

## GENDER IN EARLY CONSTRUCTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP, 1447-1518<sup>1</sup>

EL GÉNERO EN CONSTRUCCIONES TEMPRANAS DE AUTORÍA, 1447-1518

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Fecha de recepción: 08-09-18

Fecha de aceptación: 23-01-19

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30827/TNJ.v2i1.7918>

### Abstract:

The notion and construction of authorship has been reinterpreted and shaped throughout history. In the Iberian world, the rise of authorial self-consciousness begins to manifest in the early thirteenth century with the gradual rise of vernacular languages as literary languages, which afforded a new understanding of the writer's craft and place in society. The establishment of decrees within the sixteenth-century book trade reshaped it by making it compulsory to register on the work certain bibliographical details. The turn of the seventeenth century, furthermore, witnessed a rapid commercialization of the literary product — despite remaining rooted in a system of patronage, literary production began to give way to the active role of printer-publishers and booksellers. Writing for publication was a complex venture for most aspiring authors, to be sure. Nevertheless, literary careers continue to be qualified, chiefly upon gender grounds.

This essay, therefore, reflects on the role of gender in early constructions of female authorship within Iberian book history, using a critical stance on Christine de Pizan and Teresa de Cartagena, informed by new approaches to the field. The aim is to vindicate the early role of women as authors within the Iberian literary field.

**Keywords:** Book History; Authorship; Gender; Patronage; Christine de Pizan; Teresa de Cartagena.

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<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the research project, 'Poder, espiritualidad y género: La emergencia de la autoridad femenina en la corte y el convento (1400-1550)', funded by the Spanish Ministry (FF12015-63625-C2-1-P).

**Resumen:**

La noción y construcción de autoría ha sido reinterpretada y moldeada a través de la historia. En el mundo ibérico, el surgimiento de la conciencia autorial comienza a manifestarse a principios del siglo XIII por la elevación de las lenguas vernáculas como lenguas literarias, que hizo posible un nuevo discurso sobre el quehacer literario y su lugar en la sociedad. El establecimiento de decretos dentro del mercado libresco del siglo XVI la remodeló al hacer obligatorio el registro de ciertos datos bibliográficos en la obra misma. El siglo XVII, asimismo, fue testigo de la rápida comercialización del producto literario — los impresores-editores y vendedores de libros comenzaron a asumir un papel más activo en la producción literaria, pese a seguir arraigada al sistema de mecenazgo. Escribir para la publicación, sin duda, constituía una operación compleja para muchos. No obstante, la carrera del autor pre-moderno suele calificarse, generalmente, por razones de género.

Este ensayo reflexiona sobre el papel del género en construcciones tempranas de autoría femenina dentro de la historia del libro ibérico, usando para ello nuevos enfoques con Christine de Pizan y Teresa de Cartagena. El objetivo es reivindicar el temprano estatus de la mujer como autora en el campo literario ibérico.

**Palabras clave:** Historia del libro; Autoría; Género; Mecenas; Christine de Pizan, Teresa de Cartagena.

**Authorship, Gender, and Book History**

Aqui se começa o Livro das Tres Vertudes a Insinança das Damas. O primeiro capitulo devisa as tres Vertudes, per cujo mandamento Cristina fez e compilou o Livro da Cidade das Damas. E lhe aparecerom outra vez e lhe mandarom que fizesse esta presente obra.

O qual livro foi tornado de frances em esta nossa linguagem portugues, per mandado da muito excilente e comprida de muitas vertudes Senhora, a Rainha Dona Isabel, molher do muito alto e muito excilente Principe e Senhor, el Rei Dom Afonso, o quinto de Portugal e do Algarve e Senhor de Cepta.

Such reads the incipit to a fifteenth-century Portuguese manuscript, with signature BNE MSS/11515. Noticeably, the work is presented as an educational book for ladies, translated from French into Portuguese, and foregrounds women's roles as author and as patron. The author figures in the third person, as was customary in scribal titles, and is credited with the authorship of a previous work. From the thirteenth century, the literary activity of the *auctor* had become distinguished from the respective roles of scribe (*scriptor*), compiler (*compilator*) and commentator (*commentator*): “the *auctor* writes *de suo*, but draws on the statements of other men to support his own views” (Minnis 95; see also Weiss 2005).

