- Misogynist views
- Few defenders of women.
- Christine de Pizan, lack of radicalism

Compared to other profeminin writers.

-Judaeo-Christian theology
- St. Paul and St. Augustine
- women inferior in all respects. although made in God's image.

6

Christine de Pizan as a Defender of Women

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Just as modern readers are often shocked by the misogynist views that circulated within medieval culture, so they can often be disappointed by the seemingly timid response to such views from those writers of the period who sought to defend women. Christine de Pizan is one such author who, although praised by some scholars as a forerunner of twentieth-century feminist thought, has been criticized by others for a lack of radicalism when judged by modern standards.[1] It is certainly true to say that Christine did not change the ground on which the medieval debate about women was conducted in that, unlike modern feminists, she did not move from defending the moral and intellectual equality of the sexes to demanding equality for women in terms of their legal rights, political representation, and access to education. However, although Christine's defense of women may appear conservative when seen from a modern perspective, a rather different picture emerges if her views are compared with those of other profeminine authors of the Middle Ages.[2] What then were the accusations leveled against women that Christine had to refute in order to champion her sex? On what earlier arguments in favor of womankind was she able to draw? To what extent did her own defense of women advance beyond the existing terms of the profeminine response?

MEDIEVAL MISOGYNY

Judaeo-Christian theology had bequeathed to the Middle Ages the view that women were inferior to men in all respects: morally, physiologically, and intellectually. The Church Fathers, particularly St. Paul and St. Augustine, interpreted key verses from Genesis (1:26–7 and 2:21–3) and I Corinthians (11:7) to propound the idea that although woman was made in God's image to the extent that she, like

man, possessed a rational soul, she was nevertheless subordinate to him, being created for the specific purpose of helping him to perpetuate the human species.[3] This subordination of woman to man in the order of creation and the limited purpose of her existence meant that she was endowed with not only a body different from his but also an inferior rationality. Moreover, because of her lesser reason, which supposedly had made her an easier target for the Devil than Adam, Eve was often held to be more responsible than he for the Fall, her punishment reflecting this in that it entailed both suffering the pains of childbirth and subjection to her husband.[4] As the daughters of Eve, all women were held to be guilty by association of the same moral failings of disobedience, garrulity, and pride that Eve had displayed in seducing her husband into eating the forbidden fruit. These vices were thus cited by misogamous clerics such as St. Jerome in their attempts to dissuade men against marriage as the reason why wives chafe against their subjection to their husbands and make men's lives miserable.[5] Even the undoubtedly worthy example of the Virgin Mary was not enough to counteract this negative view of women, as her virtue did not erase women's guilt for their part in the Fall. In constant remembrance of Eve's transgression, all women were therefore ordered to keep silent in church and to cover their heads in shame when praying (I Corinthians 11:5–13).

These theological views were buttressed within medieval culture by arguments about women's inferiority drawn from the medical and scientific works of classical antiquity. According to Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*, the female was a defective male in both physical and intellectual terms as she was made from weaker sperm than that used to produce the male child.[6] However, he stopped short of claiming that men and women were different species altogether as, in his *Metaphysics*, he presented gender as being an "accidental" (i.e., material) difference between the sexes, like skin color, rather than an essential one that served to differentiate between species.[7] This conception of women's defective physiology was further bolstered by the application to gender of the theory of the four elements that make up all things in creation: earth, fire, water, and air, each with its related quality of coldness, heat, moisture, or dryness.[8] Because medieval thinkers believed that heat was the primary instrument of nature, they concluded that man was superior to woman, as he was allegedly the warmer and the dryer of the two sexes, whereas woman's coldness and moistness were seen as making her more unstable, changeable, and irrational.

Literary texts of the Middle Ages were heavily influenced by many of these theological and scientific ideas. A key tendency in such works was to discuss individual women as if they were representative of their entire sex whereas men were more often treated as individuals. For instance, short moralizing texts, which formed a distinctive subset of the genre of the *dit*,[9] ascribed stereotypically pejorative traits to women as an entire group, citing the familiar arguments about Eve's responsibility for the Fall, the faithlessness and instability of the female sex, and its lesser degree of godlikeness.

THE MEDIEVAL CASE FOR WOMEN

Despite the mass of antifeminist sentiment to be found in all branches of medieval culture and learning, a considerable body of counterargument began to emerge from the twelfth century onward, although it was not to be as influential as the misogyny that it was designed to refute. Because many of the misogynists derived their views by quoting selectively from biblical and patristic authorities, profeminine writers also tended to employ this "citational" method, extracting arguments in favor of women from exactly the same sources.[10] Certainly, biblical and classical sources provided many virtuous examples of the female sex, such as Judith or Esther, Penthesilea, or Andromache. In theology, a series of stock arguments known as the "privileges of women" were invoked to defend women's honor.[11] These privileges claimed that the female was superior to the male in the sense that Eve was made in a nobler place than Adam (inside rather than outside Eden), from a nobler material (bone rather than earth), and was the culmination of God's work (being created after rather than before him). Even in scientific thought, women's supposed physical and mental inferiority might have been seen as disqualifying them from public office but it also meant that they were deemed to be more affectionate than men, particularly toward children. It was this caring quality that was used by theologians from St. Augustine onward to counter the misogamous tradition and put a more positive slant on marriage. Some medieval clerics in their marriage sermons even encouraged wives to act as "preachers to their husbands" in bringing them back to reasonable forms of behavior.[12]

As Alcuin Blamires has shown, this case for women as rational, constant, and loving beings was taken up by a number of male writers such as Marbod of Rennes, Peter Abelard, Albertano of Brescia, Jean le Fèvre, and Eustache Deschamps.[13] Yet it was not always clear what the intention was behind such writings. For example, although Abelard, in his correspondence with Heloise, seems to be genuinely attempting to raise the prestige of women who took the veil, others such as Deschamps in his *Miroir de mariage* appear to be merely playing an ironic, scholastics' game in juxtaposing statements that were for and against women and wedlock.[14] As Christine herself once suggested in her *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* (1399), it was perhaps only when a female writer took up her pen that a truly unequivocal case for women would be put forward.[15] However, in conducting a systematic defense of her sex, Christine did not restrict herself simply to rehearsing traditional arguments about women's moral capacities. Rather, she transformed them into a broader social ethic that would legitimate the place of women at the very center of the body politic.

