

Kevin Brownlee

DISCOURSES OF THE SELF: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN
AND THE ROSE

In the decade between 1395 and 1405, Christine de Pizan successfully established herself as a major figure in French literary history. This process necessarily involved a complex coming to terms with the dominant discursive practices of the late medieval literary tradition, the creation of a new and distinctive voice within the context of this tradition. For Christine, this posed a special set of problems. It was not simply a question of attaining and demonstrating her formal mastery of various established literary genres. Her identity as a woman inevitably problematized her status as an "official" speaking subject in all of these generic contexts. This explicitly female status, it should be stressed, was from the outset an essential component of Christine's complex authorial persona. Indeed she was the first French literary figure who explicitly incorporated her identity as a woman into her identity as an author.¹

Christine's self-figuration as first-person female voice required that the two principal vernacular literary discourses of the late 14th century be radically modified in order for her to speak through them. The first of these — which I shall refer to as "courtly," in the broadest sense of the term — involved a limited set of linguistic registers characterized by elegance and propriety. Its privileged subject matter was the lyric ego's poetic articulation of a first-person love experience. Authority came from within the courtly system itself, which was thus self-enclosed and self-sufficient. Within this system the basic speech situation involved a male desiring subject who addressed a silent female object both of desire and of discourse. The privileged model courtly text was the *Roman de la Rose*, and in particular, the part written by Guillaume de Lorris.

The second dominant system of literary discourse in late 14th-century France was what I shall refer to — again in the broadest sense of the term — as the "clerkly." Both the subject matter and the linguistic sub-

1. For Christine's identity as medieval woman author, and the implications of her "feminism" in this context, see Sylvia Huot, "Seduction and Sublimation: Christine de Pizan, Jean de Meun and Dante," *Romance Notes* (1985), 361-373; E. Jeffrey Richards, "Christine de Pizan and the Question of Feminist Rhetoric," *Teaching Language Through Literature* 22:2 (1983), 15-24; and Christine Reno, "Christine de Pizan: Feminism and Irony" in Franco Simone, Jonathan Beck, Gianni Mombello, eds., *Seconda Miscellanea di Studi e Ricerche sul Quattrocento Francese*. Chambéry/Torino: Centre d'Études Franco-Italien, 1981, pp. 129-132. For further discussion of Christine's feminism see Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*, 1400-1789," *Signs* 8 (1982), 4-28; Mary Ann Ignatius, "A New Look at the Feminism of Christine de Pizan," *Proceedings of the Pacific Northwest Conference on Foreign Languages* 29 (1978), 18-21; Douglas Kelly, "Reflections on

stance of clerkly discourse were, by definition, learned. A wide variety of moral, philosophical, theological, political and historical topics were addressed by means of the writings of the Classical and Christian *autores*. The authority of the *clerc* derived from his mastery of the books of his illustrious predecessors, and his ability to redeploy these books in contemporary contexts. The clerkly voice was by definition male, linked to Latin as father-language and to the dominant association of Latin learning with exclusively male social institutions (Cathedral schools, monastic orders, urban universities, governmental bureaucracies). In addition, clerkly discourse was often characterized by a deep misogynistic strain, which in part served to define it. In this context, woman as object of discourse was a kind of negative object of desire. The privileged model clerkly text was also the *Roman de la Rose*, most especially the part written by Jean de Meun.

In the present essay I propose to examine how Christine used her responses to the *Rose* in order to create a new kind of discourse of the self; how her powerful strategies of reading and misreading of the *Rose* function both to establish and to authorize her new identity as woman writer — poet and clerk — within precisely those traditional literary discourses that had seemed to exclude this possibility. A two-fold process is at issue here. On the one hand, Christine utilizes courtly diction to critique and to expand the courtly system. On the other hand, she uses the learned discourse of *clergie* to critique and expand the clerkly system.

I will be focusing on three of Christine's early works: the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* (1399), the *Dit de la Rose* (1402) and the *Epistres sur le Débat du "Roman de la Rose"* (1401-1402). In each case I am primarily interested in the implications of her treatment of the *Rose* as subtext, and I will be engaging therefore in a kind of Foucauldian deductive reading. The form and the content of her critique of the *Rose* are not important simply for their own sake, but also for what they imply about Christine as originary voice. What kind of identity and authority *must be assumed* in order for these three works to be viewed as the products of a coherent discursive ego? For the act of reading in early 15th-century France presupposed this kind of causal relationship between writer and text; and Christine strategically exploited this presupposition for her own polemical ends.²

In terms of the focus of the present volume, I will be examining Christine's early engagement with the *Roman de la Rose* as an extended act of self-legitimation. For the purposes of my argument, I would like to suggest the following progression. In the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, Christine represents the inadequacies of both the courtly and the clerkly registers of the *Rose*, on that poem's own terms. She thus speaks "through" the mouth of a corrected version of the *Rose*'s structurally

2. See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in Josué Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies*, Ithaca: Cornell U. P., 1979, pp. 141-160.

central authoritative character, Cupid; there is no explicit self-figuration at the diegetic level. In the *Dit de la Rose*, Christine employs an exclusively courtly discourse simultaneously to critique and to renew the courtly register of the *Roman*, by recontextualizing it. Here, it is the central metaphor of the earlier poem that is transformed, i.e., the rose itself. The *Dit* is recounted directly in the first-person by Christine's courtly persona; and Christine as character — figured as a courtly writer — plays a key role on the level of the plot. In the *Débat* dossier, Christine adopts an exclusively clerkly discourse to confront the clerkly arguments and authority of the *Rose*. Here, she speaks entirely in her own voice, dispensing with fictional frames and constructs altogether. She presents herself as a learned female *clerc* directly engaged in interpretive activity in a contemporary socio-historical context. Here, it is the central author figure of the *Roman* that is at issue, as Jean de Meun is both undermined and exploited.

To summarize, In the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, Christine confronts and displaces the *Rose*'s Ovidian Cupid with a corrected Cupid of her own. In the *Dit de la Rose*, she confronts and displaces Guillaume de Lorris both as poet and as protagonist, with a fictionalized version of herself as poet-protagonist. In the dossier of the *Epistres sur le "Roman de la Rose"*, she confronts and displaces Jean de Meun as authoritative vernacular clerk, with a historically "real" self-representation as learned woman author.

The *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* is the first of Christine's longer works and is presented as a letter written by Cupid from his celestial court to all loyal lovers. This construct allows Christine to present herself indirectly as Cupid's secretary, who writes down and then, presumably, reads out her royal master's missive.³ At the same time, as Charity Cannon Willard has pointed out, Christine's "concept of the God of Love comes directly from the *Roman de la Rose*."⁴ This, I think, is the necessary starting point for an understanding of the kinds of intertextual strategies at work in Christine's poem.

