

ANGUS J. KENNEDY AND KENNETH VARTY

A TRANSLATION OF THE 'DITIE DE JEHANNE D'ARC'²⁸

- I. Christine, who have wept for eleven years in a walled abbey where I have lived ever since Charles (how strange this is!) the King's son - dare I say it? - fled in haste from Paris, I who have lived enclosed there on account of the treachery, now, for the very first time, begin to laugh;
- II. I begin to laugh heartily for joy at the departure of the wintry' season, during which I was wont to live confined to a dreary cage. But now I shall change my language from one of tears to one of song, because I have found Spring once again . . . well endured my share.
- III. In 1429 the sun began to shine again. It brings back the good, new season which had not really been seen for a long time-and because of that many people had lived out their lives in sorrow; I myself am one of them. But I no longer grieve for anything, now that I can see what I desire.
- IV. But since the time when I came to stay where I am the situation has completely changed, great sorrow has given way to new joy and, thanks be to God, the lovely season called Spring which I have longed for has brought green-ness out of barren winter.
- V. The reason is that the rejected child of the rightful King of France, who has long suffered many a great misfortune and who now approaches, rose up like early spring, coming as a crowned King in might and majesty, wearing spurs of gold.
- VI. Rejoicing at the sight of his noble retinue, let us all, both great and small, step forward to greet him joyously-and let no one hold back-praising God, who has kept him safe, and shouting "Nowel" in a loud voice.
- VII. But now I wish to relate how God, to whom I pray for guidance lest I omit any-thing, accomplished all this through His grace. May it be told everywhere, for it is worthy of being remembered, and may it be written down-no matter whom it may displease-in many a chronicle and history-book!
- VIII. Now hear, throughout the whole world, of something which is more wonderful than any-thing else! See if God, in whom all grace abounds, does not in the end support what is right (this is a fact worthy of note!). Consider the matter in hand and let it be of profit to the disillusioned, whom Fortune has cast down.
- IX. And note how, when someone finds himself quite unjustly attacked and hated on all sides, there is no need for such a person to feel dismayed by misfortune. See how Fortune, who has harmed many a one, is so inconstant, for God, who opposes all wrong deeds, raises up those in whom hope dwells.
- X. Did anyone ever see anything quite so extraordinary come to pass (something that is well worth noting and remembering in every region), namely, that France (about whom it was said she had been cast down)

should see her fortunes change, by divine command, from evil to such great good,

- XI. as the result, indeed, of such a miracle that, if the matter were not so well-known and crystal-clear in every aspect, nobody would ever believe it? It is a fact well worth remembering That God should now have wished (and this is the truth!) to bestow such great blessings on France, through a young virgin.
- XII. And what honour for the French crown, this proof of divine intervention For all the blessings which God bestows upon it demonstrate how much He favours it and that He finds more faith in the Royal House than anywhere else; as far as it is concerned, I read (and there is nothing new in this) that the Lilies of the Valley never erred in matters of faith.
- XIII. And you Charles, King of France, seventh of that noble name, who have been involved in such a great war before things turned out at all well for you, now, thanks be to God, see your honour exalted by the Maid who has laid low your enemies beneath your standard (and this *is* new!)
- XIV. in a short time; for it was believed quite impossible that you ever recover your country which you were on the point of losing. Now it is manifestly yours for, no matter who may have done you harm, you have recovered it! And all this has been brought about by the intelligence of the Maid who, God be thanked, has played her part in this matter!
- XV. And I firmly believe that God would never have bestowed such grace upon you if it were not ordained by Him that you should, in the course of time, accomplish and bring to completion some great and solemn task, and if He had [not] destined you to be the author of very great deeds.
- XVI. For there will be a King of France called Charles, son of Charles, who will be supreme ruler over all Kings. Prophecies have given him the name of "The Flying Stag", and many a deed accomplished by this conqueror (God has called him to this task) and in the end he will be emperor.
- XVII. All this is to the profit of your soul. I pray to God that you may be the person I have described, and that He grant you long life (to nobody's harm), so that you may yet see your children grown up; I pray too that all joy come to France because of you and them! But, as you serve God always, may war never cause havoc there again (*or* by emending *face* to *face[s]*: "May you never wage war to the death there again!")
- XVIII. I hope that you will be good and upright, and a lover of justice and that you will surpass all others, provided your deeds are not tarnished by pride, that you will be gentle and well-disposed towards your people, that you will always love God who elected you as His servant (and you have proof of this), on condition that you do your duty.
- XIX. And how will you ever be able to thank God enough, serve and fear Him in all your deeds (for He has led you from such great adversity to peace and raised up the whole of France from such ruin) when His most holy providence made you worthy of such signal honour?

