

Jean Chaperon. *Le Chemin de long estude de Dame Cristine de Pise (1549)*. Textes de la Renaissance 139. Ed. Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2008. 298 pp. index. gloss. bibl. €55. ISBN: 978-2-7453-1744-5.

For anyone interested in Christine de Pizan, this book is an object of instruction and delight. Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic has provided a finely contextualized edition of *Le Chemin de long estude de Dame Cristine de Pise*, a mid-sixteenth-century work by Jan Chaperon. She points out from the beginning that Chaperon's work is not merely a printed version of Christine's original tale; rather, Chaperon transmutes Christine's verse into prose, modernizes her early fifteenth-century idiom, and makes sometimes substantial changes to her text. The result can be considered a rewriting of *Le Chemin*. Its interest as a Renaissance document with strong medieval connections is threefold. First, it bears witness to the evolution of the French language over the century-and-a-half between Christine's composition and Chaperon's reworking; Le Brun-Gouanvic underlines this point by noting that Chaperon's text was published in 1549, the same year as Du Bellay's *Défense et illustration de la langue françoise*. Second, and more importantly for readers of Christine, it establishes the text of *Le Chemin* for audiences of the late sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Le Brun-Gouanvic cites authors of eighteenth-century literary histories that included Christine de Pizan, observing that when they discussed *Le Chemin*, they were clearly reading Chaperon's text rather than Christine's own. For three centuries, then, the reception of *Le Chemin* was based on the work of another author. Finally, Chaperon's work is itself an example of reception and representation of Christine — a compelling one, given Chaperon's intimacy with the original text and the *remaniements* he imposed to appeal to the tastes of his audience.

Chaperon supplies a preface to the work that affords valuable insight into how Christine was read ca. 1550. He explains that the author's purpose in *Le Chemin* is to teach others how to be happy in this world, and thus eternally happy in the next. Chaperon's perspective is not false, as a good portion of the work discusses wisdom as the one true treasure on earth, and the surest path to God; but in focusing on this aspect of *Le Chemin*, he diminishes others, most notably Christine's voyage of

self-discovery, and the political resonance of the debate the text stages over the qualities most necessary in a universal ruler. As to Chaperon's explanation of what prompted Christine to write *Le Chemin*, it exemplifies active reorienting; he affirms that after Christine's husband died, the widow did not wish her Muse to fall idle. Readers of Christine's literary corpus will know how little given she is to invoking Muse-born inspiration, and certainly, both the idea and the experience of inactivity were foreign to her.

In the work proper, Chaperon's modifications are perhaps most striking in *Le Chemin's* early pages. When Christine describes the love she and her husband shared, she speaks of the single will that inhabited their two hearts (vv. 86–89 of the original poem); while Chaperon uses the same image, he also embroiders on the idea so as to make Christine a meeker, more passive figure. In his version, Christine claims to be but a simple dove following her husband's direction, the lock that safely keeps her husband's key.

While one can simply read Chaperon through, noting or occasionally raising an eyebrow at a change he introduces, those who seek more targeted entry into his text will be gratified by the extensive tables Le Brun-Gouanvic's edition supplies; these list each instance in which the two *Chemins* differ, and group those differences into thematic categories. In addition, the editor offers us a review of Christine's early life in print — the *Chemin* was the fifth and last of her works to be published by 1550 — as well as a carefully pieced-together portrait of Jan Chaperon as a translator, editor and poet connected with Parisian printing house circles in the 1530s and 1540s. Chaperon's most important claim to fame over the centuries seems to have been as the possible translator of the first book of Castiglione's *Courtisan*; now, the meticulous efforts of Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic have lent him more stature, or at the very least, greater interest.

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