Calliope
And
Clio's
Kindred

An Honors Thesis

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Sapientae legant-gratias se ago.
Calliope and Clio’s Kindred brings together six diverse Medieval women and lets them interact with one another along with the medieval fair town of Troyes, Champagne, France and the mythic City of Ladies. Women as diverse as Khadija, wife of Mohammed, Queen Emma of England, a midwife of Strasbourg, Margery Kempe a religious woman, Sei Shonagon, a Court poet in Japan, and Christine de Pizan are brought together in a way befitting medieval literature. Through their interactions with one another and the cities, we learn about each woman. Using the first person they interact thus allowing women who have been dead for centuries to tell their own stories. These interactions are divided into three sections: The Map, The Foire (fair) of St. Jean, and lastly the City of Ladies. Different ladies interact at different times thus allowing each lady’s distinct voice to come through, expressing their unique place in history and society. Such interactions provide information on the diverse experience of women in the medieval era. All of which is supported by research in the form of footnotes and a large bibliography. At the end of the paper the author thanks the ladies for their contribution to history and her knowledge.
The Map

An old, sandy parchment map crinkles as it displays its weathered wisdom and age. Continents, seas, islands, oceans, rock, water, and earth give the map its definition, its identity. Yet looking at this map the first thought is not likely to be that of rocks unless one is a geologist. Instead you look at these lines and colors that give form to those continents, trying to imagine the world as the cartographer saw it. Perhaps you try to imagine the lives of those living on one small section of the map. Farms and churches dot the landscape. At this point you might see some diligent peasant farmer and his family as they work from the soil a life that might never know of the ocean several inches away on the map. With your twenty first century perception perhaps you see a different aspect of our farmer’s life.

Each discipline of study has its own way of examining such a work, thus your view might go in a different direction. Historians would look at the same space on the map and know if Caesar mentioned the area in De Bello Gallico or know the battles our farmer’s ancestors might have participated in at different times. Linguists might see a language family tree blending into the farmer’s speech. They could imagine the Germanic words in the farmer’s speech and know how to speak with him. Mathematicians could calculate how many farmers occupied this space or calculate the number of years the farmer occupied space on the map. An artist could see the beauty or lack thereof in the cartographer’s ink and key. Philosophers might debate paradigms of the period or the actual existence of our farmer. Biologists could detail the biodiversity of the area. Environmentalists could describe in depth how the farmer used his resources. Such musings while enjoyable miss the point of our map.

With all the history and knowledge accumulated since then, it is almost impossible to imagine the world of those who lived at the map’s creation. Yet by removing the blinders
of several centuries' knowledge and arrogance, the vision becomes clearer, while still
providing for a myriad of questions. What did the person from this fraction of map and
earth think of that person from a different fraction of the map? Would they get along? What
would they talk about? Would they believe in the same god? Would they be aware of other
religions? Would they care?

Instead of assuming that the speakers are men, what if they were women? What
could be learned of this map and its meanings? Could modern women discover anything
new from their Medieval grandmothers? Would history be rewritten by women whose
stories either corroborate or contradict the norm recorded by priests and echoed by
professors?

Taking seven medieval women from different backgrounds and arranging for them
meet in a real market town, Troyes, Champagne might answer some of these questions.
While this meeting would never have occurred, through the magic of research, it will. Seven
women who represent different economic groups (a queen, a noblewoman, two merchants, a
scholar, a religious woman and a midwife), faiths (Zen Buddhism, Christianity and Islam),
and countries (Japan, England, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia) all possible during the
Middle Ages gather together. Chronologically they represent all parts of the Middle Ages
with Khadija as the early Middle Ages; Queen Emma, and Sei Shonagon as the High Middle
Ages; Christine de Pizan, Margery Kempe and the Margretta Linz representing the late
Middle Ages. Each choice was made with conscious effort to make the conversation as

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1 Technically Khadija was not yet a Muslim because I'm having her come just as Mohammed started
receiving his visions thus there isn't a faith because according to Muslims God hasn't finished with
Mohammed yet. Nor has he done anything particularly Islamic at this point. (ca.610)
2 These distinctions are inherently modern as the idea of nationhood did not begin for a couple centuries
however my desire is to show the diversity of the cast not debate medieval political science.
interesting and representative of as many parts of the medieval spectrum as possible.  

Thankfully many of these ladies either wrote or were written about by others leaving a legacy that permits their voices to come through the time and space that separates them from this work. Many hands preserved and collected these works so that the ladies may share the light of their knowledge on later generations.

Having lit the world with the wisdom of these extraordinary ladies, the focus shifts back to the map of the world. Suddenly tiny dots in different parts of the map appear and begin to move. On a long narrow island off the eastern edge of the map a palm-leaf carriage starts moving from a palace with tiled roofs that slopes gently upward. The snores of many servants and ladies echo from this beautiful wooden structure as a lady, clad in many layers of rich red silk, leaves in her carriage. Beginning this long journey she rests in her comfortable palm-leaf carriage.

On the opposite side of the map, on another small island just off the western edge of a large continent, a queen prepares to depart. She begins by giving specific instructions to her steward and staff. Capably she directs them, yet reluctantly she relinquishes the power she has come to relish. Her every movement conveys her power and authority. Piety, another important part of her position, requires that she attend Mass before departing. Wisely, she makes special appeal to Saint Christopher, patron saint of travelers, in her prayers.

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3 Thus this conversation could not have actually taken place. However my goal is to imagine that it had by taking each lady from her strongest period and allow her to speak. Through a variety of techniques I hope to be as historically accurate as possible.

4 Any faults herein are the exclusive property of one Tara S. Smith and not to be assigned to any particular author, lady, editor, or advisor.

5 To those many anonymous helpers, gratias tibi ago.


7 Sei Appendix 4

8 Sei 52,285
Along the coast of the continent named after Europa, not far from where the queen prepares herself, another woman sits heavy with child. By the orders of a midwife she cannot leave her house but she still manages to keep busy. She rolls thread as she directs her teenage daughter at the loom. Even as her back aches, she keeps working. Her child may be due soon but that does not mean the family’s hunger will disappear while she awaits its arrival. As she directs her daughter she hopes that this child will be a boy, a gift that would make her burden and that of the family lighter.

On the far left side of the map, parts of which were labeled by Crusaders near Christian holy places, another lady inspects a caravan as it prepares to leave. These goods must make it to Damascus to keep her family’s wealth intact. Her husband recently received a vision, though she does not yet, know what his vision will mean for her family. The caravan ready and gone, the lady prepares her camel. This trip would be shorter by boat but she prefers her camel; they are old friends and she intends to scrutinize markets along the way.

From a town in the mountains that a river meanders through, the next lady prepares for her journey south. She travels by foot which means packing a few possessions and some loaves of bread for her journey. Carefully she leaves instructions with her daughters about the expectant ladies in the area. Both daughters strong and healthy assure her that all will be well; they will do exactly as she has taught them. With caution and fear in her voice she

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11 Leila Ahmed Women and Gender in Islam. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 103-104
12 Emory C. Bogel Islam Origins and Belief. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999) 6-7
13 Gelis 103
instructs them that they cannot make a mistake which is likely to injure both mother and child and her family's meager living. Her daughters obey. Bidding their mother a safe journey, they promise to pray for her.

A holier lady sits sobbing loudly as she prays to her God on an island called Britannia by the Romans, who crucified her Lord. Other parishioners, used to her antics but still annoyed by them, whisper that she is going on another pilgrimage. More malicious voices add that they hope that she finally becomes a martyr, "Let God can have her because we have no need of her on earth." Satisfied with her prayer, she and her guide begin this journey. She speaks of God and, rarely, of her husband.

Sitting at her desk another woman, in a white veil and deep blue dress, reminisces about her good husband whom she misses dearly. Her home sits on land that used to belong to the Parisi across the channel that separates her home from that of the religious lady. She too must make a journey, a bit shorter and more pleasant than those of the others but she must prepare for her guests before they arrive at their destination. With her guidance and assistance the ladies were selected and summoned. A heavy sigh escapes her as she contemplates all the work required to make this event a success. Gathering up the parchments with descriptions of her guests, she walks to her carriage.

