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Inventing Christine de Pizan: Art and Authorship in Late Medieval France

Adria Leigh Woodruff
The College of Wooster, awoodruff20@wooster.edu

Inventing Christine de Pizan: Art and Authorship in Late Medieval France

By

Adria Leigh Woodruff

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Advisors: Tracy Cosgriff

Contents

Acknowledgements iv
List of Illustrations v
Introduction 1
I. Christine de Pizan & Systems of Patronage 13
II. Authorial Auctoritas of Christine de Pizan 33
III. The Visual Programs of Christine de Pizan 49
Conclusion 65
Illuminations 70
Bibliography 85

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan presenting book to Queen Isabeau,* 1413. f.3r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 2. Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan presenting book to Louis d' Orleans,* 1413. f.95r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 3. Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan presenting book to Charles VI,* 1413. f.178r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 4. Christine de Pizan, *Othea giving a letter to Hector: Temperance adjusting a clock*. f.2r, *L'Epistre Othea* (Paris BN MS 848).

Figure 5. Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan in her Study,* 1413. f.4r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 6. Charles V in his study In John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, St. John's College, Oxford, Ms. 64, f° 1.

Figure 7. Christine de Pizan, Christine in her Study. F.3v, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (MS. Fr. 180). Bibliothèque de Genève

Figure 8. Boccaccio and Fortune Ms. 63 (96.MR.17), fol. 172v

Figure 9. Christine de Pizan, *Christine de Pizan building the City of Ladies,* 1413. f.290v, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 10. Christine de Pizan, *Bath of the Muses,* 1413. f.183v, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 11. *Bath of the Muses*. f.116v, *Ovide moralise* (MS fr. 871). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 12. *Dante and Virgil,* 1450. f.1r, *Divina Commedia* (Yates Thompson 36). British Library.

Figure 13. Christine de Pizan, *Rectitude leading Christine,* 1413. f.323r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 14. *Minerva*. f. 9v, Français 599. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits

Figure 15. Christine de Pizan, *Minerva,* 1413. f.102r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 16. *Juno*. f. 9v, Français 599. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits

Figure 17. Christine de Pizan, *Juno,* 1413. f.118r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Figure 18. *Limbo,* 1450. f.1r, *Divina Commedia* (Yates Thompson 36). British Library.

Figure 19. Christine de Pizan, *Justice, the Virgin and Saints entering the City of Ladies,* 1413. f.118r, *Book of the Queen* (Harley MS 4431). British Library.

Introduction

> Following these remarks, I, Christine, spoke, "My lady, I realize that women have accomplished many good things and that even if evil women have done evil, it seems to me, nevertheless that the benefits accrued and still accruing because of good women-particularly the wise and literary ones and those educated in the natural sciences whom I mentioned above-outweigh the evil. Therefore, I am amazed by the opinion of some men who claim that they do not want their daughters, wives, or kinswomen to be educated because their mores would be ruined as a result."[1]

This quotation, from *The Book of the City of Ladies*, explains the lasting allure of Christine de Pizan. It is one of her most well-known manuscripts, the one she penned to air her grievances about the unjust words of men and to protect virtuous women. In her dream allegory, she is approached by the celestial personifications of Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, who task her with the construction of the City of Ladies. These entities retell the biographies of notable women – mythological, historical, and theological – who have made great contributions to art, logic, and science. Christine de Pizan uses these biographies as the foundation and building blocks to construct the city. This exemplary work, along with many of Christine's works, are concerned with the defense and education of women. In this passage, Christine speaks to Rectitude, the personification of righteousness, in defense of those women. By identifying herself noticeably and stating her opinion plainly, Christine establishes herself as both an author and authority. Through her words, we are offered insight

[1] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffery Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1998), 153

into the mind of France's first woman of letters. Less has been said, however, about the compositions that embellish her text. Christine was not simply an author; she was also a publisher who exercised a heavy hand in her manuscripts' illuminations. It is thus necessary to also interrogate the paratextual elements of her works in order to understand her meaning. While the literature surrounding Christine's texts are abundant, works focusing on her illuminations and miniatures are less so, at least in English. In this thesis, I will investigate Christine de Pizan's miniatures, primarily those in the *Book of the Queen* (Harley 4431), to disentangle the unique networks of patronage in which she operated, prove her auctorial auctoritas, and examine her use of illumination as amplification of her textual metaphors that reference her unique position.

Historical Context: Christine's Life, Writing, and the *Book of the Queen*

Christine de Pizan is an exceptional figure within manuscript studies, but it is difficult to navigate her biography within French courtly culture without first understanding who she was beyond her status as a female author-publisher. While the majority of Christine's life was spent in France, she was actually the first child of three born to Thomas de Pizan (Pizano) in Bologna, Italy in 1364.[2] Thomas himself was employed by King Charles V as a physician and astrologist, and so he enjoyed considerable favor within the court itself. He was given the opportunity to bring his children and wife to France, and the family likely lived in one of the king's principal residences when they first moved to Paris in 1368.[3] While not much is known about Christine's early life or childhood, we do know that her father provided her with an informal education beyond that of a typical girl, and that she grew up in

[2] Sandra L. Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar: Christine De Pizan's 'Cité Des Dames,'" *Feminist Studies* 10, no. 3 (1984): 457.
[3] Ibid., 457-459.

the Valois court, likely influenced by humanist scholars who were invested in the values of classical antiquity.[4] At age fifteen in the year 1379, she was married to a nobleman, Etienne Castel, who worked as a notary and secretary to the king. Although the marriage was arranged by her father, it seemed to result in a loving relationship. While Christine's marriage flourished, and she gave birth the three children between 1381 and 1385, three events altered her comfortable life. First, right after her marriage to her husband, her family's primary patron, Charles V, died and the fortunes of the Pizano family began to decline. Then, just a few years later in 1384, Thomas himself perished following a long illness, leaving behind only a meager inheritance. Finally, in 1389, Christine's husband Etienne died while on a royal mission. In less than a decade, Christine went from living comfortably and happily, to widowed and destitute.[5]

Medieval women were generally stripped of their bodily autonomy, the right to own land and participate in legal forums, among other restrictions. Their role in common society was to occupy the home and provide fruitful offspring for their husbands.[6] However, Christine de Pizan was the product of a unique set of circumstances. In addition to her informal education and thanks to her association with the royal court, she had access to libraries and other resources women of her time were generally not privy to.[7] After the death of these two patriarchal figures, Christine de Pizan was freed from the inferior legal and social status medieval women suffered as wives. She had a degree of independence and

[4] Bell, Susan Groag "Christine De Pizan (1364-1430): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman." *Feminist Studies* 3, 173-174.
[5] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 458.
[6] Cartwright, Mark. "Women in Ancient Greece." Ancient History Encyclopedia. Ancient History Encyclopedia, September 22, 2019.
[7] Bell, "Problems of a Studious Woman," 173-174.

selfhood that, in addition to her informal education, afforded her the opportunity to turn to authorship and publication to sustain herself and her family.[8] In her place, many women would have instead taken religious vows.[9] Over the next several years, she wrote dozens of poems that won several prizes and sometimes were composed at the request of patrons. By the end of the decade, she had gathered these poems together into her first volume, the *Cent Balades.*[10]

Christine operated as both author and publisher of a large swathe of works that ranged from love poetry, to allegorical narratives, to political and philosophical treatises. These works were composed both on commission and speculation. Her oeuvre circulated within the same courtly contexts in which she was raised.[11] Christine then, due to her occupation and association with the royal court, was a part of a movement of French humanist philosophers and rhetoricians. These humanists concerned themselves with morality, liberal arts, and the self-development of the soul during its journey on the earthly realm contextualized by Christian values, seeking to answer the question of human life. The humanists were a male-dominated group that embraced the cult of antiquity, believing that Christian values had eroded during the Middle Ages and desiring to return to Greco-Roman authors whose examples would benefit the contemporary world. Studying following these humanist principles became the great love of her life, claiming that the pursuit of learning and knowledge would lead to virtue and the love of God alongside her contemporaries.[12]

[8] Sauer, Michelle M. Gender in Medieval Culture. London;New York;: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 52.
[9] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 458.
[10] Ibid., 458.
[11] Ibid., 456-459.
[12] Ibid., 460-461.

One of the most exquisite of Christine's works that survives to us today is the *Book of the Queen* (British Library, Harley 4431). Many of Christine's writings were produced individually and given to separate patrons, however an equal number were gathered into compendia or collected works. Four collected works survive to us today, but the *Book of the Queen* – otherwise known as the *London Collected Works* – is the largest and most complete version. The compendium currently resides in London. It is called the *Book of the Queen* because the manuscript was compiled at the request of Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, the wife of Charles VI, who was the ruler of France at its time of manufacture (between 1411 and 1415). It is the most illuminated of all of Christine's works and one of the few to contain autograph text, including the preface dedicated to the queen. It is also the only compendium to include *The Book of the City of Ladies.*[13] The codex is assembled in roughly chronological order, beginning with the *Cent Balades* and *Epistre Othea,* and it ends with *The Book of the City of Ladies.* There are a few oddities about the work that suggest that it was fashioned from other manuscripts, such as the section containing *Epistre Othea* having its parchment pages lengthened with extra strips of vellum. This manuscript occupies the majority of my study into Christine de Pizan not only because it is one of the most extensively illuminated, but also because of the nature of those illuminations and the accessibility the British Library provides.

Literature Review

Research on the feminist and literary aspects of Christine de Pizan's works is abundant, but surprisingly, there is a significant lack of art historical literature in English.

[13] Ibid., 461.

When collecting material for my research into Christine, I found that I lacked a lot of formal analysis of the miniatures in her works to provide context for their iconography and their implications. The studies I did find, which were mostly works from a few notable names, regarded Christine's works in very specific contexts. For example, many studies only focused on the miniatures of one manuscript and compared those paratexts across copies. While this information was useful in articulating how Christine had a hand in the composition of her illuminations as a publisher, it made it difficult to understand some of the relationships within cycles. In other instances, miniatures within the same manuscript were compared, but to very specific means which did not suit the purposes of my own research. Finally, there seems to be no dedicated paper to the illuminations within the *Book of the Queen* as a whole. With my research, I hope to contribute to the discussions surrounding Christine de Pizan's manuscripts with a comprehensive exploration of the ways in which Christine's illuminations amplify her text and provide new meaning to our understanding of her through the lens of the *Book of the Queen.*

There are a number of authors whose work were of significant assistance in my understanding of Christine de Pizan, the French court, medieval patronage, and the reading of paratextual elements in manuscripts, but do not warrant a dedicated paragraph. J.J. G. Alexander, David Diringer, and Otto Pacht's works provided insight into the production and understanding of medieval manuscripts and their illuminations. Without the groundwork into the history of manuscripts, I would have not been able to compose this essay with any efficiency. Leah Tether, Steven Rendall, and Holly Flora's works gave context on authorship and patron in the medieval world that allowed me to explain Christine's exemplary status. Susan Gorag Bell's research enabled my understanding of humanism as an integral part of

Christine's work and life, providing context for works Christine used to develop her texts. In addition, it gave me a greater understanding of author-patron relationships and the vocabulary to describe portraits of Christine within her work. I have developed her argument by describing Christine de Pizan's relationship with one of her patrons, Queen Isabeau, and considering images of Christine's form in my work. Finally, Maureen Quilligan's work on *The Book of the City of Ladies*, allegory, and female authority provided the basis for exemplifying Christine de Pizan's authorial auctoritas.

Throughout my research, the most pleasurable works to read and those which provided me the most comprehensive and provoking insights into Christine de Pizan were those that gave me greater understanding of authorship in the medieval world. Of interest is Susan Goarg Bell's 1978 essay, *Christine de Pizan (1364-1420): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman.* Her essay reminds the reader of Christine's plight and labor as a studious female scholar within the Valois court, despite the great rewards of being one, in order to contextualize her unique position as author as well as the advice she provides to women throughout her manuscripts. Through the consistent imagery of Christine knelt before patrons, Bell is able to relate Christine's relationships to her plight of loneness and practicality of other women becoming scholars, something Christine does not recommend. Deborah McGrady is another prominent name I have referenced in relationship to Christine's authorship. Both of her essays, *Reading for Authority: Portraits of Christine de Pizan and Her Readers* and *What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works* are inquisitive to Christine's role as an author-publisher. *Reading for Authority* provided the basis for my discussions on Christine's authorial auctoritas and her role as author-publisher. The essay describes Christine as having adopted a "clerkly

female persona" that allowed her to operate as a self-educated woman within the courts. This work operates in tandem with many of Bell's points from *The Problem of a Studious Woman* however, McGrady is much less critical of Christine, choosing to reiterate the things that make her so unique in both literature and art.

Sandra Hindman was another prominent scholar in my research. There were two works of hers which were of considerable interest in my work, the first an essay titled *With Ink and Mortar: Christine de Pizan's "Cite des Dames"* and the second, her publication *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othea": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI.* Both works begin with informative biographies of Christine's life and work which I utilized to write my own biography of Christine. Her essay, *With Ink and Mortar* is an informative composition on a handful of miniatures from Christine's *The Book of the City of Ladies*. The essay is divided into three comprehensive sections, the first two of which detail Christine's life and explain the odd nature of the *Book of the Queen* to provide context for the miniatures she describes. Hindman pays particular attention to the role of architecture in both the textual and visual cycles of the *City of Ladies* copy within the *Book of the Queen,* using the essay to argue for Christine's place within art historical conversation. Her book, *Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* is divided into several chapters that mimic the structure of her shorter essay: providing context, in this case regarding the political climate of France in the early 15th century, establishing the nature of the publication, and tediously combing through the details within every illumination she discusses. However, her works were those that were very specific. As such, it was difficult to recontextualize some of her conclusions to fit within the scope of my research. With these combined works, I was able to clearly articulate and expand upon the conditions in which the *Book of the Queen* was produced and the politics

that informed Christine's work. I expanded on her discussion of architecture by amplifying Christine's use of architecture as metaphor.

