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THE PORTRAIT OF THE WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF
CHRISTINE DE PISAN.

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THE PORTRAIT OF THE WOMAN
IN THE WORKS OF CHRISTINE DE PISAN

by

HELEN RUTH PINKEL

A THESIS SUBMITTED
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Christine de Pisan, who lived in the late Middle Ages, was one of the first writers who wished to give women a fair and public trial. She found the masculine position of her time concerning women illogical and unacceptable. Men refused to admit women's capabilities and at the same time refused to recognize that the inferiority they reproached was their own creation. This intransigence was maintained, Christine contended, in order that men might maintain a moral and intellectual superiority over women for their personal advantage. Christine became concerned for the cause of women, and during her literary career, a period of 35 years, in nearly every one of her numerous works, she was to defend women and to redefine the feminine image.

The term "cause," however, is to be understood in the social context of the time. Christine did not suggest a restructuring of the social pattern or wish that women intrude upon men's privileges. She accepted the principle of subordination of the wife to the husband in the interests of order and harmony. Believing, however, that neither integrity, nor intellect, neither achievement, nor happiness was restricted to the male, Christine wished her reader to see this truth. She asked that men not suppress their rational and humane impulses and that they realize that man and woman, as equal beings,
together—face—human—destiny. She further believed that the differences between them had been made by God in order to bind them more closely, and hoped their warfare might end and women be treated fairly. Believing as well that human fallibility might exist in either sex and that women were susceptible to temptations of vanity, revenge and passive acquiescence, Christine asked women to live responsibly so they might deserve and win the respect of society and obtain some happiness; in this way women would not debase but would raise the quality of life. The "cause" that Christine undertook on behalf of women consisted therefore in defending women against injury to their happiness and degradation of their character and in guiding them toward a better appreciation of their own value and of the possibilities of their role in life--the possibilities open to them in the fifteenth century and after, for she intended her work to be of enduring applicability.

If Christine defined a problem concerning women, it was because changes in society had taken place at the time she lived which affected women's position and because she herself had a life experience which caused her to be a sensitive observer. The late Middle Ages was a critical moment in history--one of conflict, misery and transition. The features of modern life were already apparent, bringing a fluidity into society and its ideas and creating an acquisitive and unsettled spirit. The new society in some areas did
benefit women; with the passing of the feudal system, however, women's area of importance was beginning to be narrowed and many women were less at ease in the world, their paths encumbered by discrimination and scorn. Although Christine's keen moral awareness was the result of several factors—and such an awareness can never be fully explained—it can be readily assumed from her work that her personal unhappiness and her experiences as she confronted her environment trained her eye and enlightened her understanding. As she observed the situation of women, she was struck both by the inconsistency between man's need of woman and his ill treatment of her and by the incongruity between the real women she knew or knew of and the denigrating portrait of women uppermost in the minds of men. When Christine assumed the task of defending women, she could not of course escape from her own presuppositions; however, since this was unexplored territory—for women's feelings, their positive qualities and contributions had not yet become an important subject of literature—her feminine point of view had the significance of new perception and heightened among her contemporaries a new awareness of the personality and problems of women.

In taking up their defense, Christine describes how women are wronged in the various phases of their existence. She shows how it is the man who devises the conventions and determines the course of the love affair; the woman, who is guileless, is seduced by the man and lets herself be bewitched by love, creating an illusion which
eventually wrecks her heart. In married or single life, Christine portrays the moral and physical violence to which the woman is exposed, suggesting that the more defenseless she is, the more she may be abused. She shows that under war conditions, where lawlessness is unchecked, man's inhumanity to man may be exercised on women. Central in her criticism is the maligning of women by slander or by the unfavorable characterization written by male authors. She vehemently condemned such characterization not simply because of the basic human need to be considered as an individual but also, since men controlled the areas of communication, because the uncomplimentary views were passed on, and men consequently continued to view women with an inaccurate perception; ill treatment of them was thereby condoned causing women's personalities to be altered. Because Christine believed that the human being was capable of enlightened reason and compassion, she apportioned blame to men in describing the wrongs done to women. To change attitudes, however, Christine sought to convince her public that a more humane attitude was more reasonable, for man's abuse of authority demeaned him and depressed the potential of the woman for helping him or enriching his life.

If Christine seemed to exaggerate the seriousness of some issues, and if the divisions between men and women seem to be more profound than they actually were, it is because she wished to awaken an awareness to these issues and to the woman's point of view, and this had not been done before. Christine was not writing moral
abstractions. For example, the habit of slandering which she continually denounced, caused a woman to be disgraced, and a disgraced woman knew a life of wretchedness. Nor are they moral abstractions today. If her critical comments on certain behavior seem clichés to us, this behavior retains its potency for evil. All the fine invisible lines in human relationships which Christine suggested remain: the point at which natural curiosity becomes intrusion upon the privacy of the individual or at which the expression of opinions breeds hostility and divides people, the moment when power ceases to be used beneficially and instincts of aggression are turned loose on the defenseless, or when play between man and woman becomes an experience in which treachery and cruelty may have their place.

In order for men to abandon their attitude of arrogance toward women and for women to realize their value, Christine continued her defense of women by exploring their capabilities. She knew that she could not place the burden of proof upon contemporary women, since the privileged positions of the society devolved upon men, and women were left strangers to ideas. She, therefore, found her source for an appreciation of women's qualities in antiquity and in the recent past of the high Middle Ages. Basic to her argument was that woman, created in the image of God, was endowed with a moral sense and reasoning power. To prove that women had fulfilled the promise of goodness in their nature, Christine presented illustrations of generous and loving women who have remained loyal to their commitments and of
intellectually and spiritually gifted women whose accomplishments have contributed to the cultural heritage. Whenever possible, Christine confirmed her observations with reference to women in her society whose good qualities had passed unnoticed. Christine's defense also includes her own imaginative portrayal of women who all possess physical grace and spiritual beauty. Designed to show the reader that the personal happiness of man is dependent upon woman's love and intelligence and that growth of civilization has been due to both their gifts and their mutual efforts to raise themselves in dignity, Christine's defense of women represents a challenge to men in which she asked that they reconsider their attitudes and behavior toward women.

Christine also challenged women to increase their effectiveness. She knew that a woman had no way of escaping from her role in life. Furthermore, in her day social convention would not permit a woman a romantic adventure outside of wedlock. Christine therefore established rules of guidance to help women live within the imperfect as perfectly as possible. The stories of illustrious women were not intended to be consoling myths to compensate for women's inferiority or to flatter pride; rather, by inspiring in women a feeling of solidarity, they were to give them a new confidence and an incentive to improve. If women followed the moral code, they would command respect. In this way, they would better fulfill their capabilities and make a greater contribution to society. She pointed out possible
dangers in their particular situations and confronted them with the consequences of surrendering to temptations.

Knowing, however, that moral consciousness cannot equal the powerful sense of the self, Christine enunciated the principle that morality and self-interest coincide. Her message to women exemplified the idea that righteous conduct would be most useful and would bring the desirable feeling of contentment. Although the opportunities for women to participate actively in the life of the community had begun to diminish, Christine nevertheless wished to convey to women an appreciation and a sense of importance of their role in society and to show them that whatever role they occupied gave scope for choice and personal qualities. Christine had strong religious feelings, but at the same time she gave particular significance to worldly life; her thinking was in advance of her nation's in her emphasis on family and civic responsibility. She therefore reasoned that if women could strive for high standards, they could best serve themselves and the community where all members interact; evil acts would compound themselves, but goodness, too, she believed, would build upon itself. Again, if Christine's preoccupations seem familiar to contemporary readers, it is to be remembered that although much didactic literature was addressed to women during the Middle Ages, Christine was perhaps the first woman to address women and to write from what she considered to be their viewpoint.

