Chapter Two

A Case of Faulx Semblans:
L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours
and *The Letter of Cupid*

Christine de Pizan has long been recognized as one of the most important defenders of women's honor in medieval literature. She first addressed the problem of literary misogyny in 1399 in a long poem entitled *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* (*The Letter from the God of Love*). A detailed, satirical, humorous work, possibly written for recitation at court, this poem introduced many arguments that Christine later developed in *Livre de la Cité des Dames* (*Book of the City of Ladies*). It is also one of the few medieval satires that we have from the pen of a woman. While its humor, if not its importance, have often eluded modern commentators,[1] it found many readers among its contemporaries. Even if it did not inspire the fourteenth-century *Querelle de la Rose* as some scholars now propose,[2] it provoked imitation and response. Three years after Christine wrote the original, Thomas Hoccleve translated it into English as the *Letter of Cupid*, until recently the only English translation in existence.[3] It is still one of the few recorded responses by a male contemporary to Christine's defense of women. While the *Letter of Cupid* holds few attractions as a poem, it does provide a rare glimpse into how an educated clerk received Christine's ideas. Its importance as a document of cultural if not literary history is considerable.

In the past, three commentators addressed this reception. Each reached a different conclusion. Jerome Mitchell found the *Letter of Cupid* faithful; Diane Bornstein argued that it was a parody; John Fleming claimed

it commented on the *Querelle de la Rose*.[4] In one respect, however, the commentators were united: they paid scant attention to Christine's original humor, her careful organization, or her attempt to defend women through the topics of *notatio* rather than *effictio* (that is, through character, as medieval and classical rhetoricians recommended, rather than through beauty or fortune).

Because of this inadequate commentary, I would like to reopen the comparison here. In the past, Hoccleve's poem has often been judged on whether or not it defends women. I think that it does, and by the standards of former studies is a faithful translation. But these standards are not discriminating enough. The *Letter of Cupid* also reinterprets, refashions, and rethinks *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*. Indeed, Hoccleve's work is a refraction of Christine's, in the etymological sense of a translation that weakens and breaks the target text to pieces. It does not subvert, but it does redefine the basis of defense,[5] remaking an assertion of women's worth into a conventional defense of women's chastity, possibly in imitation of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, to which the poet openly refers and which his poem often imitates.[6] To see this difference is to detect a profound separation in the poems' *intentiones* and *causae finalis*. With this separation in mind, I believe that a new comparison can profitably enhance our understanding of Christine's arguments and their reception. My comments will address Hoccleve's deletions, additions, and alterations, as well as changes in the poem's organization, which have often been inadequately explored.

With the exception of Diane Bornstein, past commentators generally minimized the changes that Hoccleve made by omitting and rearranging Christine's arguments.[7] Yet in making his translation, he deleted roughly half the original poem. As John Fleming noted, the English poet took Christine's work apart as though it were "so many building blocks" and then put the sections back together "without paying much attention to their original positions" (23). Fleming felt that very few of Christine's points were lost; in fact, they were. Not only did Hoccleve simply drop some passages, but by obliterating the original order, he changed what remained. As Judson Allen recently noted in his study of medieval poetics, *Ethical Poetic of the Latter Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction*, a medieval text was

not haphazardly structured. Its outline or *forma tractatus* often implied an argument even if the presentation itself was not strictly syllogistic in form.[8] Indeed, the *forma tractatus* commanded much of the attention given a text in the *accessus ad auctores*, for deciphering it was believed to lead to the author's intentions.

In *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, structure is important and carefully crafted. Christine begins with a dissuasive argument against misogyny; she closes with a persuasive argument for women's worth. Her *captatio benevolentiae* draws its power from two of the four traditional loci of appeal—the speaker's good character and his opponents' malice. Such an approach was recommended by Cicero's *De inventione*.[9] This essential antithesis also governs the argument of the poem. Thematically, the contrast ranges beyond calling misogynists liars and women innocent victims. Misogyny is a sin that springs from self-love. It harms society's well-being and perverts the liar's nature. Since lies destroy trust and love, misogyny is both a social crime and a sin against God's providence. In contrast, the victims of misogyny—wives and mothers—render numerous services to society in accordance with woman's nature and place. They are thus pleasing to God and beneficial to the community. By slandering and deceiving women, misogynists attack the earthly and heavenly communities to which they should belong. Misogyny is thus a concern for all.

