The City of Scholars
New Approaches to Christine de Pizan

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Edited by
Margarete Zimmermann
and Dina De Rentiis

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Preface

Over the past two decades, no medieval author has enjoyed such a marked "revival of interest in her work"[1] as Christine de Pizan. Angus Kennedy seeks to explain this phenomenon in the light of renewed interest in the Late Middle Ages and the contemporary feminist movement.[2] Through translations into English, Dutch, modern French, and German the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1404/1405) – yet to be published in the original – has become a bestseller: a distinction achieved by very few medieval works. Editions and translations of this author's other works have followed, as well as a wealth of scholarly publications, and for some years now one can speak of a 'boom' in Christine de Pizan research. This was reason enough to organize an international conference which would allow opportunities for discussion and exchange of ideas, as well as for a first critical assessment.

This volume contains the fruits of the First International Christine de Pizan Conference held June 3–5 1992 at the Freie Universität of Berlin. It gives a view of current approaches in research and inquiry, and mirrors the high level of contemporary research being done on the work of this writer. Furthermore, it documents the intensity with which Christine's works are read, edited, translated, and discussed in Europe and particularly in the United States. The Berlin conference made possible the beginning or rather the continuation of the dialogue between American and European "Christinophiles," likewise it enhanced the interchange between generations of scholars which is indispensible for progress in any field of learning. And finally: it provided a forum for interdisciplinary work on Christine's work informed by key issues in Art and Social History, the *histoire des mentalités*, Historical Anthropology and Political Science. These new approaches deepened the historical understanding of Christine's works within their contexts of genesis and influence.

The numerous translations of the *Cité des Dames* have decisively increased the interest in Christine among a broader public, both within and beyond the boundaries of the academic world. Yet, in the past, the nature and the motives of this interest were too reductive: Christine de Pizan was considered almost exclusively as an "advocate of women;" her historiographical, political and lyrical works were heavily underestimated. It took some time to realize that she is, indeed, far from being an "author of one book" – albeit an important and unique book –, and that reducing her *œuvre* to one aspect is an undue simplification. The Berlin conference proved that the research on Christine de Pizan has successfully managed to break out of this reductionist cage. These proceedings give representative insights into an area of research characterized by a large variety of topics and methods. The appeal of the *Cité des Dames*, this great early defense of women, certainly remains a constant theme in this volume. However, a clear shift in the key points of interest becomes apparent. Very close attention is given especially to Christine's philosophical and political allegory *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune* (1403) as well as to the *Avision-Christine* (1405) – a combination of autobiography and veiled commentary on her crisis-stricken times –, and to the *Livre des Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (1405) – a most complex work interweaving the genres of biography, mirror of princes, and historiography. Such categories as female authorship and a specifically female view of the social and intellectual conditions of the Late Middle Ages are clearly pertinent issues in scholarship today. At the same time, it is and will be essential to bring out Christine's universal significance for the literature of the 15th century, and to work against any lingering underestimation of her status as an author and as a subject of highly qualified research.

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[1] Kennedy: *Christine de Pizan: a bibliographical guide*, p. 11.

[2] Ibid.

Charity Cannon Willard, the great pioneer and present doyenne of international research on Christine de Pizan, calls the author "a child of two worlds."[3] This term precisely characterizes Christine's experienced and consciously lived participation in both the Italian and French culture of her time. Traces of this active participation in these two cultures can be found everywhere in her work. They become apparent, for example, in her creative treatment of the influences of the *tre corone* – Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio –, in the Italianisms of her language, in the interest she shows in the political developments occurring in her country of origin, or in her apostrophe to Minerva: "[...] et je suis comme toy femme ytalienne."[4]

The present volume characterizes Christine de Pizan not only as a French author with strong ties to Italian culture, but also – and, perhaps, most of all – as a European poet. Her work was popular among the higher nobility of all Europe, and it reflects essential problems and concerns in European culture around 1400. Christine takes an active part in the appropriation and assimilation of the Greco-Roman legacy, however not without gender-specific modifications, as to be observed especially in relation to Ovid. Further important issues that constitute an object of constant reflection in her works are the modality and possibilities of an *imitatio auctorum*, the mediation between French and Italian culture, and the development of literary forms combining encyclopaedic and didactic traits.

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[3] Willard: *Christine de Pizan. Her Life and Works*, p. 15.

[4] Christine de Pizan: *The Book of Faytes of Armes and Chyvalrye*, transl. William Caxton, p. 8.

In light of the innovative readings given here, all past and present attempts to reduce Christine to a *quantité négligeable* in literary and cultural history by labeling her as lengthy pedant, unoriginal, prudish bluestocking, or sycophant, lose their *raison d'être*. Attempts of this kind merely indicate an unhistorical approach, gender bias, and a deficient understanding of the Late Middle Ages. The papers collected in this volume contribute to the view that Christine de Pizan was and is, indeed, a great European writer. They show that because of their manifold potential for sense and meaning, her works deserve an eminent place in the literary canon of the 14th and the 15th centuries.

At the end of the second book of *L'Avision-Christine*, "Dame Opinion" addresses the fictitious author-self Christine with the following words: "In time to come, even more will be spoken of you than during your lifetime, for [...] you have lived in a bad time, when sciences are not held in great esteem [...]."[5] Lady Opinion then predicts the coming of a "[...] prince full of valor and wisdom who, through knowing your volumes, will wish that you had lived during his lifetime and would have liked to know you [...]."[6] In our democratic century, a host of "Christinophiles," "full of valor and wisdom" like the mysterious prince, have assumed this role and stepped out into the field of science, to preserve the *memoria* and to increase the *fama* of Christine.

It would be both presumptuous and inappropriate to designate Berlin, this metropolis in the Mark-Brandenburg, characterized by Prussian-Protestant parsimony, a city of contradictions and discontinuities, as a "haut lieu christinien." The State Library of Berlin owned only one manuscript of a work by Christine de Pizan, the *Livre du Chemin de long estude* (1403), and this manuscript has been missing since 1945. However, the multicultural atmosphere of a city, in which so many "children of two worlds" dwell, added to the success of the First International Christine de Pizan Conference, and the Clubhouse of the Freie Universität provided a comfortable setting for a stimulating and serene exchange of ideas.

We, the organizers, would first and foremost like to thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation of Cologne for generously and unbureaucratically providing the funds necessary for the conference. Without this support, the congress could not have taken place. We would like to thank the *Senat für Wissenschaft und Forschung*, the *Außenamt der Freien Universität*, and the Institute of Romance Languages. Furthermore, we would also like to express our gratitude to Liliane Dulac (Montpellier), and Earl Jeffrey Richards (New Orleans), whose support substantially facilitated the preparation of the congress.

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[5] Quoted from: Willard: *Christine de Pizan. Her Life and Works*, p. 223.

[6] Ibid.

Finally, we wish to thank the following future members of the Berlin *City of Scholars* for their inexhaustible energy, patience, and unswavering dedication: Christiane Breithecker, Béatrice De March, Christiane Jessen, Claudia Probst as well as, for her invaluable redactional help, Esther Keller and Marcus Keller.