What shines through consistently in Christine's writings is
her dedication to the ideals of brotherhood and justice and her passionate belief in what she taught. The direct social effect—whether or not through her writing she was able to alter views or to guide—is irrelevant. Christine's influence was that of a committed and honorable woman, and such an influence is always intangible. Although she may be studied from different points of view, her essential contribution to the cause of women remains similar to that of the countless humanists who, through their insights, have opened up new areas of human relations into which the principles of humanity and justice have been extended.

.....

Numerous manuscripts of Christine's works were executed both in her lifetime and during the fifteenth century. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a few of her works were printed, in English translation as well as in French. However, critical editions did not appear until the latter part of the nineteenth century, and only in the near future will the editing of all her extant works be completed. Christine always received attention from literary critics; however, due to the insufficient number of available texts, she has not been studied extensively. The reference books that do exist are mainly discussions of her life and works. A small number of studies have been made, however, of her ideas concerning women. This present study
has nevertheless been undertaken because the previous studies which date from the first quarter of the twentieth century have been based on a limited number of her works and her ideas have therefore not received as comprehensive treatment as they deserve. Moreover, in view of the new knowledge offered by the social sciences during the course of this century, new light can be brought to the subject which is actually an open-ended one since the institution of the family and ideas concerning the family and woman's role in society are constantly evolving and today, at an accelerated pace.
CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN IN MEDIEVAL LIFE AND THOUGHT

Because the major forces behind action and thought are invisible, unrecorded in history—homelife, love, personal encounter—the vital importance of the woman in any period of history can generally only be inferred. Nevertheless, in the critical epoch of the Middle Ages, the solutions adopted for the organization of life, while shaping society, attested to the important role of woman in life and thought. Women ruled huge territories, fought for their family domains, and played in important role in the economic life. In the conflicts of the age woman's importance was manifest. There was a polar conception of her nature: the wickedness of the woman was opposed to the blessedness she could bestow. Virginity was extolled while matrimony was raised to an unparalleled height in spiritual and social thought.

The ambiguity of woman's position is explained in part by the widening gulf between feudal theory and practice. Medieval society was strongly patriarchal. The woman was always in the tutelage of a male, and her natural vocation was considered to be marriage and the family. Since the holding of land involved military duties, feudal organization generally excluded a woman from inheriting a fief and discharging feudal obligations. In the absence of a strong central
government, the landholders were the ruling class, and warfare, justice, administration, and learning were men's prerogatives and responsibilities. To these rights were added those of ritual in conformity with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Feudal law varied according to region and even from fief to fief. However, the succession to property usually followed the male line, the child took the paternal name, and the quality of nobility was in most cases passed on from father to son. The law did not formally exclude a daughter from inheriting property in the absence of surviving sons, but in the event that property was bequeathed to her, her position was considered anomalous; immediate marriage or remarriage was demanded. If she was a minor she was placed in the custody of a guardian who assumed her feudal duties.

A wife was chosen for the importance of her marriage dowry, her family's influence and her ability to bear her husband sons. Since matrimonial agreements were political, betrothals were often made when the heirs were in infancy; as a consequence repudiations were not uncommon. In the household the husband had nearly absolute authority over the wife. It was stipulated by law that he could beat her provided he did not injure her.\(^2\) Harsh penalties were inflicted on her for infidelity or disobedience. Her legal status reflected her subordinate role, and it was always the husband who administered their joint holdings and represented them before the law.
It might be inferred from the foregoing that women were but chattels; however, although in theory woman's role was minimal, the practical needs of feudal life actually permitted the woman to occupy a role of importance.

Because of the necessity of preserving the dynasty, in three particular instances there was a departure from feudal theory, and a noblewoman was given the possibility to attain a position of political dominance. The first instance was in the event of the absence or insanity of her husband. As mobility was a distinctive feature of the noble's existence, many circumstances arose which caused nobles to leave their estates: military service, private warfare, convocations at the lord's court, political missions, pilgrimages, the crusades, wanderlust. During these absences, women planned military operations, raised and commanded troops, negotiated treaties, performed rights of homage, and assumed the managerial functions of the manor. A second departure from feudal theory was the fact that the dower, a life interest of one-half of the husband's holdings, was usually accorded to the widow, for it qualified her to exercise full dominion over her territory. If a widow had a son who had not yet come of age, it was she who was designated most frequently as his guardian and thereby given the responsibility for administering the fief, a third reversal of feudal theory.

Two further opportunities also enabled the high-born woman to wield great power. The first was in religious life, for an abbess or
prioress in her capacity of holder of a benefice, was invested with the same functions as the male lord of a fief. The second, and the more exceptional, is seen in the position of the queen. The Capetians, in their continual effort to reestablish their actual sovereignty used all available resources to enhance it, and one tactic was to emphasize the dignity of the queen. In every branch of government, the queen was given freedom to exert a direct influence and take independent action. Although only noblewomen exercised political leadership, women of all classes shared in economic life. The household was an economic unit where each member contributed his or her share. Trades and crafts were open to townswomen who in many cases could become masters. A married woman usually participated in her husband's workshop and, if widowed, could then retain ownership. Peasant women worked in the fields alongside men; their tasks—following the rhythm of the seasons—were divided according to the physical labor involved.

For women who could not or would not marry, economic emancipation was provided by the nunnery. Theoretically open to all, it was actually a selective institution for girls from noble families since dowries were required for admittance. For those who did enter willingly and did not consider the religious life a deprived state, the convent afforded an opportunity to many to meet spiritual needs, develop talents and to enjoy security and respect. Outside the nunnery the work community in urban and rural areas often absorbed
the unmarried women of non-noble families.

Woman's growing prominence during the height of the feudal system is evidenced in the aristocratic social life. As mistress of the castle, the woman shared with her husband whatever status he enjoyed in society and commanded as much honor and respect as he. At the time when leisure and comfort were introduced into the home and servants and travelers increased in number, noblewomen were especially visible in performing the functions of hospitality and joining the company in the hunt and games.

At the same time there existed separate worlds for men and women—the autonomous masculine world with its codes and rites and the woman's sphere in the home. Although society had not yet given a sentimental value to the woman in her maternal role, within her segregated sphere she had the responsibility for bringing up her children in their early years and, if she was a noblewoman, other young children from neighboring households were entrusted to her care. Women in all social strata continued to be responsible for their daughters' education which, as in most cultures, was carried on informally at home. Corresponding to the needs of society, it was vocational in character, but it included a minimal religious instruction and basic reading skills. Although literacy was increasing, the level of education in the general population was minimal. There were, however, aristocratic women of literary standing, and especially in religious life a few women attained intellectual distinction.
Feudal conditions imposed a way of life that ultimately enhanced the position of the woman. Paradoxically, the role women played in their resistance to feudal conditions and ideas is a further indication of their significance. The appeal of the Albigensian heresy in the South was related to the belief in equality of the sexes which would permit women access to all sacerdotal functions. Feminine voices of protest joined those in spiritual communities, and women were among the leading participants in the insurrection against Northern crusaders. Another popular religious movement originating in the North, sprang from the unfulfilled social needs of women. The surplus of single women in a growing population was becoming a major social problem, and there was an insufficient number of religious foundations to house them. Great numbers of women—the unmarried and widows—seeking escape from the insecurity of urban existence grouped themselves in communities. They did not form an Order but shared the ideal of leading a simple and virtuous life of prayer and social service to the community. This wish for perfection in purity identified them with the Albigensians, and they became known by the derogatory name of Beguines. Women also participated in political action. They fought in both the liberation movements of the towns and in the peasant uprisings that characterized the age.

A further instance of women's resistance to feudal conditions is of a less direct nature. Women's values may have been influential
in the humanizing trend which originated in the Middle Ages. This trend found its expression in the fourteenth century in various ways: the human figure in statuary and the decorative arts was more gracefully interpreted; a new emphasis was given to politeness; charitable activity increased as orphanages and refuges for the sick and homeless were founded. Whether women's purpose was to preserve the existing social order or to alter its future course, evidence exists that they were at times a powerful influence in the medieval community.

