

Acknowledgments

For feminist academics, it is a tenet that scholarship is rarely accomplished by just one, two, or three researchers, and this is especially true in Christine Studies. Without the many modern editions completed and annotated by superb scholars, our tools would have been far fewer and more difficult of access, even with the increasing availability of digitized manuscripts. Without translations into other languages, Christine de Pizan's works would perhaps be unknown to all but a small audience of cognoscenti, the conversation about her the poorer for being excluded from a rich multicultural and multilingual group of admirers and enthusiasts. We are grateful to all those both named and unnamed in this volume for their hard work and many insights.

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Abbreviations

<i>Album</i>	Gilbert Ouy, Christine Reno, and Inès Villela-Petit, with Olivier Delsaux and Tania van Hemelryck, eds. and collaborators, and with the advice of James Laidlaw and Marie-Thérèse Gousset. <i>Album Christine de Pisan</i> . Turnhout: Brepols, 2012.
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>Città</i>	<i>La Città delle dame</i> , ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, trans. [into Italian] Patrizia Caraffi, 2nd ed. Milan: Luni, 1998.
CNRS	Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique
DR ed. Hicks	<i>Le Débat sur Le Roman de la Rose</i> . Edited by Eric Hicks. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1977.
DR ed. and trans. Hult	<i>Debate of the "Romance of the Rose."</i> Edited and translated by David F. Hult. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
DMF	<i>Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330–1500)</i> . Accessible online at < http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/ >.
fol., fols.	folio, folios
<i>Mutacion</i>	<i>Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune</i> . Edited by Suzanne Solente. 4 vols. Paris: Picard, 1959–66.
<i>Œuvres poétiques</i>	<i>Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan</i> . Edited by Maurice Roy. 3 vols. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886–96.
<i>om.</i>	omitted
RR ed. Lecoy	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, <i>Le Roman de la Rose</i> . Edited by Félix Lecoy. 3 vols. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965–70.
RR trans. Horgan	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, <i>The Romance of the Rose</i> . Translated by Frances Horgan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
ST	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> . Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 3 vols. Latin and English. New York: Benziger Bros., 1947–48.

Foreword

In this book, two highly respected Christine de Pizan scholars bring their literary, linguistic, textual, and codicological expertise to two early works by Christine championing women. The meticulous editions and translations presented here are based on the earliest extant manuscripts of *The God of Love's Letter* and *The Tale of the Rose*, and they are welcome for making it possible to see how Christine subsequently revised the texts. And they are especially welcome, too, for what Fenster and Reno reveal about Christine's early thought. The substantial introduction and textual annotations show that Christine had already absorbed neo-Aristotelian thinking and used it to equip herself with an intellectual paradigm for defending women in unprecedented and systematic terms derived from natural philosophy. The book's new insights increase our understanding of Christine as an intellectual and writer of extraordinary creativity in her rebuttal and replacement of gender models. Fenster and Reno's book makes it clear that Christine's voice is more than ever one we should hear.

The precise timbre of that voice has been a matter of debate since at least the 1970s (a debate that had been part, too, of the nineteenth-century reception of Christine): much thought has been expended on the issue of whether Christine's is a feminist voice. To say that it is can incur the reproach of anachronism, of creating an unhistorical proto-feminism valued because it prefigures later ideologies. But in the face of our own persisting gender inequalities, giving attention—attention of a properly contextualized kind—to the history of women's calling-out of inequity is important. Women, after all, remain one of the largest minoritized groups: that there is historical evidence for their resistance to injustice and prejudice suggests that women have not simply permitted or colluded in their minority status, but that much effort has been put into disabling and confining them. Moreover, amidst the contemporary heterogeneity of feminisms and their complex intersectionalities with issues of race, class, and justice as currently understood, there seems little point in defining Christine in or out of particular models of feminism, although there is every point in understanding as carefully as possible what she is doing.

Both works presented here, *The God of Love's Letter* and *The Tale of the Rose*, are marked by Christine's principled, political, and very well-informed attention to *la cause des femmes*. In one of their most striking contributions, Fenster and Reno focus on how Christine's systematic use of the language of natural law was directed to the defense of women in *The God of Love's Letter*. They pay close, transformative attention to Christine's neo-Aristotelian lexis and show how she repositioned Aristotelian categories of nature, inclination, and habit to create an intellectually authoritative discourse on women's nature that could address

academic theory as well as social practice. Christine's *Letter* draws on some of the aristocratic discourse of *courtoisie*, but it is no courtly game. Rather, it depends on an understanding of divine, natural, and human law, in which Cupid's letter is nothing less than the letter of the law. The *Letter* is thus a hitherto overlooked early instance of Christine's capacity to take on and redeploy for her own purposes entire edifices of thought, and also, importantly, the first clue to her interest in developing a virtue ethics applying to women. In this text, as in Christine's later work, scholasticism is alive—and newly salient and newly open to examination—in the vernacular.

The Tale of the Rose, on the other hand, is an experiment in imagining women's autonomous sociopolitical capacity: in the visionary setting up of an Order of the Rose organized and controlled by women for the defense of women, Christine moves beyond similar orders run, with however benevolent intentions, by men in the service of women. She scripts her own legitimate and independent advocacy in the beautiful gold and blue document Loyalty delivers to her by dream-vision as a mandate for disseminating her ideas. Whether the Order was ever set up, how far the poem is a record or not, is in a sense beside the point: the poem, in all its graciousness and aspiration, does its own political work.

As presented and elucidated here, these texts have obvious importance both in themselves and in creating a new account of Christine's canon and its development. And they have contributions to make to many European literatures, Christine de Pizan's works having had such wide dissemination and influence in medieval France, Flanders, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and England. I can, for instance, now put these works before my students of medieval English literature as part of a transregional culture in which Christine's works circulated in French and English amidst the multilingualisms of late medieval England (where Christine's son Jean was sent by her to the Earl of Salisbury, and where he joined Henry IV's court after Salisbury's murder in 1400). The poet Hoccleve's *Lepistre de Cupide*, a medieval English-language adaptation of *The God of Love's Letter*, was first presented together with Christine's *Letter* in a collaboration by Fenster with her colleague Mary Erler some thirty years ago.¹ But Fenster and Reno's new edition and revised translation is needed, excitingly enough, because of the exponential growth in knowledge about Christine and her works: the present volume is both the outcome of and a contribution to new ways of seeing Christine de Pizan. Christine's *Letter* repays comparison with, for example, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (which draws, as Carolyn Collette has shown, on humanist and Aristotelian

1. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler, ed. and trans., *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's Epistre au dieu d'Amours and Dit de la Rose; Thomas Hoccleve's The Letter of Cupid; with George Sewall's The Proclamation of Cupid* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990).

discourses²) and its deployment of Cupid's court. So too, *The Tale of the Rose* is a thought-experiment and a program to conjure with alongside Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Both these latter works consider questions of delegated sovereignty in various ways: in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, a judicial (not only social) court of women decide a rapist's sentence in a process for which Arthur has transferred oversight to Guenevere. In *The Tale of the Rose*, the genesis of a female order for the protection of women, governed by women themselves, is initially laid out within the social space afforded by one of the Duke of Orléans's Parisian residences, but emerges without the baggage entailed in a male-governed order's service of women. In the *Wife's Tale*, Guenevere's judgment that the rapist-knight may have a year in which he either finds a satisfactory answer to what women want or faces execution is used by Chaucer as a space in which the question of women's rights to any kind of autonomy is opened up and re-entangled with their relations to their husbands (in the rapist-knight's compulsory marriage to his rescuer). The fitness of aristocratic rule and chivalric ideology is dissected both by the authoritative, artisanal, much-married female teller of the *Wife's Tale* and by its principal internal speaker, the powerful self-governing old faery-woman who chooses to marry and to reconstruct the rapist-knight. For Christine, it seems, such questions have already been thought through: the postulate of an order serving women, in however courtly and chivalric a setting, should not depend on an ideology of male chivalric service but on female autonomy for its participants. Like the authoritatively Dantean argument of Chaucer's faery-woman, *The Tale of the Rose* demands a new model in which ethics rather than lineage determines nobility. Launched amidst the proliferation of chivalric orders committed to the defense of women and/or run by men at the turn of the fifteenth century, the *Tale* is a challenging work of experimental social imagination.

In our world's contemporary war on women (nowadays often spearheaded or licensed by various levels of government in the United States of America), medievalist feminist scholars have a signal contribution to make. They can dislodge the routine equation of the Middle Ages with some dark era of misogyny from which we have escaped and progressed. This self-flattering assumption licenses many present abuses, but is historically unverifiable. On an almost weekly basis new studies appear of women's rulership, political influence, sociocultural patronage, and numerous other activities in medieval Europe. Nevertheless, no one would deny that there were structural and influential misogynist constructs in the Middle Ages, and Fenster and Reno sagely include an example here in the shape of Chancellor Jean Gerson's *Poem on Man and Woman* (lucidly translated by Thomas O'Donnell). It is a splendid way of illuminating the complexity of what Christine was up against. For all that Gerson gave considerable thought to pastoral writing

2. Carolyn P. Collette, *Rethinking Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (York: York Medieval Press, 2014).

for women in his letters to his sisters, anyone who has ever been “mansplained” will immediately see in his *Poem* how apparent reasonableness and logic rest on a reflex structural misogyny that perceives no need to examine its own premises. Readers will feel, too, the frustrating intricacy with which unconscious privilege and unexamined “authoritative” pronouncements are intertwined. The difficulties Christine takes on in dis-articulating all this and finding a basis on which rational and equitable discussion can proceed is vivid in Fenster and Reno’s juxtaposition of her *Letter’s* early defense of women with Gerson’s.

It would be foolhardy to think that these difficulties have been left behind in our world, or that Christine no longer provides illuminating models. Current structural misogynies may be differently inflected, but are no less crippling and dangerous. It ill beseems any modern society or state that grudges or attacks full autonomy for its female citizens to plume itself as against the Middle Ages, let alone to appropriate the Middle Ages as a licensing origin point for its own barbaric practices. In spite of legal and customary conceptions of rule as male and men as the governing class, medieval Europe was a domain in which women ruled principalities, realms, and counties, and where, as the remarkable works made freshly available here show, they could rule in matters of intellect, vision, and creativity.

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Introduction

Christine de Pizan and the Other Voice

Christine de Pizan (ca. 1365–ca. 1430) was born in Italy but moved to the court of King Charles V of France at the age of about four, after her father, Tommaso da Pizzano, became the king's astrologer and physician. She married at fifteen (and happily), but was a widow by the age of twenty-five; in addition, her father had died a year or so before her husband. Christine turned to writing to support herself and her family, now consisting of a son, daughter, mother, and niece.¹ She wrote the major portion of her work between 1399 and 1410, although certain of her lyric poems date from before that period; it is remarkable that a good part of her output was completed in the first five or six years of the fifteenth century. The following (partial) list gives a sense of Christine's extraordinary accomplishment. In addition to hundreds of short poems, there were five long "courtly" poems: the *Dit de Poissy* (*Tale of Poissy*), 1400; *Debat de deux amans* (*Debate of Two Lovers*), 1400; the *Trois Jugemens* (*Three Judgments*), 1400;² the *Dit de la pastoure* (*Tale of the Shepherdess*), 1403; and the *Duc des vrais amans* (*Duke of True Lovers*), possibly 1405.³ Other works addressed various subjects in verse or prose, or sometimes in mixed verse and prose. These included her letters in the *Debate of the Rose* (see pp. 10–11); several lengthy, learned works such as the *Epistre Othea* (*Epistle of Othea*), 1400–1401; *Chemin de longue etude* (*Path of Long Learning*), 1402–1403; *Mutacion de Fortune* (*Mutability of Fortune*), 1403; *Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (*Deeds and Good Practices of the Wise King Charles V*), 1404; *Cité des dames* (*City of Ladies*), ca. 1405; *l'Advision Cristine* (*Christine's Vision*), 1405–1406; *Prodhomme de l'homme / Prudence* (*Man's Integrity / Prudence*), 1405–1406;⁴ and *Corps de Policie* (*Body Politic*), 1407;⁵ a book on warfare, the *Fais d'armes et de chevalerie* (*Feats of Arms and of Chivalry*), 1410, as well as the *Enseignemens moraulx* (*Moral Teachings*), 1399–1402, and *Cent Ballades d'amant*

1. A second son died some time before October 2, 1402, the date of a letter Christine wrote in the *Debate of the Rose* in which she states that "je ay ung seul filz" (I have only one son). See *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1977; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1996), 128.

2. The most recent editions of these three poems are in *The Love Debate Poems of Christine de Pizan: Le Livre du Debat de deux amans, Le Livre des Trois Jugemens, Le Livre du Dit de Poissy*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

3. We have only a relative date for this work: it preceded the *Trois Vertus*, traditionally dated 1405; in this latter work (Bk. 1, ch. 26) Christine writes that she had already included the dame de la Tour's letter against wifely adultery in the *Duc des vrais amans*.

4. Neither one of these two nearly identical works has been edited.

5. A new English translation of the *Corps de Policie*, by Angus J. Kennedy, is forthcoming in The Other Voice series.

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et de dame (*Hundred Ballades of a Lover and Lady*), possibly 1407–1410.⁶ Three devotional works were written between 1402 and 1403: *Oraison Nostre Dame* (*Prayer on Our Lady*); *Quinze Joyes de Nostre Dame rimees* (*Fifteen Joys of Our Lady in Rhyme*); and *Oroison de la vie et passion de Nostre Seigneur* (*Prayer on Our Lord's Life and Passion*). The number and variety of Christine's compositions over such a short period indicate the depth of her learning before and after her husband's death. She herself observed that between 1399 and 1405 she wrote fifteen major volumes, not counting specific shorter narratives, and that together they made up seventy substantial quires.⁷ Her need for financial support was pressing, but she also possessed an intellectual drive that required expression.

Among Christine's early writings were six works about "woman." The *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* (*The God of Love's Letter*), 1399, introduces issues to be pursued at greater length later, in the much longer *Cité des dames*. The *Dit de la Rose* (*Tale of the Rose*), 1402, complements the *Epistre*, since both rebuke, in their separate ways, the misogyny of the influential thirteenth-century vernacular poem, the *Roman de la Rose* (*Romance of the Rose*), which itself dealt ironically with some principal tenets of contemporary natural law. Her censure of the *Roman* became even more pointed during the epistolary exchange known as the Debate of the Rose, which began before 1402; Christine's letters in the Debate further emphasize many points in her defense of women. The *Livre des Trois Vertus* (*Book of the Three Virtues*), ca. 1405, also known as the *Trésor de la cité des dames* (*Treasury of the City of Ladies*), is an advice manual for women of all stations in society, including poor women. In her final work, the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (*Poem about Joan of Arc*), 1429, a jubilant Christine celebrates Joan's deeds.

When Christine wrote the *Epistre*, her first narrative poem, she was already known in court circles for her lyric poems.⁸ In some of them she had touched on themes that would reappear in the *Epistre*, such as pretense and betrayal in love, but those were motifs made familiar in courtly literature. Not until she wrote the *Epistre* could readers begin to see the larger, political resonance of Christine's campaign for women's dignity. Contemporary theology held that, at the level of

6. The *Fais d'armes* was translated into English by William Caxton in 1489; the French text, however, has not been published since 1527 (misleadingly titled *L'Arbre de batailles et fleur de chevalerie* [Paris: Philippe Le Noir]). See *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye*, translated and printed by William Caxton from the French original by Christine de Pisan (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1932; reissued with corrections, 1937).

7. *Le Livre de l'Advison Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), Bk. 3, ch. 10.

8. Note on the translation of the title: in medieval French the preposition *a* (*à*) was often used to indicate possession, and the construction still exists in modern French in such expressions as "*à moi*" ("mine") or "*la femme aux cheveux blonds*" ("the blond-haired woman"). The *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* meant a letter "belonging to," thus by, the God of Love.

the soul, all humans were equal, but once incarnate, men were leaders and women their helpmeets. Christine never openly contested that hierarchy, but she certainly objected to its abuses: men could vilify women with impunity, for in practice women had little redress against an entrenched system of male hegemony. She argued for women's ability to understand subtle thinking, which provided the capacity for ethical behavior. Her own experience—her desire for knowledge, and the education to which it led her—was probative, but it also revealed to her a long history of men's writing against women, and it gave her the tools with which to contest the misuse of masculine privilege. The two poems presented here in new editions and translations, the *Epistre* and *Dit*, take their place as her first public challenge to misogynous discourse and to the slighting behavior men could practice toward women.

Modern facing-page editions and translations of both poems first appeared in 1990, in *Poems of Cupid*.⁹ In undertaking these second modern editions and translations, we have hoped to offer work that benefits from the great strides that have been made in Christine Studies since that time. *Poems of Cupid* featured the latest manuscript witnesses for each poem, but we have chosen here to produce the earliest texts of the two poems in order to offer a "genetic" edition of each—that is, an edition that traces the evolution of the poems written by the author as they were worked upon and recopied. We believe it is crucial to understand Christine's uniquely comprehensive approach to her writing, and to see her at work adjusting her text, making corrections or stylistic improvements (evidence of her own correcting hand appears in all fifty-four of the extant manuscripts now recognized as having been produced under her supervision); sometimes, too, she added or removed items in the interests of political judiciousness.¹⁰ Her involvement with every aspect of a text's or manuscript's production invites us to see the person Christine, an engaged thinker and writer, but also a uniquely self-sufficient businesswoman and publicist for her ideas.

While nearly all her writing deserves a place in the Other Voice series, her defenses of "woman" especially, because they speak in the exceptional voice of a woman publicly defending women against the excesses of fifteenth-century androcentric culture, bring us a special, lone Other Voice speaking up against a vast chorus that might well have preferred her to remain silent about women's rights.

9. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's Epistre au dieu d'Amours and Dit de la Rose*; Thomas Hoccleve's *The Letter of Cupid*; with George Sewall's *The Proclamation of Cupid*, ed. and trans. Thelma Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

10. See in particular James C. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan: An Author's Progress," *Modern Language Review* 78 (1983): 532–50; Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan: A Publisher's Progress," *Modern Language Review* 82 (1987): 35–75; and Gilbert Ouy, Christine Reno, and Inès Villela-Petit, with Olivier Delsaux and Tania van Hemelryck, eds. and collaborators, and with the advice of James Laidlaw and Marie-Thérèse Gousset, *Album Christine de Pizan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

Background: The Roman de la Rose

The years between 1399 and 1402 were an important moment in French literary history and in the reception history of a celebrated thirteenth-century poem, the *Roman de la Rose*, whose reach extended far beyond its time and place. Its misogynist tenor dismayed and angered Christine, and although she was not the first or the only French intellectual to find fault with the work, she was the first to record objections from a woman's point of view to its deeply degrading view of women. In between writing the *Epistre* and the *Dit*, in a period of a little over a year from June–July 1401 to October 1402,¹¹ Christine participated in the *Débat du Roman de la Rose* (Debate of the *Romance of the Rose*), an exchange of letters in prose in which she explained to a group of her humanist contemporaries why she found the *Roman* objectionable. She met with their condemnation for her views, but she never changed her opinion, moving on to significantly expand her ideas about women and the need for their defense.

The *Roman* was begun ca. 1230 by Guillaume de Lorris, who wrote the first approximately 4,000 verses, and it was continued and terminated in the 1270s by Jean de Meun, who added nearly 18,000 verses.¹² Together the two sections recount, in allegorized terms, the steps in the conquest of a rose. The two parts vary in character, with modern criticism sometimes referring to Lorris's portion

11. See the list of Debate documents and their dates in *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Hicks (cited in note 1 above), lii–liv; all citations here are taken from this edition. A newer edition by Andrea Valentini provides the Debate letters in the format Christine herself chose for presentation to the Queen and to the Provost of Paris—that is, in a dossier prominently featuring her own letters. See *Le Livre des Epistres du débat sus le Rommant de la Rose* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014; rpt. 2016). An English translation based on the Hicks edition is the *Debate of the "Romance of the Rose,"* ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010). A modern French translation is that of *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, trans. Virginie Greene (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006). On Christine's feelings and stance in the Debate and elsewhere in her writing, see the perceptive comments of Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, "Désir et étonnement: de l'auteur au lecteur. Emotion, écriture et lecture au temps de Christine de Pizan," *Le Moyen français* 75 (2014): 19–42.

12. All citations here are taken from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy. 3 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965–70). Citations in English are from *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). The *Roman* has garnered a considerable modern body of criticism which is dealt with to 2017 in these bibliographies: Heather M. Arden, ed., *The Roman de la Rose: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1993); Herman Braet, *Nouvelle bibliographie du Roman de la Rose* (Louvain, Paris, and Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2017); and Catherine Bel and Herman Braet, eds., *De la Rose: Texte, image, fortune* (Louvain, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006). See also the *Roman de la Rose* Digital Library (a joint project of Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries and the Bibliothèque nationale de France) at the Digital Library of Medieval Manuscripts: <<http://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/>>. A brief review of recent trends in *Rose* scholarship is provided by Jonathan Morton in "Etat présent: *Le Roman de la Rose*," *French Studies* 69 (2015): 79–86.

as “courtly” and to Meun’s as “scholastic.” In Lorris’s opening section, a young nobleman, called Lover, falls asleep and dreams that he has set out walking one May morning and has arrived at the Garden of Pleasure. Its exterior wall features portraits of figures such as Avarice, Hatred, Old Age, Poverty, Sorrow, and the like, all personifications of qualities or traits antithetical to love and positioned to face away from the garden. Once the dreamer has been received into the garden by its gatekeeper, Idleness, he meets the personifications Love, Courtesy, Joy, Pleasant Looks, and others. Strolling about, the dreamer reaches the fountain of Narcissus, named for the handsome young man of myth who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool, not realizing that it was only an image: fixated by the sight, and the victim of a love that can never be returned, Narcissus loses the will to live. In the *Roman*, however, the dreamer gazes into the fountain and sees one special rosebud reflected in a pair of crystals at the fountain floor. Wounded by Love’s arrows, he falls in love with the rosebud and accepts Love’s commandments. The stages in his courtship of the rose are then told through the activities of allegories such as Fair Welcome and Friend, on the one hand, and Jealous Husband, Shame, and *Dangier*, or Resistance/Rebuff, on the other. Reason warns against love’s follies, but Lover is unpersuaded. He is prevented from reaching the rose by Jealousy, who builds a castle around the garden and sets Old Woman to guard the door—but at that, Lorris’s poem stops.

When Jean de Meun continues the narrative, he adds lengthy speeches by various personifications. Reason counsels Lover to abandon his pursuit of the rose, but Lover rejects her advice. Friend counsels on ways to seduce the rose, and the Jealous Husband, commenting on marriage, lambastes wives for being faithless and meretricious. Old Woman recommends that women take many lovers, and fleece them while they can. Further escapades and speeches follow. Eventually, Love’s army, abetted by Venus, comes to Lover’s aid. They pledge to defeat Chastity, which pleases Nature, for she confesses to her priest Genius her regret at having created man, who can be mulishly reluctant to perpetuate the species. Genius utters a sermon condemning those who fail to use the organs given by Nature to further the human species. Lover finally succeeds in entering the castle and taking the rose.

Christine’s displeasure with the *Roman* stemmed in part from Jean de Meun’s failure to provide clear and straightforward moral instruction, as was expected of medieval works. She argued instead that it did just the opposite, teaching readers improper behavior. Today, the *Roman* has many admirers, but their appreciation of the poem is not always without reservation. The poem’s conclusion still gives pause: there, Lover achieves sexual union with the silent rose, for whom refusal has never seemed an option. It is therefore not surprising that many see in this a depiction of rape.¹³ Further, we should understand that for another group, such

13. For Rosalind Brown-Grant this is a depiction of “allegorical rape.” See *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35.

a resolution would have been titillating and thus unacceptable in a work of this kind. Christine herself points out that upon hearing the conclusion of the *Roman*, women would blush to hear the “horrible things included in the ending.”¹⁴

Christine further objected to perceived obscenities in the *Roman*, such as references to genitalia. This earned her the accusation of prudishness. As a writer cognizant of contemporary literary aesthetics, however, she objected not to sexually explicit language per se, but rather to its jarring use, as she saw it, in the mouths of Reason and Genius in particular. Medieval literary theory called for figures to speak in character, a point that would become key in the Debate of the *Rose*. Equally, she singled out the ending of the poem as especially heinous, for she believed a text should conclude explicitly upon a summing-up, “in the juridical sense,” as Rosalind Brown-Grant has observed. She deemed the final chapter of the *Roman* to be “particularly pernicious” because the rape “is the final impression that the reader will take away from the text.”¹⁵

In an otherwise impressively talky work, the silent rose is the only figure never to speak. (Had the rose been endowed with a voice, what might she have said? Given Lover’s strenuous efforts to reach her, the *Roman* suggests that she repeatedly rebuffed him, but the medieval reader is expected to accept that men play the dominant role in species preservation, and if a woman must be forced, so be it.) To the extent that the rose can be said to exist at all, it is in the dreamer’s imaginary, where “woman” is not really “a woman” at all; as a rose, she is a traditional, colloquial symbol for the vagina, woman synecdochally reduced to her genitalia. A vagina that spoke could of course undermine the portrait Jean de Meun wanted to provide of an acquiescing figure who is an unprotesting means of gratification and insemination. But the *Roman* is after all a dream, and those who wish to excuse the depiction of forcible sex upon which it ends sometimes invoke the dream framework, in which there can be no true or false. The rose’s fate is driven by Lover’s aspirations, but it should be noted that he too seems impelled by textual forces beyond his power to resist.

In the end, the plethora of voices in the *Roman* debating and contradicting one another results in a critical stalemate: just what is the *Roman* teaching? A precise answer remains elusive to this day, although it has been much discussed in the scholarly literature. Perhaps, as Noah Guynn suggests, the poem’s popularity

See also Noah D. Guynn, “Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*,” in *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 137–70. For a succinct, fuller synopsis of the *Roman*, see Sarah Kay, *The Romance of the Rose* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1995), 117–19.

14. DR ed. and trans. Hult, 179.

15. Brown-Grant further suggests that Christine may be echoing Dante’s advice that what the speaker most hopes to convey should be placed at the end of a talk; for discussion of these points, see Brown-Grant, *Moral Defence of Women*, 30–43.

(there are nearly three hundred surviving manuscripts) can be explained by its “encyclopaedic range of themes and styles and its openness to diverse interpretive approaches.”¹⁶

Pushing Back 1: The Epistre au dieu d'Amours

The God of Love’s “excommunication” of men who deceive women, a document with elements of a diplomatic act,¹⁷ puts the reader in a royal court at a key moment. In the illustration in one of the manuscripts in which the *Epistre* appears, BnF fr. 835, an image at fol. 45r shows the god seated outdoors handing a piece of folded parchment to a young nobleman kneeling at his side. In British Library manuscript Harley 4431, known as the Queen’s Manuscript, Cupid is presented at fol. 51r seated in a garden, surrounded by trees; again, a young nobleman kneels to his right and receives the letter. This imaginary *locus amoenus* presents a kindly but authoritative god who has presumably descended to an earthly location in order to hand the letter over to a human messenger, who will then disseminate its contents.¹⁸ Both illustrations feature birds flying overhead.¹⁹ Each illustrator interprets this pleasant scene differently, however. In the Paris manuscript the

16. Noah D. Guynn, “*Le Roman de la Rose*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 48–62, at 48.

17. Tania van Hemelryck notes that the *Epistre*’s format resembles the parts of a diplomatic act: the *suscription*, which names the author of the act (Cupid), vv. 1–2; the *adresse*, which names those for whom the letter is intended (all Cupid’s loyal subjects), v. 6, and is followed by the *salut*, or greeting, v. 7; the *notification* (“We make it publicly known”), v. 8; the *exposé*, or detailing of the reason(s) that led to the decision to prepare the *Letter* (we have received complaints from injured ladies), vv. 9ff; the *dispositif*, or details of the final judgment, the juridical decision, vv. 775–95; the statement of time and place (*date*), vv. 796–800; the final signature (*salut final*), vv. 825–26; the list of witnesses (*signes de validation*), vv. 801ff.; and finally the formulas of authentication (*formules d’authentification*), including, in one manuscript text of the poem (BnF, fr. 835), the anagram Christine creates for her own name, *Creintis*, “Fearful.” See “*L’Epistre au dieu d’amours* ou ‘l’origine du monde’ auctorial de Christine de Pizan,” *Le Moyen français* 78–79 (2016): 241–54. See also Earl Jeffrey Richards, “*Seulette a part*”—The ‘Little Woman on the Sidelines’ Takes Up Her Pen: The Letters of Christine de Pizan,” in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, ed. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 139–70. For a bibliography of medieval treatises including those on letter-writing, see James J. Murphy, *Medieval Rhetoric: A Select Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

18. At the conclusion of the *Livre des Trois Vertus* (Bk. 3, ch. [14]) a manual of advice for women, Christine sends her work out to be disseminated in all countries.

19. In a recent personal communication, Inès Villela-Petit associates the bird motif with the renewal of spring (*reverdie*), a theme integral to courtly lyric poems of that genre and consonant with the *Epistre*’s setting in the month of May. Both miniatures feature three white birds; the Queen’s Manuscript shows a fourth, a green ring-necked parakeet, which expresses contemporary aristocratic interest in exotic fauna.

colors are soft, light greens and pinks, evoking love's sweetness. In the British Library manuscript, colors are strong: Cupid's vermilion mantle rather brings to mind burning passion.

The *Epistre* centers on a number of seemingly unrelated themes whose common thread is that they respond to prevailing negative generalizations about women. These would have been familiar to the medieval reader but the poem's modern public must often infer what they were from the defenses the God of Love develops. Several items in the defense are not original, having appeared in works by other writers,²⁰ but Christine breathes life into them through her evocation of lively scenes: overachieving suitors bustling about in their created personas; lazy knights, ensconced before warming fires, boasting about their amorous conquests and slyly bringing the company around to "forcing" the information out of them—these are psychologically resonant "slice of life" portraits designed to be penetrating, mocking, and humorous.

To the reproach that women are faithless and deceitful, the God of Love retorts in several ways.²¹ Men are duplicitous (that is, as the word suggests, they practice a form of "doubleness" or two-facedness), whereas women are "simple" (not simple-minded) in that they are not duplicitous and do not think about or practice doubleness.²² It is women who are thus deceived by men, who instead should be kind to them, for they are their mothers, helpmeets, and nurturers.²³

20. See Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. "The Formal Case: The Corpus," 19–49, and "The Formal Case: Origins, Procedures," 50–69.

21. Tracy Adams argues that the *Epistre* in particular depicts the crisis in France in 1399, and that its God of Love is "helpless" and "flummoxed," an implied parallel to the ailing King Charles VI (1368–1422), whose grave mental illness imperiled France. See *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 51–52. It is true that in their opening complaint the women stress a decline in chivalry in France especially, but nothing in the god's portrait suggests a feeble or ineffectual king. Indeed, scholars generally agree that Christine intended to rewrite Cupid as an improved version of the Roman's Cupid, in keeping with the remedial tenor of the god's letter as a whole. Comparison with a king of France is not impossible, but if so, this God of Love would seem rather to recall Charles V, the "wise king," whom Christine so admired for "doing the right thing," as Cupid does here when he "excommunicates" false lovers.

22. On simplicity as a "stance" (French *posture*) that Christine adopts, see Claire-Marie Schertz, "Autour de Christine de Pizan: Entre lyrisme courtois et engagement politique," *CONTEXTES* 13 (2013), <<https://journals.openedition.org/contextes/5798>>. See also Thelma S. Fenster, "Strong Voices, Weak Minds? The Defenses of Eve by Isotta Nogarola and Christine de Pizan, Who Found Themselves in Simone de Beauvoir's Situation," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France and Italy*, ed. Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 58–77; and Fenster, "Simplexe et sagesse: Christine de Pizan et Isotta Nogarola sur la culpabilité d'Eve," in *Une femme de lettres au Moyen Age: Etudes autour de Christine de Pizan*, ed. Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995), 481–93.

23. See Blamires, "Honoring Mothers," in *The Case for Women*, 70–95.

Women cannot deceive men because they do not do what men do: Jason betrayed Medea (vv. 435–42) and Aeneas abandoned Dido (vv. 443–58), but Penelope remained faithful to Ulysses during his long absence, in spite of being pressed by suitors (vv. 459–64).

The argument against women could swing two ways, however. If women were not clever enough to be duplicitous, then they were too gullible (Eve of Genesis) and gave themselves too readily (but if that is the case, the god asks [vv. 391–404], why must they be pursued so energetically in the *Roman*?). Women may well be trusting—perhaps too trusting—but they were created by God without the aggressive traits that cause war and destruction, with the result that they don't bring grievous harm to people or nations (vv. 643–50). Turning the tables against the commonplace medieval accusation that women gossip, the God of Love shows that men also gossip, and their gossip does more harm: because of men's greater influence and the sexual nature of their talk, women become the victims of men's boastful indiscretions or downright fabrications, sacrificed in what is fundamentally a contest between men.

Clerical culture is also to blame. The God of Love explains that clerics write books about women's purported ills and teach their young pupils to be wary of them. Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* (*Remedies for Love*), a treatise on ways to fall out of love that relies upon unappealing descriptions of women, was often used as a Latin-language textbook.²⁴ But clerics, Christine's God of Love says, are among the most lascivious of men: they seek only wanton women with interests like their own. They do not know honorable women, so how can they purport to speak about *all* women? Further, old men blame women in order to deflect attention from their own impotence. Even if there are some evil women, as a matter of principle women as a group should not be blamed (vv. 651–58).

One defense advanced by the God of Love reaches back into theological commentary on the Creation story. Clerics conceded certain "privileges" to Eve, and thus to women: for example, women were made of bone, a finer material than the earth from which Adam was formed (vv. 596–601); man was born outside the earthly paradise, whereas Eve was the first to be born inside it (vv. 602–6).²⁵ Incongruously familiar with the story of Jesus, Cupid further says that the biblical books about Jesus speak only good of women (vv. 558–73), and it was a woman who was worthy of carrying the son of God (v. 578). Truly noble men, such as the knights Othon de Grandson and Hutin de Vermeilles, would not dream of

24. See Elisabeth Pellegrin, "Les 'Remedia amoris' d'Ovide: Texte scolaire médiéval," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 115 (1957): 172–79; and James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn L. McKinley, eds., *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

25. See Blamires, "Eve and the Privileges of Women," in *The Case for Women*, 97–125.

defaming women; they should serve as exemplars (vv. 225–32, 233–39); this “naming of profeminine men,” in Blamires’s view, “is a new development.”²⁶

Pushing Back 2: The Debate of the Roman de la Rose: Voices Carry

Some two years after composing the *Epistre* Christine’s criticism of the *Roman* took a different turn. She entered into an epistolary exchange with the humanists Jean de Montreuil, Provost of Lille (1354–1418), and Gontier Col (ca. 1350–1418), joined by Pierre Col, Gontier’s brother and canon of Notre-Dame de Paris, all of whom admired the *Roman*. Jean Gerson (1363–1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, supported Christine’s view of the *Roman*, and he wrote against it in his *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* (*Treatise against the Romance of the Rose*).²⁷ It is not known what events occurred in the roughly two years between the *Epistre* and the first Debate letter. It appears that in 1399 Jean de Montreuil had not yet read the *Roman*; when he did, he wrote in praise of it, circulating his appreciation in a now-lost treatise. In his letters, he was high-handed with Christine, refusing, as Emma Cayley has underscored, to address her directly, and referring to her through a third party as “she.”²⁸ In a Latin letter of 1402 sent to an unidentified poet—perhaps Eustache Deschamps (ca. 1340–1404/5), or the Benedictine cleric Honorat Bovet (ca. 1340–ca. 1410)—Montreuil compared her to the Greek courtesan Leontium, a pupil of Epicurus who had dared to write against “the great philosopher,” Theophrastus.²⁹ Christine did not flinch in her response to Montreuil’s slur: “may it not be attributed to folly, arrogance, or presumption that I, a woman, dare to reprimand and refute so subtle an author [Jean de Meun] and to divest his work of its renown, when he, just one man, dared undertake to defame and

26. Blamires, *The Case for Women*, 45.

27. In addition to the English translation of all the Debate documents in *DR* ed. and trans. Hult, Gerson’s treatise against the *Romance* is translated in *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, trans. Brian Patrick McGuire (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 378–98. For a fuller understanding of Montreuil and the circles in which he moved, see Gilbert Ouy, “Paris, l’un des principaux foyers de l’humanisme en Europe au début du XV^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de Paris et de l’Île de France* 94–95 (1967–68), 71–98; Ezio Ornato, *Jean Muret et ses amis Nicolas de Clamanges et Jean de Montreuil: Contribution à l’étude des rapports entre les humanistes de Paris et ceux d’Avignon (1394–1420)* (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1969), and André Combes, *Jean de Montreuil et le chancelier Gerson: Contribution à l’histoire des rapports de l’humanisme et de la théologie en France au début du XV^e siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1942).

