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FENSTER (Thelma), « *Je n'en quier faire nouvel livre* ». The *Chemin de lonc estude* and Jean de Mandeville's *Merveilles du monde* »

RÉSUMÉ – *Le Livre des merveilles du monde* de Jean Mandeville figurait parmi les livres les plus populaires de l'ère médiévale en Europe. Christine de Pizan commence son *Chemin de lonc estude* en s'inspirant de la description de la Terre Sainte de Mandeville, mais, beaucoup moins optimiste que lui, elle ne veut pas continuer à suivre sa géographie exotique ; elle favorise plutôt une discussion du bon gouvernement. Cela constitue un moment peu ordinaire dans l'histoire de la réception des *Merveilles*.

ABSTRACT – The *Livre des merveilles du monde* by Jean Mandeville, was among the most popular books of the European Middle Ages. Christine de Pizan's borrowing from it to describe the Holy Land in her *Chemin de lonc estude*, constitutes an unusually negative moment in the *Merveilles*' reception history. Whereas other readers delighted in Mandeville's exotic geography, Christine rejected it and the idea of crusade in favor of an intellectual consideration of good government.

## “JE N’EN QUIER FAIRE NOUVEL LIVRE”

### The *Chemin de lonc estude* and Jean de Mandeville’s *Merveilles du monde*

Among influences on Christine de Pizan’s *Chemin de lonc estude*<sup>1</sup>, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*<sup>2</sup>, which supplied a model for the celestial voyage of the *Chemin* and inspired the *lonc estude* of the title, is surely the best known today. In 1402-1403, however, the date of the *Chemin*, Dante’s writing was far from well known in northern Europe, and though itself a “travel narrative”, it was not at all like those narratives of earthly travel which in the late Middle Ages excited great curiosity. Among these was the very popular *Merveilles du monde*, composed in 1356 or 1357 by the elusive “Jean Mandeville”, an account that Christine knew and

- 1 Edition is A. Tarnowski, ed., *Le Chemin de longue étude*, Paris, Librairie Générale Française, 2000. All verse numbers for quoted material refer to this edition. My deep thanks to J. Wogan-Browne for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this article.
- 2 On Dante’s influence, see Y. Batard, “Dante et Christine de Pizan”, *Missions et démarches: Mélanges offerts au Professeur J. A. Vier*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1973, p. 345-351; K. Brownlee, “Literary Genealogy and the Problem of the Father”, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23, 1993, p. 365-387; C. Heck, “De la mystique à la raison: la spéculation et le chemin du ciel dans *Le Livre du Chemin de long estude*”, *Au champ des écritures: III<sup>e</sup> colloque sur Christine de Pizan*, ed. Eric Hicks, Paris, Champion, 2000, p. 709-722; E. J. Richards, “Christine de Pizan and Dante: A Reexamination”, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 222, 1985, p. 100-111; D. De Rentiis, « “Sequere me”: “Imitatio” dans la “Divine Comédie” et “Le Livre du Chemin de long estude” », *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. M. Zimmermann and D. De Rentiis, Berlin / New York, De Gruyter, 1994, p. 31-42. For various other echoes, see T. Coletti, “Paths of Long Study: Reading Chaucer and Christine de Pizan in Tandem”, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 28, 2006, p. 1-40; D. Lechat, “L’utilisation par Christine de Pizan de la traduction de Valère Maxime par Simon de Hesdin et Nicolas Gonesse dans le *Chemin de long estude*”, *Au champ des écritures*, p. 175-197; B. Ribémont, “Entre espace scientifique et espace imaginé: *Le Livre du Chemin de long estude*”, *Une femme de lettres au Moyen Âge: études autour de Christine de Pizan*, ed. L. Dulac and B. Ribémont, Orléans, Paradigme, 1995, p. 245-261, at p. 254; A. Slerca, “*Le Livre du chemin de long estude* (1402-1403): Christine au pays des merveilles”, *Sur le chemin de longue étude. Actes du colloque d’Orléans, juillet 1995*, ed. B. Ribémont, Paris, Champion, 1998, p. 135-147; B. Zühlke, “Le moi dans le texte et dans l’image”, *City of Scholars*, p. 232-241.

