

Introduction

Christine de Pizan as “Other Voice”

Christine de Pizan stands out as the first professional woman writer in the French literary canon.¹ She presents herself explicitly as such, making her gendered authorial persona that of a carefully crafted “other,” carving out a strong, at times controversial, place in a literary and intellectual landscape historically reserved for men.² She cultivates that persona through autobiographical references woven throughout her works, which persistently and often poignantly emphasize her identity as daughter, mother, wife, and widow.³ Using her singular perspective as a platform from which to stage her writing, Christine’s emphasis on her own gender pairs with an emphasis on women as subject matter. Deftly manipulating the dominant, historically masculine, discursive modes of her day—“courtly” and learned alike—Christine writes within and against them to assert a distinctively feminine voice anchored in a specifically feminine model of authority. As the term for a defined concept of feminism would not exist until the nineteenth century, it would be anachronistic to call Christine a “feminist” in the modern sense. It is quite safe to say, however, that hers is the first self-consciously polemical “proto-feminist” voice we hear from medieval France.

While Christine’s life story and cohesive point of view were imprinted on her writing from the start, the most prominent and decisive moment in her establishment as a credible, authoritative “other” voice was her engagement in France’s first public literary debate, the quarrel surrounding the *Roman de la Rose* (*Romance of the Rose*). This voluminous poem, very well known in Christine’s time, was composed by Guillaume de Lorris (lines 1–4056, ca. 1236) and Jean de Meun (lines 4057–21677, ca. 1270). It depicts a dream vision in which a lover pursues and ultimately ravages his love object, represented by a rose. This work would

1. The scholarly literature on Christine de Pizan is immense. In eleven cases where the documentation pertaining to a topic threatens to overwhelm the footnote apparatus, the reader is invited to refer to the Appendix. In this case, see Appendix/1: *Overviews of Christine’s Life, Works, and Historical Context*.

2. See Appendix/2: *Christine’s Self-Construction as a Gendered Authorial Persona*.

3. Notable examples are to be found in the first twenty poems of her *Cent balades* (*One Hundred Balads*), the prologue to *Le chemin de longue estude* (*The Path of Long Study*), Book I of the *Mutacion de Fortune* (*Mutability of Fortune*), and Book III of *Lavision-Christine* (*Christine’s Vision*). On Christine as an innovator with regard to autobiography as a genre, see María Angela Holguera Fanega, “Manifestaciones autobiográficas en *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune* de Christine de Pizan,” in *Las sabias mujeres: Educación, saber y autoría: siglos III–XVII*, ed. María del Mar Graña Cid (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1994), 203–11. Regarding autobiography and biography as focal points of Christine’s writing, see James Laidlaw, “Writing Lives—Christine de Pizan,” *New Comparison* 25 (Spring 1998): 25–39.

leave an indelible mark on French literature for its use of allegory, mythological and other learned references, and narrative structure.

Christine took issue with the *Romance of the Rose*, and in particular its second author, Jean de Meun, for his misogynist tendencies and vulgar language. The result was a public epistolary debate on the poem that unfolded from 1401 through 1402. On one side were Christine and her allies Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, and Guillaume de Tignonville, Provost of Paris. On the other were Jean de Montreuil, provost of Lille and secretary to Charles VI; Gontier Col, also a secretary to the king; and his brother Pierre Col, Canon of Paris. The debate put Christine squarely in the company of a number of “heavy hitters,” whom she likely knew through the circles of secretaries to the royal court that was her personal and professional milieu.⁴ Not only did she hold her own, but she took a measure of control in the dispute by crafting the debate letters into a book at the end of 1401 and presenting them to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria and Guillaume de Tignonville. Ultimately, Christine’s display of knowledge, wielding of a sharp pen, and deft self-promotion went a long way toward solidifying the author’s reputation.⁵

Aside from her status as a professional woman author, Christine can be described as “other” in a number of ways, in that she was often a “first” for her time. She was the first woman among the wave of scholars who brought Italian humanistic thought and literary works to the French intellectual milieu.⁶ With her *Livre de la cité des dames* (*Book of the City of Ladies*), she became the first female writer to pen a substantive text in defense of women, which she accomplished by correctively recasting known texts to show that interpretations in favor of women were as viable as those that had been traditionally opposed to them. Her officially commissioned biography of King Charles V is extraordinary, as not only the first

4. Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984), 47. Henceforth cited as Willard, *Life and Works*.

5. See Appendix/3: *The Debate of the Romance of the Rose*.

6. On Christine’s humanism, see Susan Groag Bell, “Christine de Pizan (1364–1430): Humanism and the Problem of the Studious Woman,” *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976): 173–84; Nadia Margolis, “Culture vantée, culture inventée: Christine, Clamanges et le défi de Pétrarque,” in Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez, and Philippe Simon, eds., *Au champ des escriptures: III^e Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, Lausanne, 18–22 juillet 1998* (Paris: Champion, 2000), 269–308; Margolis, “Christine de Pizan: The Poetess as Historian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 361–75; Earl Jeffrey Richards, “Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson: An Intellectual Friendship,” in John Campbell and Nadia Margolis, eds., *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 197–208; and Richards, “Christine de Pizan, the Conventions of Courtly Diction, and Italian Humanism,” in Richards, Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno, eds., *Re-interpreting Christine de Pizan* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 250–71.

“secular biography” written in France,⁷ but as the first time a woman would be granted such an honor and responsibility—a rarity in any age.

Further, Christine was known to be closely involved in the commercial production of her works, highly unusual for writers in her day, and she even copied some of those texts in her own hand.⁸ Charity Cannon Willard comments in reference to *L'avisioin-Christine* (*Christine's Vision*) that Christine “became the first woman to leave such an autobiography as a record of her evolution both as a writer and as a person.”⁹ Daniel Poirion goes a step further still, saying that *pour la première fois en France, nous ne pouvons pas séparer l'étude de l'oeuvre et celle de l'écrivain. Voilà, au sens qui deviendra classique, notre premier auteur, et cet auteur est une femme* (for the first time in France, we cannot separate the study of the work from that of the writer. Here is, in what will become the classic sense of the word, our first *author*, and that author is a woman).¹⁰

In sum, then, Christine was not just an “other” voice of the late Middle Ages, but also a forerunner with respect to modern concepts of authorship, in many ways redefining the relationship between writer and text. Christine's contemporary, famed poet Eustache Deschamps, called her “nompareille” (incomparable) in a ballad written for her, with the refrain “seule en tez fais ou royaume de France” (for your achievements, you stand alone in the French kingdom).¹¹ With some two hundred manuscripts of Christine's texts surviving—including the highest number of original manuscripts by any medieval author, many in the author's own hand¹²—she has lived up to that assessment, standing out as perhaps the most “present” of all late medieval French writers, of either gender, in our time.

