Between 1401 and 1404 a group of Parisian intellectuals argued about the worth of the immensely popular *Romance of the Rose*. This complex allegory of love, lust, and the quest for knowledge, which was begun by Guillaume de Lorris around 1230 and completed by Jean de Meun some forty years later, offered ample fodder for discussion. The Debate focused particularly on the poem’s second part, which climaxes in a spectacularly graphic allegory of deflowering. The Debate, or Quarrel, encompassed multiple conflicts, notably between humanism and theology, and between misogyny and feminism. It was also concerned with matters of style: was it morally acceptable to use graphic language and imagery? The debaters had very different ideas about these issues, but there was one stylistic question about which they agreed—that the *Romance of the Rose* was a compilation.¹ In turn, they produced compilations of their own reactions to the *Rose*, and modern scholars have followed in their example.

Since 1978 a new generation has had access to the letters, treatises, sermons, and poems that the medieval Quarrel produced, thanks to a meticulous edition by the late Eric Hicks. Two new *Rose* Debate anthologies have recently appeared: the first, by Virginie Greene, translates Hicks’s edition into modern French along with fresh commentary; the second, a team effort by Christine McWebb and Earl Jeffrey Richards, reorders and expands Hicks’s original selec-

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tion of documents and translates it into English. These new versions highlight a question that has been around as least as long as the Quarrel of the Rose: what material deserves to be compiled or collected, and why? And what constitutes an authentic text?

The earliest extant document in the Quarrel correspondence is a letter from a defender of the Romance of the Rose called Gontier Col to its great detractor Christine de Pizan. Both were from the same circle—Col was a member of the royal chancery, while Christine was the widow of another royal secretary, and a budding writer in her own right. In his letter, Gontier asks Christine to explain her supposedly erroneous view that the Romance of the Rose is sacrilegious, and as a corrective he also sends along sections of the Tresor de Jean de Meun, an apocryphal meditation on the articles of the faith. Gontier’s personal copy of the Tresor survives to this day; it is BnF Ms. n. a. fr. 6261.

In this essay, I will argue that Gontier’s lost Tresor compilation should be considered along with the more canonical documents included in modern editions of the Quarrel. The first step will be to investigate what the term compilation meant to the debaters and their contemporaries; as we shall see, it encompassed a variety of forms, from the Rose itself to the Tresor, Gontier’s Tresor compilation, and at least some of the texts written especially for the Quarrel. That Gontier’s compilation had the same status as other Quarrel documents is reason alone for us to consider it, but still more to the point, what influence might it have had on the ensuing debate? A closer look at Gontier’s personal copy of the Tresor will help us reconstruct his Tresor compilation; then we will be able to trace the compilation’s influence on subsequent debates on theology and feminism—the Rose debaters emerge as more attentive to each other’s arguments than has sometimes been supposed. I will conclude with some remarks about the slippery nature of textual transmission and reception in the Middle Ages and modern era.

As we use it today, the term compilation describes a range of forms, including so-called miscellany manuscripts, florilegia of worthy sayings, and single-authored works that incorporate predecessors’ words and ideas. Despite their name, miscellanies like the Shrewsbury Book (BL Ms. Royal 15 E. vi) often betray a highly systematic order, and so do lyric anthologies like Gautier de

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4. On the Shrewsbury Book’s underlying order, see the contributions by Karen Fresco (chapter 9), Andrew Taylor (chapter 7), and Craig Taylor (chapter 8) in this volume. On miscellanies in general,
Coinci’s *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, as it is presented in BnF Ms. n. a. fr. 24541. In the late Middle Ages, the concept extended even beyond the literary sphere to politics, to signify a cabal. On the other hand, as Alastair Minnis has shown, authors like Boccaccio and Chaucer occasionally donned the compiler’s mask in order to deflect possible criticism of their works towards their sources. Christine de Pizan also presented herself as a compiler, but for different reasons; in Christine’s formulation, compilation represented an analytical filtering and reshaping of others’ words and ideas. It was a potentially noble form: Christine repeatedly likened her experience of inspiration to the Annunciation and her books to the Word made flesh. Sylvia Huot has read Christine’s portrait of a beautiful and sacred union between feminine compiler and masculine authors as a response to Jean de Meun’s imagery of (pro)creative hammers, pens, and penises. Their frenzied thwacking represents a uniquely masculine perspective; by definition there must be an object, but Jean de Meun’s emphasis is on the solitary perspective of the author-lover.