Each of the ladies' directions brings them to the same mysterious place. None of their directions listed specific towns or countries instead they merely identified interesting landmarks in an effort to make the journey more pleasant and keep its ultimate destination a

15 Ibid
16 Kempe The Book of Margery. She rarely mentions loving her husband more often she speaks of him as a disease preventing her from getting to heaven.
secret. The lady from the East starts earlier seeing many mountains, rivers, and farmers along the way. Her nearest neighbor from Arabia takes her camel by land the better to see the trading cities she had only heard about from other merchants.\textsuperscript{17} The queen takes a royal ship from England the entire duration of the trip.\textsuperscript{18} Traveling by boat is her preferred method of travel, because it allows her role as queen and member of ducal family of Normandy to command respect in foreign places.\textsuperscript{19} As the daughter of the Duke of Normandy she has seen many of the sights along her journey before and savors their familiarity.\textsuperscript{20} Her fellow country lady tries to tarry along the way at religious sites but, sadly, her guide refuses to stop. As a frequent pilgrim she is familiar with many of these places.\textsuperscript{21} The lady from the north takes a straight road to her destination while keeping an eye for the thieves, she knows are lurking, waiting for wealthier people than her along the road. They prefer a richer quarry than some poor midwife. All the ladies converge on a dot in the middle of the Count of Troyes' richest possession.\textsuperscript{22}

Her highness from England arrives at the destination first. To her the spot appears to be a simple, sunny clearing just outside of Troyes though her summons said she would meet other royalty. The ship with its flags of Normandy and England attracts some attention as it passes through the champagne-cork shaped city.\textsuperscript{23} Queen Emma is a short dark-haired lady with light blue-grey eyes wearing a crown and veil over her hair.\textsuperscript{24} Khadija,\textsuperscript{17} Speculative but likely that as a Meccan she would have heard of Greece and other Mediterranean places to say nothing of Africa or China.
\textsuperscript{18} Speculative however the heads of State have traveled in distinctive vessels
\textsuperscript{19} Pauline Stafford. \textit{Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's in Eleventh Century England} (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishers,1997). Given what I have read of Emma while this is speculative I believe it to be consistent with her character.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid
\textsuperscript{21} Kempe. Margery discusses her pilgrimages throughout her book.
\textsuperscript{22} The French state would prefer you think of this place as the department of Aube not Champagne as it was and is more often known.
\textsuperscript{23} Anonymous www.vieuxtroyes.fr
\textsuperscript{24} All physical descriptions are largely based upon the little tidbits found in the sources.
on her camel, attracts more attention. Whether it is her dark coloring and exotic clothes or
her camel that attracts the most attention is hard to say. Even the oldest of merchants stares
at the dark haired lady with sparkling brown eyes and flowing clothing. Laughing, she urges
her camel to their ultimate destination, where she is promised to find wondrous goods.

Decked in white and protesting loudly about skirting the town walls, Margery Kempe arrives
with her guide. He assured her that God would forgive her for not visiting the church Pope
Urban IV built despite the summons declaring that such a visit was the purpose of this
journey.\textsuperscript{25} In her palm-leaf carriage, Sei Shonagon from the East arrives bedecked in silks so
rich that as she passes through Troyes, weavers of every nationality appraise the worth of her
outfit to be more than the fortunes of several generations of lords.\textsuperscript{26} They did not, however,
see her face, for no man had such rights unless he is her lover.\textsuperscript{27} Had they seen her face they
would have seen her reading over the summons given her by the Empress promising that in
this faraway place she would meet great writers. Threadbare and tired, the midwife,
Margretta Linz, passes unnoticed through town.\textsuperscript{28} Having heard that a famous lecturer on
new birthing techniques would be speaking in Troyes and having received a summons by
way of her priest she decided to go. Magically the ladies are in the field, as Christine de
Pizan had intended, however they cannot see one another. Time and distance still separate
the ladies from one another. With a deep breath Christine says the prayer that allows the
ladies to see one another. Before they have a chance to do more than stare, she says:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{25} Elizabeth Chapin. \textit{Les Villes de Foires de Champagne des Origines au Debut du XIVe
Siecle}, (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion, 1937.)
\textsuperscript{26} Sei 129,277
\textsuperscript{27} Sei 27-29,72-3,93, and 300
\textsuperscript{28} Geis 70-71, www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintm27.htm St. Margaret was the patron Saint of
Midwives so this seemed apt.
\end{flushright}
"Gracious ladies, you were summoned here for different, very specific purposes which will occur within the day. A Lady has summoned you here and it is my duty to make sure that you enjoy this experience. You are all exceptional ladies with many talents which is why the Lady thought you would enjoy this meeting. Dear Margery, do not start weeping for this meeting has been sanctioned by He who is most dear to you." Her gently firm voice continued, "I shall introduce you to one another. The lady with the crown is her highness Queen Emma of England, wife of Cnute, King of England, sister to the Duke of Normandy and Daughter of the late Duke of Normandy. Behind the fan and beneath that covering of fine silk is Sei Shonagon, Court Lady of the Empress Sadako, member of the famed Kiyowara family, and court poet. Astride that sturdy camel and with the coloring of Arabia is Khadija wife of the merchant Mohammed from Mecca. In white is Margery Kempe wife of the merchant John Kempe and daughter of a merchant who was many times mayor of Lynn Bishop. Lastly we have, Margretta Linz, a midwife of Strasbourg. Ladies, you currently stand on the land belonging to the Queen of Heaven and the City of Ladies. While you are here you will understand one another perfectly despite your differences in language because the City of Ladies has only one language, virtue. While you are here we shall tour the town of Troyes, then have dinner and entertainments, after which you will fulfill the summons.

29 In true hierarchical form the ladies are introduced.
30 Sei 400
31 Sei 319
32 Kempe 7.23
La Foire de St. Jean

As the ladies wait with Christine de Pizan, assistants appear with light brown wool dresses with hoods that will cover them from head to ankle, and hand them to each lady. The ladies look at the dresses confusedly. Christine begins, "Did you see the bustling town through which you passed on your way here?"

I spoke up, "My lady it appears to be a trading town like that of Mecca or Damascus." She, our hostess, the lady in the blue dress and white veil, looked at me kindly. None of us knew her name and I was disconcerted that I could understand every word she said, while noticing that she spoke with an accent I was not used to hearing.

With that odd accent she said to me, "Khadija, you are right, it is the hot fair of St. Jean celebrated in Troyes every year with merchants from all over the world. There are merchants from Acre, Cyprus and Tunis." Then our hostess looked at the lady in white and Queen Emma then said, "Merchants are here from England with woolens and metals." Looking at the woman who carried the dust of many miles on foot she said, "There are merchants here from Strasbourg, your home."

The lady said with pride, "Of course there are. It would not be the fair of St. Jean without merchants from Strasbourg."

The lady in silks spoke up "Lady, why is it that all of you," gestures at everyone but me, "look alike but Khadija and I are the only ladies who came from the east."


34 Ibid

Our hostess nodded, "I invited a Mongol princess but she was too busy guarding the silk trading road to attend." Her silk clad ladyship was happy with that answer.

A loud cry erupted from the lady in white. "Do you expect us to wear these dresses?! My Lord commanded me to wear white." For a brief second the lady in blue looked annoyed, and then forced a pleasant expression. "Margery, God will not be offended if you wear this habit. While the Count of Troyes can ensure the safety of merchants and trade, he cannot stop thieves. Wearing the habit prevents thieves from robbing you and makes you more anonymous."

I could feel her gaze slipping east towards the lady in silk and myself perhaps since we had traveled the longest and would be least familiar with this new setting. We put on the habits with the help of the assistants.

The hood felt a bit odd. We walked with a few armed men to the gates of Troyes. Such an unfamiliar name to me yet as I have never been this far West there is no reason I should know of this town. Her majesty managed to keep her crown visible despite the hood. Shonagon and I made eye contact and laughed at our silly costumes. So far from home yet we still need to be protected by men. I wish Mohammed were here to see this strange place.

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36 I tried to incorporate a Mongol lady but the information was severely lacking. One promising book appeared in my research, sadly however it was in Mongolian, not a language with which I am familiar. It would have been nice for her to attend with her military abilities.

37 Kempe 96

38 Gies Daily Life in Medieval Times

39 Ibid. This refers to the agreement of the Count of Troyes with other adjacent nobles. Ironically the habit would make them more anonymous and yet more protected because they are anonymous nuns instead of women from different parts of the world. The rough wool habit would deflect more attention than it would gain.

40 Ahmed 71. Aisha was the first of Muhammed's wives to wear a veil. Khadija did not wear a veil and would be unused to such a covering.

Since there is a market here I will check prices and compare them with those he used on his journey. I am curious to see the differing values placed on the food and spices. In Mecca some goods are much less valuable than they are in Damascus. Other merchants tell me that the people in the West soak up luxury goods like the desert consumes rain, with a never ending appetite. Silks like those Shonagon wears are probably not worth to her one tenth of what any merchant here would pay.

Two by two, we walk with guards on the outside of each pair of ladies. Her majesty and Shonagon ahead, the lady in blue next to me in the middle followed by the lady in white and the lady of Strasbourg. How do they say that word? I know I am only saying it now because of the help of translation, but how will I say it when I get home? After a short walk we get to the gate with people bustling to get in, while guards and officials keep a strict eye on the goods entering the city. Ahead of me Shonagon's fan, very beautiful, flutters nervously as she glances everywhere.

"Hostess," she begins quietly, "I have not ever been to such a fair as this and the rules of the court declare that no man may see my face. All of them keep staring."

Our hostess said, "Gracious ladies, you are about to enter the hot fair of St. Jean. I will lead you to goods that might interest you." Her majesty looked uneasily at our departing guards. "You wear the habit of a nun, so that if anyone abuses you they can be certain of a brutal afterlife, thus you will not need the guards. Others dress as you do; your habit will prevent any bad things from happening especially within Troyes. Keep

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42 Sei 300.
your fan and hood up; no man should give you more than a passing glance, Lady Sei. Or you could pretend to be a hag.\textsuperscript{43}

"But why disfigure beauty when beauty is so short lived. However seeing as most of the men here would be rejected from their majesties' court for being too dirty, I shall pretend myself to be an ugly old nun." We laugh at her wit except for the lady in white, Margery, who looked disapprovingly at Lady Sei.

The lady in blue continued, "Since you are equally unfamiliar with the fair and each other it is best that you explore the fair in pairs. When it is time for dinner one of the guards will summon you. Queen Emma and Lady Sei, I will lead you to the fine fabrics and precious metals. Khadija, you and I will explore the spices.\textsuperscript{44} This leaves Margery and Margretta to look at the holy goods for sale along with the different foodstuffs."