borrowed from for the first part of the *Chemin*<sup>3</sup>. Scholars have applauded Christine's avant-garde interest in Dante (she was only the second writer in France, after Philippe de Mézières, to mention the Italian writer, and the first to use the *Divine Comedy* as a model for her own work), and the Italian poet's influence on her has understandably earned critical attention. Nonetheless, the significance of opening the journey in the *Chemin* with an account of the Holy Land that would have recalled Mandeville's, only to abandon it abruptly in favor of a celestial route, has been less explored. In the *Chemin* the Cumean sibyl leads Christine on a quest for knowledge<sup>4</sup>, visiting, like Mandeville, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and other eastern locations, arriving in the Far East; at this point, instead of continuing their earthly journey, the pair ascend the ladder of *Speculacion* (v. 1647) to begin their "voyage dans l'espace livresque et paradisiaque du savoir"<sup>5</sup>. To judge from the wide dissemination of copies of the *Merveilles* among Christine's aristocratic contemporaries, she was writing for a readership who knew the *Merveilles* and they would not have missed her pointed rejection of the Mandevillian trajectory.

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- 3 The historical identity of "Jean Mandeville" is not known, and the name may have been invented. The discovery that sections of the *Chemin de lonc estude* closely parallel portions of the Mandeville-author's book was first made by P. Toynbee, "Christine de Pizan and Sir John Maundeville", *Romania*, 21, 1892, p. 228-239, although C. C. Willard thought that the various works of geography in British Library MS Cotton Otho D II could have been a source, given that its miniatures were done by the Master of the Epistle of Orthea: see Willard, "Une source oubliée du voyage imaginaire de Christine de Pizan", « *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble* »: *hommage à Jean Dufournet*, ed. J.-C. Aubailly et al., 3 vols., Paris, Champion, 1993, vol. 1, p. 323. Toynbee used the only French edition of the *Merveilles* available at the time, the text from British Library MS 4383, with Sloane 1464, Royal 20. B. X. and Grenville XXXIX, prepared by G. F. Warner to accompany *The buke of John Mandeuill*, an edition of the English version of the *Travels* in British Library MS Egerton 1982. Mandeville also provided Christine with her description of the Amazons in the *Cité des dames* (see I. M. Higgins, *Writing East: the "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 288, n. 2). For a slightly different dating, see M. C. Seymour, "Mandeville in England: The Early Years", *A Knight's Legacy: Mandeville and Mandevillian Lore in Early Modern England*, ed. L. Niyesh, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 15.
- 4 See the comments of N. Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*, Gainesville, 2011, p. 19. For the theme of the quest in the *Chemin*, see Ch. Brucker, "Le monde, la foi et le savoir dans quelques œuvres de Christine de Pizan: une quête", *Une femme de lettres*, ed. Dulac and Ribémont, p. 265-280.
- 5 F. Pomel, "Les métamorphoses de Christine de Pizan dans *Le Chemin de Longue Étude*", *Lectrices d'Ancien Régime*, ed. I. Brouard-Arends, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003, p. 217.

Between the *Merveilles* and the Dantean-inspired *Chemin* exists a space where narrative re-direction signifies the abandonment of a respected composition that, as Christine wished to show, had outlived its usefulness – not because of its Englishness, it would seem, but because of its *désuétude*, its unhelpfulness to the political situation of the French monarchy, as Christine saw it, or to the French aristocracy.

THE MERVEILLES DU MONDE

Geography primer, travel book, and pilgrimage guide, the *Merveilles* exhorts its readers, as early as the prologue, to take back the land where Christ shed his blood. The narrator says:

Et en ladite terre voleit il morir come saisy pur la lesser a ses enfauntz, pur quoi chescun bon christien qe poair en ad et de quoy se devoroit pener et mettre en grant [travail] de notre susdit et droit heritage conquerre et mettre fors des mains des mescreauntz et de l’appropriier a nous, qar nous sumes appelez christiens de Crist qe est nostre piere, et si nous sumes droitz filz de Dieu nous devons le heritage qe nostre piere nous ad lessé chalanger et ouster des mains des estranges<sup>6</sup>.