The letter itself is a response by the God of Love to a series of complaints he has received from women, and a careful rhetorical structure is in evidence throughout. After a brief prologue (vv. 1-16) establishes the fictional epistolary frame, Cupid announces the first category of offenders whom he must reprimand:

Si se plainnent les dessusdites dames
Des grans extors, des blasmes, des diffames,
Des traïsons, des oultrages très griefs,

3. Charity Canon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*. New York: Persea, 1984, pp. 47, 62.

4. Charity Canon Willard, "A New Look at Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* in Franco Simone, Jonathan Beck, Gianni Mombello, eds., *Seconda Miscellanea di Studi e Ricerche sul Quattrocento Francese*, Chambéry/Torino: Centre d'Études Franco-Italien, pp. 82-83.

Des faussetez et de mains autres griefs,
Que chascun jour des desloiaux reçoivent,
Qui les blasment, diffament et deçoivent. (vv. 17-22)⁵
[Thus the above mentioned ladies complain of the great crimes, the accusations, the slanders, the betrayals, the great outrages, the deceptions and the many other pains that they receive every day from disloyal men, who blame, defame and deceive them.]

It is a question then of deceptive courtly lovers, those who manipulate the linguistic and behavioral codes of *fin'amors* in order to disguise their true identity and purpose. In socio-literary terms, they are "chevaliers/et escuiers" [knights and squires] whose custom it is to "traïr" [betray] ladies "par beaulx blandissemens,/ Si se faignent estre loyauls amans/ Et se cueuvrent de diverse fantise" (vv. 33-37) [with sweet words, and they pretend to be loyal lovers and disguise themselves in various false ways]. In the terms of the *Roman de la Rose*, these deceptive lovers are following the Ovidian advice of the character Ami. Or, to say the same thing in a different way, they are utilizing the character Faux Semblant as behavioral and linguistic model in an amorous context, acting, in the words of Christine's Cupid, "par faulx semblans" (v. 50) [by false seeming]. At the same time, their comportment involves a breakdown of the key opposition between the categories of *mesdisant* and *courtois*, which, in the courtly system, must — by definition — be mutually exclusive. These unworthy lovers repeatedly alternate between the role of *amant* and the role of *losengier*. And Cupid's treatment of them in these terms exploits courtly discursive conventions simultaneously to characterize and to condemn this first category of offenders, who are in addition juxtaposed by positive counter-examples taken from contemporary French history (vv. 17-259).

The second category of offenders reprimanded by Cupid are not lovers but writers, more particularly, bookish, misogynistic clerks, who are cited in pseudo-legal terms parallel to those used earlier:

Si se plaignent les dessusdittes dames
De plusieurs clers qui sus leur mettent blasmes,
Dittiez en font, rimes, proses et vers;
En diffamant leurs meurs par moz divers;
Si les baillent en matiere aux premiers
A leurs nouveaulx et jeunes escolliers,
En maniere d'exemple et de doctrine,
Pour retenir en age tel doctrine. (vv. 259-266)

[Thus the above mentioned ladies complain of the many clerks who accuse them in prose and verse books, defaming their morals in varied words; and they give these books as school texts to their young, beginning students, by way of example and doctrine, to be retained into adulthood.]

5. All citations from the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* are from Maurice Roy, ed., *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, vol. 2, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1891. Translations are mine.

Cupid responds to these misogynistic clerks by deftly manipulating clerkly discourse for his own purposes. First, he summarizes the standard anti-feminist charges. They characterize women as "decevables,/ Cautilleuses, faulses et pou valable/ ... mençongieres, / Variables, inconstans et legiers" (vv. 271-274) [deceitful, crafty, false and worthless ... untruthful, changeable, inconstant and flighty]. Next, Cupid critiques the bookish authority upon which clerkly discourse rests:

Et ainsi font clers et soir et matin,
Puis en françois, leurs vers, puis en latin,
En se fondent dessus ne sçay quelz livres
Qui plus dient de mençonges qu'uns yvres ...
Et s'aucun dit qu'on doit les livres croire ...
Qui des femmes les malices proverent,
Je leurs respons que ceulz qui ce escripent
En leurs livres, je trouve qu'ils ne quistrent
En leurs vies fors femmes decepvoir. (vv. 277-280, 309, 311-315)
[Thus the clerks write their verses both morning and evening, now in French, now in Latin, basing themselves on books that repeat more lies than a drunkard ... And if anyone says that we should believe these books ... which demonstrate women's evil nature, I answer that those who wrote these things in their books were — in their lives — only interested in deceiving women.]

Three specific clerkly texts are singled out for special treatment: Ovid's *Remedia amoris* and *Ars amatoria*, and the *Roman de la Rose* of Jean de Meun. Furthermore, the two Ovidian texts are treated largely in terms of their function in Jean's vernacular poem. Thus both the *Ars amatoria* and the *Rose* are viewed as practical manuals on how to deceive women, with the French poet being authorized by the Latin one, whose work he continues. Several important points are at issue here. First, we have a negative rewriting of the positive utilization of the *translatio studii* topos at the midpoint of the conjoined *Rose* text, where it had functioned to authorize Jean de Meun's poem as a worthy continuation of the poetic service to the God of Love exemplified by the Latin elegiac poets in general, and Ovid in particular.⁶ In Christine's *Epistre*, Cupid himself denounces not just the authorial stances of Ovid and Jean (whose poetic service he emphatically refuses), but also the clerkly construct of bookish authority that links the two poets together.⁷ For Christine's Cupid this link has a purely negative resonance:

6. See Karl D. Uitti, "From Cleric to Poète: the Relevance of the *Romance of the Rose* to Machaut's World" in M. Cosman and B. Chandler, eds., *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century*. New York (1978), 209-216.

7. This is also, it seems to me, a response to Jean's clerkly self-defense against charges of misogyny in his so-called *apologia* in vv. 15, 165-212 of the *Rose*. See Kevin Brownlee, "Reflections in the *Miroir aus Amoureux*: The Inscribed Reader in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*" in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method*. Eds. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols. Hanover/London: University Press of New England, 1982, pp. 60-70.

Et meismement pouëte si soutil
 Comme Ovide, qui puis fu en exil,
 Et Jehan de Meun ou Romant de la Rose,
 Quel long procès! quel difficile chose!
 Et sciences et cleres et obscures
 Y met il la et de grans aventures!
 Et que de gent soupploiez et rovez
 Et de peines et de baraz trouvez
 Pour decevoir sanz plus une pucelle,
 S'en est la fin, par fraude et par cautelle! (vv. 387-395)

[And even a poet as subtle as Ovid, who was later exiled, and Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose*: What great exertion! What an elaborate enterprise! And what great adventures he described there! And how many people are entreated and begged, and how much effort and trickery is there in order to accomplish nothing more than the deception of a maid through fraud and cunning, for that is the ultimate goal!]