Christine's Life and Works

While Christine's agenda was clearly a conscious engagement with the cause of women, she was not what we would call radical in her view of social roles. In fact,

7. Willard, *Life and Works*, 118.

8. See Appendix/4: *Christine's Involvement in the Production of Her Works*.

9. Willard, *Life and Works*, 160.

10. Daniel Poirion, “Christine de Pisan,” in *Le Moyen Âge II: 1300–1480* (Paris: Arthaud, 1971), 206.

11. *Œuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878–1903), 6:251–52; Ballad 1242, line 2 and refrain.

12. Gilbert Ouy and Christine Reno, “Le catalogue des manuscrits autographes et originaux de Christine de Pizan,” in Bernard Ribémont, ed., *Sur le chemin de longue étude ... Actes du colloque d'Orléans, juillet 1995* (Paris: Champion, 1998), 127.

her “feminism,” or lack thereof, remains a topic of debate to this day.¹³ As Willard wryly put it, “There still remains the problem of judging her as a woman as well as a writer ... opinion has swung from admiration that she could have accomplished what she did at all to disdain for the fact that she did not do what she never intended.”¹⁴ With respect to politics, morality, and social roles, Christine’s views were very much in line with the dominant thought of her day, particularly that of the conservative world of the court. As a woman head-of-household, earning her living through writing, she was a self-avowed anomaly. She observed more than once that not only was she fulfilling a man’s role, but in fact she had to turn into a man to do so, as she graphically depicts in the most dramatic, explicit, and studied of such references, found in the *Mutability of Fortune*.¹⁵

Christine’s works are striking for their number and variety. She composed love poetry. She wrote epistles addressed to readers real and imaginary, allegorical dream visions, a world history, and a royal biography. She highlighted her faith in religious writings. She shared her knowledge and entertained her tendency toward didacticism through treatises on good governing, chivalry, and proper behavior for women.¹⁶ Her patrons and dedicatees occupied the highest strata of society, and included such luminaries as King Charles VI, Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, John of Berry, Philip the Bold of Burgundy, John the Fearless of Burgundy, and Louis of Orléans. Christine’s impetus to write professionally arose from crisis in her life, and her ability to succeed at such a level was the fortunate result of her studious nature combined with her unusual upbringing—an Italian transplant who never lost her intellectual and emotional connection with her roots, and who

13. For a criticism of Christine’s conservative stance, see Sheila Delany, “‘Mothers to Think Back Through’: Who Are They? The Ambiguous Example of Christine de Pizan,” in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Schichtman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 177–97. Christine M. Reno responds to Delany in “Christine de Pizan: At Best a Contradictory Figure?” in Margaret Brabant, ed., *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), 171–91. See also Beatrice Gottlieb, “The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century,” in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 337–64; and Douglas Kelly, “Reflections on the Role of Christine de Pisan as a Feminist Writer,” *Sub-stance* 2 (1972): 63–71. For an early study of Christine’s “feminism,” see Rose Rigaud, *Les idées féministes de Christine de Pisan* (Neuchâtel: Imprimerie Attinger Frères, 1911).

14. Willard, *Life and Works*, 222–23.

15. *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, English translation of *La mutacion de Fortune* published in this volume, lines 1325–61.

16. On Christine’s didacticism, see, for example, Roberta Krueger, “Christine’s Anxious Lessons: Gender, Morality, and the Social Order from the *Enseignemens* to the *Avision*,” in Marilyn Desmond, ed., *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 16–40; and Charity Cannon Willard, “Christine de Pizan as Teacher,” *Romance Languages Annual* 3 (1992): 132–36.

was raised amid the people and resources of the French royal circle. From early on, Christine's work was well received in France, and thanks largely to the artistically attuned English noble, the Earl of Salisbury, whom she met at the French court in late 1398, she gained an audience in England as well.¹⁷ Christine was also known in Italy, as a result of marriages between the French and Italian royal families around this time.

Christine was born in Venice in 1364 or 1365, where she stayed until ca. 1369, when her father Thomas (Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano), doctor and astrologer to the court of King Charles V the Wise, relocated his family to Paris.¹⁸ Christine was reared in the milieu of the intellectually-minded king, to whose extensive library she had access. Thanks to her learned father, Christine was exposed to more academic pursuits than most young people of her time, especially girls. Still, in her autobiographical reflections, she lamented that, having been born a girl, she did not receive the depth of education that a boy would have enjoyed, commenting that she was only able to gather the scraps from her father's table. Her writings, nonetheless, show her to have been extremely well read in the canonical texts known to the literati of her day, with the influence of such masters as Boethius, Ovid, Boccaccio, and Dante so prevalent that it is an important current underlying much of the scholarship on Christine and her work.

At age fifteen, Christine married Etienne de Castel, himself employed as a secretary to the king, and all indications are that she led a happy family life, which came to include two sons and a daughter. Christine's world would take a progressive downward turn, however. It began as early as September 1380, when the death of Charles V ushered in both an era of great turmoil for France and an immediate change in the fortunes of Christine's family. Suddenly, the standing and income of Christine's father suffered a precipitous decline, as would his health. After struggling with an illness that would strain his finances, Thomas died between 1384 and 1389, leaving little behind as an inheritance for his daughter.

Christine's troubles, however, were just beginning. Most catastrophic and life changing of all was the loss of her husband to illness in 1390. Now she was on her own, responsible for the well-being of her mother, three children, and a niece. Making matters worse, she was also thrown into the fray of lengthy legal battles to

17. On the dating of that encounter, see James Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury, and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36 (1982): 129–43.

18. For a study of Christine's roots in Italy, see Nikolai Wandruszka, "Familial Traditions of the *de Pizano* at Bologna," in Angus J. Kennedy, Rosalind Brown-Grant, James C. Laidlaw, and Catherine M. Müller, eds., *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan, Glasgow 21–27 July 2000: Published in Honour of Liliane Dulac* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2002), 3:889–906; and Wandruszka, "The Family Origins of Christine de Pizan: Noble Lineage Between City and 'Contado' in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in Hicks, Gonzalez, and Simon, *Au champ des escriptures*, 111–30.

settle her estate, gaining firsthand knowledge of the court system's corruption and hostility toward women. Christine's legal wrangling would drag on for more than twenty years, a trying and scary time to which she alludes in several of her texts, including the *Mutability of Fortune*.