Methods

Throughout my paper, I use several theories in order to analyze the miniatures in Christine de Pizan's the *Book of the Queen.* The conversations surrounding Christine are rather complicated because analysis requires an understanding of medieval French culture, images as storytellers, and literature. As I strive to explore the networks of patronage Christine operated in, her authority as an author-publisher, and her use of image as metaphor, I utilize feminist, literary, and social theories.

My examination of Christine de Pizan is based mostly in feminist theory and social theory, as I disentangle her unique status and occupation. In some ways, Christine is an ideal medieval figure for testing concepts of feminist theory. In particular, the works of Judith Butler and Linda Nochlin are useful because Christine is a prime example of an intervention into a male canon and a female performing male roles. Although Christine is not an artist in the sense that she has applied paint to canvas or drawn figures, she had a major hand in the composition of the illuminations within her manuscripts beyond her writing. As such, I believe she qualifies as an artist herself. In her essay, *Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?* Nochlin argues that there are no female equivalents to Michelangelo or Raphael because the notion of the Great Artists is a myth. The idea of a Genius or a Great Artist ignores the socioeconomic status of the figures we think of when someone mentions a "master" artist.[14] Further, she argues that it is pointless to divide the canon, rather the

[14] Linda Nochlin, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?," Aesthetics, January 2017, 46-51.

standards for art, between the genders as it would render the female canon as secondary, placing scholarship in the same position from which it started. Women can only be successful within our understanding of the canon of art, if they perform male roles.[15] Women such as these are an intervention on the canon or at least a disruption to it, despite their exclusion from the standard. Christine is one of many examples of a disruption to this male social economy, as France's first woman of letters and one example of a successful female poet in the late medieval period. Nochlin's distinction coincides nicely with Judith Butler's theories of performativity as outlined in *Bodies That Matter*, wherein Butler famously argued that gender is performative. Regardless of ones assigned sex, gender is artificially imposed as a cultural norm. Hence, if one is female but operates in the roles that society has deemed masculine, then that female becomes a man regardless of her own identification.[16] Christine herself laments, both in private letters and in her *L'avision de Christine*, that she has become male due to her profession and her status as a widowed woman.

As for literary theory, I have been invested in numerous essays on the literary contents of Christine's work in order to understand her as an author but also in order to utilize proper vocabulary in my discussions. In addition to feminist and social theory, I have also engaged with several papers on literary theory to understand Christine as an author and to utilize proper vocabulary in my discussions. I sought those works which described traditional and formalist theory. One challenge I have faced is how to read the images in a manuscript, or rather, how to understand the literary object as an artwork. I primarily reference Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge* and William Diebold's *Word and Image.*

[15] Ibid., 48-51.
[16] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 2015) 1-27.

Camille's work has given a way to read those paratextual elements, to engage with these elements of the manuscript as spaces in which metaphor and meaning can be found. His conceptions lead nicely into Diebold's, who references images as amplifications of the text and as their own readings. In addition, I have also read Gerard Genette's *Introduction to Paratext* which has bolstered my understanding of codicological jargon. Throughout this essay I use paratext to reference any element of the page that is not the text, that is the written work itself. This includes the illuminations I am mostly concerned with, but also dedications, marginalia, and anything else on the fringe of the reading. These works allow me to utilize Christine's images as enhancements of my own arguments.

Overview of Chapters

My first chapter is intended to disentangle the networks of patronage that allowed for a manuscript such as the *Book of the Queen* to be produced and to establish Christine de Pizan as the originator and authority in the control of her manuscripts. I begin by describing the new systems of patronage that Christine operates under due to the changes in French court, most prominently the death of major patron of the arts, King Charles V. I choose three images to support my arguments, the first the frontispiece of the manuscript (fig. 1), as well as the dedication miniatures with Louis d'Orleans (fig. 2) and Charles VI (fig.3). In addition, I utilize textual elements from the codex, such as Christine's dedication to Queen Isabeau, to emphasize my argument with Christine's own words.

The second chapter argues the exceptional nature of Christine as an author-publisher and describes her authorial auctoritas while noting some of those hardships she endured along the way. I argue that the significance of Christine's position is that she is the first monetarily successful female poet in France, but more importantly that her hand in the

creation of her manuscripts makes her especially unique and worthy of study. Christine de Pizan's unique position as a woman of letters is reflected in the simultaneous confinement and subversion of epic narratives and biographies of women illustrated in her visual allegories. The importance of Christine de Pizan's visual programs is that they are not just simply illustrations of the text, rather they serve as a visual interpretation of her metaphor.

Finally, in the last chapter, I explore the ways in which Christine's textual metaphors are amplified by paratextual elements. Particularly, I emphasize how architecture plays a role in the literary building of City of Ladies within the *Book of the Queen* and in the miniature cycles of the text. I also describe how these visual programs are inspired by revisions to the male canon. In addition, I also describe her influences and revisions of those influences as a method for defining allegory and authority. Here, I use a number of illuminations from *Book of the Queen* and Christine's influences, Dante's *Inferno* and Bocaccio's *On Famous Women.* These comparisons allow for an understanding of how Christine uses word and image to retell the biographies of women and the male quest for knowledge in a feminine lens.

While the literature on Christine is vast, the art historical research has some significant opportunities for further study. With my research, I endeavor to contribute of the lack of comprehensive art historical research into Christine de Pizan's illuminations, especially those in the *Book of the Queen*. The analysis of Christine's manuscripts and illuminations allow for investigation into the social and political structures of the late French medieval period through a unique feminine lens. Further, these investigations allow modern viewers to interpret and adapt her language and visuals to current times.

I. Christine de Pizan & Systems of Patronage

The *Book of the Queen* (Harley 4431) opens to a magnificent half-page frontispiece (fig.1). The brightly colored scene is that first illumination to confront the reader; it also establishes a claim of authorship as it depicts a unique presentation scene of the poet, Christine de Pizan, who offers her codex to her patron, Queen Isabeau of Baveria. Within the gold and red rectangular borders, a lofty white mason arch frames the room and exchange. The room, the queen's bedroom, is composed of tall stone walls decorated with blue tapestries. Each tapestry is embroidered with alternating gold designs and tacked to the wall with a graceful drape between the nails. The intense blue of the drapery is broken in the center of the composition, with a set of arched open windows within the carefully articulated space of a rectangular nook. Above, green and red banisters alternate until they become obscured on the left side of the composition by the bed, a clue to the setting of this composition being the queen's private quarters. The central figure in the room, framed by those arched windows, is the poet and author Christine de Pizan. She is easily recognizable throughout the manuscript, as she is nearly always shown in a similar style of dress, a blue or black gown with long rectangular sleeves, a high collar, and atop her head a matching white hennin. The poet offers a red-bound, gold-decorated tome to Queen Isabeau who sits before her on a couch. Queen Isabeau is dressed in a deep red, fur-lined gown with gold embroidery and a green tie around the waist; she is the most-well dressed woman in the room among the gathered women. This presentation scene is both familiar and atypical. Medieval viewers were accustomed to presentation or dedication miniatures within manuscripts, wherein the author of the work kneels before his patron to exchange the codex. These types of scenes usually comprise the frontispiece of a manuscript. However, the dedication miniature in the

Book of the Queen is unique in its gendered aspects: first, the poet is female and she presents a book to a female patron. Second, the exchange takes place in the company of a group of unattended women. Third, Christine de Pizan maintains literary authority over her manuscript by being the only individual to touch the manuscript; she is also the central figure in the composition. Finally, we come to the fascinating realization that this frontispiece is not the only presentation scene within the *Book of the Queen.* The composition of the frontispiece demonstrates that Christine de Pizan intentionally utilized the changing systems of patronage in the French royal court to reconceptualize the literary artifact as an object of her own thought. Her works are her own, not ones designed and owned by the patron that receives them.

The *Book of the Queen*, also called the *London Collected Works*, is not one text but a compendium of Christine de Pizan's major works assembled, it is thought, at Isabeau's request around 1411. There are three other collections of Christine's work, but the *Book of the Queen* is not only the most lavishly illustrated version, but also the only such compendium to include the *City of Ladies*.[17] The manuscript also includes many of Christine's other popular works, such as *L'Epistre Othéa* and *Le chemin de long estude*, which are arranged in approximately chronological order according to the date each work was written. Compendia themselves are not unheard of, but the *Book of the Queen* is unique because the construction of the book itself is oddly irregular between texts. For example, the folios containing *L'Epistre Othéa* had their margins carefully enlarged with extra strips of vellum so it would fit with the rest of the works in the book. The section of the manuscript containing the *City of Ladies* may have once been an independent volume, judging from the

[17] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 426.

quire notations, which are inconsistent with the rest of the codex.[18] The irregular construction of the book suggests that the volume was assembled from already existing works. But there is also textual evidence to suggest that the *Book of the Queen* was a compilation of works that had already been offered to other patrons. In the dedication of the manuscript, just below the frontispiece, Christine claims the codex was "compiled" rather than written for the queen:

> Si l'ay fait, ma dame, ordener
> Depuis que je sceus qu'assener
> Le devoye a vous, si qu'ay sceu
> Tout au mieulx et le parfiner
> D'escripre et bien enluminer,
> Dès que vo command en receu...
> (Christine, Oeuvres, vol. 1, dedication, lines 49–54)
>
> [I had [this book] compiled, my lady, as soon as I knew that I was to address it to you, and I knew all the better to finish it, to write it and to illuminate it nicely, as soon as your request was received...][19]

In addition, the accompanying miniature cycle within the *Book of the Queen* was on earlier collections also offered to Christine's other patrons, including King Charles VI, Louis of Orleans, and other members of the French court. Her works were even sought after by patrons in England, such as Henry IV, and in Italy by the Duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti.[20] What the *Book of the Queen* presents to us, then, is a confusing picture of

[18] Ibid., 462.
[19] McGrady, Deborah. "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431," *Christine de Pizan's Collected Works* (1998) 195.
[20] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 459.

medieval systems patronage: this is a manuscript assembled for an extraordinary patron from works that were already offered to other patrons. The dedication page of the manuscript along with the accompanying frontispiece reproduce elements of traditional components of medieval patronage through Christine's visual subordination, kneeling to her, to the patron queen. However, multiple dedication images exist within the same manuscript which demonstrates that Queen Isabeau is not her only patron. Further, it suggests that the queen was not the inspiration for the *Book of the Queen.* [21] In addition, this frontispiece suggests that Christine de Pizan's works were not circulating as gifts to individuals as in traditional networks of medieval gift-exchange, but rather, that Christine was operating in radically new systems of patronage.[22] I believe it is worth examining the definitions of patronage that allowed the *Book of the Queen* to be compiled. In addition, I suggest that Christine de Pizan did intentionally reconceptualize the literary artifact as an object of her own through the textual and paratextual evidence she leaves behind.

Patronage

Among the numerous unique paratextual elements of the *Book of the Queen*, some of the most striking are the several dedication miniatures. In a typical manuscript, there is one dedication or presentation miniature that makes up the frontispiece of the manuscript, describing the work as a gift to a single patron. However, multiple of these types of images within the same manuscript suggest that her works were not circulating as gifts to individuals, as they would be in traditional networks of medieval gift-exchange, but rather that Christine de Pizan was operating in a new system of patronage in which she could re-gift

[21] McGrady, Deborah, "What is a Patron?," 125.
[22] Ibid., 197.

her works as commodities. [23] Mere pages after the lavish frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen,* the reader is greeted with the presentation scene of Louis d'Orleans. (fig. 2). Christine de Pizan is once again framed by a white architectural arch as she kneels on the right-hand side of the miniature. There is a similar sense of décor in this room as well, with stone walls and blue and gold tapestries. Although she is not central in this illumination, she still maintains obvious control of the manuscript, as only her hands touch the codex. She appears in a black gown of the same style, with a long white collar and matching hennin. Christine meets Louis's gaze, as she offers to him a thick green and golden bound codex, presumably containing the text that follows, the *L'Epistre Othéa. L'Epistre Othéa* is Christine's allegorical etiquette guide on how to live a happy and virtuous life; it is also a subtle political allegory, which she penned and dedicated to the Duke of Orleans. Three men stand around the pair, witnessing the exchange between author and patron. The Duke of Orleans, dressed in a deep blue, fur-lined robe with gold detailing and a brimming orange cap, is presented in this dedication miniature as one of Christine's many patrons.

Patronage is a difficult concept to define in medieval studies, particularly in manuscript studies. Originally, the term was used to describe the particular notion of gift-exchange of premodern courtly culture. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the term in reference to a "man of distinction who gives protection and aid to another person in return for deference and certain services."[24] Luckily, current assessments of patronage go beyond the traditional notions of patron as the primary source of inspiration and the impact of wealth on artistic commissions by challenging the idea that commissioners

[23] Ibid., 197.
[24] "patron, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press, March 2020.

themselves shaped the style and content of work. Instead, the agency of the artist, viewership, and court members have been brought to the forefront of patronage studies. Further, the definition of a patron has been widened to include women. For these reasons, we can use the term patronage to describe the broad history of reception and investigations of agency in producing an object. In manuscript studies especially, scholars have begun to differentiate between the patron, or the person funding the work, the book's reader or owner, and the artists and poets who manufactured it, in order to construct a more accurate picture of the production, purchase, and meaning. With these considerations, dedication miniatures require focused study, and scholars most look for other clues to glean a work's context. And this is certainly the case with Christine de Pizan's *Book of the Queen*, which presents not one or two presentation scenes, but three, each with different patrons. The manuscript also includes a miniature of a patron requesting a poem from Christine in her study! To best understand the production and the networks of patronage that produced the *Book of the Queen*, I believe that patronage must be explained and the presentation miniatures in the book must be interrogated.