Put differently, this Portuguese vernacular translation hoped to attract interest by way of affording (constructing, linguistically and materially) a powerful image (Lakoff xiv): the work as the literary product of an established woman *auctor*, Christine de Pizan, supported by the then Portuguese queen (Pizan 2002, 73; see also Brandenberger 1998). The importance of this construction cannot be overstated, as it promotes a relational view of gender within the fifteenth-century literary field (Bourdieu 1993, 34), curiously when the history of literary theory remained a history of fresh starts (Weiss 1990, 233). This reading holds, for despite the pervasiveness of Aristotelian views, Renaissance practising physicians viewed female inferiority in terms of behaviour patterns, rather than corporeal imperative, and clear-cut dichotomies between male and female did not exist either in legal theory, or in everyday practice — female inferiority could be transcended through a change in behaviour (Brown 2005, 183, 185-6).

The history of the book has long united the study of material culture with the study of ideas, increasingly from a comparative, transnational stance — “transnationalism” understood here, both as a type of consciousness (the desire to connect oneself to others) and a mode of cultural production (shared social practices) (Vertovec 6-7). To be sure, viewing works as cultural artifacts through Darnton’s ‘communication circuit’ (2006, 11) elucidates their collaborative and conventional nature, not to mention the gradual professionalization of the writer’s career. Genette’s study of the paratext occupies a special place here, as it extends to all phenomena surrounding, clarifying, and modifying the significance of a work: the effect of a paratext, he observes, lies in the realm of influence, experienced subconsciously, and is always (thought to be) in the publication’s best interest (Genette 409; see also Chartier; Cayuela 1996; Lowenstein; McKenzie). Nonetheless, its full scope is rarely ever considered. Paratexts can be of a textual or verbal (i.e. titles, prefaces), an iconic (i.e. illustrations), and a material (i.e. typographical choices) kind, but also of a factual kind (i.e. the author’s age, gender, class, membership in an academy) (Genette 7). In other words, every single detail relating to an author’s identity, if known to the reader, needs to be read critically because it partakes in the construction of authorship and indeed influences how his or her work is received — a view, which by no means is new, since Quintilian and Cicero’s canonical recommendations included the use of personal information for the *captatio benevolentiae* (Villegas de la Torre 2017, 127; see also Ezell; Broomhall; Pender).

### **Reading Christine de Pizan (1365-1430) in Portuguese Vernacular**

From the Burgundian court, a prominent focus of late fourteenth and fifteenth-century European culture, Christine de Pizan successfully turned to professional writing — like many other lay writers (Marino 67-70) — to support her three children, her niece, and her widowed mother, writing over forty-one different works between 1394 and 1429; from au-

thentic love and virtuous life, to the common good in political life, grief, Joan of Arc, and various meditations on the life of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. For the manifestly public pro- and antifeminist literary debate, Pizan published the two works referred to in the Portuguese incipit. *La Cité des dames* (c. 1405), a copy of which she sent to Isabeau de Bavière, queen of France (1385-1422), allegorically evokes the title of St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* in its structural device of the symbolical "city of women". In it, Pizan reorganizes material extracted from Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (c. 1361-62), together with contemporary examples of famous women, employing a female authorial and reading perspective (Schibanoff 91; see also Pizan 1986; Cantavella 1992), which is reinforced and enacted by the dialogue, for all the interlocutors are identified as female: *Christine* as author and narrator, and the three virtues Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, grammatically marked as feminine in French and allegorized as damsels. In its sequel, *Le Livre des trois vertus a l'enseignement des dames* (c. 1405), Pizan moves on to advise women, including the religious, on how to cope with social life, choosing again a gendered female perspective, this time on women's contemporary roles through all the stages of their lives: as in *La Cité*, the main character, *Christine*, is identified both as author and as narrator, engaging in dialogue with the three Virtues. Crucially, Pizan's philosophical argumentation on women has been seen to reveal a new development in the history of the concept of woman (Allen 538-39).