28. Emma Cayley, *Debate and Dialogue: Alain Chartier in His Cultural Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78.

29. *DR* ed. Hicks, 42–43; *DR* ed. and trans. Hult, 103. After Aristotle fled from Athens, Theophrastus succeeded him at the Lyceum. Leontium’s criticisms of the philosopher were called out by Cicero, who attacked the Epicureans for having “emboldened a loose woman like Leontium to write a book refuting Theophrastus.” See Cicero, *De natura deorum*, ed. and trans. Harris Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1933), 1.33.93.

condemn without exception an entire sex.”³⁰ Montreuil was also embarrassed to be writing in the vernacular instead of Latin, the language deemed appropriate to humanist reflection and dialogue;³¹ it fell to the Col brothers to respond further in French. Christine herself glossed the Debate as *non haineux* (not vicious), but her adversaries could be both condescending and rude.³²

Christine would have caused consternation among her opponents when she prepared a dossier of the Debate letters and sent it to Queen Isabeau (ca. 1370–1435), wife of King Charles VI, and to Guillaume de Tignonville (d. 1414), Provost of Paris—especially since the dossier included, along with the dedicatory letter to the queen and one to Tignonville, only her own letters and two by Gontier Col. Of her own letters, the lengthy letter to Montreuil, a rebuttal of his praise of the *Roman*, may have been indebted to the genre of the newly developing vernacular prose treatise, at which Christine was trying her hand.³³ Andrea Valentini has persuasively argued that Christine probably saw her collected letters in the Debate as an integral literary work on their own.³⁴ (By 1402 she had fully launched her literary career and had every reason to think of herself as an author: in addition to her collected lyric poetry, she had completed three courtly narratives—the *Dit de Poissy*, the *Deux Amans*, and the *Trois Jugemens*—as well as the learned *Epistre Othea*, was working on the nearly 24,000-line universal history, the *Mutacion de Fortune*,³⁵ and was considering or had already begun the *Chemin de longue étude*, another learned composition.) It is also plausible that her exclusion of Pierre Col’s letter of late summer 1402, with its forceful response to her arguments, was deliberate.³⁶

Implicit to the Debate is the simulated orality of the *Roman* itself, voice, or voices. Christine regarded the *Roman*’s many contradictory voices as a failure to

30. DR ed. Hicks, 22; DR ed. and trans. Hult, 63.

31. DR ed. Hicks, 30–31; DR ed. and trans. Hult, 65. See also Valentini’s comments in *Epistres du debat sus le Rommant de la Rose*, 119 and n. 25.

32. Nor was such condescension restricted to the Middle Ages. In 1969, John Fleming called Christine a “minor poet” whose role in the debate was “rather inflated . . . by modern feminists and should probably not be taken too seriously.” See *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 47. Fleming’s comment bears witness to the ground Christine Studies have covered since he wrote.

33. Virginie Greene’s suggestion in “Le débat sur le *Roman de la Rose* comme document d’histoire littéraire et morale,” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes/Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies* (CRMH) 14 Spécial (2007): 297–311, at 297 (accessible online at <<https://journals.openedition.org/crm/2586>>). Christine’s letter to Montreuil was dated summer 1401 (DR ed. Hicks, 11–22; DR ed. and trans. Hult, 50–63).

34. Andrea Valentini, ed., *Epistres du debat*, 107.

35. According to Suzanne Solente, Christine began writing this work in 1400. See *Le Livre de la Mutacion de fortune*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 4 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1959–1966), 1:xi.

36. See DR ed. Hicks, 89–112; DR ed. and trans. Hult, 130–58.

provide the morally uplifting closure that a single narrating voice, with a single, instructive message, could furnish and which would signify the work's *utilitas*.³⁷ In the *Epistre* Christine sets this right by channeling many voices through the single voice of Cupid, and through the clarity of his point of view. But Cupid's voice is unavoidably thick with the trace of other voices: Meun's voice of Cupid and then Ovid's figure of the god, upon which Meun relied, are funneled through the god of the *Epistre*, to be refuted. One hears the distant buzz of anonymous, clerkly male voices, the fathers of the church, explaining "how women are," and the voices of the deliberate defamers of women, the would-be seducers who take delight in weaving stories of sexual conquest. These voices are made to be heard in the *Epistre* so that all may be identified and condemned by the one voice that articulates the moral standard, that of the God of Love.

Because voice is so crucial to the *Epistre*, some modern readers have lamented that it is Cupid, and not Christine herself, who speaks for the feminine collectivity. Claire Nouvet remarks that in order to give voice to the previously silent "we," the "community of women" who are the poem's plaintiffs, the case against men must be heard through another male voice; as Nouvet puts it, this "feminine plaint, this muted voice, will have to be articulated in the voice that muted it." And because it is Cupid who discloses the damage done to women, he "speaks in women's place the certainty that they cannot speak."³⁸ Nouvet captures an important difference in expectation as between medieval and modern readers, but Christine's critical technique in both the *Epistre* and the *Dit* depended on rewriting the God of Love as a deliberate and obvious riposte to Meun's god: Christine's god is the exemplar, a male figure whose thoughts and actions are just as Christine would wish, and that is because the God of Love is not speaking *instead of* Christine—rather, he is "being spoken" by Christine. This is a further twist on Christine's talent for "mastering . . . the 'master discourse,' her turning it to speak her own ends," as Maureen Quilligan has observed.³⁹

It is in fact voice, material and metaphorical, speaking, reciting, or singing in both the *Epistre* and the *Dit*, that is foregrounded. Emphasized too is the fear that talk could sow chaos, and Christine vehemently condemns it, especially slanderous talk, against which she believed women (and some men) had no recourse. She also made clear in her writing that women had to control what other people

37. On the matter of Christine's approach to responsible writing, see Glenda McLeod, "Poetics and Antimisogynist Polemics in Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*," in *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan: Essays in Honor of Charity Cannon Willard*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards et al. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 37–47.

38. Claire Nouvet, "Writing (in) Fear," in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 279–305, at 284 and 293.

39. Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des dames* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 204.

thought and said about them—that is, women had to “manage” their *fama*.⁴⁰ The serious need to do so can be extrapolated from the example of medieval jurisprudence, an indicator of an ethos in the larger society. Without a concept of proof as we know it today, the court testimony of witnesses, called the *fama* of the case, or what people said, “what everyone knew,” or common opinion, could serve as proof. Further, an informal but acceptable practice of surveillance by one’s neighbors played a regulatory role. In such circumstances, Christine urged women to avoid potentially incriminatory behavior, which could attach especially to them, and she encouraged women to engage instead in conduct that could enhance their good reputations. Both avenues depended on the key factor of self-control, integral to managing one’s *fama*. So it was that Christine later wrote the *Trois Vertus* and the cautionary *Duc des vrais amans*,⁴¹ whose married princess, talked about because of her affair with the eponymous duke, pays for her indiscretion with a ruined reputation and an unhappy life. The duke, on the other hand, accused of laziness, restores his good name by going off to fight in foreign wars. In Christine’s view, nothing was better evidence of the damage done by talk—or writing—than assertions of women’s lasciviousness, greed, dishonesty, and faithlessness, as uttered by characters in the *Roman* such as Old Woman and Jealous Husband.⁴² The lack of respect such rumors might engender could effectively erase whatever power and influence women had—running a household, for example, or a kingdom. As Carolyn Collette puts this, a “prudential habit of mind . . . continually assays, weighs, and checks to maintain the strength of the webs of affinity and influence that a woman constructs and which are constructed around her in the social world.”⁴³

The centrality of language to the project of opposing Jean de Meun is also conveyed in the *Epistre* by the mimicry and displacement that foregrounds certain vocabulary. Old Woman was one of the *Roman* characters Christine found especially offensive, for she is a go-between for clandestine lovers. Further, she counsels young women to profit from their lovers while they can. She observes that young men are seldom reliable, and she advises women not to be so foolish as

40. On *fama*, see Bernard Guenée, *L'Opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Age: d'après la chronique de Charles VI du Religieux de St. Denis* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), and Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail, eds., *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

41. *Le Livre du Duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma Fenster (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995); *Le Livre du Duc des vrais amants*, ed. Dominique Demartini and Didier Lechat (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013); *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*, in *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Maurice Roy, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886–1896) 3:59–208; *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers*, trans. Thelma Fenster and Nadia Margolis (New York: Persea, 1991).

42. For advice by Old Woman and Jealous Husband, see RR ed. Lecoy, vv. 12710–14516, and vv. 8437–9390; RR trans. Horgan, 191–224, 130–44.

43. Carolyn P. Collette, *Performing Polity: Women and Agency in the Anglo-French Tradition, 1385–1620* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 37.

to take only one lover; but, she warns, be sure to tell each one that you are faithful to him alone. Old Woman argues that the mistake made by Dido and Medea was to have given all their love in just one place.⁴⁴ She puns on the verb *partir*, advising the lady to say to her lover that he alone will have the rose, and “Ja mes autre n’i avra **part!** **Faille** moi Dex se ja la **part!**” (Never will another have a **share** (part)! May God fail me if I **divide** it!).⁴⁵ The quite similar pun on *partir* in the *Epistre* is unmissable: the subject (women’s alleged promiscuity) is the same, but now its articulation is placed in the mouths of men, the gossiping knights who tease one another about their mistresses’ purported sexual adventures:

Telle t’aimë et tu le jolis fais
Pour sienne amour, et pluseurs y ont **part**;
Tu es receu quant un autre **s’en part!**

(Lady so-and-so loves you, and you play the swain / For her love, but many get their part; / You are welcomed as another departs! vv. 128–30)

These echoes of Old Woman’s *partir* work intertextually to emphasize that women are seen to act disloyally only in the ribald and self-serving tales told by men.

For Meun’s character of Old Woman, a young woman who fails to fleece her lover—that is, *plumer*, or pluck his feathers as if he were a chicken—is a fool.⁴⁶ (In Kay’s reading, Old Woman says this because men are fickle, and in this way she upends the misogynist discourse of men who so often repeat that women are unfaithful.⁴⁷) The *Epistre* uses the same verb to describe such women as tarts, reprehensible exceptions to the generality of women, but Cupid retorts that he’s pleased to have the men who traffic with them dealt with in such a way. As he says: “Si ne remaint en eulz plume a plumer—/ Bien le scevent a leur droit reclaimer” (They haven’t a feather left to pluck—/ These women know how to claim their due; vv. 513–14).

“Qui sont fames?” *Who Are Women?*

When Christine set out to explain the *nature de femme*, she was working within the long-established formulations of influential Christian male writers, principally Augustine and then the neo-Aristotelian interpretations of Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁸

44. RR ed. Lecoy, vv. 13123–42; RR trans. Horgan, 203–4.

45. RR ed. Lecoy, vv. 13091–92; RR trans. Horgan, 202.

46. RR ed. Lecoy, vv. 13667–68; RR trans. Horgan, 208. Horgan transforms the metaphor of plucking a lover’s feathers into plucking love’s fruit.

47. Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, 103–4.

48. For a general survey of clerical ideas about women, see Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, “Comment les théologiens et les philosophes voient la femme,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale: X^e–XII^e Siècles*

In discussions of sex and gender, writers seemed to return to a small number of thorny issues, centered in various ways on whether men and women enjoyed complete equality. Souls, which had no sex or gender, were all equals; as incarnate beings, however, women were men's helpers. To answer why woman had been created, Augustine invoked her role in procreation and her divinely ordered place as man's helpmeet.⁴⁹ Man's primacy came in part from the order of creation: God created man first, then woman, who was taken from man's side;⁵⁰ such arguments from events in the garden were countered by the privileges of women.

A second issue had to do with whether both man and woman were made in the image of God. Saint Paul had declared that only man was the image and glory of God while woman was the glory of man,⁵¹ and for Augustine, woman enjoyed the image of God in her soul alone, which had no gender.⁵²

Guilt for the Fall constituted a third topic of importance and was a popular subject for debate. Aquinas argued that since the woman was "more grievously punished than the man, . . . she sinned more grievously than the man." (ST II-II.163.4)

Like Augustine, Aquinas believed that women were physically and intellectually weaker than men, but having adopted from Aristotle the more extreme view that woman was a failed man (*mas occasionatus*)⁵³, he seems to want it both ways. He writes:

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material

20 (1977): 105–29. For Christine's ability to read Latin, see Liliane Dulac and Christine Reno, "L'humanisme vers 1400. Essai d'exploration à partir d'un cas marginal: Christine de Pizan, lectrice de Thomas d'Aquin," in *Pratiques de la culture écrite en France au XV^e siècle*. Actes du colloque du CNRS (Paris, 16–18 mai 1992), organisé en l'honneur de Gilbert Ouy par l'Unité de recherche 'Culture écrite du Moyen Age tardif,' ed. Monique Ornato and Nicole Pons (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 161–78.

49. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, 2 vols. (New York and Ramsey, NJ: Newman Press, 1982), 2:72–74. See also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), and Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1:27 and I Cor. 11:7" and "God's Image: Is Woman Excluded? Medieval Interpretation of Gen. 1:27 and I Cor. 11:7," in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Oslo: Solum Vorlag, 1991), 188–207 and 208–27.

50. Augustine, *Literat Meaning*, 1:182–83.

51. 1 Cor. 11:7.

52. Augustine, *Literat Meaning*, 1:98–99.

53. See Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 133.

indisposition, or even from some external influence. . . . On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation. Now the general intention of nature depends on God, Who is the universal Author of nature. Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female. (ST I.92.1)

Aquinas was hard-pressed to reconcile that understanding with the church's belief that God could not create a defective being. Blamires observes that not even Aquinas's "best efforts" could "mask" such a "disparity."⁵⁴ In the *Cité des dames*, Christine exclaims, "Ha! Dieux, comment peut cecy estre? Car se je ne erre en la foy, je ne doy mie doubter que ton infinie sapience et tres parfaicte bonté ait riens fait qui tout ne soit bon. Ne formas tu toy mesmes tres singulierement femme et dés lors lui donnas toutes teles inclinacions qu'il te plaisoit qu'elle eust? Et comment pourroit ce estre que tu y eusses en rien failli?"⁵⁵ (Ah, God! How can this be? For unless I err in my faith, I cannot suspect that your infinite wisdom and very perfect goodness made anything that might not be perfect. Did you not create woman with the greatest care and give her the inclinations you were pleased for her to have? And how could it be that you could have failed in anything?) Viewed in terms of the theological beliefs of her time, Christine's argument is on firm ground.

In the popular sphere, following the appearance of the *Roman* and over the course of the next century, "praise" and "blame" poems about women, in Latin and in the vernacular, came to constitute nearly a literary genre of their own. They stated why women were good or bad, and because they were based on a stock supply of arguments, they could take on the character of literary exercises on a popular subject. More significant for its length and its vitriol was the *Lamentationes Matheoluli* (1290–1291) (*Lamentations of Matheolus*⁵⁶), by the cleric Matthew of Boulogne, a work that rails against women and marriage; it was translated from Latin into French by Jean LeFèvre around 1380, after which LeFèvre wrote a riposte to the *Lamentations* in French, a defense of women called the *Livre de Leesce*

54. Alcuin Blamires, ed., with Karen Pratt and C. W. Marx, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 89–90.

55. *La Città delle dame*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, trans. [into Italian] Patrizia Caraffi, 2nd ed. (Milan: Luni, 1998), 44.

56. *Les Lamentations de Matheolus et le Livre de Leesce de Jehan Le Fèvre, de Resson: Poèmes français du XIV^e siècle*, ed. A. G. van Hamel, 2 vols. (Paris: Emile Bouillon, 1892–1905). A more recent Latin edition with commentary in German is Matheus von Boulogne, *Lamentationes Matheoluli*, ed. Thomas Klein (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2014). A summary of the French *Lamentations* is Charles-V. Langlois, "Les Lamentations de Mathieu," in Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age* (Paris: Hachette, 1925), 2:241–90.

(*Book of Gladness*).⁵⁷ Christine disliked the *Lamentations*, as she tells us at the beginning of the *Cité*, where she points out that Matheolus himself confessed to being an old man who blames women for his own impotence, for he is *plain de voullenté, et non puissance* (filled with desire, and not able to act).⁵⁸ She does not mention *Leesce*, but the *Epistre* bears a large number of similarities to it.⁵⁹ *Leesce* shared arguments with poems that preceded it, and Christine herself was often walking upon well-trodden ground. Her inventiveness in the *Epistre*, however, and the seriousness of her effort, depended not so much on the defense topoi she used, otherwise widespread, but on the larger framework within which she situated them, an illustration of the essential humanity of women and their aptitude for moral virtue.

Brown-Grant has argued that at the heart of Christine's defense of women is a question intended to refute the scurrilous implication of much anti-feminist writing claiming that woman was somehow less than human. In her letter to Pierre Col of October 1402, Christine pointedly asked:

Qui sont fames? Qui sont elles? Sont ce serpens, loups, lyons, dragons, guievres ou bestes ravissables devourans et ennemies a nature humaine . . .⁶⁰

(Who are women? Who are they? Are they snakes, wolves, lions, dragons, vipers, or rapacious, devouring animals and enemies to human nature?)

Already in the summer of 1401, in her debate letter to Jean de Montreuil, Christine had pinpointed a contradiction in the argument of Meun's character Genius, who advocates sexual relations as often as possible for the continuance of the species, while he elsewhere advises men to flee from the venomous snake: "Fuyez, fuyez,

57. Jehan LeFèvre, *The Book of Gladness / Le livre de Leesce: A 14th Century Defense of Women*, in *English and French*, trans. Linda Burke (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2013) reprints, with minor changes, LeFèvre's French translation from van Hamel's edition.

58. *Cité*, Bk. 1, ch. 8.

