



“The God of Love’s Letter” and “The Tale of the Rose”: A Bilingual Edition.
Christine de Pizan.

Ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Christine Reno. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 79*. Toronto: Iter Press, 2021. xvi + 210 pp. \$41.95.

Before Christine de Pizan embarked on her *Book of the Cities of Ladies* (1405), undoubtedly at present her best-known work, she composed two short poems that can be seen as thematic precursors: the *God of Love’s Letter* (1399), a powerful manifesto in praise of women proclaimed by the God of Love, who lauds their character and intellectual abilities, and *The Tale of the Rose* (1402), which imagines a chivalric order, created and controlled by women, and tasked with protecting them from slander. In a time when a renewed “war on women” (xv) is being waged—as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne points out in her foreword—it is useful to be reminded that women had to fight the same battles again and again over the centuries. Christine was one of the foremost fighters in the battle for women being recognized as men’s intellectual equals. Thelma S. Fenster and Christine Reno, two of the most accomplished Christine de Pizan scholars, banded together to produce this excellent volume in the equally excellent series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, which by now features hundreds of beautifully produced and affordable paperback editions.

The lengthy introduction offers a succinct biography of Christine de Pizan, contextualized presentations of the two poems, and an extremely useful lexicographic and semantic analysis of de Pizan’s use of nuanced terms like *condicions*, *inclinacions*, and *meurs*. The authors also provide information on the historical background, such as the culture of translation at the court of the French king Charles V and the fashion of creating chivalric orders centered on love at the time of the composition of the *Tale of the Rose*. The section on versification, rhymes, and vocabulary is well designed for teaching purposes. Fenster and Reno wisely opted for a very readable translation in a kind of rhythmic prose rather than trying to reproduce de Pizan’s syllable count and rhymes.

What makes this volume especially valuable is the editors’ choice of producing what they call a genetic edition by reproducing the earliest manuscript of each text (Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château 492 for the *Letter* and Bibliothèque nationale de France français 12779 for the *Tale*). Variants and rejected readings are appended to the texts. The variants allow readers to follow Christine de Pizan’s revisions, which are especially marked for the *Letter* since they span about twelve years. Both the descriptions of the manuscripts (supplemented by ample bibliographies) and the notes are exemplary. For instance, the note to *Letter*, lines 547–48 (119) parses de Pizan’s expression “une chose simplete / Une ignorant petite femmelette” (“a simple little thing / A simple little woman”) by tracing this topos back to Hildegard of Bingen

and her theological use of it. Another exemplary note is the one for lines 574–92 (167) of the *Tale* that in a nutshell explains the history of parchment, gold leaf, patent letters, bulls, and seals. Both scholars and students will profit from the ample and meticulously researched information in such notes.

As a kind of counterpoint to de Pizan's profeminism, the editors included "A Poem on Man and Woman" by Jean Gerson, translated from the Latin by Thomas O'Donnell. Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris at the time, was a noted theologian and prolific writer as well as an ally of Christine de Pizan in the acerbic debate about the thirteenth-century *Romance of the Rose*, chronicled by de Pizan herself in a dossier of various documents produced by herself, Gerson, and their adversaries. Gerson's poem dwells on the harmony that should exist between man and woman, whose souls are equal, even if they are not equal in earthly reality, a conundrum already treated by Saint Augustine. All in all, this volume is a model of its kind and should find a wide readership.

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The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne, Volume 4.2: The Songs and Sonets Part 2; Texts, Commentary, Notes, and Glosses. Jeffrey S. Johnson, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. lxxxviii + 1,016 pp. \$85.

With *Songs and Sonets*, volume 4.2, the penultimate addition to a collection of eleven large reference books, the monumental Donne Variorum project has approached completion. Volume 4.3 was published in 2022. Moreover, thanks to Digital Donne, an online research tool that since 2005 has unceasingly updated critical commentary, Donne's complex lyrics may yield endlessly to new close readings and analysis. Conceived in 1980 as an eight-volume project with Gary A. Stringer as its general editor, and supported by NEH grants since 1986, the Variorum began publication in 1995 with volume 6, *The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies*. Stringer managed the Variorum until 2014, when its current general editor, Jeffrey S. Johnson, began to guide the final publications: volume 5, *The Verse Letters*, in 2019, and this three-part and longest volume, *Songs and Sonets*, which began its release with 4.1 in 2017.

Volume 4.2 includes twenty-five of the poet's undisputed fifty-three love lyrics, each introduced in stark isolation in original spelling and modern type, so a reader meets the text on its own terms with no glimpse of critical interpolation. Next follows the justification for that poem's copytext with a transmission diagram of textual antecedents and a historical collation of all its substantive variants from an array of manuscripts and seventeenth-century print sources. Several of the manuscripts here see their first use in textual scholarship as editors pursue Donne's lost original holographs. A meticulous