.” (Aa. iv.)

So while the intent of print may be to increase the generalized audience, the address of the printed manuscript focuses on men to the point of excluding women from the reading community. Even if we ultimately agree with Hope Johnston's assertion that "[t]he masculine focus prologue [sic] deserves reconsideration as a politically astute manoeuvre: after all, it was the noblemen who needed to be convinced of Mary's suitability for academic achievement and eventual leadership of the country" (Johnston 389), we must still acknowledge that the exclusion of an implied female readership denies the existence of women as a textual community. Where Christine’s text begins with a woman reader-of-texts, the printed version begins with a male reader, and this implicitly shelters women from the realm of textual participation.

In addition to the printer’s prologue, this text focuses on masculinized imagery throughout the paratext. These images frame men as being the outward-facing entities who publicly create and consume literature, and women as inward facing. Jennifer Summit has already noted that the woodcuts in Pepwell’s print depict Christine as being cloistered away, as
opposed to showing her as she was—a woman who lived and wrote in the city. This replicates Anslay’s use of the word “cloystre” in that it denies women’s participation in a larger, more public intellectual culture. The printed text denies the ways in which Christine’s text speaks back to masculine authority and outward towards a larger audience. *La cité des dames* is reframed by this text as an enclosure for women. Instead of speaking back to men, the women only speak amongst themselves.

Even looking at the layout of the text itself, the 1521 Anslay translation surrounds Christine’s text in assertions of masculine authority. In addition to beginning with a prologue that celebrates masculine patrons, translators, and readership, the text also ends with the authoritative colophon demonstrating the power of the printer Henry Pepwell, and the reign of Henry VIII. The printers mark following the colophon additionally reinforces masculine authorization by reiterating Henry Pepwell’s hand in the production of the book. This woodcut consists entirely of masculine figures of God the Father, Jesus, and two seraphs. Compare this to the 1405 manuscript of *Le livre de la cité des dames*, wherein the only stamps of authoritative, outside forces are those of library stamps, printed years after the manuscript was read and circulated. Without the final colophons and printer’s marks, Christine’s text ends with the speaker addressing all women, with the implication that these women will go on to use the instructions contained in the book in their public lives Christine implores her fellow women “[fouyr] les vices accroître et moutiplier noe cite vous refiouyr et bië faire” (79r) (“fly from vices to increase and multiply our city and rejoice in good deeds”). Christine’s interest in *la cité des dames* is that it allows women to flourish. Through defending themselves from misogynistic attack, women are able to expand their interests both within the city and without.
However, by ending the text with a masculine woodcut, Pepwell’s print adds a layer that serves to further enclose women. In Christine’s construction, the boundaries of the city were meant to allow women to speak out to a masculine literary culture, but the barriers instituted by masculine print serve to silence the feminine voice that seeks to speak out. Additionally, the image of these masculine figures reinforces the idea stated in the prologue: that men are needed to adequately protect women from negative reputation. They are the only outward-facing entities in the construction of the printed text. Even the final woodcut, depicting two women speaking, shows the women as facing towards each other, rather than speaking back to some outside entity. To add to this, the speech banners coming out of the women’s mouths are entirely empty, as if to signify that women’s speech is somehow untranslatable in print. Pepwell’s text serves only to silence women in the larger context of print culture.

The mechanisms of translating and printing works that originally circulated in manuscript form also allows Pepwell to cut women off from literary culture. The labor that went into translating and imprinting texts from the middle ages was often selectively applied. We see the same thing as we work to digitize texts for digital archives and repositories. It is relatively easy to create a canon that centers around the writing of men, if printers and translators (or in the modern day, archivists and digitizers) are only invested in dealing with men’s writing. Ignoring certain types of writing creates an incomplete picture of the past. This is particularly the case as querelle des femmes began to be printed. Christine’s address and criticism of Matheolus is probably one of the most prominent criticisms in the first book of Le livre. However, as Anne Coldiron notes “the other voices of the querelle—even Mathéolus's infamous Lamentationes—do not make it into early English print” (36). This lack-of-context allows
Pepwell, in his prologue, to claim that the reputation of ladies must be furthered by masculine aid through print. Since no one was aware of the texts of the *querelle des femmes* tradition that had been in circulation, it is relatively easy for Pepwell to assert his/Anslay’s/Kent’s importance in the furtherance of the discussion. Adding to this is also the fact that “it was also more common and usual, for in the latter fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries, it was predominantly men, not women, who spent their ink debating in the *querelle des femmes* and trying to settle, once and for all, the ‘woman question’” (Schibanoff 479). As examples of women writers defending women became increasingly less common in England, the room for men to step in and take over the debate grew. This loss of material across translation allows printers like Pepwell to write a new history of women’s participation in literary culture.