59. See Blamires, *The Case for Women*, 5 and 36.

60. Brown-Grant, *Moral Defence of Women*, 14; DR ed. Hicks, 139; DR ed. and trans. Hult, 181–82. Christine was surely familiar with the tradition of "feminine bestiaries" that linked mostly negative qualities of women with features popularly associated with specific animals. The Anglo-Norman *Blasme des fames* (*The Vices of Women*), for example, compares women with snakes, lions, leopards, foxes, bears, dogs, cats, rats, mice, hedgehogs, falcons, sparrowhawks, titmice, sparrows, blackbirds, bats, and owls; when women are lambs or doves, it is only for superficial attraction. See *Three Medieval Views of Women*: "La Contenance des Fames," "Le Bien des Fames," "Le Blasme des Fames," trans. and ed. Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 120–42.

fuyez le serpent venimeux!”⁶¹ This clearly alludes to the metonymic slide by which Eve and women after her were not merely accused of acting like the serpent, they *became* the serpent.⁶² Commenting on Genius’s injunction, Brown-Grant observes that it “constitutes a key point of misogynist doctrine which Christine will contest throughout her later writings in defence of women.”⁶³

The main elements in Christine’s argument accentuating women’s membership in the human species postdate the *Epistre*, appearing instead in the more accommodating prose of the *Debat* and the *Cité*. In the *Cité*, the character of Rectitude, one of three ladies (with Justice and Reason) who help Christine build the city, says that:

“Et n’est mie doubte que les femmes sont aussi bien ou nombre du peuple de Dieu et de creature humaine que sont les hommes, et *non mie une autre espece*, ne de dessemblable generacion, par quoy elles doyent estre forcloses des enseignemens moraulx.”⁶⁴

(And there is no doubt that women number among God’s creatures just as much as men do and are *not another species* or bred in such a dissimilar way that they should be excluded from the teaching of virtue [emphasis added].)

The same reasoning is already present in the *Epistre*. Christine casts the defense in terms associable with natural law theory: *inclinacions*, *meurs*, and their frequent companion word, *condicions*. These three, which Christine brings together for the first time in the *Epistre*, would come to constitute a meaningful semantic field in her writing about women.

“Par droite condicion et inclinacion naturelle” *Through [Their] Rightful Condition and Natural Inclination*

For Aquinas, as D. E. Luscombe puts it, “all beings have within themselves inclinations which direct them to the end that is proper to them.”⁶⁵ In a passage from the

61. *DR* ed. Hicks, 21; *DR* ed. and trans. Hult, 61.

62. See John A. Phillips, *Eve: The History of an Idea* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 38–51.

63. Brown-Grant, *Moral Defence of Women*, 14.

64. *Città*, 376 and 378 (Bk. 2, ch. 54).

65. D. E. Luscombe, “Natural Morality and Natural Law,” in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 705–19, at 709. A helpful guide to the *Summa* is Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Stephen L. Brock, “Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law,” *Vera Lex*, n.s. 6 (2005): 57–78.

Summa Theologica worth giving in full here, Aquinas explains the inclinations belonging to human beings:

Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law. Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, "which nature has taught to all animals" . . . , such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to do good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination. (*ST I-II.94.2*)

Inclinations were subject to the action of reason, the higher faculty that separated humans from other animals and gave humans the ability to formulate ethical behaviors. The possibility existed, however, that human beings might not follow the promptings of reason in some instances, and in certain circumstances inclinations could change. Aquinas wrote that "the natural law, in the abstract, can nowise be blotted out from men's hearts. But it is blotted out in the case of a particular action, in so far as reason is hindered from applying the general principle to a particular point of practice, on account of concupiscence or some other passion" (*ST I-II.94.6*). This law of "the natural," it should be noted, appears to be less rigid than the idea of nature in present-day understanding, which tends to posit a rigidly fixed and unchanging drive.⁶⁶

Christine did not directly challenge the gender hierarchy enforced by the church, choosing instead to emphasize the complementarity of gender roles, but she also insisted on fair, equal, and respectful treatment of both men and women. In the *Epistre* (v. 733), she goes even further by stating that men and women are

66. See Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

absolute equals, as expressed in the words *per* (equal) and *semblable*, this latter word expressing in Middle French not only similarity, but equality.

It is often noted in modern scholarship that Christine, like others writing in defense of women, often invoked women's role as mothers (as she does in the *Epistre*). As Christine developed her ideas about women's moral virtue, however, she reminded her readers that women also contributed to the well-being of the human group, to the sociability indispensable to its cohesiveness. This was Aquinas's second inclination, "to live in society," and "to avoid offending those among whom one has to live."

Inclinacions

The term *inclinacion*⁶⁷ appears only once in the *Epistre*, but its position toward the end of the poem in the God of Love's summation of women's qualities is significant. Further, its pairing with the word *condicions* (discussed at pp. 23–26) is emblematic of Christine's approach. The god says:

Par ces raisons, conclus et vueil prouver
Que grandement femmes a approuver
Font et louer, et leurs **condicions**
Recommander, qui **inclinacions**
N'ont aux vices, qui humaine nature
Va dommagant et grevant creature. (vv. 713–18)⁶⁸

67. According to the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (1330–1500) (<<http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>>), *inclinacion* is an innate tendency and a spontaneous movement of the soul. Pointing toward astrology, the DMF observes that it is particularly what is conferred by the stars at birth, but is susceptible of being modified by free will. Joël Blanchard and Michel Quereuil, *Lexique de Christine de Pizan: Matériaux pour le Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 224, gloss it as a general inclination or desire without noting the term's importance to natural law theory or to astrology/astrology. The *Dictionnaire étymologique de l'ancien français* (DEAF), ed. Kurt Baldinger, with Jean-Denis Gendron and Georges Straka (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval; Tübingen: Niemeyer; Paris: Klincksieck, 1974–2012), 1: 167, and the *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (FEW), ed. Walther von Wartburg (Bonn: Klopp, 1922–2003, 4: 627b), provide an example taken from the French translation of Aristotle's *On Divination in Sleep* by Nicole Oresme, King Charles V's most forward-looking translator and advisor: s.v. *inclinare*, "Les instruments de Dieu [. . .] qui inclinent les courages de personnes a diverses fortunes" (God's instruments . . . which incline people's hearts toward various fortunes). See Nicole Oresme, *Livre de divinacions*, in G. W. Coopland, *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers: A Study of His Livre de divinacions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 50–121, at 66. A definition of *inclinacion* that links it to medieval natural law theory has not yet found its way into glossaries or notes for modern editions of Christine's writings.

68. Earl Jeffrey Richards comments on Christine and natural law in "Justice in the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas, in Late Medieval Marian Devotional Writings and in the Works of Christine de Pizan," in *Christine de Pizan: Une femme de science, une femme de lettres*, ed. Juliette Dor, Marie-Elisabeth

(“With this reasoning I conclude and hope to prove / That women do very much to be approved / And praised; and I want to recommend / Their qualities, which show no inclination / Toward the vices that damage / Human nature and harm created beings.”)

But *inclinacion*(s) occurs more often in Christine’s major defense of women, the *Cité des dames*. Once more, the configuration of *inclinacions/enclin(e)*(s) with *condicion* appears, where *condicion* can be *encline* (inclined). Defending women from the charge that they are gluttonous *par nature*, Christine answers that it is rather *leur condicion, qui n’y est mie encline* (their . . . disposition, which is not so inclined); and even supposing that shame gave them the wherewithal to resist such an *inclinacion naturelle* (natural inclination), that could only be to women’s honor.⁶⁹

As human beings wish to know and love God, so does woman:

Et vrayement je dy et reviens a mon propos que se Nature n’a donné grant force de membres a corps de femme, que elle l’a bien recompensé en ce que **inclinacion** y a mise tres vertueuse, c’est de amer son Dieu et estre cremeteuse de faillir contre ses commandemens, et celles qui sont autres **se desnaturent**.⁷⁰

(I return to my point, telling you truly that if Nature did not give a woman’s body great strength, she compensated for that by giving her a very virtuous **inclinacion**: that is, to love her God and be fearful of violating his commandments. Women who do otherwise act **against their own nature**.)

The term *inclinacion* is in fact a way, for Christine, to make sense of the world. *Inclinacion* explains why some people “naturally” become workers, while others “naturally” become thinkers and still others become civic leaders (or not). In her biography of Charles V, Christine explains the formation of different political and social groups and how labor in them was assigned by princes. She says that some people, *de leur propre inclinacion* (by their own inclination), applied their intelligence to the philosophical arts.⁷¹ And in the *Livre de paix* (*Book of*

Henneau, and Bernard Ribémont (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), 95–114. In the *Roman*, Reason claims that both humans and other animals have a *naturieux enclinemenz* (natural inclination) to want to preserve a likeness of self through engendering and nurturing: RR ed. Lecoy, vv. 5733–46; RR trans. Horgan, 88–89.

69. *Città* 82 (Bk. 1, ch. 10).

70. *Città* 104 (Bk. 1, ch. 14).

71. *Le Livre des Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 2 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1936–40), 1:114. See also 1:17.

Peace), written between 1412 and 1413–1414, she explains why the common people ought not to acquire official positions in the city, because their “general inclination” (*inclinacion generalles [sic]*) “is hasty, with little reflection and needing little pretext for action.”⁷²

Finally, *inclinacion* could be individual. In the *Cité*, in an important autobiographical statement, Christine discusses her personal *inclinacion*. She explains that she took after her father, commenting further that he did not think women worse off for having acquired learning. Her mother was opposed to this, but Christine’s *inclinacion naturelle* impelled her to gather *petites goutelletes* (little drops) of knowledge.⁷³ Again, in the *Mutacion de Fortune*, Christine discusses her upbringing, explaining that her father wished to have a male child, but her “mother” (Nature) prevailed and Christine was the result. Her father had the *tesor*, treasury, of learning, which she too would have liked to have. She adds, however, that in so many ways she is much more like her father than she is her own natural mother, now using *condicions*:

. . . de toutes choses mon pere
 Bien ressemblay et proprement,
 Fors du sexe tant seulement,
 Mais des façons, de corps, de vis,
 Si bien que il vous fust avis,
 Meismement es **condicions**,
 Que tous semblables les eussions. (vv. 394–400)

(I took after my father well and truly in everything, except for our sex: in our mannerisms, bodies, and faces, even in our **qualities**, so much that you would have thought we possessed all the same ones.)

She compares her longing for learning with the yearning of lovers who can neither see nor hear what they desire:

Et, combien que femmelle fusse,
 Par quoy l’avoir dessus dit n’eüsse,
 Y avoie **inclinacion**
 De ma droite **condicion**
 Et pour mon pere ressembler. (vv. 447–51)⁷⁴

72. *Livre de Paix*, Bk. 1, ch. 11. See *The Book of Peace by Christine de Pizan*, ed. and trans. Karen Green, Constant J. Mews, Janice Pinder, and Tania van Hemelryck, with the assistance of Alan Crosier (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 141, 171.

73. *Città* 316 (Bk. 2, ch. 36).

74. *Mutacion*, 1:20–21, 22. An almost complete English translation is Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, trans. Geri L. Smith (Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for

(And, although I was a female, according to which I should not have the above-mentioned wealth, I had the **inclination** [to have the treasury of learning] from my own specific **condition**, and to be like my father).⁷⁵

In Psalm 31 of the *Sept Psalmes allegorisés*, a devotional text, Christine's suppliant asks God, "chaces de moy toute *inclinacion* de pechié car, se de toy ne vient, je n'ay force de contrestre a ma mauvaïse *inclinacion* . . ." ⁷⁶ (banish from me every *inclination* to sin, for, if I don't receive that from you, I haven't the strength to resist my bad *inclination*).

This same argument about individual inclinations having been divinely bestowed leads Justice, in the *Cité*, to defend both women and men who like finery and pretty little things on the grounds that it would be hard for them to eradicate that taste, which they possess "par droite condicion et inclinacion naturelle" (through their rightful condition and natural inclination).⁷⁷ It is worth noting that the argument about personal, natural inclinations brings theological import to what might otherwise be thought a uniquely literary point in the *Debat*. Pierre Col defends characters such as Old Woman and Jealous Husband on the grounds that in what they say they are being true to their natures (inclinations); he says that Jean de Meun "makes each personage speak according to what pertains to him—the Jealous Man like a jealous person, the Old Woman like an old woman, and likewise for the others."⁷⁸ Like Boccaccio and Christine, they too behave according to their inclinations.

Condicions

Often paired with *inclinacion* is *condicions*, independently the more frequent of the two, perhaps due to its wide range of meanings, and, as we shall see, to its transregional literary applications.⁷⁹ Christine uses it to mean character, attribute,

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75. Evidence for this is also found among other late medieval writers. Boccaccio, for instance, invoked his personal, natural inclination: he was prepared by nature ("in his mother's womb") to follow his natural inclinations, that is, to follow poetic meditations. See Filippo Andrei, *Boccaccio the Philosopher: An Epistemology of the Decameron* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 72.

76. *Les Sept Psalmes allegorisés*, ed. Bernard Ribémont and Christine Reno (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017), 7.

77. *Città* 408 (Bk. 2, ch. 62).

78. "fait chascun personnage parler selonc qui luy appartient: c'est assavoir le Jaloux comme jaloux, la Vielle comme la Vielle, et pareillement des autres" (*DR* ed. Hicks, 100; *DR* ed. and trans. Hult, 144).

79. In the *DMF*, *condition* has a variety of meanings: something that makes something or someone what they are; a manner of being; a state or situation. For Christine the plural *condicions* can indicate

feature, characteristic, trait, quality, property, and the like—pretty much the range of meanings to be found in Aquinas’s writing, where it does not have the systematic valence that *inclinatio* carries for him. English translators of Thomistic natural law theory most often translate *conditio* or its declensions as “conditions”: *diversas hominum conditiones*, in English translation, can be “various conditions of men,” while *conditiones particulares* may be simply “conditions,” and *aliae conditiones* “other conditions.”⁸⁰

After qualifying the *nature de femme* in some detail, Christine concludes that:

Et telles sont par nature sens doubte
Condicions de femme, somme toute. (vv. 677–78)

(Such are certainly by nature / **Women’s qualities**, in sum.)

Should a woman lack these *condicions*, she *se desnature* (“distorts her nature,” v. 680), but she nonetheless remains a woman. Such women are not “other”; rather, they are on a scale, *enormales* (v. 656), meaning not “abnormal” but “excessive.” The *nature de femme* is found not always, but *selon le commun cours* (“according to what is usual,” v. 657), a rendering in French that seems to parallel the Thomistic phrase *ut in pluribus*, “for the most part,”⁸¹ and this leads Christine to emphasize that blaming all women for the defects of a few is wrong. In conclusion, Cupid says:

. . . moult leur fist le hault Dieu courtoisie
 D’elles fourmer sens les **condicions**
 Qui gent mettent a griefs perdicions (vv. 694–96)

characteristic traits or qualities; it can signal the physical or mental state of a person, one’s social position and/or rank. In the *Lexique de Christine de Pizan*, condition is glossed as a *façon de se conduire* (comportment) and *nature, façon d’être* (nature, way of being), and it gives the following example from Christine’s *Trois Vertus*: “. . . toutes gens ne sont mie d’une **condicion** et qu’il est assez d’hommes et de femmes si pervers que quelque bonne correction et enseignement que on leur donne, si suivront ilz tousjours leur fole ou mauvaise **inclinacion**” (not all people are of one condition and there are enough men and women who are so perverse that whatever good correction or teaching one may give them, they continue to follow their foolish or evil **inclination** (*Lexique de Christine de Pizan*, 84).

80. See Ludwig Schütz, *Thomas-Lexikon*, online at <<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/tl.html>>. For the range of possible English translations of Thomas’s *conditio*, see Roy J. Deferrari and M. Inviolata Barry, with the technical collaboration of Ignatius McGuiness, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948–49), 199–200.

81. For this observation and for much information on other related points, we are grateful to Fr. Brian Davies, O. P.

(... God on high did women a courtesy / By forming them without the **qualities** / That lead people to grievous perdition.)

The god assures his listeners that women are in fact inclined *not* to do evil, in a formulation which includes *condicions* but also *taches*:

Et s'on me veult dire que mie **enclines**
Condicions ne **taches** femenines
 Ne soit a ce, n'a user de batailles,
 N'a gens tuer nē a faire fouailles
 Pour bouter feu, nē a telz choses faire,
 Pour ce, nul preu, louange, ne salaire
 Ne leur en puet ne doit appartenir
 D'elles souffrir de telz cas, ne tenir,
 Mais sauve soit la grace des diseurs,
 Je consens bien qu'elles n'ont pas les cuers
Enclins a ce, nē a cruaulté faire. (vv. 659–69)

(And if someone wants to say to me / That women's **traits** and **qualities** are not **inclined** / Toward that, or to do battle, / Kill people, or prepare the torches / To start a fire, or to do any such things, / And so no special praise, credit, or reward / Can or should belong to them / For abstaining from things like that, or resisting /—Begging pardon from those who say so—/ I indeed agree that women haven't hearts / So **disposed**, nor toward doing deeds of that sort.)

Christine stands out for her exploration of woman's nature as a group of *condicions*, but she is not alone in applying the term to perceived character traits. In his *Archiloge Sophie*, for example, Christine's contemporary, Jacques Legrand, uses it in a more condemnatory fashion:

Femme raisonnablement doit avoir deux **condicions**, c'est assavoir honte de mesprendre et paour de desobeÿr a sa partie: car lors femme est perdue et dissolue quant elle n'a en soi honte ne paour. Si est chose moult a reprendre de veoir femmes hardies et dissolues et prestes a faire plusieurs maux: teles sont celles qui par leurs manieres villes et dissolues, et par leurs regars vains et luxurieux attraiēt les hommes a mal faire.⁸²

82. Jacques Legrand, *Archiloge Sophie. Livre de bonnes meurs*, ed. Evencio Beltran (Geneva: Slatkine; Paris: Honoré Champion, 1986), 371.

(A woman must reasonably have two **qualities**, that is, shame in wrongdoing and fear of disobeying her spouse: for a woman is lost and dissolute when she has no shame in herself or fear. There is much to blame at the sight of bold and dissolute women ready to commit much evil: such are those who by their vile and dissolute comportment, and by their frivolous and lecherous glances, entice men into evildoing.)

Finally, “conditions” was part of a transcultural French literary vocabulary. In a study of “individuality” in medieval English literature, Blamires notes that for Chaucer *condiciouns* was a preferred word for dealing with “the moral attributes forming part of the rhetorical coding of literary portraiture.”⁸³ Taken as well with the evidence from Boccaccio concerning his own “natural inclination” to pursue poetic meditation (see note 75), Christine was thus applying a late-medieval lexical practice to the portrayal of an entire group.