- XX. May You be praised for this, great God! It is our bounden duty to thank You who decreed time and place for these blessings to come about. With hands clasped, both great and small, we all thank You, Heavenly Lord, who have guided us through the great tempest into peace[ful] water].
- XXI. And you, blessed Maid, are you to be forgotten, given that God honoured you so much that you untied the rope which held France so tightly bound? Could one ever praise you enough for having bestowed peace on this land humiliated by war?
- XXII. Blessed be He who created you, Joan, who were born at a propitious hour! Maiden sent from God, into whom the Holy Spirit poured His great grace, in whom there was and is an abundance of noble gifts, never did Providence refuse you any request. who can ever begin to repay you?
- XXIII. And what more can be said even of the great deeds of the past? Moses, upon whom God in His bounty bestowed many a blessing and virtue, miraculously and indefatigably led God's people out of Egypt. In the same way, blessed Maid, you have led us out of evil!
- XXIV. When we take your person into account, you who are a young maiden, to whom God gives the strength and power to be the champion who casts the rebels down and feeds France with the sweet, nourishing milk of peace, here indeed is something quite extraordinary!
- XXV. For if God performed such a great number of miracles through Joshua who conquered many a place and cast down many an enemy, he, Joshua, was a strong and powerful *man*. But, after all, a *woman*-a simple shepherdess-braver than any man ever was in Rome! As far as God is concerned, this was easily accomplished.
- XXVI. But as for us, we never heard tell of such an extraordinary marvel, for the prowess of all the great men of the past cannot be compared to this woman's, whose concern it is to cast out our enemies. This is God's doing: it is He who guides her and who has given her a superhuman heart.
- XXVII. Much is made of Gideon, who was a simple workman) and it was God, so the story tells, who made him fight; nobody could stand fir-n~ before him and he conquered every-thing. But whatever guidance God gave [him], it is clear that He never performed so striking a miracle as He does for this woman.
- XXVIII. I have heard of Esther, Judith and Deborah, who were women of great worth, through whom God delivered His people from oppression, and I have heard of many other worthy women as well-but none can compare with her! (*or*, champions every one). Through them He performed many miracles, but He has accomplished more through this Maid.
- XXIX. She was miraculously sent by divine command and conducted by the angel of the Lord to the King, in order to help him. Her achievement is no illusion for she was carefully put to the test in council (in short, a thing is proved by its effect)