The rupture in the circulation of materials could be described as a break—the “break” between periods that is so often referred to when we talk about the medieval and early modern periods.. And it is this break that I would like to think about, particularly when it comes to how we historicize breaks across period. So often, the early modern period—the “renaissance”—is described as a time when things were discovered or, to follow the logic of the name, “reborn.” In the context of Anslay’s text it is much more useful to think about what was misplaced across the divide between medieval and early modern, than what was found. Through the loss of earlier contexts, these early printed, early modern texts were able to create a complicated divide over period that still haunts and confounds scholarship today.
“In bokes olde theyr worthy myndes to fede”: Translating gender across time

The division between the medieval and early modern periods has often been framed as a story of “how we got to now,” in the sense that the break facilitated a progressivism that has lead to the supposed developments of modernity. As even the name “early modern” implies, the period is viewed as an embryonic form the contemporary. “Pre-modernity” is something that we must speak back to across a barrier. By fencing off the medieval period from other periods as “in the middle” or “between,” we do precisely what Anslay’s text does to women: we seclude the medieval away from other periods, making it more difficult to speak across the break. The beginning of this process can be seen in Anslay’s text. I contend that the practice of enclosing women in literature that begins to emerge in Anslay’s text is inextricable from the process of enclosing the middle ages. This practice has impacted the ways in which we think about women throughout “modern” history.

The central problem with discussing gender in terms of these periods is that it allows us to categorize ourselves as somehow separate and free from previous constructions of gender. In his discussion of periodization, Eric Hayot condemns the usage of discrete periods to organize departments, saying:

- Periods instantiate more or less undertheorized and inherited notions of totality.
- Insofar as periods are definitions, they conceptualize themselves as the product of a set of central characteristics and deviations from them. In general, no matter how extensive the deviations are, the central concept or inner essence governing the period remains firmly in place (155).
In terms of how this impacts women’s relationship to history, it becomes easier to conceptualize women’s general oppression—or lack thereof, if it is conceived of as being constant in one period, and then disappearing in the present. Anslay’s text, through its descriptions of time, seeks to enact precisely this totalization, effectively creating the period that came before. Modern television shows such as Mad Men continue this tradition, by situating sexism in the past, in order to make modern gender issues seem tame or manageable by comparison. Often times, one hears platitudes along the lines of: “I can’t possibly imagine what it must have been like to be a working woman in the 1960s.” The act of locating injustices and inequalities in the past serves to provide some comfort about the present state of things, and diverts criticism in favor of the rhetoric of “look how far we’ve come.”

The traces of this rhetoric are seen in Anslay-Pepwell text through the discussion of “bokes old” and past ideas. As Jennifer Summit notes, Pepwell’s prologue replicates the beginning of Christine’s text, wherein she is poring over old books that discuss the merits of women. In *Le livre* this interaction with texts of the past foregrounds a discussion of contemporary misogyny. However Pepwell speaks of an old text that affirms women, rather than addressing a contemporary misogynistic text. Considering the array of pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes* tradition circulating in the sixteenth century, it certainly would not have been hard for Pepwell to find some contemporary analogue to Mathéolus or *Le roman de la rose*.

Even Anslay’s translation is fashioned as “old” in the printer’s prologue. Pepwell describes gentlemanly reading habits, (“Of noble men that do endyte and rede/In bokes olde theyr worthy myndes to fede” (Aa.iv.r)), before immediately jumping to a description of Anslay’s translation: “So nowe of late came in my cultodye/This forefayd boke by Bryan
Anſlay”. This segue implies that the translation itself is somewhat old, despite the fact that the book was both translated and printed within the lifetime of Henry VIII (as the prologue itself explicitly states). By placing the translated text itself in the past, Pepwell makes clear that the misogyny referenced in the text is doubly displaced in the past; not only are the old books that “speketh as it were by one mouthe” set against women in the past, but the text that decries those misogynistic ideas is also in old and distant. Pepwell positions the issues of the *querelle des femmes* so that they are no longer relevant to contemporary discussions. The text is an artifact of past injustices, but it fails to speak to the pressing gender issues of Pepwell’s own time.