The subtlety and power of this approach lies in its apparent straightforwardness. Cupid is placing women, not their misogynist detractors, at the center of cultural tradition. Indeed such a displacement is one of Christine's objectives in the poem; it later becomes a recurrent strategy in her other defenses of women's honor. The poem's *forma tractatus* defines this approach by presenting the persuasive and disuasive arguments as mirror images. Where the opening section attacks the wholesale condemnation of women (1-554), the concluding one establishes the virtue of womankind (555-826). The *dissuasio* examines knightly (28-260) then clerical misogyny (261-470)—those who respectively slander women by the written and the spoken word. It ends by equating the two as deceit (471-554). The *persuasio* treats of noble men and women (555-732), closing with an equation of their worth (733-774). Because Cupid recognizes worthy men and concedes the

existence of sinful women, the two worlds are not gender-specific, but they are constructed to contrast. The slanderers belong to the world of *discordia* and self-love; most of their victims belong to the world of *concordia* and selfless service. Roughly parallel treatments sustain the contrast. The knights' and clerks' deceptive use of language is compared to the wholesome language of worthy men and the solid deeds of virtuous women, which speak more eloquently than words. The misogynist use of pagan authorities is also paired with Cupid's use of the gospels to defend women's virtue. These treatments effectively expand misogyny's consequences beyond the feminine community by using cultural traditions to undermine the slanderers' authority.

In pedigree this two-part approach has a venerable past. It comes from St. Augustine's division of history in the *City of God*, the same book which later gave Christine her central metaphor for *Cité des Dames*. The Augustinian subtext is particularly important because in the midst of Christine's playful jabs, it suggests that the nation (here France) which tolerates the misogynist game invites dire consequences. Troy, as Cupid reminds his audience, fell through such dalliance. The comparison is even more striking given Christine's habit of characterizing France as the successor to Rome and Troy. Such overtones serve to sever woman's virtue from its usual sexual context, enabling Christine's narrator to substitute standards of civic service and moral rectitude as truer criteria of judgement. Such an approach is characteristic of Christine both in her concern for her country and in the way this concern is integrated into her defense of women; in fact, she would expand her arguments into a full-blown scheme for women's integration within social and cultural history, an appropriative strategy that accounts for much of her original contribution to the *Querelle des Femmes*.

Yet this new approach is precisely what Hoccleve tries to remove by deleting and rearranging. While his Cupid also reproves both knight and clerk and while he defends one conception of the virtuous woman, he fails to describe virtuous men or to equate male and female virtue. Moreover, in describing the misogynists and their victims, Hoccleve ignores Christine's thematic emphases and parallel developments. Her concerns for the misuse

of language, the knights' and the clerks' dereliction of duty, and their building of false reputation are missing from *Letter of Cupid* and with them the social context of the original defense. From the outset, a considerable narrowing results simply from what is not translated. The whole ethical frame of Christine's *forma tractatus* evaporates with the Augustinian subtext.

