

Introduction

Christine de Pizan and the Other Voice

By the time Christine de Pizan came to write the *Livre du corps de policie* (*Book of the Body Politic*) in 1406–1407,¹ she had already acquired her distinctive voice as the first ever professional female writer to earn her living by her pen. Having been required to take up writing to keep body and soul together after the death of her father's patron Charles V, king of France, in 1380, then that of her father in ca. 1389, and crucially that of her husband in 1390 (which left her as a widow with three children, a niece and her mother to look after), she embarked on a variety of literary genres and subjects into which she characteristically weaves detailed autobiographical elements that are usually absent from the work of most medieval authors. These genres and subjects either give a female perspective on the prevailing (usually misogynistic) assumptions of her age or confirm her entry into domains of intellectual activity normally deemed out of reach for women living within a completely male-dominated environment. A few representative examples from the period before 1406–1407 will suffice.

In her lyric or narrative poems, Christine presents the solitariness and vulnerability of widowhood, and subverts and counters the centuries-old tradition of courtly love by warning women that they are the ones who will suffer most in any such liaisons.² In the verse *Epistre au dieu d'amours* (*Epistle of the God of Love*) of 1399, the *Dit de la Rose* (*Tale of the Rose*) of 1402,³ and in the prose epistolary Debate on the *Roman de la Rose* of 1401–1403,⁴ the first literary quarrel on the role and status of women, she voices her criticisms of Jean de Meun's misogyny as an instrument of female devaluation and oppression, presenting herself in rational argument as the equal both of her male supporters and opponents—ironically, her contribution to the debate unjustly earning her the reputation of prudishness among some modern male critics of the *Roman de la Rose* (Christine had simply deplored the use of explicit, sexual language as inappropriate in the mouth of Reason or Genius, since allegorical figures should speak and act in conformity

1. Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Champion, 1998). Cited henceforth as *Policie*, ed. Kennedy.

2. *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886–1896), 1:5–6, 12; 3:59–208 (especially 162–71). Cited henceforth as Roy.

3. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

4. *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion 1977); *Le Livre des epistres du debat sus le Rommant de la Rose*, ed. Andrea Valentini (Paris: Garnier, 2014); *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007); *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

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with their ascribed roles and attributes).⁵ In the *Epistre d'Othea* (*Epistle of Othea*) of 1400–1401,⁶ which mingles both verse and prose, she begins her didactic career as a counsellor to the young, addressing their youthful representative Hector through the intermediary of the goddess Othea. In the verse *Livre du chemin de long estude* (*The Path of Long Study*) of 1402–1403,⁷ and in the prose *Advision Cristine* (*Christine's Vision*) of 1405⁸ she enters the domain of politics, embarking on her lifelong search for the ideal ruler who could put an end to France's troubles, using female figures as didactic mentors or interlocutors (the Cumaean Sibyl in the *Path of Long Study*, Libera, Lady Opinion, Lady Philosophy in *Christine's Vision*). In the *Mutacion de Fortune* (*Fortune's Mutability*) of 1403,⁹ she relates her own misfortunes to the role of arbitrary Fortune in universal history, stating famously that coping with her adversities has transformed her into a man, giving her new strength to continue with life's journey. In a quite original way, Fortune is presented here as the medieval equivalent of what modernists would regard as the Absurd in human affairs. In her *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du Sage Roy Charles V* of 1404 (*Book of the Deeds and Good Practices of the Wise King Charles V*),¹⁰ a king who embodies all the qualities of the ideal ruler, Christine follows up her universal history by embarking on yet another path normally reserved for male authors, historical biography, which Christine innovatively adapts to her own ends, since she presents her prose biography as a “mirror for the prince,” thereby providing a model of behavior for other princes who might one day rule as king.

5. D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 361; John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 47, 109, 135, 237. For a spirited defense of Christine, see Rosalind Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 30–43. See also Angus J. Kennedy and Nadia Margolis, “The Debate on the Rose Rekindled: Helen Waddell and Christine de Pizan,” in *De Christine de Pizan à Hans Robert Jauss: Etudes offertes à Earl Jeffrey Richards*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and Roy Rosenstein (Amiens: Presses du centre d'études médiévales de Picardie, 2017), 116–22, especially 119.

