their general education and in their pastoral activities." The "evil nature of women and the harm they ... cause to their innocent victims" (men and children) (16) constitutes a strong subtext.

Examples of how the book was read are provided by excerpts from two major commentary traditions. Based on the Lyons 1580 edition, with emendations primarily from the Venice 1508 edition and only occasionally from earlier manuscripts and printed editions, Lemay's translation of this difficult text is highly readable. Oddly, the last chapter on the generation of sperm, missing from the Lyons edition and taken from two Munich manuscripts (presumably Clm 22297 and 22230) stops one sentence short of the traditional close found in most manuscripts (including Clm 22297) and printed editions: *Grates ergo de bene dictis et veniam de obmissis, si aliqua sunt humiliter nunc imploro et auxiliam divine gratie, a quo omnis sapientia orta est et vita eterna, ad quam nos deus omnipotens gloriosus et magnificus perducat, qui cum patre vivat et regnat per infinita secula seculorum. Amen.* The translator's own explanatory phrases in brackets (80 ff.) render some of the most difficult passages (dense scholastic arguments about the nature of accidents, for example) more fluent.

One might quibble with certain minor points. It is unnecessarily confusing, for example, to use the term *physici* for natural philosophers (Introduction, 33, 43) when the Latin text consistently uses *medici* for medical authorities or doctors and *philosophi* for natural philosophers. Used to distinguish the general medical practioner from the surgeon, *physicus* (physician) meant someone with advanced training in general internal medicine who had also studied natural philosophy (Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* [Chicago, 1990] p. 21). The argument is well-taken that not until the thirteenth century did ideas about the poisonous nature of menstruation become enshrined in learned scientific texts (35); nevertheless, in the section of the introduction entitled "Women's Secrets and Medieval Science," one misses references to Pliny, to popularizing literature like the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets*, or the story of the venomous maiden from the *Dialogue de Placides et Timéo* (ed. Claude Thomasset, [Geneva/Paris, 1980] pp. 109-113), or to the excellent discussion of this topic and the role of *Secrets* in the construction of Western "gynophobia" in Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1988, pp. 75, 191, 126-129). A more serious omission is the valuable critical study of Johann Hartlieb's fifteenth-century German adaptation of the *Secreta mulierum* (Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, vol. 36, Pattensen/Hanover, 1985), which is nowhere mentioned.

Medieval feminist scholars will find the bibliography very useful. I expect this handsome, affordable and well-executed volume to become a bestseller. It will be indispensable in any course where the medieval scientific view of women is of concern.

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Richards, Earl Jeffrey, ed., with Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, Christine Reno. *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan.* Athens, GA/ London: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992.

Feminist scholars will find this an indispensable volume in the Christine de Pizan bibliography. The first of the book's three sections, entitled "Christine and the ""faith

Beginnings of Feminist Thought," announces essays explicitly concerned with misogyny and the defense of women, with figures of paternal authority and maternal wisdom; yet both remaining sections, "Christine and Medieval French Literature," and "Christine Between the Church Fathers and the Humanists," also examine Christine as a woman writer.

While most of the articles are interpretive pieces, two which are not merit attention. First Christine Reno's contribution: the edition and English translation of a heretofore unpublished prologue to *L'Avision-Christine*. Reno's text comes from the single manuscript (ex-Phillips 128) that contains such a preface. For anyone who has pored over *L'Avision* in M. L. Towner's diplomatic edition, seeking to understand the allegories of Chaos, Nature and Lady France, this prologue is fascinating. Christine de Pizan provides a triple reading for *L'Avision*: Each allegory should be understood with reference first to the world in general, then to individual man, and finally to the kingdom of France. Thus, the shade that feeds Chaos is at once Nature, the mother of the world; human life, which "passes like a shadow ... yet nourishes each man as long as he is alive" (p. 211); and the Catholic faith, which nourishes France. Reno compares *L'Avision* to the *Epistre d'Othéa*, the only other work where Christine sets out interpretations for her text, and observes a "shift from the traditional exegetical categories of moral and spiritual interpretation ... to [an] emphasis on ... political meaning" (p. 221). Both the preface and Reno's commentary should give pause to those who continue to treat *L'Avision* only as autobiography; Christine herself did not give primacy to this aspect of her work.