- XXX. and well examined, before people were prepared to believe her; before it became common knowledge that God had sent her to the King, she was brought before clerks and wise men so that they could find out if she was telling the truth. But it was found in history-records that she was destined to accomplish her mission;
- XXXI. for more than 500 years ago, Merlin, the Sibyl and Bede foresaw her coming, entered her in their writings as someone who would put an end to France's troubles, made prophecies about her, saying that she would carry the banner in the French wars and describing all that she would achieve.
- XXXII. And, in truth, the beauty of her life proves that she has been blessed with God's grace-and for that reason her actions are more readily accepted as genuine. For, whatever she does, she always has her eye fixed on God, to whom she prays and whom she invokes and serves in word and deed; nowhere does her devotion ever falter.
- XXXIII. Oh, how clear this was at the siege of Orleans where her power was first made manifest! It is my belief that no miracle was ever more evident, for God so came to the help of His people that our enemies were unable to help each other any more than would dead dogs. It was there that they were captured and put to death.
- XXXIV. Oh! What honour for the female sex! It is perfectly obvious that God has special regard for it when all these wretched people who destroyed the whole Kingdom-now recovered and made safe by a woman, something that 5000 *men* could not have done-and the traitors have been exterminated. Before the event they would scarcely have believed this possible.
- XXXV. A little girl of sixteen (isn't this something quite supernatural?) who does not even notice the weight of the arms she bears-indeed her whole upbringing seems to have prepared her for this, so strong and resolute is she! And her enemies go fleeing before her, not one of them can stand up to her. She does all this in full view of everyone,
- XXXVI. and drives her enemies out of France, recapturing castles and towns. Never did anyone see greater strength, even in hundreds of thousands of men! And she is the supreme captain of our brave and able men. Neither Hector nor Achilles had such strength! This is God's doing: it is He who leads her.
- XXXVII. And you trusty men-at-arms who carry out the task and prove yourselves to be good and loyal, one must certainly make mention of you (you will be praised in every nation!) and not fail to speak of you and your valour in preference to everything else,
- XXXVIII. you who, in pain and suffering, expose life and limb in defence of what is right and dare to risk confronting every danger. Be constant, for this, I promise, will win you glory and praise in heaven. For whoever fights for justice wins a place in Paradise-this I do venture to say.
- XXXIX. And so, you English, draw in your horns for you will never capture any good game! Don't attempt any foolish enterprise in France! You have been check-mated. A short time ago, when you looked so fierce, you had no

inking that this would be so; but you were not yet treading the path upon which God casts down the proud.

- XL. You thought you had already conquered France and that she must remain yours. Things have turned out otherwise, you treacherous lot! Go and beat your drums elsewhere, unless you want to taste death, like your companions, whom wolves may well devour, for their bodies lie dead amidst the furrows!
- XLI. And know that she will cast down the English for good for this is God's will: He hears the prayer of the good whom they wanted to harm! The blood of those who are dead and have no hope of being brought back to life again cries out against them. G'd tolerate this no longer-He has decided, rather, to condemn them as evil.
- XLII. She will restore harmony in Christendom and the Church. She will destroy the unbelievers people talk about, and the heretics and their vile ways, for this is the substance of a prophecy that has been made. Nor will she have mercy on any place which treats faith in God with disrespect.
- XLIII. She will destroy the Saracens, by conquering the Holy Land. She will lead Charles there, whom God preserve! Before he dies he will make such a journey. He is the one who is to conquer it. It is there that she is to end her days and that both of them are to win glory. It is there that the whole enterprise will be brought to completion.
- XLIV. Therefore, in preference to all the brave men of times past, this woman must wear the crown, for her deeds show clearly enough already that God bestows more courage upon her than upon those men about whom people speak. And she has not yet accomplished her whole mission! I believe that God gives her to us below so that peace may be brought about through her deeds.
- XLV. And yet destroying the English race is not her main concern for her aspirations lie elsewhere, on something higher, that is, ensuring the survival of the Faith. As for the English, whether it be a matter for joy or sorrow, they are done for. In days to come scorn will be heaped on them. They have been cast down!
- XLVI. And all you base rebels who have joined them, can't you see now that it would have been better for you to have gone forwards rather than backwards as you did, thereby becoming the serfs of the English? Beware that more does not befall you (for you have had to put up with too much already) and remember what the outcome will be!
- XLVII. Oh, all you blind people, can't you detect God's hand in this? If you can't, you are truly stupid for how else could the Maid who strikes you all down dead have been sent to us? -And you don't have sufficient strength! Do you want to fight against God?
- XLVIII. Has she not led the King with her own hand to his coronation? No greater deed was performed at Acre; for there were certainly plenty of opponents. But in spite of everyone, he was most nobly received and anointed without delay, and there he heard mass.