6. *Epistre Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999); *Letter of Othea to Hector*, trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport, MA: Focus Library of Medieval Women, 1990); *Lettre d'Othéa, déesse de prudence, a un jeune chevalier, Hector*, trans. Hélène Basso (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008); *Othea's Letter to Hector*, ed. and trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Earl Jeffrey Richards (Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017). The verse *Enseignemens moraux* and *Proverbes moraux* of ca. 1400 were also composed for the benefit of her son. The texts can be found in Roy, 3:27–44 and 45–57.

7. *Le Livre du chemin de longue étude*, ed. Andrea Tarnowski (Paris: Livre de poche, 2000).

8. *Livre de l'advision Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac (Paris: Champion, 2001).

9. *Le Livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 4 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1959–1966). Cited henceforth as *Mutacion*, ed. Solente.

10. *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du Sage Roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1936, 1940). Cited henceforth as *Charles V*, ed. Solente.

In what is probably her most celebrated work today, the *Livre de la cité des dames* (*Book of the City of Ladies*) of 1404–1405,¹¹ Christine achieved another first by completing a book on women written by a female author, its aim being to counter the negative portrayal of women by male clerical writers; this was followed up in 1405–1406 by the *Livre des trois vertus*, a “mirror for princesses,” a manual of practical conduct aimed at women of every class.¹² Finally, one could mention the *Epistre a la reine* (*Epistle to the Queen*) of 1405,¹³ in which Christine attempts directly to influence contemporary political events (potential civil war between warring dukes) by writing to Queen Isabeau, wife of King Charles VI, and imploring her to act as mediator in the crisis. What many of these works have in common is that the speaking voice presents the author as ignorant, humble, simple, and quite unworthy of addressing her distinguished patrons. While this so-called “humility topos” may well reflect a lack of confidence at the very beginning of her career, it is eventually being ironically and subtly manipulated by Christine to demonstrate that she is far from simple and ignorant, having at her command all the authority, competence, and erudition required to execute the task in hand.

All of these examples, then, demonstrate that by 1406–1407 Christine had already acquired a unique voice and authority as a female author, determined as she was to influence contemporary politics for the better, to cultivate the importance of wisdom, knowledge, virtue, and peace in both her male and female princely patrons, and indeed in all her readers, and to counter misogyny and valorize the role of women. One should note too that by this date, the number of these patrons had increased substantially in line with her now established reputation. Let us now try to define more precisely the authorial voice that speaks to us in the *Body Politic*.

The *Body Politic*, written for the dauphin, Louis de Guyenne, son of Charles VI,¹⁴ is a text with several claims to being regarded as “other.” It is the first political treatise to have been written not just by a woman, but by a learned woman capable of holding her own in a domain traditionally reserved for male commentators; it is a work that takes its place in the “mirror for the prince” tradition (stretching

11. *La città delle dame*, trans. Patrizia Caraffi, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards, 2nd ed. (Milan: Luni Editrice, 1997).

12. *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1989).

13. “Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre à la reine* (1405),” ed. Angus J. Kennedy, *Revue des langues romanes* 92 (1988): 253–64.

14. This information is given to us in the *Livre de paix* of 1412–1414, also written for the Dauphin. See *The Livre de la paix of Christine de Pisan*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (The Hague: Mouton, 1958), 174; and *The Book of Peace by Christine de Pisan*, ed. and trans. Karen Green, Constant J. Mews, Janet Pinder, Tania Van Hemelryck, and Alan Crosier (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 188, 314. References will be made to the Green edition unless an exception is noted.

from classical antiquity to Erasmus and Machiavelli),¹⁵ but this particular “mirror,” or manual of government, as elaborated by Christine, addresses not just the prince, but nobles, knights, and the common people as well, attempting to promote (against a background of civil strife) the ideals of interdependence and social responsibility among the various members of the body politic. Although thoroughly rooted in the mind-set of medieval Christendom, it is a work that heralds the humanism of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on the study of classical culture, Roman civic virtues, the importance of learning and its diffusion, the role of the writer as moral guide, and the conviction (entirely compatible with Christian faith) that human beings can improve their earthly condition by their own efforts and by the practice of virtue. It is clear, therefore, that Christine works into the “mirror” tradition quite distinctive features that reflect her own priorities as the “other voice.” Let us try now to define the various registers or inflexions of this “other voice.”