Berlin-Dahlem, February 1994

Margarete Zimmermann
Dina De Rentiis

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Sources and Influences

RENATE BLUMENFELD-KOSINSKI
Columbia University

Christine de Pizan and Classical Mythology. Some Examples from the "Mutacion de Fortune"

Abstract: In her *Cent Balades* Christine de Pizan established two principal models for the intertextual use of classical mythology: the personal/autobiographical and the moralizing/mythographical. In the *Mutacion de Fortune* Christine reuses and expands these models: She uses examples from classical mythology to give depth and meaning to her own autobiography; mythological tales also appear as moral and political commentary. Thus Christine's gender transformation, central to the first part of the *Mutacion de Fortune*, is announced and commented on by the stories of Circe, Iphis, and Tiresias, representing a variety of metamorphoses. In later, predominantly historical, parts of the *Mutacion* the stories of Actaeon, Ulysses, and Cadmus serve as cautionary and instructive *exempla.*

In many poetic texts of the late middle ages classical mythology is omnipresent. Christine de Pizan's *œuvre* is no exception. Indeed, her works show us the whole range of the literary and political uses of classical myth in that period. The most important interpretive traditions for mythological material Christine inherited were those of the *Ovide moralisé* (with its complex multilayered interpretation of Ovidian fables), and of poets like Machaut and Froissart whose views on art and love were often couched in the form of ancient – or new, pseudo-Ovidian – myths.[1] The *Mutacion de Fortune* (1403), a universal and personal history focusing on the powers of Fortune, combines two of Christine's principal uses of myth, the personal and political, in important ways.[2]

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[1] I treat Christine de Pizan's use of classical mythology in much greater detail in chap. 5 of my *Reading Myth* (to be published by Stanford University Press). Chap. 3 deals with the interpretive techniques of the *Ovide Moralisé* and chap. 4 is devoted primarily to Machaut and Froissart. The text of the *Ovide Moralisé* has been edited by de Boer.

[2] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, ed. Suzanne Solente. Brownlee describes the *Mutacion* as "a universal history framed by a personal history" (Brownlee: "The Image of History in the *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*," p. 44).

For both currents – the personal and the political – we can find precursors in Christine's own works, in particular the *Cent Balades* (begun around 1395) and the *Epistre Othea* (ca. 1400). In the *Cent Balades*, mythological stories such as those of Hero and Leander, Circe, Io, and in particular the Judgment of Paris serve to define Christine's poetic stance towards love and the courtly tradition as well as her own poetic voice.[3] In some poems her voice is that of a moralizer or mythographer; in others it is a deeply personal voice that for example dramatizes the poetic "je's" choice of wisdom in a poem like *Autres Balades* 7 (the Judgment of Paris). Here the rewriting of the myth serves the purpose of self-definition rather than that of showing us a choice of three lives for all humans, as the preceding interpretive (Fulgentian) tradition did.[4] In the myths of the *Cent Balades*, as I show elsewhere, the personal, the moral and the mythographic intersect.[5]

In the *Epistre Othea*, ostensibly a work of traditional mythography, Christine distances herself very subtly from her mythographic predecessors.[6] She rewrites both ancient myths and their interpretations and through this rewriting appropriates the methodological bases of mythography and establishes her own authority as a mythographer.

It is from this basis of the personal, and at the same time political and mythographic, views of myth that Christine comes to the *Mutacion de Fortune*. It is here, in the initial sections, that we find the most effective use of myth on the autobiographical level and, later on in the text, some skilfull exploitation of traditional mythological stories as political commentary.

The four informing mythological stories in the first part of the *Mutacion* are those of Circe, Tiresias, Iphis, and Alcyone and Ceyx. The first three are grouped together, since they all deal with the transformation of gender or form, an important theme in the opening of the *Mutacion*. The last one, only alluded to by Christine, is a heartbreaking story of love beyond death and is related to the dominant image of this part of the *Mutacion*, that of her marriage as a sea voyage ending in shipwreck with her husband swept overboard to his death.

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[3] Strictly speaking, figures like Hero and Leander are not part of classical mythology. But already Fulgentius considered their story a fabula as worthy of allegorical interpretation as the stories of the gods. On this and related problems see the fundamental study by Demats: *Fabula*.

[4] See Fulgentius: *Fulgentius, the Mythographer*, pp. 64–65.

[5] Blumenfeld-Kosinski: *Reading Myth*, chap. 5 (see note 1).

[6] The political import of the text and its illustrations has been discussed in the excellent study by Hindman: *Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre Othea;'* the techniques of interpretation used by Christine form part of the chapter on Christine in my *Reading Myth*. The opinions on whether Christine was a traditional mythographer or more of an innovator are divided. See Schibanoff: "Taking the Gold out of Egypt." Flynn and Schweickart, eds. *Gender and Reading*, pp. 83–106, and, for the other position, Reno: "Feminist Aspects of Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre d'Othea a Hector,'" pp. 271–276.

Christine prefaces her telling of the *Metamorphoses* stories by stating that here we will learn "comme de femme homme devins" ("how from a woman I turned into a man," v. 1029). This, she adds is neither "mençonge ne fable" ("lie nor fable," v. 1032), but rather "parler selon methafore" ("speaking metaphorically," v. 1033), offering an illustration of the powers of Fortune. What she then goes on to tell are of course Ovidian fables, nicely highlighting the complex meaning of the term fable. In the *Ovide moralisé* the term was almost always used as a reference to the Ovidian base text which was "false" yet true in many different ways. It was false from a doctrinal perspective and it was false because it was fiction; yet it became true through the poet's ingenuity: the fables' hidden meaning was as orthodox as could be desired. Similarly, Christine initially equates fables with lies and instead valorizes metaphor. Yet, the way she actually uses fables to convey truths, be they psychological or political, points up their narrative value and authorizes her frequent use of Ovidian fables.[7] Let us now turn to the stories introducing – and prefiguring – Christine's own metamorphosis in the *Mutacion*.

In the first story of transformation, that of Circe (vv. 1035–1056), the focus is on the enchantress's ability to metamorphose humans. As in *Autres Balades* 17 that dealt with the same subject, this is seen as something negative, even sneaky:

> [...] En faisant semblant d'amer,
> A ses chevaliers on tendi
> Buvrage, qui les estendi
> A la terre comme chetis,
> Et en pors furent convertis. (vv. 1046–1050)[8]

Christine does not even mention Ulysses's rescue mission resulting in the men's retransformation (an important element in *Autres Balades* 17), thus highlighting Fortune's power, for she was the real preparer of the potion. Circe, so it seems, was nothing but Fortune's instrument. This reorientation of the mythological story serves distinct purposes: first, by restricting the metamorphoses to one-way transformations (in this passage, as we saw, the men remain pigs, although Christine mentions Circe's ability to retransform them) the author prepares the reader for her own one-way transformation; second, the absolute power of Fortune cannot be doubted by anyone. She governs history.[9]

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[7] On Christine's views on metaphor and allegory (drawn, according to Reno, from Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*), see the preface to the *Avision-Christine* published by Reno.

[8] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 1046–1050: "By pretending to be in love with them, one gave his knights a potion that made them stretch out on the ground like sick people, and they were changed into pigs."