The Portuguese manuscript translation does not include Pizan's dedication to her *mecenas*, Marguerite de Bourgogne (1394-1441), on becoming queen of France in 1404 — paratextual features could differ from copy to copy of the same text to suit individual needs. Given its powerful *captatio benevolentiae* based on gender, it seems instructive to share a passage from it, nonetheless:

[P]our ce que [...] vostre bon sens naturel vous induit et apprend a amer sapience et toutes les choses que elle demonstre por le desir que vostre tres noble courage a de vivre ou tamps a present ou en celui a avenir par l'ordre et administracion de raison en la maniere que doibt estre reglee et duite toute haulte princesse, Je Cristine, vostre humble servante desireuse de faire chose qui plaire vous peust, [...] ay fait et compilé ou nom de vous et pour vous singulierement cestui present livre, lequel est a la doctrine et enseignement de bien et deument vivre aux princesses et generalment a toutes femmes [...] par le grant desir que j'ay de l'acroissement du bien et honneur de toute femme, grande, moyenne et petite. (Cited from Brandenberger 1996, 112)

Instead, it hoped to exude quality and confer social prestige on its patron (Cayuela 2009: 386) by linking the translation to the queen of Portugal, Isabel de Coimbra (1433-1455), wife of Afonso V (1432-1481). Rainha Isabel was the daughter of Duque Pedro de Coimbra (1392-1449) and Isabel de Aragón, countess of Urgel, whom he married in 1429. A year later, her aunt, Isabel de Portugal (1397-1471), a generous literary patron, married Duc

Philippe de Bourgogne, brother of the original dedicatee of *Le Livre des trois vertus*. Therefore, *La Cité's* sequel may have reached Portugal through the duchess's agency, perhaps as a wedding present to her niece either upon becoming queen in 1447, or before she died in 1455. The translation can be firmly dated between those years (Willard 310; Pizan 2002, 31).

However the original reached Portugal, the fundamental motive underlying the translation work remains encoded in Pizan's authorial strategies, to be understood within the framework of the tradition within which the text positions itself. Prior to *Le Livre des trois vertus*, conduct books or *espejos de príncipes*, even if intended for female nobles, were written by men and projected a male perspective. The advice offered was predominantly theoretical and, despite claims to the contrary, increasingly focused on the question of chastity, not intellect (see Brandenberger 1996, 107-55). Conversely, Pizan's advice is practical, gendered female, and intended for women from all walks of life. To be sure, the application of scholastic critical devices to the vernacular was widespread, helping bolster the status of lay writers by adding "an extra dimension to their literary personae, enabling them to take on the guise of a pedagogue, or *sabio*, expanding their own work" (Weiss 1990, 234).

The Portuguese translation reproduced the title and Pizan's female authorial perspective, used in the French original:

Depois que eu houve acabada, per graça e ajuda do Senhor Deus e mandamento das tres Vertudes [convem a saber] Razom, Dereitura e Justiça, a Cidade das Damas, per a forma e maneira que em ela se contem, como pessoa trabalhada e fraca de dar fim a tam grande trabalho, dei lugar de folgança a meus fracos nembros e, depois do continuado eixarcicio, pus meu corpo em repouso. (Pizan 2002: 75)

Here the prologue is enmeshed with the literary text — with 'Capitolo primeiro', to be exact. The first-person pronoun ("eu") is identified as expressing the voice, behaviour, and experience of the human *auctora* of the present text and of a previous fully identified one, which substantiates the promotional role of self-referential revelation in public discourse (Gómez-Bravo 187), but also the data supplied by the incipit. The reference to divine grace ("graça") stands as a literary formula (not "the expression of spontaneous sentiment", Curtius 412), evoking the divine only in the sense that all human talents were thought to originate in God (Weiss 1990, 27).

Having confirmed the text's famous female authorship, attention is then drawn to the moment when the three Virtues returned to urge the author to end her idleness and to resume her writing — the allusion to idleness as companion is a well-known topos of the *prooemium*, often used as justification to engage in literary activity, but so is the pretence