Meurs

Of the three terms discussed here, *meurs* or *mours*⁸⁴ (*mæurs* in modern French) denotes an especially important and subtle piece in the pragmatics of Christine’s moral outlook. It is central to her emphasis on women’s virtue (*meurs femenins*).

The word *meurs* is derived from the Latin *mores*, the plural form of *mos* (manner, custom, usage, or habit). In modern English, the word “mores,” or social norms, does not connote something moral (although the adjective *moral* does), but in fifteenth-century French and therefore in Christine’s usage, *meurs* had a strong moral component. On this, Nicolas Oresme (d. 1382), probably the leading intellectual in Charles V’s court, translated Aristotle as follows: “la vertu morale est faite et causee en nous par **meurs**, et pour ce son nom est dirivé de ‘**meur**’ et en differe peu” (moral virtue is made and caused in us by *meurs*, and for this reason its name is derived from *meur* and differs little from it); to this is added Oresme’s explanation that in Latin *mos* meant *coutume*,⁸⁵ given in Middle French as “manière de faire ou de se comporter, usage, habitude” (a way of doing something or of behaving, a usage, or a habit).⁸⁶

83. Blamires, “Individuality,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker, with the assistance of William Green (Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 478–95, at 490.

84. According to the DMF, *meurs* denotes one’s conduct or comportment, manner of living (morally), or one’s habits and tastes; it may also refer to one’s nature.

85. Nicole Oresme, *Le Livre de Ethiques d’Aristote*, ed. Albert D. Menut (New York: Stechert, 1940), 146.

86. DMF s.v. *coutume*, A.1.

In five instances in the *Epistre* Cupid refers to *meurs*, translatable variously as manners, ways, practices, comportment, and the like. In three cases, a particular set of habits is said to belong to women: there are *meurs femenins*, v. 200 (women's practices), and as a group, *leurs meurs*, v. 260 (women's conduct, habits). In his *Remedia Amoris*, according to Cupid, Ovid attributes *moult de vilaines mours*, v. 282 (many nasty habits) to women. A comment on Ovid's *Art of Love* shows that *meurs/mours* can be taught: Cupid claims that it "n'enseigne **condicions ne mours** / De bien amer, mais ainçoiz le contraire," vv. 370–71 (doesn't teach the **behaviors** or **ways** / Of loving truly, but rather the opposite). To be underlined here is the verb *enseigne*, teach, which recalls that *mours* can be acquired. This is fundamental to Christine's impulse to compose the *Epistre* and to her advocacy of men's exercise of reason so as to practice virtuous behavior toward women.

At the very beginning of the *Cité*, Christine's narrator refers to the chorus of male voices who have formed the bad *fama* (the common opinion, or what everyone knows) about women. Joining *enclins* with *meurs*, Christine's narrator says:

... generaument auques en tous traictiez, philosophes, pouetes, tous orateurs desqueulx les noms dire seroit longue chose, semble que tous parlent par une mesmes bouche et tous accordent une semblable conclusion, determinant les **meurs femenins enclins** et plains de tous les vices⁸⁷

(... generally in nearly all treatises, philosophers, poets, all orators whose names would be tedious to mention, it seems that all speak with the same mouth and all agree upon one conclusion, determining **feminine practices** to be **inclined** toward, and filled with, all vices).

Later in her writing, as Christine moved toward fuller discussion of virtue ethics for women, *meurs* would be central. Once more, a cluster of expressions at the opening of the *Cité* sets the tone of the book as a whole: there are *meurs femenins* (feminine comportment), *meurs comme femme naturelle* (comportment as a natural woman), and *natureulz meurs et condicions femmenines* (natural comportment and conditions of women). She pairs *meurs* with *vertu* or *vertus*, referring to an *edifice de vertu et de meurs*⁸⁸ (the realization of virtue and comportment), a formulation she uses again in the *Corps de policie*, telling her readers that she will remind them of the *edifice de bonnes meurs*.⁸⁹ Delphine Videt-Reix, examining the *Cité* in particular, observes that with phrases like *perfection des*

87. *Città* 42 (Bk. 1, ch. 1).

88. *Città* 42 (Bk. 1, ch. 1).

89. *Le Livre du Corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 1.

meurs et des vertus (perfection of comportment and virtue) Christine develops a “nouvelle poétique de la prudence et de la justice à travers l’illustration concrète des vertus” (a new poetics of prudence and justice through the concrete illustration of virtues).⁹⁰ Christine offers individual exemplars: Artemisia, a queen and warrior in the *Cité*, possesses *force en vertu et sagesse de meurs et prudence en gouvernement*⁹¹ (strength in virtue and wisdom in her comportment and prudence in government). In the *Duc des vrais amans*, the wise Sebile, herself an example of a virtuous older woman, sends a letter to the young princess counseling against her illicit love affair with the eponymous duke. She stresses that the princess must be excellent in *bonté et sagesse, meurs, condicions et manieres* (goodness and wisdom, habits, qualities, and comportment) so as to be an example to other women.⁹² In addition to the personal harm the princess’s adultery causes, it raises the specter of men’s misogynous generalizations about women: men’s pronouncements on women create a rupture in direct woman-to-woman exemplarity by discouraging women from thinking of themselves as agents capable of virtue.

The Intellectual Life of the Laity and the Place of the Epistre

With some exceptions, attempts to evaluate and place Christine’s individual works have left the *Epistre* somewhat at the periphery of her body of writing.⁹³ Its philosophical statement is more cursory than that offered by the *Cité*, and as a courtly composition it lacks the story element that shapes Christine’s love debate poems. But is the atmosphere of the poem, as Eric Hicks maintained, not intellectual or literary? Does the misogyny described in the poem, as Hicks described it, have primarily to do with hypocritical lovers and furtive love affairs, pretended courtliness and amorous conquests, in a game played against other men, rather than

90. See Delphine Videt-Reix, “Christine de Pizan et la poétique de la justice,” Diss., Aix-Marseille Université, 2011 (<www.theses.fr/2011AIX10006.pdf>), 117; Earl Jeffrey Richards, Liliane Dulac, and Delphine Reix, “Creating New Political and Allegorical Forms of Discourse and the Meaning of the Word ‘Moral’ in the Works of Christine de Pizan,” in “*Ton nom sera reluisant après toy par longue memoire*”: *Etudes sur Christine de Pizan*, ed. Anna Loba (Poznan: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2017), 85–103.

91. *Città* 136 (Bk. 1, ch. 21).

92. *Duc des vrais amans*, 172. The translation here is revised as against that in *Duke of True Lovers*, trans. Fenster and Margolis, 112. The letter is repeated in the *Trois Vertus* (Bk. 1, ch. 25).

93. In “*L’Epistre au dieu d’amours ou ‘l’origine du monde’* auctorial,” Tania van Hemelryck points out that Christine’s career as an author begins in the *Epistre*, where she uses the term *ignorant petite femelle* (v. 548) with the intention of refuting it. See also Nadia Margolis, “Christine de Pizan, mangeuse de savoir,” in *L’Offrande du cœur: Medieval and Early Modern Studies in Honour of Glynnis Cropp*, ed. Margaret Burrell and Judith Grant (Christchurch, NZ: Canterbury University Press with Massey University, 2004), 45–60.

with a more learned misogyny?⁹⁴ Hicks's comments may have the potential to drive the *Epistre* into the margins of Christine's participation in the Debate and in her writing generally, whereas it in fact marks the opening chapter of her lifelong intellectual and personal preoccupation, persistently argued in the philosophical vocabulary the *Epistre* introduces. The courtly tone and framework of the *Epistre* can indeed lead the reader away from its serious import, and the God of Love's amusing critique of a type of foolishness identified with men certainly captures its readers' interest. But the poem's verve should not be allowed to mislead the reader: it is speaking to both a lay and clerical audience, educating both.⁹⁵

Christine's shaping of her argument in the terms of contemporary theological thinking, and in the vernacular, reflected the educational spirit of the court of Charles V and would have contrasted with the lack of any communal interest in learning under Charles VI. Like French kings before him, but far more extensively, Charles V—known as “Charles the Wise”—had created a library of translations into French of the Latin *auctoritates*.⁹⁶ He employed the best translators of the day, those who had spent their lives studying Latin, because he saw that transmitting ancient learning to the aristocracy could be an effective means of articulating his own governing policies. According to Serge Lusignan, Charles was to all intents and purposes the first of his line to consider his library an instrument for ruling; for Lusignan, this was so marked that it constituted a break from previous royal practice and a new direction in the way knowledge was acquired and in who

94. “L'atmosphère de l'épître n'a rien d'intellectuel ni même de ‘littéraire,’ dans la mesure où la science et la littérature s'écartent de la vie de cour,—dans la mesure, précisément, où la littérature ne serait plus fête. [...] S'il est exact qu'elle vise une misogynie, c'est une misogynie hypocrite et suave, complice des amours furtives, de galanteries feintes, de conquêtes amoureuses faites plus encore par jeu que par luxure [...]; DR ed. Hicks, xxx).

95. On Christine's philosophical and theological learning, see Benjamin M. Semple, “The Critique of Knowledge as Power: The Limits of Philosophy and Theology in Christine de Pizan,” in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 108–27. On February 1, 1402 (n. st. [the dedicatory letter to Guillaume de Tignonville was undated]), Christine submitted the dossier of Debate letters to Queen Isabeau, but in spite of its sandwiching between the putative dinner in January and the poem's recitation a month later, Hicks warns that the *Dit* and the *Epistre*, by their nature as poetic compositions rather than prose commentary, should not be considered part of the *Debat du Roman de la Rose* (DR Hicks, xxix–xxx). Here again, however, strict demarcation on formal grounds alone may not be helpful; the *Epistre*, with its open criticism of an iconic (male-authored) work by a woman, would surely have helped to draw attention to Meun's work.

96. Previous royal bibliophiles included Philip IV the Fair (1268–1314), Philip VI the Fortunate (1293–1350), and John II the Good (1319–1364). For a list of manuscripts held in Charles's library, see Léopold Delisle, *Recherches sur la librairie de Charles V, roi de France, 1337–1380* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1907).

could acquire it.⁹⁷ Latin, the hegemonic vehicle for erudition, had been the exclusive property of learned clerics. Translation into the vernacular changed that, and it changed what the laity could know.

Lusignan sees Charles's efforts as the culmination of an important earlier idea, *translatio studii*: the geographic passage of *chevalerie* and *clergie* (chivalry and learning) from Greece and Rome to France, a concept articulated by the twelfth-century poet Chrétien de Troyes in his prologue to *Cligès*.⁹⁸ By the end of the thirteenth century French was "firmly established as a language of written culture," Lusignan observes, but not in the case of learned writing.⁹⁹ Beginning in the early fourteenth century, however, the French royal court began to see the value of translating learned writing from Latin into French, although it was not until Charles V became king that a concept of ancient learning's capacity to enhance royal power took shape: study and wisdom were linked with political accomplishment.

Charles's translators often commented on the severe challenges presented by translation from Latin into French, given that the French of the time lacked the lexical equivalents to the Latin philosophical vocabulary. They remedied the shortcoming by creating neologisms.¹⁰⁰ Among Charles's translators, Nicole Oresme stands out, as previously noted. Oresme was a perspicacious advisor who saw the political and linguistic ramifications of the translation project. He understood and supported Charles's ambitions, embracing the opportunity to form the French aristocracy to Charles's program of government. This was an effort at the formation of an educated laity, and Oresme was a willing and talented instructor. For his vernacularization of Aristotle's *Ethics*, for example, Oresme created a glossary and commentary explaining the meanings of the new French vocabulary he had forged. That crucial vocabulary, Oresme saw, would furnish French with the competence to express learned ideas,¹⁰¹ while ancient learning, he astutely realized, could endure only by being translated into the vernacular languages.

97. Serge Lusignan, "La topique de la *translatio studii* et les traductions françaises de textes savants au XIV^e siècle," in *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Âge*, Actes du colloque international du CNRS (Paris, Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, 26–28 mai 1986), ed. Geneviève Contamine (Paris: CNRS, 1989), 303–15, at 310.

98. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, vv. 30–39.

99. Lusignan, *Translatio studii*, 6–7.

100. Margolis has rightly dubbed this "the golden age of the neologism," due especially to the activity of Charles's translators; see "Les terminaisons dangereuses: Lyrisme, féminisme et humanisme néologiques chez Christine de Pizan," *Le Moyen français* 39–41 (1996–97): 381–404, at 381.

101. Serge Lusignan, "Nicole Oresme, traducteur, et la pensée de la langue française savante," in *Nicolas Oresme: Tradition et innovation chez un intellectuel du XIV^e siècle*, ed. Pierre Souffrin and Alain-Philippe Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988), 93–104.

Joan Cadden has argued that Oresme's French translation of Aristotle's *Livre de divinacions* and the resulting discussions of astrology in Charles's court "suggested the existence of another set of contexts—the intellectual life of the laity, the social dynamics of the court, and the political interests of the monarchy."¹⁰² Cadden's observation broadens our understanding of the rationale for the translations in that it looks at the place of education for the laity as a way of making Charles's vision work. To take Cadden's point is to recognize that there were not two mutually exclusive spheres, courtly or learned, and that Charles V's translation program went a long way toward eradicating that distinction.

Like other evidence that suggests an erosion of boundaries between the learned and the secular—that is, between the university and the court, Latin and the vernacular—so too Jean de Meun's *Roman*, with its encapsulations of major philosophical and theological ideas not in Latin but in French verse. Indeed, the *Roman* stood at a threshold where learned ideas could be discussed in the vernacular. The *Epistre*'s learned language and its courtly context should not be construed as separate, much less opposing, entities.

The Dit de la Rose and Chivalric Orders

The staging for the *Dit*, composed for Valentine's Day 1402, is a Parisian residence of the Duke of Orléans, where noble guests enjoy exquisite dishes, witty conversation, and poetic competitions. It presents yet a further retort to the *Roman* by rewriting the symbol of the rose, elevating it from sexual symbol to metaphor for the honor of women.¹⁰³ We do not know whether the Order of the Rose, whose founding the *Dit* records, actually existed, but certainly the poem is intended to introduce a new kind of chivalric order: like other orders, it will be dedicated to honoring women, but unlike others, its authority and administration will come not from men, but from women. Lady Loyalty¹⁰⁴ has selected Christine as her

102. Joan Cadden, "Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan: Unities and Uses of Knowledge in Fourteenth-Century France," in *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science: Studies on the occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Edith Sylla and Michael McVaugh (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997), 208–44, at 209–10. See also Edgar Laird, "Astrology in the Court of Charles V of France, as Reflected in Oxford, St. John's College MS 164," *Manuscripta* 34 (1990): 167–76, and Laird, "Christine de Pizan and the Controversy Concerning Star-Study in the Court of Charles V," *Allegorica* 18 (1997): 21–30.

103. Lori Walters observes that Christine "reappropriates and reworks the major metaphor of Jean's text" by present[ing] her version of what Jean's 'Rose' would have said had the character spoken in her own voice." See "Fathers and Daughters: Christine de Pizan as Reader of the Male Tradition of *Clergie* in the *Dit de la Rose*," in Richards et al., *Reinterpreting Christine*, 63–76, at 63.

104. Christine's Lady Loyalty was perhaps inspired by the debate that unfolded in the late fourteenth century in Jean le Seneschal's *Les Cent Ballades* as to whether Loyalty (Loyauté) or Falseness (Fausseté) brings more joy in love. See Jean le Sénéchal, *Les Cent Ballades: Poème du XIV^e siècle composé par Jean*

earthly representative, and she has given her a mandate to select other women who in turn will choose candidates for membership in the Order.¹⁰⁵

The Order of the Rose bears comparison with the Order of the Dame Blanche à l'Ecu Vert (the White Lady on the Green Shield) and the Cour amoureuse dite de Charles VI (Court of love attributed to Charles VI), both created within a few years of the *Dit's* composition. The Order of the White Lady on the Green Shield, whose members pledged themselves to protecting women, was founded April 11, 1400 and thus followed the *Epistre* by less than a year. The order was an initiative of the famous Jean II le Meingre (1366–1421), known, like his father, as “Boucicaut,” a war hero and champion of the late-medieval reprise of chivalric ideals.¹⁰⁶ Christine knew of the Order's founding and celebrated it in her *Autre Balade XII* (no doubt composed between April 1400 and 1402) while exhorting women to pray for the success of the Order, whose members “l'escu vert aux dames belles / Portent sanz estre deffaillans” (carry the green shield with beautiful ladies without flinching).¹⁰⁷ In the ballade, she asks that good may be said of them and that they be remembered always.

Boucicaut's anonymous biographer, in his report of the Order's founding in *Le Livre des fais du bon Messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut* (*Book of the Deeds of the Good Sir Jean Le Meingre, called Boucicaut*), uses terms strikingly like those uttered by the God of Love in his account of the circumstances impelling him to write the letter. Boucicaut's biographer reports that:

... avint que aucunes **complaintes** vindrent devers le roy comment plusieurs **dames et damoiselles, vesves et autres**, estoient oppressees et travaillees d'aucuns poissons hommes qui par leur force et

le Seneschal avec la collaboration de Philippe d'Artois, comte d'Eu, de Boucicaut le jeune et de Jean de Crésecque, ed. Gaston Raymond (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1905).

105. Both Loyalty and the motif of the dream vision, perhaps a rewriting of Lover's dream in the *Roman*, are firsts in Christine's *œuvre*. In the *Chemin*, published soon after the *Dit*, the Cumaean Sibyl descends to a sleeping Christine and takes her on a voyage to faraway places, including Jerusalem and up to the heavens.

106. Charity Cannon Willard has suggested that Boucicaut's Order of the White Lady on the Green Shield was the inspiration for Christine's Order of the Rose. See Willard, “Christine de Pizan and the Order of the Rose,” in *Ideals for Women in the Works of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Diane Bornstein (Detroit: Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1981), 51–67, at 58. The fourteenth century had in any case been a time of chivalric revivalism that encouraged the establishment of several knightly orders, the most famous of which is still Edward III's Order of the Garter, founded in 1348 in England. In 1369 in France, Louis of Bourbon founded the order of the *Ecu d'Or* (Golden Shield), welcoming knights who promised they would honor ladies. In 1394 Louis, Duke of Orléans, at the occasion of his son Charles's baptism, created the *Ordre du Porc-Epic* (Order of the Porcupine; also known as the *Ordre du Camail*, Order of the Cameo).