(Margery looks very unhappy at her pairing.)

"I must ask that I be put with Khadija because my father was the Mayor of King's Lynn, a very important and rich town and my husband is a merchant.\textsuperscript{45} You cannot possibly expect me, who has been to the Holy Land to go about with a poor midwife; besides Khadija and I have more in common as merchants. In the Holy Land I saw camels much like hers so she probably knows more about the Holy Land. See she and I have more to talk about than the midwife.\textsuperscript{46}"

\textsuperscript{43} At this point I'm assuming Christine has read The Pillow Book and is aware of Shonagon's sense of humor.

\textsuperscript{44} Chapin, Gies Medieval. According to both sources there are merchants from Cordoba present. I lack the skill to write the interactions between Khadija and the Moslem merchants. It would be quite surreal for Khadija to meet a follower of her husband's prophecies. In the interests of not creating a Back to the Future scenario I will decline this chance to mess with history that much. Granted the Spice Islands converted to Islam but I think it was after the 1200s when this visit to Troyes is set.

\textsuperscript{45} Kempe 23,7

\textsuperscript{46} Kempe 23-However where Margery's failed at her attempts at brewing. Khadija was a successful merchant according to all accounts.
Her Highness and Lady Sei laughed. Many times in Mecca I have seen people whose holiness requires separation from the poorer people or people they perceive to be lower than they are. How would God see us? To my husband and children I am important, regardless of our wealth. They need me to feed them and make sure their home is nice. Children see only the help given to them not just the jewels on the fingers doing the giving. Does God hear the wealth in prayers?

Before I can quote a verse from the Christian holy book I have heard used, Shonagon speaks.

"I am glad to see your God pays as much attention to position as mine does. To think maybe all religions are alike."

"Lady Sei I have heard about your strange religion from other pilgrims. I cannot believe that you would blaspheme so. The Lord, my God, is beyond the realm of your pagan gods. I weep that you are not converted to the True Faith and know of the glory of Jesus Christ. When you start following the True Faith you will understand how mortally wrong you are," said Margery with all the force of tears and anger. If every pilgrim to the Kaaba had the same feelings as this lady, Mecca would be covered in blood.

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47 In sticking to the hierarchy of the Middle Ages, Khadija's position as a rich, well connected merchant places her more among the company of Christine whose father was the Court Physician than that of Margery. Technically it could be argued that Khadija belongs more with Margery on the basis of religious influence-Margery's visions versus those of Mohammed. To me based upon position within my twentieth century history books, Khadija would trump all of the ladies with her influence on Mohammed thus Moslems but the twentieth century blinders came off in the introduction and I have no desire to force history on women who merely lived it.

48 Speculative but I cannot imagine she had not seen that living in Mecca as she did.

49 Speculative. There's a little less to support such an egalitarian attitude yet I want to think as practical as she seemed to be, this might not have escaped her notice.

50 Sei 101. Imaging her doing this is easier than typing it.

51 Kempe. Throughout her autobiography, Margery affirms the glory of God so this speech is no stretch of the imagination.

52 Presuming of course that she had not heard of the Crusades.
Shonagon was joking with Margery; I could tell by the way she moved her fan quickly over her face so as not to show her laughter.

"While I agree with your faith, Margery, do you think the Virgin Mary would appreciate you treating others in this way? She is our guest and, as a fellow guest, you need not lecture her on your religion," said the Lady in Blue kindly.

Margery’s crying got worse as she turned red from either anger or sadness, I could not tell. "Take me to the nearest Church so that I may pray for your souls and confess my sins."

Our hostess looked relieved as she summoned a guard. "Take this Lady to Sainte Madeleine’s."

"But my Lady, Saint Panthaleon’s is closer," interjected the Guard.

"There is a kindly priest at Sainte. Madeleine’s who will be interested in hearing her stories." The guard obeyed and took Margery with him. "Margretta, I am very sorry for Margery’s behavior." In her habit, the midwife looked more proud despite Margery’s comments and merely shrugged her shoulders.

Turning back to me, the Lady in blue said, "Khadija, merchant of Mecca would you care to explore the fair of St. Jean with Margretta Linz, midwife of Strasbourg?"

I considered her position for a moment and it reminded me of that of my husband Mohammad, the orphan without much to recommend him before we married.54

"Midwife," I said, "it would be my pleasure to explore the fair with you, just do not make me say the name of your town." All the other ladies laughed as the lady in blue led her Majesty and Shonagon toward the luxury goods.

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51 Map of Troyes. Christine is deliberately letting Margery get a view of the fair knowing full well that she will not see it otherwise.
54 Bogle 6-7
We watched as they disappeared in the throng of people. "Tell me why your position is so low?" I asked.

"Lady Khadija (it sounded funny the way she said it) I am a widowed mother of four. The only skill I have comes from the pain of childbirth, either mine or that of other women. If the mother dies while in my care, it is my fault. If the baby dies, especially if it is a boy, it is my fault. However if I call a surgeon in to help and he saves both I get neither credit nor food. I try my best but much of what happens is a mystery. God moves in ways I do not understand and all I can try to do is make sure both survive. Do you have any children?"  

"Yes, my youngest are two girls with my husband Mohammed."

"What are their names?"

"Fatima and Zara."

"Beautiful names, my daughters are Anna and Teresa."

"See, Midwife, we both possess daughters and professions."

She smiled back at me and then catches a man looking at us. "What does he expect us to do, wail like that other creature?"

"No, Merchant of Mecca, but I do see a stall selling rosaries, which are sacred beads used to do penance and make amends with our God. Rosaries are also very reassuring for the mothers during childbirth and help me keep my focus during birth. I trust our lady will not mind if we have a look."

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55 Strasbourg is difficult to imagine with an Arab accent.
56 Ahmed 103: Gelis 104
57 Ahmed 103
58 None of my sources gave any other names other than Fatima, which I know from years of World Civ.
59 Chapin, Gies Daily Life. Both thoroughly the fair experience.
I follow her through the narrow streets filled with people, goods, animals, and refuse. Buildings several windows high crowd in on us. Plenty of people mean that this fair keeps the merchants and nobles happily rich. These buildings are odd with their height and use of wood. At home most buildings are made of stone or clay or tents.\footnote{Based upon years of World Civ I know that there were not many trees left in Arabia. Mecca was different because it was in a stone valley thus all the houses there would presumably have been made of stone or clay. Khadija would certainly have been aware of the Bedouins who lived in tents.}

The streets are paved with stones and shops open right on the street. Stalls and people crowd in the available space. People in all sorts of odd dress mix with "nuns" like us. Some of the men wear short skirts while others wear short pants—every sort of clothing is acceptable here. Women wear dresses that expose parts of their chests while others are completely covered. It is interesting what passes for modesty here. Dogs and cats paw for food in the corners. Smells of dirty humans, horses, goats, pigs, and cows mixes with that of food. It smells very familiar. Missing are the smells of oils and incense that fill markets at home.\footnote{Speculative but based upon the fact that most of oils and fragrances at that time came from the east. Khadija was likely exposed to things like myrrh and olive oil things unknown to Margretta.} Glass and furs are sold not far from one another though they may have come from different parts of the world. It is all quite amazing. If only Muhammad could see all this... We could make a fortune selling our goods here and I think he would enjoy seeing these new goods, people and buildings.\footnote{Speculative.} After staring at everything going on around me I was surprised when Margretta Midwife dragged me through the whirling sights past gold, silver and guards into a stone building tall enough to stack ten camels without touching the ceiling.

"Margretta, why are we here?"
"Khadija it was getting warm, there was too much to see, I was getting dizzy from all the smells and I did not like some of the looks you and I were getting from strange men with lust in their hearts. My mother used to warn me about slave traders and those men looked like what she described.63 This is the Church of St. Jean - the safest place for two foreign nuns to be. The Keeper of the Fair is just outside the door with his guards."

"Thank you, friend Midwife, I did not notice the looks. My eyes usually miss nothing."

"Friend Merchant, your eyes have probably never had to take so much in, I know mine haven't."

I look at the colorful windows whose colors cover the floor. Different figures appear in the windows though I cannot tell what connection they may have. Reds, blues and blacks I have never seen panes of glass in such vivid colors.64

"What do they mean?" I ask my new friend.

"They tell stories about St. John and Christ, both are important to our--my religion. The priests speak to us about them up there." She points to a platform of intricately carved stone so I can see where she means. There is an altar beneath a wooden man on a very long piece of wood with another piece of wood not as long as the first one at his shoulders. He looks like he is in intense pain.

"What is the language written on the windows?"

"It is Latin the language of the wise."

"Why is it not in your own language?"

63 Mothers have been warning about what happens to children who misbehave for centuries. This warning also echoes the Children’s Crusade in 1203 when thousands of French children were sold into slavery. Margretta would have remembered this because our childhood fears loom even in adulthood.

64 This description is based upon visiting gothic cathedrals throughout Luxembourg, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco and France.
"Because God speaks Latin and it sounds better to him than our pagan tongues. When the priests get to heaven they speak to Him in Latin and give him a list of good Christians which lets us in, even without Latin."\(^65\)

"It is very odd that you do not know the language of your God."

"That is how it has been done for as long as anyone can remember."\(^66\)

"You are a good example of your faith." I have met people of many faiths and many Christians, Margretta acts like one of the best of both. Many people act like Margery disdaining those below them despite their "piety." I appreciate Margretta's explanations since they do not condemn and merely seek to inform.