It was during this period that Christine's literary enterprise began. Her first collection of poems, the *Cent balades (One Hundred Ballads)*, written between ca. 1394 and 1402, comprises primarily love poems, with the first twenty of particular significance for their autobiographical thrust. These poems depict Christine's recent widowhood and the terrible suffering it caused her. At this stage, Christine writes not just to make a living, but also as a refuge from her grief. Poem 11 of this sequence is the famous "Seulete suy" (A little woman alone am I). Here, Christine defines herself as a widow, with the end of line 1, "et seulete vueil estre" (and a little woman alone I want to be), affirming her resolve.¹⁹

Christine would experiment not only with ballads, but with the range of other fixed forms popular in her day—rondeaux, virelays, and lays. Christine's first long poem is the 827-line *Epistre au dieu d'amours (Letter of the God of Love)*, dating from 1399. The central theme of the *Epistre* is the negative side of romance, addressing as it does men's ill-treatment of women, with an emphasis on seduction, deceit, indiscretion, and slander — all so damaging to a woman's well-being and reputation.

While the initial phase of Christine's work focused on poetry and courtly love themes, even relatively early in her career she would take up weightier topics, seemingly compelled to offer advice where she had areas of concern. An early example is the *Epistre Othea (Letter of Othea)*, written in 1400. Known for its unique structure, combining verse passages with prose allegory and didactic gloss, the *Letter of Othea* draws on mythology for the lessons it contains. This work, focused on good morals and proper behavior for young men, is directed to Christine's teenage son, Jean de Castel. But copies were also given to Louis, Duke of Orléans, Queen Isabeau, Charles VI, and Philip the Bold, suggesting that Christine had

19. *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886–1896), 1:12. On this stance taken by Christine, see Lori J. Walters, "The Figure of the *seulette* in the Works of Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson," in Liliane Dulac, Anne Paupert, Christine Reno, and Bernard Ribémont, eds., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre ... Actes du VIe Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan: Paris, 20–24 juillet 2006: Volume en hommage à James Laidlaw* (Paris: Champion, 2008), 119–39. On isolation as a hallmark of Christine's literary persona, see Catherine Attwood, "The 'I' Transformed: The Poetic 'I' in the Works of Christine de Pizan," Chap. 5 in *Dynamic Dichotomy: The Poetic "I" in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century French Lyric Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 167–74; and Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, "'Seulete suy et seulete vueil estre....,'" in Kennedy et al., *Contexts and Continuities*, 2:549–60.

loftier aims for her text.²⁰ As it turns out, the *Letter of Othea* went on to enjoy the greatest commercial success of any of Christine's texts.

The years 1400–1405 would be a period of dazzling productivity, during which Christine composed the majority of her most substantial and important texts. We have already noted that the *Rose* debate of 1401–1402 represented a validation for Christine, establishing her authority in a new and public way, and galvanizing her place in the wider intellectual community. That event also marked a turning point in Christine's writing, as she began to engage more consistently in weightier topics such as history and governance, and to compose in prose rather than verse. While she did not abandon courtly love themes and poetry entirely, the overall trend as Christine's career unfolded was toward an expansion of her range of concerns and assertion of an ever bolder voice.

A major work dating from this period is *Le chemin de longue estude* (*The Path of Long Study*), inspired by both Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and Dante's journey to the underworld. Written during 1402–1403, this is the first of Christine's texts in which she publicly expresses her concerns for her country's ills. The poem opens with a lament on the sad state of the world, and especially of France, where conflict is the order of the day. The Prologue is autobiographical, again emphasizing Christine's widowhood and the solace she takes in solitary intellectual pursuits. The poem goes on to recount an allegorical dream vision in which a sibyl guides Christine-the-protagonist on a voyage of discovery through which she visits many exotic lands, and then the heavens. She ends up observing a marvelous tribunal of sorts, where queens Wealth, Wisdom, Chivalry, and Nobility argue before Lady Reason over who is to blame for the sad state of affairs on Earth, and the best way to restore good governance and stability. The views of Christine-the-author are plain: Wisdom wins the argument, persuading Reason that the world needs neither the wealthiest prince nor the greatest warrior, but a philosopher-king, and that France is the rightful place from which to reestablish order. Christine-protagonist is chosen to bring the message about righteous governance and the responsibility of leaders back to France, which Christine-author indeed does by dedicating the work to the king and presenting copies to the dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Orléans, three of the central figures in France's internal power struggles.

The *Path of Long Study* is contemporaneous with the *Mutability of Fortune* (to be discussed below). It is after that busy year of writing, and the success of the *Mutability of Fortune* in particular, that Christine would be commissioned by Philip of Burgundy to write his brother's biography, *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (*The Book of the Deeds and Good Ways of the Wise King Charles V*). It is Christine's first work entirely in prose. More than just the

20. Nadia Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 83.

story of the king's life, this is a treatise on kingship itself, with Charles V as the model. Christine extols Charles's virtue and intelligence, and expounds on chivalry and wisdom as qualities that a good king should possess. As Philip of Burgundy died in April 1404, he did not live to see the work's completion in November of that year. However, Christine began the year 1405 by presenting the biography to the king's brother John, Duke of Berry, on New Year's Day.²¹

Two of Christine's most important works would soon follow. In the prose *City of Ladies*, modeled on Boccaccio's *Book of Illustrious Women*, Christine recasts tales from myth, history, legend, and religious writings in a light favorable to women. The divine ladies Reason, Rectitude, and Justice appear to the naïve Christine-protagonist, confused and saddened by the condemnation of women that was so prevalent in writings of all kinds across the ages. Through examples of women whose accomplishments and character defy the negative judgments, Christine's visitors teach her to read in a new way, to trust in her own feminine experience, and ultimately to counsel and speak on behalf of all women. The metaphorical City of Ladies, of which the building blocks are all the examples that have comprised Christine-protagonist's education, will stand as a bastion in defense of women, with the Virgin Mary herself as queen.²² Exemplifying Christine's pro-women agenda and highlighting her erudition, the *City of Ladies* has gone on to become the most widely read of Christine's works in modern times.

Christine's Vision, also in prose and also dating from 1405, is again structured as an allegorical dream vision. Part 1 is largely concerned with the history of France and its present-day ills, capped off by Christine-protagonist being charged with spreading the word to France's leaders about what must be done to get France back on track. In Part 2, Christine-protagonist moves on to the University of Paris to explore the implications of true wisdom versus opinion in one's understanding of life and the world. Part 3, the best known section of this complex and unusual work, contains the most extensive autobiographical passage in all of Christine's writings, in which she presents herself in terms of her dual status as ever-grieving widow and, by this point in her life, successful professional writer.