While Pepwell’s text denies that misogyny exist in the terms that Christine states in Le *livre*, the text still discusses the possibility of prejudice against women. However, I am struck by the fact that the terms in which he describes this misogyny are analogous to many contemporary discussions of sexism, but more frequently racism. Especially in the wake of recent events such as the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina and the all-too-frequent shootings of unarmed black men by police, the perpetrators of racism have been framed as a small subset of violent individuals; this comes at the expense of addressing the prevalence of systemic and quotidian racism. Often, those looking to avoid meaningful discussions of racism will claim that it is only perpetuated by the poor and the uneducated. The Pepwell text similarly invokes this argument, by placing the blame for misogyny on the poor and undereducated, rather than acknowledging that sexism can exist in any socioeconomic group. In *Le livre de la cité des dames*, misogyny is especially prevalent in those who are learned (“hommes clercs et autres”), and seems somewhat endemic to clerkly and well-educated populations. In Pepwell’s prologue, the paradigm is reversed: the “worthy
myndes” of learned and noble gentlemen must combat against the misogyny put forth by “people lewde.” Instead of framing misogyny as something that could feasibly happen at any stage of life or education level, as Christine does, Pepwell’s prologue presents a narrative of progress, in which those who educate themselves become increasingly more learned, and in the process, learn to celebrate women. Those who insult women in literature are educationally stunted, as they cannot accept more modern “gentylneſſe” that celebrates women through literature.

Christine’s acknowledges the interaction between the past and present through literature and emphasizes the ways in which past scholarly activity impacts women in the present. In contrast, Pepwell’s printing of the text makes it clear that in this modern moment that the misogyny of the past is eradicated—at least from the minds of the genteel and contemporary reader. By beginning Le livre de la cité des dames with this this prologue, Pepwell frames Christine’s original text as a stepping stone towards a perfect modernity, rather than as a dialogue about contemporary issues. By fantasizing about the past as static, Anslay, Pepwell, and the other agents of textual production of the 1521 print create a version of the present that purports to be freer by flattening and enclosing a text of the past.

This act—the act of distancing one’s present from the past—seeks to turn discussions of cultural history into a moment of false translation, effectively rendering the past “foreign” in relation to the present. It creates a rift across which the translator can assert difference where it does not necessarily exist—or, at least, a narrative of difference that is too pat to describe the multiple and coexisting threads of history. It creates a translation across a boundary that doesn’t definitively exist. I agree with Emily Apter’s call, that “literary history needs to open up to radical re-sequecing, through anachronic timelines, non-Eurochronic descriptions of duration,
and a proliferation of new names for periods as yet unnamed, or which become discernible only as Untranslatables of periodicity” (Apter 65). This is obviously a very difficult thing to do, however I believe we can start through conducting more studies of literature that are typically in the contested zone between “medieval” and and “early modern,” and showing how they speak both backwards and forwards, rather than treating them as a signal of a new era. Through understanding the untranslatability across the categories of “medieval” and “early modern”—understanding that there is no break across which we can “translate”—we discover new ways of interpreting the past and creating relationships across it.

The use of the past in order to create contrast with the present is not necessarily always employed negatively. For example, Carolyn Dinshaw’s analysis of nostalgia in Foucault’s *History of Sexuality Vol 1.* makes clear that the medieval past can be read positively and to positive ends: “Foucault uses the opposition of acts to identity, surface to depth, premodernity to modernity, in order to show that future sexuality does not have to be dominated by current notions of identity” (Dinshaw 201-202). However, Dinshaw’s analysis shows that Foucault’s fictioned historicizing serves to liberate rather than constrain both the past and the present. It is important that, as we conduct our feminist inquiries, we attend to the ways in which our translations of history may potentially constrain the past. If we create a reimagined view of the past, we must ensure that it does not create a totalizing view of the past; we must ensure that it is not intended to reassure ourselves of our identities as enlightened, progressive, modern subjects.