5. See Kathryn Duys’s contribution to this volume (chapter 11).
8. This opinion is not shared by all. Joël Blanchard, for example, has suggested that Christine’s pose as compiler is purely rhetorical, and he has gone so far as to equate her compilations with terrorism because of the way that they supposedly explode their source texts. See Blanchard, “Compilation et légitimation au 15e siècle,” *Poétique* 74 (1988), pp. 139–57. This intriguing interpretation highlights Christine’s very real demolition of the sources she does not like (such as Matheolus), but it fails to acknowledge her own point about the power of creative reading. By recuperating misogynist texts like Boccaccio’s *De Claris Mulieribus* in her *Book of the City of Ladies*, she asserts her power as an interpreter; she adjusts the details of Boccaccio’s narrative in a way that brings out the “truths” which had been “obscured” in the original wording. Blanchard also fails to acknowledge the many more straightforward ways in which Christine compiles words, images, and ideas from favorite authors like Boethius, Augustine, and even Guillaume de Lorris. Christine’s view of compilation is both flexible and expansive. On Christine’s idea of analytical compilation, see Julia Simms Holderness, “Compilation, Commentary, and Conversation in Christine de Pizan.” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 20 (2003), pp. 47–55, and “Castles in the Air? The Prince as Conceptual Artist” in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, Karen Green and Constant J. Mews, eds. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 161–75.
And yet, although Jean de Meun did not use the word compilation to describe the *Rose*, he did highlight the work’s composite quality. In a stunningly playful passage, the god of Love refers to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun as both characters in the ongoing action and the *romanciers* themselves. Both are also faithful scribes of Love’s commandments, and Jean de Meun in particular is meant to spread Love’s wisdom throughout France in the form of a book called the *Mirror for Lovers*.[11] In this presentation, the *Romance of the Rose* becomes more an inspired collaboration than an incomplete work and its continuation. Moreover, the suggested title puts it on a par with other medieval mirrors, compilations of instructive material like Vincent of Beauvais’s magisterial *Speculum Maius*. The *Rose* may also be understood as a window into one man’s mind, a collective conversation between the different aspects of his character (such as youth and reason) and his experience (such as leisure, danger, and of course, love). Jean de Meun’s rowdy and contentious compilation “in the language of France” displayed far greater complexity than his near-contemporary Bonaventure might have conceded.[12] In this vernacular context, it is not hard to imagine why both the *Rose*’s advocates and detractors saw it as a compilation. In turn, we should expect that their understanding of literary compilation and collection was quite flexible.

The Quarrel of the *Rose* took place in a variety of settings—private, semi-private, and public. It was also a multi-media affair, including unrecorded but remembered conversations, personal letters, a moral treatise, and lyric poems and sermons meant for public consumption. Some documents are in French, some in Latin. The new edition by Christine McWebb and Jeff Richards expands the Debate’s temporal boundaries beyond the years 1401–4, to include a variety of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century reactions to the *Rose*. This is a fascinating endeavor, but the “new” documents that they include (by Petrarch and others) are more of a metadebate; they react to the *Rose*, but not to each other.

