The Rise of French: An Examination of Latin's Influence upon Middle French through Analysis of Christine de Pizan's Treatises[1]

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Abstract

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the vernacular Middle French began to be used more extensively as a language of prestige over Latin, which had been overwhelmingly the scholarly *lingua franca* as well as the official language in law, politics, medicine, and science. Part of this linguistic shift involved the elevation of French by latinization practices performed by translators, clerics, and writers seeking to capture the full meaning of the Latin and impose more formal structure upon Middle French, as well as to make French into a more serious and prestigious language. Christine de Pizan, a French author of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, provides an excellent case study for the use of Latin to elevate Middle French as a language of prestige. Sociolinguistically, her choice to write in Middle French over Latin shows a calculated choice to make her work more accessible to her intended audience of women, who were literate in the vernacular, but not in Latin. Her use of latinisms, or latinization processes shows an attempt to elevate her own French so that her writing may be taken seriously by her academic peers.

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction:

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Middle French continued its ascent to higher

prestige as a language of scholars and academics, slowly wending its way into a greater number

of works through translation movements as well as writers choosing their native tongue for their

treatises. Through these writings it is possible to discern changes in Middle French and to see

clearly the influence that Latin had on elevating the language from low prestige vernacular to

high prestige language. Though French had been an established vernacular for centuries, and had

itself formed from Vulgar Latin, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries French began a second

latinization, that allowed it to start to move into the scholarly sphere. The changes in Middle

French examined in the course of this thesis focus around Latin's influence on Middle French,

particularly in *latinisms*[2], a term that encompasses a wide variety of linguistic processes that

Latin wields upon Middle French. Of these processes I will examine lexical and phonologic

processes at work in Middle French as influenced by Latin, and as seen in the orthography of

manuscripts from the turn of the fifteenth century. In particular, my examination will focus on

two works by Christine de Pizan, a fifteenth century authoress, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*

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2   For further discussion of the use of this term see Rickard (1974)

(the book of the city of ladies) and *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* (the book of the three virtues).

These two books present an ideal opportunity for examining the phenomenon of

vernacularization, where a vernacular language becomes the language of prestige, as they show a

window into scholarly work written in Middle French in the 15th century. They also present a

unique opportunity for sociolinguistic analysis, as they are written by a woman in an age where

female scholars are scarce, and her choice to write in Middle French over Latin represents an

interesting choice for a scholarly work. As such, Christine's use of latinisms within her

orthography may evidence her need to create as scholarly and prestigious a work as possible, in

order to make herself be taken seriously and her opinions given weight. Within the context of

her time and her status, the sociolinguistic and historical linguistic analyses become intertwined

and work to present a bigger picture of the greater changes occurring in Middle French.

1.1 Overview and Methodology

Through the course of this thesis I will examine the ways in which Christine de Pizan

uses latinisms in her writing, and I will analyze the ways in which her latinization are of

sociolinguistic importance. Namely, I seek to show that her use of Latin to elevate her own

writing was reflective of a larger linguistic movement within France at the time, as well as to

show the advantages she gained from latinizing her French on an individual level. Section 1 will

be broken down into five sub-sections, in Sub-Section 1.2 I will contextualize the environment

in which she is writing, starting with a brief history of her life, Sub-Section 1.3 will comment on

women's literacy and education in the late Middle Ages, and Sub-Section 1.4 presents the state

of Middle French during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Sub-Section 1.5. contextualizes

the larger translation movements from Latin to French in the fourteenth century, and the larger

implications of the linguistic shift occurring within France between Latin and French. In Sub-

Section 1.6 I will provide a brief history of Latin during this period to contextualize its use in the

vernacularization of French, as well as a brief history of Old French in order to better understand the re-latinization that Middle French undergoes . In Section 2 I will begin my analysis of latinization of French, starting with an overview of the phonologic, lexical, and morphosyntactic change in French, and the Latin influence over these linguistic changes. Then I will examine in detail Christine's specific usage of latinisms in her work, with data from *Le Livre de a Cité des Dames,* and *Le Livre des Trois Vertus.*