A WOMAN'S RESPONSE TO ANTIFEMINISM

For Christine, the fundamental error made by misogynists was in presenting women as if they were a race of less than human beings, inferior to men in terms

of rationality, moral judgment, and intelligence. Her response was to emphasize not only the essential sameness of men and women but also their possession of identical moral and intellectual faculties. In putting forward this positive view of womankind, she stressed its implications for the way in which the relations between men and women were understood. As she pointed out in her reply to Jean de Montreuil, which forms part of the documents in the famous "Querelle de la *Rose*" (1401–1402),[16] once women are regarded as members of the same species as men, they can no longer be seen simply as objects to be desired or feared. On the contrary, they should be accorded the respect due to them for their central role within human society as partners with men in every facet of the latter's existence as husbands, lovers, sons, and brothers (ed. Hicks, 139, ll.775–83, ed. and trans. Baird and Kane, 136). As Christine saw it, the debate about women thus centered on two key issues: sameness versus difference and complementarity versus incompatibility. Let us examine how she discussed each of these issues.

Sameness versus Difference

To argue that men and women shared a common humanity and possessed an equal rationality, Christine's strategy was to show that the sexes were distinguished from each other purely by external bodily differences. Her trump card here was her adoption of Aristotle's theory that the differences between men and women were "accidental" rather than essential.[17] Thus, in the *Livre de l'advision Cristine* (1405),[18] in her allegorical account of her own birth, Christine describes how Nature began by pouring her spiritual essence into a mold, mixed it with matter to give her a human form, and only then, at the end of the process, endowed it with a specifically female gender:

> Lors, comme elle ja eust mis le mole atout la matiere en la fournaise, mon esperit prent, si le fiche ens, et tout en la maniere que aux corps humains donner fourme acoustumé avoit, tout mesla ensemble et ainsi cuire me laissa par quantité de temps tant que ung petit corps humain me fut parfaict. Mais comme le voulsist ainsi celle qui la destrempe avoit faicte, a laquel cause se tient et non au mole, j'aportay sexe femmenin. (ed. Reno and Dulac, 14, ll.4–10)[19]

(When she had put the mold with all the material into the oven, she took my soul and placed it in, and just as she usually did to give form to human bodies, she mixed it all together and let me bake for a certain time until a little human body was ready for me. But, according to the wishes of she who had made the mixture, I was given the female sex, since this was up to her to decide rather than being due to the shape of the mold.) Similarly, in the *Livre de la cité des dames* (1405),[20] on the question of woman's godlikeness, Christine offers her own interpretation of the account of human creation in Genesis by arguing that Adam and

Eve differed only on the level of the body, not of their rationality, as humankind was spiritually but not *physically* created in God's image.[21] As Dame Raison explains to Christine:

> Mais aucuns sont si folz que ilz cuident quant ilz oyent parler que Dieu fist homme a son ymage que ce soit a dire du corps materiel. Mais non est, car Dieu n'avoit pas lors pris corps humain, ains est a entendre de l'ame qui est esperit intellectuel et qui durera sanz fin a la semblance de la deité, *laquelle ame Dieu crea et mist aussi bonne, aussi noble en toute pareille en corps femenin comme ou masculin.* (ed. Richards, 78, emphasis added)

(There are, however, some who are foolish enough to maintain that when God made man in His image this means His physical body. Yet this is not the case, for at that time God had not yet adopted a human form, so it has to be understood to mean the soul, which is immaterial intellect and which will resemble God until the end of time. *He endowed both male and female with this soul, which He made equally noble and virtuous in the two sexes* [emphasis added].[22])

For Christine then, what divided the sexes in biological terms was far less important than what united them in spiritual terms: their common rationality and capacity for virtue. Proof of this was provided by her selection of the women whose illustrious deeds and virtuous acts as warriors and artists, inventors and prophets, teachers and saints, are commemorated in the *Cité des dames*. Likewise, in her courtesy books she treats her audience, whether male or female, as having an equal ability to make reasoned moral choices. Hence, in the *Livre des trois vertus* (1405),[23] in addressing women of each estate in society, she appeals to the rationality of all her readers—be they princesses, peasants, or prostitutes, baronesses, nuns, or bourgeoises—in order to persuade them to pursue virtue and so, effectively, "write" themselves into the City of Ladies.[24]

Having argued that the difference between men and women was limited to the level of the body, Christine nevertheless refused to conceptualize even this bodily difference in terms of inferiority and superiority. In the *Cité des dames* (I.1) she rejects Aristotle's argument that woman is a defective male (which she probably knew from reading St. Thomas Aquinas's Commentary on the *Metaphysics*),[25] quoting the theological "proof" that women, as God's creation, were not misbegotten (Genesis 1:31) and that it is heterodox to claim otherwise. Although she concedes, like many other medieval defenders of women, that the female sex is generally less physically strong than the male—with the exception of women like the Amazons—Christine does not interpret this as a sign of innate deficiency on the female's part.[26] Indeed, whereas other profeminine writers simply made such physiological frailty into a "strength in weakness" topos by citing it as evidence of women's greater compassion and affection,[27] she used it as the basis of an even more positive argument. On the grounds that what Nature has

taken away with one hand she compensates for with the other, Christine claims that women's physical weakness in fact gives them both a lesser tendency toward aggression and violence and a greater inclination for study (ed. Richards, 104, 152; and trans. Brown-Grant, 34, 57, respectively).

Yet this moral defense of women in terms of the rationality and propensity for virtue that they shared with men was only one aspect of Christine's contribution to the debate on sameness versus difference. Equally important, to her mind, was the need to convince her audience, particularly male clerics, of the need to read beyond the biological differences of the sexes so as to be able to see women as exemplars of the human in moral discourses. Paradoxically, given that it was a commonplace of misogynist thought that women were capable of reading only literally and failed to grasp the higher allegorical levels of meaning,[28] Christine sought to show that it was, in fact, the misogynists themselves who were the literal readers in their refusal to interpret women as signifiers of a higher import than just their bodily gender.