Our concern lies with the more or less direct exchanges that took place between 1401 and 1404. At several moments during this period, interlocutors compiled exchanges between themselves and their adversaries that allowed

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12. Bonaventure distinguished compilation from authorship, attributing creativity to authors only: “Some write others’ words, adding material, but not their own, and they are called *compilers*. [. . .] Some write both their own words and those of others, but their own are nonetheless the focus, and the others’ are annexed to these as confirmation, and these people should be called *authors.*” (*Aliquis scribit aliena addendo, sed non de suo; et ipse compilator dicitur. [. . .] Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tamquam principalia, aliena tamquam annexa ad confirmationem et debet dici *auctor.*) St. Bonaventure, *In primum librum sententiarum*, proem, quaeptio iv. In *Opera* (Quaracchi, ed.), i (1882), 14. col. 2. Reproduced in M. B. Parkes, “Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,” in J. J. G. Alexander and Margaret T. Gibson, eds., *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to William Richard Hunt* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), pp. 115–41 at pp. 127–28.
themselves to have the last word. For example, Christine de Pizan ended her first compilation with her stinging response to Gontier Col; she ended her second compilation with her response to Gontier’s brother Pierre, whose own letters to her she neglected to include. Interestingly, Gontier chose to copy this compilation, without including his brother’s letters (Berkeley, University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC Ms. UCB, 109). A third compilation, which was created by another advocate of the Rose, does include Pierre’s first letter to Christine, as well as his own response to her response to him; this version survives in one manuscript only, a compendium of works by, attributed to, or about Jean de Meun (BnF Ms. fr. 1563). These compilations were destined for public consumption, and made their way into the libraries of the Queen, the Duke of Berry, and the Provost of Paris, Guillaume de Tignonville. Other documents, such as Jean Gerson’s sermons and Jean de Montreuil’s letters, survive in separate manuscripts, but their arguments link them closely to the compiled correspondence. Finally, like the conversation between Jean de Montreuil and Christine de Pizan that first sparked the Quarrel, several of the documents are now lost to us. One of these, Jean de Montreuil’s original treatise in praise of the Rose, lives on in shadowy form in the response Christine made to it. Another, the Tresor compilation that Gontier sent to Christine, seems to underlie some of the Quarrel’s later arguments.

In his first letter to Christine, Gontier describes Jean de Meun as a “true Catholic, solemn master and doctor in [ . . . ] holy theology, [and] most profound and excellent philosopher . . . ,” and he explains so that Christine can better appreciate the master’s theological brilliance, “I am sending you publicly but hastily a bit of the Tresor, which he compiled in order to be better known by the envious and others after his death.” Gontier adds one proviso: “[the text] is incorrect, because of the mistakes of the scribe who did not understand it (as will be obvious), and I have not had the time or leisure to review or correct it thoroughly, because of my haste and the burning desire I feel to see your own writing. It is to be hoped that you will know well how to correct and understand the scribe’s mistakes in this compilation.” The fragmentary state of Gontier’s personal copy of this work suggests that it may be the source for his compilation.

BnF Ms. n. a. fr. 6261 is itself a collection. It contains three works in the following order: (1) Gontier’s personal copy of the Tresor de Jean de Meun, (2)
Un petit traitié de doctrine, which is a set of remonstrances to live virtuously with the end of all things in mind, and (3) a self-explanatory Salve regina en franczoys. The latter two texts are written in a fifteenth-century hand, and the binding appears to be from the late fifteenth century. But the Tresor’s last folio bears Gontier’s signature (“∞ De libris Gonteri Colli de Senonis ∞ Gontier [seing] ∞ de”), and according to Carla Bozzolo, the poem is in Gontier’s own hand.15 Marginal notes in another medieval hand indicate places where Gontier has missed one or two stanzas (“ici manquent 12 vers,” “ici manquent 24 vers”). Without any other indication, one might not notice the missing stanzas, but one cannot help but notice that whole folios have been lost as well. The manuscript’s final private owner, the Marquis Auguste-Henry-Edouard de Queux de Saint Hilaire (1837–89), was also the last to emend it. The freewheeling Marquis (whom we also know as the editor of the complete works of Eustache Deschamps) filled in the blanks in the Tresor by copying out the relevant pages from the edition by Dominique-Martin Méon and pasting them in close to the manuscript’s seam. He did the same for the missing stanzas, keying them in to the main text with a system of diacritical marks.