At this point, Cupid levels his potentially most serious charge against clerkly authority as such. First of all, this involves a critique of the misogynistic content of clerkly books on the grounds of insufficient experience on the part of their authors: the *auctores* (both Latin and vernacular) simply did not have enough knowledge about women to speak authoritatively on the subject. The authority of the written word is thus subjected to an experiential standard that is grounded in empirical (i.e., non-bookish) reality. At the same time, the *auctores* are, as it were, detached from their texts and judged as human beings in specific historical circumstances.⁸ A perspective is thus created from which bookish authority can be criticized from the outside. And in the context of this kind of newly "personalized" authorial intentionality, the clerkly misogynist's identity as such renders his position suspect — he is an interested party:

Et s'on me dit li livre en sont tuit plein ...
 Je leur respons que les livres ne firent
 Pas les femmes, ne les choses n'i mirent
 Que l'en y list contre elles et leurs meurs. (vv. 407, 409-411)⁹
 [And if anyone says to me that books are full of them (i.e., misogynistic doctrines) ... I answer that women did not write the books, nor did they put into them the things one reads there against women and their behavior.]

Indeed, what occurs at almost the precise midpoint of the *Epistre* (immediately following Cupid's negative treatment of the male, misogynistic poetic genealogy linking Ovid and Jean de Meun) is the explicit articulation of an *absence* with regard to any corresponding genealogy of female authors. This absence is represented as a potential presence:

Mais se femmes eussent les livres fait
 Je say de vray qu'autrement fait du fait,
 Car bien scevent qu'a tort sont encouppées ... (vv. 417-419)

[But if women had written the books, I know for a fact that it would have been done differently (otherwise), for they well know that they are wrongly condemned ...]

Furthermore, the witty author/character configuration of the *Epistre* enables this declaration of absence on the level of plot (and with regard to the past) to function simultaneously as an affirmation of presence on the level of composition (and with regard to the present). The statement concerning the lack of female clerks in the past is made by — indeed, is the very mark of — Christine de Pizan as female clerk writing in the present. She is in the very process of writing a "livre" that is both by a woman and about women, and therefore very different ("autrement ... fait," other-wise made) from the existing misogynistic (male-authored) clerkly tradition. Christine as author thus responds to the clerkly inadequacies that her character Cupid criticizes — by means of articulating, of *writing* these very criticisms, i.e., as *clerc*.

Christine qua poet-author is thus implicitly established as female clerk by Cupid, the same mythographic figure who had explicitly authorized Jean de Meun as clerkly poet-author in the *Rose*. And it is thus only at this point in the *Epistre* that Cupid (and Christine) embark on a recuperation of clerkly discourse, which is utilized to disprove the misogynistic position, as it were, on its own terms. Cupid first employs the Classical tradition (vv. 437-558), citing a series of clerkly counter-examples to demonstrate that women are "loiales" (v. 433) rather than "fausses" (v. 425); more often deceived than deceiving: Medea (vv. 436-44); Dido (vv. 445-460) and Penelope (vv. 461-470). Next, Cupid turns to the Christian tradition (vv. 559-714), where he focuses on woman's role in the two key moments of human history: the Redemption and the Fall. Beginning with the New Testament, Cupid first praises the exemplary fidelity of Christ's female followers, then invokes the Virgin Mary as the ultimate demonstration of God's valorization of woman (581-83; 589-92) and finally cites the example of Jesus's positive treatment of women (593-594). Cupid then moves to the Old Testament, in order to rehabilitate Eve. Not only are the circumstances of Eve's creation interpreted as marks of divine favor, but she is definitively declared "innocent" of original sin with regard to intentionality:

Si ne fu donc fraude ne decepvance,
 Car simplece sanz malice celée,
 Ne doit estre decepvance appellée. (vv. 616-618)

[It was thus not fraud or deception, for simplicity that conceals no malice should not be called deception.]

8. This has already begun in vv. 313-315, where the limitations of clerkly treatments of women "en leurs livres" were explained as a consequence of the limited clerkly experience of women "en leurs vies."

9. See Christine Reno, "Feminism," pp. 128-129.

This is of course a significant correction of the key clerkly justification for misogyny, and it leads to an extended discussion of the inherently positive aspects of woman's nature (emphasizing woman's disinclination, even incapacity, for a variety of particularly grievous sins; again, viewed as a mark of divine favor).

Cupid concludes his *Epistre* by summarizing once again the two categories of offenders he has been reprimanding and correcting, before reiterating their definitive punishment, banishment from his court:

Pour ce conclus en diffinicion
 Qué des mauvais soit fait punicion
 Qui les blasment, diffament et accusent
 Et qui de faulz desloialz semblans usent
 Pour decepvoir elles; si soient tuit
 De nostre Court chacié, bani, destruit,
 Et entrediz et escommenié,
 Et tous noz biens si leur soient nyé,
 C'est bien raison qu'on les escomenie. (vv. 775-783)

[Therefore I definitively conclude that punishment be meted out to the wicked, those who slander, defame and accuse (women), and those who use false, disloyal appearances to deceive them: May they all be driven out of our Court, banished, dismissed, condemned and excommunicated; and may all our goods be denied to them, for it is quite just that I excommunicate them.]

On the one hand then, we have bad courtly lovers, those who misuse courtly discourse in order to deceive women. On the other hand, we have bad clerkly writers, those who misuse clerkly discourse in order to defame women.

In this context, I suggest, Christine de Pizan's entire *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* functions as a corrective rewriting of the famous speech of Jean de Meun's Dieu d'Amours at the structural center of the conjoined *Rose* text. Jean's Cupid, we remember, asked his assembled troops for two different kinds of help: he asked that Guillaume de Lorris (qua protagonist) be helped as courtly lover; and that Jean de Meun (qua narrator) be helped as clerkly writer. Within the context of the *Rose*, of course, both Guillaume's courtly loving and Jean's clerkly writing are authorized as poetic service to the God of Love — by the God of Love himself. This intricate and witty construct is both derived from the Ovidian tradition and used to authorize Guillaume and Jean within the context of the Ovidian tradition. The figure of Cupid in the *Rose* thus functions to present the poem's discursive practice as successful on its own terms. Christine's Cupid, on the contrary, calls into question precisely this success. In order to expose and correct the discursive inadequacies of the *Rose*, he strategically employs a superior, more authentic *courtoisie* and *clergie* which allow for — indeed require — a female authorial voice.

The *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* thus involves Christine's transformation

of Cupid, the authoritative character at the *Roman's* structural center. In the *Dit de la Rose*, it is the central metaphor of the earlier poem — the rose itself — that she submits to a corrective transformation. In this way the courtly register of the *Rose* is, as it were, detached from the clerkly and treated in isolation, on its own terms. For Christine employs an exclusively courtly discourse to effect her critical rewriting.

The narrative structure of the *Dit de la Rose* involves two clearly differentiated episodes. The first is a miniaturized courtly pageant ostensibly narrated in the third person. The second episode is a courtly dream vision, narrated in the first person.