What Hoccleve does translate is also changed and narrowed, the most important change being Cupid's accusations. Christine's Cupidio claims that women have accused the slanderers of "traisons...oultrages tres griefs...et faussetez" [treasons...very grevious outrages...and lies].[10] The key words here are the first and last, an emphasis echoed in the slanderers' characterization as "faulx semblans" – "liars." Lying, as Dante's *Inferno* demonstrates, was the most heinous of sins to the medieval mind, one thought to pervert one's reason, God's image in man. Although Hoccleve occasionally characterizes misogynists as liars, his position is neither as consistent nor as emphatic as Christine's. The opening accusation simply cites the misogynists as guilty of "outrage and offense."[11] Throughout the poem he also ignores Christine's polemical and stylistic use of deceit. First and foremost, she highlights deceit to prove that misogyny is a lie. Hoccleve's poem does not share this emphasis. Secondly, by characterizing the misogynists as self-serving liars, Christine's Cupid inverts the conventional stereotype of the guileful, selfish woman,[12] turning the tables on women's detractors by treating them to some of their own medicine. Such inversions do not appear in *Letter of Cupid*, which, as we shall see, is not satiric and relies on a much broader vein of humor. Finally, Christine uses deceit to tie her poem together. Fraud is the common vice of knight and clerk; it is also the central contrast with the virtuous woman. Hoccleve neglects these aspects and with them Christine's numerous figurative descriptions. In *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, misogynists often appear enclosed or encased, sheathed in darkness and disguise. Over the course of the poem, such images subtly convey a fate of imprisonment rather than concealment. Those who plot inside buildings or spur their horses through the narrow, claustrophobic streets of Paris, those who believe that they have "eschapée," (517) are in reality "envelopée" (518).[13] The same entrapment awaits France as it once did Troy, a kingdom "tant so fort" (542) but destroyed by deceitful stratagems, adulterous love, and the most famous

of "empty forms"–the Trojan horse. The whole procession of containment images in fact introduces a second subtext–Dante's *Inferno*. There in the eighth and nineth circle, sinners are covered in increasingly disgusting images of deceit–excrement, holes in the ground, pitch, leaden capes, reptilian form, tongues of fire, the deformities of disease and, finally, the numbing ice of the frozen Cocytus. Christine, herself an Italian and a student of Dante as her other works show, might well have borrowed the technique from here.

Letter of Cupid lacks this dark commentary; it also takes a much less optimistic view of human nature. In Albion, the "croope and roote of gyle" (17) is endemic not alien since a "mannes herte" (36) is naturally hard to know. Although Christine's poem asserts that the sin is basically the punishment, Hoccleve's liars are not affected by their lies. They merely attract the external punishment of a Cupid who corrects capriciously–"if us list" (238). Most important, Hoccleve asserts that the slanderers' sin is inconstancy, a much more limited characterization of deceit and one inextricably linked to the courtly tradition which Christine's poem criticizes. The numerous descriptions of entrapped sinners disappear. In their place, Hoccleve accuses men of abandoning their mistresses. To prove his point, he manufactures representative quotations of the slander, thus threatening the very tone and purpose of Christine's text. Faced with a zesty rendition of feminine wiles, the reader is inclined to forget that Hoccleve is trying to defend women's honor. In fact, precisely this alteration convinced Bornstein that the poem attacks women rather than defends them.

But if *Letter of Cupid* is closely examined, evidence of a pattern quite different from satirical subversion becomes abundantly clear. While Hoccleve's deletions and organizational changes seek to remove the Augustinian subtext of Christine's poem, his additions outline a quite acceptable medieval defense of women's honor. This basis, older than Christianity but enshrined in Church dogma, is chastity. In other words, where Christine's poem attempts to move women beyond the physical plane, Hoccleve's places them squarely within it.

We can appreciate the change if we compare Hoccleve's use of direct address with Christine's sole quotation of misogynist slander. *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* presents the failure of courtly discourse as an excess of self-

love. Knights slander women's reputation in an attempt to establish their own. In support, Cupid quotes a representative example:

> Je sçay bien de tes fais,
> Telle est t'amie et tu le jolis fais,
> Pour sienne amour, mais pluseurs y ont part,
> Tu es receu quant un autre s'en part! (127-30)
>
> (I know all about your deeds,
> Such is your lover; you play the game rather well
> For her love. But several share it;
> You are received when another one leaves!
> – my translation)

The knight's taunt is clear: your naturally demanding lover is too much for you to handle. Similar charges occur in Hoccleve's translation. But in Christine's poem, the slander is less important than its context. Such things are said when knights gather "in the great courts of our lords, the dukes" ["...en ces grans cours de noz seigneurs les ducs" (119)] where they bait each other to new boasts as they lie "by the great fires in the evenings" ["...aux grans feux a ces soirs" (125)]. Their slander is whispered inside, as they crouch half-hidden in the dark. The dukes' courts connect the slander with the highest level of society; the huddled males invert the venerable picture of grouped female gossips. Most important, the atmosphere of gloom relieved only by a flickering fire suggests secrecy and evil, a covert conspiracy that would not stand up to the light of day. Christine's illustrators understood her point; quite possibly she directed them to it since she seems to have overseen production of her manuscripts. M.S. Harley 4431, which contains what may be corrections in Christine's own hand, illuminates precisely this scene. The surroundings, not the slander, make Christine's argument.