Nancy Bradley Warren argues that discussions of the medieval past, while often used to further the goals of the translator or adapter, often would bring up unintended anxieties about the
present. She reminds her readers that the past was particularly capable of infecting contemporary discourse surrounding lineage, saying:

The medieval past could also raise questions in the present because it was itself so replete with the unresolved. Indeed, the same anxieties about religion, lineage, monarchical legitimacy, and gender so prevalent in the Tudor era fundamentally shaped and animated the very medieval history to which early modern politicians and propagandists so readily turned (Warren 174).

Her analysis of history, gender, and depictions of Tudor lineage does a particularly good job of taking apart the ways in which depictions of the medieval past shaped early modern texts. Her analysis offers what I think is a good contrast to the models of thinking through lineage that Sheila Delany presents in her “Mothers to Think Back Through.” Delany’s issue with Christine de Pizan as a “mother figure” for feminist writers and artists, is that, by her analysis Christine is conservative. While this is certainly true, we must be wary of assertions like: “Christine’s role in the Roman debate shows her once again less the friend of woman than of the powers that be” (Delany 194). Which powers that be? and which women? Certainly, even as we historicize the past, we must be attuned to the pluralities present in that time period. We must also use these pluralities to unsettle our own notion of a totalized present, in order to create more complex and robust analyses of history.
Appendix A - The Printer’s Prologue

The kyndly entente | of euery gentylman
Is the furthereunce | of all gentylneſſe.
And to procure | in all that euer he can.
For to renewe all noble worthyneſſe.
This dayly is fene at our eye expreffè.
Of noble men | that do endyte and rede.
In bokes olde | theyr worthy myndes to fede.

¶So nowe of late | came in my cuftodye.
This forefayd boke | by Bryan Anflay.
Yoman of the feller | with the eyght kynge Henry
Of gentylwomen | the excellence to fay
The whiche I lyked | but yet I made delay
It to impreſſe | for that it is the guyſe.
Of people lewde | theyr prowefe to dyſpyſe.

¶But then I fhewed | the forefayd boke
Unto my lorde | the gentyll Erle of kente
And hym requyred | theron to loke.
With his counſayle | to put in in to prente
And he forthwith as euer dylygente
Of ladyes (abrode) to fprede theyr royall fame.
Exhorted me | to prynte it in his name.

¶And I obeyenge gladly his inſtaunce
Haue done me deuoyre | of it to make an ende
Prayenge his lordhyp | with others ſhall chaunce.
On it to rede | the fautes for to amende.
If ony be | for I do fayne intende.
Gladly to pleafe. and wylfully remytte
Thys ordre rude | to them that haue freſſhe wyte.
Appendix B - Translations

4v

And therefore betwene vs thre ladymes þou seeft here moued by pytte | we be come to tell the of a certayne buyldynge made in the manere of a cloyſtre of a Cyte ſtrongely wrought by masons handes + well buylded which is predeſtynate to the for to make and to ſtable it by our helpe and counſayle | in the whiche ſhall none enhabyte but onely ladymes of good fame | and women worthy of prayſynges. For to them where vertu ſhall not be ſounde | the walles of our Cyte ſhall be ſtrongely ſhiſyte.

10r-10v

Demande xpine a raſſon pourquoi ce ſeſt que femmes ne ſiéent en ſiege de plaidoirie et Responce xi. Très haute et honorée dame voz belles raſſons ſatiffient tres grandement ma penſée mais encore me dites †il vous agréee la verité pourquoi ce ſeſt que [ces] femmes ne tienent plaidoirie en cours de juſtice ne congoſſient de cauſes ne font nefont [sic] iugemens car ſes hommes dient que ſeſt pour ne ſcay quel ſeſme qui en ſiege de juſtice ſe gouverna mauſſagement

66r

Cy dit des princeces et dames de france lxix

And I Xpine ſayd thus. Madame ſythe that ye haue remêbred this lady that is in my tyme and are entred to the fame [pourie] of ladymes of
dames de france ou qui y font demourantes
Ie vous priy quil vous plaife a me dire ce
qu’il vous enfemble et fil vous est [advis] que
bon foit que il en y ait de hebergees en nostre
cité
france a bydynge in that coûtre. I pray you that
it pleafe you to faye somwhat of them that ye
lême ought to be fayd | + yf ye thynk y be good
that they may be harboured in our cyte.
Endnotes

1 This, of course, does not even include the fact that almost all of the texts were edited and printed by men. In many cases (such as Margaret Roper’s “A Devout Treatise” or some of Anne Askew’s Examinations) the women in question were not explicitly named on the title pages as authors, yet printers and editors were named. This tradition continues well past the sixteenth century, as women in the textbase are frequently only called “a lady” or “a gentlewoman,” where the male contributors are explicitly named.