107. *Œuvres poétiques*, 1:220–21.

puissance les vouloient **deshriter** de leurs terres, de leurs avoirs et de **leurs honneurs**, et avoient les aucunes desheritees de fait.¹⁰⁸

(. . . it happened that certain complaints came before the king [about] how many ladies and demoiselles, widows and others, were oppressed and made to suffer by certain powerful men who, by their force and might intended to deprive them of their lands, their possessions and their reputations, and had in fact disinherited certain women).

For his part, the God of Love had earlier said that *sont venues complaints* (complaints have come, v. 9) from *dames et damoiselles* (v. 11) asking for his help, for without it they will be *desheritees* / *De leur honneur* and *ahontees* (“robbed / Of their honor and shamed,” vv. 15–16). Of special interest is the Boucicaut biographer’s inclusion of widows. Christine, as a widow, was forced to file lawsuits after her husband’s death to hold on to threatened property.¹⁰⁹ Because of the similarities between the biographer’s comments and the God of Love’s reasons for writing, Christine’s failure to mention widows is notable, especially as she would soon make her sympathies known in *Autre Balade VI*, which begins:

Ou donc trouveront reconfort
 Pouvres vesves, de leurs biens despoillées,
 Puis qu’en France qui sieult estre le port
 De leur salut, et ou les exillées
 Seulent fouir et les desconseillées,
 Mais or n’i ont plus amistié?
 Les nobles gens n’en ont nulle pitié,
 Aussi n’ont clers li greigneur ne li mendre,
 Ne les princes ne les daignent entendre.¹¹⁰

(Where shall they find comfort / Poor widows, robbed of what they had, / Since in France, which used to be the harbor / Of their safety, and where the banished / And disconsolate are used to going, / But

108. *Le Livre des Fais du bon Messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, Mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes*, ed. Denis Lalande (Geneva: Droz, 1985), 160–61. For purposes of this introduction, translated excerpts from Boucicaut are ours. A translation appears in *The Chivalric Biography of Boucicaut, Jean II Le Meingre*, trans. Craig Taylor and Jane H. M. Taylor (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016).

109. Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984), 39. See also Maureen C. Curnow, “‘La Pioche d’Inquisicion’: Legal-Judicial Content and Style in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des Dames*,” in Richards et al., *Reinterpreting Christine*, 158–60.

110. *Autres Balades*, in *Œuvres poétiques*, 1:213. This poem is repeated in the *Advision*, where Christine describes her trials as a widow (*Advision*, Bk. 3, ch. 6).

where they no longer find friendship? / Nobles no longer pity them /
Nor clerics, great or small, / And princes don't deign to hear them.)

Boucicaut surely knew Christine, and may have had her in mind. In a passage remarkably like the sentiments of *Autre Balade VI*, the biographer says that Boucicaut felt great pity for women, and reflects that:

... moult grant honte estoit a si **noble royaume comme celui de France**, ou est la **fleur de la chevalerie et noblesce du monde**, souffrir que dame ne damoiselle ne femme d'honneur quelconques eust cause de soy plaindre que on lui [eust] tort fait ne grief, et que elles n'eussent, entre tant de chevaliers et escuyers, nulz champions et deffendeurs de leurs querelles, par quoy les mauvais et villains de courage estoient plus hardis a leur courir sus par mains oultrages leur faire, pour ce que femmes sont foibles, et elles n'avoient qui les deffendist.¹¹¹

(... what a great shame it was that **such a noble realm as France**, where the **flower of chivalry and worldly nobility exist**, should tolerate that a lady, demoiselle, or honorable woman might have cause for complaint and not have, from among so many knights and squires, champions or defenders of their cases, because of which evil men and those of base intention grew bolder at pursuing them by committing many an outrage, because women are weak and have no means of defending themselves).

A second important and much larger society founded almost a year later, ostensibly for the protection of women, was the *Cour amoureuse* dite de Charles VI (Court of love attributed to Charles VI), created in 1401 by Philip the Bold of Burgundy (1342–1404) and Louis II, Duke of Bourbon (1337–1410). The *Cour* brought together a group of nine hundred fifty nobles, clergy, merchants, and humanists, pledged to promote the “*tres loees vertus, c'est assavoir humilité et leauté, à l'onneur, loenge et recommandacion et service de toutes dames et damoiselles*”¹¹² (the very estimable virtues of humility and loyalty, to the honor, praise and esteem and service of all women). The membership included most of the highest-ranking nobles of France: Charles VI, Louis of Bourbon, and Philip of Burgundy, followed by the king's younger brother, Louis I, Duke of Orléans (1372–1407); John, Duke of Berry (1340–1416), the king's uncle; John of Burgundy (Jean sans Peur, John the Fearless), son of Philip (1371–1419), and Philip's other son, Anthony of

111. *Livre des Fais*, ed. Lalande, 161–62.

112. Carla Bozzolo and Hélène Loyau, *La Cour amoureuse, dite de Charles VI*. 3 vols. (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1982–92), 1:41.

Brabant (1384–1415); and Louis VII, Duke of Bavaria (ca. 1368–1447), brother of the queen. Guillaume de Tignonville, Pierre and Gontier Col, Jean de Montreuil, and Christine's son Jean de Castel (ca. 1384–ca. 1425) also held important positions in the Cour. Other members included the poet Eustache Deschamps; the writer Antoine de la Sale (ca. 1386–ca. 1462), author of *Le petit Jehan de Sainttré*; the poet and diplomat Alain Chartier (ca. 1385/90–ca. 1430); and Waléran III of Luxembourg (ca. 1355–1415), appointed Constable of France in 1411.¹¹³

The first meeting of the Cour amoureuse took place in the Paris residence of the Duke of Burgundy on Valentine's Day, 1401, a day when male lovers were to choose a sweetheart to serve in the coming year (as Christine says in the *Dit*, vv. 639–42). Members were forbidden to write anything, whether in rhyme or in prose, that might dishonor, reproach, belittle, or blame women, and no one could be a member who said or caused another to say *vilaines ne vituperables paroles* (ugly or shameful words) about any woman, for whatever reason, in any place whatsoever.¹¹⁴

It is perhaps the very efflorescence of other chivalric orders dedicated to the defense of women around the time the *Tale of the Rose* was composed that contributes to explaining why Christine wished to create the Order of the Rose. Certainly she would have viewed the founding of an order in which women, not men, elected the Order's members as an appropriate remedial measure. Who better than a woman could judge a man's service to women? As in the case of the *Epistre*, a defense of women written by a woman, an order that espoused giving women some control over their own fortunes was another way for a woman to write the book.

To the extent that the chivalric orders as a whole recalled earlier popular literary narratives, especially Arthurian-inspired tales such as those by Chrétien de Troyes and others, the Order of the Rose retroactively edits the ethos they advance, which called upon champions, if willing, to defend ladies' honor. In that sense, the late medieval orders revived and formalized a literary ideal, and they also institutionalized the obligation to act on behalf of complainants. In literature, women were not always sure of finding a champion and thus were at men's mercy. Christine's Order of the Rose therefore brought women the agency required to choose a champion already sworn to act.¹¹⁵ Given the name of the Order and the

113. Christine honored various members of the Cour by mentioning them in her poetry. She addressed her *Trois Jugemens* to Jean III de Werchin (1374–1415), the seneschal of Hainaut (*Love Debate Poems*, 155); Jean de Chateaumorand (d. 1429) and Guillaume de Montreuil, "l'Hermite de la Faye" (d. 1413), are named in the *Deux amans*, *Love Debate Poems*, vv. 1627, 1641–42; Chateaumorand is also in the *Chemin* (vv. 4519–20; 4544); and Jean de Torsay (d. after 1428) is celebrated in Autre Balade XII (*Autres Balades*, in *Œuvres poétiques*, 1:220–21).

114. Bozzolo and Loyau, 43.

115. Douglas Kelly, reading the *Epistre*, has suggested that at this point in her career Christine still believed in the value of the courtly paradigm and of love for a woman as a knight's inspiration to

title of its founding poem, this new order must also be considered a further challenge to Jean de Meun's *Roman*.

The issuing of the poem itself is the second of two events. The first would have been the dinner party at which the Order of the Rose was created, which Christine tells us occurred in mid-January 1402. The second involved the composition or presentation of the poem about the dinner party, possibly at a second dinner party dated Valentine's Day, 1402 (the feast day of Valentina Visconti, wife of Louis of Orléans). Thus the gathering at which the Order was founded would have taken place well before and completely outside the reading of the poem, as Eric Hicks stresses. Hicks goes on to surmise that the ballades inserted into the poem, brought by Lady Loyalty¹¹⁶ and integral to aspirants' induction into the Order, must have been composed by Christine before the rest of the poem was written so as to be of use at the January dinner. Hicks's assumption that the founding dinner was not a fiction is plausible. It would otherwise be difficult to explain Christine's careful dating of the event a month before the poem appeared; were it a fiction, the founding of the Order and the feast could simply have been placed, not inappropriately, at Valentine's Day, along with the *Dit*. Regrettably, in spite of Hicks's meticulous reconstruction of both the event and its commemoration, we have no independent information that the duke's dinner party in fact occurred, or that the Order of the Rose really existed. But even if the Order was nothing more than a fiction, the point—that women could, and should, make decisions about matters affecting their own lives—had been made.

Manuscripts

These editions of the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* and the *Dit de la Rose* are based on the four extant manuscripts supervised by Christine de Pizan that contain these texts; all of these manuscripts are large volumes of her collected works. Three of

chivalric deeds; she would change her opinion later, in such works as the *Duc des vrais amans*. See *Christine de Pizan's Changing Opinion: A Quest for Certainty in the Midst of Chaos* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 108–12.

116. For Tracy Adams, the *Dit* is marked by an “absent and impotent God of Love” because Loyalty, not Cupid, comes to Christine in her sleep—a hint at the dysfunction of Charles VI's court. See “The Political Significance of Christine de Pizan's Love Poetry,” *Cahiers de recherche médiévales et humanistes/Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies (CRMH)* 17 (2009): 353–71, at 366 (accessible online at <<https://journals.openedition.org/crm/11539>>). But by making Loyalty the God of Love's messenger, Christine signals that loyalty in love is a principal ethical point of the *Dit*. As noted earlier, she appears to accept and even promote the foundational principles of humility and loyalty specified in the statutes of the Cour amoureuse, that is, “comme dit est que nostre amoureuse Court et seigneurie est principanment [*sic*] fondée sur les deux vertus d'umilité et leauté” (as it is said that our loving Court and seignury is founded principally on the two virtues of humility and loyalty). See Bozzolo and Loyau, 41.

the four (L_1 , L_2 , and R) are believed to have been copied by the author.¹¹⁷ There are but two copies of the *Dit*: Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château 492 (L_1), and Paris, BnF, fr. 12779 (L_2). All four volumes contain the *Epistre*: the aforementioned two plus Paris, BnF, fr. 835 (D), and London, BL, Harley MS 4431 (R). We use the sigla coined by James Laidlaw and widely adopted since: L for *Livre* (Book), D for Duke's manuscript, and R for Reine (Queen).¹¹⁸

As indicated earlier, we have opted for a genetic presentation, choosing the earliest manuscript as our base and showing in the variants the changes the author made from one copy to the next. This approach allows us to trace the evolution of the texts under the author's direction and to focus on the specific changes she introduced from version to version.

In the case of the *Dit* Christine made very few changes in her second edition, L_2 , which was executed soon, if not immediately, after L_1 . There are changes nonetheless. For example, for v. 534, she corrected the verb form *veulz* to *veult*, and in v. 33, she opted for a slight textual modification, substituting the conjunction *et* and noun *assemblée* for the verbal phrase *ot assemblé*. Not all changes were deliberate: the recopying of v. 22 led to the omission of the word *eulx* and a resulting hypometric line.

The evolution of the *Epistre* unfolds over a longer period of time—some dozen years—and is consequently more complex. The larger number of changes for the *Epistre* made between L_1 and L_2 indicate that Christine worked on this text more than she did the *Dit*. She introduced a variety of changes in L_2 , including correction of the number of syllables in v. 74; substitution of the non-ambiguous pronoun *elz* for *ilz* in v. 683; and new wording in vv. 129 (*mais* for *et*), 388 (*long* for *loinz*), and 421 (*desprisant* in place of *mesdisant*). All of these changes were maintained in D and R . Christine did not keep some of the L_2 modifications in preparing later copies, where she reverted to the text of L_1 (see vv. 244 and 258). More often, however, she continued working on the *Epistre*, introducing new modifications in D , most of which were kept in R . These involved such corrections as syllable count in verses left uncorrected in L_2 (vv. 165, 201, 436); the introduction of an improved rhyme (v. 600: *omme/somme* instead of *omme/fourme*); numerous lexical changes (vv. 83, 101, 164, 171, 185, 212, 213, 345, 350, etc.); the reworking of an entire verse (v. 599); changes of word order (vv. 84, 114, 504, 546, 96, 705, 778); and the addition of new verses (vv. 250 a, b), the repositioning of others (810 a, b), and the elimination of still others (vv. 487–88, 561–62). The Queen's manuscript (R) shows that Christine continued working on the *Epistre*, introducing still further variations in word order (v. 57); improving a verse stylistically (v. 397); making lexical changes to some already made in D (v. 525); and introducing modifications that intensify the criticism of men (vv. 338, 361). In

117. Ouy et al., *Album*, 194, 222, 325, 340.

118. Laidlaw, "A Publisher's Progress."

sum, we may imagine Christine—the author, editor, and publisher of her own writings—working continuously on them, taking time to bring to them metrical, lexical, and stylistic refinements, and sharpening their ideological focus.

Our edition lists at the end, for comparison's sake, the variants of the *Epistre* contained in a manuscript anthology of poetry dating ca. 1430–1440, Westminster Abbey 21 (W), which also includes a copy of Christine's *Dit de la pastoure* (but not the *Dit de la Rose*). As the reader will see, this copy contains a considerable number of errors when compared with those produced under the author's supervision, and it well illustrates the defects that could creep into a text once it had left the author's oversight.

We do not include variants from three other manuscripts that are imperfect copies of the two *L* manuscripts: Paris, BnF, fr. 604, a mid-fifteenth-century paper copy of Chantilly 492 and its companion Chantilly 493, and two eighteenth-century paper copies of BnF, fr. 12779, made for the celebrated medieval scholar and collector Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye (1697–1781): Paris, BnF, Moreau 1686, and Paris, Arsenal 3295. The latter is the more faithful of the two, containing the same lacunae as the original and even an identical cross-out. Moreau 1686 lacks three of the works contained in *L*₂: the *Oroison Nostre Dame*, the *Quinze Joyes Nostre Dame rimees* and the *Dit de la pastoure*, and changes the ordering of two works, putting the *Enseignemens moraulx* before the *Epistres sur le Roman de la rose*.

***L*₁ Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, 492**

This manuscript is the first of two volumes numbered 492 and 493 in the Bibliothèque du Château in Chantilly that together form the first copy of Christine's collected works owned by the French queen, Isabeau of Bavaria. The volumes were compiled over the course of some six years, between 1399 and 1405, and probably presented in installments. The table of contents written on fol. 1v of Chantilly 492 lists twenty-one works and states that the volume was begun in 1399 and "completed and written" in 1402 on the eve of the birth of Saint John the Baptist; that is, June 23.¹¹⁹ The twenty-one works listed, beginning with the *Cent Balades* (*One Hundred Ballades*) and ending with the *Quinze joyes Nostre Dame rimees* (*Fifteen Joys of Our Lady in Rhyme*), do not account for the entire contents of the current two volumes, nor even for those of the first.¹²⁰ The author increased

119. "Cy commencent les rebriches de la table de ce present volume fait et compilé par Cristine de Pizan demoiselle; commencié l'an de grace mil. ccc. iiij^{xx}.xix eschevé et escript en l'an mil quatre cens et deux la veille de la nativité saint Jehan Baptiste" (Here begin the rubrics for the table [of contents] of the present volume, [which was] written and compiled by Demoiselle Christine de Pizan; begun in the year of grace 1399, completed in the year 1402, the eve of the birth of Saint John the Baptist).

120. A scratched-out passage on fol. 163v at the end of the *Quinze Joyes* in all likelihood corresponds to an original *Explicit*; see DR ed. Hicks, lix.

the initial twenty-one works by five: the *Oroison Nostre Seigneur* and the *Pastoure* were added to current ms. 492 in fols. 164–182, plus the *Chemin*, *Mutacion*, and *Epistre a la reine* that comprise the current second volume, Chantilly 493, probably completed shortly after the date of the last work (Oct. 5, 1405). The *Epistre* is found on fols. 67c–73d of Chantilly 492; the *Dit* follows immediately on fols. 74a–79a. They are the fourteenth and fifteenth items, respectively.

The two volumes were early on bound into a single volume.¹²¹ Separated into two before its acquisition by Henri of Orléans, Duke of Aumale (1822–1897), in November 1887 from the bookseller Damascène Morgand,¹²² the volumes were bequeathed to the Institut de France upon the duke's death a decade later. Nothing has been discovered about its travels during the nearly five hundred intervening years.

Written on parchment, Chantilly 492 measures 291 x 240 mm (justification 205 x 184 mm), and contains 182 written folios preceded and followed by four parchment leaves. The text is presented in two columns of 32 lines (35 for the *Pastoure*). Almost all texts are copied in dark brown ink, with the ink of the *Pastoure* and the table of contents in a lighter brown, indicating their separate execution. Rubrics are a bright red throughout, except for the rubric accompanying the table of contents, which is orange-red. There remains a faint trace of a signature on fol. 2r. Catchwords are generally written in the bottom space between the two columns; the last two, accompanying the two added works (*Oroison Nostre Seigneur* and *Pastoure*), are written more rapidly and aligned with the end of the second column.¹²³ Fourteen miniatures illustrate various texts, of which six accompany the *Epistre Othea*; neither the *Dit* nor the *Epistre* is illustrated. The artist for the first thirteen miniatures has been named by Inès Villela-Petit the Pastoure Master (“Maître de la Pastoure”) for his creation of the charming scene of the *Pastoure* in BnF, fr. 12779, that features shepherdesses, a shepherd, and their flock; this artist works with light colored washes over ink drawings set off against a background of orange, dark pink, or blue wash decorated with scrollwork.¹²⁴ The fourteenth miniature in the volume was executed by the artist Villela-Petit

121. Tania van Hemelryck and Christine Reno, “Dans l’atelier de Christine de Pizan. Le manuscrit Harley 4431,” in *Du scriptorium à l’atelier: Copistes et enlumineurs dans la conception du livre manuscrit au Moyen Age*, *Pecia* 13 (2010): 267–86, at 271; Gilbert Ouy et al., *Album*, 199–200; Olivier Delsaux, Gilbert Ouy, Christine Reno, and Inès Villela-Petit, “Le premier recueil de la reine,” *Médiévales* 53 (2012): 46–55.