Mandeville wrote the *Merveilles* during the early years of what is now called the Hundred Years War, when he could not have envisaged the long but intermittent strife that would follow. In the period when the *Merveilles* was composed, Anglo-French strife in the Hundred Years War had resumed and the French king, Jean II, having become a prisoner of the English following the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, regained his freedom only at the cost of a huge ransom stipulated by the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360. As for the crusades, just under a century had passed since the failed eighth crusade under King Louis IX or Saint Louis in 1267, which was followed almost a quarter of a century later by the loss of Acre (1291). Mandeville recalls the passage of time as he looks *outré mer*:

6 C. Deluz, ed., *Le Livre des merveilles du monde*, Paris, CNRS, 2000, p. 91. For a recent discussion of the pilgrimage-crusade nexus, see M. C. Gaposchkin, “From Pilgrimage to Crusade: The Liturgy of Departure, 1095-1300”, *Speculum*, 88, 2013, p. 44-91.

[...] pur ceo qe il y ad long temps qe il ne eust passage general outre mer et plusours gentz se delitent en oier parler de la dite seinte terre et en ount solaz<sup>7</sup>.

To compose his travel narrative Mandeville, in I. M. Higgins' apt term, "overwrites" his principal sources; that is, he does not merely borrow from them, he introduces alterations that make the *Merveilles* "an often compelling account of matters pious and profane, historical and scientific, mundane and marvelous"<sup>8</sup>. Christine does not take advantage of that cornucopia, representing Mandeville's narrative only partially and secondarily as a beginning respectful of the Holy Land to be followed by the celestial journey that is the real heart of the *Chemine*. If for Mandeville the road to be followed is clear, the very structure of the *Chemine* suggests a plotting and re-plotting: roads are taken or avoided, in a repeated triage of paths (v. 884-958), and the poem itself begins more than once<sup>9</sup>, re-directing both itself and the re-presented material of its sources. The narrator's initial passage through holy sites creates a spiritual ground for the intellectual quest to follow, and her subsequent choice of a literally and metaphorically higher path than Mandeville's earthly one recalls the literary type of the *voie de paradis*, a moral either/or requiring the traveler to select the correct road<sup>10</sup>.

Jerusalem after the crusades had come to be portrayed as the center of the world; it was, in the words of the *Merveilles* narrator, the *terre de promissioun ... qe est en my lieu de mounde*<sup>11</sup>. From Jerusalem, the *Merveilles* goes further east and recounts a journey through Turkey, Armenia, Tatory, Persia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Chaldea, Ethiopia, Amazonia, the islands around India, and China. The narrator, claiming to be old and arthritic after thirty-five years of travel, says he was forced into a sedentary existence and wrote his travel book from memory. But in fact, the circumstances surrounding composition of

7 Deluz, *Merveilles du monde*, p. 92-93.

8 Higgins, *Writing East*, p. 12.

9 Tarnowski observes that the poem "débute et débute encore, avant de trouver le fil de sa narration, de trouver sa voie" (*Chemine*, p. 21). On Christine's setting of limitations on herself as to how high she can climb, see D. Kelly, *Christine de Pizan's Changing Opinion: A Quest for Certainty in the Midst of Chaos*, Cambridge, Brewer, 2007, p. 34, 36-37.

10 Pomel believes that for Christine reading was a "voie de salut personnel": "Métamorphoses", p. 225, 227, n. 12, and see p. 217-218.

11 Deluz, *Merveilles du monde*, p. 89-90; see also Higgins, *The Book of John Mandeville*, p. 4, n. 6.

the *Merveilles* are a persistent mystery. The name Jean (de) Mandeville (or John Mandeville) and the author’s travels have long been deemed a fiction<sup>12</sup>. The book is based on the writings of others, many of whom did visit the places they described, and Mandeville may have consulted an extraordinary three dozen or so sources<sup>13</sup>. This in turn suggests that he had access to a large and wealthy library such as might be found in a northern French monastery or at St. Albans Abbey in England, but whether the *Merveilles* was first written in England or in France, in Anglo-Norman or in a continental French, remains a matter of speculation<sup>14</sup>.