to write by command (Curtius 86, 89). The three Virtues' appellation of the author "filha do estudo", and their reference to her authorship "trabalho da tua mão deestra" serve to forcefully establish the work's literariness and Pizan's intellectual prowess (Pizan 2002, 75-76). The projection of a female authorial perspective is also reinforced by self-naming, *Cristina*, adjectives marked as feminine, and visually-charged references, such as "Toma tua pruma e scrive" (Pizan 2002, 77). In Romance languages, biological gender triggers gender agreement in discourse, but there are ways to avoid this, namely by employing the impersonal, neuter nouns, and adjectives, and indeed by avoiding self-naming — neither Pizan in the French original nor those involved in the production of the Portuguese translation saw a problem with it, clearly. In fact, Pizan's metadiscourse includes an appeal to fellow women to read her work by the claim to write / publish for the benefit of all studious women, identified as a distinctive group: "Bem aventuradas serom aquelas que morarem em nossa Cidade pera acrecentar o conto de nossas cidadãas. A todo o *colegio femenino* e a sua devota religiom, seja notificado o sermom e liçom da Sapiencia" (Pizan 2002, 77-78; my emphasis). A desire to expand her readership is highlighted in this way throughout the text, evincing a high degree of authorial self-promotion based on gender. At times, the appeal to the complicity of her fellow women is more directly embedded in the narrative, such as when the *auctora* spells out her intended readership (women) to control the reader's interpretation; at other times, she uses the first-person plural perspective to represent her views in confluence with those of the *Vertudes*.

The translation's ending ('FIM E CONCLUSOM DE NOSSO LIVRO. / Capitulo XIV', Pizan 2002, 309) further confirms the role of gender in Pizan's self-promotional strategies. On the one hand, the first-person pronoun is again marked as feminine by the adjectives *cansada* and *leda*, and by prominently self-naming ("Eu, Cristina, fiquei [...] muito cansada por a longa scriptura, mas muito leda"). On the other, it projects the image of an experienced *auctora* by stating to build on the Virtues' worthy lessons ("as quaaes, de miim recapitoladas, vistas e revistas"), in order to enhance the honour and status of all ladies and university women, present and yet to come ("Em crescimento d'honra aas Senhoras e a toda a universidade das molheres, presentes e por viinr"). Pizan's metadiscourse here also encourages that her work be widely copied and shared, no matter the cost involved, by queens, princesses and great ladies, in order to reach the widest possible praise and female readership:

[E]u desejo, pensei em mim que esta nobre obra multiplicaria pelo mundo em outros muitos trelados, qualquer que fosse o custo. Seria apresentada em diversos lugares a Rainhas, princesas e altas Senhoras, afim que mais fosse honrada e eixaçada [...] e que per elas podesse seer semeada antre as outras molheres, o qual dito pensamento e desejo puse em efeito, assim como ja é acabado (Pizan 2002, 309).

Thus *Le Livre des trois vertus* is explicitly and boldly marketed as *female*, in the French original and in the Portuguese translation, both from the perspective of its author and from the perspective of its potential readers, which doubtless aided its public dissemination across borders. In fact, thanks to an annotation found below the explicit in BNE MSS/11515 (fol. 97v), we know that the work still circulated in the sixteenth century, outside Portuguese-speaking territory, and how it was viewed by male readers. Briefly, Fray Lluís de Borja, once a page in the Emperador's household, then a friar from the Order of St Francis, found it in 1534 in the Franciscan friary and *studium* of San Antonio, situated near the village of La Cabrera in the Guadarrama mountains north of Madrid — Pizan (2002, 35-37) mistakenly places it in Barcelona. He posted it to Leonor de Castro (d. 1546), marchioness of Lombay, the favourite *camarera mayor* of the Emperatriz Isabel de Portugal (1503-1539) and the wife of Lluís's relative, Francesc de Borja, marquis of Lombay, later duke of Gandia and viceroy of Catalonia between 1539 and 1543.

### Reading Iberian Female Authorship after Christine de Pizan

*O Livro das tres vertudes* was followed by a rise in the number of publications employing an Iberian female perspective. Be this intentional or not — authors are readers themselves (Luna 135; Darnton 11) —, what seems clear is that fifteenth-century Iberian publications by women agreed on projecting an authorial female voice (Whetnall 148; see also Cantavella 1992; López-Iglésias Samartim). The publications of Teresa de Cartagena hold a special place here, as they illustrate “a writer's reflections on the creative process” (Deyermond 25). The only extant copy, RB MS h-III-24, containing her two treatises, was produced in 1481, as it includes Alonso Núñez de Toledo's *Vençimiento del mundo* bearing that date — the name of the copyist, Pero Lopes del Trigo, is given in the colophon on the last page of the text. Its first paragraph constitutes the incipit, written in the third-person singular as that of *O Livro das tres vertudes*:

Este tractado se llama *Arboleda de los enfermos*, el qual conpuso Teresa de Cartajena seyendo apasyonada de graues dolencias, espeçialmente auiedo el sentido del oýr perdido del todo. E fizo aquesta obra a loor de Dios e espirital consolacion suya e de todos aquellos que enfermedades padescen, porque, despedidos de la salud corporal, leuante[n] su deseo en Dios que es verdadera Salut (Cartajena 1967, 37).