Medieval patronage is often defined as a part of the "gift-exchange economy."[25] Scholars consider court artists entertainers, who were selected by elite patrons to amuse and educate audiences. In exchange for their service, artists often received food, lodging, clothing, money, and sometimes a stable position within the court. This reciprocal obligation that occurred between poet and patron required the submission of the artists to the benefactor in the relationship as a prerequisite. [26] As such, most artists or entertainers served one court

[25] McGrady, "What is a Patron?," 197.
[26] Ibid., 197

or patron, remaining with that benefactor until other circumstances arose. However, this type of patronage, at least for authors and poets, underwent substantial modifications in the late Middle Ages with the rise of the book trade. The availability of cheaper book-making materials and the demand for manuscripts across courts and countries allowed authors to acquire multiple patrons and publish books on speculation. Further, historical shifts in the cultural priorities of French nobility prompted book makers to distribute manuscripts to a larger buying audience. Due to the artistic agenda promoted by royalty, especially under Charles V Valois, there came a desire to enhance one's libraries – notably witnessed by the collections of the Dukes of Berry and Orleans. However, after the death of Charles V, the young king Charles VI took the throne. His successor was not as interested in promoting an artistic agenda, this led poets themselves to seek new patrons within the courts, as other nobles continued to upheld the agenda of the previous monarch.[27] This cultural shift and wider dissemination of texts disrupted the king's role as sole patron of the arts and had a secondary effect on patronage dynamics: noble figures began to collect examples of diverse writers, as opposed to supporting the works of a handful of notable authors. As such, many authors, including Christine de Pizan, lacked a source of consistent support from a single patron at the same time that she was granted the ability to shift between patrons as it suited her. In short, she was not exclusively tethered to a single patron and had the ability to redistribute works to other royal figures across courts. In fact, as the *Book of the Queen* was being assembled, between approximately 1411 and 1412, Christine de Pizan was working for

[27] Hindman, Sandra. "Christine De Pizan's "Epistre Othéa": *Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto, Ont., Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986) 6-10.

the Burgundian court in the service of several patrons, including the Dukes of Burgundy Phillip the Bold and John the Fearless.[28]

It has become obvious, then, that Christine de Pizan does not operate according to the traditional notions of patronage. That is, she did not submit herself to a single patron, but instead took productive advantage of the shifting nature of patronage by marketing her works as commodities to multiple patrons. In this new system, she could accommodate multiple projects for several patrons and disseminate copies of those same works to other members of nobility, even across courts.[29] This more complex patronage pattern suggests that her texts are not gifts she renounces ownership of for the pleasure of the court, whose patrons can lay exclusive claim to, but instead are artifacts which are associated primarily with their creator who oversees their distribution.

The Frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen*

The frontispiece in the *Book of the Queen* (fig. 1) is one of the most visually striking miniatures in the codex. Two gatherings of six women watch over the exchange between Christine de Pizan, the poet, and Queen Isabeau. Viewers today, however, may instead first notice the historical accuracy of the illumination. The pale, limited colors of Isabeau's bedroom serve to emphasize the vibrant colors of the blue hanging tapestries embroidered with the golden arms of France and Bavaria, the fleurs-de-lis, the red linens of the couch and bed, and the color outfits of the women in the scene. The size, furniture, and decoration of this room match descriptions from royal accounts, particularly, the chair between the canopy bed, which is also adorned with the arms of France and Bavaria, and the open arched window

[28] McGrady, "What is a Patron?," 198.
[29]Ibid., 198.

in the center of the room. Due to this evidence, we may assume this represents Queen Isabeau's bedroom in the Hotel de Saint-Pol, one of the rooms she used during her pregnancies.[30] Most notably, though, Queen Isabeau's portrait is remarkably realistic. She wears her most fashionable clothing. Queen Isabeau is dressed in a popular style of gown, a fur-lined houppelande, and in this composition the dress is even her favorite color, vermilion. [31] Her head piece too, a crown-like bourrelet, was a common style of the time is well. In addition, she is depicted with two animals in her company: a graceful white hound that rests with elegantly crossed paws near the foot of her bed, and another smaller dog that sits at her side. Likely both of these dogs are greyhounds, the queen's favorite breed. [32] Even the red and gold bound codex Christine offers to Isabeau is approximately the same size as the *Book of the Queen.* These elements suggest that the frontispiece was carefully composed to commemorate or represent Christine de Pizan's presentation of the manuscript to her patron Queen Isabeau. However, this miniature was painted before the actual exchange took place. In addition, we know that Christine de Pizan dictated the composition of many of her works' illuminations to her artists. What this tells us is that Christine had knowledge of the queen's bedroom before the exchange, likely because the queen was a recurring patron for Christine, and utilized those details to construct an image that spoke to her dedication to Isabeau and the completion of the manuscript.

That same dedication and miniature also contradict themselves by embracing the radical new networks of patronage and challenging the traditional notions of medieval patronage, the gift-exchange economy. While the second chapter of this text will focus more

[30] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 463.
[31] Ibid., 463.
[32] Ibid., 463.

on the gendered aspects of Christine de Pizan's career, it is important to note here one of the primary ways in which she contradicted notions of gift-exchange is by the simple virtue of being a female poet with a female patron. For the purposes of this chapter, it is instructive to instead consider how Christine's centrality and her control of the codex challenges usual networks of patronage while simultaneously demonstrating her submission to her patron. In the frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen*, Christine de Pizan is the central figure. This is most certainly a purposeful choice, because in other dedication miniatures, such as that of Louis d'Orleans (fig. 2) and King Charles VI (fig.3) it is the patron that is the center of the composition. This centrality serves to amplify not only Christine's authority over the codex – that is, her ownership over the work – but also her position at the center of a literary enterprise. As Christine operated as both author and publisher, her manuscripts were composed and circulated at her discretion. Christine de Pizan expressed this visually in the *Book of the Queen* by including her portrait multiple times throughout the codex, and often in association with other patrons. It also serves to visually express her control over the codex itself. While Christine is certainly offering the book to Queen Isabeau, as she holds the tome just away from her chest, her hands are the only ones who come in contact with it. The queen's hands remain folded neatly in her lap while the rest of the audience watches the exchange with varying degrees of interest.

The textual element of the dedication frontispiece also challenges traditional patronage systems through Christine de Pizan's address to the queen. She implores her to ignore the weaknesses in her works, as she only tried to please the "worthy people" that she offers her works to:

Ne vueillez pas, dame sensible,

Pour tant prendre garde au deffail,

Mais a ce que je me travail

Voulentiers de ce que possible

M'est a faire en chose loisible

Qu'a haulte gent voulentiers bail. (Lines 79–84)

[Would you, sensible lady, ignore the mistakes [in this book] and instead, notice that I willingly do my best to compose pleasant works that I then offer to worthy people.][33]

In this passage, Christine de Pizan clarifies her earlier statement that the *Book of the Queen* is intended as a gift for Queen Isabeau, but that the queen herself had little creative authority of the work. She did not dictate the contents of the manuscript. Instead, Christine complied the works for her that other nobles dictated the contents of. Queen Isabeau may have requested particular texts to be included in the codex, such as the *City of Ladies,* but there is not a single text within the codex besides the dedication that is solely for the queen. In the earlier statement, Christine purposefully informs the Queen that the manuscript was compiled for her, not written for her. In addition, she reiterates that the author decided whom her works are given to by acknowledging the manuscript has been compiled from works that Christine has already offered to other patrons. Recall that within the *Book of the Queen*, there are several of Christine's works, including that of *L'Epistre Othéa* penned for Louis d'Orleans, in addition to *Dit de la pasoure* and *Cent ballades*, both of which identify other nobles as dictating the works' contents.

[33]McGrady, "What is a Patron?," 199-200.

To summarize, the frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen* is one of the most striking miniatures within the compendium because the illumination a purposeful expression of Christine de Pizan's challenge to the traditional notions of medieval patronage, the gift-exchange economy. Within the medieval world, patrons would select elite artists, craftsmen, and poets as court entertainers. The works or entertainment they produced would be gifted to the patron, and in return the patron would exchange money, lodging, positions within the court, or a number of other commodities. By presenting herself as the central figure within the miniature that maintains a remarkable level of historical accuracy, maintaining control over the codex, and representing herself multiple times throughout the manuscript, Christine de Pizan implied her control over her own works, including their dedication and dissemination. Further, the textual dedication to the codex simultaneously acknowledges and subverts the medieval expectation for patronage by noting that she did not manufacture any of the works within the *Book of the Queen* for the queen, instead she simply compiled them for her. And, Christine renounces Queen Isabeau's creative authority by suggesting that the poet herself is the deciding factor in whom receives her works. However, the frontispiece of the codex is not the only miniature that implies Christine de Pizan's operation within a radical system of patronage.

The Other Dedication Miniatures

Although it is the most unique and lavish of the volume, the frontispiece is not the only dedication illumination within the codex. Isabeau's presentation miniature is one of a kind, both for the reasons already described such as the odd gathering of unattended women and the historical accuracy of the piece, but it is also the only copy of the illumination we have. We are reminded that the manuscript is a compendium, or a collection of texts within a

single volume. There are two other dedication miniatures within the *Book of the Queen*. The first is the dedication to Louis d'Orleans, directly preceding the *L'Epistre Othéa* (fig.2). The second, that of her presenting the poem *Le livre du chemin de long estude* to Charles VI of France (fig.3), appears toward the end of the manuscript. Neither of the images is singular; they appear in other versions of Christine de Pizan's works as the miniature cycles in both the *L'Epistre Othéa* and *Le livre du chemin de long estude* closely resemble and, in some cases, directly copy illuminations from earlier versions of the same text. In addition, both images bear striking compositional similarities. We can assume these images were copied from other cycles for a number of logical reasons. Firstly, it makes sense for Christine's small workshop to re-create illuminations rather than invent new compositions. Secondly, it stands to reason that this is another way for Christine to market her works as commodities associated with her as opposed to the patrons themselves. In addition, manuscripts manufactured for elite royal patrons added a layer of prestige to Christine's work. Yet, they are still worth interrogating to understand why Christine de Pizan may have included them in such a monumental present to the queen. To understand the conception of these images we must understand the texts from which they come and the patrons they represent.

Christine de Pizan wrote voluminously on a wide variety of humanist subjects between the years 1890 and 1429, mostly for nobles within the royal court of King Charles VI, but also across court systems.[34] *L'Epistre Othéa* is one of her many works that operate on two levels, the first and most obvious that of a moral allegory, the other, as a political commentary. While the present project cannot approach the meaning of the work with deeper nuance, it is nevertheless important to understand the reasons for which the work was written

[34] Hindman, "Epistre Othéa," XII.

to be able to survey the paratextual elements with the amount of consideration they deserve. There are four unique features to the text that suggests its political nature: it is written in epistolary unlike other courtesy or etiquette books at the time; the historical rather than romantic nature of the book; the use of the four cardinal virtues; and the disregard for chronological time.[35] Three copies of *L'Epistre Othéa* exist today, all produced within three years of each other. The first was penned for Duke Louis of Orleans with six miniatures around 1400, the second completed around 1408 for another compendium, this one assembled for Duke John of Berry. The third is from another volume of her collected works, completed between 1410 and 1411, the *Book of the Queen*.[36] Understanding that *L'Epistre Othéa* can be understood as a political allegory makes the inclusion of the work within the *Book of the Queen* important. Although the work was dedicated and penned to Louis d'Orleans, who was likened to the Trojan hero Hector, the knight and example of moral good in the story, he was not the only reader of the text. Louis d'Orleans as Hector made for an easy place-holder for the role, presumably to compel other readers, such as the queen, to also practice political moderation as a form of morality with advice from the goddess Othea, whom Christine de Pizan herself represents.[37] As I examine the dedication miniature proceeding *L'Epistre Othéa* in the *Book of the Queen,* I hope to prove that the characters of Louis d'Orleans and Hector are interchangeable and further, that this substitution extends to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, the patron of the codex.

The quarter-page dedication miniature of Christine de Pizan presenting her manuscript to Louis d'Orleans is bordered by a delicate gold frame (fig. 2). Within the frame,

[35] Ibid., 20-24.
[36] Ibid., XIX.
[37] Ibid., X.

the viewer is greeted by a wide, white mason trefoil arch topped with blue roof tiles. This architectural form, with white or cream-colored mason work and blue gabled rooves is common throughout the manuscript. Christine de Pizan is easily recognizable, again in a long gown with a white collar and matching hennin. She kneels toward the left side of the image, as she offers a green-bound tome to the Duke Louis d'Orleans, who is central and framed by the largest arch above. Note the difference in placement between Louis, Isabeau, and Christine. In the frontispiece of the manuscript, Christine was the central figure, here it is the patron. Yet, Christine still remains in control of her codex, as her hands are still the only ones to touch the volume. He is dressed in a fur-lined, royal blue houppelandes which is embroidered with gold wolf designs that is stitched at the waist with a gold belt. On his head he wears an orange headpiece. The exchange between poet and patron is once again supervised, this time by three male attendants who wear various colors of dress and plumed hats. Much like the portrait of Queen Isabeau in the frontispiece of the manuscript, this portrait of Louis d'Orleans is remarkably accurate. The most notable feature of this illumination in fact, is the collar Louis and the courtiers wear: the collar of the Order of the Porcupine. This image constitutes the only accurate representation of the collar, with eight star-like points and a dangling pendant at the front-most point. Further, the colors of houppelandes the men are wearing correspond with the colors of the order.[38] This accuracy of representation is once again relevant as it unmistakably identifies Louis d'Orleans. On the very next page of the *Book of the Queen*, this composition is reversed in the presentation of Othea's letter to Hector (fig.4). We recognize Christine as Othea, in the dark gown with rectangular sleeves and high collar, but more significantly we recognize Louis as Hector.