1.2 A Brief History of Christine de Pizan:

Born in Venice in 1364, Christine de Pizan was the daughter of a wealthy Italian physician, Tommaso da Pizzano, who was later appointed to the court of King Charles V of France. Christine, therefore, grew up in the royal court in France, which garnered her exceptional privileges that not many women had access to in her time. Her father and later her husband, Etienne de Castel, guided her in her education, enough that she was able to become an accomplished writer and copyist. After her husband's death in 1390, she encountered numerous struggles, including legal troubles regarding her husband's finances and income, as well as the estate that now fell to her to manage (Willard, 1984).[3] Her extreme distaste at the treatment she was afforded after she became a widow pushed her to write *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* and *Trois Vertus* so that she could disseminate her opinions on the treatment of women by medieval society, as well as educate other women in her situation so that they might be better prepared and not suffer the same hardships that she had. In *Cité des Dames* she lays out a metaphorical vision of a city for ladies, in which the most virtuous and noble of women may live together and pursue scholarly pastimes away from the misogynistic attitudes of male authorities. In this treatise she directly calls out the unfair treatment of women she has encountered in the works of male

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3   For a complete biography see Charity Cannon Willard's *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*

authors, such as one Mathéolus, whom she lists in the beginning of her book as having caused her to question. Christine states,

> But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men–and learned men among them–have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behavior. (Richards: 1982, 3)

Christine quite clearly voices her opinion on this matter, and thus shows her temerity and courage as a writer, particularly regarding the status her gender gives her, her voice casts a tenuous authority into a world dominated by men who have already shown their propensity for casting women in an insulting and unfortunate light. Thus we see the sociolinguistic importance of her writing, especially in analyzing the ways in which she uses Latin to reinforce her own authority as a scholar, so that her voice may be heard and her opinions and writing taken seriously by her peers.

1.3 Women and Literacy in the Middle Ages

It is important to examine the audience that Christine de Pizan wrote for with her two treatises, which encompassed not only learned men, but also noble and merchant class women, for whom the practical manual of advice of *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* would have been for. During the later Middle Ages from the the thirteenth century on, education for women began to expand and formal schools were present in most regions, as David Sheffler states,

> ...women and girls increasingly had access to an elementary education that led to vernacular literacy. Many may have also received at least basic instruction in mathematics useful for the keeping of business accounts. By the 14th century formal schools for girls are well documented in nearly every major region...Not surprisingly, these educational opportunities were concentrated primarily within larger towns and cities and associated with the interests of a growing merchant elite. (Sheffler, 2010: 1072)

In urban environments women's literacy in the vernacular seems to have flourished, while

literacy in Latin seems to have been low. The utility of the vernacular trumped that of Latin,

> ...as most correspondence, business records, and even property transactions and court cases were increasingly conducted in vernacular language, Latin was generally not considered useful for women. (Sheffler, 2010: 1073)

Thus it is clear that Christine de Pizan's use of the vernacular shows a calculated sociolinguistic choice for her audience, which included both women and academics.

1.4 Middle French in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are a period in which Middle French exists as a nebulous entity, having begun its transition from Old French into a distinctly different form in the beginning of the fourteenth century. At this time significant linguistic changes were occurring within the language and constituted important phonologic, morphosyntactic, and lexical changes to the language, which is reflected to some extent in the orthography of the period, but also frustratingly enough, starts to diverge from the actual pronunciation of words. The phonologic, morphosyntactic, and lexical changes in French were often influenced by Latin, and can be described by such processes as differentiation and *rapprochement*, two forms of latinization in which words which differed in meaning were spelled differently (differentiation), or if believed to be semantically related were given similar spellings to their perceived Latin origin (rapprochement). Other 'latinisms' or Latin lexical and syntactic items borrowed into French by translators show a widespread Latin influence on Middle French during the later Middle Ages. These linguistic changes are described in full detail in Sub-Section 2.1. Rickard contextualizes this with examples from the work of copyists and clerks, who in an effort to make text more understandable and letters distinguishable from each other, changed spellings to suit their needs. While these acts themselves did not influence the linguistic change in the spoken language, they show how linguistic changes affected the writing of the time.