Noticeably, no reference is either made to an addressee, or to a patron. Instead, attention is drawn to the author's identity and health, but also to the publication motive and social usage —namely to praise God (“Christian writers like to present their works to God”, Curtius 86) and to offer spiritual comfort for herself and the infirm. Put differently, this is a public work, marketed as a spiritual consolatory treatise (Curtius 79) by an identifiable female author, thus constructing a powerful authorial female image — a treatise then signalled a learned

work of a certain length written in prose (Cartagena's is of fifty folios), which manifested an authorial didactic intent (Whinnom 212). To be sure, in the Iberian Peninsula named authorship only became the norm after the 1558 royal decree, while anonymity and the omission of surnames remained a common practice throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Díaz 22, 65-79; see also Piera 2015). The Cartagena/Santa María family was one of the most influential *converso* (Jews converted to Catholicism) clans in fifteenth-century Castile, which included well-known historians and translators. Furthermore, Cartagena's father was one of the *regidores* (aldermen) of Burgos, a guard of corps to Juan II of Castile (1405-1454), a counsellor to Enrique IV and to the Catholic Monarchs — he supported the accession to the throne of Princesa Isabel in 1474 (see Cartagena 1967, 1998; Surtz 1995; Kim 2008; Conde 2013; Baranda 2014).

*Arboleda de las enfermos* begins with the author addressing an upper-class woman, as inferred from the apostrophe in the first line. The tone is autobiographical and sad, corroborating the information supplied by the incipit:

[G]rand tiempo ha, virtuosa señora, que la niebla de tristeza temporal e humana cubrió los términos de mi beuir e con vn espeso toruellino de angustiosas pasyones me lleuó a vna ýnsula que se llama "Oprobium hominum et abiecio plebis" ["The scorn of mankind and outcast of the people"; Psalm 21:7/22.6] donde tantos años ha que en ella biuo, si vida llamar se puede (Cartagena 1967, 37).

This is no private letter but a scholastic prologue in the epistolary form, of course. Medieval authors adapted it to suit their specific needs (Weiss 1990, 117), while attempting to arouse an audience's feelings to get their emotional support was a commonplace of ancient theory of rhetoric (Minnis 49). The epithet *virtuosa* serves to predispose readers, here particularly the morally good female, to identify with the author when reading the text. That the addressee is not named also reinforces the text's public, rather than private, nature (see Porqueras Mayo 165-172; Villegas de la Torre 2009).

The notion of grace in *Arboleda* also fits in with contemporary literary practice. Cartagena writes: "[P]logo a la misericordia del muy Altýsimo alumbrarme con la luçerna de su piadosa graçia, porque pudiese poner mi nombre en la nómina de aquellos de quien es escrito: 'Los que morauan en tiniebras y en sonbra de muerte, luz les es demostrada'" (Cartagena 1967, 37-38). St Thomas Aquinas, the most authoritative of the medieval Doctors of the Church, sustained that the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest, whereas that from human reason is the weakest (Minnis 95, 114). Now, Cartagena's claim to be illuminated by divine grace invokes authority through divine revelation only in the sense that all human talents were thought to originate in God. That is to say, she wants *her name* to be *recorded* for her God-given talent and to establish her



own *auctoritas* on the basis of her personal experience, “a widely recommended rhetorical ploy” (Weiss 1990, 181) and learned practice — through intellectualizing her deafness, Cartagena highlights that her learned skills are *acquired* and from textual sources. Her use of Latin and the reference to the Book of Psalms further serve this purpose, as do those to Boethius, St Augustine, St Jerome and St Ambrose later in the text:

E porque mi pasyón es de tal calidat, [...] conviene sean tales los consejos consoladores que, syn dar bozes a mi sorda oreja, me pue[d]an poner en la claustra de sus graçiosos e santos consejos: para lo qual es neçesario de recorrer a los libros, los quales de arboledas saludables tienen en sí marauillosos enxertos. E como la baxeza e grosería de mi mugeril yngenio a sobir más alto non me consienta, atreuiéndome a la nobleza e santidat del muy virtuoso Rey e Profeta llamado Dauit, comyenço a buscar en su deuotissimo cançionero que “Salterio” se llama algunas buenas consolaciones (Cartagena 1967, 38).