122. See Chantilly. *Le Cabinet des livres. Manuscrits*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1900), 2:84–86. On fol. 2r is inscribed the shelf number 1667 that the manuscript was assigned in the Duke of Aumale’s collection.

123. They were probably written before the rubrics, as the catchword on fol. 73v corresponds to the first words of the text on fol. 74r rather than with the rubric that opens that folio.

124. Ouy et al., *Album*, 110–17. An image of the miniature can be viewed at the Gallica website: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b60001038/f317.image.r=manuscrit%20français%2012779> (fol. 157r).

has called the Chantilly Blue-yellow-pink Master (“Maître bleu-jaune-rose de Chantilly”) because of his work with those three colors both in this painting and in those of the second volume, Chantilly 493.

The *Dit* opens with a six-line blue and gold filigreed letter with a dark blue interior dotted with red, one of fifteen in the volume. The letter is extended in the margin by a nine-line blue and gold festoon composed of half fleurs-de-lys. The *Epistre* begins with a much simpler two-line red ink letter against a dark blue filigreed background. Red and blue paragraph marks are used throughout both texts, and indeed throughout the volume; of the two colors, blue is predominant.¹²⁵

The volume features a luxuriously tooled, late nineteenth-century red morocco binding made by the Parisian company Belz-Niedree.¹²⁶ The inside of the binding is lined with blue leather decorated with gold, and the first and last flyleaves are doubled with blue taffeta.

Bibliography

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L₂ Paris, BnF, fr. 12779

Written on parchment, this one-volume manuscript lost several folios through the theft of miniatures.¹²⁷ It initially contained the same works as Chantilly

125. There are minor discrepancies in the placement of the paragraph marks between this manuscript and the following, BnF, fr. 12779, which are close to identical in layout.

126. Ouy et al., *Album*, 199.

127. Five miniatures have disappeared: three from the *Epistre Othea* between fols. 106–107 and 108–109, one at the beginning of the *Debat de deux amans* (fol. 49 is missing), and one from the *Oroison Nostre Seigneur* (the entire poem has been removed between fols. 156 and 157). The folios were numbered after the theft(s). Folios 35 and 36 are also missing: they contained most of the *Lay leonime*, of which only the last eighteen lines appear on fol. 37r; however, this poem is not illustrated in any other manuscript.

492, arranged in exactly the same order. In fact, the layout of most folios in the two manuscripts is identical; in the case of the *Epistre*, the layout is congruent throughout, while for the *Dit* it is identical until the final two columns, where a discrepancy of one line is introduced. The manuscript can be confidently dated to 1402 for most of the works copied therein,¹²⁸ with the *Pastoure*, dated May 1403, added to the corpus, as it was in Chantilly 492. A couple of corrections and improvements made over against the Chantilly manuscript indicate that fr. 12779 is the latter of the two.¹²⁹

The volume consists of 172 folios measuring 326 x 251 mm (justification 215 x 184 mm), preceded and followed by three paper flyleaves; the text is in two columns of 32 lines. The bulk of the folios (between 26r–156v) have text written in dark brown ink, whereas the ink of the folios before and after is medium brown in color. Existing rubrics are a bright red; however, the majority of rubrics have not been executed. Nine miniatures remain, the product of the Pastoure Master; the assistance of the Master of Jeanne Ravenelle has been identified in three that accompany the *Epistre Othea*.¹³⁰ As in Chantilly 492, neither the *Epistre* nor the *Dit* is illustrated. Both of these texts begin with large blue and gold letters against a background of dark blue and red filigree; that of the *Epistre* is four spaces high, that of the *Dit* is six. Red and blue paragraph marks punctuate the text, with the colors alternating regularly. There are traces of three different series of signatures; catchwords begin toward the end of the second column and often continue into the margin.

A fifteenth-century sanguine-colored signature [?] (“Hagar”) fills the column that was left blank on fol. 77b at the end of the *Dit*; it is accompanied by a motto (“Y doth myn”[?]) The volume belonged to the great medievalist and collector La Curne de Sainte-Palaye and subsequently to the Cabinet des Chartes, perhaps the marquis de Paulmy, and to Georges-Jean Mouchet (1737–1807), Sainte-Palaye’s collaborator on the *Glossaire de l’ancien langage françois* (shelfmark “Mouchet n° 6” on fol. 1r). Another old shelfmark is S-F 6259 (Supplément françois of the Bibliothèque nationale de France).

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BnF Gallica, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b60001038>> (digitized version of the entire manuscript); DR ed. Hicks, lxxi–lxxii; • James Douglas Farquhar and Eric C. Hicks, “Christine de Pizan’s *Dit de la Pastoure*: Membra

128. The *Rose* debate letters lack Christine’s letter to Pierre Col dated Oct. 2, 1402. As with Chantilly 492, the *Autres Balades* do not include poems written after 1402: for example, n° 38 dated 1403, and n° 42, which is a lamentation on the death of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (April 27, 1404).

129. For example, vv. 129, 230, 388 and 421 of the *Epistre* and vv. 33, 216, 352 and 534 of the *Dit*. See also Ouy et al., *Album*, 218n25.

130. Ouy et al., *Album*, 224–25; identification by Inès Villela-Petit.

disjecta,” *Scriptorium* 30 (1976): 196, 198; Laidlaw, “A Publisher’s Progress,” 42–52; • Mombello, *Tradizione*, 63–70; • *Œuvres poétiques*, 1:xviii–xix, xx n. 1; • Ouy and Reno, “Les hésitations”; • Ouy et al., *Album*, 214–26; • Lucie Schaefer, “Die Illustrationen zu den Handschriften der Christine de Pizan,” *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 10 (1937): 181–83 and fig. 113; • Inès Villela-Petit, *Le Gothique international: L’art en France au temps de Charles VI* (Paris: Hazan / Musée du Louvre, 2004), 108; • Charity Cannon Willard, “Christine de Pizan’s Clock of Temperance,” *L’Esprit créateur* 2 (1962): 149–54.

D Paris, BnF, fr. 835

This manuscript constitutes the first component of a very large volume that by 1510 had been divided, and consists today of five manuscripts in the *fonds français* of the BnF: fr. 835, 606, 836, 605 and 607.¹³¹ The ensemble includes a number of works composed after the enlarged *Livre* of 1405.¹³²

The original volume was intended for Louis I, Duke of Orléans, but acquired by his uncle, John, Duke of Berry, in 1408, following Louis’s assassination in November 1407. It evidences some reordering of the early elements of the collection,¹³³ plus some last-minute modifications that reflect the change of patrons. These involve large alterations, such as the removal of the *Dit* (given its association with the Duke, including its setting in one of his Paris residences), and the transformation of another work dedicated to Louis, the *Livre de la Prodommie de l’omme* (*Book of Man’s Integrity*), into the *Livre de Prudence* (*Book of Prudence*), by means of deft changes made to the already-copied text.¹³⁴

The initial plan of the collection called for changing the placement of the *Epistre* and the *Dit*, which for the first time would not have followed each other directly. The *Epistre* is numbered “viiij” in the collection, and immediately follows the *Autres Balades*, which are titled here *Pluseurs balades de divers propos* (*Several Ballades on Different Topics*). The *Epistre* occupies fols. 45a–50a. Had the *Dit* not been removed, it would have come in eleventh place, after the *Debat de deux amans*, the final column of which (64a) has been recopied in lighter ink, and the *Trois Jugemens*, begun on fol. 64b in the same light ink.¹³⁵

Fr. 835 consists of 103 parchment folios, preceded by three flyleaves (two paper, one parchment) and followed by one parchment and one paper flyleaf.

131. Laidlaw, “A Publisher’s Progress,” 52–59.

132. The *Duc des vrais amans*, the *Epistre a Eustace Morel*, the *Proverbes moraulx*, and the *Cité*.

133. See Ouy et al., *Album*, 178–79.

134. Ouy et al., *Album*, 177–80; Liliane Dulac and Christine Reno, “Rhétorique, critique et politique dans le *Livre de Prudence* de Christine de Pizan: quelques aperçus.” In *La Vertu de prudence entre Moyen Âge et l’âge classique*, ed. Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, Catherine Pascal, François Roudaut and Trung Tran (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), 193–222, at 199–203.

135. Ouy et al., *Album*, 231n19.

Folios measure 348 x 260 mm (justification 233 x 180 mm). The text is copied in dark brown ink up to fol. 63v, and in lighter brown ink from thereon to the end. Rubrics are in bright red, and there are also running titles bearing the title of each work and its place in the volume in Roman numerals from I to XIV; these are in reddish orange.

The volume is embellished by six miniatures. The first five are the work of the Epistre of Othea Master, and the last, accompanying the *Dit de Poissy*, by the Egerton Master. The *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* is among the works illustrated, on fol. 45a. In the Epistre of Othea Master's composition, the God of Love sits on a grassy seat against a backdrop of a trellis covered with pink roses; three birds fly overhead. He wears a long, pink houppelande (over-garment) fringed in white, his large blue wings with golden feather outlines spread behind him. He holds two long arrows in his left arm, and with his right hand holds out a folded letter to the young noble kneeling on one knee at his side. The young man wears a short orange houppelande, the right sleeve of which is decorated with clovers, and particolored orange and white hose.¹³⁶

In keeping with the high quality of the illustrations, the volume has fairly elaborate ancillary decorations, including a luxurious border on fol. 1r, executed by one of the most celebrated artisans of the day, Pierre Gilbert.¹³⁷ Six works begin with large illuminated letters, including a four-line pink C on gold leaf, filled with a double-curved vine. Two-line champ initials (that is, gold on a blue and red background) and champ paragraph signs complete the decoration.

After the Duke of Berry acquired this edition of Christine's collected works, the volume passed to his daughter Marie, Duchess of Bourbon (a Bourbon signature appears at the bottom of fol. 28r). The collection became part of the library of Francis I (1494–1547) in 1523 when he seized the goods of the Bourbons. There are three seventeenth-century shelfmarks from the former Royal Library (now the Bibliothèque nationale de France): *cinq cents nonante trois* (Rigault), 466 (Dupuy), and 7217 (Regius).¹³⁸ BnF, fr. 835 is bound in late eighteenth-century red morocco decorated with a triple thin gold line around the edges.

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136. The image, on fol. 45r, can be seen at <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8449047c/f97.image.r=manuscrit%20français%20835>>.

137. Ouy et al., *Album*, 72–75, 235; identification by Inès Villela-Petit.

138. These three different shelfmarks were assigned by royal librarians in 1622, 1645, and 1682, respectively.

Beatson, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library / George Braziller, 1974), 1:37–38, 292–93, 440n150; 2: figs. 139, 145; • *Œuvres poétiques*, 1:v–xii; • Gilbert Ouy, “Une énigme codicologique: Les signatures des cahiers dans les manuscrits autographes de Christine de Pizan,” in *Calames et Cahiers: Mélanges de codicologie et de paléographie offerts à Léon Gilissen*, ed. Jacques Lemaire and Emile van Balberghe (Brussels: Centre d’Etude des Manuscrits, 1985), 119–31; Ouy et al., *Album*, 59–67, 72–74, 131–42, 178–80, 228–38; • *Paris 1400: Les arts sous Charles VI*, ed. Elisabeth Taburet-Delahaye, François Avril et al. (Paris: Arthème Fayard / Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), n° 62A and 135; Paris, BnF, Moreau 1655, fols. 204r–205v, n° 577.

R London, BL, Harley MS 4431

This final collection of Christine’s works, presented to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria in 1414, is the largest and the most luxurious.¹³⁹ Three works have been added to those contained in the Duke’s manuscript: the *Complainte amoureuse*,¹⁴⁰ *Encore autres balades*, and the *Cent balades d’amant et de dame*. The *Epistre a la reine* (*Letter to the Queen*), dated October 5, 1405, was initially included but later erased (fol. 255a–c). There is no sign that the *Dit* was ever meant to be included in the collection. The *Epistre*, found on fols. 51b–56c, is here numbered xij and is preceded and followed by *Encore autres balades* and the *Complainte amoureuse*, respectively.

Initially a very large single volume of 398 parchment folios, the codex was divided into two at the time of its rebinding in 1962, at which time paper leaves were inserted to protect the paintings.¹⁴¹ The first volume contains 179 folios measuring 366 x 280 mm,¹⁴² preceded by five flyleaves (three paper and two parchment) and followed by a single paper flyleaf; the second contains 223 folios measuring 366 x 279 mm, preceded by four and followed by three paper flyleaves. Justification varies.¹⁴³

The volume contains 132 miniatures in all, the vast majority attributed by Inès Villela-Petit to the Cité des Dames Master and his workshop, and five to the

139. Digital images of the Queen’s manuscript can be seen online at <www.pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk/gallery/index.html>. For the dating of the manuscript, see James Laidlaw, “The Date of the Queen’s MS” (2005), 2, also accessible online at <www.pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk/harley4431date.pdf>.

140. This same title was used by a different poem in the Duke’s manuscript; it is here renamed *Autre complainte amoureuse*.

141. The binding is the house binding of the British Museum, green leather with gold tooling.

142. The volume contains two folios whose numbers 51 and 52 have been crossed out and do not figure in the numbering, which stops in this volume at 177.

143. See Ouy et al., *Album*, 322, 338–39.

Bedford Master.¹⁴⁴ The *Epistre* is illustrated on fol. 51b by an image similar to that in the Duke's manuscript. Here, the crowned god is seated on a grassy throne against a background of green and blue trees and four large birds. His wings are a brilliant yellow rimmed with orange; he wears a dark red houppelande decorated with golden wing motifs and carries both a slim bow and two arrows in his left hand. With his right, he hands a letter to the young noble dressed in blue and white with a red scarf kneeling on one knee before him.

Several works in the two volumes begin with large decorated letters. The *Epistre* begins with one of 21 large initials found in the collection: a five-line blue C on a gold leaf background, prolonged in the middle column by black pen vines with gold leaves. Several of the works have small decorated initials and champ paragraph marks, but the *Epistre* does not.

The Harley volume was brought to England in the 1420s by John of Lancaster, first Duke of Bedford (1389–1435), and given to his second wife, Jacquetta of Luxembourg (1415/16–1472); her signature is on fols. 1r, 51v, 52v; her motto, *sur tous autres* (above all others), appears on fols. 1r and 387r, and her name is scratched into the miniature on fol. 115r. The volume passed to her son Anthony Woodville (1442–1483) by her second marriage to Richard Woodville, first Earl Rivers (1405–1469); Anthony's motto *nulle la vault* (she has no equal) and signature are on fol. 1r as well.¹⁴⁵ (The volume also contains the signature of the Flemish courtier and nobleman Louis de Gruuthuse [ca. 1427–1492] on fol. 1r, but there is no corroborating evidence that he actually owned it.) By 1676 the volume belonged to Henry Cavendish, second Duke of Newcastle (1630–1691), whose ex-libris appears on fol. 1r. After his death it passed to his granddaughter Dame Henrietta Cavendish Holles, who married the bibliophile and arts patron Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford (1689–1741), in 1713. Their manuscripts were sold to the British nation in 1753.

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144. Ouy et al., *Album*, 327, 343.

145. See note 151 below.

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Arts / Fondation Wildenstein, 1987–90, 1:287, 292, and fig. 196; Van Hemelryck and Reno, “Dans l’atelier de Christine de Pizan”; Inès Villela-Petit, “La France et le gothique international (1360–1430),” in *L’Art du Moyen Âge en France*, ed. Philippe Plagnieux (Paris: Citadelles et Mazenod, 2010), 382–441, at p. 389; Willard, “Christine de Pizan’s Clock of Temperance.”

W London, Westminster Abbey MS 21

Measuring 281 x 204 mm, the manuscript consists of 80 folios of paper, bound at the end with two treatises on parchment of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, that apparently served as wrappers.¹⁴⁶ Several folios were severely damaged, but were skillfully restored.¹⁴⁷ Only two watermarks are found throughout: the first, a flower, and the second, a *P* ending in a trilobe and topped with a cross.¹⁴⁸ The disposition of watermarks points to the organic quality of the volume, which was not assembled from disparate pieces but rather compiled intentionally. Another feature pointing to the volume’s organicity is the use of dry point ruling throughout, despite different patterns of ruling that are adapted to the different types of poems contained therein.¹⁴⁹ The copying was done by multiple hands using uniform dark ink.

The volume contains some sixty-eight distinct works, none of whose authors is identified. Most of them are poems, especially ballades that occupy one side of a folio or a column. The longest are Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre au dieu d’Amours* (fols. 52r–64v) and her *Dit de la pastoure* (fols. 65r–75v).

146. We have been unable to verify the collation of Robinson and James, perhaps done when the manuscript was being rebound. See J. Armitage Robinson and M. R. James, *The Manuscripts of Westminster Abbey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). 77.

147. The first folio is a mere tongue of paper 120 x 15 mm mounted on a whole new leaf; fols. 2–4 are jagged remnants on which the writing has partially disappeared; almost all the remaining folios have received minor repair, particularly in the bottom corner. There is at least one folio missing between fols. 45 and 46. In addition, the writing on fols. 6v and 7v is partially obscured by stains that occur elsewhere but do not affect legibility.

148. The flower is located on folios 10, 11, 12, 14, 71, and 78–80; the *P* on fols. 16, 18–20, 23, 28, 30, 32, 33, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 48, 50, 52, 55, 57, 59–62, and 69. The *P* is closest to Briquet 8485, dating from the 1430s in the area of Rouen. The flower does not resemble any attested in the standard watermark references for the period (*The New Briquet, Jubilee Edition. A Facsimile of the 1907 edition with supplementary material contributed by a number of scholars*. Edited by Allan Stevenson. 4 vols. Amsterdam: The Paper Publications Society, 1968; Gerhard Piccard, *Wasserzeichen: Blatt, Blume, Baum*. Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer, 1982).