How is one to explain these larger gaps, where entire folios have disappeared? BnF Ms. n.a. fr. 6261 shows no traces of an illumination program, so it does not seem that these gaps could represent pilfered miniatures. It is possible that Gontier lent the now-missing folios to a scribe to copy for Christine, and that they somehow never made it back to him. Christine’s personal library does not survive, but comparing the lacunae in BnF Ms. n. a. fr. 6261 with Méon’s edition can help us see what passages Gontier might have wanted to send his adversary. This 1814 edition is far from scientific, but it does offer a useful sense of the structure and content of the Tresor. Gontier’s selections suggest not only that Jean de Meun was orthodox, but also that he took an interest in questions of divine grace and the honor of women, key issues in the subsequent debate. Gontier’s selection from the article on baptism is significant. For example, we read of the: “Glorious current, glorious water, / Which made clean that which Adam and Eve / Had sullied through their sin . . .”16


The selection from the article on the Passion has a similar focus: the author describes Jesus as, “Our most complete friend, . . . , The one who acquits our debts.” Both Christine de Pizan and her ally Jean Gerson would later associate the Rose with the Turlupins, a contemporary religious sect that reputedly denied the significance of the fall and believed that one could achieve a state of grace while still on earth. Gontier’s selection from the article on the Resurrection is notable for its emphasis on the love between Jesus and the “tres-doulce Magdalaine:”

[Jesus] concluded that Mary,
Who sat at his feet without complaining,
And thought only of listening silently,
Had chosen the sounder part.19

[T]he spark [of their love] was always burning,
And so she was visited
And comforted by God before all others,
For charity is most swift.20

The inclusion of this passage on Mary’s silence might be a dig at Christine’s outspokenness. Although Christine tended to portray herself as a contemplative Mary figure, one can imagine that her contemporaries saw her as more of a pesky Martha; even if she really did spend most of her time in the study, she was very active in composing complaints and firing off angry letters. At any rate Gontier’s focus on the virtue of Mary seems to anticipate and gainsay Christine’s charge that the Rose’s advocates sought “to diminish” “the honor and praise of women.”21

Gontier’s enthusiasm for the Tresor leads this modern reader to a reconsideration of medieval and modern ideas of originality, style, and faithfulness to source texts. They are key to any decision about what or what not to compile or collect. At first glance, it is hard to imagine that Gontier really believed that the Tresor had been written by Jean de Meun. It is true that Jean de Meun found

18. Débat, Jean Gerson, pp. 83, 164, and 180, and Christine de Pizan, pp. 117 and 145. See also Robert S. Lerner, The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), especially pp. 52–53 and 165–68. The Turlupins were also notorious for their supposed nude rites.
19. Tresor, p. 370: “Pour ce conclut-il que Marie / Qui seoit à ses piez sanz braire, / Et pensoit d’entendre et de taire, / Esut la plus saine partie.”
20. Tresor, p. 371: “[T]ousjours ardoit l’estincelle; / Par quoy elle fu visitée, / Et de Dieu premiers confortée, / Car charité est trop ysnelle.”
21. Débat, ed. Hicks, p. 6: Christine’s dedication letter to the Queen.
significant inspiration in the works of others—completing the poem begun by Guillaume de Lorris and translating works by Boethius, Abelard and Heloise, Vegetius, and Aelred of Rievaulx. But his continuation of the *Rose* is hardly subservient to its source, and his translations are of intellectually complex and compelling works. The articles of the faith that form the core of the *Tresor* were important for medieval Christians, but this presentation lacks the intellectual and stylistic panache that even his most severe detractors acknowledged in Jean de Meun. How could Gontier Col, who has been called one of the first French humanists, not have realized that his brilliant hero had not written the *Tresor*?²² Gontier should have known Jean de Meun’s style and preoccupations well from the *Romance of the Rose*, as well as Jean’s translation of Abelard and Heloise, which he had himself transcribed word for word (BnF Ms. fr. 920).²³ Just how attuned were those early French humanists to matters of style?