In her telling of the next story, that of Tiresias, Christine omits almost as much as she tells. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells of Tiresias's transformation into a woman and back into a man to explain his qualification as arbiter in a dispute between Jupiter and Juno as to which gender enjoys more pleasure during the sexual act (*Metamorphoses* 3.316–338). Tiresias "knew both sides of love" (3.323), for he once saw two serpents mating, separated them with his staff and consequently was transformed into a woman. The same action brings back his male shape seven years later. When Tiresias agrees with Jupiter that women have more fun in bed, Juno punishes him by striking him with blindness. To compensate for this punishment which he could not undo, Jupiter bestows on Tiresias the gift of prophecy. Of this extremely brief yet complex passage in Ovid Christine retains only the two incidents with the serpents and the fact of the double metamorphosis. What she adds, however, is quite significant: "En ce point .VII. ans demoura / Ou il fila et laboura / De tieulx mestiers, que femmes font" (vv. 1079–1081).[10] Thus the entire sexual framework has vanished; there is no allusion to the dispute between Jupiter and Juno. The definition of woman is no longer the knowledge of female sexual pleasures but rather the "work that women do."

This story, then, expands on the Circe story in that it shows us a two-way transformation: from man to woman to man. Christine will follow a similar trajectory in her own works, for in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405) she will become a "woman" again, defined by "woman's work" which in that case will be writing not spinning.[11] Thus, by focusing on work rather than on sexuality, Christine reinterprets the Tiresias story. It is undoubtedly significant that Christine here accepts none of the multiple interpretive possibilities offered by the *Ovide moralisé*. Treating in a sly way the power of women, this same story had provoked in the *Ovide moralisé* poet an acerbic attack on domineering women (3.1060–1083).[12] The allegory that follows states that women love God more ardently than men, an almost blasphemous transposition of a lascivious story into a sacred context.

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[9] In the *Avision-Christine*, by contrast, it is God who governs history. See the interesting article by Brown-Grant: "*L'Avision Christine*," especially p. 101.

[10] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 1079–1081: "In this state he remained seven years, during which time he spun and did such work as women do."

[11] Note that it is exactly the activity of spinning that Christine identifies as the traditional pursuit of women her mother wanted her to follow and that kept her from getting an education in her childhood: "Mais l'oppinion femenine de ta mere, qui te vouloit occuper en fillasses selonc l'usaige commun des femmes, fu cause de l'empeschement que ne fus en ton enffance plus avant boutee es sciences et plus en parfont." (Christine de Pizan: *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, ed. Maureen Curnow, vol. 2, p. 875).

Christine must have been aware of the misogynistic and vaguely blasphemous tone of the *Ovide moralisé*'s interpretive passages; for she elaborates neither on women's love of God nor on women's power over men but emphasizes the notion of "woman's work" which ultimately constitutes the definition of Tiresias in his female incarnation.

The third metamorphosis, that of Iphis from a woman into a man, is told at much greater length than the two previous examples (vv. 1094–1158). It represents a sort of climax because it comes closest to the events of Christine's own life as described in the *Mutacion*. What is most striking here is a desexualization of the Ovidian story similar to that of the Tiresias story: Christine removes the sexual conflicts of Iphis; she also substitutes the goddess Vesta for Isis as Iphis's mother's "patron saint."[13] Ovid tells the Iphis story in the context of tales of "unnatural love" in *Metamorphoses* 9. For Christine, of course, the metamorphosis occupies center stage.

The first parallels with Christine's own story are the reference to the fact that Iphis's father hated women so much that he ordered his wife to kill the baby she was expecting if it turned out to be a girl. Less radical, but nevertheless similar, is what Christine said about her own father:

> Mon pere, dont j'ay mencion
> Faite cy, ot devocion
> Et tres grant voulenté d'avoir
> Un filz masle, qui fust son hoir,
> Pour succeder a sa richesce,
> Qui n'appetisse pour largesse,
> Comme il disoit, bien m'en recort;
> Lui et ma mere d'un accort
> M'engendrerent en celle attente,
> Mais il failli a son entente,
> Car ma mere, qui ot pouoir
> Trop plus que lui, si voult avoir
> Femelle a elle ressemblable,
> Si fus nee fille, sanz fable. (vv. 379–392)[14]

---

[12] *Ovide Moralisé*, ed. Cornelius de Boer, vol. 15.

[13] Voir Brownlee: "Ovide et le moi poétique 'moderne' a la fin du Moyen Age," Cazelles and Méla, éds. *Modernité au moyen âge: Le défi du passé*, p. 167, n. 20.

[14] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 379–392: "My father, whom I have mentioned here, had the inclination and great desire to have a male son to be his heir, to inherit the

While Christine's father eventually accepts Christine's femaleness and wants to share his wealth of learning with her, Iphis's father persists in his cruel design, and her mother is forced to disguise the child as a boy. The name fortunately is an androgynous one. All goes well until the father picks a bride for his "son." In Ovid, Iphis is terribly attracted to the chosen girl; she muses at length that her love is even more unnatural than Pasiphae's who, though mating with a bull, at least chose a male (*Metamorphoses* 9.726–746). The mother, in despair, prays – in Christine's text – to the goddess Vesta, a chaste goddess as opposed to Ovid's unchaste Isis, and "[...] Yplis sa fille, / Qui filz devint, par la soubtille / Deesse Vestis, qui deffit / Son corps de femme et filz le fit" (vv. 1156–1158).[15] It is significant that Christine does not say "homme" ("man") here but "filz" ("son").[16] The story thus points in two directions: backward to the above-cited passage on her own birth and forward to her own transformation. Here Ovid's *Metamorphoses* functions as an intertext. For while the lines in the *Mutacion* give an all too brief description of Iphis's transformation, Ovid, and to some extent the *Ovide moralisé*, provides an extensive vocabulary that is strikingly similar to Christine's who thus calls our attention to the correspondences between her own and Iphis's story. In Ovid we read:

> Iphis walked beside her [his] mother as she went, but with a longer stride than was her wont. Her face seemed of a darker hue, her strength seemed greater, her very features sharper, and her locks all unadorned, were shorter than before. She seemed more vigorous than was her girlish wont. (9.786–789)

Here is how Christine's describes her own metamorphosis effected by Fortune:

> Si me toucha par tout le corps;
> Chacun membre, bien m'en recors,
> Manya et tint a ses mains [...] (vv. 1327–1329)

---

riches that do not diminish through generosity [i.e., learning], so he said, I remember it well; he and my mother agreed on this and conceived me in that expectation. But he failed in his intention, for my mother, who was more powerful than he, wanted to have a girl similar to herself; thus in truth I was born a girl."

[15] Ibid. vv. 1156–1158: "Iphis, her daughter who became a son through the skilfull goddess Vesta who undid her woman's body and made her a son."

[16] In Ovid we read "femina nuper eras, puer es!" (*Metam.* 9.791), while the *Ovide Moralisé* says everyone learned that "Yphis fille est devenus filz" (9.3101–3102). Thus Christine follows the *Ovide Moralisé.* But in light of Christine's views of her mother and father in lines 379–392 I would still see a deeper significance in her choice of "filz" over "homme."