15. On “mirrors for the prince”, kingship, and court life, see Dora M. Bell, *L'Idéal éthique de la royauté en France au Moyen Age d'après quelques moralistes de ce temps* (Geneva: Droz, 1962), and bibliography, 187–98; Jacques Krynen, *Idéal du prince et pouvoir royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age, 1380–1440* (Paris: Picard, 1981), sources and bibliography, 13–37; Kate Langdon Forhan, “Reflecting Heroes: Christine de Pizan and the Mirror Tradition,” in *City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 189–96; Jacques Lemaire, *Les Visions de la vie de cour dans la littérature française de la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), and bibliography, 483–542; Joël Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Écriture et pouvoir à l'aube des temps modernes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), and bibliography 205–23; Kate Langdon Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 27–44, 76–109; Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, “‘Traictier de vertu au prouffit d'ordre de vivre’: Relire l'œuvre de Christine de Pizan à la lumière des miroirs des princes,” in *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan, Glasgow 21–27 July 2000; Published in Honour of Lilane Dulac*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy, Rosalind Brown-Grant, James C. Laidlaw, and Catherine M. Müller (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2002), 2:585–601; Barry Collett, “The Three Mirrors of Christine de Pizan,” in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 1–18; Daisy Delogu, *Theorising the Ideal Sovereign: The Rise of the French Vernacular Royal Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), and bibliography, 264–92; and Charles-Louis Morand Métivier, “Glorifier le royaume et le souverain en temps de crise: Émotions et royauté chez Christine de Pizan, les chroniqueurs de Charles VI, et Pierre de Ronsard,” *Studia romanica posnaniensis* 45, no. 1 (2018): 57–68. For Christine de Pizan as the servant of the French royal house, adopting the vernacular as the primary medium for the consolidation of its power and legitimacy, see Lori J. Walters, “The Royal Vernacular: Poet and Patron in Christine de Pizan's *Charles V* and the *Sept psaumes allegorisés*,” in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 145–82; Walters, “Christine de Pizan, Primat, and the ‘noble nation Française,’” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 9 (2002): 237–46; Walters, “Christine's Symbolic Self as the Personification of France,” in *Christine de Pizan: Une femme de science, une femme de lettres*, ed. Juliette Dor, Marie-Elisabeth Henneau et Bernard Ribémont (Paris: Champion, 2008), 191–215.

The text gets off to quite an arresting and paradoxical start: “If it is possible that virtue may be born of vice, I am well pleased in this part to be seen to be a passionate woman. Just as a good number of men attribute to the female sex an inability to keep in check or silence the outpourings of their heart, so now let boldness come to the fore, and let there be displayed in several clear rivers the spring and inexhaustible fountain of my heart which cannot cease from pouring forth desires for virtue” (57). What is paradoxical here is that Christine positively embraces one of the traditional misogynistic complaints against women, namely, that they are emotional creatures unable to hold their tongue.¹⁶ She is happy to accept this charge on this occasion, since her aim in this “mirror for the prince” is the passionate cultivation of virtue in her readers at all levels of society. She follows up this acceptance with the “humility topos” already referred to: “I humbly beseech their majesties not to undertake to speak of the rules for such an exalted estate; and may they recall the teaching of the philosopher who said: ‘However great you may be, never despise, just because of his lowly status, the person who gives you good advice’” (57–58). By this stage in her career one suspects that the deployment of this topos is at least in part ironic,¹⁷ since she is now writing at a time when the authority of her voice has been well established. Let us note too one final illuminating point about this introductory section: Christine is addressing the prince directly, dispensing with intermediate figures or interlocutors such as Othea, the Cumaean Sibyl, Libera, Dame Opinion, Dame Philosophy: in other words, she is confidently speaking to power in her own voice.