"Thank you friend Merchant, now let us proceed to the moneychangers where there is more money than you or I are ever likely to see. They change money from all over the world there." We are both excited to see foreign coins,

"Margretta, Midwife of Straus-ach-aszs bourg, let us look at the gold and silver."

She smiled at the way I said her town. It is a nice smile even on so foreign-looking a face.

We walk to where there are other darker skinned people exchanging money. I wish I could exchange some of my money to see how much goods are actually worth. As a very angry Sicilian (that's what I heard anyway) almost gets killed by a guard for trying to pass off false coins, our lady finds us.

"Good ladies, I am happy to find you. Amazing how much money there is in the world."

"My lady I wish to buy something for my daughters. Am I permitted to do so?"

asks Margretta, though judging by her clothes I wonder where she hid the money.

\(^{65}\) Speculative. Based upon my observations of stained glass windows and random things I've read about the medieval church. Theoretically a someone like Margretta is doing well to understand the basics of her faith.

\(^{66}\) That does not make sense to me to this day.
"You may but it will disappear once we enter the City of Ladies because in that city worldly goods fall apart and only virtue remains. Follow me and I will lead you to the Spice stalls."

She leads us through a narrow maze of streets and people. Some streets end at odd places while others are so clogged with people that there is no way to get through them. Meanwhile, the buildings tower over us and merchants crowd around, moving their goods into best position. Everywhere voices call to one another in many different languages. As a merchant, it is like music to hear the sound of buying and in selling so many different tongues. Yet in this strange land, it is confusing enough to make a bird fly into a fire.

"Here we are my ladies, the spice stalls where you should be safe and amused."

Just as our Lady departs I ask her "Where are you going?"

"Khadija, I must meet a cloth merchant from Flanders to get news of another lady who was supposed to be here and then I will pry Margery away from whatever poor cleric she has in her good-hearted clutches."

We smile as she leaves. Whoever this lady is she must be very important to go around as she does without escort and knowing so much. Margretta and I look at the many spices, some of which I have never heard of or tasted. Smells of cinnamon and pepper blend with other spices. The prices are ridiculous. An entire caravan could eat off the sale of two small bags of cinnamon for a month.

I will ask Mohammed if we could sell here. My companion's eyes are as big as a camel's foot as she stares at the pepper.
A merchant calls to us "Bonnes Soeurs, prove to these doubters that my peppercorns are real!" He gives us each a peppercorn. Margretta bites down hard on the peppercorn and sputters. The merchant laughs as I eat mine more slowly. He continues calling to the crowd. It was kind of him to let us try his very valuable spice.

Pulling me aside Margretta points to the sugar cone and asks, "What does that brownish cone taste like?"

"Have you ever eaten honey?"

"No."

"Dates?"

"No."

"Sweet wine?"

"No, I only drink beer."

"I have heard of a sweet beer. Have you ever tried that?"

"No, all the beers we have are strong."

"Imagine something tasting like a nice kiss from your husband."

"My husband never gave me nice kisses."

Poor woman, "Imagine a cloud sitting on your tongue."

She looked confused. Perhaps she was too busy to ponder the taste of clouds. I spy a colorfully dressed youth and nod to her.

"Imagine him as someone from heaven kissing you, when your husband never existed and all you have is that moment. That is what sugar tastes like."

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67 Gies Daily Life, As with all markets sometimes people would fake expensive goods. Gies mentions the fact that merchants would sometimes use clay in peppercorns.
Margretta's sigh ends with a laugh as she reminds me "We are dressed as nuns. Nuns are supposed to have never known a man's touch or at least have abstained from it. Here we are two married ladies." We laugh as I think of my dear Mohammad, how I miss him.

Lady Sei exasperates me. I am a queen and yet she refuses to yield to my authority. We look at silks that would make any ordinary woman swoon at their richness and beauty. She merely snipes, "That would not even be good enough for the night guard's worst suit. Exorcists would not be caught by a demon in that fabric."

Thank goodness the merchants cannot hear the comments she makes. That fan of hers with its picture of a stream and fish gets more attention than my crown does. All Lady Sei talks about is the dear Empress and the magnificent Emperor. You would think they were the only monarchs ever to have walked the earth.

Finally sick of all this talk of monarchs I will never meet. I asked her "Have you ever been to a foreign land before this?"

"No, Queen Emma. Why would Shonagon want to leave so beautiful a land? Shonagon hears stories of other lands and imagines visiting them but Shonagon has no desire to go. Her majesty the Empress insisted that Shonagon come here for that was the only reason she would come."^{68}

"Well I was born in the land of the Normans and then moved to England as a bride. I have visited my daughters in other places too."^{69}

"Shonagon does not have children and prefers life around their majesties to that of any other."

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^{68} Sei 27-29,39,243
^{69} Stafford 34-6
None of my court ladies has ever said anything so elegant. Her hair is so very black from where it escapes the hood.

"Do you dye your hair with ink?"

She laughs and replies, "No Queen Emma, Shonagon never intentionally dyes her hair with ink."

"Ah, so you are a writer then?" How else but with ink could she accidentally dye her hair that black?

"No, no. Shonagon writes little verses that occasionally amuse their majesties. She is not so great a writer as her famous father and uncle."  

Lady Sei must be a great writer, for she speaks in riddles. In the cloth merchants' hall we discover the most expensive fabric I have ever seen. These red cloths cost more than most of my estates bring in per a year. Both Lady Sei and I know that beneath her habit her red silks are far better than these Italian reds. At this table both her fan and my crown are given their respect due. Past the rich reds are the light greens, Lady Sei chimes up with a story.

"That green looks like the same green as the leaves Lady Moresuki put in her hair to be elegant. It did not matter because the day she chose to do it was a day of abstinence so no one saw it when she went to all that trouble."

"Once in Church near Winchester, I saw an abbess who was better dressed than any of the ladies present. Everyone knew she took money from donations to her house to fund her beautiful dresses. A cruel bitter woman she was. After my mother in law died she was removed

70 Sei 319,400
71 Chapin, Gies Daily Life. Red was the most expensive dye and was used exclusively by the Italians.
72 Chapin, Gies Daily Life. It is likely that Shonagon’s reds would be more rich than the Italian reds.
from office and forced to sell her fancy clothes to fund pilgrimages to Rome. Some of the money was also used to help the poor. All of this she suffered because she was too worldly.  

Rows and rows of cloth appeared before us it was overwhelming so I was glad when her ladyship dragged me outside to a small garden near a church. Such gardens are very convenient in churches.

"How can you stand so many people in one place at one time Queen Emma? There are many at court and temple but never this many and those people are always moving. Half of the people in the cloth section were there merely to stare and never move. They stay like oxen."

I laughed at her accurate observation. "We usually have about that many people at court. Cnute usually has that many and more before he prepares for battle. Tell me are you married?" I think of Aethelred and Cnute.

"As a lady of Court Shonagon cannot marry. She serves at the pleasure of her majesty the Empress. Besides that Lovers are more fun than husbands. Husbands will just betray wives after a child is born if not before."

"My husbands never cheated. Why would you want a lover when husbands have more wealth and power?"

"Why would you want a husband when lovers are more interesting and less likely to beat you? Lovers are more exciting and can be gotten rid of more easily."

"Husbands provide titles, wealth, authority, and stability."

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73 Stafford  This occurred commonly as Stafford points out throughout her book.
74 Many of the churches I have visited have gardens nearby. A good example of this is St. Julien in Le Mans, France.
75 Sei  41,145
76 Speculative.
77 Sei  27-9,241
"True but lovers provide romance and mystery. As long as one is discreet in one's love affairs and makes sure to only have affairs with men of the right level and are attractive one may stay at court."78

"You would waste your life at Court without children or husband to take care of you when you are old?"

"Spending life in the company of their Majesties wastes it not. Assuming they could tolerate one that long, it would be a great honor to stay at Court that long though only if one is still pretty. For it is terrible when ugly old women clutter up court. Husbands and babies are nice but is it not the nurse who raises the baby and the mistress who cares for the husband? Could you tell Shonagon the favorite toy of one of your children or the favorite poet of your husband?"79

"That they do, yet the baby grows to a man who will take you in when your empress rejects you or a new empress moves in and refuses your company. Husbands are bound by the Church to ensure your property even after they die. It does not matter how much you know about either. They are bound to you regardless."

"Queen Emma, you are right but Shonagon prefers her life with lovers at the Empress' court."80

"I think we are well suited to our respective courts then. Tell me why do you refer yourself in the third person?"

"It is only in the prescience of their majesties that one may use the 'I'.81 While court ladies are criticized for their boldness, Shonagon adheres to the propriety set down by their majesties."82 Someday I would like to visit this court of hers. Their rules must be as rigid as those of the Pope.

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78 Sei 47-48, 81-82, 151, 241
79 Ibid
80 Ibid
81 Ibid
However her loyalty is quite beautiful though it is to a way of life that is so different from mine. No wonder she speaks so much of her court considering how proud she is.

A family of peasants crosses the garden on their way to sell food in a different part of the market. They seem very poor after all the wealth of the cloth house. It is easy to forget peasants like these exist.

"Does the little girl even have a doll?" Lady Sei asks sadly.

"I would not know Shonagon."

"Neither would Shonagon. We are so accustomed to life at Court one sometimes forgets that these people exist."

I remind her that, "I do not need to know. They pay taxes, attend Church and are loyal what more need I worry about them?"