As a matter of fact, spelling conventions changed very considerably during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but, unfortunately, they changed in a direction which was largely irrelevant to phonetic change. Hasty and ill-formed letters made certain visual safeguards desirable, if not essential. *Un* the indefinite article, looked like a cluster of up-and-down strokes. To make it more readily identifiable, a *g* was added, hence, *vng, ung*. Since a final unpointed *i* could easily be mistaken for the last stroke of such letters as *u, v, n, m* (thus *m*, for instance, could be misread as *iu, in, ni, ui,* and vice versa), final *y* was preferred...(Rickard, 1974: 71-72)

These orthographical changes are apparent upon examination of a manuscript, for example, the manuscript in fig. 1 which was copied in 1422 of *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames.*

fig. 1
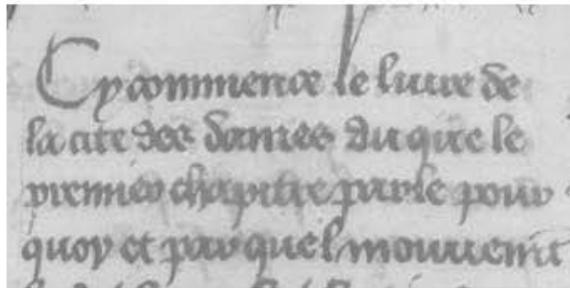
*(*Pizan, 1422: 1r)

The first word *cy* is actually the shortened word *ici* in Modern French, which means 'here'. Even though there is no ambiguity as to which letters are which between *c* and *i*, the change in orthography is reflected as a new accepted spelling for the word. This is also seen in the first word of the fourth line, *quoy*, Modern French *quoi* 'which' or 'what'. Again, though no ambiguity exists between *o* and *i*, the new use of *y* is seen as an accepted spelling. Though the original use

of final *y* in place of final *i,* was to get rid of ambiguity between letters that could be easily misread, it eventually becomes an accepted orthography and appears word finally consistently.

1.4 A Political History of Middle French under Charles V

In the fourteenth century, during the reign of Charles V, at whose court Christine de Pizan spent her childhood and formative years, French began to become utilized as a language of politics and scholarship. Charles V sought to use French in order to strengthen the monarchy and solidify his power.

> Under Charles V, in fact, French had succeeded in encroaching upon the hegemony of Latin. During his reign, French became premier in the practice of power...In law, although certain bilingual practices remained in place, actual legislative texts in Latin became rare. Most of the King's statutes, mandates, and letters were in French, as was his will. He practiced a veritable "politique délibérée de diffusion de la culture et de promotion de la langue française" (intentional politics of cultural diffusion and promotion of the French language), for his aim, and that of his learned friends, was "la promotion de la langue française dans l'activité intellectuelle et dans la realité publique"...(the promotion of the French language in the intellectual sphere and in political exchange)... (Fenster, 1998: 94) (Autrand, 1995:103, 105)

This shift in usage of French by Charles V paved the way for French to become the *lingua franca* of the country, and for French to become a language of prestige. Charles V was actively assisted in this endeavor by Nicole Oresme, a scholar and translator from the College of Navarre,

> Oresme provided Charles V with the theoretical underpinnings for the use of French over against Latin...Oresme said it was good to translate such works for *le bien publique* (the public good) and because their study creates *affeccion et amour au bien publique* (love for the public good). (Fenster, 1998: 95)

For Charles V, Middle French represented an opportunity to improve and maintain his power as monarch, by creating a national language used by the highest offices and scholars for their work. Oresme, though not of noble birth, had succeeded in drawing the attentions of the royal family, in particular John II, Charles V's father, who first requested him to deal with issues regarding national finances in 1356 (Grant,1997:188) . He thereafter came into contact with an adolescent Charles V and thus became part of an influential group of academics that surrounded Charles V

during his reign.[4]

This political push for the usage of French in official and academic capacities by the monarchy influenced Christine de Pizan in her own work. Having grown up at the court of Charles V, and with extensive access to the royal libraries through her father, she would have been surrounded by the ideas of Charles and his translators.[5]

1.5 A Brief History of Latin and Old French

In order to fully contextualize the historical background of the linguistic changes in French during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is necessary to briefly look at Latin as a language during this time period, as well as a brief history of Old French.

Latin mainly existed as the language of scholars and to some extent an official language of state, though as shown in 1.4, during the reign of Charles V of France, movements were made to shift the official language from Latin to French. The Latin of Christine de Pizan's time from which latinisms were created, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries was by and large Classical Latin. Vulgar Latin was a spoken language from which Old French had formed much earlier, before the ninth century. The earliest extant manuscripts that used Old French were *The Strasbourg Oaths* written around 842, and the *Sequence of Saint Eulalia*, written around 881 (Kibler, 1984: xxiii). Latin and Old French around this time were very similar, and are often referred to respectively as *lingua latina* and *lingua romana rustica* (Kibler, 1984: xxiii). Thus we see that French had existed as an established vernacular that grew organically away from Latin during the roughly five to six hundred year period between the ninth and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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4   For more detail on Nicole Oresme and his relationship to Charles V, see Edward Grant's chapter in *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science: Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday* 187-207.
5   See Willard (1984) Chapter 1.