2 See “A city, a room” from Writing Woman, 181-197.

3 Of course, the Earl Jeffrey Richards, Rosalind Brown-Grant, or indeed any other translation will also contain certain omissions, failures of translation, and biases. For more reading on failures of translation see the beginning of the chapter on linguistic translation.

4 For further reading on the subject of the intersection between material and digital, see Susan Schreibman’s essay “Digital Scholarly Editing” from Literary Studies in the Digital Age (https://dlsanthology.commons.mla.org/digital-scholarly-editing/) and Sarah Werner’s “Where Material Book Studies Meets Digital Humanities” from Journal of Digital Humanities 1.3 (2012) (http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-3/where-material-book-culture-meets-digital-humanities-by-sarah-werner/) The Women Writers project also has detailed documentation on scholarly editing that attends specifically to the issues associated with transcribing and editing early modern texts: http://wwp.northeastern.edu/research/publications/guide/

5 As Jennifer Summit notes (97), a hand has added an expanded form of Christine’s full name, which seems to indicate that at least one reader was aware of Christine’s authorship.
Delany, in particular, has noted Christine’s conservatism and classism (Medieval Literary Politics, “Mothers to Think Back Through). Carolyn Dinshaw has also noted Christine’s deference to “traditional moral authorities” (“Medieval Feminist Criticism” 22), but still acknowledges Christine’s own feminist critiques. However, many critics like Maureen Quilligan have been more forgiving of Christine’s politics. Quilligan argues that Delany “makes a rhetorical gesture that sacrifices accuracy to polemic. It is also anachronistically to hold an author up to a litmus test of political purity few authors of any period could pass because the terms of comparison are incongruent” (8).

Since phenomena I describe in the 1521 text were indeed caused by multiple hands, I will refer to this text variously as the 1521 text, Anslay’s text, Pepwell’s text, or the Anslay-Pepwell text, to acknowledge the multiple forces at play in the creation of this text.

Ferguson also has an interesting discussion of the relevance of time and translation when discussing feminist writers. For more on this topic see “Feminism in Time” from MLQ 65.1 (2004): (7-27).

For the full analysis of this passage, see “Gender Subversion and Linguistic Castration in Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Christine de Pizan” from Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts. ed. Anna Roberts. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998. Print

See Margaret Ferguson’s discussion of nationalism and language (Dido’s Daughters pages). In it she discusses Erondell’s The French Garden: for English Ladyes and Gentlewomen to walke in, of which she says: “like many other treatises ostensibly aimed at teaching French as a desirable accomplishment for privileged women, the text displays a marked ambivalence toad both women and toward French. French is ‘delicate, but over nice as a woman, scarce daring to
open her lippes for feare of marring her countenance” (161). And yet she also notes that languages like French “were often perceived as threats like invading armies” (160).

11 Rosalind Brown-Grant’s translation of this same title takes some liberties with the original French, but I believe it is a more accurate translation of Christine’s original question. She translates it as “Christine asks Reason why women aren’t allowed in courts of law, and Reason’s reply.” Although this loses the imagery of the “seat,” it maintains the public-facing aspect of Christine’s discussion.

12 McLuhan at several points makes very reductive assertions about media’s impact on different those who interact with it, such as the point in the text when he asserts, “Print created individualism and nationalism in the sixteenth century” (19-20), an assertion that most medievalists would scoff at.

13 S. G. Bell has collected some evidence that Christine may have written a few of the manuscripts of Le livre in her own hand (31). This would suggest that Christine had more control over her manuscripts than many other medieval authors. She may have been able to avoid the “negligence and rape” so bemoaned by Chaucer.
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