"It is sad that after living at Court you do not care more for your subjects"

"I suppose your beloved Empress spends all day talking to peasants and asking if their daughters have dolls."

"Her majesty does not but the court ladies feed beggars all the time and allow them the leftovers of the feasts of certain holidays."83

"Much of my wealth goes toward enriching the Churches in my kingdom and helping nunneries survive. We care for the poor differently. You apparently deal with yours more directly."

"The walls of court keep poverty out though the wise pay attention to the poor…"

"That they do." I agree but we are reminded to be mindful of the poor by our faith. Christ converted the poor before the rich thus we must take care of them as though they are Him.

Shonagon distracts me from my pious thoughts by pointing out joyfully, "Look a cat!"

82 Sei 27-29
"Doesn't your fancy court have cats?"

"Once. Let's follow it" 84

"It is probably diseased and smelly."

"We could ask the Guard about that." Before us stands a guard like the one who escorted us to Troyes.

"Ladies follow me. We will meet up with the others shortly," said the Guard quietly. The merchant and the midwife join us laughing like children and teasing each other like sisters.

"That man in the blue was from Italy not Sicily! You just insulted him," laughs Khadija. Margretta insists, "Still he denied his countryman hospitality which is against all the rules I've ever heard."

Laughing with every word Khadija replied, "But Margretta, they weren't countrymen!"

The ridiculous woman in white rejoins us without her habit and causes all the laughter to cease. Her serious face stifles their laughter but not for long. Something else sets them off and the two start laughing like drunks. Shonagon stares as do others; they will think we are the wrong kind of nun. We are lead out of town by our very capable guard. We step onto a funny platform outside of the city. It feels very soft like peat or mud.

A gentle servant greets us, "Kind ladies after your wearying day at the fair you should rest before dinner. These cushions will let you rest as we make our way to our destination. Fear not for you shall not be disturbed."

We look around and find pillows of silk with our names on them. Mine is purple, the white lady's is white and nearer to mine than it should be, for if she carries on, I will not be able to sleep. Khadija's is pale blue and that of Shonagon is a deep red like her dress. Oddly the midwife's is a dark green like that of a forest; the sight of it makes her cry. As I lay my head on the pillow it smells

84 Sei 30-33. Cats were imported from China.
of comforting things—a feast, incense at Church and wildflowers. Though I am not certain I believe I heard the pillow, it tells me not to worry about the others and to sleep.

The ladies sleep their way to the City of Ladies where Christine anxiously awaits their arrival. Weeks of work have gone into making this day as special as her guests. Christine has been busy with her duties as hostess and hopes to be able to get to know these guests in person. A new figure in blue and white, the Queen of the City of Ladies and the Virgin Mary appears to her.

"Your majesty I am sorry, what has brought you here?" Mary smiles pacifically as she is often portrayed in art in churches all over the world.

"Daughter, worry not about this evening for it will take care of itself. The guests will behave themselves even dear Margery." Christine laughs, "She has a good heart it just gets hidden by her fervor."

"This I know and I will try to influence her to be a little less cutting but not so much that she is not Margery." Christine smiles.

"My lady, you said something about an additional servant?"

"Here she is."

A blonde girl with intelligent blue eyes enters the room, "My lady, I am honored to serve you and will do anything you ask."

"That is what I normally expect of my servants. Take care to miss the rough side of the cook's tongue." The new servant's shoes squeak on the floor as she exits.

"My lady how is this servant any different?"
"You will learn my child. Nothing in this City is an accident." Pondering these words Christine wonders why the servant’s shoes squeaked and marvels at the wisdom of her Queen.\footnote{Chuck Taylor sneakers like all rubber soled shoes squeak on polished stone surfaces.}

In the City of Ladies

"I was having the most of wonderful dreams of my Savior. We were walking around a garden in heaven and He told me that there were many things that I do not understand. Being only a poor woman I agreed that I could never hope to understand all things. He pointed to a bee on a flower and said, "Margery do you know how that bee flies?" \footnote{Scientists are still puzzling over this one.} "No, Lord I do not." "Then do not be quick to criticize its' flight. Some things you are meant to understand and some things you will never understand." "Yes Lord, I will try to be more patient and humble." My dream ended as our walk in the garden did. While the other ladies were exploring the market I was praying to my Savior and St. Jean in Ste. Madeleine’s to protect them as they made their way through the fair. My habit I gave to a poor beggar in the Church. I am not afraid of anything as long as I have faith in my God.

As we awoke from our rest we were almost to the gates of a great city with many spires and towers. When we got off the platform I realized
it was a cloud—nothing else would be so soft and white not even a feather pillow.

Like we did in Troyes we slowly walked up to the shiny white walls that had to be at least half as tall as a cathedral. This city looked nothing like the heaven I have seen in my visions. Instead of soldiers at the gate there were tall, curly red-haired women with golden bows and silver arrows. They looked so fierce that I almost cried out for God to save me. Their silver armor was almost as bright as the walls. With faces as cold as stone, without any kindness or gentility—I doubted they were Christian. Even those ladies from the East have kindness in their faces.

Lady Sei whispered to us, "They are more fierce than the palace guard."

Queen Emma agreed, "Vikings are never this ferocious."

"Will they harm us?" asked the proud midwife.

As we got closer a more militant woman appeared, she spoke to us loudly and clearly, "I am Queen Thamiris and these are Amazon guards. Our gate guards a mysterious city before you may see it you must first pass through the Gate of Virtue that reaffirms your virtue. Be yourself: kind, noble, charitable, wise, pious, gentle, good hearted, patient, witty,

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87 The description matches that of my first college roommate who thankfully lacked fierceness.
88 De Pizan 38-39
and courageous. Then you will truly savor this city. Otherwise you would not be here in the first place."

Queen Thamiris wore a gold and silver helmet with a scarlet plume. In her right hand she carried a long sharp sword with a jeweled hilt. Even when I went to the Holy Land I never saw anything so awesome as this sword.\(^{89}\) Her left hand held a shield with a spade, crown, cross, and cooking spoon on it.\(^{90}\) We all stared at her armor with its breastplate of silver studded with jagged diamonds and the braided leather on her arms also studded with diamonds. Beneath the breast plate she wore a long black dress. She seemed the very image of Delilah.\(^{91}\) Were it not for the cross around her neck I would have been afraid she was one of Satan's helpers. The Virgin Mary spoke inside of me and told me not to worry. When we walked into the gate all of us were very quiet. The walls of the gate were covered by pictures of the different virtues.

We looked at the pretty paintings, and then we all made our way through the gate. Greeting us on the other side of the gate was a woman

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\(^{89}\) Kempe 62-80

\(^{90}\) Each representing a different aspect of women along with the different classes as they existed. A spade represents the women in the field. The crown is royalty and aristocratic women. For nuns and holy women a cross and the cooking spoon represent town ladies along with the important work all do to feed their families.

\(^{91}\) Margery would not likely to have been familiar with Amazons or any type of woman warrior.
with kind blue eyes, dark black hair, and a silver dress with an olive branch in her hand.\textsuperscript{92}

"Greetings ladies, you have passed through the Gate of Virtue. What you are about to see is the City of Ladies. It was built by Reason, Justice and Rectitude.\textsuperscript{93} Yon walls are sturdy because ladies of the highest character contributed to them. Thus the virtue of each of you keeps the walls sturdy and shiny white. Honest discourse encourages the companionship and wisdom of all participants, so it is to the Palace of Knowledge we go. Your lady awaits."

She led us through the most amazing place I have ever seen. The streets were clean with no filth or rubbish anywhere, unlike Troyes and every other town I have visited where you cannot go two steps without stepping in some refuse.\textsuperscript{94} Women and girls walked around without escorts.\textsuperscript{95} They were all so beautiful and rich enough to have eaten at a king's table every day. There were not any dark corners, nor crowded alleys, and the air smelled like roses.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{92} In another twist this lady is in fact my high school French teacher--a very virtuous lady
\textsuperscript{93} All descriptions are based upon the Book of the City of Ladies unless noted.
\textsuperscript{94} Christine probably could not have imagined a town without such things but I can. I beg her pardon as I update her utopia.
\textsuperscript{95} What need would they have of escorts in a town without violence, crime, or men?
\textsuperscript{96} Speculative but interesting
Rome was nothing compared to these buildings with their glass windows and jewel-toned exteriors. Reds, burgundies, yellows, golds, whites, pinks, purples, blues of all the brightest hues covered the buildings. The city was so beautiful I know my Lord had something to do with it. I felt Him with me. Too quickly we reached the most extraordinary building—it had every color I have ever seen and then some on it, with a golden yellow porch and door. Three stories high and as wide as a cathedral is long it had flags flying from every tower. Our guide, who looked like Queen Thamiris, winked at me as she left. The lady in blue greeted us. Her ladyship led us through the Palace. Every wall was covered with a different tapestry. Each rich with bright colors and fine wool showing some sort knowledge—many of the coverings used -ology in their titles. Some had ladies examining plants; others showed ladies acting like physicians, while others showed ladies studying the stars. Ladies were in every tapestry doing different things. Such things I could not understand and remembering what my Savior told me I just looked at them without asking any questions of our hostess. Looking back at us the

97 Ditto
98 A palace of knowledge should have every known color. Besides that if it only had one color it would be pretty boring and knowledge is rarely boring for long.
99 Biology, Sociology, Epidemiology, Etymology, Psychology and Anthropology among others.
100 My ideas about these tapestries come from the Musée de Cluny, Cleveland Museum of Art and a trip to Brussels.
lady in blue smiled peacefully as none of us talked—probably out of humility.