> Transmuee me senti toute.
> Mes membres senti trop plus fors
> Qu'ainçois […] (vv. 1336–1338)
>
> Si me senti trop plus legiere
> Que ne souloye et que ma chiere
> Estoit muee et enforcie
> Et ma voix forment engrossie
> Et corps plus dur et plus isnel […] (vv. 1347–1351)
>
> Or fus je vrays homs, n'est pas fable. (v. 1391)[17]

If Ovid and the *Ovide moralisé* inspired this passage what about the interpretations offered in the *Ovide moralisé*? There, Iphis is either a woman of perverted sexuality or the sinful soul. We saw the many ways in which Christine identifies herself with Iphis, interpreted in such negative terms in one of her major sources. If the intertext defines the reaction to a given passage, we can understand the myriad reasons why Christine had to turn into a "man" in this context. Not only did society require her to act like a man: through her transformation she could also avoid the negative values associated with women, here figured by Iphis in her pretransformation state. Thus by framing her own metamorphosis by the Ovidian one, Christine adds a new dimension to her poetic autobiography. The passage is not only very moving in purely human terms but also part of a web of Ovidian references that go beyond explicit citation.

The three examples of metamorphoses of gender and form prepare the reader for what is to come in Christine's own life story. They cover the whole spectrum of metamorphosis: a one-way (although potentially two-way) transformation of men into pigs; a two-way gender change of man into woman into man; and finally a transformation of a woman into a man. Christine thus sets the stage not only for her own transformation but for a problematic of gender roles she will explore in later works, such as the *Cité des Dames*. Circe's story highlights the moral dimension of metamorphosis, while Tiresias's story teaches us that a transformation need not be final, even if at first it appears to be. Thus while Christine starts out in her professional life like Iphis, she leaves the possibility for a retransformation open.[18] The mythological examples are thus far more than mere illustrations of the powers of Fortune. They are essential parts of Christine's self-definition.

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[17] "She [Fortune] touched my whole body; she fingered and held in her hand every part of my body, I remember it well. I felt completely changed. My limbs felt heavier than before. I felt lighter than I used to and my face was changed, was stronger, and my voice stronger and my body harder and faster. I found my heart to be strong and bold. I was astonished at this, but I felt that I had become a true man. Thus I was a real man, in truth." It is significant that in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* Christine uses some of the same words to describe the transformation that readies her for the business of constructing the City ("me sentant […] trop plus forte et legiere que devant n'estoye," vol. 2, p. 640). Here, however, she remains a woman, highlighting a change in her perception of what it takes to be an author.

The final example of Christine's "personal myths" which add both emotional and intellectual resonances to her text is not a gender change but a tale of eternal love. The allusion to Ovid's Alcyone and Ceyx story (vv. 1257–1259) is only a small part of the truly heartbreaking account of Christine's reaction to the loss of her husband which is presented as an allegorical shipwreck. Here, the presence of the Alcyone and Ceyx story tempers the atmosphere of total despair. For, reading against the Ovidian intertext, we know that eventually the two spouses were united, albeit in a different shape. Christine's answer to the myth of the halcyon days that awaited Alcyone and Ceyx is the myth of Iphis. If she cannot have her man, she must become one.

The four myths of this part of the *Mutacion* acquire deeper and truer meaning through their position in a "personal" system. Where in the *Cent Balades* and *Autres Balades* mythological stories were dispersed throughout the collection and responded in each case to one of Christine's preoccupations, here the myths form part of a poetic autobiography. They speak to her and the reader through the qualities that make them eternal: they provide answers, hope, and links to the past. At the same time, Christine uses the myths as structuring principles within the first part of the *Mutacion*: the gender metamorphoses announce the "miracle" to come, the Alcyone and Ceyx story evokes the hopeful aspect of the Ovidian tale at just the right moment and predicts Christine's future strength. There is also a progression of personal involvement with the myths: while the three stories of gender change are ostensibly *exempla* (though they acquire a deeply personal meaning along the way), Alcyone and Ceyx form part of a passionate outcry that clearly states Christine's participation: I, Christine, am even more ready to throw myself into the sea after my husband than Alcyone was. Thus Christine inscribes herself into the mythic/historical universe of the *Mutacion.*

But once we leave the autobiographical sections Christine presents herself much more as a spectator than as a participant. The *Mutacion* with its over

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[18] The trajectory I mentioned above becomes even more complex when we include her early poetry: from her lyric poetry ("je" is a woman) to the *Mutacion* (woman to man) to the *Cité* ("Christine" is a woman again) her journey mirrors that of Tiresias through his various transformations. Although in the 1403 *Mutacion* Christine looks back at the moment of her husband's death, i.e., before she began writing, *de facto* Tiresias's trajectory is reflected in her use of poetic personae.

23,000 verses is conceived on a grand scale and along the way there are a few extremely interesting rewritings of myth. On the whole Christine rather faithfully follows such sources as the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, the *Grandes Chroniques* or the *Historia de proeliis* (for the parts on Alexander the Great). The sheer scope of the work seems to overwhelm the narrator who offers frequent commentaries on how much is still to be done; the topos of *abbreviatio*, as well, makes many appearances. In brief, the set-up is that of Christine visiting the castle of Fortune, a windy place in constant motion. It is there that Fortune dwells with her two brothers Heur ("Luck") and Meseur ("Bad Luck"). In the palace there are wall paintings depicting the historical events that were the results of Fortune's doings. Christine, in conveying this history to us in an ekphrastic manner, is thus both witness (though removed), transcriber and interpreter of the events. The overriding concept and unifying principle of the *Mutacion* is that of the power of Fortune. Christine sees her own life and the entire history of the world as subject to that power. Just like in the *Histoire ancienne*, historical and mythic events are recounted in the same register. But Christine also uses mythological stories as *exempla* that open up the text toward contemporary politics.

Christine's retelling of the myth of Actaeon can serve as a paradigmatic example of her treatment of myth in the later parts of the *Mutacion*. In this version of the Actaeon myth, it is no longer Diana who is responsible for Actaeon's unfortunate metamorphosis into a stag but rather Fortune;

> Mais n'avint pas, ce m'est advis,
> Par Dyane aviser ou vis,
> Ains fu par Meseur et ma dame,
> Qui maint lieu met a feu et flame. (vv. 48451– 48454)[19]

Christine plays not only with the traditional version of the myth but also with the traditional interpretations. She shuns the overtly spiritual interpretation of the myth in the *Ovide moralisé* (where a word play on *serf/cerf* ["servant"/"stag"] allowed the equation of Actaeon and Christ; 3.629–630), although, as we will see in a moment, the *Ovide moralisé* probably hovered in the background. Christine also abandons her own interpretation of the myth in the *Epistre Othea* (chapter 69), where Actaeon was an exemplar against wasting time by hunting (an interpretation already offered by ancient commentators like Palaiphatos) and, spiritually, came to stand for the penitent who has vanquished the flesh.[20]

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[19] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 48451– 48454: "But this did not happen because of [his] looking Diana in the face, but it happened through Bad Luck and my lady who burns down many a place."

[20] Christine de Pizan: *L'Epistre Othea*, ed. Halina D. Loukopoulos.

