This monograph is the latest in a series of publications inspired by Charity Willard’s suggestion (Studi francesi, 27 (1965) 452–57) that BnF, MS fr. 580 might contain an autograph copy of Christine de Pizan’s Epistre a la reine. Her article opened up a fruitful line of enquiry, notably in studies by Gilbert Ouy and Christine Reno that culminated in their Album Christine de Pizan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), completed in collaboration with art historian Inès Villela-Petit and a number of other scholars, including Olivier Delsaux. Out of some 200 manuscripts, Ouy and Reno identified fifty-four as being contemporaneous with the date of composition, twenty-five of which, they argued, were copied wholly or partly by scribe X, and the remainder by P and R, all three scribes and some twelve illuminators working together in a Paris scriptorium in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. At the centre of their analysis is the persuasive but still contested thesis that X is Christine. These considerations will contextualize Delsaux’s monograph, based on a doctoral dissertation (Université de Louvain, 2011), which he must have been completing before and during his collaboration on the Album. Delsaux accepts the Ouy/Reno arguments as a working hypothesis, though he has re-examined all the relevant manuscripts. Inevitably, therefore, there is considerable (and understandable) overlap in the material covered by the two works.

They are, however, very different. Where the Album is a monumental inventory, Delsaux’s study focuses on the status of the autograph manuscript in the late medieval period, and the questions this poses. What value (if any) was attached to autograph production at the time? How does this compare with the status of an autograph manuscript in the modern world? What were the issues at stake when a medieval author chose to copy works in his/her own hand? What do we know of medieval representations of the author/scribe? After proposing a quite intricate terminology, Delsaux guides us authoritatively through these issues over three main chapters, each reflecting one stage in manuscript production: composition, edition, publication. To ensure perspective and depth, he casts his net far and wide over non-Christinian works, while subjecting a representative sample of Christine’s manuscripts to meticulous analysis. The wealth of technical material covered, though rewarding, is challenging, and some changes would have made the
volume a little more reader-friendly: for example, a layout based on three sections further subdivided into self-contained chapters might have been preferable, while cross-references of the type ‘cf. Chapter III’ would have been more useful as page references, given the length of the chapters involved. Whether interested or not in codicological studies, Christine specialists will find much to intrigue them. For example, it is touching to note the impact of personal memories when Christine acts as author and scribe (p. 773). In the *Advision-Cristine*, recalling her husband’s death, she refers to ‘sa fin comme bon catholique en la fin de Beauvais’ (a revealing slip for ‘la ville de Beauvais’). General readers will be interested to register the distance that separates medieval and modern conceptions of autography. Our medieval ancestors did not accord it the same value as we do, who live in the world of the printed book where autograph manuscripts may be rare. When Christine copied or corrected manuscripts in her own hand, it was more often than not for reasons of finance and efficiency: the author could dispense with intermediaries, make additions, or alter names of dedicatees at the last minute. In other words, autography had everything to do with the needs of the producer, not the expectations of the reader. A handful of slips provides a reminder that we are all still subject to scribal error (e.g. p. 45, lines 17–18; p. 191, line 1; p. 421, line 10 . . .).

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