



## Medieval Women and the Adversariality of Logic

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## A bit of background

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A natural combination of these two issues results in an on-going research project of mine: Where are the women in medieval logic?

# Two different questions

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- What is logic?

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- What is a logician?

# What is logic?

- Dialectic
- Philosophy of language: signification, meaning.
- Argumentation and the practice of debate.

# What is a logician?

- ① One who writes treatises on logic?
- ② One who practices or uses logic?

## Argumentation: Adversariality and techniques of silencing

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- Strong connection between production of textbooks/theoretical treatises and university activity.
- Male/female antagonism: Two case studies.
  - ▶ The adversariality of argumentation: Eloise rejects what Townsend calls the “tradition of dialectical disputation and the social customs of ritualized male aggression”.
  - ▶ Self-silencing & removal from discourse: “Je ne suis logicienne”, Christine de Pizan writes in the *Epistres sur le ‘Roman de la Rose’*.

# Eloise d'Argenteuil & The adversariality of argumentation

- c. 1090?/1100?–1164.
- Student and lover of Abelard.
- Recognized as an important ethical philosopher in her own right in modern times.
- After Abelard's death, Peter of Cluny complimented her on the fact that she had “left logic for the gospel, Plato for Christ, the Academy for the cloister”.

## Christine de Pizan & Silencing by removing oneself from the dispute

- Born in Venice, 1364; grew up in the French court of Charles V as her father was the king's astrologer, alchemist, and physician.
- Began writing after being widowed at 25.
- Best known for her French courtly poetry, but also wrote books on practical advice for women.
- *The Book of the City of Ladies*: Dialogue between allegorical women representing Reason, Justice, and Rectitude, written in a highly skilled dialectical style.

## NOTES:

On p. 53, Laennec says: "She writes in a letter to Pierre Col, 'je ne suis logicienne' (p. 117) ('I am not a logician'), but in the following paragraph proceeds to challenge his argument by setting him a classical problem of logic to solve: 'Se tu dis oyl, câžest faulx. . . .Se tu me dis non, doncques te dis je vraye ma proposition' (pp. 117-18) ('If you say yes, it's false. . . . If you tell me no, then you have proved true my proposition'). Here is the context of the part 'Se tu me dis non, doncques te dis je vraye ma proposition' (EROS.244a:05 and around): <http://www.pizan.lib.ed.ac.uk/xmlfinal/eros.xml>. The part where Christine de Pizan argues that she is not a logician is a bit earlier, at line EROS.243d:04 of the same text, 'Les Epistres sur le Rommant de la Rose'. Have fun!