The *Merveilles*, one of a small number of travel resources in French as opposed to Latin, was widely enjoyed in France. In Paris, it had become a staple of the stationers who supplied the needs of students and others<sup>15</sup>. The first dated copy, 1371, is the one Raoul d’Orléans made for King Charles V at the request of Gervais Chrétien, the king’s physician<sup>16</sup>. Charles marked this book as a favorite, and a little more than two decades later, his son, King Charles VI, borrowed it from the Louvre library. It remained popular through the period when Christine was writing the *Chemins*: Jean sans Peur, who would become Duke of Burgundy in 1404, and whose library contained history and travel books in numbers sufficient to show his interest in the East, commissioned a luxury manuscript of eight texts about the East which included Mandeville’s, along with the travel narratives that served as sources

12 The name Mandeville should therefore be understood throughout this article as a pseudonym.

13 His principal source was another *Livre des Merveilles*, by Jan de Langhe of Ypres, a monk of Saint-Bertin in Saint Omer, which contained de Langhe’s own French translations of William of Boldensele’s 1336 *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (Book of certain overseas regions), the story of the author’s trip to Egypt and the Holy Land, and Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio*, 1330, a report of ten years spent as a missionary in India and China. He also consulted and/or borrowed from John of Wurzburg, Jacques de Vitry, Vincent de Beauvais, Brunetto Latini, Jacques de Voragine, Prester John, and the *Roman d’Alexandre*. See also C. C. Willard, “Une source oubliée”.

14 On this see J. Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*, New York, Modern Language Association, 1954; M. J. Bennett, “Mandeville’s Travels and the Anglo-French Moment”, *Medium Aevum*, 75, 2006, p. 273-292; C. Deluz, *Merveilles du monde*, p. 7-14; M. C. Seymour, *Sir John Mandeville*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1993, p. 1-64.

15 Seymour, “Mandeville in England”, p. 15.

16 For the corrected Hebrew script in Charles’s manuscript and Christine’s possible acquaintance with Hebrew, see M. Kupfer, « “... lectures... plus vraies”: Hebrew Script and Jewish Witness in the Mandeville Manuscript of Charles V », *Speculum*, 83, 2008, p. 58-111.

for the *Merveilles*<sup>17</sup>. The duke's first copy of the *Voyages d'Outremer* (the *Merveilles du monde*) was one he inherited from his mother, Marguerite de Mâle, herself a book collector with an extensive library. Valentina Visconti, the bibliophile wife of Louis, Duke of Orleans, Charles VI's younger brother, had a copy which she brought with her from Italy to France; it was probably made in northern Italy from Michael Velsler's German translation<sup>18</sup>, which is dedicated to "any lord, knight, and lady"<sup>19</sup>. Isabelle of France, daughter of King Charles VI and Queen Isabelle of Bavaria and second wife of Richard II of England, also owned a copy. Possession of the *Merveilles* by each of these great continental families argues for the book's status and influence.

The *Merveilles'* crusading message and its depictions of the world's wonders also earned it a considerable readership in England, if the number of its translations into Middle English from Anglo-Norman can serve as a guide<sup>20</sup>. In modern scholarship, the enthusiasm for the

17 D. Jeannot, *Le mécénat bibliophilique de Jean sans Peur et de Marguerite de Bavière (1404-1424)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, p. 60.

18 See J. Camus, « Les "Voyages" de Mandeville copiés pour Valentine de Milan », *Revue des Bibliothèques*, 4, 1894, p. 12-19, and E. J. Morrall, "The Text of Michael Velsler's Mandeville Translation", *Probleme mittelalterlicher Überlieferung und Textkritik: Oxforder Colloquium 1966*, ed. Peter F. Ganz and Werner Schröder, Berlin, Erich Schmidt, 1968, p. 183-196. Both in the Middle Ages and beyond, the *Livre* was translated into several languages from its Anglo-Norman and continental French recensions, and its fame carried into the early modern period: Christopher Columbus consulted it, and Leonardo da Vinci's personal library held a copy. Not least, a sixteenth-century Italian miller named Menocchio read it in a vernacular Italian translation (C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, tr. J. and A. Tedeschi, London and New York, Penguin, 1980).

19 Higgins, *Writing East*, p. 57. C. W. R. D. Moseley comments, but without specifics, that many of the *Livre's* readers would have been cultured women: "Mandeville and the Amazons", *Jean de Mandeville in Europa: Neue Perspektiven in der Reiseliteraturforschung*, ed. E. Bremer and S. Röhl, Munich, Fink, 2007, p. 67-77, 74-75. It is generally assumed that Christine would have used King Charles V's manuscript, although Toynebee's linking of the *Chemin* and the Mandeville-author's *Livre* did not include comparison with Charles's version, which was first published in a modern edition by M. Letts, *Mandeville's Travels: Texts and Translations*, 2 vols., London, Hakluyt Society, 1953, vol. 2). It has been suggested that Christine could have used Valentina Visconti's copy (K. Green, personal communication). Valentina was not in Paris when Christine was writing the *Chemin*, however, having been moved by her husband first to Asnières, then to Blois, to protect her from the animosity of the time toward the Visconti family. At Blois she assembled a considerable library. Books could of course be borrowed and lent, but there is no record of Christine's use of the Visconti manuscript.

