
This important study by Sarah Delale expands on her doctoral research carried out under the direction of Prof. Sylvie Lefèvre at the Université Paris-Sorbonne. The title of the volume as well as the titles of three out of the four sections into which it is divided are taken from the *Adevision Cristine*. In the latter work, Christine de Pizan is strongly affected by the débat on the *Roman de la Rose* and poses, through the allegorical character of Opinion, the very important and worrying question on how to control the reader’s interpretation of a literary text.

The Introduction (*Tabernacle Truble* — a quotation from *Cité des dames*) opens with a brief list of the most ‘pop’ and contemporary rewritings and appropriations of Christine de Pizan as historical figure and of her work. This opening seems a happy preamble to the object of the volume, which analyzes the link between form, genre, and interpretation of de Pizan’s literary texts. Relying on the most recent codicological studies on the original manuscripts (*Album Christine de Pizan*), Sarah Delale investigates de Pizan’s role as both author and editor of her own texts.

The textual corpus is *pour cause* reduced to the less clearly defined genres of the *dit*¹ and the *livre*² in the time span from 1400–1408, which stood for the most productive period of the author’s career during which the activities of textual composition and copying of manuscripts constantly overlapped. In addition, two works of more hybrid status are included in the analysis: *Mutacion de fortune* and *Descripción et definición de la prodommie de l’omme*, later reorganized in *Livre de Prudence*. A complete list of manuscripts (divided by original and non-original copies) in which the works of the corpus are transmitted is provided in Appendix 2. The introduction is closed by a much welcomed as well as necessary note (62–65) where Sarah Delale justifies her choice to call Christine de Pizan *auteur* (masculine-neuter form) and not *autrice* (feminine form).

The study is organized in four parts according to four thematic nodes: literary career, disposition, interpretation and authorship.

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1. Namely: *Débat de deux amans, Dit des trois jugemens, Dit de Poissy, Dit de la rose, Chemin de long estude, Dit de la pastoure, Duc des vrais amans.*

2. Namely: *Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V, Cité des dames, Trois vertus, Corps de police, Adevision Cristine.* Therefore, livres post 1408 are excluded: *Fais d’armes et de chevalerie* (1410) and *Livre de paix* (1412–1413).
In the first part ("La première est en forme de dyamant": une carrière littéraire), the scholar reconstructs de Pizan’s literary career in chronological order (shown in Appendix 3 as a useful tableau for the years 1400–1414) and highlights some of its key moments and turning points. In particular, in 1404 with Charles V, de Pizan inaugurates a new style of narration as she perceives this work as a moment of aesthetic rupture where verse evolves into prose. This transition partly overlaps with the passage from dit to livre — terms that are in reality not perfectly discrete (Charles V itself is now called “diccié”, now “livre”, now “traittié”, cf. 141) — whose formal characteristics are reconstructed by the scholar. Whereas the dit is generically and aesthetically porous, available to accommodate allogeneic forms such as the débat, the prose letter and lyric pieces, the livre refers to a form that is more codicological (hence material) than literary or aesthetic. Also, the livre is always characterized by a division into three sections and then into chapters.

The second part ("La seconde est le kamayeau": composition et disposition) analyses the process of the creation of the text from a theoretical and then practical point of view, which in turn focuses on the double facet of reception and genesis. For the theoretical analysis, the author employs the Aristotelian theory of the four causes (material, formal, motive, and final) known by de Pizan through Thomas Aquinas’s Commentaire sur la métaphysique. De Pizan believes any literary work comes into being by the act of giving form to matter (potency) thanks to a driving cause (the author) to meet a moral end. The two moments, that of the work in potency and that of the work in act (i.e., concretized in the mise en livre), ground the literary relationship between author and reader. For the author (the driving cause), the purpose of the text acts as the final cause and generates the creation of a material form: the abstract disposition, a mere vision of the mind, is thus embodied in a concrete disposition. For the reader, on the other hand, the understanding of the text is “an archaeology of its creation” (250). Thus, interpretation consists in reconstructing an abstract arrangement from the concrete book and it seeks to find the final cause through the imaginary guidance of the author figure, the driving cause behind the writing.