Thus, as Jeff Richards has argued, Christine uses the female to exemplify the human when she constructs her City of Ladies as an allegorical representation of St. Augustine's City of God such that, in her universal history of women, all forms of social and cultural division have been transcended.[29] This strategy is even more in evidence in Christine's other works such as the *Epistre Othea*,[30] her mythographic "mirror for princes,"[31] in which she teaches her male audience to adopt modes of reading that deliteralize and desexualize female signifiers. Here, instead of simply recounting women's literal deeds—whether praiseworthy or reprehensible—in her tales from classical antiquity, she exhorts her readers to interpret stories of female figures such as Echo, Hero, Criseyde, and Pasiphae as lessons in moral and spiritual behavior.[32] Hence, in the different levels of interpretation contained in the "glose" (gloss) and "allegorie" (allegory) that accompany each of the hundred, four-line "textes" (texts) that make up this work, Christine allegorizes such female figures as vices, virtues, or the human soul. In so doing, she replaces all literal references to these actual women with more sex-neutral references to "les personnes" (people) who are prone to a specific vice or "le bon esperit" (the good soul) who must adopt a particular moral conduct, thereby ensuring that her audience grasps the universal meaning of these *exempla* rather than drawing any hasty judgments about the female sex. For instance, in her version of the story of Echo, which might easily be understood as a tale of female lust, Christine glosses this figure first as a sex-indefinite "personne qui par grant necessité requiert autrui" (Parussa, 323, ll.25–6) (person in great need of another's help) and then as the virtue of "misericorde" (mercy) that the male reader must cultivate in his own heart (Parussa, 1.43).

We can see a similar process at work in the *Advision*, although the moral exemplar presented to the princely reader here is now Christine herself. In this text, which has a more pressing political agenda than that of the *Epistre Othea*—

having been written at a time when civil war was brewing in France—Christine uses her autobiographical account of how she was metaphorically consoled by the figure of Philosophie to deliver an important message to the prince.[33] Prompting the type of polysemous interpretation that she requires from the reader of this text, Christine explains in her prologue: "la fiction de cestui livre se puet alegorisier triblement, c'est assavoir assimiller au monde general, qui est la terre, aussi a homme simgulier et puis au royaume de France" (ed. Reno and Dulac, 6, ll.111–13) (the fiction of this book can be allegorized in triple fashion, that is to say, applied to the world as a whole, which is the earth, and also to the individual man, and then to the kingdom of France).[34] Interpreting this work as both a political and a moral allegory gives a coherence to its seemingly disparate elements and clearly sets out the link Christine wishes to make for her reader between the realms of politics and individual responsibility. Whereas the first two parts of the book are devoted to identifying the ills of the country, and more generally of human society, as being the result of the ruthless pursuit of self-interest on the part of its rulers, in the third part Christine offers herself up as an example of how the virtuous soul must learn to humble itself and put aside the search for worldly gain.[35] Dame Philosophie thus encourages Christine to ignore the "accidental" aspect of her existence, her frail female form and state of relative powerlessness in society, and to see herself instead in terms of her essential human condition, namely as a soul in relation to God. Rather than wishing to change her "corps foible et femmenin en homme pour estre transmuee de condicion" (ed. Reno and Dulac, 129, ll.27–8) (weak female body for that of a man in order to change condition), she must realize that in suffering tribulation, she is in fact one of "les plus beneurez en tant comme plus s'aprochent de la vie Jhesucrist" (Reno and Dulac, 119, ll.20–1) (the most blessed as their lives come closest to imitating that of Christ). This lesson is then extended to the prince himself who must set aside the "accidental" advantages of his gender, status, and wealth and see himself anew, as Christine had done, as a soul accountable to God for his actions on this earth:

> Se tu veulz . . . avoir la vraye extimacion de l'omme et savoir quel ou quan grant il est, regarde le tout nu. Ostes son patrimoine, ostes ses honneurs et les autres mençonges de Fortune, et le regarde, se tu peus, non pas ou corps mais ou couraige. (Reno and Dulac, 135, ll.29–33)

(If you wish to have the true measure of a man, and find out who he is and how great he is, look at him in all his nakedness. Strip him of his worldly goods, strip him of his honors and all the other illusions of Fortune, and look at him, if you can, not on the level of the body but of the heart.)

The claim that it is only through ethical self-government by the ruler (rather than through reform of the institutions of power themselves) that the ills of a state

can be remedied was a highly traditional one within medieval political theory.[36] What distinguishes the *Advision* from other political texts of the time is that it delivers this message by using a female exemplar to signify the human, a far less common feature of political writing but one that formed a vital part of Christine's works in defense of women.

Complementarity versus Incompatibility

If Christine was concerned to assert the shared humanity of men and women, she was no less energetic in combating the view of misogynists and misogamists that the sexes were fundamentally incompatible and that the relations between them were necessarily antagonistic.[37] For her, such opinions were particularly evident in works such as Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* whose representation of love and marriage she criticized as being both harmful and self-contradictory.[38] To Christine's mind, Jean's text offered an impossible choice between marriage, which he depicts as a hellish institution in which men and women destroy each other, and passionate love outside marriage (synonymous with courtly love), which he shows as leading not only to the physical and moral degradation of women but also to the spiritual perdition of both sexes.

Christine proposed to challenge this pessimistic conclusion about the incompatibility of the sexes by launching a concerted attack on the conception of love that underpins it. She thus counsels women against passionate love on the grounds that it leads them to losing their self-control and makes them vulnerable to trickery at the hands of men. For example, in the *Cité des dames* she includes a number of cautionary tales of women whose love brought them tragedy. Recounting the stories of Hero, Medea, Dido, and others, Dame Droiture attempts to dissuade Christine's readers from throwing themselves into

> celle mer tres perilleuse et dampnable de fole amour, car tousjours en est la fin a leur grant prejudice et grief en corps, en biens et en honneur et a l'ame. Qui plus est, si feront que sages celles qui par bon sens la saront eschever et non donner audience a ceulx qui sanz cesser se traveillent d'elles decepvoir en tel cas. (ed. Richards, 404)

(the perilous and treacherous sea of passionate love. This is because such liaisons always have a tragic ending and the woman invariably loses out in terms of her health, status, reputation and, most important of all, her soul. Those women who are sensible and wise would do well to avoid embarking on affairs like this and not to waste any time on listening to men who are always looking for ways of leading them into such traps [trans. Brown-Grant, 186].)