20 The first translation of the French *Merveilles* into modern English appeared a few years ago: I. M. Higgins, ed. and trans., *The Book of John Mandeville, with related texts*, Indianapolis,



*Travels* displayed by anglophone researchers reflects the medieval world’s delight in Mandeville’s text; in France, however, apart from C. Deluz’s painstaking edition and her important monograph<sup>21</sup>, major studies of the *Merveilles* are noticeably fewer. The history of the *Merveilles* in medieval France, to which Christine’s *Chemin* contributes an important, though perhaps idiosyncratic, chapter remains largely to be explored.

### THE CHEMIN DE LONG ESTUDE

The *Chemin* is Christine’s first “travel” book, and with it she tries her hand at a type of composition unlike what she had done before. Her dedication to King Charles VI is followed by a lengthy, well known personal prologue, largely a lament over the harm Fortune has done her. As she lies in bed, waiting for sleep to overtake her, she thinks about the warlike nature of humans and animals, concluding that earth is the locus of misfortune, for *Tous li mondes est empeschez / De guerres . . .*, and the more wealth people have, the more likely they are to attack one another; or, they rise up against their neighbors (v. 340-345). In a sense, her approach also updates her source to reflect the continuing conflict between England and France, and the trauma of Nicopolis in 1396, when an army of allied troops from France, Burgundy, England, Germany, and the Netherlands was defeated by the Ottoman Turk sultan Bayazid I.

The Cumean sibyl (Almathea) arrives and, after recounting the events of her own life, observes that Christine would much rather be pursuing studies than spending her time among people (v. 640-642). The description of the *fontaine de Sapience* (v. 984-985) completes the first thousand or so lines. What follows lies at the philosophical core of the *Chemin*: a debate between the personified ladies Wisdom, Nobility,

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Hackett, 2011. Before then, the anglophone world came to the original French text circuitously, that is, through modern English translations of Middle English translations of the medieval French. For modern French readers, there have been three editions of the Middle French and one translation into modern French.

21 C. Deluz, *Le Livre de Jehan de Mandeville: une «géographie» au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1988.

Chivalry and Wealth, held to decide the qualities of the ideal ruler, which in turn would determine the nature of the French government. As C. Le Ninan has stated, “la question du bon gouvernement formait l’apogée de la formation de la narratrice du *Chemin de longue étude*”<sup>22</sup>. But no firm resolution is reached in the celestial debate and the decision is referred to the French court on earth, where Christine, who has recorded the arguments, will present them for adjudication. She and the Sibyl return, and the dreamer awakens.

Some of the principal ways in which Christine alters the material borrowed from Mandeville’s *Merveilles* are known from Toynbee’s study and can be summarized as follows: Mandeville lavishes description on pilgrimage destinations, but Christine rejects the idea that they require further discussion; Mandeville encourages crusading, but Christine, dwelling instead on war’s destructiveness, makes no direct statement in that regard. In Constantinople she takes her time admiring its magnificent buildings but continues her lament about the destructiveness of war: she regrets that constant war has left the city in shambles and largely uninhabited (v. 1220-1228)<sup>23</sup>. Where Mandeville delights in evoking Jerusalem for his readers, Christine refuses to dwell on Judea and Jerusalem. She does say that she lingered longer in Jerusalem than she had elsewhere (v. 1257-1260), but then, abbreviating her description and seeming to object directly to the claim in the *Merveilles* that readers want to hear more about it, she writes:

*Si vi maintes estranges choses  
Ou pajys de Judée encloses;  
En Jherusalem mesmement,  
Dont me tais, car communement  
Y vont gent en pelerinage,  
Si scet on assez ce voyage.* (v. 1277-1282)

She continues to abridge her account as she moves further east, and finally, with a particularly meaningful *occupatio*, Christine forgoes

22 C. Le Ninan, *Le Sage Roi et la clergesse: l’écriture du politique dans l’œuvre de Christine de Pizan*, Paris, Champion, 2013, p. 47. For Christine’s urging of peace in the *Chemin*, see S. Delale, “Le long chemin de paix de Christine de Pizan”, *Questes*, 26, 2013, p. 91-109.

