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Citer ce compte rendu

reste maintenant à attendre impatiemment l’édition de la partition et plusieurs études d’attribution afin de donner un corps sonore à l’ensemble.

PASCAL DUHAMEL
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Pizan, Christine de.

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Earl Jeffrey Richards have made boundless contributions to the study of Christine de Pizan’s writings with editions and critical analysis of her poetry and narratives. They once again make a great contribution to this area of medieval studies and medieval vernacular literature with their collaboration on a much-needed critical edition in English and new translation of Christine de Pizan’s Epistre d’Othea.

This didactic work by Christine de Pizan is a poetic text about love written as a letter from the Goddess of Prudence, Othea, to the ideal knight Hector. The Epistre d’Othea consists of three elements: one hundred texts in verse followed by a gloss and allegory both written in prose for each text. The gloss provides clarification of the verses with examples of fables, classical sources, and knowledge from ancient philosophers while the allegory reflects on a moral teaching from biblical citations and writings of the Church Fathers that follows the tradition of medieval mythography, such as the Ovide moralisé and the works of the Vatican mythographers. The editors maintain the work’s original form of all three parts (text, gloss, allegory) in their translation for all one hundred entries in the epistle.

Epistre d’Othea, written between 1399 and 1400, appeared in a critical edition in 1999 (Droz; rpt. as Epistre Othea in Textes Littéraires Français, 2008) by Gabriella Parussa, and a modern French translation and adaptation (Lettre d’Othea, déesse de prudence, à un jeune chevalier, Hector) by Hélène Basso
emerged in 2008 in two volumes. An English translation (Christine de Pizan’s 
Letter of Othea to Hector) by Jane Chance first appeared in 1990 with valuable 
information about Christine de Pizan’s verses.

In this new translation, twenty-seven years later, entitled, Othea’s Letter 
to Hector, in The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series, 
the editors closely consider the syntax and demanding vocabulary in their 
modern English translation which offers an accurate translation of Christine’s 
French. In a note on the first verse, the editors explain their intention to observe 
Christine’s rhetoric by maintaining her use of hyperbaton, for instance, in their 
translation of the poetic text. While considering the complexity of Christine’s 
vocabulary, syntax, and rhetoric in their translation, Blumenfeld-Kosinski and 
Richards still provide a clear translation that is accessible for non-specialists 
and will be appreciated by scholars.

The edition begins with an in-depth introduction, considering Christine 
as a writer in the Middle Ages and discussing her writings within the political 
climate of medieval France. Readers may find the overview handling a significant 
amount of historical and political information for an introduction to a literary 
work; however, the editors successfully frame the poetic work and Christine’s 
 writings within their comprehensive political discussion. These descriptions of 
the political culture of her time are further supported with detailed notes useful 
for scholars researching this period of history and for an understanding of the 
events that influenced Christine’s verses, moral glosses, spiritual allegories, and 
literary activity overall. The editors demonstrate that the political dimension of 
the poem involves more than one distinct event that occurred during the life of 
Christine and during the period in which she was writing.

The descriptions of medieval political thought and historical events are 
balanced with a discussion of genre and a focus on allegory and textuality in 
the Othea, which literary students will appreciate for understanding Christine’s 
literary production and the author as a female writer in this period. The editors’ 
introduction displays an interdisciplinary element, demonstrating their breadth 
and depth in the subject. Additionally, the overview brings to light authorities 
in the studies of Christine de Pizan and highlights literary criticism in this field. 
Footnotes throughout the epistle further provide important modern references 
to the work as well as sources that influenced Christine’s glosses and allegories. 
The editors make insightful examinations into literary—classical, biblical, 
and her own contemporaries—and political links; they further provide,
in the footnotes, information on specific French terms or the language that Christine deliberately applies to the poem or prose explanations of the text. The editors further include an appendix with a list of authors and works cited in the allegories of the epistle; the information, prepared by Cheryl Lemmens, demonstrates Christine's scope of sources and shows evidence of Christine's aptitude with the Latin language. Thus, this volume has a wealth of information for researchers and scholars while its ease in reading the poetic work and prose invites non-specialists to engage with Christine's hybrid text and with the editors' scholarly discussion of the work.

_Livre de la Cité des Dames_ (1405) has been perhaps the most widely recognized text in medieval studies by Christine de Pizan since Earl Jeffrey Richards's translation, _The Book of the City of Ladies_, in 1982. This translation of _Cité des Dames_ thrust Christine de Pizan into the mainstream of late medieval studies as a prominent female writer of her age, and the text became a standard to study with other vernacular literatures of this period and in women's studies programs. The _Othea_, surviving in fifty manuscripts, has not received the attention in academia that it had in the Middle Ages among a readership of French and English elites. The editors have provided an important new translation for readers and scholars to consider the female voice in this text as a political intent and to reflect on the epistle's cultural and political influences, as a didactic work in studies of medieval literature, and for its contributions to late medieval mythography. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Richards's English translation and critical analysis provide a thoughtful awareness to a work that deserves more attention in the field of medieval vernacular literature, and the edition will inspire new scholarship on Christine de Pizan's early verses and literary form.

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