Thus the persona projected by *Arboleda* fits in with that of the human *auctor* through characterizing her skills and her work as learned, first via the title — *Arboleda* itself contains “arboledas saludables” (“healthful groves”). In this light, the protestation of incapacity based on gender aims to appeal specifically to the benevolence of the male reader, precisely because the *auctora* hopes for a wide readership — far from excluding men, this tactic deliberately aims to include them by appealing to their vanity. This reworking of the modesty topos reveals not so much the author’s womanly privacy and *flaqueza* (weakness), but the outspokenness — and literariness (Pender 3) — of *Arboleda*’s public nature. In works dedicated to women, the inclusion of misogynist remarks only makes sense if an intended mixed readership is in mind (Brandenberger 1996, 106). Cartagena’s self-conscious pride in her role as an *auctor* is manifested throughout the prologue by such directions. At other times (Cartagena 1967, 39), her *captatio benevolentiae*, like Pizan’s, draws on other well-known medieval apologies appropriate to the discourse of public authorship — alleging to write to avoid idleness, fear of being reprimanded for writing, a deliberate use of humble language to illustrate the truth, and obeying a duty to impart the knowledge one possesses (Curtius 83, 87). In the last lines (Cartagena 1967, 40), the use of literary terms (“prólogo” and “obra”), as well as of a scriptural quotation in Latin as the *thema* (“fundamento”) of her work, a technique borrowed from the art of preaching sermons, also reflect a conscious literariness. Thus Cartagena builds on the advice given by contemporary fellow writers on the *accessus ad auctores*:

Antes de començar la ystoria, cobdicia saber quál actor la fizo e de qué nombre titulada e qué es lo que tracta e a qué fyn es fecha e a cúa parte de philosophía pertenesce. (From Enrique de Villena’s prologue to his translation of *Aneida*, c. 1428; cited in Weiss 1990, 109)

La primera es el motivo del que faze la obra; segunda, quién es aquel con quien habla; tercera, qué es la materia de que trata; quarta, cuál es el fin a que la obra es fecha. (From Diego de Valera's prologue to his *Tratado en defensa de las virtuosas mujeres*, 1444; cited in Weiss 1990, 114)

In other words, *Arboleda's* content is advertised at the front as selected and gathered by a female *auctor*, as in Pizan, with hopes for the widest possible readership. Nonetheless, here female authorial self-awareness is greater, for, in *Arboleda*, the external authoritative figure of the *auctor* as author dominates the work, whereas in *O Livro das tres vertudes* this is sometimes enmeshed with staged allegorical characters. To be sure, textual modifications responded to the gradual increase self-awareness of vernacular authors and the related changes in public perceptions of them (Brown 1995, 245).

The construction of authorship in her second publication projects an even greater authorial image by claiming to have been produced under the aegis of Juana de Mendoza (c.1425-1493), *camarera mayor* of Isabel la Católica since 1480 (Rivera Garretas 141), and her husband, Gómez Manrique (1412-1490), also a supporter of the queen and a writer himself (Cartagena 1967, 151; Conde 47; see also Gómez-Bravo): “Aquí comienza vn breue tractado el qual co[n]iunientemente se puede llamar Admiración operum Dey. Conpúsole Teresa de Cartajena, religiosa de la horden de [...] a petição e ruego de la Señora Doña Juana de Mendoça, muger del Señor Gomes Manrique” (Cartagena 1967, 111). Cartagena begins *Admiración operum Dey* with an allusion to her physical suffering having prevented her from writing earlier, which is deployed, as we saw her do before, as a protestation of incapacity, a topos of the *prooemium* (Curtius 410). Literariness, the material status of her book as a “work”, is again manifested visually through the use of *tituli* such as *Introduçion* (Porqueras Mayo 58; Gómez-Bravo 167). Despite this textual division, however, Cartagena here keeps up the epistolary fiction throughout by repeating the address “virtuosa señora”. This has the effect of predisposing the reader to read her second treatise as private communication between two women, another popular authorial practice (i.e. Gómez Manrique) still in use in the seventeenth century (see Chang; Villegas de la Torre 2009). And yet, it is also made perfectly clear that it is nothing of the kind.