[38] Hindman, "Epistre Othéa," 42-45.

Hector, on the left side of the image, wears a houppelande strikingly similar to the one Louis d'Orleans wears on the previous page. His courtiers also wear very similar clothing and colors. In addition, perched on Hector's arm is a falcon, a symbol of Louis d'Orleans.

The suggestion in this visual allegory could not be clearer: Louis d'Orleans as Hector represents, through moral good, the political moderation that poet, Christine de Pizan as Othea offers. To include this text within the *Book of the Queen* with accuracy and purposefulness suggests that Christine is operating as wisdom and guidance not only to Louis d'Orleans, but also to her other patron Queen Isabeau. This is because, while Louis d'Orleans and Hector are distinct characters, they also operate as a standard type for the position of patron. Similarly, Christine as Othea operates as a type for poets. It is not uncommon for Christine de Pizan to offer advice to the queen, as she has written direct letters of advice to her as well.[39] It should be noted that *L'Epistre Othéa* was so vital to include for Christine de Pizan that she altered the pages of the manuscript in order to fit within the *Book of the Queen.* Much like Christine, Queen Isabeau also held a unique role in the French court. She was one of only five French queens to take an official role in government: she was given the care of the sovereign with the assistance of the Dukes of Burgundy, Berry, Orleans and the council. She was also the first French queen to have separate financial accounts. It is possible, for these reasons, Christine de Pizan intended the inclusion of *L'Epistre Othéa* as advice to the queen during her rule.

The other dedication miniature in the *Book of the Queen* is the one that precedes *Chemin de long estude,* a dream allegory Christine de Pizan composed to lament the results

[39] Ibid., 26-27.

of warfare (fig.3). There is an immediate political correlation between *Chemin* and *L'Epistre Othéa* as *Chemin* is also a political allegory. *Chemin de long estude* follows Christine de Pizan as she reaches the Long Road of Learning, exploring three different paths that offer useful insights before she gets there. It is a quest for knowledge at the same time it is a gentle suggestion advocating for peace in France. By the end of the story, Christine finds strength from her new knowledge and the journey. Much like in *L'Epistre Othéa* Christine operates in this text as both author and character within the work.[40] The dedication miniature presents a quarter-page illumination bordered by a golden and red frame. The scene once again takes place underneath a white mason arch, where the viewer witnesses the presentation within an enclosed area. Christine is recognizable, as always, with her usual dress and white hennin. She, as the humble poet, kneels toward the left of the image offering a red-bound book to King Charles VI. While the composition is certainly comparable to that of Louis d'Orlean's dedication miniature, there are two subtle, yet distinct differences here. Firstly, Charles's hand grasps the codex Christine offers. This offer of control of her work is unprecedented in the miniatures we have seen so far. The second difference is that one of the king's courtiers, the man dressed in blue, touches Christine on the back as if nudging her forward. Her hesitance is mirrored in the corresponding dedication:

> A vous, bon roy de France redoubtable
> Mon petit dit soit premier presente,
> Tout ne soit il digne qu'en tieulx mains aille (vv.9, 12-13)

[40] Tarnowski, Adnrea. "*The Lessons of Experience and the Chemin de long estude"* Christine de Pizan: A Casebook. 183

[Good and mighty King of France, my little poem goes first to you, though it is not worthy to rest in your hands][41]

These lines convey her modesty but also her timidity in presenting a poem to such a powerful patron. The scene and accompanying dedication reflect tradition notions of medieval gift-exchange far better than the previous examples I have given: the frontispiece and presentation scene with Louis d'Orleans. These illuminations, as I have argued, are purposeful in presenting Christine de Pizan as operating in radically new systems of patronage by maintaining her literary authority or control over the codex and by being central in their composition as well as their dissemination. However, I do not mean to represent Christine de Pizan as operating above her status. In every illumination thus far, she has remained knelt and submissive, only showing control of the work in so far as the manuscripts she herself writes. This is still the case within this miniature as per the dedication: Charles VI is simply the first to receive the poem *Chemin de long estude.* Christine de Pizan has also given copies to Louis d'Orleans, the Duke de Berry, and Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, as we aware from the inclusion of the poem in the *Book of the Queen.* The work's inclusion in the volume may operate in the same way *L'Epistre Othéa* does, as a political allegory intended as advice for the queen.

Conclusion

Christine de Pizan was the first woman of letters or the first female author of the French court to make a successful living off the written word. Her success was completely reliant on the unique circumstances of her time, her birth, and her ingenuity. She had begun

[41] Ibid, 181.

to write seriously in 1399 during the transition in French society from Charles V to Charles VI. The previous monarch had employed both her husband and her father and promoted an artistic agenda that encouraged the creation of manuscripts and the dissemination of them. When Charles VI inherited the throne at twelve years old, he did not hold the same interests in promoting art as his father, yet the systems of patronage were already changing and continued to change when the king was no longer the most prominent patron of the arts. Other notable patrons across court systems sought out Christine de Pizan's works, from the Dukes of Berry to the Italian and Burgundian courts. The traditional notions of medieval gift-exchange were no longer feasible and hence, Christine took advantage of these new networks of patronage. Christine operated as an advisor, poet, and publisher of her works allowing for clever textual and paratextual suggestions from a female perspective, something incredibly unique for the time. Most notably is the way in which Christine uses illuminations to amplify her works and suggest things between the lines. Christine does not submit herself to a single patron and she retains her literary authority and control over her manuscripts. The reader becomes aware of this first through the construction of the book. It is obvious that Christine cannibalized other of her manuscripts to create the volume for Queen Isabeau and the addition of those multiple dedication miniatures demonstrates that this manuscript was not written for the queen, simply complied for her. She suggests this visually throughout the miniatures in the *Book of the Queen.* In the frontispiece, she is quite literally the central figure, the point of dissemination of her works in addition to being the only one with her hands on the codex. Mere pages after the frontispiece, the presentation miniature of Louis d'Orleans once again establishes Christine's control over her work, but also suggests her nature as an advisor. She does this by mirroring the presentation miniature with an image of

Othea presenting her letter to Hector, both characters becoming types for the real-life individuals: Christine herself and Louis. This clever manipulation of paratext leads to the conclusion that Christine not only has control of the manuscript itself, both in its construction and dissemination, but also in its content. Further, she can use this control for her own intention, namely offering political advice for powerful political figures while still operating within the limits of her gender and status. This point is further exemplified by the final miniature this chapter interrogates: the miniature with King Charles VI and Christine. In the final presentation scene in the *Book of the Queen* we see familiar compositional elements; Christine on the left side of the frame, the male patron central. But this is also the first illumination we see her fully submit to the patron, by allowing the patron to touch the codex. On the other hand, in Christine's carefully worded dedication to Charles VI, she tells him that he is only the first to receive a copy of said codex. To conclude, Christine de Pizan intentionally utilized the changing systems of patronage in the French royal court to reconceptualize the literary artifact as an object of her own thought. Her works are her own, not ones designed and owned by the patron that receives them.

II. Authorial Auctoritas of Christine de Pizan

Framed by a wonderfully perspectival white mason arch, supported by engaged columns that rise to meet relief-carved acanthus leaf spandrels, is a glimpse into the workspace of Christine de Pizan, dressed in a familiar blue gown. (fig. 5) She leans over a yellow cloth covered desk, a pen and a pen knife in her hands. Her body is turned toward us, in a three-quarter angle, but her gaze remains focused on the open book on her desk. Christine is in control of not only the words she is writing on the page, but also the space she occupies. This illumination of Christine in her study, an author-portrait, is another piece of visual evidence that the *Book of the Queen* is a manuscript primarily associated with its creator as it implies control over the words she writes as well as the space she occupies. But in addition, the miniature is an example of Christine's unique occupation and her authorial auctoritas. Through the arch framing the architectural niche Christine resides in, the viewer is allowed a glimpse into her space and her work, but we cannot access her. By establishing her authorial auctoritas through the gendered iconographical models of authorship and publication, such as author portraits and presentation scenes that dominate pages of her manuscripts, Christine de Pizan legitimized herself as a living archetype, advertised her literacy, and embraced a clerkly persona. Through her established authority as an author-publisher, she validated not only her text, but the wealth of visual allegories she composed throughout her oeuvre.

The traditions of authorship, publication, and reading have been gendered since antiquity. Even as manuscripts evolved from the scroll to the codex, the gendered notions

remained well into the late Middle Ages.[42] Even Christine as France's first woman of letters had to contend with these gendered notions of reading and authorship throughout her life. Christine, by allowing us a glimpse into her study, proves that she was not only a remarkably well-read scholar among her contemporary humanists, but that she also operated as both author and publisher of her massive oeuvre, evidenced by her writing inside a book. In addition, the composition of this author-portrait takes after similar compositional elements in her contemporaries' author portraits, such as Bocaccio and Dante. Her presentation in the author-portrait described, then, is not simply an aesthetic choice, but an intentional display of authority. As a publisher, Christine maintained a workshop with several scribes and illuminators whom she oversaw. She instructed her employees carefully, not only dictating her words to them but also composing the miniatures within her manuscripts. In addition to her strict supervision, Christine de Pizan wrote within the codices herself, casting her into another role as a living archetype. However, her unique career as a female archetype, author, and publisher, gave way to equally uncommon hardships.

As a female scholar, Christine de Pizan had to both legitimatize and market herself and her works in novel ways to be taken seriously by the royal patrons who sought her work, in a male-dominated field.[43] She turned to ancient, gendered models of literacy to resolve her issues of authority by utilizing prestigious iconographies, such as author portraiture and book presentation scenes. The composition of her miniatures advertised her mastery of the written word by depicting her near center or center of her illuminations, and in control of the codices and spaces she occupied, as exemplified by the author-portrait described above. She

[42] Pächt, Otto, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages: An Introduction*. (London, England; H. Miller Publishers, 1986), 9-31.
[43] Bell, "Problems of a Studious Woman," 173-184.

is additionally able to embrace a "clerkly persona" that is reflective of her unusual position as a woman that straddles the spheres of monastic and lay cultures. Rather, a "clerkly persona" refers to her status as an educated widow who has not taken religious vows but occupied elite circles. In the frontispiece presentation scene of the *Book of the Queen* (fig.1) preceding Christine's author-portrait, the viewer sees her again, with a book in her hands. This codex, bound in red and decorated with gold, sits heavily in her hands as she presents it to Queen Isabeau. Yet, she is the only one to touch it and she remains central and isolated within the group of women that surround her, informing the viewer to her unique status and authority over the book.

Christine's Workshop

The frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen* is once again worth consideration. In the last chapter, I noted how this frontispiece reflected Christine taking advantage of new systems of patronage. However, for this chapter, I will be examining the illumination as it depicts Christine de Pizan's authorial auctoritas. Within a space defined by royal blue tapestries with alternating gold checkered and fleur-de-lis patterns between tall, white mason columns, there is an unusual gathering of unattended women who serve as the audience to Christine de Pizan's presentation of her book to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria (fig. 1). The scene is set in Queen Isabeau's bedroom, as indicated by the red covered bed and frame toward the far right-hand side of the image. Likely, the image was inspired by real events, as it was common for royals to take audiences into their bed chambers. However, the illumination was painted before the event, allowing Christine to take narrative control over the composition and further, to suggest she had access to Isabeau as a frequent patron due to the naturalistic depiction of the scene. Christine herself, kneels, separated from the crowd, in front of Queen

Isabeau, just left of center of the illumination dressed in the modest blue and white garments we are familiar with. She presents, with her arms slightly extended, a large red bound book with gold decoration to the Queen. Yet, Queen Isabeau's hands remain tucked in her lap while the audience is disengaged from the scene. Christine is not only divided from the audience and Queen Isabeau by tangible distance, but also through the palpable disinterest. Only Christine's hands touch the codex, and only her gaze meets the queen's. This illumination is the frontispiece to the *Book of the Queen*, likely the same book Christine holds in her hands. It serves not only as a dedication to Queen Isabeau, but as evidence of Christine's unique occupation through her separation from the rest of the women in the miniature and her control over the codex. Christine de Pizan was not only an author-publisher, but a living archetype that composed both the textual and visual programs within her manuscripts for royal patrons, as she did with the frontispiece and author-portrait already discussed.

Christine de Pizan was responsible for a large quantity of works that ranged from love poetry, to allegorical narratives, to political and philosophical treatises which she had the privilege to write both on commission and speculation[44] as her patrons sought works of high quality that reflected their wealth and status.[45] Her works were disseminated in courtly circles, reflecting the contexts of her status, but also the networks of patronage in which she was involved.[46] Patronage, in regards to both the study of medieval art and the study of manuscripts, is complicated to define. Fortunately, I have dedicated an entire chapter of this paper to disentangle the patterns of patronage in which Christine took part. However, for the

[44] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 456-459.
[45] Flora, Holly. "Patronage." *Studies in Iconography 33* (2012): 208.
[46] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 456-459.

purposes of this chapter, patronage will be used as a convenient catch-all to describe a broad history of reception and investigations into the network of agency responsible for producing an object. [47] In addition, I believe it is important to revisit major points of the last chapter, as Christine's authority is closely tied with her patronage networks. Manuscript studies have sought to describe these patterns of agency, rather the patterns of actions and decisions made to produce an object, by differentiating between the patron and the owner of the book as once an author presents a work to their patron, they relinquish authority over the literary object, hence exemplifying the courtly gift-exchange economy. However, with the rise of the book trade within the French courtly contexts that Christine was raised, there was a wider dissemination of manuscripts. Consequently, many writers, including Christine de Pizan, lacked support from a single patron. As such, the patronage network found here functioned much differently than the traditional patterns of gift-giving described. [48] Manuscripts were now associated primarily with their creator, or creators, who were responsible for their continued distribution. Authors like Christine de Pizan then, retained their authority over their works. We could return to the frontispiece of the *Book of the Queen* to re-examine Christine's visual authority over the codex, but fortunately Christine composed many book presentation scenes due to her wide distribution of her oeuvre.