In contrast, Hoccleve's translation drops the description and concentrates solely on the slander, which is expanded in coarse innuendoes:

> Thou fisshist faire, shee that hath thee fyrid
> Is fals and inconstant and hath no feith;
> Shee for the rode of folk is so desyrid,
> And as an hors fro day to day is hyrid,
> That whan thow twynnest from hir compaignie,
> An othir comth and blerid is thyn ye. (104-109)

Other passages make similar changes. An opening remark about women's pity references courtly vocabulary while implying a successful seduction that does not occur in Christine's poem. One knight compares the unfaithful lady to a mounted horse who "fro day to day is hyrid" (107), a

bawdy comment that smacks, as Bornstein notes, of the tavern (8). In other passages, Hoccleve describes a successful seducer as a man who has "the pot...by the stele" (50). Christine's *exemplum* of Troy, the city brought low by courtly deceit, is compared not with a nation but a "cely symple and ignorant womman" (78-79) who gives in to her lover's "sleighte and sotiltee" (78). Such changes enlarge the slander and suggest that it has roots in truth. More important, they divert attention from the slanderers themselves, removing Christine's emphasis on social degeneracy. Hoccleve emphasizes the individual sinner rather than his community. Christine's slanderers use their gossip to obtain a false reputation; they pretend "to hide and cover / Those things that it pleases them to say and reveal" ["de celer et couvrir / Ce qu'il lui plaist a dire et descouvrir" (139-40)]. Hoccleve's lie from envy – "Whereof procedth this but of envye / For he himselfe hyre ne wynne may" (113-14). Later in the poem, we see that misogynists do not always lie, for when one of his knights boasts of a successful seduction, the gossip is indiscrete but truthful. In short, the *Letter of Cupid* eroticizes women in precisely the fashion that *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* deplores, even if Hoccleve argues that women, unlike men, are loyal to their physical loves.

Given such alterations, it is not surprising that the two Cupids also differ. Christine's persona is just, open, and reasonable. He rules "without the aid of anyone" ["sanz aide de nullui" (2)] in "the air of the most luminous heaven" ["l'air du ciel trés reluisant" (3)]. He is the son of a powerful goddess ["deese poissant" (4)], and "the lord of love and all its subjects" ["sire d'amours et de tous ses obgiez" (5)]. As the poem progresses, his character furnishes a kind of ethical proof for his arguments. He refuses to stoop to a general condemnation of the clerks and knights. He seeks not merely to punish but to reform. In short, he is associated in every possible way with the Boethian view of love as cosmic force, a kind of medieval gravity binding the universe together. An *exemplum* of *concordia*, he endeavors to unite diverse elements by "nostre imprecion" (304) and by nature (personified as Dame Nature and Cupid's companion). Not a small part of Christine's achievement lies in linking this higher love with the relationship between a man and a woman. That there can be conflict between Boethian love and human love she is willing to concede. That this conflict is natural, she is not. The dignity,

fairness, power, and freedom of Cupid's character, his interest in the civic and moral health of his subjects, are arguments in and of themselves for the women he defends. He establishes that the courtly slanderers of Christine's day have not only lied about women but have mistaken love as well.