Despite their otherwise laudable qualities, such as their great learning (Medea) or their steadfastness (Dido), these women serve as *exempla in malo* for

having allowed their passions to blind them to the male deceit or faithlessness that would ultimately lead to their tragic end.

This lesson to women about the danger of losing one's autonomy through accepting male advances is equally present in Christine's lyric poetry.[39] Although at the end of both the *Livre du duc des vrais amans* (1403–1405)[40] and the *Cent balades d'amant et de dame* (1409–1410)[41] both the male and female protagonists have suffered the various pains of love, it is only the lady whose reputation or life has been lost. By contrast, the male lover in each of these texts carries on much as before: he may be brokenhearted but his respected position in society is left intact. Christine underlines this fundamental asymmetry in the fates of the sexes within courtly love by giving the female voice the last word in each of these lyric sequences.[42] In the *Cent balades d'amant et de dame* in particular, the despair expressed by the lady in the final verse is reinforced in a lyric coda, the aptly named "Lay mortel"[43] (Mortal lai), in which she breathes her last and condemns Love for the suffering it has brought her at the hands of an unworthy lover.[44]

Yet it is perhaps in her courtesy book for women, the *Trois vertus*, that Christine demythifies this form of loving most completely when she reprises the letter of advice sent to the princess in the *Duc des vrais amans* by her governess Sebille, Dame de la Tour.[45] The chief lesson of Christine's courtesy book is that it is in the rational self-interest of all women, but particularly high-born ladies such as princesses, to adopt virtuous conduct both to refute misogynist opinion and to ensure a lasting reputation for themselves.[46] Passionate love is shown to be a disaster because it disempowers those who need to hold on to whatever power they possess, and undermines ladies' mastery of those codes of behavior (dress, speech, and bearing) they need to manipulate in order to fashion a virtuous name for themselves.[47] As the governess states in her letter to the princess, the physical signs of love will give the lady away because they subvert these codes on which her chastity and reputation crucially depend:

> Et comme ces dictes condicions et toutes manieres convenables a haulte princepce fussent en vous le temps passé, estes a present toute changee, si come on dit, car vous estes devenue trop plus esgaiee, plus enparlee, et plus jolie que ne soliez estre, et c'est ce qui fait communement jugier les cuers changiéz quant les contenances se changent. (ed. Willard and Hicks, 112, ll.68–73)

(Although this conduct and all other behavior appropriate to a great princess were yours formerly, you are at present, it is said, quite changed, for you have become very much more abandoned, more talkative and merrier than you used to be, and that is the kind of thing that usually causes people to have a shrewd idea. Hearts change when the manner changes [trans. Lawson, 180].[48])

In a society where even a rumor of adultery or misplaced passion could discredit a woman forever,[49] Christine presents courtly love as a game that no woman can win and so is best not played.

Having rejected passionate love as a desirable form of relationship between men and women on moral and pragmatic grounds, Christine put forward an alternative that stressed the fundamental complementarity of the sexes.[50] She thus valorized the bond between male and female as one between mutually affectionate helpmeets, a conventional argument in the profeminine armory that she derived from one of the "privileges of women" topoi and a theological gloss popularized by Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard.[51] Although the *e materia* topos stated that the bone from which woman was made was superior to the earth from which man had been fashioned, the gloss argued that the creation of woman from man's side meant that she was intended to be his cherished companion and partner in life, not his despised slave as it would be if she had been made from his foot (*Cité des dames*, I.9). In the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* these arguments serve as the basis for an alternative view of love, one that, for both sexes, is ennobling rather than corrupting, and is harmonious rather than acrimonious, because it is based on mutual respect and profound compatibility. Here the God of Love spells out to men that it is their duty to love and honor women because "C'est son droit per qui a lui est semblable,/La riens qui plus lui peut estre agreable" (For she's his kindred soul, so much like him,/The being most compatible with him) (ed. and trans. Fenster and Erler, 68–9, ll.731–2). In the *Cité des dames*, Christine celebrates marriage as the fitting institution in which this ideal of reciprocal affection can be realized. Thus, in Book I she cites Solomon's encomium from Proverbs 31:10–31 on the benefits to men who have worthy wives (I.43) and devotes a key section of Book II to the praise of wives such as Queen Hypsicratea (II.14) who, far from bringing trouble and strife to their husbands, gave them great happiness and solace. Given these and many other examples of wifely affection, Christine argues that it is up to husbands to prove themselves deserving of their wives' devotion by accepting their good counsel, valuing their constancy, and returning their love.

Although this emphasis on complementarity was a commonplace in the medieval case for women, Christine was to develop it significantly further than any of her male predecessors had. Rather than simply defending love and marriage, she uses the notion of complementarity as the basis of a broader social ethic that enabled her to legitimate women as an estate that, like the three traditional estates of men as *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores* (those who pray, those who fight, and those who labor), has a crucial role to play in ensuring social cohesion.[52] Thus, although the misogynist and misogamous clerics espoused a separatist view of the social relations between male and female,[53] Christine countered their arguments with a highly inclusive conception of society that stressed the indispensability of women to men's well-being. This did not mean that Christine

thought that women should play the same roles within society as men did. On the contrary, she made it clear that the unity of the sexes could be achieved only by a complementary division of labor (*Cité des dames*, I.11). Her task then was to valorize the role in which women could make their most visible contribution to society, that of the *mulier economica*,[54] as it was this role that, although reviled by misogynists and misogamists as one in which women abusively exercise their power in the household, had traditionally always been theirs.