149. One finds, for example, a single vertical line that sets the left margin, which is the case for the *Epistre*, or a double vertical that creates the space for initial capitals, or, in the case of folios with two columns of writing, a double vertical at left for the first column and a single vertical that situates the second column.

The volume lacks signatures and catchwords, and is tightly bound in half-morocco, which makes it difficult to distinguish quire structure. What is clear is that the *Epistre*, beginning on fol. 52r, was apparently not copied immediately after the works that precede, as fol. 51v was left blank, and was filled later with drafts of two letters, two versions of the first in Latin and one version of the second, in English, the latter beginning “Trysty and welbelovyd Master Gyles. . . .”¹⁵⁰ In fols. 1–51r, initial capitals are all uniformly highlighted with a stroke of ochre, another feature indicating a hiatus, however brief, between the copying of the *Epistre* (and following works) and those that precede. These strokes have faded over time.

The *Epistre* bears, at the end (fol. 64v), the signature “Scales,” embellished with elaborate cadels. It is not clear whether the signature belongs to a scribe or an owner.¹⁵¹ The version of the *Epistre* found in the Westminster manuscript is very close to that contained in manuscript *R*, indicating that it might have been copied from it or from a manuscript close to it. Frequent tiny marginal marks throughout correspond for the most part to paragraph marks in the Harley manuscript. *W* contains a relatively large number of errors, however, evident in the list of variants. The French used throughout the manuscript bears no trace of Anglo-Norman.

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Versification

Reading Christine’s Poetry

Christine’s skill as a poet is apparent in her handling of meter and rhyme as well as in her lively treatment of other poetic ornaments. She liked to try her hand at different types of narrative poems, composing ten-, eight-, and seven-syllable narrative verses. Her lyric poetry included ballades, rondeaus, virelais, and other short, sometimes challenging, types of short poems, particularly *lais*. She liked to mix verse and prose (as in the *Epistre Othea*, a book of moral instruction), or lyric and narrative verse (as in the *Duc des vrais amans*).

150. We are grateful to Christine Reynolds, Assistant Keeper of the Muniments at Westminster Abbey, for the information that the formula “Trysty and welbelovd” was a common opening in letters of the Tudor period.

151. We have not been able to find any trace of scribes bearing that name. Scales was a barony from the thirteenth through the fifteenth century; its last official lord was Anthony Woodville, second Earl Rivers, who inherited the Harley manuscript from his mother. Born in 1442, he was executed in 1483 at the behest of the future Richard III.

Where today we expect prose, the most frequent organizing principle of French narrative was poetry, especially the rhyming couplet. The octosyllabic couplet, in particular, was used for many types of medieval poetry, as in the *Dit*. In contrast, the *Epistre* is written in decasyllables, a meter that better suits its declamatory register: compare the *Epistre*'s stasis with the gaiety and movement of the *Dit*.¹⁵² The *Dit*'s inserted ballades and rondeau, a first example of Christine's mixing of narrative and lyric,¹⁵³ introduce variety and heighten the effect of the fixed-form poems. Varying line length sets off the closing sections of the *Epistre*: verses 797–800 are probably to be read as two couplets of heptasyllabic lines; the octosyllabic couplets of vv. 801–20 name the gods and goddesses; finally, the last two lines of the poem, vv. 821–22, the god's signature lines, are once again heptasyllabic.

Given the nature of the French language itself, in which stress predictably falls on the final syllable of a word or group of words, the counting of syllables rather than the stressed foot is fundamental to French verse. (Because English has relatively unpredictable word stress, English verse depends upon varying word stress and thus allows for rhythmic patterns such as iambs, trochees, dactyls, anapests, and the like.) Rhyme affects syllable count, and line-final rhymes are "feminine" or "masculine": if rhyme words end in *-e* or *-es*, as on nouns, verbs, or adjectives, or on the sixth person *-ent* verbal ending, they are deemed feminine, and their final syllable will not be counted; otherwise, they are deemed masculine, and their final syllable does count.

For example, verses of the *Epistre* may be scanned as in the following couplet:

Et / Jehan / de / Meun / ou / Ro / mmant / de / la / Rose:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Quel / loinz / pro / cez! / Quel / di / ffi / ci / le / chose! (*Epistre* vv. 387–88)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The final *e* at the rhyme in *Rose* and *chose* does not figure in the syllable count; the *-se* is pronounced not as a full syllable but as a short off-glide. Where a final *-e* appears within a line before a word beginning with a consonant, it does count; thus the final *-e* of *difficile* was pronounced (as it still is in modern French poetry, if not in modern spoken French). Hence *difficile*, which is three syllables in current spoken French, counts as four syllables in the second line above. In position

152. See Daniel Poirion, *Le Poète et le prince: l'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orléans* (Grenoble: Allier, 1965; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1978), 449.

153. See the comments of Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 117–18.

before another vowel line internally, *-e* was elided in principle, as *peine a* (*pei-na*) and *quelque acointance* (*quel-qacointance*) in these lines:

Au / tres / me / ttent / grant / pei / ne a / pro / cu / rer
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Par / me / ssa / ge / sou / par / quel / que a / coin / tance (*Epistre*, vv. 60–61)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On the other hand, the instability of *-e* [ə] in Old and Middle French offered poets metrical flexibility, sometimes allowing for their full pronunciation, as in *cē* of this verse:

Je / leur / re / spons / que / ceulz / qui / cē / es / crirent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (*Epistre*, v. 311)

The *-e* of *cē*, which precedes another vowel, would normally elide, but that would make the line hypometric. The modern editor has suggested how this verse should scan by adding the diaeresis over the *-e* to indicate that it should be fully pronounced. (The third person plural *-ent* verb ending follows the rule for final *-e* at the rhyme, as noted above.)

A masculine rhyme is produced when both rhyme words end in a consonant or a vowel other than an unstressed *-e*, as in these verses:

S'en / tre / di / ent: / "Je / sçay / bien / de / tes / **fais**:
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Te / lle / t'ai / mē / et / tu / le / jo / lis / **fais** (*Epistre*, vv. 127–28)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(In the first line above, *fais* is a noun meaning "deeds." In the second, *fais* is the second person singular of the verb *faire*, "to do, to make.")

Sa / be / lle / suer / de / cuer / es / **lit**,
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

M'ot / a / ppres / té / un / trop / beau / **lit**: (*Dit*, vv. 273–74)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The Ballades and Rondeau

Each of the three ballades in the *Dit de la Rose* is composed of three *huitains* (stanzas of eight lines, which are here decasyllabic), the form Christine used most

often.¹⁵⁴ All three rhyme in *ababbcbc*. Each eighth line of a *huitain* is a refrain: in the first (vv. 129–52), Loyalty explains that she has come with important news; in the second (vv. 153–76), she announces the conditions for accepting the roses, and, in the refrain, each recipient is enjoined to uphold the honor of ladies. In the third (vv. 197–224), participants take the Order. This final ballade is unique among the three in containing an envoi (an added stanza of four lines, making the poem four lines longer than the other two). The envoi was a novelty at the time, and may have been added to emphasize the performative significance of this third ballade. As a group, then, the refrains coalesce around three key points: Loyalty's bringing of the news; the requirement for accepting the symbolic rose; and the taking of the oath.

The rondeau follows a conventional format: each of its first two stanzas is of two lines; the refrain of the second stanza consists of the first line of the first stanza. In the last stanza the refrain consists of both lines of the first stanza.

Rhyme

Both Daniel Poirion and John Fox have observed that Christine's rhymes are in general more careful and more sophisticated than those of many of her contemporaries.¹⁵⁵ Christine often strove for rich rhyme, which required the identical pronunciation of the consonant preceding the stressed vowel, as in *nouvel: revel* (*Dit*, vv. 19–20). This differs from simple rhyme, which calls for the identity of the final stressed vowel and all following sounds but not the consonant preceding the final stressed vowel: *d'avanture: l'endure* (*Epistre*, vv. 87–88) or *chose: close* (*Dit*, vv. 31–32).

So-called "grammatical rhymes" are paired words having a shared etymology but different prefixes or no prefix at all, as *jure: parjure* (*Dit*, vv. 629–30), *commise: remise* (*Dit*, vv. 599–600), *apportees: portees* (*Dit*, vv. 529–30), *honnourees: deshonnourees* (*Epistre*, vv. 29–30), and *couvrir: decouvrir* (*Epistre* vv. 139–40). But Christine occasionally exploits a like technique to highlight antonyms which have no etymological connection, some of which serve to emphasize the themes of the poem:

Et qui dire ne les veult mie **appertes**
 Les monstre au doy par parolles **couvertes**. (*Epistre*, vv. 157–58)
 or
 Adont fut la sale **estourmie**,
 Il n'y ot personne **endormie**, (*Dit*, vv. 113–14)

154. See Poirion, *Le Poète et le prince*, 374.

155. Poirion, *Le Poète et le prince*, 434; John Fox, *The Lyric Poetry of Charles d'Orléans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 133–34. See also the comments of Peter V. Davies in "La rime chez Christine de Pizan: Quelques cas particuliers," in *Au champ des écritures*, ed. Hicks et al., 819–32.

Homonyms, words that have the same spelling but mean different things, supplied another poetic ornament. Some are usual in poetry of the time, as the following pair:

Partis s'en sont, congié ont **pris**, (took, from *prendre*)
Emportant la rose de **pris** (value) (*Dit*, vv. 263–64)

Other examples include:

Si comme pour faire en **present** (gift)
A celle gent nouvel **present**. (in attendance) (*Dit*, vv. 111–12)

Noble paÿs ou gentillesse **regne**. (reigns, third pers. pres. of *regner*, to rule)
Mais a present elles sont en ce **regne**, (kingdom) (*Epistre*, vv. 27–28)

Et aucuns sont qui jadis en mes **laz** (snares, lit. nets)
Furent tenus, mais ilz sont d'amer **laz** (weary) (*Epistre*, vv. 493–94)

L'amour d'elles qui leur cuer tient en **serre** (grip)
Dont l'un se plaint, a l'autre le cuer **serre** (tightens) (*Epistre*, vv. 39–40)

Sometimes, however, homonyms at the rhyme do not rise to such cleverness; some, in fact, are not completely successful: **sont** / **sont** (*Epistre*, vv. 207–8), which both mean “are,” and **non** / **non** (*Dit*, vv. 617–18), which both mean “no.”¹⁵⁶

Another category of admired rhyme, called the *rime équivoque* or *équivoquée*, is a punning rhyme in which one word of two or more syllables rhymes with two or three words in the next verse. Sometimes this could be the other way around, as in:

Vers la sienne: de corps, **de vis**
Et de beau maintien, a **devis** (*Dit*, vv. 95–96)

Qui autelle comme celle **fourme a**;
Car oncques Dieu nulle riens ne **fourma** (*Epistre*, vv. 583–84)

Le mal laissent. Les bonnes vueillent **en ce**
Prendre vouloir d'avoir **perseverence**, (*Epistre*, vv. 769–70)

There are times, however, when something less than a full rhyme occurs. That is, a rhyming pair may differ in one or more phonemes even though the orthography suggests sameness. Consider the following pair:

156. Cited in Davies, “La rime chez Christine de Pizan,” 824.

Si sont de son hostel tous **ceulx**,
Et n'y avoit pas un tout **seulz** (*Dit*, vv. 43–44)

The *l* in *seulz* would have been pronounced, whereas that in *ceulx* would have had to be silent. This would also have led to different pronunciation values as between *-eu* in *ceulx* and *-eu* in *seulz*, so that the vowels would not have rhymed either. The result is called an “eye-rhyme,” in this case twice, as there is a mismatch for both the *-l* and the *-eu*.

The following rhymes could be called “approximate”:

Or ay conclus en tous cas mes **raisons**
Bien et a droit; n'en desplaise a nulz **homs** (*Epistre*, vv. 747–48)

The form *homs* is an alternative way of spelling *homme* and would be pronounced [ɔm], whereas *raison* would have had a close (nasalized) [õn], with final *n* conceivably still lightly pronounced. The final *-s* would not have been pronounced, but it is worth noting that the *-s* of *raisons* marks the plural, while the *-s* of *homs* is a case marker that reaches back to an earlier period of French. Thus, in the Middle French period, much was available to poets wanting to adjust the toilette of their poetry.

Enjambment

Enjambment, often useful to vary the rhythm of a couplet or group of couplets, occurs when a phrase is continued beyond the rhyme into the next verse; the continued phrase is a *rejet*.¹⁵⁷ Combined with homonymic rhyme, enjambment nicely sets the stage in the *Dit* for Lady Loyalty to visit Christine at night. In the following verses, the phrases *Et m'endormy*, *Si m'apparu*, *Clere et luisant*, and *Me merveillay* are skillful *rejets*, and internal rhyme—*nue* with *m'apparu*, and *luisant* with both *dormant* and *formant*—add to the euphony of the passage:

La me couchay seulette et *nue*
Et m'endormy. Lors une *nue*
Si m'apparu en mon dormant,
Clere et luisant; de ce formant
Me merveillay que pouait estre. (*Dit*, vv. 283–87)

157. On Christine's enjambment, see Peter Davies, “‘Si bas suis qu'a peine / Releveray’: Christine de Pizan's Use of Enjambement,” in John Campbell and Nadia Margolis, eds., *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 77–90.

Sometimes, however, Christine's enjambments can seem particularly bold, even jarring, as, for instance, where the name Hutin de Vermeilles is divided over two lines and is interrupted by the word *exemple*, needed for the rhyme with *emple*:

Ne prennent pas au bon Hutin exemple
De Vermeilles, ou bonté ot si emple (*Epistre*, vv. 225–26).

A similar enjambment occurs in the *Deux amans*, in the case of l'Ermite de la Faye.¹⁵⁸

Vocabulary

Christine's acquaintance with the chancellery left its stamp on her style. The *style clerical* or *curial*, developed in Latin by clerks of the Roman curia but imitated in the vernacular languages, is apparent in her use of terms like *dessus dictes*, "above-mentioned" (*Epistre*, v. 17), *combien que*, "notwithstanding" "although," and by her use of legal vocabulary more or less in its technical sense, as in *complaintes*, "complaints" (*Epistre*, v. 9), *a la relacion*, "on the testimony" (*Epistre*, v. 800). Use of ecclesiastical terms such as *excommunier*, excommunicate (*excommenye*, *Epistre*, v. 781) was widespread. Maureen Curnow has observed that this legal register is "a clear touchstone of erudition, further proof of the affinity of women for learning."¹⁵⁹ This is of course especially appropriate in the God of Love's official act.

Pairs of synonyms or near-synonyms suggest curial style, and were also routinely employed by the king's translators, who feared that readers might not understand words translated from Latin. In the *Dit*, Loyalty reports that Cupid both "commands" and "mandates" (*commande* and *mande*, vv. 525–26) that the Order of the Rose be placed in good hands; at the end of the same poem, Christine herself both "gives" and "relinquishes" (*donne* and *habandonne*, vv. 623–24) the power to bestow the Order.

The varying forms of *onc*, *oncque(s)*, *donc*, *doncque(s)*, and *com*, *comme*, are part of a stock of sanctioned practices available to poets to adjust syllable count: *onc*, *donc*, and *com* are one syllable each, whereas *oncque(s)*, *doncque(s)*, and *comme* count as two syllables.

Presentation of French Texts

In conformity with modern editorial practices, we have distinguished between the letters *i* and *j*, and *u* and *v*. We have employed modern punctuation for capitalization and used the apostrophe after the article. The adverb *presque* is written

158. *Love Debate Poems*, 125.

159. Maureen C. Curnow, "La Pioche d'Inquisition," in Richards et al., *Reinterpreting Christine*, 157–72, at 157.

in two words (*pres que*), as in the base manuscript. The varying presentation of the adverb *tres*, written in the manuscripts with either final or intermediate *s* and correspondingly separated from or attached to its related adjective, is followed in our transcription.

In accordance with the guidelines established by Mario Roques regarding accents, we add the acute accent only on tonic *e*, whether occurring alone or followed by *s*; it is not used when tonic *e* is followed by another *e* denoting a feminine form.¹⁶⁰ Where two contiguous vowels that could be diphthongized or reduced to one sound by elision threaten proper syllable count, we add the dieresis on one of the vowels to signal that both must be pronounced.

Textual variants are listed in two groups, the first comprised of rejected readings from our base manuscript *L*₁, and the second of variants from the other author-supervised manuscripts (*L*₂, *D* and *R*). As stated earlier, variants from *W* are listed separately at the end of the *Epistre* variants. We have exercised due caution in rejecting readings in the base manuscript, doing so only when obviously faulty readings risked impeding comprehension of the text. Variants do not include spelling differences such as *age/aige* and *ue/eu* that were common at the time. Orthographic changes that serve the purpose of making an eye-rhyme or introducing textual ambiguity (as in v. 67) are not recorded in the variants, but are pointed out in the notes. No diacritical marks are used on variants.

Interlinear additions in the manuscript are inscribed in slashes (\ /), both in the text and in the variants.

Note on the Translations

By offering editions with facing-page translations, we invite readers not thoroughly conversant with Christine de Pizan's Middle French to read in dual fashion, attending to both the French poem and its English rendering. We strove to capture Christine's liveliness and to make the English as contemporary to modern readers as the French would have been to Christine's medieval readers. As in any translation of this kind, we endeavored to stay as close as possible to the French wording, although the occasional lack of a strict French-English equivalency required interpretation to avoid a potentially baffling word-for-word translation. Similarly, the syntax of octosyllabic or decasyllabic verse, with its ellipses and clauses reordered to suit syllable count and rhyme, requires a habit in reading that is unfamiliar to today's readers; this called for clarification, with the result that English lines may not always appear directly opposite their French verse. Punctuation as between the French and English texts sometimes varies.

160. Mario Roques, "Établissement de règles pratiques pour l'édition des textes français et provençaux." *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 87 (1926): 453–59, and *Romania* 52 (1926): 243–49.

Our need to focus on the precise English meanings of certain words key to Christine's thought has prompted us to provide our own English translations of selected illustrative phrases from texts by Christine de Pizan other than the *Epistre* and the *Dit*.

CHRISTINE DE PIZAN

The God of Love's Letter *and*
The Tale of the Rose:
A Bilingual Edition



Edited and translated by
THELMA S. FENSTER *and* CHRISTINE RENO

With
JEAN GERSON
A Poem on Man and Woman
Translated from the Latin by
THOMAS O'DONNELL

Foreword by
JOCELYN WOGAN-BROWNE



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