- XLIX. It was exactly on the 17th day of July 1429 that Charles was, without any doubt, safely crowned at Rheims, amidst great triumph and splendour and surrounded by many men-at-arms and barons; and he stayed there for five days.
- L. As he returns through his country, accompanied by the little Maid, neither city nor castle nor small town can hold out against them. ether he be loved or hated, whether they be dismayed or reassured, the inhabitants surrender. Few are attacked, so fearful are they of his power.
- LI. It is true that some, in their folly, think they can resist, but this serves little purpose, for, in the end, whoever does offer opposition must pay for his mistake. It is quite pointless. Whether they want to or not, they must surrender. No matter how strong the resistance offered, it collapses beneath the Maid's assault,
- LII. even though huge forces were gathered together, in order to launch a surprise attack and bar his return; but there is no need for a doctor's attentions now, for all his opponents have been captured and killed, one by one, and dispatched, so I've been told, to Heaven or Hell.
- LIII. I don't know if Paris will hold out (for they have not reached there yet) or if the Maid will delay. But if it decides to see her as an enemy, I fear that she will. subject it to a fierce attack, as she has done elsewhere. If they offer resistance for an hour, or even half an hour, it's my belief that things will go badly for them,
- LIV. for [the King] will enter Paris, no matter who may grumble about it ! -The Maid has given her word that he will. . Paris, do you think Burgundy will. prevent him from entering? By no means, for he does not see himself as an enemy. Nobody has the power to prevent him, and you will. be overcome, you and your presumption!
- LV. Oh Paris, bow could you be so ill-advised? Foolish inhabitants, you are lacking in trust! Do you prefer to be laid waste, Paris, rather than make peace with your prince? If you are not careful your great opposition will destroy you. It would be far better for you if you were to humbly beg for mercy. You are quite miscalculating!
- LVI. It is the evil inhabitants I'm referring to, for there are many good people there, I have no doubt about that; but, take my word for it, these good people, who are no doubt much displeased to see their prince rejected in this way, do not dare speak out. They will not merit the punishment which will fall upon Paris and cost many a person his life.
- LVII. And as for you, all you rebel towns, all of you who have renounced your lord, all of you men and women who have transferred your allegiance to another, may everything now be peacefully settled, with you beseeching his pardon! For if force is used against you, the gift [i.e. of forgiveness] will come too late.
- LVIII. And so as to avoid killing and wounding anyone [the King] delays for as long as he can, for the spilling of blood grieves him. But, in the end, if

someone does not want to hand over, with good grace, what is rightly his, he is perfectly justified if he does recover it by force and bloodshed.

LIX. Alas! He is so magnanimous that he wishes to pardon each and everyone. And it is the Maid, the faithful servant of God, who makes him do this. Now as loyal Frenchmen submit your hearts and yourselves to him! And when you hear him speak, you will not be reproached by anyone.

LX. And I pray to God that He will prevail upon you to act in this way, so that the cruel storm of these wars may be erased from memory and that you may live your lives in peace, always loyal to your supreme ruler, so that you may never offend him and that he may be a good overlord to you. Amen.

LXI. This poem was completed by Christine in the above mentioned year, 1429, on the last day of July. But I believe that some people will be displeased by its contents for a person whose head is bowed and whose eyes are heavy cannot look at the light.

Explicit a very beautiful poem composed by Christine.

APPENDIX: TEXTUAL AND LINGUISTIC NOTES

(a) *Corrections to the text of the poem*

Reconsideration of certain lines chiefly in the light of helpful comments which we have received from Professor T. B. W. Reid²⁹ has led us to make the following corrections to the text as printed in *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, Vol. XVIII, 1974, pp. 39-55.