As with all the miniatures discussed thus far, the room this scene is set in is defined by white, engaged columns and distinctly Roman arches that arc high above the individuals in the scene (fig. 2). The walls of this room too, recede into the illumination, allowing the viewer a glance into the shadow box like space. There are five distinct individuals here as

[47] Flora, "Patronage." 209.
[48] Desmond, Marilynn, *Christine De Pizan and the Categories of Difference,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). 195-198.

opposed to the plain, stock characters of women in Christine presenting her book to Queen Isabeau scene. We recognize the patron of the book, the Duke Louis of Orleans, by his lavish, royal blue garment that spreads across the throne he is sits in, styled with golden wolf figures and a sectioned belt at the waist, along with the red head piece he wears. His gaze, along with the rest of the men's, is directed toward Christine, whose dress is styled as we are familiar but colored black, who kneels before them at the far right of the page. Although she is not central, she still remains in control of the scene through gaze and touch. Again, only her gaze meets the patron's and only her hands touch the codex. Through these gestures, and her continued separation from the other individuals within the scene, she is visually maintaining control over the manuscript or her work. There is a wealth of presentation scenes composed by Christine that follow the same models for most of her wide range of patrons.

For Christine to distribute her works successfully through the large network of patronage in which she was involved, including even some aboard, she had to maintain a steady production schedule. Christine de Pizan maintained a small workshop where she employed approximately two scribes and a fluctuating number of illuminators. Among these illuminators were the Master of the Cite des Dames who was responsible for the frontispiece in the *Book of the Queen*, the Epistre Master, and the Saffron Master. The scribes as well as the Epistre Master and Saffron Master appeared to work exclusively for Christine. However, the most notable of Christine's employees was the female border and miniature specialist Anastasia who worked with Christine frequently.[49] While the individuals she employed would already be aware and practiced in the scribing and decorating of manuscripts, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Christine was more involved with book-making then her

[49] Hindman, "Epistre Othéa," 62-69.

humanist peers. In fact, the language used to describe her technical involvement in the production of her manuscripts is referred to as "made by Christine" as opposed to "by Christine" in both her own manuscripts and other primary documentation. In addition, we know that Christine had a close relationship with her illuminators, to whom she dictated very specific instructions and supervised closely. [50] However, Christine as a publisher was very concerned about the dissemination of her works. As such, we know that she not only dictated her works to her scribes but also participated in the writing of the physical codex herself. This concept is exampled in the very author-portrait previously discussed. Dressed in her distinctly recognizable blue dress with long sleeves and extra gatherings of fabric around the elbows, as well as her white headdress, Christine sits in her study with the instruments of a scribe in her hands. In her left, she holds a red quill and in her right, a knife to score and correct the pages. On her golden-yellow cloth covered desk also sits an open silver box, an inkwell in which to dip her quill. Nearly fifty-five of her manuscripts that still exist today have been proven to be partial or complete autographs. [51]

Christine de Pizan was not only the author and publisher of her manuscripts, she was the originator of her works, an example of a living archetype. Her occupation as publisher allowed her to maintain a salient control over both the visual and textual programs within her manuscripts. By taking advantage of that control to compose illuminations and miniatures that reflected her authority of the codices she presents and further, allow patrons and viewers a glimpse into her work through her author-portrait, she fulfills a novel role as an archetype. Her novelty as a female author-publisher as well as a living archetype ensured that she

[50] Smith, Lesley and Jane H. M. Taylor. *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*. (London; Toronto; Buffalo; British Library, 1997.) 14.
[51] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 460.

maintained authority and that patrons would seek her work. This allowed her to disseminate her works through a wide network of courtly patronage. As an author-publisher and living archetype, Christine was able to retain an important sense of legitimacy, authorial auctoritas.

Christine's Authorial Auctoritas

Authorial auctoritas is the authenticity and validity of those works whose text is considered reliable and legitimate. This authenticity serves to discern the authors' intentions behind the manuscript they produce. If an author's intent, for example, is to advise or educate their patron, their authenticity benefits the work by ensuring the text presented is reliable. As such, the concept of authorial auctoritas could serve as an important tool for legitimacy and marketing for any medieval author. However, for Christine de Pizan, auctoritas is even more significant if she wished to be taken seriously and establish her career in the male-dominated sphere of humanist writers. [52] Christine was the first female writer in France to consistently profit from her written works. In a practical sense, her auctoritas was integral to ensure her livelihood was prosperous. Further, she would require an inarguable type of authority that would allow her to assume and maintain her unique identity as a female professional writer before the profession even existed.[53] While this work was difficult, she was able to establish authority in multiple ways through both the textual and visual evidences within her manuscripts.

[52] McGrady, Deborah. "Reading for Authority: Portraits of Christine De Pizan and Her Readers." In *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, edited by Partridge Stephen and Kwakkel Erik, (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012.)154-156.
[53] Quilligan, Maureen. *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine De Pizan's Cité Des Dames.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) 1-10.

This evidence is most comprehensive within *The Book of the City of Ladies*, one of the texts within the compendium the *Book of the Queen* Christine's allegorical response to a love poem written years prior with inspiration taken from works of Boccaccio and Dante. Within this book, and others among Christine's oeuvre, the author uses a peculiar signature to open her text. She writes, "Je Christine," which establishes her authority by referencing her status as well as placing her in the role of author.[54] To write herself into the text references her authorship and her status through the power of her name. That is, by naming herself, she establishes her authority. As we know, Christine composed both the textual and visual programs of her works based on the models of prestige available to her. In her signature, she references fourteenth-century formulas for the establishment of textual authority, but in her visual allegories she utilizes references from multiple specific contemporaries including Boccaccio and Dante. We are now familiar with many of the ways in which she maintains control in her visual presence within her miniatures. However, we can continue to dissect Christine's authorial auctoritas by examining the prestigious traditions from which author portraits derive.

Author portraits have a long history, stemming from that Greco-Roman context, as important elements within the manuscript tradition. Through the translation of scroll to codex, the iconographical type of the author-portrait became examples of Byzantine Evangelist portraits. Then, during the late Middle Ages, Evangelist portraits transitioned back into author portraits as secular codices became more widely circulated and humanists became concerned with the connection between the text and the producer of that text.[55] Author

[54] Ibid., 12-14.
[55] Tether, Leah. "Disclosing the Author." In *Publishing the Grail in Medieval and Renaissance France;* Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell and Brewer, 2017) 63-108.

portraits then, as a specific type of portraiture in relation to manuscripts, served a range of functions that included: contextualizing and framing the text by establishing the texts connection with the author, stressing the importance of the individual creator to allow the adoption of an identity or persona, and bestowing the work with a sense of authenticity.[56] Christine de Pizan's author portrait in the *Book of the Queen* (fig. 5) depicts her in her study. It is important to emphasize that this author portrait occupies almost a quarter of the page. Against a lavish blue background with golden floral motifs, a white mason structure with a red-orange gabled roof houses Christine de Pizan under an elongated Roman archway. Christine sits at her desk dressed in a long blue garment that mimics the color of the sky. To her left side, is a small white dog. In her hand which rests atop an open book, she holds a pen. She looks down as she writes. By representing herself in this way, she directly responding to the way in which contemporary authors and her male patrons represent themselves as studious by the simple virtue of being within a study. One comparison is the way in which images of Christine in her study reflect similar miniatures of King Charles V (fig. 6)

This illumination of Charles V has many comparisons to Christine de Pizan's own author portraiture. Charles V is represented here within his study, however unlike Christine's cubical cell, framed by white mason columns, his space includes a large, and seemingly endless domain, as the patterning of the wallpaper extends past the borders of the illumination. He sits in a three-quarter view, turned slightly toward the viewer as his lavish garments dovetail against a dark platform. This rectangular platform does not simply continue past the border unseen, but, pushes the illumination into the viewers' space. The

[56] McGrady, "Reading for Authority," 161-164.

platform itself is contained within a decorative architectural dais that is adorned by decorative arms relief-carved with a gothic window motif that is mimicked in the real windows behind him. Above is a solid, decorative baldachin with squared crenellations and an open, floral register. Finally, we must address the similarity of the position and placement of the dogs within these images. In Christine de Pizan's portrait in the *Book of the Queen* and Charles V's portrait, there sits a small dog to our left. The dogs look up at their respective masters. These architectural forms are familiar to us in Christine's portraiture, both in the *Book of the Queen* and in others, such as the one in another copy of the *City of Ladies* (fig.7). Note the similarities between this image and the author portrait of Christine we have nearly exhausted, along with that of Charles V. Christine, this time dressed in pink, sits within the same Roman architectural arch we are familiar, but she mimics Charles V's pose once again: the three-quarter view, the raised leg, and the cross-bodied right arm.

Christine de Pizan's author portraits should also be considered with the context of her contemporaries, specifically those from which she took inspiration. For example, we might compare the compositions of both of Christine's author portraits to that of Boccaccio's representation in *On Famous Women* (fig. 8). While we understand that Christine's *The City of Ladies* is an allegorical chronicle, similar to Dante's *Inferno* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Christine de Pizan is referencing many of her tales of women from Bocaccio's *On Famous Women*, although she re-contextualizes the many of the narratives. To borrow or re-tell these stories with a feminine lens proves that Christine was well-read, which further asserts her authority and validity as an author. First, to take a closer look at Christine's other author portrait in another version of *t*he *City of Ladies* (fig. 7). Here, while dressed in a salmon colored garment and conical headpiece, both with strongly contoured folds, Christine

is recognizable by the control she maintains over the codex. Both of her hands rest on the white, text filled pages of the dark green bound manuscript she is in the middle of examining. Again, she sits under a architectural frame, this one too a Roman archway with long, white mason columns. She reads on a carrel with a round tabletop with squared supports on a large wooden platform. Her contemporary Boccaccio's representation depicts him similarly, at a carrel with a round surface, although his is much slenderer and he appears to sit on a white stone seat instead of a wooden bench. Boccaccio, unlike the three-quarter positions we have grown accustomed to seeing, sits in perfect profile as he raises one hand to a female personification of Fortune, as the other rests upon the arm of the chair he sits in. The most important feature to understand here, is that both Christine and her male contemporaries are placed within similar study spaces, an important aspect of the humanist author.[57]

In order to establish her authorial auctoritas, Christine de Pizan utilized the common and prestigious iconographies of author portraiture. As France's "woman of letters," a profession that did not exist until Christine was afforded the opportunity at the same time she was forced to take the position.[58] To sustain her career, Christine had to embellish herself with a type of inarguable authority and she did this in novel ways to ensure her continued success. Through both textual evidence, such as a distinct signature that refers to herself, and visual programs that reference common humanist iconographies of power such as Roman architectural forms, representation in male associated study spaces, and mimicking representations of powerful figures, such as one of her patrons, King Charles V within her author portraiture.

[57] Susan Groag Bell, "Christine De Pizan in Her Study," Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes. Journal of medieval and humanistic studies (Classiques Garnier, June 10, 2008) 1-10.
[58] Quilligan, "Allegory," 12-16

Christine as Exception

To understand Christine de Pizan as exception, it is important to understand the history which she deviated from. The evolution of the codex, facilitated in part by the transition from paganism to Christianity in the courts of Charlemagne began in late antiquity with the desire for control, consistency, and longevity of the written word. Papyrus scrolls were not suited for these desires as they were unwieldy and fragile. There was a particular concern for the perseveration of important classical literature, whose importance was determined by the male scribes who copied the papyrus scrolls into the book.[59] However, the echoes of codices' Greco-Roman past as gendered objects remained prevalent in the Middle Ages. Both education and literacy were gendered within Greco-Roman antiquity and the medieval period however there were significant differences in the way women were educated. In antiquity, young girls were frequently formally educated in a wide variety of scholastic endeavors. As a result, many women were literate, capable of basic mathematical functions, and play instruments. Much like medieval women though, ancient women were stripped of bodily autonomy, the right to own land or participate in legal forums among other restrictions. Their role in society was to occupy the home and provide fruitful offspring for their husbands, whom they married according to who had the largest dowry. Like medieval women, ancient women did not, although there are exceptions, occupy themselves with scholarly pursuits such as authorship.[60]

However, the gendered connotations and evolution of the codex did not end with the transition from papyrus to book in antiquity. During the early Middle Ages, over the course

[59] Pächt, Otto, "Book Illumination in the Middle Ages," 9-31.
[60] Cartwright, Mark. "Women in Ancient Greece." Ancient History Encyclopedia. Ancient History Encyclopedia, September 22, 2019.

of the 11th and 12th centuries, there were a series of cultural changes that encouraged a literate lay mentality. These changes were economic, social, and political factors that included but were not limited to the distrust of the authority of the church due to the papal schism, pandemics such as plague and famine, and advances in technology such as eyeglasses that brought about a quest for "spiritual certainties" which resulted in an uptick in literacy and book ownership, particularly among women.[61] This shift lead to the inclusion of women book owners as persons of cultural change. Both genders of the upper-class were now often capable of reading in the vernacular and in monastic or scholarly cases, Latin. However, what and how women read were still regulated by their male counterparts. Men would designate what the medieval woman read, and these texts mostly consisted of treatises of advice such as the *Ancrene Wisse* or private devotional books such as Books of Hours. Manuscripts of this kind were often written by men to supplement legislative texts such as the Benedictine Rule and further, to assimilate reading to type of religious work.[62] Christine de Pizan however, was a formidable late medieval example of an exception to the gendered notions of reading that remained prominent throughout the Middle Ages as she occupied a unique position as an educated, widowed woman.