A woman, however, was most influential as an aristocrat and in rare circumstances as a regent. Capable and strong-minded Blanche de Castille, for instance, was the regent of France during the minority of her son, Louis IX, and at the time of his departure for the Holy Land, checking both coalitions of the feudal lords and an attempt by the English to reconquer the lands of Louis VIII in France. A woman's independence must not be overstated, however, for she was not infrequently treated as chattel—neglected, discarded, demeaned. This dichotomy can be explained in part by underlying attitudes and assumptions which found their source largely in the doctrine and history of Christianity, which itself was penetrated by ambiguities.

As the Jewish tradition developed into a patriarchal system, its law reinforced the idea of woman's subordination to man. The delicate balance between authority and submission in the marital
relationship was maintained because, in spite of the woman's subordinate position, she was honored in her role as mother and in her role in family life. Christianity adopted the same matrimonial pattern:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Cor. 11:3)

The balance in the marital relationship, however, was to be disturbed since Christianity on the one hand gave the ideal of marriage and of the individual a dimension of depth, whereas the Church in practice demeaned marriage and the woman.

Finding its guiding spirit in St. Paul's proposition of the unity of love in Christ where all distinctions are abolished (Gal. 3:28) and in his spiritual analogy of the nuptial union (Eph. 5:23), the Church intended its matrimonial legislation to be an expression of respect for both man and his spouse, balancing their rights and duties. From the tenth century on the Church exercised jurisdiction over marriage; Canon law elevated marriage to a sacrament and decreed it to be monogamous and an enduring association. With respect to fidelity, the Church advanced the unprecedented view that marriage was to be mutually binding. At the same time the impediments to a valid union were made more flexible. Because the Church did actually accept social inequalities, it felt the responsibility to alleviate
the lot of the unfortunate or weak due to accidents of birth. It therefore extended its authority to the protection of women whose well-being was endangered. By the Peace of God, the threat of anathema hung over anyone who molested women. Protection from oppression was extended to widows, and redress of injustices was available through the ecclesiastical courts. The Church succeeded also in attributing to knighthood its aforementioned ideals and enlisted its support in upholding them.

The principles of equity formulated by the Church would ideally preserve from debasement the woman's inferior position. However, an extreme form of asceticism was to arise which, in denying temporal values, would depreciate the institution of marriage and awaken suspicion of the woman. The atmosphere of the early Church, influenced by Oriental and Hellenistic thought, was favorable to the formation of an ascetic bias which first developed in reaction to pagan license and worldliness. However diverse, certain philosophies and sects were governed by a desire for purity and inner freedom. The Stoics, the Cynics, and most of all, the Essenes in their observance of ceremonial piety and habits of personal cleanliness, all shared the ideal that demanded self-denial as a means toward achieving a higher level of existence. Christian sects, influenced by these philosophies, were also to follow practices of abstinence. At the same time an attitude of disillusionment prevailed
in the latter part of the Roman Empire which caused men to turn away from the world and strive toward attaining virtue through continence.

In the struggle to establish a celibate clergy and to spread monasticism, however, some of the idealism of this early state of mind tended to become more negative in emphasis as its object was the suppression of desires. Marriage and sexual relations were regarded as incompatible with spiritual duties and as indications of abdication to a weakened will. The value distinction that St. Paul had made, in view of his eschatological belief, between the spiritual elite and those who had to find refuge in wedlock led to the interpretation that marriage was a condition inferior to celibacy. Moreover, marriage had lost a degree of religious significance, as salvation no longer depended on the increase of the chosen people but on response to God's call, a response centered around a life of faith and good works. Man's desire for and fear of sexual relations were expanded to mistrust of women and to exhaltation of virginity. Because this contradictory morality was encouraged by the insistence on virginity and chastity, with the consequent toleration of prostitution, woman's sinfulness could be more forcibly affirmed. Although the Scripture had elevated marriage and woman to a position of dignity, the effect was nullified by mistrust of woman and the denial of any essential goodness in the sexual relationship.

From the clerical class came the learned and articulate members of society. Although depreciation of marriage and women was confined
to this small sector of the population, a climate of prejudiced
opinion against women was created and sustained by the inferior
position that women occupied in society. Certain facts of later
medieval life show how ineffectual was the progressive tendency that
existed within the Church to mold patterns of more humane conduct:
Infant betrothals were still made for political expediency,
repudiations of wives continued, and wives were cloistered. The
virginal state was glorified and arguments abounded to the prejudice
of both marriage and motherhood, depicting their tribulations so that
in the twelfth century a type of collective panic seized the female
population in reaction to both the real and supposed grimness of
married and family life. The accommodations of the cloister were
inadequate to meet the demands of women who wished to enter. Al-
though such behavior was dictated in part by a spiritual vocation
and more significantly by women's increasingly precarious position
in urban life, this obsession created by male thought became a cul-
tural idea which received acceptance by women themselves.

Male society felt ill at ease with its functional attitude
toward marriage and women and reacted to it in romantic and de-
voctional literature. Woman's mounting importance in castle life and
society's new leisure and prosperity created a restlessness from
which was born a relationship based on the refinement of the instinct
of desire. Unconscious yearnings of the society, necessarily re-
pressed because of their opposition to the fabric of feudal and
Christian organization, sought release and would find it in formalized expression. In courtly love poetry, human love brought ultimate happiness and filled the lover with joy, akin to grace. Since love had no motive extraneous to itself, it was considered inherently noble. Courtly love, therefore, presented in poetic form an alternative way of life. But as its psychic need and inspiration came from life, it passed beyond the confines of literature into life to renew again its inspiration.

A further manifestation of male society's ambivalent attitude toward women and its discontent within itself was the rise of the cult of the Virgin. Its flowering in the twelfth century coincided with the conception of courtly love, and in the same manner as the cult of the lady, Mary's enhancement in doctrine and popular devotion occurred spontaneously. In the people's longing to worship Christ to the utmost, some of their reverence passed to Mary. With the diffusion of the ideal of virginity, Mary was enthroned above the angels. No longer simply Mother of the Lord, she became Mother and Bride of Christ, cooperating in the redemption of mankind. When the misery of the times became unbearable, the poor, the helpless, those in need turned to the mother of mercy who embraced all in her tenderness. Eventually the poetic and religious concepts were fused, and the lady of the love-song became assimilated with the madonna and revered as an image of divine beauty.
In both lyric poetry and Mariology, the woman was entreated—as the comforter of ills. She became the arbiter of man's destiny, for through her intervention life was renewed. Such a glorification was not to efface, however, the opprobrium of sinfulness attached to the woman nor end the alienation that had been created between man and woman. Because, in this still strongly patriarchal society, she could not be permitted to emerge from behind the shadows in order that the social order not be disturbed, the woman man created was an idealization, the incarnation of his dreams, just as she had been made to be the obstacle to his dreams. The lofty prestige accorded to the woman only placed her at a social distance, however, and did not affect her actual status in any significant way. Because she was seen as irresistible, the lady of the love-song was idolized as long as desire for her was unfulfilled and she retained her perfection. The only woman the man could admit into his world in literature was the forbidden one—the virginal Mary or the noble lady, unreachable because of both her purity and matrimonial tie with another. These new concepts introduced into literature were still fraught with the same mistrust of woman and pleasure. The worship of the unique woman could not raise in esteem the typical woman in medieval society, whether she was married or awaiting marriage.