- II. 31-2: insert comma after *renouvelle*, 1.31, reject B reading and adopt C for 1.32: *s'est du sec au vert temps tiree*. This would supply a main verb for *la tresbelle saison*.
- 1.44: reject *grans* B and correct to *grant*.
- 1.70: reject *annuit* B, adopt word division of C and read *a nuit*
- 1.81: reject *vrayment* B and adopt *voirement* from C, thus giving the line eight syllables.
- 11.99-100: delete comma after *aincois* and after *prensist*.
- 1.109: rather than attribute to Christine a disyllabic pronunciation of *tien*, one should perhaps assume a lacuna of two syllables. What is omitted may be a conjunction like *puis que* (see 1.163) and the line would then read *Ment tien [puis que] qui que nuisible*.
- 1.158: delete *roy* and retain the B reading *dieu*; the phrase *dieu celeste* occurs frequently elsewhere in Christine's work.
- 11.233-4: delete *aincois*, retain B reading *a ains que*, insert comma between *a* and *ains* (delete notes on XXX, 234, p. 51). (See below in section *c* of these Notes).
- 1.280: replace full-stop at end of line by a comma.
- 1.314: reject *deult* B, adopt *deust* CG.
- 1.334: replace full-stop at end of line by a comma.
- 1.418: insert hyphen between *sont* and *ilz*.
- 1.430: reject *nest* B and adopt *na* from C, printing *Nul n'a puissance*.
- 1.435: reject *ayme* B and correct to *ayme[s]*.
- 1.471: delete *vauldra* and retain B reading *l'orra*.

(b) *Possible alternative readings*

- 1.36: one could retain the B reading (a *prime*), print *a' prime*, and simply accept that there is no main verb for the subject *le degete enfant* 1.33.
- 11.61-2: a different punctuation would allow one to retain the B reading: *Au droit en fin. C'est fait notable, / Considere' le present cas!*
- 1.136: in adopting the C reading (*Ne guerre plus n'y face oultrance*) we took *guerre* to be the subject and *oultrance* the noun object of *face*. One could perhaps consider, however, emending *face* to *faces[s]*, take *guerre* to be the object and *oultrance* to be the equivalent of Modern French *a' outrance*. A second person singular verb (*faces*) certainly provides a more logical link with 1.135.
- 11.222-3: A different punctuation is possible: *Qui furent preuses, n'y ot celle, / Mains miracles* etc. Professor Reid has pointed out that *n'y ot celle* could be seen as an elliptical construction equivalent to "there is not one [who is not . . .]" and translatable by "every one of them" (see Tobler-Lommatzsch I, 770 and II, 90-I and Tobler's *Vermischte Beitrage* I, 3rd ed., 137).

(C) *Linguistic notes*

The inclusion of a translation into English will, it is hoped, answer some of the linguistic problems which confront the reader. We should like, however, to draw attention in these notes to (i) some of the more interesting words and expressions which occur in the poem, (ii) two "ghost-words" (*vernage* and *rexune*) which were created by scribal error or editorial misreadings and which have found their way into Godefroy and other dictionaries, (iii) a number of linguistic *cruces* for which we have proposed very tentative solutions.³⁰ All of these points will be dealt with in the order in which they arise in the poem.

- 11.9-10: *A rire bonement de joie / Me prens pour Le temps yvernage*. Misreadings of the initial letter *y* of *yvernage* as the letter *p* accompanied by a sign indicating an abbreviation for *por*, *pour* have resulted in the word *vernage* appearing in Godefroy where it is glossed as a noun meaning "printemps". The only example given of *vernage* meaning "spring" is taken from these lines in the *Ditie*.³¹
- 11.71-2: *Car Dieu, qui aux tors faiz repune, / Ceulx relieve en qui espoir maint*. A scribal error in B, reproduced in the nineteenth-century editions of the poem, explains the presence of *rexune* in Godefroy where it is glossed *sub resoigne* as a noun meaning "crainte". Given that the nineteenth-century editors took *rexune* to be a noun, they naturally emended the correct reading *faiz* to *fail*, thus complicating and adding to the original error (e.g. Quicherat: *qui aux tors fail rexune*; Herluison: *qui aux torts fail rexune*; Fabre: *qui aux tors fail rexune*). The Carpentras manuscript, generally unknown until the early twentieth-century, contains what is obviously the correct reading *repune*, 3rd person singular, present tense of the verb *repugnier* (*repunner, repuner*).
- 1.119: see our comments on this line *sub Style and Versification, supra* p.62.
- 1.131: *sans le gref d'ame* (*grief* in C): "with peace of mind"? Professor Brian Woledge has suggested to us: "to nobody's harm".
- 1.143: *premise*: the context would suggest a meaning such as "proof" "evidence"
- 1.179: *afflus*: This is a rare word, which is not recorded in Godefroy or Tobler-Lommatzsch. Some editors have taken *afflus* to be a noun (e.g. Fabre glosses the word as "abondance", suggesting that he takes 11. 179-80 to