Hoccleve's Cupid, however, is traditional and limited.[14] No longer a just arbiter attempting to return his subjects to reason, this God of Love is more interested in exercising his power than in reforming sinners. He is a powerful but fickle deity, who has been moved by the complaints of women only so far as they relate to carnal love.[15] His comments are almost exclusively reproaches, his response to the slander punishment. His concerns lie with woman's erotic role, not social position, and his defense reflects that stance. Hoccleve's Cupid is thus pagan, a king whom both "gentil kynrede of goddes on hy / And peple infernal been obedient" (3-4). Aside from this sovereignty and power, we learn nothing from the opening. As the poem progresses, his association with carnality becomes clearer, both from the broad jokes comparing a woman and a mounted horse and from the different definition he offers of the moral woman. Early in Hoccleve's epistle, Cupid describes the discerning women who deceived Ovid as neither "ladies ne gentils" but "swiche filthes yat wern vertuless" (260). In contrast, Christine's highest *exempla in bono* are Penelope, who is honored for wisdom, and the Virgin Mary, who is celebrated for "savoir." Hoccleve replaces Penelope with references to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which purports to celebrate chaste lovers, and to the virgin martyr St. Margaret, who died defending her chastity. He also strips the Virgin of "savoir," presenting her as a *mediatrix*, man's "best friend" (412) who "mercy may wole and purchace can" (412). Such a treatment resembles, of course, the literary picture of the courtly lady. By the fourteenth century it was a thoroughly familiar characterization of the feminine, but it violates the direction of Christine's poem in the most blatant way.

Hoccleve's treatment of Eve suggests the larger shifts underlying these changes. In *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, Eve bridges the gap between dissuasive and persuasive arguments. Like the women victimized by misogynist lovers, she is deceived by the Devil in Eden but later accused of deception. Because of her usual contrast with the Virgin, she forms a natural

companion for Mary, who introduces Christine's argument for women's worth. In contrast, Hoccleve's treatment can only be described as confused. He ignores Eve's position in Christine's poem and attempts to defend her against charges of disobedience.[16] He thus introduces a parallel to fidelity but compromises his purported use of Eve as an *exemplum in bono*. With no place for Christine's emphasis on deceit, Hoccleve's poem has no way to use Eve. In fact, his treatment suggests that he isn't sure how to introduce her into his work.

In small, then, Eve and Mary signal the important changes that *Letter of Cupid* works. In the dissuasive argument, Hoccleve substitutes inconstancy for deceit; in the persuasive, he praises women's constancy rather than their intelligence and active works. Eve is thus subject to charges of disloyalty; the Virgin is praised for her mercy. The poem still tries to defend women but on much less comprehensive grounds. As I suggested earlier, it is possibly modelled on the *Legend of Good Women*, which was written by Hoccleve's literary mentor, Geoffrey Chaucer, and which is mentioned in *Letter of Cupid* itself. Like *Legend of Good Women*, *Letter of Cupid* begins with the narrator's protest against women who have complained about his writing. Like Chaucer, the narrator also plans to atone for past works by writing of faithful women. Chaucer, however, had made betrayal a metaphor for composition as well as courtly language. Hoccleve does nothing so sophisticated. Consequently, his poem "betrays" both models—Chaucer and Christine. While *Letter of Cupid* is an adequate medieval defense of womankind by the conventional standards of the time, it is neither witty nor inventive. Nor is it subversive.

Taken all in all, it is a less persuasive poem as well. Hoccleve's argument views sin as endemic rather than abnormal, it focuses upon human frailty rather than potential, and it removes connections between male and female virtue. Artistically, the *Letter of Cupid* also lacks any clear unity. The excision of deceit as a coordinating element and the removal of the *concordia/discordia* contrast cripple the work immeasurably. Nor does the focus on inconstancy provide as rich or as consistent a *forma tractatus* as Christine's focus on deceit. At its best, the *Letter of Cupid* offers what one critic mistakenly described Christine's poem as being—an exercise in "anti-

antifeminism" (Fleming 21). Christine's model for womankind is a more positive contribution than that. Building upon existing arguments, she includes women within the major social and cultural traditions of her day. Hoccleve's defense merely uses the older, more limiting equation between virtuous women and chastity.