Although this passionate voice is naturally seen elsewhere in the text (notably in the many highly favorable references to her adopted country France and the institution of monarchy, and in an extraordinarily lyrical passage in praise of learning, at 154:12–30), passion is not the only component of her distinctive

16. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1999), 27, Christine makes ironic use of woman’s alleged garrulousness: “I’ve just remembered something that makes me smile, something silly, which I’ve heard men and even foolish preachers say about Christ appearing first to a woman because he knew she couldn’t keep her mouth shut and so the news of his resurrection would spread all the faster.” On Christine’s ambivalent authorial stance in *Policie*, see Jennifer Monahan, “Authority and Marginal Status: Authorial Stance in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre du corps de policie* and *Livre de la paix*,” in *Au Champ des escriptures: IIIe Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, Lausanne, 18–22 juillet 1998*, ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez and Philippe Simon (Paris: Champion, 2000), 41–49. On the construction of Christine’s authority, see Liliane Dulac, “Authority in the Prose Treatises of Christine de Pizan: The Writer’s Discourse and the Prince’s Word,” in *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 129–40; and Lori Walters, “Christine de Pizan as Translator and Voice of the *Body Politic*,” in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (London: Routledge, 2003), 25–41.

17. See also the final chapter of the work where she refers to herself as a “femme non moult saichant” (a not very intelligent woman).

voice: its various inflexions include also the compassionate, the rational, and the critical. Although for Christine neither vices nor virtues are gender-specific, she expresses on more than one occasion her conviction that women are instinctively compassionate and caring by nature. For example, in the *Epistle of the God of Love*, women are presented as “piteuses, douces,” that is, “compassionate and kind,” and a woman’s nature is kind and compassionate: “car nature de femme est debonnaire, / Moulte piteuse . . .” (For woman’s nature is but sweet and mild, / Compassionate . . .).¹⁸ Christine’s experience of adversity as a widow clearly made her more readily sympathetic to the plight of other disadvantaged groups. Although she did not ever countenance the participation of ordinary people in the government of the realm, she was clearly very sympathetic to the plight of the poor and the injustices they suffered, either as victims of the inequitable tax system or as victims of bands of soldiers laying waste to the countryside on which their livelihood depended (84:23–34). The rational register is best illustrated by Christine’s analytical commentary that guides the reader through one of the most rigorously structured texts she ever wrote. Christine would have been familiar with the so-called curial style¹⁹ adopted by her husband in his work as a royal secretary with its constant recourse to repetitive formulae such as “now we must distinguish,” “to return to our first topic,” etc. The critical register can be illustrated by Christine’s willingness to incur displeasure by pointing out the failings of contemporary society, whether these failings belong to the prince, particularly in the risk of his fleecing the poor in his desire to raise legitimate revenues (74:35), to the knights in their failure to protect the realm through their own self-interest in plunder (72:3–5), or to ordinary people with their insobriety and love of “la lecherie des tavernes” (the licentiousness of the taverns) (164:32). The risk of displeasing some of her readers does not therefore constitute a reason for not speaking out. Since God is truth, Christine argues (133:12), she too must speak out for the sake of and in the name of truth, “quoy que nul die” (whatever anyone may say).

As I have pointed out before, that Christine managed to speak out in this multi-layered “other voice” as a woman-author living and writing within a male-dominated context is little short of miraculous. To misquote and turn Dr. Johnson’s celebrated misogynist dictum (on women preaching), it is a wonder not only that Christine did it well, but that she did it at all.²⁰

18. *Poems of Cupid*, ed. Fenster and Erler, v. 178, vv. 668–69.

19. On the curial style, and its distinction from the *style clerical* (the use of “tu” in humanist epistolary exchanges), see J. D. Burnley, “Christine de Pizan and the So-Called *style clerical*,” *Modern Language Review* 81 (1986): 1–6. For more detail on curial style, see J. D. Burnley, “Curial Prose in England,” *Speculum* 61, no. 3 (1986): 593–614. Curial style is an elaborate style characteristic of notarial work in the royal chancelleries, based on complicated Latin syntax, lexical doublets and triplets, and rhetorical devices such as anaphora.