Christine does not question the *Tresor*’s attribution to Jean de Meun either, but she does question Pierre Col’s discussion of another apocryphal work, the *Testament de Jean de Meun*. As Pierre-Yves Badel, Sylvia Huot, and Nancy Freeman Regalado have noted, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a flourishing of creative responses to the *Romance of the Rose*.²⁴ One of the offshoots was the attribution of various devotional treatises to Jean de Meun. The *Tresor*, *Testament*, and *Codicille de Jean de Meun* were often compiled with each other, and often with the *Romance of the Rose* itself. Taken together, these texts formed a pro-Jean de Meun publicity campaign, supposed proof of his religious zeal.²⁵

The *Testament* surfaces at several points in the *Rose* Debate.²⁶ First, the *Rose* critic Jean Gerson portrays a crowd of people eager to excuse Jean de Meun for

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²². Cf. Alfred Coville’s portrait of Gontier and his brother as pioneering humanists: *Gontier et Pierre Col et l’humanisme en France*.


²⁵. Silvia Buzzetti Gallarati, “Nota bibliografica sulla tradizione manoscritta del *Testament* di Jean de Meun,” *Revue romane* 13 (1978), pp. 2–35. This trend culminated in Honoré Bouvet’s *Apparicion Maistre Jehan de Meun* (1398). In this dream vision, Jean de Meun moderates a debate among a physician, a Jew, a Muslim, and a Dominican friar; here too Jean de Meun is a pious figure. The *Apparicion* may even be said to rely on his now-proven reputation. Cf. Michael Hanley, ed. and trans., *Medieval Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Dialogue: The Apparicion Maistre Jehan de Meun of Honorat Bouvet* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

²⁶. For Regalado, this exchange is particularly significant because it points to the broader conception of Jean de Meun in the early fifteenth century. See Regalado, “Villon’s Legacy,” pp. 295–97.
the *Rose*, because of the regret for it that he expressed in a line of the *Testament*: “J’ay fait [. . . ] en ma jonesse maint dit par vanitey.”

Pierre Col responds by reinterpreting this line, suggesting that Jean de Meun could not have been referring to the *Romance of the Rose*—instead the reference must have been to some now-lost naughty lyric poems.

He promises to explain his line of reasoning, but never does. Christine pounces on this opportunity, feigning amazement that anything by “un si souverain dicteur” could have been lost, given that Jean de Meun’s fans will attribute almost anything to him, even works by Augustine.

In fact there is no record of that attribution, but Christine could be mocking Gontier’s credulity concerning the *Tresor*.

Christine demonstrates a surer sense of style than the brothers Col. Referring to the *Rose*, she takes a jab at Jean de Meun’s style in her letter to Pierre. She insists on the idea of decorum, contrasting Jean de Meun’s parodic blend of sacred and profane with Dante’s strict separation of each into separate realms of the afterlife:

[Jean de Meun] hardly shows us the blessedness of paradise when he says that evil-doers will go there. And he mixes up paradise with the filth he describes, in order to lend greater credence to his book. But if you want to hear heaven and hell described better, and theology discussed in more subtle terms, more beneficially, more poetically, and more usefully, read the book called *The Dante*, or else have it explained to you, since it is sovereignly written in the Florentine language: there you will hear another discourse which is better and more subtly founded—no offense!—and which will benefit you more than your *Romance of the Rose*—and it is a hundred times better written—there is no comparison—please do not be vexed.

Christine’s reading of the Jean de Meun’s *Rose* is arguably influenced by her reading of the *Tresor*.