Rather, the myth is used in the political context of a diatribe against the (contemporary) English as a kind of commentary on the story of Brutus, the founder of Britain, and his descendants. Christine points out that she will not tell all about Britain except to say that King Arthur no longer reigns there and that the later inhabitants of Britain do not have much to do with their glorious past (vv. 4832–4839). It is true that in fictions they claim to be sweet, full of faith and loyal (vv. 4840–4842), but in reality they are hateful and treacherous. The story of Actaeon's dogs who, incited by Actaeon's men, turned against him and eventually killed him, should warn any disloyal subjects to turn against their master: Fortune will soon redress the balance. It is possible that Christine, by focusing on that particular element of the Actaeon story – the hunters and the dogs – means to allude to the *Ovide moralisé*'s interpretation of Actaeon's dogs as the Jews who "hounded" Christ = Actaeon to his death.[21] In her sorrow about the ravages of the Hundred Years' War, she cries out against the English who are cast here in the role of the hunters = Jews who pursue their lord (or Lord) and master to his death.[22] The intertext of the *Ovide moralisé* thus supplies the added dimension of salvation history. Significantly, she uses the first person singular to introduce the warning moral: "Je me doubt bien que mal l'atourne / Car de mal faire mal avient" (vv. 4860–4861).[23]

Another diatribe, equally passionate in tone, is directed against the noblemen who indulge in too much wine and entertainment:

> Je ne puis penser dont il vient
> A chevaliers et nobles gens
> D'estre ore si diligens
> De grans delices pour leur corps
> Avoir! Et, certes j'ay recors
> Que tous les anciens escrips,
> Qui des bons ont esté escrips,
> Dient que les bons n'estoient
> Delicatifs, ainçois hantoient

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[21] *Ovide Moralisé* 3. 604–669. For Christine's attitude toward the Jews in her writings see Margolis: "Christine de Pizan and the Jews." Brabant, ed. *Politics, Gender, & Genre*, 53–73.

[22] The "master" may stand for the French king whose legitimacy was at issue in the Hundred Years' War. On Christine's feelings for France, see Wisman: "L'éveil du sentiment national au Moyen Age;" and more generally on Christine's political thought Mombello: "Quelques aspects de la pensée politique de Christine de Pizan." Simone, ed. *Culture et politique en France*, pp. 43–153, and the essays in Brabant, ed. *Politics, Gender, & Genre.*

[23] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 4860–4861: "I well believe that this will turn out badly, / for from doing evil comes evil."

> Rudes viandes et durs lis,
> N'il ne leur chaloit des delis. (vv. 5190–5200)[24]

It is here that the myth of Ulysses appears as an exemplar of temperance. For it is true, Christine states, Ulysses taught his knights to drink when they were resting, albeit in moderation. Again, Christine uses "je" in expressions such as "je croy" (v. 5178) and "je ne puis" (v. 5190), highlighting her personal stake in this story and its moral. She presents Ulysses as a positive ancient example whose lessons in moderation are not heeded by nobles today. The consequences of this decadence of the nobility are, of course, tangible in the French's inability to chase the English from their territory.[25] Again, a lesson from ancient myth is bound up with a political and social reality of Christine's own time.

Complementing historical/political uses of myth in the *Mutacion* is the presentation of a myth of learning in the form of Cadmus. He makes an appearance on the third of the four paths leading up to Fortune's castle. This is the path of "Grant Science" (v. 3237) that those will tread who vanquish the great serpent that lies on the path:

> Qu'un fier serpent moult orgueilleux
> [...]
> Couvient dompter, a trop grant peine.
> (Cellui dompta, a la fonteine,
> Jadis, a Thebes, Cadmus)
> [...] (vv. 3187–3191)[26]

Christine then goes on to describe the marvelous landscape of learning as a kind of paradise with beautiful fountains and streams, an enchanted place similar to that of the *Chemin de long estude*.[27] The interpretation of the serpent as the pains of scholarship goes back to the *Ovide moralisé* (3.230) and Christine's own *Epistre Othea* (chapter 28). In the *Chemin* the mythic "paradise of learning" served to dramatize Christine's own entry into the world of learning and of ancient myth. In the *Mutacion* the use of Cadmus is an example not only of Christine's recycling of material in a variety of works but also of skilfull integration of the mythographic tradition into the allegory of Fortune's castle. A medieval invention (the wind-blown castle of Fortune comes from Nicole de Margival's *La Panthère d'amours* and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*) is placed at the end of the path of learning, presided over by an *exemplum* from ancient mythology. Christine renews myths, combines them and in the process often creates her own myths. But this would take us into the *Cité des Dames* …

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[24] Ibid., vv. 5190–5200: "I cannot imagine where knights and nobles these days get the idea of being so preoccupied with obtaining pleasures for their bodies! I certainly remember that all the ancient writings, written by good people, say that the good [nobles] were not delicate; rather, they ate plain food and slept in hard beds; they did not care about pleasures."

[25] For Christine's ideas on the education and duties of nobles and kings see Krynen: *Idéal du prince*.

[26] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 3187–3191: "One has to tame a wild and proud serpent, with much effort. This same one Cadmus tamed long ago at the fountain."

[27] Christine de Pizan: *Chemin de long estude*. A new edition and translation of the *Chemin* are being prepared by Andrea Tarnowski for the "Lettres gothiques" series.

From her early lyric poetry to the *Cité* Christine weaves the stories of women and men from classical mythology into the fabric of her own texts. From the emotional and autobiographical connotations of the figures in the ballads and the first part of the *Mutacion* to the virtuoso display of learning and political *engagement* in the *Epistre Othea*, the rest of the *Mutacion*, the *Chemin*, and the *Cité*, Christine draws on a familiar repertory of myths featuring human beings in all their diversity. The myths have profound resonances in every one of Christine's works, illuminating not only her own quest for identity but also her concerns for the political survival of the French nation.

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Christine de Pizan and Sacred History

Abstract: The contemporary discussion of Christine de Pizan as a feminist writer has overshadowed her earlier reputation as an historian. Indeed, she was far better known for many centuries for her historical works than for her other writings. More importantly, as an historian Christine not only departed from earlier predominant patterns of medieval French historiography but instead followed an Augustinian model of sacred history. She did so in attempt to assign eschatological significance both to current events and to the history of women. This unity underlying her historical works, however, has largely escaped notice because her historical works at first glance exhibit an astounding sweep. The wide range of subjects that Christine treats historically certainly must stem from her many different patrons, but she did not improvise from one work to another but generally applied much the same vision of history to the topics she discussed.

The contemporary discussion of Christine de Pizan as a feminist writer has overshadowed her earlier reputation as an historian. Indeed, within the historical reception of her works, she was far better known for many centuries for her historical works than for her other writings.[1] More importantly, as an historian Christine not only departed from earlier predominant patterns of medieval French historiography but instead followed an Augustinian model of sacred history. She did so in an attempt to assign eschatological significance both to current events and to the history of women. This unity underlying her historical works, however, has largely escaped notice because her historical works at first glance exhibit an astounding sweep. The wide range of subjects that Christine treats historically certainly must stem from her many different patrons, but she did not improvise from one work to another but generally applied much the same vision of history to the topics that she discussed.

