

Christine De Pizan
Excerpt from *Mutation of Fortune*

I wish to tell my history,

'Twill seem to some pure mystery.

But even though they won't believe,

I'll tell the truth and won't decieve.

It all happened to me, really;

I was twenty-five, or nearly,

It was no dream when it occured,

No need to evoke the absurd

When one has seen what I have seen,

These wonders that have really been,

That we do not see every day

Because of Fortune's clever way,

Of disguising her mutations,

Those deceptive situations

Which I hope to unveil here...

...Before my discourse grows in size,

Let me summarize, this moment,

Just who I am, what all this meant.

How I, a woman, became a man by a flick of Fortune's hand

How she changed my body's form

To the perfect masculine norm.

I'm a man, no truth I'm hiding,

You can tell by how I'm hiding

And If I was female before-

It's the truth and nothing more-

It seems I'll have to re-create

Just how I did transmutate

From a woman to a male:

I think the title of my tale

Is, if I'm not being importune,

"The Mutation of Fortune." [3]

3. Pizan, Christine de. "From the book of the Mutation of fortune" in *The Writings of Christine de Pizan* trans. Nadia Margolis ed. Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1994), 110 & 112.

Baldesar Castiglione (1478-1529)**From Book III, Chapters 4 and 5**

". . . I hold that many virtues of the mind are as necessary to a woman as to a man; also, gentle birth; to avoid affectation, to be naturally graceful in all her actions, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not contentious, not inept, to know how to gain and hold the favor of her mistress and of all others, to perform well and gracefully the exercises that are suitable for women. And I do think that beauty is more necessary to her than to the Courtier, for truly that woman lacks much who lacks beauty.

.....

"Leaving aside, then, those virtues of the mind which she is to have in common with the Courtier (such as prudence, magnanimity, continence, and many others), as well as those qualities that befit all (such as kindness, discretion, ability to manage her husband's property and house and children, if she is married, and all qualities that are requisite in a good mother), I say that, in my opinion, in a Lady who lives at court a certain pleasing affability is becoming above all else, whereby she will be able to entertain graciously every kind of man with agreeable and comely conversation suited to the time and place and to the station of the person with whom she speaks, joining to serene and modest manners, and to that comeliness that ought to inform all her actions, a quick vivacity of spirit whereby she will show herself a stranger to all boorishness; but with such a kind manner as to cause her to be thought no less chaste, prudent, and gentle than she is agreeable, witty, and discreet"