20. See Angus J. Kennedy, “Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre a la reine*,” in *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature, 800–1800*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Nadia Margolis (Berlin:

Christine's Life and Works

Thanks to the autobiographical elements contained within many of Christine's works, it is possible to trace Christine's career from her birth as Cristina da Pizzano in the Republic of Venice ca. 1365 to her death in ca. 1430, probably in the Dominican Abbey of Poissy, northwest of Paris.²¹ She was the daughter of the astrologer Tommaso da Pizzano, a native of Bologna descended from rural nobility based in Pizzano, just south of Bologna,²² and his wife, a daughter of his friend Tommaso Mondino da Forlì. Christine's father had worked as a professor of astrology and medicine at the University of Bologna, before taking up a post as councillor in the Republic of Venice. His scholarly reputation was such that he found himself obliged to accept one of two attractive offers of posts as court astrologer, one from King Charles V of France, and the other from King Louis I of Hungary. Tommaso accepted the first, travelled to France and was joined there some three years later, in ca. 1368, by his wife and family, Christine and her two younger brothers, Paulo and Aghinolfo. There they flourished under the king's patronage, their new French identity being indicated by the switch to the French forms of their name (Thomas de Pizan, Christine de Pizan).

Unusually for a young girl of her time, Christine was given a broad education by her father, who encouraged a taste for self-study and learning that was to stay with her throughout her life. At the age of about fifteen, in 1380, she married Etienne de Castel, a university graduate from Picardy and now a secretary in the Royal Chancellery, by whom Christine had three children, a daughter Marie, a son Jean, and another son whose name is not known. It was thanks to Etienne that Christine would discover the fascination of copying and preparing documents

De Gruyter, 2011), 423. The text of Dr Johnson's original quotation will be found in *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 1:463: "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well, but you are surprized to find it done at all."

21. The most complete self-portrait will be found in the *Advision*, ed. Reno and Dulac, 95–117. For modern biographies in English, see Enid McLeod, *The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pizan* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976); Charity C. Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984); Nadia Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011). For modern biographies in French and German, see Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pisan, 1364–1430: Étude biographique et littéraire* (Paris: Champion, 1927); Marguerite Favier, *Christine de Pisan: Muse des cours souveraines* (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1967); Régine Pernoud, *Christine de Pisan* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1982); Margarete Zimmermann, *Christine de Pizan* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002); Simone Roux, *Christine de Pizan: Femme de tête, dame de cœur* (Paris: Payot, 2006); and Françoise Autrand, *Christine de Pizan: Une femme en politique* (Paris: Fayard, 2009).

22. Nikolai Wandruszka, "The Family Origins of Christine de Pizan," in Hicks, Gonzalez, and Simon, *Au Champ des écritures*, 111–30; Wandruszka, "Familial Traditions of the *de Piçano* at Bologna," in Kennedy et al., *Contexts and Continuities*, 3:889–907.

with pen and ink, and become familiar with the so-called notarial or curial style, based as it was on the complicated model of Latin syntax. Their future happiness as a loving couple must at this point have seemed assured.

Fortune's wheel, however, was about to turn relentlessly over the next decade. The death in 1380 of her father's generous patron Charles V, and the consequent loss of favor at court, the death of her father in 1389, and most significantly of all the sudden death of her husband from plague in 1390, while in Beauvais on a diplomatic mission with the king, left her at the age of twenty-five bereft and adrift, both emotionally and financially, having to face costly lawsuits and deal with corrupt officials in her attempt to recover the monies rightfully due to her as Etienne's widow. With great resolution she set about earning her living, at first probably as a copyist, then composing poetry to give expression to her grief. She soon became proficient in the fixed forms of the day, the ballade, rondeau and virelay, widening her repertoire to love poems and pretending for the sake of her readers to feel emotions of joy: to conceal her true feelings, she is obliged to sing joyously with a sad heart: "Et me convient, pour celer mon affaire, / de triste cuer chanter joyusement."²³ From this point onwards, the biography of Christine is the story of her works, so closely are they interrelated. Based in her scriptorium in Paris, over the years from 1400 to 1418 (when the Burgundians entered Paris, forcing her to leave the capital), she acquired the patronage (among others) of King Charles VI, his queen Isabeau, the dukes of Orleans, Burgundy, Berry, the dauphin Louis de Guyenne, the latter's wife, Margaret of Burgundy, Charles the Noble, king of Navarre. Outside of France, she attracted the interest of John Montague, Earl of Salisbury, and King Henry IV of England, and the court of Duke Gian Galeazzo Visconti in Milan.²⁴ Involved in the detail of her manuscript preparation as author, editor and publisher,²⁵ working closely with the most talented illuminators of the day such as Anastaise, whom she praises in the *City of Ladies*,²⁶ Christine produced both individual manuscripts and a series of three increasingly lavish illustrated collective manuscripts that was to culminate in the