23 On this, see the observations of S. Sasaki, « Chateamوران et *Le Chemin* de Christine de Pizan: à propos des “ruines” de Constantinople », « *Et c’est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble* », vol. 3, p. 1261-1270.

naming all the places she sees, even though the Sibyl has taught her what they are. She says:

[...] *car seroit grief  
De tout faire narracion.  
Si n'est pas mon entencion;  
Maint en ont parlé a delivre,  
Je n'en quier faire nouvel livre.* (v. 1368-1372)

Her Dantean voyage, then, unwrites the Mandevillian one: when Christine praises the road that led Dante to find Vergil (v. 1136-1144), she announces a telling shift of emphasis.

A. Tarnowski has rightly noted structural similarities between the *Chemin* and Christine's *Dit de la Rose* (1402), written within a few months of each other<sup>24</sup>. Both deploy dream visions and allegorical female figures, and both are composed in segments. In the *Rose*, Christine attends a dinner party at the *maison close* of the Duke of Orleans. While the guests enjoy delicious food and engage in sparkling conversation, a sudden very bright light announces the arrival from above of a group of lovely ladies sent by Lady Loyalty. They bear roses which they distribute to the company as they sing charming melodies. At the end of the evening, Christine retires to the chamber in the Duke's house that had been prepared for her night's rest. She falls asleep but is awakened by the visit of Lady Loyalty herself, who has come to appoint Christine an officer of the Order of the Rose for the protection of women. In the morning Christine thinks it must all have been a dream, but the discovery of the order's charter, in its gold and azure blue royal colors, left at her bedside, tells her otherwise. The dinner party constitutes the first section of the *Rose*, while the second centers on the overnight dream vision. The bedchamber scene both continues and fleshes out the message of the dinner party, which is the importance of respecting and valuing women. In the more complex *Chemin*, however, which evokes movement over great distances, parts are embedded within parts, to some extent reflecting the segmentation caused by the poem's repeated debuts. But it is the dream vision, the most deeply embedded of the three “starts”, that contains the most striking of the poem's divisions: it is the only portion in which the direction of the narrative is turned on its head.

<sup>24</sup> Tarnowski, *Chemin*, p. 24ff.

## AN ENGLISHMAN IN PARIS?

S. C. Akbari has observed that Mandeville shows a “self-conscious determination to present himself as an Englishman”<sup>25</sup>, which is clear as early as the prologue. He introduces himself as “Johan Maundeville chivaler ja soit ceo qe jeo ne soie dignes, neez et norriz d’Engleterre de la ville de Seint Alban”<sup>26</sup>. The insistent Englishness of the Mandevillian persona may seem discordant for this point in the early fifteenth century, when conflict between the English and the French had become a matter of record. But in fact, war between the English and the French, whatever else it may have done, intensified cultural contact between the two. Discussing Chaucer’s French writing, A. Butterfield argues that “the centre of gravity in these years was precisely the space of exchange between the continent and the island” and that Chaucer himself cannot be thought either English or French. She explains that “ceaseless” cross-channel travel in the fourteenth century, battles, exchanges of various documents, aristocratic marriages and other events “radically shook up the processes of contact throughout the continent. At any town or siege or court one might find travellers, mercenaries, and exiles from north, south, east, and west”<sup>27</sup>.

The porousness of English-French cultural boundaries, even while the two were enemies, emerges from writing less known today than Chaucer’s, such as the translation into Anglo-Norman of a continental literature centered on anti-Muslim campaigns by Charlemagne, who does not figure as a particularly *English* hero. Two *chansons de geste*, *Fierabras* and its prequel, the *Destruction de Rome*, which celebrate victory over the Muslims and the conversion of some, along with the return of relics, appeared in England in Anglo-Norman in the thirteenth century. They continued to be read there and were translated into Middle English (as romances)

25 S. C. Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 53.

26 Deluz, *Merveilles du monde*, p. 92.

27 A. Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, language, and nation in the Hundred Years War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 175-176. See also M. J. Bennett, “Mandeville’s Travels”.

during the Hundred Years War<sup>28</sup>. What the *Merveilles* and the stories of a triumphant Charlemagne share is their advocacy of northern European defeat of “unbelievers”. In France too, some argued that a combined effort between the appropriate French and English military and political strata would be beneficial: Philippe de Mézières, for example, in his letter to King Richard II of 1395 urges strategic cooperation between the English and the French to defeat the Muslims. In the fifth chapter especially, de Mézières argues that Charles and Richard should seek peace and that they “devroient fort doubter d’espandre le sanc de leurs freres crestiens”<sup>29</sup>.