Christine de Pizan was informally provided a boys' education by her father Thomas, who worked in the royal courts to King Charles V. Her family remained within courtly contexts with her marriage to a nobleman that also worked in service to the king. In addition

[61] Bell, Susan Goarg. "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, edited Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: U Of Georgia P, 1988) 149-187.
[62] Barratt, Alexandra. "'Take a Book and Read': Advice for Religious Women." *In Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, edited by Gunn Cate and Innes-Parker Catherine, (Boydell and Brewer, 2009.) 194-196.

to her informal education, due to her association with the royal court, she had access to libraries and other resources women of her time were not privy to.[63] After the death of these two patriarchal figures, Christine de Pizan was freed from a patriarchal authority and from the inferior legal and social status medieval women suffered as wives. She had a degree of independence and selfhood that, in addition to her informal education, afforded her the opportunity to turn to authorship and publication to sustain herself and her family.[64] Christine operated as both author and publisher of a large swathe of works that ranged from love poetry, to allegorical narratives, to political and philosophical treatises which she had the privilege to write both on commission and speculation. Her oeuvre circulated within the same courtly contexts in which she was raised.[65] Christine then, due to her occupation and association with the royal court, was a part of a movement of French humanist philosophers or orators that concerned themselves with morality, liberal arts, and the self-development of the soul during its journey on the earthly realm contextualized by Christian values, seeking to answer the question of human life. The orators were a male-dominated group that embraced the cult of antiquity, believing that Christian values had eroded during the Middle Ages and desiring to return to Greco-Roman authors whose examples would benefit the contemporary world.

Conclusion

Authorship and reading associated with manuscript traditions have had gendered connotations since the Greco-Roman period. As Christianity became elevated through the

[63] Bell, "Problem of a Studious Woman," 173-174.
[64] Sauer, Michelle M. Gender in Medieval Culture. (London;New York;: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) 52.
[65] Hindman, "With Ink and Mortar," 456-459.

courts of Charlemagne, manuscripts began to evolve from scrolls to codices. But the gendered contexts of literacy remained well into the late medieval period, despite a steadily shifting mentality that advocated for the literate mind. By Christine de Pizan's time, both men and women were mostly capable of reading in the vernacular and those members of the clergy and scholars were literate in Latin as well. However, women's reading highly regulated by male authorities. Christine de Pizan was a unique exception to the gendered contexts of authorship and reading as she was a scholarly woman who turned to reading and writing as an occupation. She occupied a male-dominated space of humanist orators who devoted themselves to the quest of knowledge and the betterment of the soul while embracing antiquity. Christine had a personal engagement with the education and history of women for which she advocated, but for her work to be taken seriously in an overwhelmingly male field, she had to establish her authorial authority. Authorial authority was to imbue oneself and texts with authenticity and validity that operated as a legitimizing and marketing strategy. One of the ways in which Christine bestowed this authority upon herself was by responding to the popular discourse surrounding the manuscript *The Romance of the Rose* with her own work, *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Through this manuscript, located within the *Book of the Queen*, Christine was able to prove her authority as an author by advertising her literacy and embracing a clerkly persona within the author portraits that dominate the pages of the codex. Her establishment of her authorial authority was invaluable in her capabilities to market herself and in her legitimacy as an author. With authorial authority, Christine de Pizan is able to validate the wealth of visual allegories that persist through the City of Ladies, in tandem with the text.

III. The Visual Programs of Christine de Pizan

As we have seen, Christine de Pizan was an accomplished writer, whose reputation was imbued with literary authority by way of her participation in the book making process. From the foundations of her predecessors and contemporaries, she baked the bricks and spread the mortar to build her own city that disrupts the male-centric canon of literature. In *The Book of the City of Ladies* Christine weaved a visual metaphor reliant on the subversion of male stories. The revised biographies of women were her bricks and the re-telling of the male quest for knowledge was her mortar as she built a complex allegory of architecture. As she appears in her own carefully instructed composition, Christine establishes herself not only as a woman of letters, but an architect of textual and visual allegory with the authority to revise the misconceptions of women. In the large narrative miniature of Christine with her guides, she labors, placing the first bricks to build the walls of the City of Ladies. (fig.9) In this illumination there are two scenes: the first is framed by a small, gray mason building. In the second, the foundations of Christine's City of Ladies are being laid. In the left-hand scene, Christine, along with the personifications of Rectitude, Justice, and Reason, is tucked within a rectangular mason building with a single large opening toward the foreground of the image. Two small arch windows with iron grates appear on the longest sides of the building. The interior is decorated with a blue and red tile floor, a half-circular bench made of lightly colored wood, and a long rectangular table with a darkly varnished surface that separates the four figures. Christine is the figure closest to us in this scene, her form sat with a slight curve, as her arms reach across her body to the open book on the table. She writes in the open codex in a fashion we have become familiar with in her various depictions in the *Book of the Queen*. The three figures are across from her: Reason wears a red garment tied with a black

band at the waist; Rectitude is dressed in light green; and Justice wears a dusty rose dress with blue sleeves. They are each crowned and hold their attributes — a mirror, a ruler, and a vessel respectively. This scene is echoed by that on the right, as Christine and Reason lay down the foundations of *The Book of the City of Ladies*. As Christine writes her manuscript, she simultaneously builds the foundations of her city, with the tools of a mason in her hands. *The Book of the City of Ladies,* as a revision of the traditional male canon, requires a foundation to be built upon.[66] Christine, as a member of the French royal court, had access to a large library of references. For example, we know that *The Book of the City of Ladies* was a response to Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*. Primarily, however, it was the biographies of Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* that served as bricks and allegorical male quests for knowledge that served as the frame. In Dante, we can trace the engagement with architecture and the role of author as guide through the complex visual systems encountered within these manuscripts. Christine de Pizan's unique position as a woman of letters is reflected in the simultaneous confinement and subversion of epic narratives and biographies of women illustrated in her visual allegories. The importance of Christine de Pizan's visual programs is that they are not just simply illustrations of the text, but rather that they serve as an enhancement of her metaphor. Because Christine played a major role in the composition of her illuminations, the reader can assume that, at the same time the imagery is a reprieve from the density of the words on the page, it is also a nuanced supplement to the text. As such, the miniatures of *The Book of the City of Ladies* often imply that there is more behind the words on the page. Indeed, Christine herself wrote that the poem should have many

[66] Quilligan, "Allegory," 3.

interpretations.[67] For Christine de Pizan, the use of a complex visual system within her allegorical *The City of Ladies* served as an emphasis of her architectural metaphor, hence sharpening her intervention into the male canon. Through the comparisons of architectural forms and representations of the author on an allegorical journey in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as well as the depictions of women in Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* to Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*, I hope to prove that Christine's visual programs are not simply illustrations of her text, but independent, powerful statements that referenced her unique position and amplified her textual components.

Influences / Subversion of the Male Journey

To examine the influences of Christine de Pizan's work it is useful to compare her illuminations to that of her male contemporaries. Further, this comparison will serve as an example of her subversion of male-dominated allegories and highlight the images as powerful manifestations of her thought. I would like to compare the Bath of Muses imagery in Christine's *Livre du Chemin de long estude* from the *Book of the Queen* (fig.10), in comparison to that of the same imagery in *Ovide moralise* (fig. 11). In the manuscript, Christine adapts the metaphor of the male journey into the female quest for knowledge, gendering the journey and empowering herself as an author while fixing female agency into the realm of possible interpretations.[68] The miniature is relatively small on the page, allowing a brief reflection of the story by means of vivid interactions of color. Within the rectangular golden frame, Christine and the Sibyl stand in the bottom left-hand corner of the illumination. Both figures, Christine dressed in a light blue garment with sleeves with extra

[67] Gibbons, Mary Weitzel. "The Bath of the Muses and Visual Allegory in the Chemin De Long Estude." In *Christine De Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, edited by Desmond Marilynn, 128-45. (University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 128
[68] Ibid., 130.

gatherings of fabric around the elbows and the Sibyl in a rosy colored dress with shapely sleeves, look on toward the Bath of Muses. In the rectangular stone bath, all nine Muses bathe naked while a white Pegasus with red, feathery wings takes off above them, back hooves still on the rocky terrain. The water in the bath covers them modestly from the waist down. Each of the nine Muses is individualized through both the white headdresses they wear and their facial features. Further, the women interact with each other and their environment. Two Muses on the far, upper left of the bath seem to joke with one another, while a third figure behind them leans slightly out of the bath, to get a better glimpse of Christine and the Sibyl. Here, Christine and her prophetess guide interrupt the male search for knowledge with their own distinctly feminine quest.,. As the Sibyl guides Christine, preparing her for the authority and knowledge traditionally possessed only by men, they come across the Fountain of Wisdom. This fountain in which the Muses bath is a sign of that elusive male privilege of intellect.[69] However, the actual miniature contradicts this. Looking at Christine's Bath of Muses imagery, there are no male figures present and further, Christine has access to the main body of water in which the Muses bathe.

When we turn to the *Ovide moralise* image, we encounter a distinctly different depiction wherein we see indistinct Muses and a variety of male on-lookers. Despite the similarities in the text including the purity and transparency of the water in which the Muses bathe. However, within the clover frame of the *Ovide moralise* miniature, the twisting river that streams from between two, of mountains is practically transparent. The nine Muses in the *Ovide moralise* image are completely nude, with no head coverings and their full bodies visible to Apollo who sits on the top of the mountain to the right, Minerva who stands also to

[69] Ibid., 132.

the right of the composition, and the cackling magpies that sit among the squat trees and shrubbery. These Muses, instead of seemingly comfortable in each others' company, hold and cover themselves from the unwanted gaze of their visitors in this composition. The composition of the image undermines the Muses' authority as knowledgeable women and presents them as erotic. Christine's Bath of Muses transforms the canonical male voyeurism of female nudity and knowledge in the female authorial gaze by representing the female bodies of the Muses as clothed and covered. With visual comparisons such as the Bath of Muses imagery, Christine de Pizan inscribes male intellectual superiority onto the female body. In other words, by removing the male gaze from her imagery in the Bath of Muses miniature Christine allows the female form to become a viable vessel for intellect. By doing so she is also authorizing women's full assumption of equality in formerly male-only domains without sacrificing the traditional identification of females with nature.

Christine's continued subversion of the male journey into the female quest for knowledge and authority continues throughout her work. Parallels between *The Book of the City of Ladies* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* are similarly obvious. While the two works have very different aims, Dante's epic poem operates as a lesson in morality; *The Book of the City of Ladies* is a defense of women. Both utilize the literary devices of the journey or quest and elements of biography. Much like in the comparisons between the *Ovide Moralise* and *Chemin long de Estude*, Christine models her compositions in *The Book of the City of Ladies* from recognizable forms from those such as Dante's, in her subversion of the male journey. As for the biographical elements, in Dante's case, his biographical elements are brief but contextual, to explain why certain individuals are in Hell or in Heaven. However, Christine uses biography to make a case for the merits of women, categorizing their biographies

according to the individuals' achievements. As such, I would like to briefly compare the historiated initial of Dante and Virgil as traveler and guide (fig.12) to the illumination of Rectitude leading Christine (fig.13).

Dante begins his pilgrimage in a very different way than Christine, however the comparisons between their positions as guided travelers within the visual programs of the manuscripts reference the ways in which Christine both takes inspiration and subverts the models of the male journey. In the dark wood, after encountering three beasts, a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf, Dante finds himself in the presence of the poet Virgil, who operates as his guide in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. They are posed together in numerous illuminations across the manuscript, including that of the historiated initial in the first folio. Here, Dante and Virgil, dressed in long blue and red garments respectively, stand with a gentle, right-leaning sway to their bodies; they appear in a dark wood. Dante's gaze is downcast, as he lifts part of his robe up with his right hand, his left is raised at hip height. In front of him Virgil stands, both his arms raised to waist height as he gestures toward the right of the composition, toward their journey. The scene is framed in a large N, with lavish gold backgrounds and bright blue and red feathers. In each of the corners of the frame, there are four small half-length figures. Starting in the upper left hand corner then moving clockwise, the figures include: a man with a blue helm and a head in his right hand, a man in a maroon colored robe, a figure in green holding a vessel, and a final figure in bright red, holding a sword and a shield. This sumptuous illumination, along with many others in the manuscript, has clear parallels to Christine's visual programs.

The gesturing, the posture, and even the colors of the garments worn by pilgrim and guide are reflected in Christine's composition, suggesting the ways in which Christine's

textual and visual programs both reference and subvert the quest for knowledge. In the miniature of Rectitude leading Christine, the female personification of Righteousness leads a group of seven worthy women, including Christine herself, past City of Ladies, still ostensibly under construtions. This rectangular illumination occupies about a fourth of the page and it is bordered with blue and gold bands. Rectitude is identifiable within the miniature as she is the leader, or guide, and stands toward the far right-hand side of the page as she and the other women traverse the narrative. She stands taller than all the other women, a clear hierarchical scale, dressed in a red dress with white detailing on the torso. By composing Rectitude with a clear hierarchical scale, Christine de Pizan imbues her with more authority than what she allows herself. In opposition, Dante and his guide stand at the same height, equating their authority.. Much like Virgil, Rectitude holds her left hand upwards, gesturing toward the right of the composition along with the sway of her body while her other hand remains at her hip. Christine is easily distinguishable herself, as by this point the reader should be familiar with her deep blue garment with a rounded neck and burgundy sleeves, in addition to the white headdress she wears. Her blue garment as well as Rectitude's red dress, reflect a similar color symbolism to that of Dante and Virgil. Her hands and gesture are not visible to us, but she too, looks forward instead of downward at her skirts. The composition of the two miniatures mirror each other closely enough that the roles of the figures would be clearly understood, although it would be novel and fascinating to see a female body in the role of the traveler.