At last we reached the dining hall with a big table, fireplace and lots of windows. The chairs were very strange. They were big and soft but not very tall. Most tables have benches which let more people sit at a table. Even in the Archbishop of Canterbury's house there was not anything so fine. It looked like only one person could sit in them at a time.

We sat in chairs that matched our pillows. Mine was so far away that I could not talk to the Midwife, my nearest neighbor. We were evenly spaced around the long table. My chair felt very comfortable and very soft like the cloud we slept on to get here; the fabric was softer and thicker than silk. Only in my visions of heaven have I felt such comfort and richness. I felt the need to pray to show my humility around such wealth. When I bowed my head, the lady in blue shook her head. In spite of her, I tried to pray inside but never got past the first word. I beg to sob. What kind of place would prevent me from talking to my Lord? Before my sobs became too loud, I felt the prescience of the Virgin and I knew not to cry.

"Are you hungry? You have all been so quiet dear gracious ladies?"

our hostess asked gently.

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101 Like the chairs of any decent coffee shop or library.
102 Velvet
"What are we to eat? I could not imagine anything as rich as this palace so that our food must be worthy of the gods" said a shocked Khadija.

"Dearest Khadija, you will soon see. You were all summoned here with a different purpose. Your dinner will fulfill that purpose. After which, we will adjourn to the Rose room. I leave you in the capable hands of Virginia who will instruct you about your meal. If you need anything just summon one of the servants behind you. "In a quiet rush of blue the lady left.

A tall woman with a big nose and funny clothes stood at the head of the table. "I’m not going to waste time on this ‘gracious lady’ business. You are hungry and I have food. Every one of you came under the pretense of learning something. Lady Sei, you came to learn about a poet. Khadija you came to learn about different goods. Queen Emma, you came to learn about other queens. Margery, you came because you wanted to visit a holy site. Margretta Linz, you came to learn better birthing techniques. And so you will. You will learn about other amazing women. For many centuries virtuous women have known nothing of each other, separated by time, distance and their inability to read.” Servants brought in silver plates covered with gold domes for each of us. This lady,
Virginia, seems too nervous as if she has to leave soon.\textsuperscript{103} "Khadija, you will gain a wealth of knowledge by learning about Saint Perpetua which will help you in the months ahead with Mohammed's visions.\textsuperscript{104} Margery Kempe," she gave me an annoyed look, "you will dine on Juliana of Norwich who wrote about divine love.\textsuperscript{105} Emma," (she gave Queen Emma a fierce look), "you shall read the history of Anna Comnena a historian of Byzantium.\textsuperscript{106} Lady Sei, you shall dine on the poems of Sappho of Lesbos which I know you will enjoy.\textsuperscript{107} Margretta Linz of poor Strasbourg, you shall learn about what Hildegarde de Bingen has to say about your profession.\textsuperscript{108} Bon Apetit, ladies." Thankfully the nervous Virginia left.

I open the book slowly. Never have I learned to read, I'm sure my Lord will help me.

Our midwife, who is not as pious as I am, whispers to Khadija, "I can hear the author speaking. She sounds so wise."

Khadija whispers back, "I can too." Ignoring them I listen as the holy Anchorite talks about the love of God.

\textsuperscript{103} By some great twist of fate that drives history when no one's paying attention, Virginia Woolf got into the City of Ladies because she was literally and figuratively a descendent of Christine de Pizano. She got in because I cannot imagine Christine keeping her out despite Woolf's suicide.


\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Revelations of Divine Love} as cited by Andrea Hopkins in \textit{Most Wise and Valiant Ladies} (London: Collins and Brown, 19 97) 70-71. Margery met Dame Julian which she details on page 48 of her autobiography.

\textsuperscript{106} Anna Comnena's \textit{History of Byzantium}

\textsuperscript{107} Poems of Sappho

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Life of Rewards} by Hildegard de Bingen
Lady Sei starts laughing and points to the letters in her book. "These squiggles are the strangest thing I have ever seen."

Looking at them, Khadija tells her, "Those letters are Greek."¹⁰⁹

Sei smiles and continues listening. I love hearing about this holy lady except that every few pages the sound of the servant’s shoes distract me with their squeaking.¹¹⁰ She must have mice in them. Time passed as the sun set and I took my fill.

Queen Emma asked the servant in the squeaky shoes, "Where is the lady in blue?"

"Your majesty, she is finishing some correspondence and supervising the preparation of the Rose Room."

"What knowledge do you possess about our hostess?"

"Much, but what is it you desire to know, your majesty?"

"Who is she and why did she bring us here?"

"I can answer the first part of your question now and the second part will become clear later. Her name is Christine de Pizano. She served the court of the King of France. Like Lady Sei, she is a writer. Also she was the first writer to take up the defense of women against the men who

¹⁰⁹ Purely speculative but highly probable
¹¹⁰ For irony’s sake I think the squeaky rubber shoes be more annoying than the clogs worn by most medieval people which would like drive most modern people crazy.
would write slanderous and vile things about them. She is also a mother, like you Queen Emma. In common with you, Margretta she cares about women and wants to help them. A pious woman like Margery, she knows her Church history. It was she who helped Reason, Rectitude and Justice build this city just like Khadija, who is a builder, though Khadija does not know it yet. All over the world her name is known. Many read and write about her works. Christine has worked for weeks to prepare this day for you. Fidelis, her dog, is worn out from following her during her long days of preparation. You are all very fortunate to have so wise and gracious a lady as your host. Now I must be going before I burden others with the work I did not finish." Her shoes may squeak but at least she has a good heart.

Nearly at once Lady Sei's eyes grew big and bright while Queen Emma looked like she, too was the cat that got the cream.

"Gracious ladies, no wonder she is so busy with much planning and preparation to be done. Could we not entertain her as she has entertained us?" asked Lady Sei.

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111 Khadija was one of the builders of the Moslem faith. Without her faith and support in her husband's visions the third largest religion on the planet would not likely exist. 

112 Speculative but I've never heard the name of the dog that appears in the pictures with her. Given her knowledge of Latin Fidelis sounds good. Fidelis means faithful, loyal. (Wheelock, Frederick. Wheelock's Latin.)
"Let us each find something we could do to entertain her so that she
does not worry so about the entertainments for us."

"But I don't know what I could do," pondered Queen Emma.

"I shall write a poem like I do for the Empress," piped up Lady Sei.

"She will be interested to hear stories from my visions and
conversations with God," I added. The midwife got up and was
doing steps as though half remembered from dances in her youth. I
wondered because at her age she must be married. Married ladies do not
dance.113 Her feet fluttered as she leaped into the air.114 Queen Emma,
recognizing the dance, soon joined her. Amazingly her stately majesty was
almost as light on her feet as the midwife was. They looked like they were
having a good time, even more so when Khadija joined them and began
showing them some of the dances she knew. I gave up dancing for my
Lord years ago. Besides no dignified person like me should dance.
Summoning a servant I got the servant with squeaky shoes.

"Yes, my lady?"

"I wish to go to the Chapel to pray for the souls of all present."

"That is your talent, so to the Chapel we will go."

"Why are you not helping the others?"

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113 Historically dances have been domain of unmarried ladies.
114 It's called a capriole though I don't know that it's specifically medieval it belongs to a family of brantes-French folkdances. I studied them in France in my Histoire de la Danse class.
"Because I asked many questions and my questions slowed the cleaning down too much."

"Even in the City of Ladies you must be quick with your work? If you prayed more you wouldn't have to ask so many questions. God would answer them for you. He has answered most of my questions but I had to resist temptation and punish myself for my sins. Along with visits to holy people and places, they help me answer my questions."

"God answers many of my questions just not as directly as He answers yours because you constantly strive toward Him and heaven."

"Yes my Lord is a great and wonderful God. He takes good care of me when no one else does. He is my Salvation."

"Margery, this is the Chapel. Soon the candles will be lit so it should not be dark for long. There is a labyrinth in the middle of the aisle if you desire to use it. Summon me when you wish to return to the Ladies."

It was a very dark chapel with intricately carved wood and stone. Suddenly all the candles were lit and I saw the most wondrous scene. The carvings told the stories of all great women of the Bible. Beautifully, the altar shined more brightly than the walls of this City did. Behind the altar was a statue of the Virgin all in white with dark hair and the kindest eyes I

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115 Labyrinths like those at Chartres and other places. Having walked a Labyrinth, I can attest their meditative powers.
have ever seen.\textsuperscript{116} They made me weep with their beauty. I began to pray as I had wanted to at dinner.

Khadija, Emma and I compared steps. We were laughing so much Lady Sei finally joined us. From all the work of dancing we had long ago tossed away our habits. Poor Lady Sei, with all her fancy silks, could not move around easily.\textsuperscript{117} Instead of dancing with us she counted the beats. Just as we almost had a whole dance Lady de Pizan appeared.

"Lady Christine, could you leave us for a time? Like a man at the door of the birthing room you have come too soon to see your marvelous creation."

Although my voice was gentle I cannot believe I what my mouth said to this fine lady, yet referring to her as Lady de Pizan sounded wrong.

"You seem very amused. May I watch as you prepare your dance?" asked our delighted hostess.

By time we had finished practicing and performing it for Lady Christine, we were all tired and laughing. She applauded our performance.

"My ladies it is time we went to the Rose Room for refreshments.\textsuperscript{118} Leave your habits here, you need them not."