The *Dit's* first episode (vv. 25-263)¹⁰ takes place during a courtly festival, set at the elegant Parisian residence of the Duc d'Orléans during the month of January, 1401. The Duke's "hostel" (v. 43) is depicted as a kind of idealized courtly space, closed off from the outside world in an indoor, urban version of the Vergier de Deduit in the *Rose*. *Courtoisie* (v. 48) has assembled all the guests and presides over their activities, which constitute an exemplary embodiment of courtly behavior and speech, including the discussion and performance of literary works. In the midst of this refined and sumptuous setting, the goddess Loyauté arrives, a personification character sent by the Dieu d'Amours (vv. 83 ff.). Loyauté announces the purpose of her visit to the assembled company in a set of three *balades*. (Indeed, in the first part of the *Dit*, all of the goddess's direct speech is in the form of intercalated lyrics.) She has been sent by Cupid to found the Order of the Rose, and for that purpose has brought a quantity of freshly cut, beautiful roses, both white and red. These flowers are to be distributed to each male guest in exchange for (and as a sign of) his joining the Order by means of swearing an oath (a *veu*), which is coterminous with the third *balade*. It is thus "par convenant" (v. 158) that these "chevaliers bons et tous de noble sente,/ et tous amans" (vv. 169-170) [fine knights, all of noble birth and all lovers] are to receive the gift of the rose. The oath itself promises a perfect correspondence between language, behavior and intentionality in matters of love:

A bonne amour je fais veu et promesse
 Et a la fleur qui est rose clamée,
 A la vaillant de Loyauté deesse . . .
 Qu'a tousjours mais la bonne renommée
 Je garderay de dame en toute chose
 Ne par moy ja femme n'yert diffamée:
 Et pour ce prens je l'Ordre de la Rose.
 Et si promet a toute gentillesse
 Qu'en trestous lieux et prisee et amée
 Dame sera de moy comme maistresse.

10. All citations from the *Dit de la Rose* are from Maurice Roy, ed., *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, vol. 2, Paris: Fimin Didot, 1891. Translations are mine.

Et celle qui j'ay ma dame nommée
 Souveraine, loyauté confirmée
 Je lui tendray jusques a la parclose,
 Et de ce ay volenté affermée:
 Et pour ce prens je l'Ordre de la Rose. (vv. 197-199, 201-212)
 [To good Love, to the flower called the rose, to the valliant goddess
 Loyalty, I vow and promise . . . that I will always protect ladies' good
 reputation in all things, and that woman will never be slandered by
 me: and therefore I take the Order of the Rose. And I also make
 the noble promise that I will esteem and love ladies everywhere as
 if they were my lady. And I will give to her whom I have named my
 sovereign lady tested loyalty for my whole life, and I freely affirm
 this: and therefore I take the Order of the Rose.]

After each of the male guests has taken this oath, he receives his rose from Loyauté, who then departs (vv. 240-250). The company proceeds to celebrate its adherence to the new Order, before finally dispersing, each in possession of his rose: "partis s'en sont, congié ont pris,/ emportant la rose de pris" (v. 262-263) [they left; they took their leave, carrying off the valuable rose].

In this first episode of the *Dit*, a double process of transformation takes place with regard to the rose in the *Roman*. First of all, there is a concretization, a literalization. At the diegetic level, Christine's rose is just a flower. It is no longer a metaphor for the courtly beloved, figuring woman as the silent object of (erotic) desire and discourse. There is thus a defusing of the basic courtly metaphoric construct which had functioned at the level of plot in the *Roman* to represent the unfolding relationship between the lover and the beloved. The act of plucking and taking possession of the flower is thus both literalized and deprivileged: it no longer signifies sexual conquest as it had in the *Roman*, where it thus functioned as the ultimate sign of closure.¹¹ In Christine's *Dit*, on the contrary, the cutting of the literal roses functions as a kind of opening signal (see vv. 153-156, 180-182). Temporally speaking, it precedes the central events of the *Dit*'s first episode; narratologically speaking, it initiates these events. Furthermore, it is — in an important sense — the cutting of the roses that enables Loyauté — the key female personification character — both to speak, and to found the Order. Finally, Loyauté's act of cutting the flowers is carefully differentiated from the act by which the *Dit*'s male lovers take possession of them.

In addition to transforming the significance of the *Roman*'s rose by literalizing it, Christine (in the first episode of her *Dit*) simultaneously re-motivates the rose in a figurative context. On the one hand, it functions

11. Guillaume de Machaut's brief (106 vv.) *Dit de la Rose* is also relevant in this context. The plucking of the Rose by Machaut's narrator-protagonist does not effect narrative closure, and its precise metaphoric significance remains suggestively ambiguous. The degree to which Christine's response to the *Rose* was mediated in this instance by Machaut's remains to be investigated.

as the emblem of the Order. On the other hand, it signifies the successful completion of the individual speech act that establishes membership in the Order, i.e., the oath (the *veu*, the *promesse* that one must *jurer*, *advouer*). It is thus both the sign and the guarantee of authentic courtly speech, which cannot by definition be used duplicitously. For Loyauté's oath has presented the index of true courtliness not as mere verbal competence but rather as the proper relation between speech practice and intentionality. It is thus the relationship between the male courtly lover and the female courtly beloved that is redefined by means of Christine's transformation of the figurative significance of the rose. And in this new context, a woman author's voice is possible within the courtly discursive system, speaking neither as beloved nor as lover. It is this new kind of courtly female voice that is at the center of the second and final episode of the *Dit de la Rose*.

This episode opens with a transition section (vv. 264-283) in which Christine as first-person protagonist is explicitly introduced into the story line for the first time. The entire first episode, which seemed to have been recounted from a third-person perspective, is thus placed, retrospectively, into the first person as we learn that Christine the character has been present at the courtly festival from the outset. The reader's awareness of her earlier status as witness is effected by the first instance of her self-presentation as participant, as actant. Interestingly, this presentation stresses her separation from the other characters, her solitude:

Et je qui n'oz pas le cuer noir
 Demouray en celui manoir
 Ou ot esté celle assemblée,
 Ou je ne fus de riens troulée. (vv. 264-267)

[And I whose heart was not sad remained in the manor where that festival had taken place, and I was not troubled in the slightest.]

In addition, the introduction of Christine as character marks her as the favored protégée of the goddess of Chastity, Diana. This special status is figured at the level of plot by the snowy whiteness of both her bed and her bedroom, for no sooner has Christine appeared on the scene at the close of the soirée, than it is time for her to go to sleep. Several points are worth mentioning with regard to this initial association with Diana. First, in terms of the story line of the *Roman*, Chasteté was the "head" of the hierarchy of characters whose task it was to guard the rose-bushes (see *Rose*, vv. 2807-2849). She was thus, in a sense, the chief enemy of the courtly male lover/protagonist and her function was to short circuit the courtly system as set forth in the *Rose*. Christine re-motivates the figure of Chasteté as operative in the *Roman* in order to write herself into a new kind of courtly discourse as speaking subject. Second, the explicitly chaste whiteness of Christine's nocturnal décor establishes a witty but important contrast between the dream vision of the Lover in the *Rose*

and that which is about to take place in the *Dit*. For as soon as Christine falls asleep Loyauté comes to her in a dream.