Christine voices her concerns about Muslim aggression in a couple of passages in the *Chemin*. She refers to the Turkic ruler Tamerlane, who defeated the army of Bayazid I at Ankara in the summer of 1402, and she wishes that the “Sarrasins” would simply destroy one another without the need for Christian intervention (and by implication, without the shedding of Christian blood, which recalls de Mézières’ plea above):

*Et meisme entre les sarrasins,  
Le basat contre Tambourlan –  
Que Dieux mette en si tres mal an  
Qu’ilz se puissent entre eulx deffaïre,  
Si n’y ait crestien que faire!* (v. 346-350)

That passage is a strong but representative measure of how seriously anxious Christian northern Europe was about Islam<sup>30</sup>, a fear with the potential to unite Christians in France and England. Christine goes on to say:

*Mais des crestiens c’est dommages,  
Qui pour envie des hommages  
Et d’estranges terres conquerre,  
S’entreoccient par mortel guerre.* (v. 351-354)

28 See also M. J. Bennett, “Mandeville’s Travels”, and Higgins, *The Book of John Mandeville*, p. xvii-xviii.

29 “Epistre au Roi Richard”, *Letter to King Richard II: A plea made in 1395 for peace between England and France*, ed. and trans. G. W. Coopland, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1975, p. 116; cited in C. Le Ninan, “L’idée de croisade dans deux œuvres de Christine de Pizan”, *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales*, 8, 2001, p. 8 (page numbers are those of online version).

30 Christine registers horror at Bayazid’s power when she mentions once more the fighting between Tamerlane and Bayazid (v. 1327-1330).

That second comment directs attention away from Christianity's problems in the Near East toward issues closer to home. It may, at one stroke, refer to France's internal problems following the onset of King Charles VI's mental illness in 1392 and to the war between the English and the French. As Le Ninan once more observes:

*La paix entre les royaumes occidentaux, fondement essentiel de la concorde au sein du corps politique dont la recherche guide l'ensemble de l'œuvre politique de Christine, semble n'être possible qu'au prix d'une autre guerre, une guerre plus "juste" orientée vers la sauvegarde de la chrétienté<sup>31</sup>.*

No direct exhortation to crusade appears in the *Chemin*, in spite of the narrator's explicit hatred of Muslims, and we might presume that Christine was opposed to encouraging the initiation of military action. In a valuable discussion of her attitude toward war against Islam, however, C. Le Ninan finds that those who are capable of harming the Muslims occupy a place of privilege in the *Chemin*, and she argues that Christine's condemnation of the Muslims and her praise for the knight Jean de Châteaumorant, who had been placed in Constantinople to defend the city, leave room for a more subtle interpretation of her intentions<sup>32</sup>. Nonetheless, the *Chemin* is a poem that steers clear of openly advocating war or crusade. This might well be expected from an author who, only three years earlier, in the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* (1399), had advocated for what she called the *nature de femme*, a collection of *conditions* that made women peacekeepers and naturally fearful of war, while men's *conditions* disposed them toward war. But the *Chemin* is not the only one of her works to articulate an ambivalence about these *natures*: exceptions exist, and the *Chemin* tells us that a Christian woman, fearing the Muslims, may wish them dead.

31 Le Ninan, "L'idée de croisade", p. 8.

32 Le Ninan, "L'idée de croisade", p. 4. Châteaumorant returned to Paris in 1402 with the news that Tamerlane had defeated Bayazid. See also L. Dulac and E. J. Richards, "Guerre sainte ou guerre juste? Le nouveau discours polémologique, juridique et humaniste chez Christine de Pizan après la débâcle de Nicopolis", *La Guerre au Moyen Âge: des motifs épiques aux réalités du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. J. Dufournet and C. Lachet, *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 116/2, 2012, p. 321-340.