2. Linguistic Analysis

2.1 Linguistic Changes and Latinization

The most interesting changes in Middle French occur with the influence of Latin in different linguistic processes. The resulting lexical changes and orthographical changes are referred to as latinisms, which according to Rebecca Posner (1997) were exceedingly common in the fourteenth century. As she writes,

> Quantitatively, the most important type of borrowing that French has known is from Latin...In French, Latinisms are easily spotted because the phonological developments that affected inherited Latin words had transformed their shape so much that that they often had become almost unrecognizable to the inexpert observer. Concomitantly, their meaning often drifted way from the classical one, so that translators from Latin into French, most frequently in the fourteenth century, felt justified in reintroducing a more recognizable Latin form. (Posner, 1997: 156-160)

Rickard elaborates on this point by identifying two modes of latinization, *rapprochement* and differentiation, that account for the lexical changes seen in the orthography and the Latinate influence upon these changes.

> In general, the scribes were guided by two principles, both ultimately connected with Latin: namely differentiation and *rapprochement*. Differentiation meant that words which were different in meaning and believed to be unrelated were given a different spelling, even if they were homophones...*Rapprochement*, on the other hand, involved spelling alike words which were believed to be semantically and morphologically related... (Rickard, 1974: 72)

Rickard gives a few examples of these two principles at work, which I have shown below.

(1) Differentiation

        a. *pois* → *pois* 'peas'
        b. *pois* → *poids* 'weight'
        c. *pois* → *poix* 'pitch'
        d. *mes* → *mes* (possessive)

e. *mes* → *mais* 'but'

f. *mes* → *mets* 'dish'

<div align="right">(Rickard, 1974: 72)</div>

The earlier Old French is seen in the left hand side as the original spelling for all three of each of the different words. The change to the Middle French orthography is shown with the arrow. In (2) one form of *rapprochement* is shown, in which the original spelling of -*al, -el, -ol,* in contact with final -*s* became -*aux,-eux,* and -*oux,* and in order to show the relationship with the older spelling the -*l* was added back in.

(2) Rapprochement

a. c*hevaus* → *chevaulx* 'horses'

b. *cheveus* → *cheveulx* 'hair'

c. *genous* → *genoulx* 'knees'

<div align="right">(Rickard, 1974: 72-73)</div>

In this set of data, the preconsonantal [l] is vocalized to a [u] and was then represented with each of the two sounds accounted for, the old and the new. In some cases, *rapprochement* also indicated spelling that was taken from original Latin orthography, such as the case in the word *savoir*, where it seems someone got a little too carried away.

Table 1

Latin	Old French	Middle French	Gloss
scire, (actual: sapere 'to taste')	savoir	scauoir, scapuoir	'to know'
avarus	aver	avare	'stingy'
bene+dictio	beneiçon	benediction	'prayer' 'blessing'
gravis	grief	grave	'important'
rapidus	rade	rapide	'quick'

(Rickard, 1974:73, 82)

With the word *savoir*, 'to know', clerks assumed it came from the Latin *scire*, 'to know', when in fact it was derived from the Latin *sapere*, 'to taste'. In order to reflect this perceived etymological relationship, many translators and copyists wrote *scavoir* or *scapuoir*, to show both.

Rapprochement can also be seen in spellings in which the Latin orthography has been combined with the Old French orthography to create a new, more latinate form of a word. This can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Latin	Old French	Middle French	Gloss
faber	fevre	febre	'smith'
dubium	dote, doute	doubte	'doubt'
septem	set	sept	'seven'
pauper	povre	pauvre	'poor'

(Rickard, 1974:73)

In some cases, double consonants were added back in to reflect Latin etymology as well, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Latin	Old French	Middle French	Gloss
flamma	flame	flamme	'flame'
bella	bele	belle	'beautiful'
villa	vile	ville	'city'
bona	bone	bonne	'good'

(Dictionnaire de Moyen Français (1330-1500), 2015) (Rickard, 1974)

Rickard also posits several morphosyntactic changes with direct relation to Latin, he states,

> The prestige of Latin, the view that French was inferior to it, and the activity of such translators, as in the fourteenth century...led to an influence of Latin on French which went far beyond the mere renovation of vocabulary. Latin constructions, too, were imitated in French, though they were not ideally suited to a language with a very different morphology. In the main they were intended to give the language a greater dignity a brevity. (Rickard, 1974: 83)

He names six constructions that show this connection with Latin morphosyntactically.