23. Roy, 1:153, Rondeau 11.

24. On patrons generally, see Willard, *Christine de Pizan*, 155–71; Deborah McGrady, "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works," in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 195–214; Margolis, *Introduction to Christine de Pizan*, 15–17; and Angus J. Kennedy, "Christine de Pizan, Orléans and Burgundy," *Medium Aevum* 88 (2019): 134–39. On Salisbury and Henry IV, see James C. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36 (1982): 129–43.

25. 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.

26. *Città delle dame*, trans. Caraffi, ed. Richards, 192 (Book 1, chapter 41).

sumptuous Queen's Manuscript, Harley 4431, presented to Charles VI's Queen Isabeau in 1414.²⁷

Two general points deserve to be borne in mind in any discussion of her works. Firstly, one should take account of Christine's own comments on the gradual change in her subject matter and style over the years 1399 to 1405, switching from composing "choses jolies, a mon commencement plus legieres" (pretty things at the beginning of my career, in lighter vein) to "amendant mon stille en plus grant soubtilleté et plus haulte matiere" (refining my style with greater subtlety and addressing topics of more noble substance).²⁸ While Christine was referring here no doubt to the switch from her courtly writings on love to her preoccupation with the weightier themes of politics, morals, the defense of women, education, religion, war and civil war, the frontier between these two stages of her work is not as watertight as she implies. For example, in her lyric poems, she touches on matters of state (*Cent balades* 95 of ca. 1394 is a prayer for the release of Charles VI from his insanity; *Autres balades* 42 is a lament for the death of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, in 1404),²⁹ and she still deals with courtly matters of love after 1405 (the *Cent balades d'amant et de dame*, a sequence of dialogues between a lover and his lady, that ends in pain and disappointment for the lady, can be dated to ca. 1406; *Encore aultres balades* can be dated to 1413).³⁰ That said, the broad distinction that Christine draws between writing "in lighter vein" (courtly lyric) and addressing what she herself perceived to be more serious topics merits attention. Secondly, as will be seen in the section on Historical Context (22–36), almost all of her works engage with what she saw as the pressing issues of her day—the Hundred Years War with England, civil war within France, the Great Schism, popular revolts within France—and of course, on a more personal level, the defense of the role and status of women. Let us look now at the works composed by Christine over that part of her career that covers ca. 1400–1418, but (to avoid repetition) excluding those already referred to in the "Other Voice" section of this Introduction.

27. On the *Livre de Christine*, the Duke's Manuscript and the Queen's Manuscript, see Laidlaw, "Publisher's Progress," 35–75, and James C. Laidlaw, "The Date of the Queen's MS (London, British Library, Harley MS 4431)," at <pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk/harley4431date>.

28. *Advision*, ed. Reno and Dulac, 111.

29. Roy, 1:95, 255–57.

30. Roy, 3:209–317; see also *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*, ed. Jacqueline Cerquiglini (Paris: Union générale d'éditeurs, 1982); on date, see James C. Laidlaw, "Les *Cent balades d'amant et de dame* de Christine de Pizan," *Lanalisi linguistica e letteraria* 1–2 (2000): 53; and Roy, 1:271–79. The date of *Encore aultres balades* is established in Laidlaw, "Date of the Queen's MS."

Once again, we are struck both by the wide variety of genres and subject matter. The *Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* of 1410,³¹ like the *Epistre a la reine* of 1405, is an interventionist text that attempts to prevent civil war by imploring the queen, the duke of Berry, all princes of the blood, the clergy, and all French people to help dissuade the warring parties from embarking on armed conflict. Although it was probably the approach of winter rather than Christine's intervention that led to the temporary Peace of Bicêtre of November 2, 1410, the text has several claims to fame: the eloquence of this impassioned document accords it a very special status in Christine's works, Gianni Mombello indeed judging it to be "un de plus beaux morceaux de la prose du XVe siècle"³² (one of the finest examples of fifteenth-century prose); and the expressive, omnipresent motif of tears in the text allows us to see the distance that Christine has traveled since she became a widow in 1390: her tears now are not for herself, but for her adopted country being torn apart by the very princes who should be the steadfast guarantors of its peace and prosperity.