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[1] See my discussion of this point in "The Medieval *femme auteur* as a Provocation to Literary History." McLeod, ed. *The Reception of Christine de Pizan*, pp. 101–132.

Her historical works comprise a motley corpus to be sure – the *Mutacion de Fortune*, presented to Philip the Bold, and written between August 1400 and November 1403; the *Chemin de long estude*, composed between October 5, 1402 and March 20, 1403 – overlapping with the composition of the *Mutacion*; the life of Charles V, commissioned by Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy in January 1404 and who died before it was completed at the end of November 1404; the *Avision-Christine*, dated 1405, and the *Cité des Dames*, dedicated to Isabeau de Bavière, and written between December 1404 and April 1405. Moreover, the variety of Christine's historical sources for these many works underscores the complex if not at least superficially fragmented nature of Christine's historical writings. Was Christine writing for the narrow concerns of the French royal court or did she attempt to adapt the historical vision of earlier Italian models familiar to her? Either way, how original was Christine in her historical thought? Was Christine's attempt to write a universal history of women anomalous within the context of her own historical writings? A recent work on allegory in Christine, while well intentioned, misses the point: Christine was not interested in an allegory of female authority as an end in itself. Rather, Christine used the female to allegorize all humanity within the well defined context of sacred history, *ordo salutis*, ultimately a far more radical project. Her historical writings taken as a corpus, from the *Othea* to the *Ditié de Jeanne d'Arc*, experiment with the categories of sacred history, leading to two largely original, but ultimately contradictory, innovations: first, her use of a City of Ladies as an allegory for the City of God; and second, her recurrent typological interpretation of France as having an exemplary role in sacred history to the exclusion of other nations.

As a lyrical poet, Christine's attitude toward history is centered on individuals as remarkable individuals per se rather than on these individuals' place within a larger scheme, that of sacred history. The five historical works that Christine composed within five years constitute a major new phase in her career which entailed a turn away from courtly lyric in favor of history. This shift from Erato to Clio marks a change in the literary format of choice for Christine as thought something more serious was needed. Once the importance of the *ordo salutis* for Christine is seen, it will become clear in retrospect that Christine, having found French letters as practiced by her contemporaries wanting, had been struggling to come to terms with far more profound questions of literary culture and with the meaning of history itself. After all, if she did not want to spend her time in consummately artistic but petrified, self-absorbed stylistic exercises – veritable arabesques, and immoral to boot – so typical of the courtly lyric of the late fourteenth century, what was she supposed to be about as a writer anyway? The answer here lies in her remark to

Gontier Col during the Quarrel that Dante's *Commedia* was a hundred times better written than the *Rose*, an observation heavily laden with moral and aesthetic implications. Christine probably had Dante constantly in mind as she wrote since Dante represented to her the clear and sweeping alternative to the *Roman de la Rose*.[2] Many of Christine's later verse compositions, including *L'Orayson Nostre Dame*, *Les Enseignemens moraulx* and the *Prouverbes moraulx*, reveal her growing interest in the explicit moral teachings of poetry, and certainly the repeated allusions in *L'Orayson Nostre Dame* to Saint Bernard, Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, and Saint Anselm underscore Christine's openness and sensitivity to patristic teachings even before she explicitly turned to prose and allegory. Christine herself explained at the beginning of *L'Avision-Christine* the evolution of her career from lyric to history, emphasizing the growing subtlety and sublimity of her writing:

> Adonc me pris a forgier choses jolies, a mon commencement plus legieres, et tout ainsi comme l'ouvrier qui de plus en plus son œuvre s'asoubtille comme plus il la frequente, ainsi tousjours estudiant diverses matieres, mon sens de plus en plus s'imbuoit de choses estranges, amendant mon stile en plus grant soubtilleté et plus haulte matiere.[3]

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[2] While Sandra Hindman is certainly correct to note that both Philippe de Mézières and Honoré Bouvet were acutely interested in the question of universal monarchy, and has demonstrated their sensitivity with impressive documentation, I think that the question bears closer review. We must judge Christine's remark that Bouvet was her sweet master, for example, in light of her similar claim from 1403 that she was Eustache Deschamps' disciple. As I have tried to show in my contribution in *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, Christine made this claim not because she had learned her craft from Deschamps but because she wanted to situate her own work within the French vernacular context of her time. When she aligns herself with Bouvet in the *Fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, I would suggest it was because she knew first that her rendition of Vegetius was intended as a redoing of Jean de Meung's earlier translation and second that she wanted to identify herself with a contemporary literary figure with whom her French audience could associate her. It is hard to imagine, given Christine's repeated references to Dante and her position as an intermediary of Italian letters in Paris, that her interest in universal monarchy did not initially spring from Dante's concern with the Veltro and with a universal monarchy and that as a consequence of this orientation she was drawn to Parisian contemporaries with similar concerns. Her affinity with Dante and her use of him stemmed directly from her perception that Dante, rather than Jean de Meung, provided a model for literary creativity that did not entail slandering women and reducing all literary referentiality to an evasive if not cowardly *mise en abyme*.

[3] Christine de Pizan: *L'Avision-Christine*, p. 164: "Then I undertook to forge pretty things, lighter as I began, and just like the workman who increasingly refines his work the more that he works at it, so, always studying different subjects, my mind became increasingly imbued with foreign things, modifying my style into greater subtlety and loftier matter."

These remarks reflect the essence of Christine's use of sacred history in her own works, a highly original application that should be viewed within the larger picture of historical writing in medieval French.

As a genre historical writing in medieval French prior to Christine's time fell into one of four categories identified by Diana B. Tyson: "works written about contemporary events (including crusades); works describing a sequence of events, sometimes spreading over many centuries, leading up to contemporary events or intended to lead up to them; ancient history; [and] *Pseudo-Turpin* translations."[4] Twelfth-century histories tended to be written for Anglo-Norman patrons and during the thirteenth century the bulk of history writing shifted to France. Women figured heavily among Anglo-Norman patrons, whereas French patronesses, at least in the thirteenth century, appeared uninterested in historiography. In Tyson's list, subjects touching on sacred history are conspicuously absent. While she did not borrow in particular from these kinds of history writing, Christine's historical works do often incorporate material from the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, begun around the middle of thirteenth century by the monks at the Abbey of Saint Denis. This debt is significant because these chronicles cultivated "the strongest sense of a national heritage" among historical writings of their time in Europe.[5] It should be added that the notion of a special historical mission for the French within the *ordo salutis* is found in the blend of Christian and secular historiography in Fulcher of Chartres, Guibert de Nogent and Jean de Joinville who assign typological significance to contemporary events.[6] In describing the Crusader troops from various European lands arriving together near Nicaea to form a greater Christian host under French leadership Fulcher compares this modern army to the crowds assembled from different nations in Jerusalem on the feast of Pentecost united typologically into a single supranational church. Guibert explicitly isolates a special role for the French in defending the Apostolic Throne itself whereas Jean de Joinville combines royal history and hagiography as part of his clear purpose to present the king as a saint.

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[4] Tyson: "Patronage of French Vernacular History Writers," pp. 180–181.

[5] Ray: "Historiography, Western European." Strayer and others, eds. *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, v. 6, p. 264.