Through Christine de Pizan's careful considerations of a variety of literary works, she is able to simultaneously imbue herself with authorial auctoritas, subvert the male-dominated genre of the journey or quest for knowledge, and bestow her visual programs with a

multitude of interruptions that serve as powerful visual manifestations of her textual components. In the Bath of Muses imagery, Christine alters the composition to remove any notion of the male gaze by eliminating the male presence and erasing erotic connotations by displaying the Muses as covered hence inscribing herself, and the female body in general, with an equal intellect to men. Further, she is able subvert the genre of the male quest by placing herself, alongside a female guide, into the roles men would typically dominate, as exampled by the comparisons between the Dante and Virgil and Rectitude leading Christine illuminations. She accomplishes this thorough mirroring elements of color, posture, and gesture.

Representation of Women

. Christine uses the retelling of unflattering biographies of women as the moral bricks which she constructs her City of Ladies with. In the first pages of her text, as she reflects on contemporary male writings, Christine doubts herself and the capacities of women. She writes "I finally decided that God formed a vile creature when He made woman…why did You not let me be born in the world as a male, so that all my inclinations would be to serve You better…?" Her lamentations are heard by three female personifications, that of Reason, Rectitude, and Justice.[70] These are the first representations of the female form the reader is greeted with, allegorical virtues that in feminine representation, align the woman with good. These virtues pass on their advice to Christine, telling her that these passages are open for interpretation, and if she would, she should reinvent these stories herself. In fact, these women commission Christine to build the city in which women of fame and virtue can live without suffering the harmful attacks on women, the *City of Ladies*. Throughout the allegory,

[70] De Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies,* 7.

Reason, Rectitude, and Justice operate as Christine's advisors and guides in reinventing the literary canon. While Christine's goal in her retelling of famous women's biographies was to come to the defense of women, Boccaccio's was aim was much different. He turned to biography as it was becoming a popular genre at the time, to teach and moralize the myths of the ancients.[71] While the aims of these authors differ, they serve distinct comparisons in both textual and visual representations of women, allowing us to speculate on the models Christine de Pizan used for her own argument and intervention.

Out of the one hundred and six biographies of women that Boccaccio wrote, one of the first is dedicated to Minerva, who was "famous for great glory" and was "the goddess of wisdom."[72] While his and Christine's accounts articulate many of the same details, Christine's differs in a variety of ways. First, in Christine's allegory, Minerva's biography is relayed to her by Reason upon her request for women who have discovered any new arts or sciences. Second, she is spoken of and referred to in much kinder terms. Whereas Boccaccio questions and quips how a woman could be responsible for so much, Reason relays this information to Christine as remarkable inventions worth of praise. In this way, the representations of Minerva in these two manuscripts are dichotomous. Boccaccio's portrait of Minerva, which takes up just shy of a quarter of the folio it resides, depicts an intricate example of the goddess. She is tall, three quarters of her body within a delicate, ornate gold frame, in front of a deep red fabric (fig.14). Minerva is adorned with the attributes of war, which she was credited with crafting: the helmet which hides a wise mans' counsel, a cuirass as a wise man is prepared against every blow of Fortune, as well as the shield with Medusa's

[71] Boccaccio, Giovanni. *On Famous Women*. Translated by Guido A. Guarino. (New York: Italica Press, 2011) ix-xxxii.
[72] Ibid., 14-15.

head that turns the ignorant to stone, and armor that protects her. Her dress, a lavender purple with linearly articulated drapery, as well as her gold and silver attributes are luxurious. Minerva's supposed armor consists of only a breastplate. In her stillness and luxury, she seems passive within her frame.

In a very different representation, Christine chooses to depict Minerva in a busy miniature that occupies a full quarter of the space in the folio, as an active figure, a lively allegory for those women who invented new traditions of knowledge (fig.15). Minerva in her representation dominates half of the corresponding illumination. She sits, her body bent in a slightly awkward L as her torso twists toward the viewer, her hands occupied with the matter of disseminating the armor and shields she created for man in her wisdom from a nebulous, almost flower-like blue cloud. Her body is nearly three times the size of the human figures she offers her weapons to, a sincere expression across her face. Unlike her depiction in Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*, Christine's Minerva wears much fuller armor in addition to her other attributes. Minerva wears a chainmail visible as it extends down from her neck, underneath a rosy dress and a red, leather torso covering with gold detailing. Her arms are covered with stiff, shiny metal plates with circular joints at the elbows and gloves made of the same material. A brown shield with a black strap is buckled across her torso, and similarly, her cuirass is tied at her waist. She misses only her helmet; instead wispy, straw-colored hair hangs loose from her head. The several men she assists by providing arms look up to her with awe or otherwise dress themselves in their gifts. She presides over them, perhaps in a motherly way. In Christine's depiction, Minerva plays out one of her myths actively and expressively, lacking aloofness and stillness of Boccaccio's representation.

The way these women are categorized is vastly different between the two authors, with Christine describing these women according to their achievements, character, or values. Boccaccio's method of reflecting on these women via their supposed geographic locations. Another of Boccaccio's biographies that come early in his text is that of Juno, to whom he dedicates just over a page, claiming that she has done no great deed worthy of comment, but is instead famous for her great wealth. Christine recalls Juno much later in her text, grouping her with various other estimable female examples. Even if the text in Christine's story is short, the verbiage differs greatly from Boccaccio's. Boccaccio informs his reader that Juno's fame is a "generosity"[73] of the ancients, while Christine writes that she was not only a goddess of wealth, but also that "women had recourse to her help" and was attributed the "privileges and prerogatives of marriage."[74] Again, these different considerations of the textual program reflect those representations of the women in the illuminations. Juno has a real sense of agency in Christine's depiction. To begin again with Boccaccio, we are introduced to Juno as another passive portrait. She stands still and nude, within a thick golden arch that borders her description. While her gaze connects with ours, her gesture is open, revealing most of her body with the removal of a white garment with gold, horizontal detailing that just covers her pelvic region. She is adorned with luxury, much like Minerva, however these attributes of wealth serve only to dictate her figure as royal and emphasize her nudity. The crown that tops her head is narrow, but studded with white and red gemstones, and she wears a necklace with large golden links and a lacey pendant with a blue gem. Her right wrist is weighed down by six golden bangles. Her long, waved hair is similarly colored gold.

[73] Ibid., 9-10.
[74] De Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies,* 203.

Christine's portrait once again, serves to display the figure in question as an active participant in the mythology she is known for, a living allegory instilled with virtue, just as the personifications that guide her. In her representation in the *Book of the Queen*, Juno is framed by that same, blue organic form as Minerva. However, instead of Minerva's hierarchical scale, Juno appears to be very similar in size to the male figures she presides over, as they count the coins on the table and in the black lockboxes at their feet. She rests her arms on the roof of a square building, which is inhabited by those male figures. Unlike Boccaccio's representation, this Juno is fully clothed in beautiful red garments, a dress and a cloak with gold detailing. Her cloak, lined with white fur, is held together with a large diamond shaped brooch. Instead of her hair being loose, it is tied tightly up, barely visible except for those strands that frame her face. Her crown, while still gold, is decorated with spiraling patterns as opposed to studded with gems. In her right hand, she holds not the effects of personal wealth, but by a tan linen sack filled with those coins which the men below count and covet.

In summary, while Christine's text follows the biographies of women of those like Boccaccio's, although with slightly different verbiage, her visual programs emphasize these women's active roles and morality, serving as the bricks with which Christine would use to build her City of Ladies. Further, the miniatures of these women served as important representations in a moment where women typically appear as passive accessories. While the reasons for these feminine personifications vary, scholars such as Joan Ferrante argue that it is due to the resurgence Neoplatonic ideals in art and literature that could only be represented by embodiments of maternity- the woman.[75] Whatever the reason, works such as Christine's,

[75] Paxson, James J. 1998. "Personification's Gender." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 16 (2): 159

which push the depiction of women beyond the female Muse or personification, depict these women as active, fulfilling their duties just as Christine does.

Architectural Allegory

At the same time *The Book of the City of Ladies* subverts the male quest for knowledge, it is also operating within an architectural narrative metaphor that, through powerful illuminations, revised the male canon of literature. First, it is important to understand the purpose of *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Christine de Pizan's choice to write a work defending women was purposeful, as a revision of the authority of *Roman de la rose* and hence, an amplification of her own auctoritas. As such, *The Book of the City of Ladies* is a direct intervention into the canon just as much as it is a response to a literary debate.[76] For the narrative to be a successful reinvention, it had to utilize pre-existing literary models, both to inform Christine's authority as a well-read scholar and provide a commentary on well-known allegorical forms. In fact, Christine emphasized her literary prowess within the first lines of the book: "...one day as I was sitting in my study, surrounded by books."[77] At the same time Christine de Pizan worked to defend women through revisions of their popular biographies, pulling the plot and construction of her city forward, each re-telling a brick that she lays. Architecture then, is as much a plot device as it is an allegory for the construction of defensive measures for women.[78] However, the architectural metaphor can only be fully understood through the compositions that Christine designed. By comparing the architecture of the castle of Limbo (fig. 18) in *The Divine Comedy* to Justice, the Virgin, and Saints entering the City of Ladies (fig. 19) in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, I

[76] Quilligan, "Allegory," 3.
[77] De Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 3.

hope to prove that Christine's visual programs are not simply illustrations of her text, but independent, powerful statements that referenced her unique position and amplified her textual components.

The Noble Castle of Limbo houses those individuals who came before Christ's time, but were still virtuous. Dante describes it as an exalted place, with seven towering walls and seven portals. The illumination, a narrative sequence much like the imagine of Christine and Reason constructing the City of Ladies, depicts Dante and his guide, Virgil, dressed in the clothing and garb with which we are already familiar. Dante wears a long, blue garment with a matching headdress while Virgil wears a rosy robe with a firm tie at the waist. Virgil, like the other poets who stand gathered on the left part of the composition, all do not wear head coverings and have significant facial hair. Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan wear very similar garments to that of the guide, Virgil in various colors: blue, red, green, and rose respectively. The five figures stand before Dante's sleeping form, from which he rose upon hearing the storm, which is represented in this illumination through sickly colored skies and a general sense of gloom. The Noble Castle of Limbo makes up the right-hand portion of the composition, layered with seven tiers, each with a series of squared crenellations. Each tier has a portal, simply defined by a rounded arch and a dark interior glance into the wall itself. Every portal houses a figure with their back turned toward the viewer, likely each figure represents one of the sages and Dante himself, suggesting their passage and travel through the walls. At the top of the tower, a group of several characters gather, great poets and other notable people. The background of the composition is filled with mountainous terrains in a variety of gray, green, and brown hues. While the architectural element is simple within the illumination, it is the metaphor that is important. The Noble Castle of Limbo is a container

for those individuals who followed the cardinal virtues, but lacked the ritual, or gate of Baptism.[79]

Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies is a much more complex system of buildings than the Noble Castle of Limbo. Instead of seven gray walls with simple portals, the City of Ladies is colorful and vibrant. At least six varieties of building and architectural forms are present within the off-white mason wall. Some buildings, such as the purple stone one toward the left of the composition feature blue tiled, gabled rooves where others are adorned with red and white patterns or are simply flat. Windows of multiple shapes and sizes, from lancets to squares, to circles, punctuate each of the buildings. The wall itself, which in its portal houses Christine and Rectitude as they receive the Virgin and Saints, is squared and has a very similar pattern of crenulations across the turrets and walls. There are several figures within this illumination and much like previous imagery from Christine de Pizan, a clear hierarchal scale within the groups of figures. On the right-hand side of the composition, nestled within the portal itself is Rectitude, wearing the same red garment and crown as before. Rectitude, once the tallest individual in the scale, kneels before the approaching Virgin and Saints. Behind Rectitude, is Christine and the other women of the City, their arms and hands reached toward the Virgin and Saints in welcome. The Virgin herself is the tallest individual within the piece as she leads the front of the Saints she is with, dressed in her familiar deep blue robes, and crowned and haloed. In her left arm, she cradles a codex. In much the same way that the Noble Castle of Limbo is a container for those who are virtuous despite lacking Baptism, the City of Ladies is a city for virtuous women and in defense of them. For that reason, the City of Ladies also acts as an allegory for virtue.

[79] Guzzardo, John. "The Noble Castle and the Eighth Gate." *MLN*94, no. 1 (1979): 137-45.

Conclusion

The Book of the City of Ladies, as a revision of the male allegorical canon requires a foundation to be built upon.[80] Christine, as a member of the French royal court, had access to a large library of references. For example, we know that *The Book of the City of Ladies* was a response to Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose,*. Primarily, however, it was the structure of Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* that served as bricks and allegorical male quests for knowledge which served as the mortar. In Dante, we can trace the engagement with architecture and the role of author as guide through the complex visual systems encountered within these manuscripts. Christine de Pizan's unique position as a woman of letters is reflected in the simultaneous confinement and subversion of epic narratives and biographies of women illustrated in her visual allegories. The importance of Christine de Pizan's visual programs is that they are not just simply illustrations of the text; rather they serve as a visual interruption of her metaphor. Because Christine played a major role in the composition of her illuminations, the reader can assume that, at the same time the imagery is a reprieve from the density of the words on the page it is also a nuanced enhancement of the text. As such, the miniatures within *The Book of the City of Ladies* often imply that there is more behind the words on the page. Christine herself wrote that the poem should have many interpretations.[81] For Christine de Pizan, the use of a complex visual system within her allegorical *The City of Ladies* served as an emphasis of her architectural metaphor, hence sharpening her entry into the male canon.