1. Absolute constructions

   ex. *Laquelle chose entendue...*

   REL.which thing PAST.hear...

   'which thing was heard...'

2. Accusative and Infinitive forms

   ex. *On   dit   telles   estre   les Arpies*

   One says these INF.to be the.PL Harpies

'One says these are Harpies'

3. The linking relative, used at the beginning of a sentence or clause in preference to a demonstrative

    ex. *Quoi   faisant , s'eloigna*

       REL.what doing   is distant

       'doing what is distant'

4. The use of a substantive linked with a past participle and dependent on a preposition

    ex. *aprés   aulcuns jours trespassez*

       PREP.after certain days   PAST. pass

       'After certain days had passed'

5. The use of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses dependent on the conjunction *comme*

    ex. *comme il y ait   ja   long temps esté*

       thus   3.sg.PRO.to be.SUBJUNCTIVE.   already long time   past.to be

       'thus there would have already been a long time'

6. The use of *Que...si* ('but if', 'if however') as a calque of Latin *quod si*

    ex. *Que si je ne te   l'   ay rendu de   mot a mot*

       But if I neg. you.ACC DEF.ART. PERF. give of word.for.word

       selon   le latin tu doibs   entendre   que cela

       prep.according to the Latin you duty-bound   INF. to hear that which

       a esté faict   tout exprés[6]

       PERF.PAST.to make all expressed

6For more examples of each of these constructions see Rickard, pages 83-84.

'But if I do not give to you word for word according to the Latin that
which you should hear that has been made on purpose'

(Rickard, 1989: 83-84)

Latin not only influenced lexical change, but also served as a way to form morphosyntactic

constructions that served to elevate French and provide a more expansive grammar for the

language. As Rickard states, many viewed French as inferior to Latin, and that to many

translators,

> ...there is at least a dawning awareness that the French language lacks rules, and that
> this is a major reason why it is inferior to Latin. Translators occasionally comment
> on the inadequacy of French in their eyes, or try to justify their approximations or
> their over-elaborate renderings. (Rickard, 1973: 84)

These modes of latinization show a sociolinguistic pattern that follows the view

that Latin existed as the language of prestige, and that the use of Latin in Middle French, in

the form of Latinisms, especially the focus on etymology, lent French an authority as a

language that it would not have been afforded otherwise. Hilary Wise states,

> There was a growing demand for knowledge from a public largely ignorant of Latin,
> which led to a vast amount of translation into French. Inevitably, the response to a
> problem of translation was often to borrow the original expression, in more or less
> Gallicised form. Even where an indigenous word was available, or a neologism
> conceivable, the general preference was for a borrowing, in keeping with the
> seriousness of the subject matter. (Wise: 1997, 49)

The preference for translators and copyists to use the Latin shows the importance with

which Latin was held in the later Middle Ages as a language of prestige, and thus

calculated use of latinisms in Middle French shows the efforts to create a more prestigious

language in French.

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2.2 Latinisms in Christine de Pizan

Examples of the principles of latinization that Rickard posits, differentiation and *rapprochement*, can be seen in Christine's *Trois Vertus*. One significant phonologic change is the change of preconsonantal [l] to a vocalized [u] as mentioned above (Rickard, 1974: 72). Orthographically, this was represented by both an *l* and a *u*, which shows both pronunciations, original and new.

(3) *aultres* 'others'

(4) *animaulx* 'animals'

(5) *beaulx* 'beautiful' (plural)

(6) *haultes* 'high, elevated' (plural)

(7) *joyaulx* 'joy' (plural)

(8) *tieulx* 'such things'

(9) *loyaulx* 'loyal'

(10) *generaulment* 'generally'

(11) *faulx* 'false'

(12) *mieulx* 'better'

(Pizan and Hicks, 1989: 8, 10, 12, 13, 64, 65, 66)

Another latinism apparent in Christine's work is the addition of -*s* preconsonantally to reflect Latin etymology.