These manifestations of woman's advances in social responsibility and conceptual rise to glory may be interpreted as a spontaneous
response to conditions and pressures which arose with the growth

and as an outgrowth of feudalism but which were alien to its spirit

and law—such as the authority assumed by wives when husbands were

away, the supremacy of widows; the Albigensian and Beguinage

activities; the accelerated movement to the nunneries; the cults of

the lady and Virgin. However, the freedom and ultimate potential

of the woman could never be allowed to triumph in society, for it

was still the masculine authority which continued to determine

society's orientation. The right of wives to replace the men was

gradually removed. The model-image of Mary diffused by the arts was

of perfection in obedience and passivity. The sequel to De Arte

Honeste Amandi of Andreas Capellanus was Incipit Liber remdii where

the author repented the heresy of his religion of love as elaborated

in his first two books. Although from the beginning, the Beguines

had met with popular disapproval because of the freedom they dis-

played, their expansion, necessitated by social conditions, had con-

tinued. But by the fifteenth century, on the grounds that they

followed no definite rule nor had received papal confirmation, their

communities were officially repressed and they were evicted; each

Beguine had to seek a solitary corner for herself, no longer support-

ed by feminine solidarity.

The nunneries, although established as the Church's official

institution for receiving all its faithful, were enclaves in society

whose formidable independence could not be countenanced. The
self-government that women enjoyed in the religious orders of the twelfth century met with both dissatisfaction on the part of the women, because of the limitations placed on their power to govern themselves, and with resistance from the official bodies for the comparative autonomy which they enjoyed. The ultimate decision of their fate could never rest with the women whose liberties were either criticized or unauthorized. It was with this statement that an abbot of Prémontré stated the case for henceforth refusing admittance to women in the Order:

"We and our whole community of canons, recognizing that the wickedness of women is greater than all the other wickedness of the world, and that there is no anger like that of women, and that the poison of asps and dragons is more curable and less dangerous to men than the familiarity of women, have unanimously decreed for the safety of our souls, no less than for that of our bodies and goods, that we will on no account receive any more sisters to the increase of our perdition, but will avoid them like poisonous animals."  

The striking events of the late Middle Ages—unprecedented natural and human disasters and the development of the modern state—while accelerating social change, affected women significantly in their position and adjustment to life. Catastrophes were a near constant phenomenon in many areas of the population. Due to the agricultural recession, climatic instability, and poor transportation, famines reached devastating proportions. Man's undernourished body
accounted to some extent for the fatalities of the Black Death and recurring epidemics. The Hundred Years War, fought on land and sea, was the most ruthless France had yet known. The peasants were the first to experience hardships. National troops raided their lands in order to destroy crops; robber-mercenaries remained in times of peace to pillage and provoke fear. Deaths, families, and villages dis- united, urban exodus, heavier taxes, resentment toward feudal obli- gations now without justification, society's continued contempt for the low-born—all added to the bitter load of the peasants' misery which, when too heavy to bear, was relieved by collective panics, uprisings and brigandage.

Inhabitants of the towns experienced particularly the diffi- culties of adapting to the new forms of economic life. A fluid urban society bred a competitive spirit and social conflict. Clashes arose between the urban aristocracy, in which was concentrated power and wealth, and the newly formed and often impoverished proletariat which often found itself lost in a more anonymous world than it had known. Since urban status was now gained by wealth, ostentation was unrestrained, arousing the indignation of both the poor and of the nobles, some of whom were experiencing economic difficulties.

The nobility was no longer a privileged minority as changing conditions undermined its strength and position of independence. With the employment of mercenaries which deprived it of its essential function of ensuring the nation's defense, it lost much military
The nobles lost some political power as well, for the monarchy had extended its authority in order to curb their independence and had also created a bureaucracy of trained men. The economic power of many feudal lords also diminished owing to the cost of arms, luxury products which had become necessities, wages and monetary devaluations. In addition, the desire to retain noble status prevented their integration into urban aristocratic life. As the basis of the feudal system was destroyed, the human values it had favored were lost. Nobility no longer felt the same class solidarity; some lords, who had benefited from the flourishing fairs, had grown powerful and independent of their vassals, while others had not. Because salaried workers had replaced serfs, the feudal bonds between lords and their dependents weakened, and some lords concerned themselves less with the management of their estates. Denying themselves any practical alternative to restoring their self-esteem, the nobles found solace in aggression—such as banditry—and in fantasy—gallantry, display, pleasures. The feudal lord was becoming a professional soldier or courtier, but his conception of himself had not changed.

Toward the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century the nation passed through a deepened crisis of confidence as factional strife among the princes threatened its welfare and sovereignty. In resistance to the extension of royal authority, particularist tendencies developed, and during the irresponsible reign
of Charles VI, the princes' lands became miniature kingdoms. Charles V had organized royal administration more efficiently, had imposed a tone of gravity on the court, and had awakened conscientiousness in the government. When his son's first fits of insanity appeared, the princes—the Duc de Berry, Duc de Bourbon and the Duc de Bourgogne—began to vie openly for power and advantage. The princes' ambition had for some time been exercised in their own domains, but these resources were insufficient for the magnificent train of their courts. Through such venal practices as placing their own personnel in governmental services and multiplying offices, they sought to increase their treasury at the state's expense. Rebellions were rigorously suppressed. When, in the struggle for power, the two contending parties emerged—the Orléanists, who grouped around the King's brother, Louis d'Orléans, and the Burgundians—war appeared imminent. With the murder of Louis (1407) by the hird assassins of Jean de Bourgogne, who had continued the feud at his father's death, the prospect of permanent accord grew dim, and the next years were marked by dishonest peace settlements, violence, the alternate occupation of Paris by both parties, and secret pacts with England proposed or received by both sides. France's defeat at Agincourt (1415) did not end the civil war or treachery. At the 1419 conference which Jean de Bourgogne had agreed to hold in the hopes of reconciliation with the dauphin—the future Charles VII—the Duke was slain. The unabashed corruption and cynicism of the times, itself a
reaction to the loss of predictability of life, added to the nation's unrest.

During this period, woman's position seemed to decline. First, the opportunity for noblewomen to direct the political affairs of the estates arose less frequently. The era of the crusades, when men were often away for years at a time, had passed. Moreover, although absences continued to characterize the pattern of the noble's existence, wealthier nobles now had staffs, modeled after the royal government, with responsible positions filled by officials. Secondly, woman's educational disadvantage was becoming more marked. As formal instruction was required for the increasing number of professional careers open to men, woman's advancement in learning lagged considerably further behind man's. Although there were cultivated women possessed of wit and appreciation of the arts, the degree of learning they did achieve continued to be dependent upon their immediate surroundings. Finally, the economic role of wealthier women was also becoming more restricted. With the increased wealth and leisure possessed by some noble and bourgeois families, it was less necessary for a woman to participate in the domestic activity of her castle or hôtel. For example, children of noble families were raised by tutors and governesses.

Under the influence of changing conditions—especially the growing importance of the monarchy—woman's subjection to her husband became more complete. The weakening of the feudal clan had been
accompanied by the growing independence and strengthening of the nuclear family. Because order within the family was considered necessary for an ordered society, the paternal authority was reinforced, and the wife's legal power diminished. Any decision she would make when her husband was absent or mentally incompetent now had to receive authorization by a judge.\textsuperscript{5}

The fact that woman was more permanently excluded from direct control of affairs was reflected in the Salic law which established the principle that a queen could never be crowned ruler of the land or pass on the right of succession to the Crown. Although this property law owed its existence to circumstances—at first the fear of anarchy, and finally the desire of the barons to exclude an English king from the French throne—the reason given to support the law reveals a state of mind concerning women and conforms to the emerging trend. As stated in the law: "la couronne de France ne peut tomber de lance en quenouille."\textsuperscript{6}

Woman's situation in this period mirrored to a great extent the turbulence of the period. In this time of stress, frustration and relaxation of moral standards, women as weaker members of society were more vulnerable to abuse and discrimination. An antagonistic attitude toward them was becoming more noticeable, judging from the prevalent habit of slandering women and the number of satiric writings against them. There is also evidence of economic prejudice
toward them. Because women formed an increasingly high percentage of the population, single women without protectors were the first to feel the effects of the times. The situation of a girl from a noble family whose dowry was poor became more acute. Since wealthyheiresses were in particular demand, she might suffer disparagement in marriage or be obliged to enter a nunnery. The unmarried women of the lower middle class experienced hardship in the labor market. Always somewhat disadvantaged in salary, she now was forced to accept work at increasingly lower pay than male workers, and her lot was further worsened by their hostility. The newly-formed guilds denied entrance to a woman.