[80] Quilligan, "Allegory," 3.
[81] Gibbons, "The Bath of Muses," 128.

Conclusion

While the literature on Christine de Pizan is vast, the art historical research has a significant gap that allows for further investigation into her illuminations, particularly those in the *Book of the Queen.* The analysis of Christine de Pizan's manuscripts emphasize the importance of miniatures as an insight into social and political structures of the late French medieval period. Further, the specific study of Christine's codices allows for the implementation of feminist theory, such as the understanding of gender roles, to better explore the roles of women, particularly as artists and patrons, within medieval culture. My research acts as an analysis of a unique system of patronage, the status of Christine as an author-publisher, and the use of illuminations to amplify textual metaphors and create new meaning within pictorial cycles within the context of the *Book of the Queen.* Further, by paying special attention to the *Book of the Queen* and its material features, I endeavor to contribute to the lack of comprehensive English research into the codex.

Christine de Pizan was the product of novel circumstances as the first female French poet to sustain herself. She was provided a comfortable childhood and an education beyond that of a normal girl for her age. Raised in the humanist court of the Valois, she had privileged access to the libraries other women were not privy to. The death of her father and husband, and so her status as a widow, afforded her social and legal opportunities she otherwise would have never been granted, such as the ability to sell property and participate in philosophical discourse with contemporaries. Further, she was writing in a time of political tension following the death of Charles V and the succession of his son, Charles VI. This incident was another wheel in the shifting of patronage networks that Christine pursued. However, while the circumstances of her birth and time were the modes that allowed her to

operate as a female author-publisher, her ingenuity should not be ignored. Christine had the intelligence to recognize her circumstances and take advantage of them, intervening in the male canon by taking on certain masculine roles in society while still maintaining her status as a female writer. She even recognized this in herself, writing that she felt herself a man in her career. Christine adopted this masculine and clerkly persona as a means of establishing her authorial auctoritas, to legitimize and market her works. In addition, she was an unusual living archetype, or an originator of her works. Many parts of her texts were autograph, and she had a significant hand in the composition of her miniatures. Christine's compositions are significant amplifications of her text in which the reader can find new meaning and understand her metaphors in a fuller interpretation. Her unique status also allows us to trace her pictorial inspirations and investigate how she reinvents these images with a feminine lens. As such, her illuminations function as windows into her unique perspective as the first French female poet.

Christine de Pizan and her works have remained at the center of feminist medieval art and literature studies. Much of what Christine had to say in the 15th century of France is still relevant today. It is significant to end my research on Christine de Pizan with the analysis of her pictorial cycles in the *Book of the Queen,* particularly those miniatures in *The Book of the City of Ladies,* as it allows me to examine her illuminations as extensions of her metaphor and reflections of her status as a female author in late medieval France. But it also allows me to open my discussion of her works in the context of the modern era. In *The Book of the City of Ladies,* Christine weaved a complex visual metaphor that was reliant on the re-telling of female biographies and the subversion of the male quest for knowledge, stories and literary devices she refitted to her own feminine lens. As such, her text became not only a window

onto her own perspectives, but a structure for other medieval women to find solace in. To this day, *The Book of the City of Ladies* remains a powerful textual and visual metaphor that comes to the defense of women. Her poem, as she notes all good poems should do, allow for multiple interpretations. We continue to find new meanings in her work across culture and time. One of the best examples of a modern interpretation of Christine is a short, collaborative animated film titled *The Book of the City of Ladies; a collaborative seminar*, that was the result of an online seminar that multiple art schools across the globe took part in, directed by Isabel Herguera. Herguera is an award-winning animator, filmmaker, and professor who has taught at several major universities, including China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing, China.[82]

The film opens with a somber string chorus against a marred parchment texture. As a female narrator, acting as Christine de Pizan begins her account of her life, scribbles that mimic writing float across the screen. The viewer is introduced to Christine's life is short snapshots, a fantastical story book that begins with frames of Christine and her father gazing into the sky with a telescope made from iron fencing. Music begins to swell as an operatic voice sings to transition into the next part of Christine's life: the deaths of her father and husband. In these frames, she kneels beside two stone grave markers on a snowy day. As the narrator emphasizes Christine's loneliness, the visuals center on a kaleidoscope of rotating marginalia, mostly red, blue, and gold floral motifs. Christine, as she appears in her author portrait of the *Book of the Queen,* remains stationary in the visual assault of color. With Christine's biography established, the animated retelling of *The Book of the City of Ladies* begins.

[82] Herguera, Isabel. "The Book of the City of Ladies; a collaborative seminar." *Vimeo.* Video File. August, 2019.

Due to the globally collaborative nature of the project, every stanza of the story retold is animated by students, each of whom offers a different perspective. Some stories are accompanied by heartening facts. The scene in which Reason, Rectitude, and Justice present themselves to Christine is portrayed by a group of students from the Technical University of Kenya and the National Institute of Design in India. The resulting animation portrays the three personifications as multi-armed Hindu deities in painstaking stop-motion paper animation while Christine is roto-scoped by one of the participating students. Faces of virtuous modern-day women, Anne Frank, Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, among others, appear and disappear off the frame as cut-outs from magazines. . Another strange scene animates Christine's seventh chapter, in which she describes how husbands can become disgruntled if their wives do not bear them a son. In the scene, vibrant Venus flytraps with massive human teeth chew and spit out fornicating flies, swallowing the male ones and spitting the females on the ground to perish in writhing agony as they pile on top one another. One female fly is dissected with tweezers and scalpels to reveal an abdomen filled with blue and pink eggs. A sample is taken and viewed from a microscope. In it, each of the female eggs are carefully removed. The scene ends as the animation pans out, revealing a frame full of pink and blue eggs. As the scene pans and begins to fade to black, the pink eggs pop until there are none left.

The animation serves as a visual reminder of how important and impactful Christine de Pizan's life and works are still today. Further, it shows how medieval texts can be interpreted with new visual cycles to inform and impact the modern understanding of those works. Christine herself likely would have encouraged these new visual cycles and adaptations of her poetry to reflect modern society as she encouraged the analyzation of her

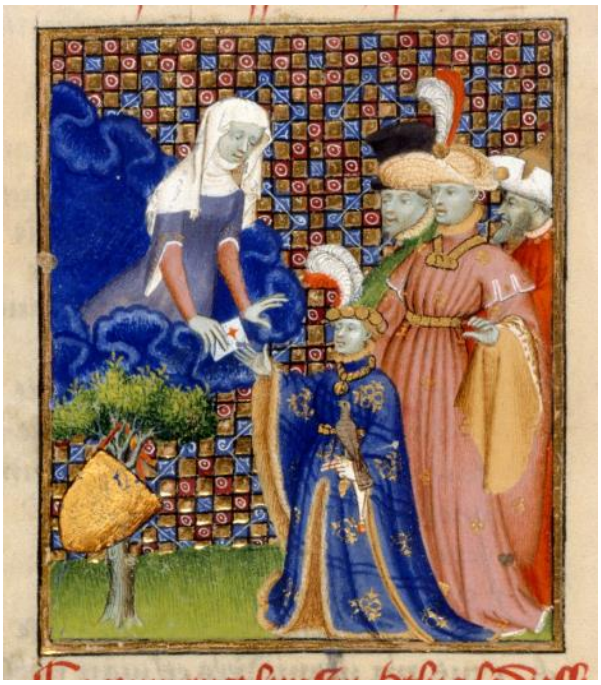
poems as a means of sharpening the mind. In addition, in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine claims that her city is for the women of the past, the present, and the future to find comfort in.

I believe the importance of the study of Christine de Pizan and her illuminations is not just in the understanding of Christine and the society she was a part of, but also the ways in which new visual interpretations of her work reflect our own society. Here I have aspired to contribute to and broaden current English narratives by examining Christine's pictorial cycles in the *Book of the Queen.* There is still, however, plenty more to be said. For example, an examination of Christine's workshop and the women she employed there would be a fascinating study of Christine as Entrepreneur and publisher. In addition, there is the opportunity to expand on the modern visual interpretations of her medieval works, as exampled by the animation I have just discussed. I hope, much in the way that Christine used the retelling of biographies of women as the foundation of her City of Ladies, that my project provides a foundation for future research into Christine de Pizan and her many works.

Illuminations

(fig. 1) f.3r “Christine de Pizan presenting Book to Queen Isabeau” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm. British Library.

(fig. 2) f.95r “Christine de Pizan presenting a book to Louis d’Orleans” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm British Library.



(fig. 3) f.95v “Othea presenting her letter to Hector” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 4) f.178 “Christine de Pizan presenting Book to Charles VI” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 5) f.4r “Christine de Pizan in her study” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 6) Charles V in his study In John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, St. John's College, Oxford, Ms. 64, f° 1.

(Fig. 7) Christine de Pizan, Christine in her Study. F.3v, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (MS. Fr. 180). Bibliothèque de Genève

(fig. 8) Boccaccio and Fortune Ms. 63 (96.MR.17), fol. 172v

(fig. 9) f.290v “Christine de Pizan building the City of Ladies” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 10) f.183v “Bath of the Muses” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig.11) f.116v “Bath of the Muses” Ovide moralise (MS fr. 871). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

(fig. 12) f.1r “Dante and Virgil” Dvina Commedia (Yates Thompson 36) (Northern Italy c.1450) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 13) f.323r “Rectitude leading Christine” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

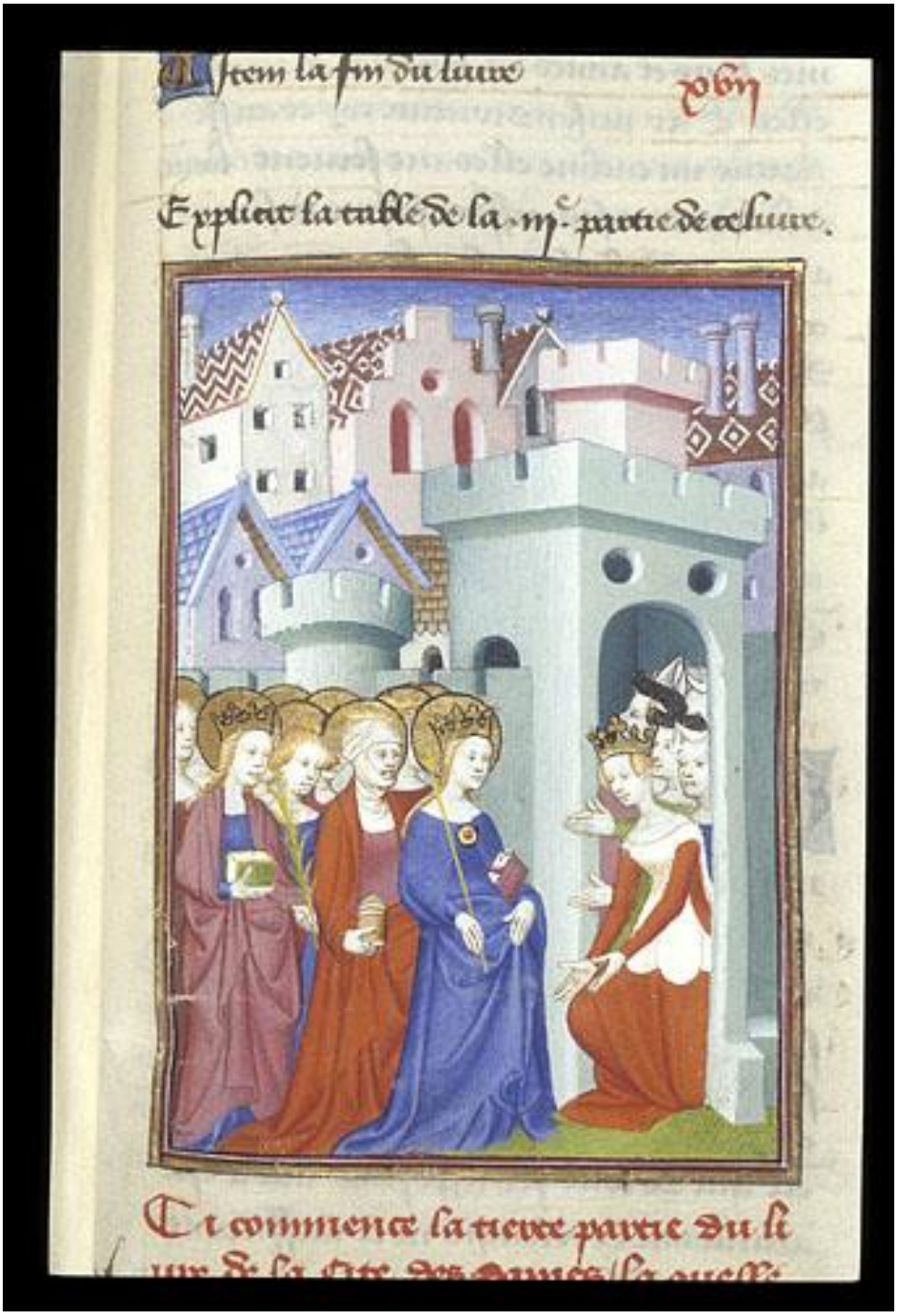
(fig. 14) f.9v Minerva Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Français 599

(fig. 15) f.102r “Minerva” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 16) f. 7v Juno Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Français 599

(fig. 17) f.118r “Juno” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

(fig. 18) f.8v “Limbo” Dvina Commedia (Yates Thompson 36) (Northern Italy c.1450) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.



(fig. 19) f.361 “Justice, the Virgin and Saints entering the City of Ladies” Book of the Queen (Harley MS 4431) (Paris, France, 1413) parchment, ink, and gold pigment. 365 x 285 mm (text space: 245 x 195 mm). British Library.

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