One of the last works to emerge from this flurry of activity is the prose *Livre des trois vertus* (*Book of the Three Virtues*), later renamed *Le tresor de la cité des dames* (*The Treasury of the City of Ladies*), composed in 1405–1406. This work, a follow-up to the *City of Ladies*, is a kind of how-to manual for the way women from all walks of life should comport themselves. As Willard points out, this work breaks new ground both by paying attention to women of all social strata and by

21. Willard, *Life and Works*, 132.

22. For a study relating Fortune's castle with this metaphorical city, see Julia Simms Holderness, "Castles in the Air? The Prince as Conceptual Artist," in Karen Green and Constant J. Mews, eds., *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 161–75.

encouraging women to be proactive about their life circumstances.²³ Dedicated to Marguerite, the daughter of the Duke of Burgundy, who married the dauphin, Louis de Guyenne, in 1404, Christine's wise words on virtue and social behavior for all women undoubtedly held a message for the girl who was in line to become their sovereign.²⁴ Mindful of the future in the *Three Virtues*, Christine confronts the present in her 1405 *Epistre a la reine (Letter to the Queen)*, pleading for a resolution to the conflict between the powerful rivals, the Duke of Orléans and John the Fearless of Burgundy, whose rift was so grave that it would fuel the catastrophic divide that defined the early years of fifteenth-century France.

Christine's rate of literary production declines after 1405, but variety remains a hallmark. Her *Livre du corps de policie (Book of the Body Politic)*, from 1407, expounds upon what it means to be a good leader as well as a good subject. She addresses the formation of the ideal prince, followed by the desired qualities for nobles and knights, and finally those for groups making up the rest of society. In 1410, expanding upon themes present in Part II of the *Body Politic*, Christine would compose her military treatise, the *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie (Book of Feats of Arms and of Chivalry)*. Acknowledging up front that the topic is a surprising one for a woman author, Christine bolsters her position by calling out to Minerva, the goddess of chivalry and arms, in the prologue. She beseeches Minerva to support the undertaking, and aligns herself with the goddess by pointing out that "like you I am an Italian woman."²⁵ Christine clearly wished to show skeptical readers an example of another woman who dared to engage with the world of warfare, and succeeded.

On a very different topic is the *Cent balades d'amant et de dame (One Hundred Ballads of Lover and Lady)*, also generally believed to have been written between 1407 and 1410. That text, which marks Christine's final foray into courtly love themes, has been considered her "swan song" to lyric poetry.²⁶ Her use of an innovative dialogic structure, in which she alternates poems in the voices of the man and woman in a doomed courtly love relationship, allows Christine to assert the feminine voice and point of view in ways that the traditional model of such debate sequences does not, presenting a harsh critique of the courtly love paradigm that can be so cruel toward women.

As different as these three works are, Christine's interest in teaching is present in all. If the *Body Politic* was primarily aimed at instructing boys and men as future leaders, and the *Feats of Arms* was a sort of manual for practitioners of mili-

23. Willard, *Life and Works*, 146.

24. That did not happen, as Louis de Guyenne died in 1415.

25. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, trans. Sumner Willard, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 13.

26. See Barbara K. Altmann, "Last Words: Reflections on a 'Lay Mortel' and the Poetics of Lyric Sequences," *French Studies* 50 (1996): 385-99.

tary arms and strategy, the *One Hundred Ballads of Lover and Lady* had at least the secondary aim of offering a moral lesson, primarily for girls and women.

In addition to the themes of politics, chivalry, and, to a lesser extent, love, Christine's writing from the second decade of the fifteenth century powerfully reflects her long-standing dismay at the tragedy of France's political infighting, expressed in works such as the emotional *Lamentacion sur les maux de France* (*Lament on France's Ills*) from 1410. The *Livre de la paix* (*Book of Peace*), from 1412–1413, would be Christine's last substantial treatise on good governance and her last attempt to appeal to the powerful elite. It is followed by the *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* (*Letter on the Prison of Human Life*) from 1418, which directly concerns the suffering of women who lost loved ones in the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

In 1418, it is believed that Christine retreated to Poissy, about eighteen miles from the intense unrest of Paris, to the convent that her daughter Marie called home. Christine's last work, and lone major text to appear in the following decade, is the 1429 *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (*Tale of Joan of Arc*). Written within the months immediately following Joan's victory at Orléans, this verse piece is simultaneously a glorification of "The Maid" who was responsible for the salvation of France and a plea for the acceptance of Charles VII as France's rightful king and great hope. Christine completed the *Tale of Joan of Arc* at the end of July 1429, as is indicated within the poem, after Charles VII's coronation on July 17, also referenced in the poem.²⁷ What is not known is whether Christine, who almost certainly died in 1430 or 1431, was alive to see the sad aftermath of Joan's triumph, the heroine's execution by the English in May 1431.

Historical Context

Christine's life coincided with the later phase of the Hundred Years' War, and specifically the period of transition from the relative peace and prosperity enjoyed under Charles V to the years of civil war, assassinations, rivalries among often ruthless power-mongers, and resurgent violence between France and England that marred the reign of Charles VI and beyond.²⁸ Christine's vantage point was

27. *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc: Christine de Pisan*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1977), stanzas 61 and 49, respectively pages 37 and 40 (Middle French), and 48 and 50 (English).

28. On the relationship between Christine's works and the complex politics of her time, see Tracy Adams, *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014); Adams, "A Re-assessment of the Relationship between Christine de Pizan and Louis of Orléans," in Patrizia Caraffi, ed., *Christine de Pizan: La scrittrice e la città / L'écrivaine et la ville / The Woman Writer and the City: Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale "Christine de Pizan": Bologna, 22–26*

unique in that she personally knew and worked for a number of the key players at the highest levels—people whose actions and loyalties profoundly affected, indeed often determined, the events of this time. Furthermore, Christine wrote not only *for* these people; she wrote *to* them in her works addressing good governance and in her expressions of despair at the state of France. In fact, the copy of the *Mutability of Fortune* presented to the Duke of Berry contains notes, apparently in Christine's hand, highlighting certain passages on governance, and appear to be a direct message from Christine to the duke during that very troubled period.²⁹

When Charles V died in September 1380, his successor was just eleven. Charles's brother Louis, Duke of Anjou, became regent, while another of the king's brothers, Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and the late queen's brother Louis II, Duke of Bourbon, took on the role of the dauphin's guardians. What ensued was not a smooth custodianship of power, but rather a sustained and vicious rivalry that would take its toll for decades. France's straits would go from bad to worse as Charles VI matured. In 1392, just four years after having assumed the reins of government, the king suffered what would be the first of many bouts of madness that would define his adult life. With no official regency reestablished, the rule of France became a political landscape fertile for continued infighting and instability. While Queen Isabeau was officially in charge during her husband's periods of incapacity, Philip the Bold was the principal power holder at this point.³⁰ Meanwhile, the king's brother Louis, Duke of Orléans, was nipping at Philip's heels.