This theoretical premise introduces the codicological analysis of de Pizan’s original manuscripts, starting with their mise en livre in its various components: text, incipit and explicit, rubric, table des matières, chapter number, decorated initial, miniature, pilcrow, etc. These elements have a typological and hermeneutic function at the same time since they tag the text and guide the reader in the interpretation. The process of creation is then explored from a genetic point of view: through the study of the
chronological process that leads from the manuscripts of edition to those of publication (moments that are not necessarily discrete).

The third part ("La tierce au rubis précieux": forme et lecture) addresses the aforementioned distinction between dit and livre en prose and analyses their respective characteristics. The former is marked by a binary structure, the latter by a ternary structure. In the dit, the subjective person of the author-narrator cannot act as guarantor of interpretation, which, although suggested by the textual arrangement, will be sought by the reader outside the text. The ending remains open, suspended. Instead, the livre is a genre with an explicit didactic purpose, where the meaning is made clear by the omniscient narrator and coincides with the textual arrangement. The two genres are not to be considered in a ‘syntagmatic’ but in a ‘paradigmatic’ relationship: i.e., the livre succeeds chronologically to and outdoes the dit. Moreover, the livre exerts a retroactive influence on the dit so much that the dits copied in later collection manuscripts tend to take on the characteristics of the livre’s mise en page. The contemporary scholar must therefore ask themselves the question of which version to edit. In fact, the author’s last will does not necessarily correspond to the best version of their work: “sometime after composition, the author disassociates himself from the creator and becomes, in respect of his own work, a reader among others, simply more authorised than others” (517).

The fourth and last part (La quarte est la place à prendre: auteur et interprétation) is dedicated to the figure of Christine de Pizan. Claiming and suffering at the same time her own feminine identity (“simple femmellette” [540]), de Pizan renounces all authority from the outset. The author then becomes her own reader among readers, whose interpretation she guides through an empathic and imitative process.

The reception of Christine as historical figure is the subject of the second section of this fourth part: “Christine is among the medieval authors who have never ceased to be reinterpreted or quoted. Each era has reshaped Christine according to its own canons as if to preserve her universal significance” (607). Sarah Delale closes the circle of her book by analyzing the reception of the author and her work from the fifteenth century to the present day through interventionist reading, recreational publishing, literary creation in its different declinations as a cento, historical novel, etc. up to the production of icons with a symbolic function.

In the Conclusions, the scholar takes up and makes explicit the quotation from Advision that gives name and structure to the entire book (695): the diamond, which becomes obscure once set in gold, is the language of the poets; the cameo with its various faces corresponds to the allegorical figure
of *Opinion*, which stands for the verisimilar and for ambiguous answers; the ruby symbolizes the true word of philosophy. The form of the *dit* is then matched with the diamond, whose virtue does not fail despite its obscurity, and with the cameo as both are multiple and ambiguous. The narrative of the *livre en prose*, on the other hand, aspires to the clarity of the ruby.

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**Works Cited**


Guicciardini, Francesco. 2023. *Ricordi*, edited by Matteo Palumbo. Torino: Einaudi. ISBN 8806251716. Pp. 602 (i–xlvi). Written between 1512 and 1530, Francesco Guicciardini's *Ricordi* (also known to English readers as *Maxims and Reflections* or *Counsels and Reflections*)\(^1\) poses a challenging philological problem due to the different versions of his work that Guicciardini wrote during those years. This new edition, published with an introduction and a commentary by Matteo Palumbo, collects the most advanced and state-of-the-art results of the *Ricordi*'s philology. This includes the critical edition of Guicciardini's last version of *Ricordi*, published by Matteo Palumbo in 2009,\(^2\) and the critical edition of the previous versions of the work, newly established by Pierre Jodogne.\(^3\)

In the introduction, M. Palumbo points out how in Italy the interpretation of Guicciardini's work, particularly of *Ricordi*, is hindered by “the shadow

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1. The best English translation, based on the critical text edited by Raffaele Spongano (*Guicciardini* 1951), is *Guicciardini* 1972. In 2000 an English edition was published by G. R. Berridge (*Guicciardini* 2000), which, however, takes up the 1890 translation by N. Hill Thomson, and rearranges the *Ricordi* on the basis of common thematic threads. In this review I'll refer to the book as *Ricordi*, and to the single aphorisms as *ricordo* (singular) or *ricordi* (plural), without capitalization.


3. The description of the main manuscripts — Q1, Q2, B, and C — are in *Guicciardini* 1951.