Some texts can be grouped under the general heading of didactic "mirrors for the prince," almost all of them written either for or with the dauphin, Louis de Guyenne, in mind. The exception is the unedited *Prod'homme de l'homme* (*Man's Integrity*) addressed to Louis of Orleans, although his name was removed after his death in the version of this text revised as *Prudence* in 1408. In addition to the already mentioned biography of *Charles V*, the *Livre du corps de policie* (*Book of the Body Politic*) of 1406–1407, the *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* (*Book of Feats of Arms and Chivalry*) of 1410,³³ and the *Livre de paix* (*Book of Peace*) of 1412–1414³⁴ were all composed for the moral or military instruction of the

31. Angus J. Kennedy, ed., "*La Lamentacion sur les maux de la France* de Christine de Pizan," in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis* (Rennes: Institut de Français, Université de Haute Bretagne, 1980), 1:177–85. On Christine's engagement in immediate political concerns, see Claude Gauvard, "Christine de Pizan et ses contemporains: L'engagement politique des écrivains dans le royaume de France aux XIVe et XVe siècles," in *Une femme de Lettres au Moyen Age: Etudes réunies autour de Christine de Pizan*, ed. Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995), 105–28.

32. Gianni Mombello, "Quelques aspects de la pensée politique de Christine de Pizan d'après ses œuvres publiées," in *Culture et politique en France à l'époque de l'Humanisme et de la Renaissance*, ed. Franco Simone (Turin: Academia delle scienze, 1974), 43–153, at 128.

33. Christine Moneera Laennec, "Christine 'antypgraphe': Authorship and Self in the Prose Works of Christine de Pizan with an Edition of B. N. MS 603, *Le Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1988); *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, trans. Sumner Willard, ed. Charity C. Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

34. *Livre de la paix*, ed. Willard; *Book of Peace*, ed. Green et al. See also Berenice A. Carroll, "On the Causes of War and the Quest for Peace: Christine de Pizan and Early Peace Theory," in Hicks, Gonzalez, and Simon, *Au Champ des escriptures*, 337–58; Forhan, *Political Theory*, 133–54.

dauphin Louis.³⁵ Probably commissioned by the dauphin's guardian at this time, John the Fearless, the *Book of Feats of Arms and Chivalry* represents another first for Christine, a highly technical manual on warfare written by a woman, covering the just war, the qualities expected of a leader, contemporary siege practice, sea battles, the laws of war, judicial combats and heraldry. Some manuscripts and early printed editions suppress Christine's name, perhaps reflecting disbelief that a woman could write a treatise of this kind.³⁶ The text may well have influenced the later reform of the French army under King Charles VII (1403–1461). The *Book of Peace*, whose composition was interrupted by the Cabochian revolt of 1413, goes over much of the same ground as the *Body Politic* and represents Christine's last vain attempt to influence the dauphin in his duties as future sovereign.

Three poetic works written ca. 1400, the *Debat de deux amans*, the *Trois jugemens*, and the *Dit de Poissy* (*Debate of Two Lovers, Three Judgments*, and the *Tale of Poissy*)³⁷ reflect not only the contemporary fascination with courtly love casuistry and debates, but also the ironic distance Christine maintains between herself and the subject matter, convinced as she is that illicit love inevitably leads to disaster and despair, particularly for the lady involved. To these three poems we could also link the *Dit de la pastoure* (*The Shepherdess's Tale*) of 1403,³⁸ a verse narrative of disappointment in love, within the courtly tradition, told significantly from the shepherdess's perspective rather than the knight's, and the *Duc des vrais amans* (*The Duke of True Lovers*) of 1403–1405,³⁹ an artistic tour de force combining verse and prose, with inserted ballades, virelays and rondeaux, and representing Christine's most explicit condemnations of courtly adulterous love, particularly in the prose letter written by Seville de Mont Hault, the Dame de la

35. A work entitled the *Avision du coq* (*Vision of the Cock/Rooster*) also written for the dauphin, does not seem to have survived. It is referred to in the *Livre de la paix*, ed. Willard, 152, and *Book of Peace*, ed. Green et al., 164 and 293.