The ensuing period was characterized by political maneuvering, strategic marriage arrangements, and shifting fortunes. The death of Christine's most supportive patron, Philip the Bold, in 1404, sparked an intense power struggle between Louis of Orléans and John the Fearless of Burgundy. The conflict exploded in November 1407, when Louis of Orléans was assassinated by partisans of his rival.

septembre 2009 (Florence: Alinea, 2013), 17–27; and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Christine de Pizan and the Political Life in Late Medieval France," in Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady, eds., *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9–24.

29. See Christine M. Reno, "Autobiography and Authorship in Christine's Manuscripts," *Romance Languages Annual* 9 (1997): xxi–xxiv.

30. On Christine's views of Isabeau's role in governing at this time, see Tracy Adams, "Christine de Pizan, Isabeau of Bavaria, and Female Regency," *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009): 1–32; Adams, "Isabeau de Bavière dans l'oeuvre de Christine de Pizan: Une réévaluation du personnage," in Juliette Dor and Marie-Elisabeth Henneau, eds., *Christine de Pizan: Une femme de science, une femme de lettres* (Paris: Champion, 2008), 133–46; and Adams, "Isabeau de Bavière et la notion de régence chez Christine de Pizan," in Dulac et al., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre*, 33–44. See also Daisy Delogu, "Advocate et moyenne: Christine de Pizan's Elaboration of Female Authority," in Dulac et al., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre*, 57–67.

John, however, was pardoned by the king for his role, and his political victory was sealed when he was appointed governor of the dauphin two years later.³¹

France's troubles were far from over. In 1410, Louis's son Charles, Duke of Orléans, married the daughter of Bernard VII, count of Armagnac. Tensions crystallized as the family and its supporters, now known as the Armagnac faction, united in opposition to John the Fearless of Burgundy and his allies. In what may have been part of John the Fearless's propaganda counterattack,³² Christine wrote her *Lament*, deploring the situation, envisioning catastrophe to come, and appealing to the French to find peace. There would be no such thing: in the summer of 1411, the Burgundians, with the help of the English, rode into Paris and established their dominance. The August 1412 Treaty of Auxerre reestablished stability, with John the Fearless in charge. But both peace and John's dominant position would be short-lived.

In April 1413, a pro-Burgundian butcher named Simon Caboche led a popular revolt in Paris (the "Cabochian uprising"), terrorizing bourgeois and intellectuals and rebelling against the Orléans faction. John the Fearless had initially encouraged the uprising, only to have the prevailing sentiment turn against the Burgundians when the extreme nature of the unrest proved distasteful to the populace. The dauphin turned to the Armagnacs for support when even his own family members and close associates became targets. Ultimately, the Burgundians were run out of Paris and the revolt was put to an end. Christine's *Book of Peace* both celebrates the Treaty of Auxerre and testifies to the terror of the violent times, while calling out for the dauphin to govern according to the highest ideals.

Stability continued to remain elusive. Taking advantage of France's tenuous state, the English under Henry V resumed aggression, resulting in the battle of Agincourt in 1415. The battle was catastrophic for France, and particularly for the Armagnacs. At the end of that same year, the dauphin Louis de Guyenne would die, leaving his brother Charles as the successor to the throne. In 1418, however, the English-sympathizing Burgundians again occupied Paris, attacking the Armagnacs and killing many of their partisans, including a number of pro-Armagnac intellectuals and Bernard VII himself, who was at that point Constable of France. Christine expresses her despair over the turmoil to Marie of Berry, Duchess of Bourbon, in her 1418 *Letter on the Prison of Human Life*.

Violence continued in 1419, when the Armagnacs exacted their revenge for the 1407 assassination of Louis of Orléans by in turn killing John the Fearless of Burgundy. That murder galvanized the loyalties of the Burgundians, under John the Fearless's son Philip the Good, toward the English king Henry V. France was all the more deeply divided, Paris was once again in a state of terror, and the

31. Willard, *Life and Works*, 183.

32. Willard, *Life and Works*, 187.

dauphin Charles's position as future king was in ever greater peril. In 1420, in an attempt to establish a measure of stability, Queen Isabeau negotiated the Treaty of Troyes, under the terms of which the French throne would be handed over to England upon the king's death. Two years later, in October 1422, that came to pass, and thus began a new phase of civil war between the partisans of the future Charles VII—that is, the side of the deceased Duke of Orléans and the Armagnacs—on the one hand, and the Burgundians, allied with the English, on the other. It was not until Joan of Arc's victory in battle at Orléans in May 1429 that the tide would turn definitively in favor of the dauphin, who was crowned King Charles VII in July of that year. After having commemorated that success in her *Tale of Joan of Arc*, Christine's voice would go silent, her own life coterminous with one of the nastiest phases of the Hundred Years' War.

While the Hundred Years' War was the defining factor shaping French society at this time, one must not overlook the other major cultural crisis in Christine's world, the Great Schism in the Catholic Church. Between 1378 and 1417, two popes vied for power, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, France. The rift had implications not only for the church, but for the politics of France, whose aspirations for supremacy were certainly not hurt by having the Pope in French territory.³³ An issue less prominent in Christine's immediate milieu, perhaps, than the civil war, the Schism was nonetheless disconcerting to a devout Catholic like Christine and served to exacerbate the political tensions in France and beyond. Christine laments this division in Book 3 of the *Mutability of Fortune*, calling for its resolution. In fact, in most of the illustrated copies of the poem, Book 3 features a miniature depicting two men vying for the papal throne, which serves to underscore the problem visually as well.

Such were the tumultuous times in which Christine lived and wrote, the trials of her own life resonating with the turmoil of the world around her. Through all this, in part because of all this, her "other" voice resonated and resonates still. As we will see, such parallels between the personal and the universal, and the immediate and the timeless, are put provocatively into play in the *Mutability of Fortune*.

Orientation to The Book of the Mutability of Fortune

In poem 7, lines 1–2, of her *One Hundred Ballads*, addressing her plaint to Fortune, Christine foretells the overarching theme of the *Mutability of Fortune* well before the time of its writing: "Ha! Fortune très doloureuse, / Que tu m'as mis du

33. For a brief but useful overview of the Great Schism in Christine's time, see Barbara Wagner, "Tradition or Innovation? Research on the Pictorial Tradition of a Miniature in the *Mutacion*: 'Le plus hault siège,'" in Kennedy et al., *Contexts and Continuities*, 3:862–64.

hault au bas!” (Ha! Grievous Fortune, how you have put me from high to low!).³⁴ Indeed, just as the autobiographical thrust of Christine’s earliest poems will set the path for her career, Christine’s personal story will serve as a framework for the elaborate world history that is the *Mutability of Fortune*. Or, to put it in terms of Kevin Brownlee’s succinct and often-cited description, the *Mutability of Fortune* is “a universal history framed by a personal history.”³⁵ As Fortune lifted Christine to happiness and prosperity only to then throw her to the depths of despair and struggle, so has Fortune done even to the great civilizations of the world and their greatest heroes, over and over again, through the course of time.