Nor could chivalry continue to protect women. Possibly it had only approximated its ideal of protecting the weak. However, now that knighthood was merely ornamental and the noble's sense of duty had lessened, the ideal was observed only by a few. During the wars in the early Middle Ages, chivalry had been constantly flouted; but the extended period of warfare in the late Middle Ages was characterized by defeat and anguish. The civilian population—including women—was treated as an enemy and subjected to the excesses of barbarism. There are two known instances of an attempted revival of chivalry in the reign of Charles VI: One, the "Ordre de l'Ecu vert à la dame blanche," founded by Marechal Boucicaut in 1399 "pour défendre les femmes envers et contre tous dans leurs justes causes et
querelles"; and the second, the "cour amoureuse" which met for the first time in 1401 (o.s.) with the stated intention of cultivating poetry and honoring women. Although the revival of chivalry was undoubtedly inspired by noble intentions—the dream remained alive even if reality did not confirm it—no record exists of any redress of grievances of either association. Nor did the clergy abide by its former standards, enticed as it was by the newer luxurious life.

In spite of the continually changing conditions and pressures in the fourteenth century, the enhanced status of women during the feudal period endured. As a result of woman's growing political and social responsibilities within a feudal context, and her emergence as a literary heroine, she was beginning to be considered as more than mere property. Under the influence of the new affluent society that was emerging, and the success of courtly love, the woman continued to gain a greater social prestige. With the growing secularization of society, the concept of the family would soon stir the imagination and receive respect. The fact that had always existed—the role of the woman as an important influence in the family and society—was becoming more apparent.

The social change in the fourteenth century affected Christine's life and her thinking. The woman whom she eventually addressed would be the woman of her immediate environment of the beginning of the fifteenth century, seen either as defenseless or as
one grown vain and irresponsible in this new era of acquisitiveness.

The woman whom she would project as her ideal was the strong able woman of the centuries immediately prior to her own and of her models in antiquity.
NOTES -- CHAPTER I

1 This discussion on historical background applies primarily to the region of the Ile-de-France. It stresses the organization and practices of the fief-holders who were of political and social importance in medieval society although they represented a minority of its members.


6 Lehmann, Le Rôle de la femme, p. 357.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF CHRISTINE DE PISAN

In Christine's writings are found the contours and details of her life. Born in Venice in 1365 of Italian parents, she went to France in 1370 to join her father, Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, who was then in the service of Charles V. Tommaso, who had studied medicine at the university in his native Bologna, was later a professor of astrology there and became a counsellor of the Venetian Republic. Invited to join their entourages by the kings of Hungary and of France, Tommaso chose the court of the latter, because he was a distinguished personality known for attracting scholars to his court and because Paris was then one of the leading political and cultural capitals of Europe.

Tommaso had multiple duties at the court. Besides being a diplomat, physician, astrologist, and eventually royal counsellor, he probably gained royal favor also for his skill in the occult arts—magic and alchemy. That the king and princes appreciated him is seen by the records of the salary, living expenses and gifts with which he was rewarded.

Thus, Christine was a child of two cultures. While Italian customs were undoubtedly retained by her family, she observed and participated in the life of fourteenth-century Paris. When older she

34
read books in Italian and is credited with having introduced Dante into France. At the same time, she grew to love her adopted country and would one day write its history and address herself to its rulers and people. In the Avison she describes this gradual identification as the deepening of a friendship with "La Dame Couronnée" who symbolizes France:

Et ainsi appercevant de mieulx en mieulx sa haultece ... voye iusques en sa maistre cite laquelle estoit nommee la second Athens. ... minforme ades des coustumes manieres et condicions de la ditte dame. ...

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

apres maintes aventures que ie ataigny ad ce que desiroye. si oz la plaine accontance de la dame renomme de laquelle la beaute sens et benignite ne seroie souffisant de descripre ... or fus ie la dieu mercis si prochaine princesse amie a dycelle que de sa grace faveur ot a me descouvrir les secrez de son cuer. ...

Christine resembled her father in appearance, personality and in her leaning toward study. She once described him as a philosopher, whose two invaluable treasures of knowledge—astrology and medicine—protected him against all misfortunes. Tommaso, who was influenced by the advanced ideas in Italy concerning education for women, wanted his daughter to pursue those academic disciplines normally reserved for boys; however, her mother preferred that she be brought up in a more conventional manner, and so Christine was to learn filaces. She occasionally expressed both her regret at the restriction placed
upon girls: --a restriction which she considered to be based more on custom than on equity -- and her gratitude that she benefited somewhat from her father's learning:

Et, combien que femmelle fusse,  
Par quoy l'avoir dessus dit n'euisset,  
........................................  
Ne me poz je tenir d'embrer  
Des racleures et des paillettes,  
Des petis deniers, des maillettes  
Choites de la tres grant richesce,  
Donc il avoit a grant largece,  
........................................  
Cela au mains m'est demouré,  
Qui ne fauldra jusques mourré.11

According to medieval custom, Christine was married at the early age of fifteen to Etienne Castel--eclier grade--from Picardy, who had been chosen by her father more for his character than fortune.12 Nevertheless, Christine seemingly approved of her new husband, for in the Mutacion de Fortune she recaptured the joy of her wedding with its promise of happiness.13 Twenty-four at the time of their marriage in 1380, Etienne was appointed notoire et secretaire du roy.14 The following year Christine gave birth to a daughter, two years afterwards, to a son, and later to another son who died at an early age.15 In nearly all of her writings, an echo is heard of the happiness which she experienced in marriage, and its full expression is shown in the following lyric poem:

Doulce chose est que mariage,
While the promise of love in marriage was fulfilled, that of continued serenity crumbled little by little for her. In succession Christine was to lose the king, her father and, after ten years of married life, her husband. Each loss brought with it unforeseen difficulties. The nation and court had benefited from the interlude of peace and renewed prosperity due to the foresight of Charles V. At his death, new leadership brought not only a less benevolent rule but also new counsellors and allegiances.\(^{17}\) As Tommaso was left without the backing of a strong protector, opposition to him—which was based either on the growing scientific spirit\(^ {18}\) or on court rivalry\(^ {19}\)—became outspoken. Tommaso's good standing was further affected by the revelation of a miscalculation that he had made in the composition of an elixir which was intended for some members of the royal family.\(^ {20}\) Although his services were retained at court, lowered prestige affected him materially; his salary was reduced, his allowance was cancelled, and hopes for the future remained unfulfilled. His characteristic generosity and lack of concern for economy now appeared as a detriment to his family's well-being. The shock and disappointment of these events were perhaps not unrelated to his subsequent illness and death in 1387.\(^ {21}\)

Christine's husband assumed the role of head of the household,
ably demonstrating that Tommaso's confidence in him was well-placed. His capability had been recognized at court, and he was advancing rapidly in his career. All indications pointed to a bright future for him when, on a trip to Beauvais with Charles VI in 1390, he died during an epidemic which had struck the town: "Mort ... le me tolle en fleur de ieunece comme en l'aage de .xxxiiii. ans et moy de .xxv." 22

Christine's sudden widowhood was to be a turning point in her life. Her grief was acute; moreover, her financial situation became precarious. Tommaso had left little, if any inheritance; the fortune that she did possess was to be contested; she had a household of six persons to maintain, including her mother, three children and a niece. Due to the custom of the day, her husband had not entrusted her with information on the family's financial situation; consequently others took advantage of her inexperience. Thrust into hardship and the consequent anxiety, she felt deserted and defenseless as she began to wage a solitary battle to preserve her home and to provide it with some measure of security:

... or me convint mettre mains a oeuvre/ ce que moy nourrie en delices et mignotement navoye appris/ et estre conduisarresse de la nef demouree en la mer en orage et sanz patron. Cest assavoir le desole maisnage hors de son lieu et pais. Adonc me sourdirent angoisses de toutes pars. ... 23

For fourteen years she was involved in litigations to keep or
retrieve money rightfully hers; debtors would not pay; fraudulent creditors pursued her; rent on a property not in her possession and the arrears allegedly due on another were demanded; a merchant absconded with the money he had been given to invest for her children, and the case brought against him was lost; she had to solicit for part of her husband's back salary, and even after securing the king's authorization, delays continued until finally partial payment was made. These fruitless efforts were accompanied by physical distress. A long illness gave some respite but denied her the remuneration which the court case might have granted had she been able to actively seek redress. The incongruity of a fine lady reduced to the state of pleading her case before those of lower station brought insults and mockery. Although she had to conceal her indignation in the courts, the feeling of humiliation could not be suppressed.

When poverty became a near reality, she was forced to abandon pride: Sergents entered her home and seized belongings; she borrowed money from friends. Christine felt herself further betrayed when a rumor became current that she had become involved with an unknown man. Fearing that any pity offered would imply superiority and future indebtedness, she hid her tribulations from the world.24

Christine's initial expression of grief and anguish was to be a recurring refrain. She was, however, to know another type of life which, by its spiritual and creative nature, would become the source of an achievement that would lend a significance to her difficulties.
After the first period of readjustment, she would spend leisure
hours in her estude petite\textsuperscript{25} where, in reading, she found distraction
and even refuge from her deep melancholy. Seeking to extend her
knowledge, she undertook a program of study:

\begin{quote}
... ains comme lenfant que au premier on met
a la b. c. d. me pris aux hystoires anciennes
des le commencement du monde/ les hystoires des
hebrieux/ des assiriens et des principes des
seigneurie/ procedant de lune en autre
descendant aux romains/ des francois/ des
bretons et autres plusieurs hystoriagrafes/
apres aux dedusions des sciences selon ce
que en lespace du temps que ie y estudia\^y jen
pos comprendre. puis me pris aux livres des
pouetes. ... Adonc fus ie aise quant ioz
trouve le stile a moy naturel ... \textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

As no comprehensive analysis of her sources exists, we can only sur-
mise from her works that she read widely. This selective list of
her reading, however, may suggest its scope and character: The
Scriptures and writings of the Church fathers; Aristotle; Ovid,
Seneca and Boethius; Dante and Boccaccio; both the French \textit{romanciers}
and the chroniclers; as well as such contemporary thinkers as Jean
Gerson and Honor\^e Bonet and the poets Machaut and Deschamps. Also
familiar to her were the compendia of philosophers' dicta, saints'
lives, and histories and mythologies which, in the Middle Ages, were
widely circulated.

Although such a personal accomplishment could only be ex-
plained by a fervent curiosity for learning, it was necessarily
dependent upon the intellectual history then in progress in France.

In spite of the difficulties of the fourteenth-century, many members of the Valois royal family showed a marked interest in letters—collecting books and encouraging literary activity. Under Charles V the nascent humanist movement was given an impetus and the tools by which it could later flourish. While classical texts were copied, a stimulus was given to the development of the vernacular with the emergence of national unity and self-consciousness. It was Charles V who was instrumental in creating a royal library which would be accessible to interested scholars. Thus Christine's self-education was both encouraged and influenced by an intellectual climate of vitality as more texts and resources became available to a reading public.27

In her study Christine discovered a world wider in space and deeper in time than the one she had known. Soon her reading awakened a desire for self-expression in verse:

... nature en moy resiouye me dist ... prens les outilz et fiers sur lenclume/ la matiere que ie te bailleray si durable que fer ne feu ne autre chose ne la pourra despecer si forge choses delictables. ... Or vueil que de toy naissant nouveaulx volumes lesquielx le temps avenir et perpetuelment au monde presenteront ta memoire.
... Adonc me pris a forgier choses jolies a mon commencement plus legieres/ ... 28

Absorbed in grief, the first poems she composed were of her sadness. As she found that by giving a pattern and rhythm to her feelings they
became less intense, she felt pleasure and so continued to write poems of a similar nature. These balades somehow became known to members of the court who requested her to continue writing them.\textsuperscript{29} To please her audience, she tells us, she changed her theme from grief to love.\textsuperscript{30}

Her success was immediate. Before the turn of the century these poems, written in solitude, were carried beyond the borders of France—to England by the Earl of Salisbury,\textsuperscript{31} and to Italy. She was invited to the courts of both Henry IV upon his ascension to the English throne and Jean Galéas Visconti, Duke of Milan. She did not accept the king of England's offer considering him an usurper, nor Visconti's because he died.\textsuperscript{32}

Although this spontaneous attempt was a way for personal expression, Christine realized that her writing would enable her also to provide for herself and family. She was therefore to become one of the first professional woman writers in France.\textsuperscript{33} It was perhaps in the year 1394 that she composed her first ballad lamenting her sorrow; her last poem which sings of her joy at the triumph of Joan of Arc was written in 1429, shortly before her death. In the intervening years she wrote not only poetry—love, religious, didactic—and personal letters, but verse and prose of a moral, political and historical nature. Her most productive period was in the opening years of the fifteenth century, her efforts diminishing after 1413
by reason of political conditions and advancing years. Study and writing were simultaneous activities, and judging from the volume of her writing, she evidently worked with great concentration and energy.

Her works were originally conceived and composed. She placed her lyric poems in contemporary settings. She combined allegories and personal expression. She interspersed observations in moral treatises. Her historical biography has a generally inspirational and idealistic tone. She included numerous quotations and paraphrases from the Bible, Church fathers and philosophers to complement her ideas. She has a unique style which is often spontaneous, sometimes ponderous, tense, expressive of many moods—tender, ironic, indignant, impassioned. Her language is varied: she used archaic forms, words of recent formation, and many diminutives in her poetry. Although she wrote in the dialect of the Ile-de-France, her language shows some Italian influence. Because of the peculiarities of her structure and style and the consistency of the thought expressed, her writings bear a mark of distinct individuality.

Christine attributed her favorable reception to the novelty of a woman writing books. However, besides the novelty and her talent, the cultural history of the period, which had influenced her preparation for a literary career, was also a factor in its success. Hers was an age where artistic beauty was cultivated and prized. During the reign of Charles VI in particular, many exquisite manuscripts were produced, due in part to the perfection of technique in
illumination and to the encouragement that this art received. Princes would either commission a book, or writers who had been granted the privilege would present them a finished manuscript in the hopes of receiving recompense. Christine had as patrons nobles and nearly all members of the Valois family. Her first collection of poems, the Cent Balades, appeared in 1399. Thereafter, working in close collaboration with the craftsmen as evidenced by the integration of the text and illustrations in her manuscripts, Christine presented her protectors with many magnificent tomes. Dedications could simply be changed and multiplied when works were copied, so that one work would be offered to more than one protector. The libraries of the Duc de Berry, noted for his taste in the decorative arts, contained nearly all of her works, which were also the most represented of any writer in the queen's collection.