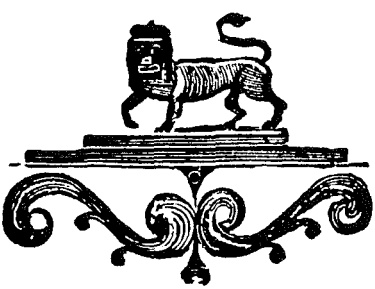
Eric Hicks makes clear what misogyny Christine denounced in *The City of Ladies* by providing the modern reader with a chapter from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*. Hicks has edited and translated a section of Denis Foulechat's 1372 French version of the text; it is reasonable to assume Christine knew Foulechat's work, as it would have been available to her in the king's library. The chapter "On the Ills and Burdens of Marriage" is a litany of complaints against women—their fickleness, their unbridled lust—which Christine countered repeatedly with stories of feminine constancy and chastity. The presence of this text in the volume serves to recall the background against which Christine wrote.

Attention to such background might open a trap for the reader, if we are to credit Joël Blanchard's account of *The City of Ladies*. Blanchard's substantive essay, "Compilation and Legitimation in the Fifteenth Century," will already be familiar to many from the original French version (*Poétique* 19 [1988]). The author states from the outset that discussion of Christine's feminism leads critics astray: "Many have taken a feminist utopia ... to be the subject of a book that in fact is animated by quite a different ambition. This feminist bias has only seen the surface of things. A reading of Christine in such an univocal and reductive fashion represents a somewhat naïve belief in the letter of fiction" (p. 228)." We should note that Blanchard omits naming any of the "recent English-language critics" (p. 228) who write from the perspectives he criticizes. Blanchard argues that we must turn our attention to "the construction of the book itself, and more specifically the work of compilation, its necessities, and its order." He posits that Christine opens *The City of Ladies* with just a cover of misogynist discourse; she tests this façade as she pieces together her literary city, defining her own work by first projecting it against an invented resistance. When Christine complains of "assaults made on women in general" ('generaument,' f. 4r, p. 236), her literary ploy, says Blanchard, is

"the mask of the indignant female reader" (p.230.) He writes: "there is enormous bad faith entailed in this way of citing authors 'in general'..., without actually citing them all by name" (p. 246). But Blanchard's dismissal of Christine's attack on misogyny as a subject for critical analysis is unwarranted. We might use his own reasoning to say that he has simply made feminist readings of Christine a pretext for his unique interpretive plan. This plan *per se* has much to recommend it; Blanchard offers excellent observations on the connection between the book and the city (see his readings of manuscript miniatures), and presents cogent explanations of the novelty Christine brings to her composition/compilation. Nevertheless, the schema which sets the issues of compilation against the "pseudo-problem" of Christine's feminism (p. 246), and her profound "literary need" (246) against her staged confrontation with misogyny, leads the reader to a too-familiar conclusion: namely, that Christine's writing is *only* about writing. This is an unsatisfactory realization, especially considering the density of Blanchard's discussion.

*The City of Ladies* plays a major role in other strong pieces in the collection. Glenda McLeod's essay is particularly intriguing: a detailed analysis of the text according to medieval rhetorical categories allows her to reveal its ethics, or moral stance. Eleni Stecopoulos and Karl Uitti have written on mythical women as truth-bearing representatives of feminine virtues. They point out that *The City of Ladies*, which opens with Christine's despair before a copy of Matheolus' *Liber lamentationum*, "constitutes far more profoundly a response to Boccaccio than to Matheolus;" the latter is "merely despicable" (p. 49), while the former looms as the authority whose credibility—in the form of *De claris mulieribus*—Christine questions.

Indeed, Christine's connections to other authors afford *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan* both breadth and depth of interest. Her vision of her Italian compatriots—Dante and Petrarch as well as Boccaccio—is of central concern to Earl Jeffrey Richard's essay. Barbara Altmann contributes a fine study of Machaut's importance for Christine's debate poems, while Allison Kelly builds a convincing case for Christine's influence on Antoine de la Sale's *Jehan de Saintré*.

As the volume's editor and contributors remind us, *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan* was conceived as a tribute to Charity Cannon Willard, whose ventures in editing (*Le Livre de la paix, Le Livre des Trois Vertus*), biography (*Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*), and historical criticism have cleared a path for many a *pizaniste*.

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