The poem was completed on November 18, 1403, and was immediately placed before some very important potential readers. Of the first four copies of the *Mutability of Fortune* produced, one was presented to Philip the Bold of Burgundy, one to John of Berry, and a third was likely for King Charles VI.³⁶ With respect to Christine’s professional evolution, the *Mutability of Fortune* can be seen as a milestone of sorts, as the initial copies of the work are more elaborate and of higher quality than the manuscripts her studio had previously produced.³⁷ The *Mutability of Fortune* also corresponds to the transitional period in Christine’s career, when her emphasis was moving from lyric poems to prose and from love themes to history and politics. It is her first important historical text, and by far her longest work up to that point.

The *Mutability of Fortune* comprises 23,636 lines of octosyllabic rhyming couplets divided into seven books of unequal length, along with an interposed prose passage of some 3,500 words at the end of Book 4. Christine does not immediately launch into her retelling of the history of the world. Rather, she methodically leads up to it, setting the stage through the first three books and much of the fourth. In Book 1, Christine-protagonist describes her life, which happens to be that of Christine-author, in allegorized form. In this section, Christine explains how she came to be in the service of Fortune, and sets out her aims for the text to follow. Book 1 also boasts the most well-known and most commented-upon pas-

34. *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Roy, 1:8.

35. Kevin Brownlee, “The Image of History in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune*,” in “Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature,” edited by Daniel Poirion and Nancy Freeman Regalado, special issue, *Yale French Studies* (1991), 44.

36. Willard, *Life and Works*, 107. The fourth copy was destined for an unknown recipient. Willard also points out (232n48) that the Duke of Burgundy’s copy is the one designated as B (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale 9508), the Duke of Berry’s is H (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 78 D 42), and the other two are C (Chantilly, Musée Condé 494) and S (ex-Phillipps 207, private collection). For details on these manuscripts, see Gilbert Ouy, Christine M. Reno, and Inès Villela-Petit, *Album Christine de Pizan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 413–23 and 426–66.

37. James Laidlaw, “Christine and the Manuscript Tradition,” in Altmann and McGrady, *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, 237.

sage in the entire work, Christine's transformation into a man following the death of her husband, a transformation necessary for her to handle the responsibilities and tribulations that her loss imposed on her.³⁸

Book 2 elaborately presents Fortune's strange, marvelous, and forbidding castle, the paths leading to it, the different façades and doors through which one may enter, and the one door through which all must leave. She offers detailed descriptions of Fortune and of the figures guarding the doors and overseeing the crowds within the castle's walls. In Book 3, Christine discusses the masses of people who occupy the castle and how they are situated relative to each other, addressing all levels of society from the highest rulers of the secular and religious world to the lowest social strata. Overall, this section reveals Christine's critical view of the state of French society, with each group contributing in its own way to the erosion of social order and morality.³⁹

It is in Book 4 that Christine-narrator begins her long account of the world history that she saw painted and written on the walls of the Marvelous Room of Fortune's castle. But first she expounds on the topic of the sciences and liberal arts, also depicted on the walls, where Philosophy rules over all. The world history begins with the stories of Adam and Eve and Noah. Christine then turns her attention to Babylon, with an account of Nimrod's arrogant and failed plan to build the Tower of Babel. Christine then shifts her focus to the history of the Jews, the only section of this text to be written in prose, which Christine attributes to an illness that sapped her ability to compose in verse (lines 8731–48).

Book 5 recounts the history of the ancient kingdoms of Assyria, Persia, Thebes, Crete, and Athens. In the course of these histories, we encounter, among others, King Ninus and Queen Semiramis, as well as Cyrus and his enemy, the Amazon queen Tomyris. We learn the stories of Oedipus, Judith, and Esther, and witness Theseus vanquish the Minotaur. Christine devotes Book 6 to the Amazons and the history of Troy. Among the tales included in this section are those of Jason and Medea, the abduction of Helen, the confrontation of Hector and Achilles, and the exploits of Ulysses. The seventh and final book recounts the history of Rome, including its founding by Romulus and Remus, and the war between the Romans and the Sabines. This section also includes the conquests of Hannibal and Alexander the Great, and the conflict between Pompey and Julius Caesar. Christine wraps up her poem with chapters on contemporary Italy, England, and France, in which she reflects on the exploits, failings, and virtues of a number of leaders from her time. The concluding chapter brings the tale back to Christine's

38. See Appendix/5: *Gender Transformation in Christine's Mutability*.

39. For a general study of Christine as a critic of her society, see Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Les exilées du pouvoir? Christine de Pizan et la femme devant la crise du Moyen Age finissant," in *Apogée et déclin*, ed. Claude Thomasset and Michel Zink (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1993), 211–23.

autobiography and immediate present, as she signs off from her self-imposed retreat into a solitary life of study.

The *Mutability of Fortune* draws upon a rich array of characteristically Christian motifs and stylistic tendencies. With respect to Christine's signature ploys, one of the most fundamental—self-presentation marked by self-deprecation—is liberally put to use in this poem. From the very first lines, she emphasizes her limited intelligence, excusing herself for her inadequacies as she attempts to tackle daunting topics and the often inexplicable nature of man's fate. These gestures of humility, prominent throughout Christine's love poetry and learned treatises alike, carry an inherent irony, especially as she makes her way through her career with an ever-increasing body of texts to validate herself as an artist and an intellectual. Also, further accentuating Christine's humble self-restraint, she repeatedly acknowledges her sensitivity to her reader's experience of her text, with many allusions to brevity and keeping her comments short so as not to become tedious, again rather ironic in a text of this length and complexity.⁴⁰

Another prominent feature of the *Mutability of Fortune* which is fundamental to Christine's approach overall is her extensive citation of Latin and Greek philosophers, writers, and statesmen to illustrate and validate her points. References to Aristotle, Seneca, and Varro, to name a few, contribute to the impression of learned, elevated discourse that Christine strives to cultivate, particularly in her didactic works. Critics have long debated the extent of Christine's familiarity with Latin, with the prevailing opinion being that her sources were largely French translations and compilations available to her through the royal library. Through such citations, Christine not only shores up her message, but demonstrates her own vast erudition.