Disappointments and hardships were not effaced, however, by a successful career. Despite her genuine grief over her husband's death and her disavowal of rumors, her work might suggest that she had a love affair which ended in disappointment. At the age of fifteen her daughter entered the convent of Poissy, and although Christine wrote a poetic description of a visit to Poissy conveying the tranquillity and devotion of the nuns, she felt keenly the separation. Her first attempts at establishing her son, Jean, in a court career brought discouragement. The Earl of Salisbury, who introduced her poetry to the English nobility, took Jean back with
him to his court. However, as a supporter of Richard II, the Earl was executed, and although Henry IV took Jean under his protection, Christine, not to be disloyal to her former benefactor, arranged for his return. Afterwards Jean served briefly with the Duc d'Orléans without remuneration. She then secured a place for him in the entourage of Philippe de Bourgogne, only to experience distress when, in 1404, the duke, who had promised to be one of her most generous benefactors, died.\footnote{11}

Fame itself was not an unmitigated blessing. Because it was considered so improbable that a woman could attain such erudition and power of thought, it was said that clerics were the authors of her works:

\begin{quote}
Car les aucuns dient que clers ou religieux les te [Christine] forgent/ et que de sentement de femme venir ne pourroyent. Mais ce sont les ig norans qui ce dient/ car ilz nont pas cognoisance des escriptures qui de tant de vailians femmes sages plus que toy, et lettres ...\footnote{42}
\end{quote}

An attitude of condescension toward her as a woman can be seen in her correspondence with noted humanists in which she dared to express opinions critical of Jean de Meun:

\begin{quote}
Si te prie, femme de grant engin, que tu gardes l'oncueur que tu as pour la hautesse de ton entendement et langage bien ordené, et que s'on t'a loué pour ce que tu as tirey d'un voulet pardessus les tours de Nostre Dame, ne t'essayes pourtant a ferir la lune d'un bouion pesant: ...\footnote{43}
\end{quote}
Much of the information for Christine’s biography the Avision, which was completed in 1405. This date also marks the deepening of the crisis between the rival factions in France of the Burgundians and Orleanists which would finally erupt in civil war and be a factor in the renewal of hostilities with England. Although all her writings indicate a thoughtful concern over the political and social events of her age, those written in her later period reflect most closely the times and her anxiety in view of mounting tension, conflict and the grief that wars bring. Her personal suffering continued; yet it was the suffering she felt for her people which her later writings convey. In her pleas for reconciliation of differences, her voice rang out with authentic distress. Because the party of national unity came to be represented by the Orleanist-Armagnacs, at the occupation of Paris by the Burgundians and the massacres which followed in 1418, she had to flee into exile. According to the poem to Joan of Arc of 1429, she found refuge in a convent:

Je, Christine, qui ay plouré
Unze ans en abbaye close, ... 44

She knew the grief of losing her son, Jean, who, as secretary to the dauphin and in exile with his family, died in 1425. 45

The date of Christine’s death is unknown, although in 1434 she was spoken of in the past tense by an historian of Paris. 46
Christine emerges from her writings as a forceful personality; she is intense in her feelings, restraining, however, the tendency to self-pity. She is courageous in the expression of her thought and tries to be open and fair-minded. Christine's life must have been a decisive influence in the attitudes she developed. The security fostered in her home, her acquaintance with people of intellectual independence, her varied and often painful experiences must all have contributed to her acquiring a mature vision and high social values. Although practical needs explain to an extent the unabating energy with which she wrote, Christine's work reveals consistently a genuine desire and determination to teach a sense of justice and responsibility. It was because of her belief in the possibilities of personal development that she wished to bring to all the fruits of her learning and thought and to women in particular the lessons which she believed she had gained from her personal experiences.
NOTES -- CHAPTER II

1 The basic source for information on Christine's life up to the year 1405 is the third part of L'Avision - Christine. Autobiographical information is also found in Part I of Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune. Personal references are made in other works as well. The most detailed study of her life and works is found in Marie-Josephe Pinet, Christine de Pisan, 1364-1430: Etude biographique et litteraire (Paris: Champion, 1927). For the most recent study, see Suzanne Solente, Christine de Pisan (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1969).

2 Tommaso's family probably came from the hill town, Pizzano, a few miles outside of Bologna. See Elena, Nicolini, "Christina de Pizzano, l'origine e il nome," in Cultura Neolatina, I (1941), 143-150.


5 Avision, Pt. I, p. 76, 1.14 - p. 77, 1.15.

7Ibid., I, Pt. I, pp. 13-18, 11. 171-338.


9Christine de Pisan, Le Livre de la Cité des Dames, edited with Introduction and Notes by Maureen Co. Curnow (Typescript: Vanderbilt University), Pt. II, chap..xxxvij., par. 186).


12Avision, Pt. III, p. 152.


14Avision, Pt. III, p. 152.

15Ibid., Pt. III, p. 166, 1. 6.

16Christine de Pisan, Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan, ed. by Maurice Roy (3 vols.; Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1886-1898), I, 237, ll. 1-4. All poetry quotations unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from this edition. This edition will be subsequently referred to as éd. Roy.


19Solente, Christine de Pisan, p. 6, Note 2.

20Thorndyke, Magic and Experimental Science, III, 611-627.

21Avision, Pt. III, pp. 152-153; Solente, Christine de Pisan, p. 6, Note 3.
22 Avision, Pt. III, p. 153, 1.33 -p. 154, 1.3.

23 Ibid., Pt. III, p. 154 11. 23-27. Shortly after their father's death, Christine's two brothers, Paolo and Aghinolofo, returned to Italy. References to her brothers are made in the Avision, Pt. III, p. 169, and the Ctye of Ladies, Pt. II, chap. 7. See Nicolini, "l'origine et il nome," pp. 143-150.


29 Ibid., Pt. III, pp. 164-165.


31 Jean de Montaigu, the Earl of Salisbury, went to France in 1396 in order to negotiate the marriage between Richard II and Isabelle de France. See Percy G. Campbell, "Christine de Pisan en Angleterre," in Revue de la Littérature Comparée, V (1925), 659-670.
In the *Avision*, Christine comments on her own style, prophesying that her writings will be better appreciated in the future when learning will once again be in repute. In the words of "dame Opinion":

...les autres dient ton stille estre trop obscur et que on ne lentent si mest si delictable
... la prolixite de mes narracions cy racontées pourroiet aux lisans tourner a enuy. ... les uns sur le language domront leur sentence en plusieurs manieres/ diront que il nest pas bien eleuquant/ les autres que la composicion des materes est estrange/ Et ceulx qui lentendront en diront bien/ Et le temps a venir plus en sera parle que a ton vivant ... car les sciences ne sont pas a present en leur reputacion ...


CHAPTER III

THE CHALLENGE TO MASCULINE SUPREMACY

A. Introduction: Christine's Mutacion (1)

Such a radical change occurred in Christine's life at the death of her husband that she symbolized it later as a supernatural design—the mutacion de Fortune—which gave her overnight the strength of a man. However great the temptation had been to succumb to loneliness and fright when first widowed, she was prevented from doing so by the necessity of assuming a man's responsibilities. Her entrance into the man's world of practical affairs and a professional career strengthened her resources for combatting these feelings of weakness which, because of continued grief and new misfortunes, never wholly disappeared. Her mutacion thus became the occasion for both the discovery within herself of aggressive and creative impulses and, through her new experiences and awareness, the development of a social conscience which is a distinct characteristic of her writings.