Clearly, interest in replicating Christine's arguments did not fuel Hoccleve's enterprise. Yet neither was he interested in attacking women. We are left then with a riddle. Why did he choose to translate this text?

While Hoccleve was not a hostile or ironic translator, he does appear to have been a singularly unsubtle one. Whether incapable of understanding or unwilling to accept Christine's defense, he sacrificed a great deal of the original's unity and artfulness to arrive at a constricted and altogether conventional argument. Perhaps he felt that Christine had misused her arguments, that she was excessive in her complaints against the clerks, and that she was grasping for too much in her advocacy of feminine virtue. Perhaps, too, her satiric reversal of misogynistic *topoi* and her accusations against the clerks—Hoccleve's own class—offended him. Most important, Hoccleve seems to have disapproved of a defense of woman on ethical and social grounds. Certainly he failed to incorporate such a strategy in his own defense, nor did he grace it with an explicit rebuttal. Three options might thus explain his decision to translate. He was interested in replicating Christine's poem, but he misunderstood her more playful and subtle effects. He was attracted by the idea of a defense but uneasy with the boldness of Christine's plan. Or perhaps and more pragmatically, he needed money. He often complains of poverty in his writings, and the notoriety of the *Querelle de la Rose* may have made the translation of Christine's work a profitable venture in 1402. One or a combination of all three factors must have influenced his decision to translate.

What is especially intriguing, however, is not that his poem is more traditional but that so few critics have noted its reductiveness. Two theories have suggested motives for the translation; one argues that the *Letter of Cupid* ridicules Christine's literary judgements, the other that it ridicules her feminist ideas. In light of the two texts, these grant the English poet a subtlety that he simply doesn't merit while according Christine too little

recognition. To refuse to acknowledge Hoccleve's refraction of Christine's text – in formal, rhetorical, metaphoric, and thematic patterns – merely repeats his mistake. In this sense, *Letter of Cupid* offers us a salutary warning. Beyond Christine's skill or Hoccleve's traditionalism, a study of the two works reveals the reductive reading that has too long been the lot of France's first professional writer. It is an heritage that must be discontinued if the latest discovery of her texts is to be her last.

Glenda K. McLeod
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Notes

1. This paper was first given at the Southeastern Medieval Association Conference at the University of Georgia (October 1986). Commentaries on *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* can be found in Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Susanne Wemple and Julius Kirstina (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 337-364; Enid McLeod, *The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pizan* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976); Régine Pernoud, *Christine de Pisan* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1982); Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pisan 1364-1430: Etude biographique et littéraire* (1926 rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1971); Lula Richardson, *The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929); Rose Rigaud, *Les idées féministes de Christine de Pizan* (1911, rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973); Martha Waller, "Christine de Pisan's 'Epistle of the God of Love' and the Medieval Image of Woman," *Christianity and Literature* 27 (1978): 41-52; and Charity C. Willard, "A New Look at Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours,'" in *Seconda Miscellanea di Studi e Ricerche sul Quattrocento Francesce* (Chambéry-Torino: Centre d'Etudes Franco-Italien, 1981), 71-92. In addition, a new English translation with critical introduction and with Hoccleve's translation is now available in *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours and Dit de la Rose with Thomas Hoccleve's Letter of Cupide*, transl. Thelma Fenster (Leiden Brill, 1990).

2. E. Hicks in *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose* (Paris: Champion, 1977) dismisses the idea that *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* began the famous debate.

3. A new translation by Fenster has now been published. I had not seen this work at the time of this article.

4. See Diane Bornstein, "Anti-Feminism in Thomas Hoccleve's Translation of Christine de Pizan's 'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours,'" *English Language Notes* 18 (1981): 7-14; John Fleming, "Hoccleve's 'Letter to Cupid' and the Quarrel Over the 'Roman de la Rose,'" *Medium Aevum* 40 (1970): 21-40; Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Fifteenth Century Poetics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968). Derek Pearsall in *Chaucer and Chaucerians* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1966) also notes that Hoccleve manages to "laugh at women" in the poem (225). As Bornstein points out, however, he does not enlarge upon his comment.