Yet another of Christine's "signatures" is, quite literally, her signature. She weaves her own name conspicuously throughout her texts. The *City of Ladies*, for example, is marked by the invocation of a formulaic "je, Christine," whose sheer repetition, as Maureen Quilligan points out, "makes its distinctively idiosyncratic frequency a signal mark of Christine's authority."⁴¹ At times, Christine makes a

40. Christine's "humility topos" has been well-acknowledged by critics; one study focusing on that theme and its gender implications is Christine Moneera Laennec, "Christine *Antygrafe*: Authorial Ambivalence in the Works of Christine de Pizan," in *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, ed. Carol J. Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 35–49. On Christine's assertions of truth and concern for brevity, see Jeanette M. A. Beer, "Christine et les conventions dans *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*: 'abriger en parolles voires,'" in Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont, eds., *Une femme de lettres au Moyen Age: Etudes autour de Christine de Pizan* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995), 349–56; and Beer, "Stylistic Conventions in *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*," in Richards et al., *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, 124–36.

41. Maureen Quilligan, "The Name of the Author: Self-Representation in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la cité des dames*," *Exemplaria* 4 (1992), 202. On Christine's signature(s), see also Laennec, "Christine *Antygrafe*," 36–37; Didier Lechat, "Christine de Pizan, 'Dire par fiction le fait de la mutacion,'" Chap. 4

game of it. In the 1402 *Dit de la Rose* (*Tale of the Rose*) for example (lines 647–49), she says that her name will be revealed to anyone “Qui un seul cry crierait, / et la fin d’aoust y mettrait, / s’il disoit avec une yne” (if he will say a single cry / then add the month of August’s end / and if he says it with an een).⁴² In the *Mutability of Fortune* (lines 375–77), she similarly identifies herself through an easily solvable riddle, while also playing on her name’s fortuitous resonance with that of Christ himself: “le nom du plus parfait homme, / qui oncques fu, le mien nomme, / I. N. E. faut avec mettre” (the name of the most perfect man who ever was, and you must put I. N. E. with it). Throughout her works, Christine names herself as a means to assert her specificity, itself hinging on her status as simultaneously a woman and a learned author, all with repeated nods toward her Catholic faith as an underpinning of her enterprise.

The *Mutability of Fortune* is infused with a number of elements prevalent in late medieval literature more generally. The allegorical figure of Fortune, for one, with her two faces and her ever-turning wheel, had been a fixture in literature and the visual arts for centuries, figuring prominently in texts known to Christine, both ancient and more contemporary.⁴³ One notable example from near Christine’s time would be Guillaume de Machaut’s 1341 *Remède de Fortune* (*Fortune’s Remedy*), which contains a nearly six-hundred-line exposé on Fortune’s confounding ways.⁴⁴ Another example, more immediate to Christine, is ballad 1134 by her fellow court poet, Eustache Deschamps, the refrain of which stages Fortune declaring herself “mere de tous” (mother of all).⁴⁵ Fortune has a strong presence throughout Christine’s own works as well, not the least of which would be the *Path of Long Study*, written at the same time as the *Mutability of Fortune*, in which the autobiographical prologue prominently features the narrator’s suffering at the hands of Fortune. Fortune’s malevolent manipulations also figure centrally in the autobiographical third book of *Christine’s Vision*, composed two years later.

in “Dire par fiction”: *Métamorphoses du je chez Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart et Christine de Pizan* (Paris: Champion, 2005), 441–44; Lori J. Walters, “Christine’s Symbolic Self as the Personification of France,” in Dor and Henneau, *Christine de Pizan: Une femme de science*, 197; and Walters “Signatures and Anagrams in the Queen’s Manuscript: London, British Library, Harley MS 4431,” *Christine de Pizan: The Making of the Queen’s Manuscript* website (November 30, 2012) <<http://www.pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk/waltersanagrams.html>>.

42. Citation and translation from Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Eler, 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* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 121–25; emphasis mine.

43. See Appendix/6: *Discussions of Fortune in Medieval Literature*.

44. *Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1908–1921), 2:33–54; lines 905–1480 <<https://archive.org/details/oeuvresdeguillau02guiluoft>>.

45. *Œuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, 6:56–58.

For the *Mutability of Fortune*, Christine also draws from a number of specific literary works.⁴⁶ Her abundant use of myth, for example, is traceable largely, although not exclusively, to the *Moralized Ovid*, an anonymous medieval French translation and recasting of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁴⁷ She refers to Ovid by name or by specific allusion to "the poet" no fewer than six times in the *Mutability of Fortune*. She also makes explicit mention of the *Romance of the Rose*, a work she may have made her reputation criticizing, but which is also recalled by her use of allegory, the figure of Fortune, and certain other motifs fundamental to her text.⁴⁸ Much of the history Christine uses is drawn from the anonymous *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* (*Ancient History up to Caesar*).⁴⁹ The thirteenth-century *Jeu des échecs moralisés* (*The Moralized Game of Chess*) by Jacques de Cessoles is strongly

46. On sources for this poem, see *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune par Christine de Pisan*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 4 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1959, 1966), 1:xxx–xcviii. An early study of Christine's sources in the *Letter of Othea*, but also pertinent to the *Mutability of Fortune*, is Percy G. Campbell's *L'Épître d'Othéa: Etude sur les sources de Christine de Pisan* (Paris: Champion, 1924). See also Louis-Fernand Flutre, "Eustache Deschamps et Christine de Pisan ont-ils utilisé les *Faits des Romains*?" *Cultura neolatina* 13 (1953): 236–40. On the influence of Boethius on this work, see Glynnis M. Cropp, "Boèce et Christine de Pisan," *Le Moyen Age* 87 (1981): 390–92; and Julia Simms Holderness, "Christine, Boèce et saint Augustin: La consolation de la mémoire," in Dulac et al., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre*, 283–85.

47. See Appendix/7: *Christine's Use of Ovid*.

48. See Brownlee, "The Image of History"; Jane Chance, "Gender Trouble in the Garden of Deduit: Christine de Pisan Translating the *Rose*," *Romance Languages Annual* 4 (1993): 20–28; and Nadia Margolis, "The Rhetoric of Detachment in Christine de Pisan's *Mutacion de Fortune*," *Nottingham French Studies* 38 (1999): 177–78. See also Appendix/8: *Christine's Use of Allegory*.