Moving forward in time, one may ask what constituted an “authentic” text

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27. Débat, p. 64.
30. Débat, pp. 141–42: “[L]a beatitude de paradis ne monstre il mie quant il dist que les malfait-eurs yront. Et pour ce mese il paradis avec les ordures dont il parle; pour donner plus foy a son livre. Mais se mieuxz vueltz oir descriptre paradis et enfer, et par plus subtilz termes plus hautement parlé de theologle, plus prouffitabilitment, plus poetiquement et de plus grant efficasse, lis le livre que on appelle le Dant, ou le te fais exposer pour ce que il est en langue florentine souverainement dicté; la oyras autre propos mieuxz fondé plus subtilement, ne te desplaise, et ou tu pourras plus prouffiter que en ton *Romant de la Rose*,—et cent fois mieuxz composé; ne il n’y a comparaison, ne t’en couroucess ja.”
in the nineteenth century? Although the Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire had access to a complete printed edition of the *Tresor*, he chose to copy out the sections missing from his manuscript and paste them in. In 1889, the year of Queux de Saint-Hilaire’s death, Gaston Paris recalled that what had attracted his old friend to late medieval French literature,

was a natural affinity with the nobility, elegance, and amiability of the high society of that time and the poetry which gave it pleasure. He was quite at home in the chivalrous, refined world which is glimpsed in the *Livre des Cent Ballades*; and so he was delighted to discover that [ . . . ] a certain Jehan de Queux [was] among those who took part in this gallant poetic tournament. In publishing the *Cent Ballades*, he claimed to address not scholars, but rather, “those men of the world [ . . . ] who still kept alive the flower of chivalry which certain families had passed down for generations [and] to all those who, because of their cultivated minds and distinguished sentiments take an interest in historical and moral questions.” Assuredly, he was himself the paragon of this group.31

Queux de Saint-Hilaire’s interventionist attitude resembles that of his contemporary Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79), who preferred restoring crumbling medieval architecture to its original splendor, to merely preserving it from further ruin. Authenticity in its more current sense be damned—these men felt a direct connection to the past, and this sense of connection allowed them to reshape their objects in a way that we might not consider feasible today.

And what about today? In his edition of the Debate, Eric Hicks discusses at length his reasons for including letters by Jean de Montreuil and omitting Christine’s *Epistre au dieu d’amours*. His near total silence about the *Tresor* may be explained by the fact that whoever wrote it was not a direct participant in the Debate. But it is worth noting that Gontier presents the *Tresor* as the Debate’s very earliest document. In his first letter to Christine, Gontier says

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31. Gaston Paris, “Le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire,” in Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres complètes*, 11 vols. (Paris: SATF, 1889), vol. 6, pp. ii–iii: “c’était une affinité naturelle avec ce qu’eurent de noble, d’élégant et d’aimable la haute société d’alors et la poésie où elle s’amusa. Dans ce monde chevaleresque et poli que fait entrevoir à l’imagination le *Livre des Cent Ballades*, il se trouvait naturellement chez lui: aussi quel ne fut pas son plaisir quand il rencontra dans Deschamps (t. IV, p. 312) un Jehan de Queux, mentionné précisément en compagnie de plusieurs de ceux qui prirent part à ce galant tournoi poétique! En publiant le recueil des *Cent Ballades*, il y a vingt ans, il déclarait l’adresser non aux savants, mais à ceux des hommes du monde, plus nombreux qu’on ne le croit, qui conservent encore intacte cette fleur de chevalerie transmise avec des traditions de famille auxquelles on se rarement forfaire . . . à toutes les personnes qui, par la culture de leur esprit et par la distinction de leurs sentiments, s’intéressent aux questions historiques et morales.’ Assurément, il était lui-même le type le plus achevé de ceux qu’il caractérisait ainsi [ . . . ].”
that Jean de Meun wrote the *Tresor* to stave off attacks by “jealous people and others . . . after his death” [ses envieux et des autres [ . . . ] a sa mort]. In the same letter Gontier refers to contemporary detractors of the *Rose* as “jealous of the accomplishments of the late Master Jean” [envieux sur les fais du [ . . . ] feu maistre Jehan]. I would argue that Gontier’s lost compilation does have the force of an authorial text. After all, Gontier and Christine both refer to Jean de Meun as a compiler.

Even when the debaters are not arguing about theoretical issues like allegory, their correspondence bears witness to the complex literary culture of their day. The *Rose*’s advocates and detractors shared common assumptions about the nature of literary authenticity, and for all of them, textual transmission was a frustratingly messy business.