The reference to *Arboleda's* wide circulation among both men and women allows Cartagena to contradict directly the modesty topos based on her gender (“mi flaco mugeril entendimiento”, Cartagena 1967, 113) by referring in the same breath to the general “wonder” her work has aroused among both sexes. Some men and some women questioned *Arboleda's* authorship, despite being of “poca sustança”, an allegation that has triggered the author's defensive posture. But a defensive stance is yet another popular formula of the *exordium* (Porqueras Mayo 135, 153; Curtius 83) — after the advent of print, it remained conventional for validating and advertising publicly the “legal” status of a work (Brown 1995,

245-46). That the fiction of private communication serves as a rhetorical strategy is made even more evident when the discussion moves swiftly from the author's disability ("defecto") to the misogynistic incredulity that allegedly greeted her earlier authorship of *Arboleda*. Despite the charming pretence that she is only concerned that Juana de Mendoza and her husband in their intimacy should not be affected by the *dubda* ("doubt") concerning her authorship, the classification of the work as "obra mugeril" and the reference to the approval of "los prudentes" and to the flagrant and insupportable untruth of the minority of doubters ("algunos") situate the statement in the manifestly public and popular pro- and antifeminist literary debate. Indeed, the plural, *varones* ("men"), or *estado fimineo* ("community of women"), alternate with the singular *señora* ("lady"), causing the chosen subject matter to oscillate between the private and the public, but with a clear preponderance of the latter (Cartagena 1967, 113-14, 115).

More telling is that she openly admits that this "wonder" could also be interpreted as *praise* ("loor") on the basis of public opinion: "E diga quien quisyere que esta ya dicha admiración es loor, que a mí denuesto me paresçe<r> [...]. Así que yo no quiero vsurpar la Gloria ajena ni deseo huyr del propio denuesto" (Cartagena 1967, 113; my italics). By *choosing* to reject this positive reading through a new learned publication on women, writing, and human talent, Cartagena ultimately reinforces all justification for *her* authorial renown ("Gloria"): "God is the source of all *auctoritas*: after Him comes the human *auctor* who is responsible for what is actually said in a given text, and finally there is the person who compiles the saying of the human *auctor*" (Minnis 95). In other words, in *Admiración*, Cartagena builds on a conventional topos (the allegation of plagiarism) and a reality (the scarcity of didactic works by women) to partake in a popular, transnational literary debate ("ca la suficiencia que han los varones no la an de suy[o], que Dios gela dió e da", Cartagena 1967, 116).

Was Cartagena familiar with Pizan's oeuvre? At the time of her publications, European protofeminist literature was dominated by Pizan's works and those of Boccaccio (Vélez-Sainz 62). Of course, receiving negative criticism was not gender-specific (see Tietz & Trambaioli) and women writers knew that. In *The Vision* (1405-1406), for instance, Dame Opinion tells Pizan not to worry about adverse criticism because "anything that pleases everyone is impossible" (Pizan 2005, 85). In the prologue to *Proverbios* (c. 1437), a popular didactic treatise written in verse, Íñigo López de Mendoza, marquis of Santillana (1398-1458), recalls that it was commissioned by Juan II of Castile for the education of his son Enrique (López de Mendoza 1991: 99). And yet, he counteracts any possible allegation of plagiarism by taking on the persona of the *compiler*, not of the *auctor* (Weiss 2005, 515):

Bienaventurado Príncipe, podría ser que algunos, los quales por aventura se fallan más prestos a las reprehensiones e a redargüir e emendar qua a fazer nin ordenar, dixessen yo haver tornado todo o la mayor parte destes proverbios de las doctrinas e amonestamientos de otros, assí como de Platón, de Aristótilis, de Sócrates, de Virgilio, de Ovidio, de Terençio e de otros philósophos e poetas, lo qual yo non contradiría, antes me plaze que assí se crea e sea entendido. Pero éstos que dicho he, de otros lo tomaron e los otros de otros, e los otros de aquellos que por luenga vida e sutil inquisición alcançaron las esperiencias e causas de las cosas (López de Mendoza 103).