49. Only portions of this text exist in modern editions, notably Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, ed., *L'histoire ancienne jusqu'à César, ou, Histoires pour Roger, châtelain de Lille, de Wauchier de Denain; L'Histoire de la Macédoine et d'Alexandre le Grand* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), and Marjike de Visser-van Terwisga, ed., *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César: Estoires Rogier*, Tome I: *Assyrie, Thèbes, le Minotaure, les Amazones, Hercule* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995). Solente details Christine's use of this key source for more than half of the poem (*Mutacion*, 1:lxiii–xcii). Much of the material covered in the *Histoire ancienne* goes back to the *Histories* of Herodotus, dating from the fifth century BCE; for an English translation of Herodotus, see *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassler; trans. Andrea L. Purvis (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007). See also Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, "Histoires universelles et variations sur deux figures du pouvoir: Alexandre et César dans l'*Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, *Renart le Contrefait* et le *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* de Christine de Pisan," in "La figure de Jules César au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance (II)," ed. Bruno Méniel and Bernard Ribémont, special issue, *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 14 (2007): 7–28 <<https://crm.revues.org/2556>>; Franziska Huber, "L'histoire ancienne jusqu'à César, source du *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* de Christine de Pisan: Etude comparative des récits sur Cyrus," in Hicks, Gonzalez, and Simon, *Au champ des écritures*, 161–74; and Danielle Régnier-Bohler, "La tragédie thébaine dans 'La Mutacion de Fortune,'" in Margarete Zimmermann and Dina de Rentis, eds., *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pisan* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 127–47.

present in Book 3.⁵⁰ The section of Book 4 on the liberal arts is closely borrowed from Brunetto Latini's *Book of the Treasure* and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*.⁵¹ The story of Alexander the Great, found in Book 7, is traceable to a French translation of the Latin *Historia de preliis*.⁵² Let us recall that in Christine's day, close and often undocumented borrowings were not only accepted, but were also a way for the writer both to demonstrate his or her own breadth of knowledge and to authorize his or her own text by inscribing it into a larger literary legacy. Christine does so abundantly in this sweeping poem.

Overall, Christine's devout Catholicism, her vision of a well-ordered world in which every social category plays its role with integrity, her moral teachings on the virtues of humility, patience, truth, and honor, all ring strongly in this text. Allegory serves as her vehicle, while history provides her with ample evidence with which to demonstrate Fortune's unceasing influence upon humankind.

Afterlife of The Mutability of Fortune

In the first book of this poem (lines 154–56), the narrator announces its title, couching it in the concept of future readership: “Et ce dictié vueil que l'en nomme / quant l'histoire sera commune: / ‘La mutacion de Fortune’” (and when the story becomes known to all, I want this tale to be called “*The Mutability of Fortune*”). Two years later, in *Christine's Vision*, we see Lady Opinion remarking about Christine-protagonist's work, “Et le temps a venir plus en sera parlé qu'a ton vivant” (in times to come, more will be said of it than in your lifetime).⁵³ Such comments within Christine's works reveal that the author was keenly conscious

50. Solente demonstrates that Christine would have used the French translation from Latin by Jean de Vignai; see Suzanne Solente, “Le *Jeu des échecs moralisés*, source de la *Mutacion de Fortune*,” in *Recueil de travaux offerts à M. Clovis Brunel par ses amis, collègues et élèves* (Paris: Société de l'Ecole des Chartes, 1955), 2:556–65.

51. Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure: Li livres dou Tresor*, trans. Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York: Garland, 1993); and *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. and ed. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) <<http://pot-pourri.fltr.ucl.ac.be/files/AClassftp/TEXTES/ISIDORUS/Etymologie/B1N8PWGetQy.pdf>>. On the *Etymologies*, see Bernard Ribémont, “Christine de Pizan, Isidore de Séville et l'astrologie: Compilation et ‘mutacion’ d'un discours sur les arts libéraux,” in Dulac et al., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre*, 303–14.

52. See Solente, *Mutacion*, 1:xcii–xcvii. For an English translation of the *Historia de preliis* by the Archipresbyter Leo, see *The History of Alexander's Battles: Historia de preliis: The J' Version*, ed. and trans. Roger Telfryn Pritchard (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992).

53. The original is from *Le livre de l'advison Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac (Paris: Champion; Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2001), 89. The English is from *The Vision of Christine de Pizan*, trans. Glenda McLeod and Charity Cannon Willard (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 86.

of the afterlife of her own writings—not just that they would be read, but with respect to their educational value and, one would imagine, the universal truths with which she sought infuse them.⁵⁴

If we conceptualize the “afterlife” of the *Mutability of Fortune* as beginning with its reception immediately following its completion, we can start with the ways Christine gave the poem a presence in her own subsequent works, referring to it by name. In the 1404 biography of Charles V, she describes how John of Burgundy had graciously accepted a copy of the *Mutability of Fortune* in the previous year.⁵⁵ In the 1405 *City of Ladies*, Lady Reason reminds Christine-protagonist that she already knows stories about great women, as she has written about them in her *Mutability of Fortune*.⁵⁶ In Book 2 of the 1405 *Christine’s Vision*, Lady Opinion admonishes Christine for having given Lady Fortune too much credit for her power over the world in her earlier text, explaining at length that in fact she, Lady Opinion, has had greater responsibility for what has transpired than Fortune ever has. She explicitly names the *Mutability of Fortune* three times during that comeuppance.⁵⁷ Ultimately, such allusions by Christine to her own texts serve not only as good marketing, but perhaps more importantly as a means for Christine to authorize her own writing and align herself with the countless other authors who figure so strongly throughout her works.⁵⁸

Following her death, Christine’s texts continued to be read, produced, and translated well into the sixteenth century. Two of the surviving manuscripts of the *Mutability of Fortune* date from that time.⁵⁹ Further, a comparative analysis suggests that the *Mutability of Fortune* served as a model for the sixteenth-century

54. See Appendix/9: *The Reception of Christine’s Works*.

55. *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V par Christine de Pisan*, ed. Suzanne Solente (Paris: Champion, 1936–1940), 1:6–7; Book 1, chapter 2. For an English version of this passage, see the excerpt from *The Book of the Deeds and Good Conduct of the Wise King Charles V*, in *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pisan*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, trans. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: Norton, 1997) 113–16, at 115.

56. *City of Ladies*, Book 1, chapter 17. For the modern French edition of this passage, see *Le livre de la cité des dames*, ed. and trans. Thérèse Moreau and Eric Hicks (Paris: Stock, 1992), 73. For the English translation, see *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982), 43.

57. *Christine’s Vision*, Book 2, chapters 14–22. In *The Vision of Christine*, trans. McLeod and Willard, the poem is named on pages 74, 75, and 78. For the original Middle French, see *Le livre de l’advision Cristine*, ed. Reno and Dulac, where the poem is named on pages 75, 77, and 79. On this passage, see also Anna Slerca, “L’advision Cristine, Guillaume de Machaut, Boccace et le thème de la rétraction,” in Dulac et al., *Desireuse de plus avant enquerre*, 315–16.

58. On Christine’s strategy of auto-citation, see Kevin Brownlee, “Rewriting Romance: Courtly Discourse and Auto-Citation in Christine de Pisan,” in Jane Chance, ed., *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 172–94.

59. Manuscripts P (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale f. fr. 25430) and U (Paris, Arsenal 3172).