Whereas Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* (Christine's main source for the *Cité des dames*) had found virtue in those women who, as viragoes displaying "manly" qualities, succeeded in transcending their sex,[55] Christine devoted over half of her text to women who, as wives, had virtuously performed the role that was specific to their sex. More importantly, Christine presents these good wives as not only benefitting their own husbands but also serving to maintain or restore social cohesion in general. For instance, she praises Tertia Emilia for hiding her husband's adultery so as not to damage his exalted status as military leader of Rome (II.20), the wife of Alexander the Great for persuading her husband to make plans for his succession to avoid plunging the country into chaos (II.29), and Queen Clotilde for converting her husband King Clovis and so bringing the Christian faith to the people of France (II.35).

Thus, even if Christine's own female contemporaries could not perform exactly the same deeds as these classical and historical women, they could, nonetheless, still seek to emulate the qualities of discretion, peacemaking, and persuasion displayed by each of them. More explicit instruction as to how this could be done is provided in the *Trois vertus* in which, once again, Christine stresses the importance of women's contribution to men's lives as their partners and complementary helpmeets.[56] Here, she outlines how the women in each specific social class can bring comfort and support to their husbands and so ensure both solidarity between the sexes and cohesion within society. She encourages the princess to maintain a respectable court, love her children and husband, and display largesse toward the deserving and compassion toward the needy (Book I); counsels baronesses and other ladies of noble rank to run their husbands' estates in their absence with justice, firmness, and sobriety (Book II); and advises women of the artisanal and merchant classes to share their husbands' workloads, maintain a respectable household, and refrain from social climbing through their mode of dress (Book III). For Christine then, harmony in the home and stability in society go hand in hand, and women have a crucial role to play in creating both, one that should be properly acknowledged by those who in the past have so consistently attacked them.

Yet perhaps the clearest instance of Christine's development of traditional profeminine ideas about the complementarity of the sexes into a broader social ethic is that she does not simply outline what women have done for men but also turns to the question of men's own responsibility toward women. Adopting her

male predecessors' standard argument that men's failure to give women credit for all they do for them constitutes personal ingratitude toward the female sex, she goes on to transform this point into a wider issue of moral and social injustice. In her view, it was not just that men should honor women because of the Virgin Mary's role as mother of the Redeemer and be grateful to them for their capacity to give birth, their talent for making garments that dignify the male sex, and their diligence in looking after their menfolk.[57] Although she clearly thought these points were important and dealt with each of them in the *Epistre au dieu d'amours* and the *Cité des dames*,[58] Christine also saw her defense of women as an attempt to call misogynists to account for the damage they had caused to the body politic in slandering one of its most hard-working estates. As numerous scholars have noted, this emphasis on justice can be seen in the fact that Christine conducts her defense within a strongly legalistic framework: a court of love in the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* and a case for the defendant in the *Cité des dames*.[59] However, what has not previously been commented on is that Christine conceives of justice in the terms set by contemporary social theory. As a result, she was able to condemn misogyny as a destabilizing and injurious force within society precisely because it encouraged men to abrogate their responsibility toward women as an estate.

Social cohesion in the Middle Ages was theorized not in terms of equality but of complementarity and reciprocity, with each estate being naturally or providentially fitted to play its particular role.[60] Subscribing to this theory in her political works such as the *Livre du corps de policie* (1406–1407),[61] Christine declares that all the estates are interdependent and so should be mutually supportive:

> Car tout ainsi comme le corps humain n'est mie entier . . . quant il lui fault aucun de ses membres, semblablement ne peut le corps de policie estre parfait . . . se tous les estas dont nous traictons ne sont en bonne conjonction et union ensemble, si qu'ilz puissent secourir et aidier l'un a l'autre, *chascun excercitant l'office de quoy il doit servir, lesquelz divers offices ne sont a tout considerer establis et ne doivent servir ne mes pour la conservacion de tout ensemble*. (ed. Kennedy, 91, ll.16–23, emphasis added)[62]

(For just as the human body is not whole, . . . when it lacks any of its members, so the body politic cannot be perfect . . . if all the estates of which we speak are not well joined and united together. Thus, they can help and aid each other, *each exercising the office which it has to, which diverse offices ought to serve only for the conservation of the whole community* [ed. and trans. Forhan, 90, emphasis added].[63])

Using many of the same terms but applying them to gender relations, Christine in the *Cité des dames* explains through her mouthpiece Dame Raison that this is also how male and female roles in society should be conceived:

> *Dieux a estabi homme et femme pour le servir en divers offices et pour aussi aydier, conforter et compaigner l'un l'autre*, chacun en ce qui lui est estabi a faire et a chacun sexe a donné tele nature et inclinacion, comme a faire son office lui appartient et compette. (ed. Richards, 92, emphasis added)

(*God created man and woman to serve him in different ways and to help and comfort one another*, according to a similar division of labor. To this end, He endowed each sex with the qualities and attributes which they need to perform the tasks for which they are cut out [trans. Brown-Grant, 29, emphasis added].)

Given this division of labor, medieval social theorists argued that reason and natural justice demanded that each member of the body politic, whether a member of the prestigious preaching or fighting classes or the more lowly laboring classes, should show gratitude for the contribution of the others by rendering unto each his due.[64] Thus, in the *Corps de policie*, Christine herself upbraids the nobles for acting irrationally in denigrating the important role played by the common people in contemporary society:

> Et vraiement ceulx qui tant de mal leur font ne prennent pas garde a ce de quoy il servent, car qui bien y viseroit, *toute creature raisonnable se tendroit obligee a eulx. Si est pechié d'estre ingrat de tant de services comme ilz nous font*. Et vraiement ceulx icy sont bien les piez qui soustiennent le corps de la policie, car ilz soustiennent par leur labour le corps de toute personne. (ed. Kennedy, 108, ll.21–6, emphasis added)

(And really those who do them so many evils do not take heed of what they do, *for anyone who considers himself a rational creature will hold himself obligated to them. It is a sin to be ungrateful for as many services as they give us*! And really it is very much the feet which support the body politic, for they support the body of every person with their labor [trans. Forhan, 107, emphasis added].)