This dream (vv. 283-552) is almost entirely composed of the long speech that Loyauté makes to the sleeping Christine (vv. 294-551). This speech (in narrative verse), explicitly and exclusively addressed to Christine the character in private (see v. 293), complements the goddess's earlier speech (in lyric verse) to a male courtly audience in public, where Christine the character had functioned as silent and invisible witness. Amours has sent his "messagiere" (v. 311) to Christine to accomplish two things on his behalf. First (vv. 314-496), Loyauté explains that Amours had her found the Order of the Rose to combat the widespread abusive practice of *mesdire* [anti-courtly calumny, slander] among the nobility, most particularly as it pertains to women. For:

... sur toutes autres diffames
Het Amours qu'on parle des femmes
Laidement en les diffamant. (vv. 484-86)
[... what Love hates above all other slanders is speaking villainously of women by slandering them.]

Second (vv. 497-547), Loyauté explains that the God of Love has "commissioned" Christine herself to publicize and to spread the Order. It is by means of the elaborate deployment of this conceit that Christine's identity as courtly poet and professional writer is explicitly incorporated into the story line of the *Dit*. Through Loyauté, Cupid empowers Christine to designate those worthy women everywhere who can confer membership in the Order:

Amours ...
... veult qu'ayes legacion
De faire en toute nacion
Procureresses qui pouoir
Ayent, s'elles veulent avoir,
De donner l'Ordre delictable
De la belle rose agreable
Avec le veu qui appartient. (vv. 498, 504-510)
[Love ... wants you to have the authority to appoint procureresses in every country, who will have the power (if they so choose) to bestow the delightful Order of the lovely, pleasing Rose, as well as the oath that goes with it.]

It is at this point in the *Dit* that a final transformation is effected upon the figure of the rose. For the sign of adherence to the Order among the future members who will respond to Christine's message will no longer be the literal roses distributed by Loyauté at the moment of the Order's founding. Rather, these will be replaced by artful representations:

Car quiconques d'orfaverie
D'or, d'argent ou de brouderie

De soye ou d'aucune autre chose,
Mais que soit en façon de rose,
Portera l'ordre qui donnée
Sera de la dame, ordonnée
De par toy pour l'Ordre establir,
Il suffist. (vv. 536-543)

[For it will be sufficient that whoever is granted membership in the Order by a lady designated by you wear an insignia of worked gold or silver, or of embroidered silk, provided that it be in the form of a rose.]

Finally, Loyauté presents Christine with a written document (*bulles*, v. 544) which guarantees her "commission" (v. 546) from the God of Love. At the level of plot, this document also guarantees the truth of the dream in which Loyauté appeared, for Christine finds it at her bedside when she awakens:

Si me pensay que c'estoit songe,
Mais ne le tins pas a mençonge
Quant coste moy trouvoy la lettre (vv. 556-558)
[And I thought that it was a dream, but I did not consider it to be a lie when I found the letter beside me]

Once again, Christine simultaneously recalls and transforms a key construct from the *Roman de la Rose* in order to establish the distance, the difference between that courtly discourse and her own; and to establish her new kind of poetic self in terms of, by means of this difference. Here, Christine cites the famous rhyme-word pair that opens Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman* (*songe/mensonge*) in order to contrast her dream (and her poetics) with his. At the same time, Christine's construct stresses the primacy of the written artifact.

In the final section of the *Dit de la Rose*, Christine's service to "Bonne Amour" (v. 525) is explicitly presented in terms of her identity as a writer: the plot of this courtly fiction thus serves to motivate and authorize its composition. It is in order to fulfill her "commission" (v. 595) from Cupid that she has written the *dit* which explains what the commission is and how she received it (vv. 602-606). The last stage of this process involves Christine speaking directly to her extra-textual audience as an authoritative courtly voice. First, she addresses the men in her extra-textual audience, encouraging them to be worthy of joining the Order. Second, she addresses the virtuous "dames amoureuses" (v. 612), empowering them to admit worthy men into the Order:

De par la deesse je donne
Le plain pouoir et habandonne
De donner l'Ordre gracieux
A tous nobles ... (vv. 622-625)
[On behalf of the goddess I give and grant full power to bestow the gracious Order on all noble men ...]

This final speech act is essential to the successful functioning of the *Dit* as courtly discourse. And it involves a speaking female subject who is neither the beloved nor the lover. Rather, the courtly system has been expanded to include a new kind of female voice, outside the economy of desire but empowered to comment authoritatively upon that economy by means of courtly discourse.

To summarize. In Part I of the *Dit*, the Order of the Rose is founded for the intra-textual public.¹² Cupid authorizes Loyauté to act for him. No role is played by Christine as character, except that of witness. The fact that her direct intervention as character is not required for the intra-textual founding of the Order highlights her role as author in this regard. In this context, Christine's transformation of the *Roman*'s central metaphor is of great importance. The metaphoric equivalency of rose and woman as object of desire in the earlier poem is strategically undone in the first part of the *Dit*, where literal roses emblemize (in a non-metaphoric way) the Order and its oath, i.e., a corrected courtly code which precludes both the speech practice and the mode of signifying of the *Roman*.

In Part II of the *Dit*, the Order of the Rose is redefined, expanded so as to include the extra-textual public. Here the role played by Christine as character is crucial, and overlaps with her status as author. For she is the "means" by which this expansion of the Order outside the boundaries of the text is to be accomplished. Again, within the fictional hierarchy of courtly literary activity it is Cupid who authorizes Christine through the mediation of Loyauté. In addition, a corresponding "expansion" is effected with regard to the rose as signifier. For the extra-textual members of the extra-textual Order, an extra-textual representation of the rose is posited. This involves visual icons of the flower, composed of luxurious cloth, to be displayed on clothing or flags. Christine thus attributes a new kind of significance — a new kind of signifying — to the figure of the rose, once she has divested it of the metaphoric function it had in the courtly system of the *Roman*. The iconographic representations of the rose to be worn by the extra-textual members of Christine's Order function as indexes of a full or proper reading of the

12. It is important to note Charity Canon Willard's conclusion that "aside from the poem there is no evidence that an Order of the Rose was ever established" ("Christine de Pizan and the Order of the Rose" in D. Bornstein, ed., *Ideals for Women in the Works of Christine de Pizan*. Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1981, p. 51). Willard reaffirms and elaborates this view in *Christine de Pizan*, pp. 168-169. But cf. Eric Hicks's nuanced discussion of the relation between public ceremony and poetic composition in the case of the *Dit de la Rose*, which presupposes the historical existence of Christine's Order (in the "Introduction" to his edition of *Le Débat sur le "Roman de la Rose"*, Paris: Champion, 1977, pp. xlii-xlvi). Both scholars stress the importance of contemporary historical models for the Order of the Rose, in particular the Marshal Boucicaut's "Ordre de l'écu vert et la dame blanche" (founded on Easter day, 1399, and praised by Christine in *Autres Ballades* XII) and the "Cour amoureuse, dite de Charles VI" (see A. Piaget, *Romania* 20 [1891], 416-454 and *Romania* 31 [1902], 597-603; and especially C. Bozzolo & H. Loyau, *La Cour amoureuse, dite de Charles VI: Etude et édition critique des sources manuscrites* [Paris, 1981]).