[6] I examine the importance for Christine of categories based on sacred history in Fulcher and Guibert in my essay "French Cultural Nationalism and Christian Universalism." Brabant, ed. *Politics, Gender, & Genre*, pp. 75–94.

Poets' Allegory and Theologians' Allegory

The five years following the quarrel of the *Rose* witnessed an intense outburst in primarily historical writing on Christine's part. During this period Christine comes to apply more systematically the categories of sacred history to her work. In *La Mutacion de Fortune* she presents a primarily "event-centered" history that traces ancient events leading up to contemporary ones, reminiscent of her principal source, the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*. In the *Livre des Fais et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V* she follows a more nationally oriented historiography and in the *Avision-Christine* she attributes the *translatio imperii* and the *translatio studii* an important role in sacred history. The shifts in interest and emphasis apparent in these works culminate in her profound and subtle allegory of sacred history in the *Cité des Dames* which also has its roots in her earlier writings.

The close and recurrent connection between allegory and history for Christine is first evident in Christine's *Epistre Othea*, and her subsequent works exhibit an increasingly sophisticated historical vision. In the *Othea* Christine follows what Dante called the allegory of the poets – a phrase that Christine seems to echo at the beginning of the *Othea* – rather than the allegory of the theologians. The major difference between the two lies in the meaning of the literal sense: for the poets the literal sense did not need to be historically true, whereas for the theologians the literal was very much the historical. Christine announces at the beginning of the *Othea* that she is following "the manner of the ancient poets" – a clear signal that she wishes to lay the greatest emphasis on the moral teaching of her work. In the Preface to the *Avision-Christine* she sounds a similar note:

> Pour ouvrir la voie a declairier les choses soubz figures dictes en la premiere partie de ce livre, laquelle appert aucunement obscure, se aucun le temps a venir au gloser plus estanduement vouloit entendre, est asavoir selon la maniere de parler des pouetes.[7]

Since Christine was heavily indebted to the *Ovide moralisé* in the *Othea*, it should come as little surprise that she saw her task there as an allegorical writer within the context of poets' allegory. Now poets' allegory, best illustrated by Ovid according to Dante in the *Convivio*, depended on truth presented under a fiction, or as Dante puts it, hidden under a beautiful lie, "una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna." Christine must have come to realize if women's accomplishments were viewed originally within the context of myth, they could easily be constructed as *bella menzogna*. In her historical writings she will move from poets' to theologians' allegory, prompted by the unmistakeable intent of demonstrating the importance of France and of women in the *ordo salutis*.

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[7] Reno, ed. "The Preface to the *Avision-Christine* in ex-Phillips 128." Richards, Williamson, Margolis, and Reno, eds. *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, p. 208; transl: Reno, p. 209: "To open the way toward declaring those things said by means of figures in the first part of this work, which appears somewhat obscure, in the event someone might in the future want to understand the glosses of the work more fully, that is to say according to the style of the poets."

In part, Christine's turn to history and moralization must surely be seen as one more response to the antithetical celebration of *fabula* in a superficial allegorical framework found in the *Roman de la Rose*. The best known and most famous definition of history for medieval writers was provided by Isidore of Seville:

> […] nam historiæ sunt res veræ quæ facta sunt; argumenta sunt quæ etsi facta non sunt, fieri tamen possunt; fabulæ vero sunt quæ nec factæ sunt nec fieri possunt, quia contra naturam sunt.[8]

In practice, this distinction boiled down to that between true histories and fictional fables, as Bernard Guenée has noted.[9] By way of illustration, Guenée cited Geffrei Gaimar's mid-twelfth-century appendix to *L'Estoire des Engleis*. In an obvious allusion to Isidore, Gaimar insists "N'est pas cest livre ne fable ne sunge / Ainz est de veire estoire estrait."[10] If Gaimar had written his work after Guillaume de Lorris, it would be easy to see his disclaimer of fiction as a reaction to the *Rose* – Gaimar even rhymes *mençonge* with *sunge*, a common enough practice. However, since *L'Estoire des Engleis* long predates the first part of the *Rose*, it is safe to assume that the seriousness of historical truth and of writing history, traceable back to Isidore, was a well established tradition in its own right. Given Christine's militant opposition to the *Rose*, her rejection of the *Rose*'s celebration of poetic *fable* led inevitably to her embracing history and history writing. In the *Othea* Christine shows her determination to moralize Ovid, the arch-author of the *Rose* itself, following the scheme pioneered in the *Ovide moralisé*. She will experiment with dream-visions having an explicit historical content as well as with the more difficult theologians' allegory that posits the historical truth of the literal sense, all as part of her perception that the writing of history constituted the most serious alternative to the kind of writing in the tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*.

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[8] Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiarum*, book I, 44: "For histories are true things that were done; arguments are those which, even if they were not done, could however happen; but fables have neither been done nor can happen, since they are against nature."

[9] "La rhétorique classique avait distingué l'*historia*, qui dit le vrai, l'*argumentum*, qui dit non le vrai mais le vraisemblable, et la *fabula* dont le récit n'est ni vrai ni vraisembable. Cette triple distinction n'a pas été oubliée au Moyen Age. Mais dans leur ensemble, les auteurs du Moyen Age n'ont retenu que l'opposition fondamentale entre […] la verité historique et la fiction, entre l'histoire et la poésie." (Guenée: *Histoire et culture historique dans l'occident médiéval*, p. 19).

[10] "This book is neither fable nor dream but is taken from true history." *L'Estoire des Engleis*. Quoted in Guenée: *Histoire et culture historique dans l'occident médiéval*, p. 19.

The *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*

The *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune* is in many ways an immature and contradictory work: it follows the changes of fortunes in pagan and Old Testament history, skips over the history of women, excludes the misfortunes of the Jews from the workings of Fortune and barely touches on Christian history, all within a superficial allegorical framework that confuses historical and literal meaning. Christine seems torn by the discordant requirements of poets' allegory and theologians' allegory. Yet it is clear that even at this early date Christine was abreast of the late medieval discussion of the *ordo salutis*. In the fourth book of the *Mutacion de Fortune* (vv. 8355–8399), Christine, following her source, the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, alludes to the fact that the world was now in its sixth age. In *De civitate Dei*, XXII, chapter 30 – a work translated by Christine's contemporary Raoul de Presle – Augustine had posited a parallel between the six days of creation and the six ages of the world and in Christine's day this division had been widely commented on by scholastic theologians. In this passage Christine often mentions disagreements among the authors on the actual division of the ages of sacred history, and this comment suggests that Christine was not following her principal source blindly, but was sensitive to contemporary opinions on sacred history. Less than five years later in the *Cité des Dames* Christine applied the Augustinian scheme of an earthly and a heavenly city in which the literal, historical experiences of women allegorically represent all humanity and anagogically represent the City of God. I would suggest that Christine came to this Augustinian notion of history through Dante and that she came to embrace more and more Dante's and Augustine's vision of history and to abandon gradually that of Boethius, which figures so prominently in *La Mutacion de Fortune*.[11] As Christine searched for anagogical meaning in history, the mutations of Fortune, limited to the sublunar world, serendipitous and lacking an anagogical significance, must have been disappointing at best, whence in part her decision to turn to the contemplative life at the end of the *Mutacion.*