In her texts in defence of women, Christine criticizes the behavior of misogynists on exactly the same grounds. For instance, in the *Cité des dames*, she inveighs against them for having gone against reason and divine providence in denying the huge debt rightfully owed by men to women:

> *a tout homme qui voulentiers mesdit de femme vient de tres grant vilté de courage, car il fait contre raison et contre nature*: contre raison en tant que il est tres ingrat et mal congnoissant des grans biens que femme lui a fais . . . ; contre nature en ce que il n'est beste vive quelconques, ne oysel, qui naturellement n'aime cherement son per, c'est la femmelle. (ed. Richards, 72, emphasis added)

(*any man who willfully slanders the female sex does so because he has an evil mind, since he's going against both reason and nature*. Against reason, because

he is lacking in gratitude and failing to acknowledge all the good and indispensable things that woman has done for him. . . . Against nature, in that even the birds and the beasts naturally love their mate, the female of the species [trans. Brown-Grant, 19–20, emphasis added].)

That Christine clearly conceived of gender relations in "estate" terms can be seen most strikingly in the fact that she singles out the two most powerful estates of men—clerks and knights—for particular criticism. This is because, as she explains in the *Cité des dames*, it is precisely these two sections of the body politic that have benefitted most from the contribution made by women to human society and yet have been the least grateful to them. Because it was the female sex that brought the alphabet and arms into the world, along with so many other inventions such as weaving, spinning, and agriculture (I.33–I.40), it is all the more unreasonable and unjust that clerks and knights have persisted in their attacks on women when in fact they owe their very livelihood to them:

> or apperçoy . . . la tres grant ingratitude et descongnoissance d'iceulx hommes qui tant mesdient des femmes . . . or se taisent d'orenavant les clercs mesdisans de femmes . . . voyant ceste noble dame Carmentis, laquelle par la haultece de son entendement les a appris . . . les nobles letres du latin. Mais que diront les nobles et les chevaliers . . . refraignent leur bouche d'orenavant, avisant que le usage des armes porter, faire batailles et combatre en ordenance . . . leur est venu et donné d'une femme. (ed. Richards, 182–4)

(I've now realized the full extent to which those men who attack women have failed to express their gratitude and acknowledgement. . . . Those clerks who slander women . . . really should shut their mouths once and for all . . . they owe a huge debt of thanks to this noble lady Carmentis, for having used her fine mind to . . . endow them with . . . the noble Latin alphabet. . . . But what about all the many noblemen and knights who . . . should hold their tongues, given that all their skills in bearing arms and fighting in organized ranks . . . have come down to them from a woman [trans. Brown-Grant, 72].)

Thus, for Christine, the concept of complementarity did not serve simply to value women in their roles as the affectionate, constant, and morally dependable spouses of men, as her male predecessors in the medieval debate had argued. It was also the means by which she could require men themselves to face up to their responsibilities, reminding them of their social and moral duty to love, protect, and show gratitude to women for their contribution to society. In so doing, Christine was able to adapt the traditional premises of medieval social theory to new ends, using them to strengthen her case for women and to argue that it was in the interests of both social cohesion and natural justice that the estate of women be allotted its rightful, acknowledged, and honored place in the body politic alongside that of men.

CONCLUSION

As a defender of women, Christine de Pizan cannot help but disappoint modern feminists for omitting to make a connection between the moral equality of the sexes and the need for their social, legal, and political parity. Yet it should be borne in mind that the society in which she lived reserved education only for a tiny fraction of even the male population and similarly denied any right of political representation to the vast majority of men. Seen in this context, the failure by profeminine writers such as Christine to demand a political voice for women or equal educational opportunities becomes more understandable. Furthermore, although it was a commonplace of medieval culture that in the next life, differences between men and women—like those between lord and peasant—would become immaterial (Galatians 3:28), in this life inequality between both the sexes and the classes was a necessary and inevitable part of human existence. All members of the body politic had a valuable role to play in maintaining the cohesion of society, but each could play this part only within his or her designated estate. Given that most social theorists of the Middle Ages largely excluded women from their vision of human organization, or at best thought them deserving of only a brief mention,[65] perhaps Christine's most important contribution to the medieval debate on women was that she claimed for the female sex a vital place in the body politic. Whereas marriage sermons and courtesy books declared that women's chief role in society consisted of preserving their chastity and acting with sobriety,[66] Christine argued that because women shared the same rationality and potential for making moral choices as men, their worth was not limited to these qualities alone. Thus, rather than being reviled as the greatest threat to men's well-being and peace of mind, as the misogynist and misogamous traditions would have it, women, as the necessary complement to men, should be valued as their greatest asset in every aspect of their lives.[67]

NOTES

1. See, for example, Rose Rigaud, *Les Idées féministes de Christine de Pizan* (Neuchâtel: Attinger, 1911; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973); Blanche Hinman Dow, *The Varying Attitude toward Women in French Literature of the Fifteenth Century: The Opening Years* (New York: Publications of the Institute of French Studies, 1936); Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," in *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirschner and Suzanne Wemple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 337–64; Sheila Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 74–87 and 88–103; and Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des dames* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
2. See Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). See also Alcuin Blamires et al., eds., *Woman Defamed and*

Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

3. Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Comment les théologiens et les philosophes voient la femme," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 20 (1977): 105–29; and Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Rôle of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).
4. Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 8–27.
5. Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: Misogamous Literature from Juvenal to Chaucer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
6. Cited in Blamires, *Woman Defamed*, 39–41.
7. *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. John Warrington (London: Dent, 1956), 325. See also Vern L. Bullough, "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," *Viator* 4 (1973): 485–501; and Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
8. Cited in Blamires, *Woman Defamed*, 41–2.
9. For examples of works in this genre, see *Three Medieval Views of Women: La Contenance des Fames, Le Bien des Fames, Le Blasme des Fames*, trans. and ed. Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
10. R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny: Woman as Riot," *Representations* 20 (1987): 1–24.
11. Paul Meyer, "Mélanges de poésie française, IV: Plaidoyer en faveur des femmes," *Romania* 6 (1877): 499–503; and "Les Manuscrits français de Cambridge, ii: Bibliothèque de l'Université," *Romania* 15 (1886): 236–357.
12. Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum* 61.3 (1986): 517–43. See also S. H. Rigby, *Chaucer in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 155–60.
13. Blamires, *The Case for Women*.
14. Blamires, especially Chapter 8 on Abelard and pp. 33–6 on Deschamps.
15. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's "Epistre au dieu d'Amours" and "Dit de la Rose," Thomas Hoccleve's "The Letter of Cupid," with George Sewell's "The Proclamation of Cupid,"* ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 54–55, ll.417–18. Text hereafter referred to as the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours*.
16. See Christine de Pisan, Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier et Pierre Col, *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Eric Hicks, Bibliothèque du XV^e^ Siècle, 43 (Paris: Champion, 1977). Text hereafter referred to as the "Querelle." See also *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents*, ed. and trans. Joseph L. Baird and John R. Kane, University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 199 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1978).