Dit.¹³ For the ultimate effect of Christine's "corrected" courtly discourse on the properly disposed reader is "corrected" courtly speech and behavior in the real world, in history. This conception of the dynamics of reading necessarily involves an extraordinary claim for Christine's authority as speaking — and writing — subject, as author figure. It also has important implications for her notion of the nature of literary discourse and of the author-text-reader relationship. All of this is elaborately and dramatically illustrated in the dossier of the *Débat sur le "Roman de la Rose."*

The *Débat* represented a new phase of Christine's long engagement with the *Roman*, one which was crucial to her development of a new kind of authorial self. For the purposes of my argument it is important to stress that there were two different *Débats*, two different contexts for the documents which collectively constituted the *Débat*. On the one hand, there was the series of letters, treatises, sermons and poems written to attack or to support the *Roman de la Rose* between the spring of 1401 and the winter of 1403. Christine de Pizan, later joined by Jean Gerson (the Chancellor of the University of Paris), attacked the *Roman* while Jean de Montreuil (Provost of Lille and sometime royal secretary), Gontier Col (first secretary and notary to the King), and Pierre Col (Canon of Paris and Tournay) defended it. This set of documents in chronological order constitutes what I shall call the "first level" of the *Débat*'s historical existence and lies outside my immediate concerns. What I will be focusing on is the "second level" of the *Débat*'s historical existence, in the dossier that Christine created by rearranging and recontextualizing a strategically chosen selection of the original documents; by in effect transforming the *Débat* into a "book" of which she was the author. The act of making this book was itself a polemical, public gesture that functioned as part of the ongoing *Débat*. It was also an extraordinary gesture of appropriation, of control on Christine's part, with important implications for the authority of her public voice.

The dossier is dated February 1, 1402, and contains seven component parts. The first three define the dossier as such. There are two dedicatory epistles and a brief introductory statement of the genesis and the chronology of the *Débat*. What follows are four letters which had been written earlier and are here re-presented in a new context, a new kind of speech situation: for they are directed simultaneously to their original, particular addressees; to the two privileged addressees of the dossier considered as a unit; and to a more generalized reading public. It is in these four letters that Christine's public position as reader of the *Rose* is explicitly stated in detail. Before moving on to an analysis of this

13. In Peircian terms, it is as if an icon of smoke functioned as an index of real fire. For the distinction between index and icon see Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers II: Elements of Logic*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1932), 156-73.

position, I would like to consider the first three components of the dossier which establish, elaborate and reinforce the authorial identity that is implicit in Christine's reading of the *Roman*.

The two dedicatory epistles are complementary. Together they open the frame that creates a "book" out of letters which have already been exchanged. The first dedicatory epistle is to a woman, a kind of ultimate courtly audience: Isabeau de Bavière, Queen of France. The second dedicatory epistle is to a man, a kind of ultimate clerkly audience, Guillaume de Tignonville, the Provost of Paris, who is also — significantly — a *chevalier*. In both cases the power politics of literary patronage are very clearly at issue.

When she addresses the Queen, Christine stresses the subject matter of the *Débat*, treating her opponents in a cursory manner. This subject matter is presented in terms of an implicit solidarity between speaker and addressee:

moy simple et ignorant entre les femmes . . . sui meue a vous envoyer les presens epistres, esquelles, ma tres redoubtee dame — s'il vous plaist moy tant honorer que oïr les daigniez —, pourrez entendre la diligence, desir et volonté ou ma petite puissance s'estent a soustenir par deffenses veritables contre aucunes oppinions a honneseté contraires, et aussi l'honneur et louenge des femmes (laquelle plusieurs clerks et autres se sont efforciéz par leurs dittiez d'amenuisier, qui n'est chose loisible ne a souffrir ne soustenir) (pp. 5-6).¹⁴

[Although I am very simple and ignorant among women . . . I am moved to send you the present letters. In these letters, my most awesome Lady, if you deign to honor me by listening to them, you can understand my diligence, desire, and wish to resist by true defenses, as far as my small power extends, some false opinions denigrating the honor and fair name of women, which many men — clerks and others — have striven to diminish by their writings. This is a thing not to be permitted, suffered, or supported (pp. 65-66).]

When she addresses the Provost of Paris, Christine presents the debate by stressing her relationship with her opponents, downplaying the subject matter as such, and asking Guillaume de Tignonville both to help her argument and to judge in her favor:

Pour ce requier vous, tres sçavant, que par compassion de ma femmine ignorance, vostre humblesce s'encline a joindre a mes dictes vraies oppinions par si que vostre saigesce me soit force, ayde, deffense et appuyal contre si notable et esleuz maistres . . . Et avec ce suppli la bonne discrete consideration de vostre savoir que vueille discuter et proprement eslire le bon droit de mon oppinion . . ." (p. 7-8).

[Therefore, I ask, most wise man, that, out of compassion for my feminine ignorance, you see fit to add your sound views to my writing, so that your wisdom

14. All citations are from the excellent edition of Eric Hicks. Translations are from Joseph L. Baird and John R. Kane, *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents*, Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina P., 1978 (UNSRLL 199).

may be strength, aid, defense, and support for me against such notable and elevated masters . . . And in this letter I request the favorable and discreet exercise of your wisdom so that you consider and rightly choose the cause which I favor . . . (pp. 68, 67)]

The chronological "explanation" of the quarrel that follows sets up an ongoing narrative temporality and context for the exchange of letters. At the same time, Christine's identity as correspondent is carefully established. First, there is a progression from the spoken to the written word: the initial disagreement between Christine and Jean de Montreuil ("mon seigneur le prevost de Lisle, maistre Jehan Johannes," p. 8¹⁵) is presented as having taken place in a recent conversation. Second, Christine herself is carefully presented not as the aggressor but as the respondent in the debate. Not only does Jean de Montreuil initiate the dispute as such by provocatively praising the *Roman de la Rose*, but he also initiates the correspondence by sending to Christine a copy of his own letter to an unnamed "sien amy notable cler" (pp. 8-9) whom he attempts to persuade to accept his position. Christine responds with a letter of her own, of which a copy is subsequently requested by Gontier Col, who wants to argue against Christine's position. Christine's self-presentation as "character" in the *Débat* thus involves several important features worth noting. First, she functions from the outset as a publically accepted female *clerc*. This identity is implicit in her rôle as disputant, for her clerkly opinion is presented as sufficiently important to be solicited by major contemporary male clerkly voices within the Parisian intellectual establishment. Second, Christine significantly expands the role of the "lady" as correspondent, in terms of preexistent vernacular literary models. The figure of Toute-Belle in Guillaume de Machaut's epistolary *Voir-Dit* — the most famous literary male/female exchange of letters in the 14th century — is particularly important in this regard. Toute-Belle was both love object and love poet, and though it was she who initiated the epistolary relationship (at once amorous and literary) with Machaut, it was, at her request, the male poet who served as teacher and guide in literary matters. Further, Machaut was the "author" — again at Toute-Belle's request — of the literary work which collected, arranged and contextualized the letters between poet and lady.¹⁶ Unlike Toute-Belle, Christine as correspondent functions exclusively as reader and writer; she is not at all a love object. In addition, *she* is the author figure in terms of the letter collection considered as a whole.