36. T. E. Wareham, "Christine de Pizan's *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* and its Fate in the Sixteenth Century," in *Seconda miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul Quattrocento francese*, ed. Franco Simone, Jonathan Beck, and Gianni Mombello (Chambéry: Centre d'études franco-italien, 1981), 135–42. See also Everett L. Wheeler, "Christine de Pizan's *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 46 (2002): 119–61, where it is argued that blanket charges of misogyny alone present too easy a solution to the alterations.

37. Roy, 2:49–109, 111–57, 159–222; *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), 81–152.

38. Roy, 2:223–94.

39. Roy, 3:59–208; *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers*, trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Nadia Margolis (New York: Persea Books, 1991); *Le Livre du duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (Binghamton: Medieval Renaissance Texts and Studies 124, 1995); *Le Livre du duc des vrais amants*, ed. Dominique Demartini and Didier Lechat (Paris: Champion, 2013).

Tour.⁴⁰ Christine emerges from these works as an exponent of the positive, general values of courtliness (respect for women, elegance in language and demeanor, etc.), but as a critic of courtly love, alerting women to the pitfalls and faultlines that lie in wait for the unwary.

A similarly cohesive grouping can be made of Christine's religious writing which unusually punctuates her whole career and not just the final stages of it, as is often the case for compositions of this kind.⁴¹ This group includes the relatively early devotional poetic works *Oroyson Nostre Dame* (*Prayer to Our Lady*), *Les XV joyes Nostre Dame* (*The Fifteen Joys of Our Lady*), and *Oroyson de Nostre Seigneur* (*Prayer to Our Lord*), all from 1402–1403;⁴² the prose *Sept psaumes allegorisés* (*Seven Allegorized Psalms*) of 1409,⁴³ a devotional work based on the penitential psalms usually invoked at times of challenge and crisis, was commissioned by a cousin of Charles VI, Charles III the Noble, king of Navarre. Beneath the personal devotion characteristic of all these works, one senses Christine's characteristic concern for the fate of France: for example, in the *Prayer to Our Lady*, she prays for peace within the church and an end to the Schism, for a restoration to “vraye santé” (true health) of the mentally unstable Charles VI, for peace within the realm, for the “noble chevalerie” (the noble knights) to be mindful of their duty to defend France from evil, for the clergy, burghers, merchants, common people, and agricultural laborers all to play their appropriate part in working for the common good.⁴⁴ This prayer for peace and the common good, addressing all estates of society, is a clear pointer to concerns that Christine will deal with in greater detail in the *Body Politic*. Similar concerns with contemporary issues can be detected too in the *Seven Allegorized Psalms*: the papal Schism, the continuing intermittent madness of Charles VI, and the conviction that the princes of the blood will act only in their own interest (the work was written during the crisis prompted by the arrest and summary execution of John of Montagu, Grand Master of the Royal Household in October 1409, on the orders of John the Fearless of Burgundy).⁴⁵ The final religious work to be taken into account for the period up to 1418 is the *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* (*Epistle on the Prison of Human Life*), written

40. Roy, 2:162–71; *Duke of True Lovers*, trans. Fenster and Margolis, 111–20; *Duc des vrais amans*, ed. Fenster, 171–80; *Duc des vrais amans*, ed. Demartini and Lechat, 333–50.

41. Margolis, *Introduction to Christine de Pizan*, 116.

42. Roy, 3:1–26; Jean-François Kosta-Théfaine, “*Les XV Joies Nostre Dame* rimees de Christine de Pizan,” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 16 (2008): 255–77.

43. *Les Sept psaumes allegorisés*, ed. Bernard Ribémont and Christine Reno (Paris: Champion, 2013).

44. Roy, 3:1–9 (vv. 19–21, 43–48, 106, 151–56, 163–68, 175).

45. *Sept psaumes*, ed. Ribémont and Reno, 53–55; on Montagu, see the section of this Introduction on Historical Context (32, 34), and Charity C. Willard, “Christine de Pizan's Allegorized Psalms,” in Dulac and Ribémont, *Une femme de Lettres*, 317–24.