(13) *nostre* 'our'

     CL. *nostrum*

(14) *estre* 'to be'

     CL. *esse*

(15) *chascun* 'each'

     CL. *quisque unus* VL. *cascunum*[7]

                  (Pizan and Hicks, 1989: 11, 65)

The derivation of *chascun* from Latin shows a very good example of a borrowing from Latin in which the orthography represents the original Latin form. In (15) the Middle French form derives from Vulgar Latin *cascunum,* a derivation of *quiscunum* from Classical Latin *quisque unus* meaning 'each one' (Brachet, 1896:199). The preconsonantal *s* in the orthography reflects the etymological relationship with Latin.

In the following data, an interconsonantal *g* is inserted between two nasals, probably in an effort to make clear the letters in the spelling.

(16) *tiengne* 'take'

(17) *viengne* 'come'

     (Pizan and Hicks, 1989: 8, 63, 70)

The efforts to make the reading of the orthography more accessible and clear show a concerted effort to disseminate these manuscripts to a wider audience, such as women, who would have been literate in the vernacular, but may have only had a basic educational experience. It is possible to see that these spellings are becoming standard orthographies of

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7   I use the following abbreviations: CL; Classical Latin, VL; Vulgar Latin, MF; Middle French, OF; Old French, Mod. F; modern French

the fifteenth century, and show the accepted usage of latinisms within writing as a way to elevate the French. Christine's use of such orthography, whether written by her own hand or directed to a copyist, shows her desire to show her writing as scholarly, while still being accessible to the audiences she wishes to disseminate it to. As Thelma Fenster writes,

> Christine, whose compositions are unilingual, sought a relatively more elevated vernacular register. She must have hoped to legitimize her prose by latinizing her syntax, vocabulary, orthography, and by redeploying Latin sources rendered into French by the best translators of her time. (Fenster, 1998: 103)

By latinizing her writing, Christine is able to follow in the footsteps of the translation movement of Charles V, so in effect, her use of latinisms gains authority from the King. Thus, Christine was able to write her treatises, such as *Le Livre des Trois Vertus,* a manual directed towards educating women on how to prepare themselves for unfortunate circumstances, such as the death of a husband, while still garnering scholarly prestige with her language use. Writing in Middle French allowed access to her work, and followed in the footsteps of the translation movements, but her use of latinisms gained her works authority, so that they could be read by anyone, and their matter taken seriously.

In (19) below, we see an example of one of Rickard's constructions, the use of infinitives which was previously limited in Old French.

(19) n'avoir   jamais paour de la   mort et estre   asseuré   de a tousjours
     NEG.INF to have never fear   of the death and INF. to be PAST. assured of   always

     sans   partir   remaindre   encelle glorieuse beneurté
     without INF. to leave   INF. to remain in.this   glorious happiness

'never have fear of death and be always assured to remain in this glorious happiness without leaving.'

<div style="text-align: right;">(Pizan and Hicks, 1989: 21-22)</div>

It is interesting to note Christine's use of latinate morphosyntactic constructions in her works, which, just as with the lexical latinisms, shows a full fledged influence of Latin upon the language of Middle French, and also the importance of Latin sociolinguistically for Christine de Pizan in her writing. Though she is writing in the lesser prestige vernacular, the latinisms and latinate constructions that she employs throughout her work show an immense scholarly aptitude as well as a calculated effort to gain authority in her writing, so that her academic peers may take her work seriously.

3. Conclusion

At the time when Christine de Pizan was writing her two treatises, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* and *Le Livre des Trois Vertus,* in the early years of the fifteenth century, Middle French was becoming more and more established as a high prestige language of scholars in France, slowly outmaneuvering Latin as the language of choice for scholarship and writing, as well as official business. This switch from low prestige to high prestige was facilitated by the use of latinisms in lexical change and orthography as well as in the use of latinate constructions in Middle French grammar. Translation movements spurred this change, and it is from these movements that many of the latinisms that occur in Middle French arrive in the fourteenth century, as translators and copyists sought to create neologisms and new lexical items and

stabilize the nebulous grammar of Middle French, as well as elevate the language to the prestigiousness of Latin, particularly in serious scholarly works. Christine de Pizan reflects this movement to Middle French in her own writings, and presents an ideal lens with which to view the linguistic processes occurring between Latin and French during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Her use of latinisms and latinate constructions within her treatises shows her desire to be taken seriously and her opinions given authority and scholarly weight. At the same time, she uses Middle French to write her works, so that they may be accessed by a wider audience, thus the Latin influence upon her work seeks to elevate her own writing, while at the same time remaining accessible to her audiences. Her work is thus significant sociolinguistically and sheds important light on the influx of Latin constructions and lexical items and orthography into Middle French during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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