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[11] See Margolis: *The Poetics of History: An Analysis of Christine de Pizan's "Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune."*

I would also suggest that the controversial passage on the significance of Jewish history in the *Mutacion* is also symptomatic of Christine's attempt to apply the categories of sacred history to her subject matter and foreshadows her attempt to assign France a special place in sacred history as well. In other words, there is a necessary and hardly surprising symmetry between the positive position occupied by France in God's plan of history and the Jews' comparable negative position. After all, if God has favored or punished the Jews according to their merits, then national and religious differences can be explained as essential within the scheme of salvation and not coincidental or accidental. Here is where the major inconsistency in Christine's understanding of sacred history arises: if the City of God transcends human divisions, and if the national and linguistic divisions of humanity arose as a result of pride, then no nation can rightly claim a privileged position within salvation. Christine's special treatment of the Jews, however, goes hand in hand with her positive singling out of France. These aspects of the poem alluding to sacred history, however, contrast with the more conventional poets' allegory throughout the work, consistent with Christine's complicated relationship to French nationalism and Christian universalism. Christine was hardly alone in her typological interpretation of contemporary history. Better known earlier adherents of this approach to sacred history, for example, include Honoré d'Autun and Hugh of Saint-Victor, in the twelfth century, and Alexander von Roes in the thirteenth century.[12] Christine probably was not familiar with the historical works of these authors, though she may have known Hugh of Saint-Victor's *Distinctiones*. The important point here remains that Christine's use of sacred history represented a significant departure from the larger body of historical writings in medieval French.

The opening passage of the *Mutacion* which narrates Christine's gender change is heavily, but hardly uncritically, indebted to the *Ovide moralisé*. When she remarks, "je diray, par ficcion, / Le fait de la mutacion,"[13] she is squarely within the realm of poets' allegory. The poets' allegory of the *Mutacion*, depending as it does on a fiction, a *bella menzogna*, does nothing to strengthen the position of women in history. Christine's subsequent remarks in the *Mutacion* that she has spent little time on women's history because women's evil deeds have hardly worsened the state of this world also leave little room for women's history as such: "Leur plus grant meffait ou malice / Empire pou l'estat du monde."[14] In case her point was not clear, she repeats that the evil in this world does not stem from women: "Qui aux maulx du monde prend garde / Peut veoir, se bien y regarde, / Que le mal qui au monde avient / Communement d'elles ne vient."[15] Some three hundred lines later, Christine returns to the subject of women, focusing on their oppression, their *male Fortune*. She takes physically abused wives, battered women, to symbolize allegorically the fate of all women in the book of Fortune. Christine must seek justice elsewhere – which explains in part why Justice is the last of the three Virtues who introduces the Virgin Mary in the third part of the *Cité des Dames*.

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[12] See discussion in Schmale: *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 48–49.

[13] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 151–152: "I will tell in a fiction / the fact of my mutation."

In light of these problems, poets' allegory ultimately could not provide Christine with the grounding in truth she sought for recasting women's history. Moreover, as Suzanne Solente noted, much of the allegorical apparatus of the first two parts of the *Mutacion* shows clear borrowings from the personification allegory of the *Roman de la Rose*, again clearly poets' allegory, and Christine by this time must surely have felt that she needed to turn elsewhere. For this reason, I would suggest that Christine ended the *Mutacion* with an important, and hitherto unexplained allusion to Dante that anticipates the evolution of her historical vision. While Christine borrows from the personification allegory of the *Rose* in the *Mutacion*, readers of the poem have hitherto overlooked a far more important debt to Dante which points to Christine's evolving allegorical practice.

While Christine rarely uses Dante as a source in the *Mutacion de Fortune*, she seems to be troubled by a gnawing dissatisfaction with the course of human events, a dissatisfaction that she voices most openly at the very end of the *Mutacion* in a passage that bears closer scrutiny. Here she notes that Fortune's castle offers no real security. (By way of anticipation, the fortification of the City of Ladies will provide exactly the security the Fortune's castle does not, a security founded in part on the historical truth of the literal sense.) She asks, quoting the last part of chapter eleven of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians if men should glory in the goods of Fortune. Then she summarizes: "Et, pour ce que partout Meseur / Frequante, pour avoir moins noyse, / Nonobstant que partout il voise, / J'ay choisie pour toute joye / (Quelqu'aultre l'ait), telle est la moye, / Paix, solitude volumtaire, / Et vie astracte [et] solitaire."[16]

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[14] Ibid., vv. 6626–6627: "Their greatest misdeed or malice / hardly worsens the state of the world."

[15] Ibid., vv. 6641–6644: "Whoever takes care for the evils of the world/ can see, if he looks well, / that the evil that has come into the world / generally does not come from them."

Christine's turn to the solitary life of the spirit, to the contemplative life, is her answer to the changes wrought by Fortune. Remember that while Christine was working on the *Mutacion* between August 1400 and November 1403, she was simultaneously working on the *Chemin de long estude*, (October 5, 1402 to March 20, 1403), whose title as we all know comes from Dante's avowal to Vergil in *Inferno* 1. 83, "vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore / che m'ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume."[17] Now, chapter twelve of Second Corinthians ends on a consideration of those things in which the Apostle Paul might glory in, and it prepares for the discussion immediately following at the beginning of chapter thirteen, which begins "Si gloriari oportet, non expedit quidem: veniam autem ad uisiones et reuelationes Domini" and then tells of the man caught up to the third heaven, the passage to which Dante refers in *Inferno* 2. 32 when he says, "Ma io, perché venirvi? o chi 'l concede? / Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono / ne degno a ciò né io né altri 'l crede."[18] As *dantisti* have long known, this passage signifies for Dante the intimate conflation of sacred and pagan history central to Dante's allegory and the stupendous claim that Dante combined in his own person a mission of such central importance within sacred history. Christine must have had this passage in mind at the beginning of the *Mutacion* when she gives her own disclaimer, itself an example of the modesty topos as Dante's earlier observation that he was unworthy as well: "Comment sera ce possible / A moy simple et pou sensible / De proprement exprimer / Ce qu'on ne peut extimer / Bonnement, ne bien comprendre?"[19]

Christine asks how she can express properly what one cannot judge or understand well, much like the man caught up to the third heaven who heard *arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui.* The same Dante who combines in his person Aeneas and Saint Paul as travelers to the next world furnishes the model

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[16] Ibid., vv. 23630–23636: "And, because ill fortune frequents everywhere, in order to have less trouble, even though he takes his pleasure everywhere, / I have chosen for every joy / – may everyone else also have it – such is mine / peace, voluntary solitude / and a solitary life apart."

[17] Dante Alighieri: *Inferno* 1.83: "May the long study and great love avail me / that have made you search your volume."

[18] Ibid., 2.32: "But I, why must I go there? or who allows it? / I am not Aeneas, not Paul / neither I nor others think me worthy of this."

[19] Christine de Pizan: *Mutacion de Fortune*, vv. 1–5: "How will it be possible / for simple me, hardly sensitive, to express properly / what one can not fathom / fully, nor understand well."