17. Earl Jeffrey Richards, "In Search of a Feminist Patrology: Christine de Pizan and 'les Glorieux Dotteurs,' " in *Une femme de lettres au Moyen Age: Etudes autour de Christine de Pizan*, ed. Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont, Etudes christiniennes (Orléans: Paradigme: 1995), 281–95; and "Rejecting Essentialism and Gendered Writing: The Case of Christine de Pizan," in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 96–131.
18. *Le livre de l'advision Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac, Etudes christiniennes, 4 (Paris: Champion, 2001), hereafter referred to as the *Advision*. All translations of this work are mine, unless otherwise stated.
19. For a fuller discussion of this issue of accident versus essence, see Rosalind Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading beyond Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120–22.
20. *La Città delle Dame*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards and trans. Patrizia Caraffi (Milan, Trento: Luni Editrice, 1998), 2nd ed.; text hereafter referred to as the *Cité des dames*.
21. Lori J. Walters, "La ré-écriture de Saint Augustin par Christine de Pizan: de *La Cité de Dieu* à la *Cité des dames*," in *Au champ des escriptures: III^e^ Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, Lausanne, 18–22 juillet 1998*, ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez, and Philippe Simon, Etudes christiniennes, 6 (Paris: Champion, 2000), 197–215; and Thelma S. Fenster, "Possible Odds: Christine de Pizan and the Paradox of Woman," in *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the Fourth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan (Glasgow 21–27 July 2000)*, 3 vols., ed. Angus J. Kennedy in collaboration with Rosalind Brown-Grant, James C. Laidlaw, and Catherine Müller (Glasgow: University Press, 2002), 355–66.
22. *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 22–3.
23. *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks, Bibliothèque du XV^e^ siècle, 50 (Paris: Champion, 1989); hereafter referred to as the *Trois Vertus*.
24. Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, "Le *Livre des Trois Vertus* et le *sermo ad status*," in Dulac and Ribémont, *Une femme de Lettres*, 139–49; and Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan*, 182–92.
25. Richards, "Rejecting essentialism."
26. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, " 'Femme de corps et femme par le sens': Christine de Pizan's Saintly Women," *Romanic Review* 87 (1996): 157–75.
27. Blamires, *The Case for Women*, especially 132–7.
28. See, for example, the interpretation of the Wife of Bath as a literal reader in D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 321–2.
29. Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Christine de Pizan and Sacred History," in *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis, European Cultures, Studies in Literature and the Arts, 2 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1994), 15–30. See also Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 133–7.

30. *Epistre Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999); hereafter referred to as the *Epistre Othea*. All translations of this text are my own.
31. For studies of this text as a political work, see Sandra Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's "Epistre Othéa": Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986); Gabriella Parussa, "Instruire les chevaliers et conseiller les princes: *L'Epistre Othéa* de Christine de Pizan," in *Studi di storia della civiltà letteraria francese, Mélanges offerts à Lionello Sozzi par le Centre d'études franco-italiennes, Universités de Savoie et de Turin*, vol. 1, Bibliothèque Franco Simone, XXV (Paris: Champion, 1996), 129–55; and Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Miroir du prince, miroir d'amour: *L'Epistre Othéa* and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," in *Sur le chemin de longue étude . . . Actes du colloque d'Orléans Juillet 1995*, ed. Bernard Ribémont, Etudes christiniennes, 3 (Paris: Champion, 1998), 25–44.
32. Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan*. 78–87.
33. Ibid., 89–127. See also Roberta Krueger, "Christine's Anxious Lessons: Gender, Morality and the Social Order from the *Enseignemens* to the *Avision*," in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilynn Desmond, Medieval Cultures, vol. 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 16–40.
34. Christine M. Reno, "The Preface to the *Avision-Christine* in ex-Phillipps 128," in *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards et al. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 207–27, 213.
35. Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan*, 89–127.
36. Jacques Krynen, *Idéal du prince et pouvoir royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Picard, 1981), 118.
37. See Glenda McLeod and Katharina Wilson, "A Clerk in Name Only—a Clerk in All But Name: The Misogamous Tradition and *La Cité des dames*," in Zimmermann and De Rentiis, *The City of Scholars*, 67–76.
38. Kevin Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the *Rose*," *Romanic Review* 59 (1988): 199–221.
39. See many of the articles in Earl Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Christine de Pizan and Medieval French Lyric* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998).
40. *Le livre du duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995); hereafter referred to as the *Duc des vrais amans*.
41. *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*, ed. Jacqueline Cerquiglini (Paris: Union Générale d'Edition, 1982).
42. Charity Cannon Willard, "Lovers' Dialogues in Christine de Pizan's Lyric Poetry from the *Cent ballades* to the *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 4 (1981): 167–80; and Liliane Dulac, "Dissymétrie et échec de la communication dans les *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame* de Christine de Pizan," *Lengas* 22 (1987): 133–46.
43. Barbara K. Altmann, "Last Words: Reflections on a 'Lay Mortel' and the Poetics of Lyric Sequences," in Richards, *Christine de Pizan and Medieval French Lyric*, 83–102.
44. Charity Cannon Willard, "Christine de Pizan's *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*: Criticism of Courtly Love," in *Court and Poet. Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress on the International Courtly Literature Society, Liverpool, 1980*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981), 357–64.
45. Allison Kelly, "Christine de Pizan and Antoine de la Sale: The Dangers of Love in Theory and Fiction," in Richards et al., *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, 173–86. See also Roberta L. Krueger, "A Woman's Response: Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre du Duc des vrais amans* and the Limits of Romance," in her *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217–46.
46. Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan*, 193–206; and M. Bella Mirabella, "Feminist Self-fashioning: Christine de Pizan and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 6.1 (1999): 9–20.
47. Eric Hicks, "Discours de la toilette, toilette du discours: de l'idéologie du vêtement dans quelques écrits didactiques de Christine de Pizan," *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92.2 (1988): 327–42; and Roberta L. Krueger, "*Chascune selon son estat*: Women's Education and Social Class in the Conduct Books of Christine de Pizan and Anne de France," *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 24 (1997): 19–34.
48. *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).
49. Thelma Fenster, "La fama, la femme, et la Dame de la Tour: Christine de Pizan et la médisance," in Hicks et al., *Au champ dès escriptures*, 461–77.
50. June Hall McCash, "Mutual Love as a Medieval Ideal," in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context. Selected Papers from the Fifth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Dalfsen, The Netherlands, 9–16 August, 1986*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 429–38.
51. Blamires, *The Case for Women*, 101.
52. S. H. Rigby, "Literature and social ideology," in *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. S. H. Rigby (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 497–520.
53. Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
54. This concept is derived from Aristotle's *Economics*: see Aristotle, *Oeconomica*, trans. E. S. Forster, in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), revised edition, Book I, 3.
55. Constance Jordan, "Boccaccio's In-famous Women: Gender and Civic Virtue in the *De Claris Mulieribus*," in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 25–47; and McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*, 59–80.
56. Charity Cannon Willard, "Women and Marriage around 1400: Three Views," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 17 (1990): 475–84.
57. For these traditional arguments used in women's defense, see Blamires, *The Case for Women*, Ch. 3.
58. On Mary, see *Epistre au dieu d'Amours*, ll.571–90, and *Cité des dames*, II.30; and on women in general, see *Cité des dames*, I.39.
59. For studies of legalistic aspects of Christine's work, see Charity Cannon Willard, "A New Look at Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au dieu d'Amours*," in *Seconda Miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul Quattrocento francese*, ed. Jonathan Beck and