\textsuperscript{116} Every Christian has their own perception of the Virgin Mary. Mine and this one comes from the portrait of Mary with the infant John the Baptist and Christ done by Rafaello. (Galleria Uffizi, Florence). She would wear white as a symbol of her purity and that of all women. Her eyes must be kind based upon her position and her humanity.

\textsuperscript{117} Sei Appendix 4

\textsuperscript{118} Roses have always been a symbol of women. I chose the Rose Room because it would be a comfortably feminine space and because the word in Latin for secret is \textit{sub rosa} which also ties into the fact that nothing they say will leave that room. Nothing in this City of Ladies is meaningless.
As I now expected, the Rose room was very elegant and covered in
tapestries. Some of them detailed the cultivation of roses while others detailed the stages of women. There were hardly any men in the pictures. On the floor were big cushions of reds, pinks, yellows, and whites. White candles provided the light as we settled down on them. Servants brought in rose shaped pastries and sweet wine.

Lady Christine began, "Virginia, did not scare you I trust. Mrs. Woolf can be a bit hard to like. I have a letter from one of the other ladies who could not be here. She just gave birth to her first son."

I smiled with pride for the midwife who delivered the baby boy and saved his mother. I knew what sort of tough work the midwife had.

"Sons are such blessings," said Emma, thinking of hers.

"Homes are never as happy as when a son is born," I told the ladies.

Lady Sei asked "But do you love them more than daughters?"

"Not more, just differently. Rarely parents do not even love their sons let alone their daughters," I answered.

"I agree with Margretta. My children are all precious to me though rarely I have seen others who did not love their children for whatever reason. It is sad when it happens but it does. Most children, thanks to our Lady, are loved by their parents," our Hostess added.

Queen Emma asked, “How many children do you have, Lady Christine?”
"I have two: a boy, Jean, and a girl, Marie. A second son died as a baby."\textsuperscript{119}

"I am the only one here without a baby. They must keep you very busy. Babies are quite adorable though their parents can be atrocious," added Lady Sei.\textsuperscript{120}

"Eventually they are cute but they certainly do not start out that way. Birth is exhausting for all involved. Artisan families are easier to deal with because the father is not always looking over my shoulder--he usually too busy working in the shop. Richer fathers wait outside the birthing room, waiting for their sons to be born and are full of questions. These questions make the mother nervous which makes my job much harder to say nothing of hers. Births take hours and often days. Ladies usually have their mothers and other women around to help calm them and make their job easier."

"Tell me, Margery; do all mothers have as much trouble managing their children and their homes as I do? It is impossible to look after my caravans and my children at the same time. My husband helps but it is still very difficult," added Khadija with a laugh. Christine and I join her laughing at the help husbands sometimes give with the best intentions and the worst results.

"As a queen I do not look after my children," Emma gave Lady Sei an odd look at this time.

She continued, "When they are old enough I send them to live with other noble families who are either relatives or friends. They teach my children how

\textsuperscript{119} Charity Cannon Willard. \textit{Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works}. (New York, New York: Persea Books, 1984) I read this book a couple years ago so I'm not exactly sure from which page this comes.

\textsuperscript{120} Sei 78,117
to run a household or how to fight depending on which child they get. They either learn how to become men or wives."

"But Queen Emma," interrupted Lady Christine, "I know well of the system of which you speak and you forgot the Church. My daughter Marie is a nun and is very happy."\textsuperscript{121}

"You are right Lady Christine, many second sons and daughters do take their vows, making it easier to marry off the daughters. Daughters require large dowries so it is easier to let the eldest children marry and the others help save money by taking their vows as monks or nuns."\textsuperscript{122}

Khadija rejoined the conversation, "We arrange marriages too. In our tradition we use matchmakers and then the head of the clan agrees or dismisses the marriage."\textsuperscript{123}

Lady Sei asked, "Do all boys become warriors?"

Queen Emma answered, "No, the rest become monks. The Church is very powerful. By putting your family in it you gain more power than if the sons had died on the battlefield."

"Do not the younger sons dislike being forced into the Church?"

"Yes, many of them do not like it but it protects their family’s fortunes. Many houses allow the monks to live extremely well. Besides if one of their brothers becomes Duke or king, the younger son will be promoted to a better post."

\textsuperscript{121} Williard Christine de Pizan.

\textsuperscript{122} Records do not mention how many daughters Emma had. Conventional wisdom suggests that at least one of them had to have gone into the convent.

\textsuperscript{123} Bogle, 6
Wars I know about, I told her, "Do not worry, Lady Sei. There are plenty of wars to kill those older sons, leaving even more property to widows and children for the second son to take care of in his brother’s absence.

"Being a widow allowed me to have more power over my lands and that of my children," Queen Emma said with pride.

"Really, because war leaves many of us poor," I countered.

Lady Christine asked me gently, "On the battlefield, your husband died?"

"Yes, Lady Christine he did. He died a very painful death, an arrow hit him in the eye. One of my sons died in war, too."

Queen Emma retorts, "As did one of mine."

"Your Majesty, you are a queen. If one of the princes died in battle there are bards to sing about his magnificent death. You memorialize death where I must pay for it," I said as I thought of Frederick, my son, and Karl, my husband.

The Queen paled and responded by saying, "We must pay for it in the loss of an heir. The men loyal to him must swear new oaths of loyalty, and I do miss my son Arthur. Like you because of war I will not be able to spend time with Arthur or see his children."

"Yes, your Majesty, but all the ideals about loyalty and valor cannot bring either of our sons home. Frederick did not die for a noble cause. The Baron’s son wanted the hunting forest of his cousin, and decided to seize it for himself. Thus the Baronlet went into Strasbourg declaring that his Cousin would...

124 Stafford 77-82

125 Stafford 77-82,212,240 The ironic thing is that Alfred died helping her get power.
rape and pillage the whole town if able young men could not defend the forest. Ready to defend Strasbourg out of loyalty to the town and unaware of the Baronlet’s deception, they went. Worse, Frederick was not killed by the Cousin’s men but by brigands who hid in the forest and stole from travelers passing through it. Ferocious and determined to protect their living, they killed him. The Baronlet abandoned him and lost 100 other men, before he realized the cost of a hunting forest. Of all my children, Frederick had the most respect for my work and would often walk me home when I was exhausted after a birth. Although loyal to Church and family, his calling to protect both of them made his death sadder since he died at the hands of brigands, not enemy soldiers. Albertus, my other son, was loyal only to violence. He beat his wife and children because he was good at killing, stealing, and abusing women. For two years he went away to fight. In the meantime, his wife Elsbeth had his son. When he returned from war, he took a new wife because ‘I knew, Mother, that if you attended the birth both mother and babe would die.’ Thieves robbed and killed him on his way back from the Baron’s court. Both my sons died loyal to the Baron and left women in poverty because of it. I cannot agree with war because Frederick died defending, he thought, his home and family. Albertus died from the greed and violence that ruled his life. How can war be called good?” I finished with a sob.

Christine spoke first, "Dear Margretta, I am sorry for your loss. You know from your faith that Frederick’s good behavior will be rewarded while Albertus

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126 This is purely speculative but very possible-to me let me know if you think this highly improbable.
will not be judged so kindly. Besides, you are lucky to have two good daughters both of whom will make you proud."

"As a merchant I make less from war than from peace. It is hard to get caravans across war zones. Yet, men love war more than peace," said the wise Khadija.

"We win more land for our people in war than in peace. Many of these lands do not know Christianity, we conquer for the Church and for our people. My husband Cnute controlled many lands because of war," add her Majesty.

Lady Sei asked a very interesting question, "How do you make order from war? Is not war very chaotic?"

"Simple, if our enemies attack us because they think we are weak we must fight. If they threaten my people we must defend them," said the war-loving Emma.127

"Who it is that makes the rules?" asked Shonagon.

Christine and Khadija answered, "Men."

"Who starts the wars?"

"Men."

"So to get rid of war you must get rid of men?"

"I suppose, but then who would support and marry you?" asked Khadija.

"With men gone, could you not support yourself?"

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127Stafford Based upon my sense of Emma that is how I think she would answer. Unfortunately I cannot cite a specific example of this except to point to the basic facts of her life: wife of defeated king marries conqueror and spends the rest of her life fighting to keep her offspring in power.
"No Lady Sei, because women are not the only ones who buy my goods. Men buy them more than women and men are also more important in transporting the goods long distances between trading towns."

"Very well. Queen Emma, could you stop a war by speaking to your husband?"

"Lady Sei, I cannot. It is always the king's decision. At times I may influence his decision but that is all."

Lady Christine added, "Kings and advisors often determine war, not just queens."

"Even a queen cannot stop a war?" asked a very curious Lady Sei.

"No, but you have lived at Court all your life and have seen the amount of power the Empress has."

Lady Sei replied, "You are right Queen Emma but I do not have knowledge of your court. When we spoke earlier, you argued that husbands and kings provide more security with more power. Yet Margretta’s men all died because of that need for security and power, as did Arthur. You have your security but at what cost?"

"I have never questioned the cost because I need the security. As a queen I believe my people think just as I do. Margretta’s husband and sons died protecting that security just as any of my people would. Men are responsible for that security so as a queen I cannot make decisions regarding our security."

"Actually some very clever queens have stopped wars in the past but it is rare," added Christine.
"Where did you learn about these ladies?" asked Khadija full of wonder.