5. See Bornstein for an argument that Hoccleve does subvert the text.

6. Hoccleve refers to the *Legend of Martyrs* in his poem, a reference which W. Skeat identified as Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* in his article "Hoccleve's Letter of Cupide," *The Academy* 32 (1887): 253. Chaucer, of course, was Hoccleve's acknowledged master. In his article, Fleming argues that the reference to Chaucer's poem strengthens his case that Hoccleve was responding to Christine's part in the debate over the *Roman de la Rose*.

7. See Fleming and Mitchell. Bornstein refutes the idea that the translation is faithful.

8. Judson Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Latter Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 123.

9. Cicero's *De Inventione* was a central rhetoric text in the Middle Ages and one in use in Italian universities where Christine's teacher and father had studied. According to James Murphy in *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), this text was not in regular use for rhetoric courses in northern schools such as the Sorbonne.

10. Christine de Pisan, *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* in *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pizan*, ed. Maurice Roy, Vol. 2 of 3 vols. (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1965), v. 19-20. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

11. Thomas Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid* in *Thomas Hoccleve: The Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick Furnival (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1925), v. 12. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

12. Christine's characterizations of the knights in lines 35-61 are full of such inversions. These young blades are very like the women depicted in misogynist tracts. They are vain, frivolous, lustful, deceitful, and overly given to dress and pleasures of the flesh. They also hang around churches in hopes of a sexual conquest. Such descriptions amusingly turn the table on generations of misogynist writers.

13. This internalization of justice is akin to Dante's conception of the sinner's punishment in the *Inferno*. Christine knew Dante's poem; she refers to it in other works, such as *Avision-Christine*.

14. For other interesting comments on the change in Cupid's character, see Bornstein and Fleming, both of whom detect a change. Kevin Brownlee in his excellent article "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the 'Rose,'" *Romanic Review* 79(1988): 199-221 suggests that Christine's Cupid is an intentional rewrite of the Cupid of Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose*.

15. Fleming sees this change as Hoccleve's correction of Christine's faulty allegory. Cupid, he argues, should be carnal. If Hoccleve is responding in this fashion, I believe that he is missing one of the poem's primary points, that is that men must stop thinking of women and women's love as entirely carnal objects. Christine's redefinition of Cupid (and the love of women) is of a piece with other redefinitions of women's nature in her epistle and should be seen in that light. See also Brownlee, who argues that Christine's Cupid is an intentional revision of Jean de Meung's.

16. Bornstein also argues that placing Eve right before the praise of women is "a strategic juxtaposition that detracts from the praise" (12).

Chapter Three

Christine de Pizan's *Book of War*

I. The Wedding Gift

A manual on warfare may seem an inappropriate wedding present. Yet that is how Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre des Fais d'Armes et de Chevalerie* (The Book of the Feats of War and Chivalry) first came to England. When Margaret of Anjou and the English king Henry VI were married, John Talbot, the first Earl of Shrewsbury, gave the royal couple a handsome manuscript collection. It included tales of such heroes as Ogier the Dane, Guy of Warwick, and Alexander the Great; a summary of the rules governing the Order of the Garter; and several works on the conduct of warfare. Among these was Christine de Pizan's work explaining how a king could win battles by fighting ethically and effectively.

Actually the manuscript was a splendid present. Before William Caxton introduced printing to England, an illustrated vellum manuscript was sumptuous – quite literally, a gift fit for a king and for his queen. The works in this particular manuscript testify to the importance of chivalric matters; implicitly the collection presumes that Margaret and Henry share an interest in nobly heroic conduct. Miniatures in the manuscript underscore the importance of that subject and of royal identity.[1] In one, for example, a border of stylized flowers surrounds a castle. Within the castle, a group of courtiers stand on the left of the page, gazing in admiration as Talbot kneels holding up the manuscript. At his feet stands a small dog, a double symbol both of his family (for it is a Talbot dog) and of loyalty. Above the Earl, King

THE RECEPTION OF CHRISTINE DE PIZAN FROM THE FIFTEENTH THROUGH THE NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Visitors to the City

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