15. See Hicks (p. 197): "le surnom Johannes paraît avoir été choisi comme 'une sorte de constatation permanente de sa qualité de clerc' . . ." (A. Thomas, "Le Nom et la famille de Jehan de Monstereuil," *Romania* 37 [1908], 594-602)."

16. For the importance of epistolarity in the *Voir-Dit*, and its relation to the lover/beloved configuration see Kevin Brownlee, *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut*, Madison: U. of Wisconsin P., 1984; Jacqueline Cerquiglini, "Un engin si subtil," *Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIV^e siècle*. Paris: Champion, 1985; and William Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain: Essays on the Narrative Verse of Guillaume de Machaut*. Lexington: U.P. of Kentucky, 1974.

It is thus important to note that Christine suppresses Jean de Montreuil's original letter (which, interestingly, has never been recovered) and begins her selective re-presentation of the epistolary exchange with Gontier Col's letter (dated September 13, 1401) requesting a copy of Christine's reply to Jean de Montreuil. It is in response to Gontier Col's request therefore that Christine's long letter to Jean de Montreuil appears as part of the *Débat* exchange. Christine's reading of the *Roman de la Rose* thus appears as doubly solicited, and the *Débat* itself, as a public event already underway. Both of these impressions of course are created by Christine as "author" of the dossier, and both function in important ways in the public establishment and valorization of her new authorial self.

Christine's letter to Jean de Montreuil contains the most explicit and elaborate critical response to the *Roman de la Rose* in her career up to this point. Her arguments involve a series of attacks on several of the major characters and episodes in Jean de Meun's poem. Jean's Reason is reproached both for her use of obscene language and for her statement that it is better to deceive than to be deceived. La Vieille is attacked for giving pernicious advice to young women. Genius is denigrated because his words serve to excite lust. Le Jaloux is condemned in tandem with Genius for defaming women and undermining the institution of marriage. Finally, the concluding episode in Jean de Meun's poem, the "Taking of the Rose," is criticized as obscene and provocative.

Christine's overall critical strategy thus involves a systematic insistence on authorial responsibility and on reader response, both in a moral context. She attributes to literary discourse an inescapably exemplary character: literary texts by definition present themselves as models to be imitated, in behavior and in speech. It is because of this perspective that she refuses to accept the distinction between author and character with regard to the moral valence of a particular passage. What she foregrounds relentlessly are the extra-textual consequences of literary mimesis, the links between literature and history. What is important about this concept from my present point of view is not at all its relevance or validity for an "accurate" or "correct" reading of the *Roman de la Rose*. I am concerned, rather, with how Christine's notion of the moral dimension of literary discourse is part of her own self-definition as a writer. For this is how she conceives of her own literary vocation, her new kind of female authorial identity.

At the same time, the key question of clerkly authority is at issue. Christine's self-empowering claim to speak as a female *clerc* necessitates a redefinition of clerkliness in such a way as to make possible this kind of speaking subject.¹⁷ In her letter to Jean de Montreuil, this is how she speaks. She deploys a battery of learned arguments, appositely citing the

17. In this general context see Susan Groag Bell, "Christine de Pizan 1364-1430): Humanism and the Problems of a Studious Woman," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976), 173-184.

texts of various *auctores*. On the one hand, this involves a confrontation with her 15th-century clerkly opponents, where the question is her authority as a reader. On the other hand, this involves a confrontation with Jean de Meun himself, perceived as the embodiment of the kind of clerkliness that precludes Christine's own clerkly identity. Here, the question is her authority as a writer.

Both kinds of authority are at issue when, towards the end of her letter, Christine engages in a strategic act of auto-citation. Arguing against the misogynistic position of Le Jaloux, Christine maintains that women simply do not engage in a variety of particularly grievous sins that are, as it were, reserved for men:

Et comme autrefois ay dit sur ceste matiere en un mien dictié appellé *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*: ou sont les contrees ou les royaumes qui par [les] grans iniquitez [des femmes] sont exiliéz? . . . je pry tous ceulx qui tant le font autentique et tant y adjostent foy qu'ilz me sachent a dire quans ont veuz accuséz, mors, pendus ou reprouchiéz en rue par l'encusement de leurs femmes: si croy que cler les trouveront seméz (pp. 17-18).

[As I have said previously on this subject in my work called "L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours," where are those countries and kingdoms which have been ruined by the great evils of women? . . . I pray all who hold [Genius's] teaching authentic and put so much faith in it, that they kindly tell me how many men they have seen accused, killed, hanged, and publically rebuked by the accusations of their women? I think they will find them few and far between (pp. 52, 51).]

First of all, Christine is here treating herself as a bookish authority, who can be cited in good clerkly fashion to buttress an argument. Secondly, she is illustrating her own point with regard to authorial responsibility and rhetorical distancing between author and character: she claims as her own words those that were spoken in the *Epistre* by the character Cupid. Third, she emphasizes the difference between that fictional *Epistre* and this real one, which is also a function of the increased authority, independence and definition of her evolving public persona, her new authorial self. She no longer needs to speak through the authoritative fictional construct which is the God of Love, but has reached a point where she can — having created it — speak in her own voice, clearly situated in history. Thus she recontextualizes the earlier charge brought by her character Cupid against misogynistic clerks in general, by directing it (in yet another auto-citation, vv. 313-318) against Jean de Meun in particular:

Mais vrayement puis que en general ainsi toutes blasma, de croire par ceste raison suis contrainte que onques n'ot accointance ne hantise de femme honnable ne vertueuse, mais par plusieurs femmes dissolues et de male vie hanter — comme font communement les luxurieux — cuida ou faingny savoir que toutes telles feussent, car d'autres n'avoit congnoissance (p. 18).

[But truly since he blamed all women in general, I am constrained to believe that

he never had acquaintance of, or regular contact with, any honorable or virtuous woman. But by having resort to many dissolute women of evil life (as lechers commonly do), he thought, or feigned to know, that all women were of that kind; for he had known no others (p. 52).]

In this context she fulfills, in a real *epistre* written in her own name, the prediction made by her character Cupid, in a fictional *epistre* written in his (fictional) name, concerning the necessity of female experience for an authentic depiction of woman's nature. Cupid, we remember, had added that if women had written the books, a very different picture would have emerged (vv. 408-422). This is now what Christine claims quite explicitly to be doing:

... veritablement mon motif n'est simplement fors soustenir pure verité, si comme je la sçay de certaine science estre au contraire des dictes choses de moy nyees; et de tant comme voirement suis femme, plus puis tesmoingnier en ceste partie que celui qui n'en a l'experience, ains parle par devinailles et d'aventure (p. 19).

[... my motive is simply to uphold the pure truth, since I know by experience that the truth is completely contrary to those things I am denying. And it is precisely because I am a woman that I can speak better in this matter than one who has not had the experience, since he speaks only by conjecture and by chance (p. 53).]