mean: "Moses, upon whom God bestowed an abundance of blessings and virtues". *Afflus* is in fact an adjective (from Latin *adfluus*, *afluus* glossed in Du Cange *sub affluitas* as *abundans*), translatable in this context as "bountiful" or "in His bounty".³² Cp. also the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (aditvs avctori tate et consilio academiavm qvrnqve Germanicarvm, Lipsiae, MDCCC, Vol. I) *sub afluus* where one example is given, from Julius Valerius; "flumen... adfluum vident".

- 1.215: This line raises a number of problems: the meaning of *ammonestoit*, the use of the indicative after *quoy que* (to be understood as "although" or "whatever"?), the identity of *il* (God or Gideon?), and the fact that the C reading includes an object pronoun (*quoy qu'il l'ammonestoit*). We have taken the basic meaning of 11.214-16 to be: "But whatever guidance He (God) did in fact give [him = Gideon] *or* although He (God) did in fact guide [him = Gideon], He never performed so striking a miracle as He does for this woman".
- 11.233-4: As corrected above, in section (a) of this Appendix, these lines now read: *Et bien este' examinee / A, ains que l'on l'ait voulu croire*. It will be recalled that in our notes in Part I of our article we rejected the base manuscript reading *a ains que* and adopted *aincois que* from the Grenoble manuscript. In the light of an exactly parallel construction which we have since then noted in Christine's *Chemin de Long Estude* we now take *a* to be the auxiliary in post-position. The relevant lines in the *Chemin de Long Estude* read: "Jadis Remus et Romulus, / Qui a leur mere este' tollus / Orent par leur oncle cruex..." (ed. Robert Puschel, Berlin and Paris, 1881 and 1887, 11. 3577-9)...
- 11.322 and 324: We take *sans relever* and *sans lever* to be synonyms whose literal meaning is "without rising up", i.e. "well and truly dead". Fabre by contrast glosses *sans lever* as *sans relache*.
- 1.354: *L'Englecherie*: this word is used here by Christine to refer pejoratively to the whole English race and all that it stands for. The only example Godefroy gives of this particular usage is the one that occurs in the *Ditie'*. "Englecherie" was a term which originally had a legal connotation. In Norman England the "presentment of Englishry" (i.e. the offering of proof that a slain person was English) was a method whereby a community could escape the fine that would automatically be levied in the event of a Norman being murdered.³³ Even in its original legal sense therefore the word had pejorative overtones.
- 1.358: *il en est sue'*: The context seems to suggest that the meaning of this expression is "it's all up with them".

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ENDNOTES

²⁸ For corrections to the text of the *Ditie* see section (a) of Appendix.

²⁹ We should like to record our debt to Professor Reid for the interest which he has shown in our work and for the many valuable observations and suggestions which he has made.

³⁰ Comments from interested colleagues on these and other problems will be particularly welcome, as we propose to publish the poem eventually in book-form.

³¹ A fuller discussion of *vernage* has been accepted for publication in *Medium Aevum*.

³² We are grateful to our colleague Mr. Patrick Byrne for drawing our attention to the Du Cange reference.

³³ On Englishry, see F. C. Hamil, "Presentment of Englishry and the Murder Fine", *Speculum*. XII. 1937, pp. 285-298. Our thanks are due to Dr Michael Clanchy of Glasgow University's Mediaeval History Department for drawing our attention to this article.