The fact that only the *auctor* takes responsibility for one's authorship (Minnis 101) underlines a clear empowerment on the part of Cartagena and on those who chose to adopt such a rhetorical persona — Cartagena seems interested in underlining her proven *auctoritas* to protect her newly acquired position as a *tratadista*. At any rate, the different paratexts which characterize *Arboleda* may be read as a first attempt to underscore Cartagena's authorial achievement and grounds for renown — Aristotle held that the right to renown was based exclusively on a person's achievement (Höffe 154; Minnis 189). In this light, the timely, late addition of further paratexts in *Admiración's* incipit — even if the omission of her religious order is unexplained (Marimón Llorca 112) — seems to have been intended to elevate the standing of Cartagena's oeuvre (Genette 135). All this should bear great significance if Cartagena was still alive in 1481, as has been thought (Conde 45), for it would suggest that she indeed enjoyed authorial status in courtly circles.

### **Female Auctoritas, Patronage, and Print, 1497-1518**

Even if in passing, it seems worth recalling that, in 1497, the Catholic Queen commissioned the posthumous printing of her niece Sor Isabel de Villena's *Vita Christi*, a devotional work written in Catalan, whose "main feature is undoubtedly its feminine and pro-feminist narrative style" (Cantavella 2014, 100). Her participation is disclosed in the dedication, which is kept in the subsequent two reprints in 1513 and 1527 — the former bears a plate of the female author, "enthroned, surrounded by her nuns, teaching authoritatively" from an open book (Twomey 207). Not only did this *Vita Christi* fully register the identity of its female author as *auctor* and employ female gendered perspectives. Furthermore, it projected enough authority and financial worth to be almost immediately offered in print.

Villena's female wisdom was not the only one to be marketed using the new technology. Pizan's, too, kept posing as a key example of a virtuous teacher and *auctora* within the Iberian Peninsula. In effect, "Por mandado dela muyto esclarecida reyna dona Iyanor molher do poderoso e muy magnifico rey do[m] Juan segundo de Portugal" a second translation of her *Le Livre des trois vertus* was undertaken and issued in Lisbon in 1518 by Germão de Campos. Crucially, the new publication bore Pizan's name in the title, *O Espelho de Cristina* — the French printed editions of 1497, 1503, and 1504 bore the titles,

*Le tresor de la cité des dames* and *Le tresor de la cité des dames selōdame cristine* (Pizan 2002, 55; Chang 39) —, and ‘Capitolo primeiro’ now rubricated as ‘Prollogo’ (see Pizan 1987). Rainha Leonor de Portugal (1458-1525) was a renowned literary patron. In 1516, furthermore, Campos had printed Garcia de Resende’s *Cancioneiro geral* containing compositions by eighteen named female poets (López-Iglésias Samartim 250-67, 372-76; Almeida Mendes 35-6). In other words, the construction of female authorship continued to be reinterpreted and shaped in line with contemporary developments in the literary field. This is significant, for, while the social use of a work mattered more in getting it into print than the genre in which it positioned itself, the profit-making principle increasingly got the upper hand from then on (Bouza 47-48; Marino 131).

### Conclusions

If women wrote as authoritatively and publicly as they did at a time when female authorship was scant, the horizon of expectation (see Jauss & Benzinger 1970) cannot have been wholly detrimental for the woman author then, or thereafter— for if it had been, neither their works nor the women writers themselves would have repeatedly bothered to parade (construct) a female voice at all, much less sign their works in their names, as they did, however modestly. As we have seen, the adoption of a comparative, transnational stance rooted in book history calls into question the supremacy given to prescribed notions of woman and writing by inexorably placing the emphasis on women’s craft (cultural artifacts), not their bodies: aided by their readers, patrons, and book producers, women’s didactic works were passed on, read, evaluated, patronized, translated, and finally printed for a wider audience since the fifteenth century, similarly to their male counterparts. Through this critical lens, furthermore, the role of gender in the construction of fifteenth-century female authorship re-emerges as having *relational* paratextual value, curiously used to ingratiate the woman’s work with her readers. In fact, taken as a whole and in connection with other works, such early constructions of female authorship document women’s long place within authoritative literary traditions, however modestly, and thus need be borne in mind when considering later ones.

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