At the same time, she appropriates an alternative clerkly tradition, in the context of which she chooses to situate her new, learned female voice:

... et quant a parler de tout le bien qui ou dit livre puet estre noté, certes trop plus de vertueuses choses, mieulx dictes, plus auttentiques et plus prouffitables — mesmes en politiquement vivre et moralement —, sont trouvees en mains autres volumes fais de philosophes et docteurs de nostrë foy, comme Aristote, Senèque, saint Pol, saint Augustin et d'autres — ce savéz vous —, qui plus vallaiblement et plainement tesmongnent et enseignent vertus et fuir vices que mais tre Jehan de Meun n'eust sceu faire" (p. 22).

[Do you wish to speak of all the good which can be found in this book? Certainly, far more virtuous things, eloquently expressed, closer to the truth, and more profitable to the decorous and moral life can be found in many other books — books written by certain philosophers and by teachers of our faith, like Aristotle, Seneca, St. Paul, St. Augustine, and others, as you well know. For these testify and teach how to pursue virtue and flee vice more clearly and plainly than Master Jean de Meun has ever been able to do (p. 55).]

Christine's self-portrayal in the dossier of the *Débat* thus involves a kind of superior clerkliness, which allows her to confront and to displace Jean de Meun as authoritative vernacular clerk. The ultimate "proof" of her identity as historically "real" learned woman author lies in the status of the *Débat* itself, as speech situation. Simply by participating in this kind of public discursive interchange, Christine establishes her own

clerkly, authorial credentials. Hence the importance of the dossier as format in terms of her new kind of public self.

This is, I think, what is ultimately at issue in the final two letters of the dossier. Gontier Col questions Christine's status as reader, as disputant, because she is a woman in letter number three. Christine responds in letter number four by reaffirming her identity as female clerk as the source of her authority. The *fact* of the epistolary exchange is the most powerful confirmation of Christine's position, and her opponents in the *Débat* are thus made to bear witness to her public identity as a new kind of clerkly speaking subject.

It is interesting, in this context, to consider the key difference between Christine's letters and those of the Rhodophiles when viewed as illocutionary acts.¹⁸ Her opponents write directives: their goal is to convince Christine, to make her change her mind and recant her opinions. Her letters, on the other hand, are representatives: her goal is not to convince or to convert her opponents, but to represent her own position, her own reading of the *Roman de la Rose* — which means nothing less than the representation of her new authorial self. Even at the level of the inscribed dedicatees of the dossier as a whole, Christine is primarily concerned with creating prestigious and authoritative public witnesses to her aggressive act of self-representation. The appropriate conditions which allow the *Débat* to take place imply and thus establish the key features of Christine's identity as clerkly speaking subject.

It is therefore highly significant that Christine acted to take final and complete control of the *Débat* as written artifact by means of an additional letter, which both expanded the original dossier and definitively effected closure. Dated October 2, 1402, this letter is a long and detailed response to the epistolary attack made by Pierre Col on Christine's position as contained in the initial dossier. Pierre's letter itself is strategically excluded from Christine's second collection.

Christine's final letter is the longest in the dossier and constitutes a kind of definitive statement of her reading of the *Roman de la Rose* and of Jean de Meun. On the one hand, previous points are recapitulated and significantly expanded. On the other hand, a variety of new approaches are employed which involve increasingly sophisticated and self-assured use of her "personal" identity as woman author. The culmination of Christine's argument, of her interpretation of the *Roman*, is in fact a clear articulation of this identity in contradistinction to the limited possibilities for female identity contained in Jean de Meun's poem. A particularly revelatory moment comes as she answers Pierre's charge that she attacks Jean de Meun only because she envies him, and his status as author:

18. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1977), pp. 80-99 and John R. Searle, "Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society* 5 (1976), 1-23.

... je te promet n'y ay aucune envie. Et pour quoy aroie? Il ne me fait froit ne chaut, ne mal ne bien ne oste ne donne; ne il ne parle d'estat dont je soie par quoy aye cause de indignacion, car je ne suis mariee ne espoir estre, ne religieuse aussy, ne chose qu'il die ne me touche: je ne suis Bel Aqueil, ne je n'ay paour de la Vielle, ne boutons n'ay a garder. Et si te promés que je aime biaux livres et subtilz, et biaux traités, et les quiers et les cerche et les lis voulantiers si rudement comme les sache entendre. Et si n'aime point celluy de la *Rose*, la cause si est simplement et absolument pour ce que il est de tres mauvaise exortacion et deshonneste lecture, et qui plus penetre en couraige mal que bien (p. 147).

[... I assure you I feel no envy. And why should I? He makes me neither hot nor cold, does me neither good nor ill; he neither gives nor takes away; he does not speak of my particular situation — why then should I feel indignant? For I am not married, nor hope to be, nor am I a nun, so that nothing he says pertains to me. I am not Fair Welcome; I do not fear the Old Woman; I do not have any rose buds to guard. Yet I assure you that I love beautiful, wise, and well-written books. I seek them out and read them eagerly (within the limits of my understanding), and if I do not love that book of the *Rose*, it is simply because the work teaches an evil and dishonorable lesson, and sows far more evil than good (p. 142).]

By this point, Christine's reading of the *Rose* has quite literally become a discourse of the self. Over the course of the *Débat*, she has confronted Jean de Meun qua author by means of a powerful deployment of the clerkly discourse he himself had used. Now at the end of the *Débat*, having established her own authoritative clerkly identity, she displaces Jean as author figure. For her final letter ends with a self-portrait, a miniature literary autobiography in which the different stages of her career as a professional writer are presented in sequence (Hicks, ed., pp. 148-150; trans., pp. 143-144). The concluding stage is her involvement in the *Débat* itself, which she presents as one of her literary works, as co-terminous with the dossiers she has made. Her final gesture of control in this regard is thus to effect closure:

Et quant a moy, plus n'en pense faire escripture, qui que m'en escripse, car je n'ay pas empris toute Sainne a boire: ce que j'ay escript est escript ... mieulx me plaist excerciter en autre matiere mieulx a ma plaisance ... Si feray fin a mon dittié du debat non hayneux commencié, continué et finé par maniere de soulas sans indignacion a personne (pp. 149-150).

[For my part, I do not intend to write any more about the matter, whoever may write to me, for I have not undertaken to drink the entire Seine. What I have written is written ... I prefer [now] to devote myself to another subject more to my taste ... I will now bring to an end my book of the debate, which has never been spiteful, but was begun, continued, and ended pleasantly, without personal enmity (p. 144).]

Christine's dossier of the *Epistres sur le "Roman de la Rose"* constitutes an extended act of self-presentation in and through history. At the same time, it is the culmination of her long critical engagement with the *Rose*

both as reader and as writer. Throughout the dossier she expertly employs clerkly discourse to confront the single most authoritative clerkly figure in the medieval French literary canon: Jean de Meun. In doing so she expands the very terms of the clerkly discursive system in such a way as to authorize her own identity as clerkly speaking subject. In this context her dossier, her book, her *dittié* of the *Débat* is at once the product and the proof of her legitimacy as female clerkly author.

University of Pennsylvania

MANIC

686L NVI 61

VOLUME LXXIX NUMBER 1

JANUARY 1988

REVIEW

ROMANCE