THE AUTHOR’S “I”

Higgins has observed that Mandeville’s claim to knighthood established him as a member of “a privileged stratum of the larger Christian community, whose task it was to rule and defend that community<sup>33</sup>”. As he records his memoirs, Mandeville’s narrator announces an effort at individual memory, but he also appeals to his community to participate in the text by contributing to a collective memory. He does not know everything, he says, nor does he wish to discourage others from making their own discoveries. He advocates for primary, in-person encounters with earthly phenomena even as he himself learns about it second-hand, through books. In an important statement explaining his aims in writing the *Merveilles*, he asks his fellow knights to corroborate, correct, or add to his report, saying:

*Il y a plusours autres diversez pays et mout d’autres mervailles par delà qe jeo n’ay mie tout veu, si n’en savoroie proprement parler. Et meismement en païs ouquel j’ay esté y a plusours diversetés dont jeo ne fais point mencion, qar trop seroit longe chose a tout deviser. Et pur ceo qe jeo vous ay deviseez d’ascunes pays vous deit suffyr quant au present. Qar si jeo devoioie tant quantquez y est par delà, un autre qe se peneroit et travailleroit le corps pur aler en celles marches et pur cercher le pays seroit empeschez par mes ditz a racompter nulles choses estranges, qar il ne porroit rien dire de novel en quoy ly oyantz y puissent prendre solacz. Et l’em dit toutdis qe choses nouvelles pleissent. Sy m’en taceray atant sanz plus racompter nulles diversetez qe soient par delà, a la fin qe cis qe vourra aler en celles parties y troeve assez a dire<sup>34</sup>.*

Verifiability is placed in the hands of Mandeville’s readers, and consensus will be reached through the reports of other voyagers returning from the East. In keeping with the crusading idea, and inviting readers to imagine the vast and limitless opportunities of what he calls the *par delà*, Mandeville also optimistically invites future memories: for by not telling all, and by enticing others to see and report on the marvels whose discovery is an adjunct to crusading, Mandeville, although not proposing a new version of epic, sets out a homosocial paradigm reminiscent of the epic ethos.

33 Higgins, *Writing East*, p. 28, 54.

34 Deluz, *Merveilles du monde*, p. 478–479. The solitary protagonist of a Christine composition was often the author herself, as has been well documented.

Christine's travel narrative instead emphasizes an equally privileged but different quest. Her community is not Mandeville's. Although Christine leaves her story open, with closure to be brought by those who will decide the winner of the debate after the poem has ended, she does not invite her readers to correct or alter what she has written; she alone (apart from the Sibyl) has witnessed the debate and is alone in being able to provide a record of it. As Dante's embrace of antiquity and the individual exemplar (Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*) contribute to the portrait of him as a precursor of humanism, so Christine's emphasis upon what is exemplary – the Sibyl assures her that her name will shine in memory long after she is gone (v. 496-497), thus touching on a use of *fama* known from Petrarch, Dante and others.

Travel writing featured an author or narrator who could plausibly have been a visitor to the places described; seeing with one's own eyes (or claiming to) mattered. In principle, that suited Christine well, considering her general reliance on the authority of her own experience<sup>35</sup>. Although women in the Middle Ages were known to make pilgrimages, it is unlikely that Christine would have cast herself in that role. Instead, Christine and the Sibyl, as has often been noted, are female counterparts to the male pair, Virgil and Dante. But comparison with the *Merveilles* reveals an additional version of female solidarity: in the *Chemin*, a work from which male voices are largely absent, the pair of Christine and the Sibyl does not duplicate Mandeville's group of armored knights; it replaces them. With the help of the Sibyl, she can do what Mandeville did and, as Toynbee remarked, in some instances she implies that she can do it better<sup>36</sup>. That accomplished, however, she moves on to argue not just the value of a governing ethos that differs from Mandeville's but one to which women – indeed, Christine de Pizan herself – may contribute.

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35 See A. Tarnowski, "The Lessons of Experience and the *Chemin de long estude*", *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. B. Altmann and D. McGrady, New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 181-197.

36 Toynbee, "Christine de Pisan and Sir John Maundeville", p. 231, 237. Christine manages to kiss the Holy Sepulchre, for example, whereas Mandeville says he could not.