"My Lady Khadija, I read about them in books which kind people lent me," Lady Christine answered quietly.

"What do you read? I read the Chinese classics and poems favored by their majesties," Lady Sei said excitedly.\textsuperscript{128}

"Lady Sei I too read the classics--Greek philosophy, modern treatises, works on faith and philosophy. Thankfully I can read Latin and French. At my father's insistence, I learned to read. After my husband died, my education continued because I had to use my knowledge to feed my family.\textsuperscript{129}

Khadija piped up with "In my business I would be betrayed if I could not read a little. We rely on records to keep track of our goods. As it helps to know a little of several dialects when you trade because different buyers speak different languages."

"As a queen, I was only taught to read Latin, which I use to account for my lands and make sure my records are kept correctly."\textsuperscript{130}

"As a queen you do business?" asked a surprised Khadija.

"I must manage my estates and their interests. Even donating lands to the Church, which I do often, requires knowledge of Latin. My steward writes down my orders but I always read them to ensure they are correct."\textsuperscript{131}

"Barely can I read but I have knowledge of herbs and birthing," I added nervously.

\textsuperscript{128} Sei 136,216,250
\textsuperscript{129} Willard Christine de Pizan
\textsuperscript{130} Stafford 181-183,202,227
\textsuperscript{131} Stafford 181-183,202,227
Lady Sei smiled quietly "Even as you described your work, which I know is very hard, I am jealous that you get to see life begin."

"My dear Lady Sei I think you are better suited to your witty life at court and I to mine. However after talking with you, Lady Christine, I will try to get one of my daughters into a nunnery, if I can afford it."

Emma sniffed at me and said, "Be careful that she goes to a good house. Some of them are quite poor. In one of those places she would be worse off than a farmer so you will have to pay to get her into a nice house but she will certainly appreciate it."

"Her nunnery at Poissy, Marie enjoys. I am certain..." Lady Christine looked at me for the name of my daughter when suddenly Khadija added "Anna or Teresa?"

"You remembered!" I could not believe Khadija would remember my daughters' names because our conversation had been so long ago.

Lady Christine looked out the window and yawned. "My Dears it is late, this hour of ours."

Before we can depart the blonde haired servant with the loud shoes reappears with Margery. This time she wears a dress more strange than that of Margery. Long and black, it covers her from shoulder to ankle. Around her neck are a silver medal on a red ribbon and two tassels of red and white.\textsuperscript{132} Her head carried the oddest hat with four corners and a red and white tassel dancing off.

\textsuperscript{132} The metal is for graduating Magna Cum Laude and the tassels are for graduating with honors hence this paper.
the edge of it. On her feet are the oddest shoes with ties but not made of leather or wood.\textsuperscript{133}

"Lady Christine, her highness the Queen of the City of Ladies, insisted I explain the purpose of this party."

"How would you know, you are just a servant?" asked Queen Emma.

"Your majesty, in this City appearances are often deceiving.\textsuperscript{134} In the spirit of Lady Christine, I summoned you here. Fortune favored me with parents who encouraged me to learn and read about all of you wonderful ladies. In the course of reading about you I learned much, I desired to repay the debt by letting you meet one another.

"Earlier I studied Christine and her City of Ladies which made me want to invite you here. It is the one place where all of you could meet and be certain to enjoy the experience. Thankfully Christine was kind enough to do most of the work in bringing you here. Virginia too was one of my teachers. Because of her, you got to meet one another.

Sadly great women rarely know or even like one another. This setting allows you meet someone you otherwise would have no knowledge of and perhaps to like them though that was left to chance. Her majesty allowed me to play a small role in watching you. Wise ladies it has been my honor to learn from you. Each of you has taught me much. If this garb appears strange, it should be. After years of work, ladies like myself attend and even graduate from schools. This gown indicates my scholarship and I wear it in honor of you.

\textsuperscript{133} My great (many times) grandmothers deserve to see the full regalia.\textsuperscript{134} This hints back to page 25 where this servant (your humble author) makes her first appearance.
ladies. Each of you were summoned here because of your unique talents and abilities.

"Like Dante in his journey through the Underworld I too have had a helpful guide. Another fine lady has helped with every step of this journey. Lady Christine, you know that red-haired lady, often seen in the library speaking French? She is my guide and a very learned one at that."
Lady Christine nodded and smiled.

"Each of you has been a guide for me. Every one of you has led me to new ideas and taught me new things. Khadija you have taught me and many others about strong women. Your grace and humility has made you a role model. Lady Shonagon, your wit sparkles and your observations enchant. Regardless of your opinion of your Pillow Book, I delighted in your intelligence and use of language. Long years after you wrote it I read a beautifully translated version. Queen Emma, you challenged me to redefine the way I thought about queens, whom I had previously thought did nothing more than marry and have sons. Later queens and Machiavelli, a famous educator of leaders, could learn much from the way you managed your property and position. Margery Kempe, you too have challenged me. I admit your Autobiography was not the easiest read because at times I got very frustrated with all your tears. You taught me about the passion of your beliefs and the way you saw God. My hope is that I understand you better for all the trials we went through together in reading your Autobiography. Dear Midwife, you have taught me a lot about women and how our bodies have been treated
throughout time during pregnancy. Margretta, you are an able teacher and
good lady. Lastly, my Lady Christine you have been an inspiration throughout
this project. Thank you for discussing from a woman’s perspective the virtues
and vices of women, men, war, and love. In your defense of women you
elegantly stood up to all the bullies who would tell women how wrong and
vile we are. After reading some of the same works you did I came to the same
conclusions, yet your strong voice contradicted all those who would slander
women. For that and many reasons I pay all of you the highest honor.” The odd
little thing bowed to us.

“...”My ladies I pray that in my little composition I do none of you a
disservice. In memoris valebitis. 135” We all smiled at the blonde girl whose
eyes were wet with tears.

“I could not have imagined so many would read the Book of the City of
Ladies and influence so many just as these ladies could not imagine their
impact. Keep reading and fine ladies will keep teaching you. You will be ready
for any challenge, including the witty banter of a cocktail party or a room full
of your own students.” 136 The girl just smiled at Lady Christine and all of us.

“We see that we are limited by our experiences you are unlimited in
your opportunity based upon your odd dress. Nature should always be
important in your reflections on humans,” Lady Sei advised.

“Do not be afraid to question the way the world appears, situations are often

135 Wheelock’s Latin I hope/meant it to mean "Be strong in memory" which is my very basic way saying I
hope they will never be forgotten.
136 This refers back to the first time I met Christine in Maude Jennings’ Honors humanities sequence. Dr.
Jennings kept encouraging us to read because we might need some of the information for a cocktail party.
complicated by biases," added Queen Emma. Margery began, "Faith is important and God works mysteriously."

"Do not let the differences blind you to the things we have in common," Lady Khadija supplied.

"Take better care of yourself and listen more. Every project should not be as painful as birth," I told her-- for I listened to her as she listened to us.\textsuperscript{137}

As we left the Rose Room we felt proud of this strange girl in her odd clothing. The last thing we saw in the Palace of Knowledge were others dressed like her filling halls and applauding us. The beautiful building looked even better with all those wise ladies.

Exiting the Gate of Virtue, the ladies return home by way of dreams. Where carriages, camels, barges, and feet brought them to Troyes, clouds take them back to their respective corners of the map and their own times. Sei Shonagon wakes in her quarters, having had a most bizarre dream when she finds a copy of Sappho of Lesbos' poems in Greek and Japanese. Later she uses them to pepper her poetry and charm others with her knowledge of mysterious places. Resting in a tent on the sands of Arabia, Khadija wakes missing Mohammed and finds a book that tells the story of the determined life of a peculiar Christian saint, Perpetua. Perpetua's words help her in the hard days ahead as Mohammed receives more visions. Carefully she burns the book before she dies so that later wives never know of its impact. Early morning in Strasbourg and a merchant's wife goes into labor. Margretta Linz leaves her bed

\textsuperscript{137} All of the above are lessons that they taught me and how I imagine them saying it.
with its copy of the writings of Hildegarde de Bingen knowing that this birth will be easier because her new knowledge of women and labor. The mothers and babies she saves will never know the impact a German nun had in keeping them alive. Off the western coast of Europe, Margery Kempe meditates on Divine love, discussing with her Lord the things she learned from Julian and how His love works in the lives of his followers. Her confessor appreciates this new knowledge, while everyone else ignores it and her as usual. A few days' ride away, Queen Emma sits reading over her estates' finances at a table in her castle. On her bookshelf she keeps a copy of Anna Comnena's history. Finally in the land of the Parisii Christine de Pizan writes at her desk with her dog at her feet, inspiring generations not yet born.

The City of Ladies makes this conversation possible though the city itself will never appear on any map. These women come from their own times not that of this twenty first century world. All have much to teach regardless of their rank, era, country and abilities. Look instead as you would at the perspective of that map-always offering knowledge but never making judgments. Regardless of discipline an old map is a beauty to behold. The previous pages answered the questions of viewpoint and agreement while entertaining. Getting people together from different parts of the map always surprises and informs especially if those women come from different parts of a large era. Medieval women act as wonderful teachers. Good fortune allows for commonalities and differences to appear in nonviolent ways. All good questions provide answers that provide more questions, as our Ladies would be sure to
tell you. Many more questions await answers but that is one of the joys and challenges of life. Embrace both and the knowledge will come.  

4 Four years of college have taught me that lesson many times over and have made every day its own adventure.
Bibliography