Gianni Mombello (Chambéry: Centre d'études franco-italien, 1981), 71–92; Maureen Cheney Curnow, " 'La pioche d'inquisicion': Legal-Judicial Content and Style in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*," in Richards, *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, 157–72; and Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 151–75.

60. Cary J. Nederman, "The Expanding Body Politic: Christine de Pizan and the Medieval Roots of Political Economy," in Hicks et al., *Au champ des escriptures*, 383–97.
61. *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy, Etudes christiniennes, 1 (Paris: Champion, 1998).
62. On Christine's social and political theory, see Gianni Mombello, "Quelques aspects de la pensée politique de Christine de Pizan d'après ses oeuvres publiées," in *Culture et politique en France à l'époque de l'humanisme et de la Renaissance*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale promosso dall'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino in collaborazione con la Fondazione Giorgio Cini di Venezia, 29 Marzo–3 Aprile, 1971 (Turin: Accademia delle Scienze, 1974), 43–153; and Kate Langdon Forhan, "Polycracy, Obligation, and Revolt: The Body Politic in John of Salisbury and Christine de Pizan," in *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 33–52.
63. Kate Langdon Forhan, ed. and trans., *The Book of the Body Politic*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
64. Andrew Galloway, "The Making of a Social Ethic in Late-Medieval England: From *gratitudo* to 'Kyndenesse,' " *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55.3 (1994): 365–83.
65. See, for example, Jacques Legrand: *Archiloge Sophie*, *Livre des Bonnes Meurs*, ed. Evencio Beltran, Bibliothèque du XV^e^ siècle, 49 (Paris: Champion, 1986).
66. See D. L. d'Avray and M. Tausche, "Marriage Sermons in *ad status* Collections of the Central Middle Ages," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 47 (1980): 71–119; Alice A. Henstch, *De la littérature didactique du moyen âge s'adressant spécialement aux femmes* (Cahors: A. Coueslant, 1903; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975); Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); and Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1983).
67. I would like to thank Thelma Fenster and S. H. Rigby for kindly making their work available to me prior to publication and to express once again my gratitude to S. H. Rigby for his invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. I am also grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for funding the period of study leave in which this chapter was prepared.

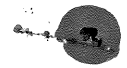
7

Christine's Treasure

Women's Honor and Household Economies in the *Livre des trois vertus*

Roberta L. Krueger

Critics have long acknowledged that the *Livre des trois vertus* occupies a distinct place both within Christine de Pizan's corpus and within late medieval didactic literature.[1] A companion volume to the *Cité des dames*, the book of advice that Christine dedicated in 1405 to the young Margaret of Burgundy is more practical and more direct than the *Cité des dames*. As she advises contemporary women on how to maintain virtue and honor in their own communities, Christine addresses matters of "real" life in compelling detail and uses historical exempla sparingly. Unique among Christine's works and among late medieval conduct books, the *Trois vertus* is addressed specifically to women of all ranks. It is one of the rare female-authored books of conduct from the Middle Ages, the only medieval female-authored treatise for women in French.[2] Filtering her voice through various allegorical figures or speaking directly, Christine tailors her voice, tone, and precepts for each class, as in *ad status* sermons.[3] The book's intricate layering of embedded voices highlights the skillful use of female speech, which is one of the overarching concerns of the book.[4] Compared to near-contemporary male-authored didactic texts for women such as the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* or the *Menagier de Paris*,[5] Christine spends less time extolling chastity or obedience to one's husband, and her interactive approach is less threatening; it appeals to women's reasoning and eschews frightening punitive exempla. Christine pays far more attention to women's proactive roles in enhancing their social reputations through moral behavior and good works and fosters what Rosalind Brown-Grant has called a "politics of visibility."[6] The book's varied narrative voices, its often personal tone, the diversity of its advice—on piety, social and marital relations, dress, children's education, household management, domestic and civic duties—and its broad audience—



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A CASEBOOK

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