Making her way through corridors of corruption and indifference and feeling herself unprotected, Christine was brutally confronted with the stark reality of the evils of her society. Because of her religious beliefs in the salvation of man by God and in the dignity of one's neighbor, she could only feel indignation and
sorrow over the irresponsible egoism and moral laxity surrounding her. Her acquaintance with philosophy made her aware of mankind’s highest ideals and especially of the principle of reason as a guide to righteous conduct. Thus the social change and upheaval of values to which she was an eye-witness presented themselves as a picture of decadence. Since Christine would not accept irrationality and disunity to be the normal state of society, she believed that Christendom and France were passing through a spiritual crisis.\textsuperscript{2}

In her literary expression, Christine became a wanderer experiencing a moral solitude never wholly compensated for by the solace which knowledge or fame could offer. With the high idealism of the past and the ailing society of the present side by side to compare, she voiced from her new perspective in distance and time her grief and her prophetic warning of divine vengeance:

\begin{verbatim}
Et moy, comme mere piteuse
Qui voit mesprendre ses enfans,
Doubtant vengence despiteuse
De leurs mortelz et durs offens,
Ay paur d'eulx vecir boutez
Hors de l'heritage du pere
Et si laidement deboutez
Qu'il conviengne qu'en eulx appere.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{verbatim}

The evils of society, which Christine describes in many of her works, received their first extended development in two allegorical poems, the Mutacion de Fortune and the Chemin de Long Estude. In the former Christine, with an analytical eye acquired through experience,
describes dame Fortune's castle which, high on a perilous rock, ceaselessly revolves so that the position of its inhabitants is never secure. Persons of all grades of society, consumed by desires for vain worldly goods, seek entrance by the gate of "Richece." Within, many attempt to mount along the paths of "Grand Orgueil" and "Grand Malice," neglecting, because of their difficulty, the flowering way of "Grand Science" and the incomparable beauty of "Juste Vie." When some do reach the top, they do not deign to consider the dwellers below, and all social intercourse becomes affected by this display of pride, and is thus distorted. 4

In the Chemin de Long Estude, which contains a generalized commentary on the decline of the social structure of the period, Christine dreams that she is guided by a prophetess to the firmament, where she attends and records for the earth the debate of the world's four ruling queens and moderated by "Raison." A messenger from "Terre" is at this moment presenting an appeal that man must better himself lest his iniquity deprive him of his birthright. As these four queens, the motivating forces of human behavior—"Richece," "Noblece," "Chevalerie" and "Sagece"—justify individually their conduct before the court, it becomes clear that without the voice of "Raison," no longer heeded on earth, each has become an evil leading to strife and therefore a threat to mankind's survival. "Richece," rather than being a boon to civilization and a benefit for the poor,
breeds greedy hearts which seek only pleasure and luxury. "Noblece," which should inspire each generation to emulate the virtues and worthy deeds of its ancestry, debases itself when it merely takes pride in its heritage. The purpose of "Chevalerie" is to protect the public weal and to aid the needy; yet it wages aggressive warfare. Even "Sagece" is condemned for its shallowness in demanding honor; for only when it is accompanied by goodness and humility may it be considered wisdom.⁵

It is clear that Christine accepted the Christian assumption that, because of man's rebellion and the consequent weakening of his will, he strays from the straight upward path and permits consequentially the instincts of pride and sensuality to defeat easily the moral sentiment. At the same time, she just as firmly held to the conviction that God not only extends His grace to fallen man in order to restore him to the state of original justice but has given to him consciousness and opportunity to uplift himself. It was therefore mankind's obstinacy in pursuing evil intentions and the cynicism that condones it which caused Christine's alarm.⁶ The whole social body seemed permeated by shameless sinning; injustices were a part of the way of life.

The scale of values being so ill-conceived that money and power won respect while goodness was scorned, the weaker members of society were necessarily the first victims. Christine's sympathy
was aroused for the downtrodden and underprivileged as she witnessed sufferings caused by the ferocity of wealth and influence: Justice was not served for those who could not pay for preferred treatment; the poor and ill were rejected by their families; those who were prosperous cared little to hear of others' misfortunes, while the spirit of charity lessened as one came into closer contact with those in need.  

Although Christine's compassion embraced all those in misfortune, her most meaningful identification was with women, who she felt were being wronged. As her personal feelings found new avenues of expression in the dual role thrust upon her and as she experienced the injustices of male supremacy, Christine took up the defense of women. To defend women against their detractors, she would show how they were unjustly injured and maligned: first, by presenting them in the role of the woman in love, then in other areas of their existence, and then by demonstrating their positive qualities in various real life situations.

Christine's mutación was therefore a sublimation process in which she overcame her weaker feelings in order to defend the image and human rights of the woman. As she became imbued with the humanist desire to contribute to the betterment of society, she set herself the task of preparing a rational ground for sounder evaluations on woman, whom she saw not as an inferior being but as man's other self.  

...
B: The Woman in Love

The initial expression of the first part of Christine's defense of women is found in her love poetry. While enumerating the wrongs committed against them, this lyric expression reveals her view of the woman's role in love in both a subconscious and intentional manner. Christine's first poems lamented her widowhood and only later did she begin to write love poems; however, it will be seen that the opposition between the two themes of love and widowhood is more apparent than real.

Christine sees herself in her earliest ballads and occasional later poems as the widow clothed in sorrow:

Je suis veste, seule et noir vestue,
   A triste vis simplement affulée;
En grant courroux et maniere adoulée
   Porte le dueil tres amer qui me tue.⁹

She has lost her beloved companion, her protector, and her guide, and she can find no solace for the loneliness and grief which she is experiencing. Finding no release from the memories of her lost paradise, Christine seeks escape from her anguish in the desire for Death. However, her unanswered pleas to Death tighten her bondage to grief:
Dueil engoisseux, rage desmesurée,
Grief-desespoir, plein de forsennement,
Langour sanz fin, vie maleührée
Pleine de plour, d'engoisse et de tourment,
Cuer doloreux qui vit obscurement,
Tenebreux corps sus le point de perir,
Ay, sanz cesser, continuellèment;
Et si ne puis ne garir ne morir. 0

As sorrow weaves its own time and landscape, gradually she is
severed from reality:

Seulete suy partout et en tout estre.
Seulete suy, ou je voise ou je siée,
Seulete suy plus qu'autre rien terrestre,
Seulete suy de chascun delaissée,
Seulete suy durement abaissee,
Seulete suy souvent toute esployée,
Seulete suy sanz ami demourée. 11

Since the flow of events defies explanation, she unleashes
her anger at Fortune who remains impervious to the human cry. Couched
in caprice, Fortune continues to sow a wasteland in Christine's life.
Absorbed in her sadness, the widow sees the world as pitiless and
herself as utterly forsaken. So as not to offend, she hides her feel-
ings, but this effort only makes them harder to bear. The widow's
suffering is exemplified in this ronduo where the relentless waves of
tears intensify and suggest the futility of her efforts to emerge from
their tyranny:

Source de plour, riviere de tristece,
Flun de doulour, mer d'amertume pleine
As Christine's grief is slightly allayed, due in part to her expressing it in verse, she changed her theme to one calculated to please her growing audience, that of courtly love, which was to become the dominant theme in her lyric poetry. Although her intention in choosing the "sentement ... d'amours" was to write of more joyful emotions, Christine saw the fate of the woman in love through her own subjectivity and feelings as a widow. To know love, she understood, was for the woman to experience bereavement and suffering. After a happiness, rapturous but brief, comes the pathos of loss and grief, the awakening to the bitterness of dreams brutally shattered and the entrance into the loneliness and fright of eternal night. Here memory, regrets and desires linger on, and no consolation is possible:

O Amours dure et sauvage,
Certes, qui te fait hommage
Se met en divers servage,

Car ta puissance est trop forte,
Dure et diverse,

Que tout cuer ou es aherse
Entre en la porte
De deuil et en honneur morte
Il se renverse.

Ains suis a grief deuil livrée,
Et délivrée,
Bien voy, ne m'en verray jamais,
Car désir renaît
M'est-on cueur, souvenir navré
M'a...

........................
... et je pleure et larmoie,
Plaine de douil et de désir ensemble; ...

As Christine began to compose verse she followed the tradition of courtly love poetry. However, in her short poems and romances, it becomes apparent that Christine deviated from the accepted pattern of the man-woman love relationship with all of its guiding rules. According to the original conception of courtly love, the lover reveres the lady as a goddess who incarnates unconscious wishes, and as such she is impersonal and inaccessible. From her lofty position, she appears haughty and must be continuously entreated before her mercy may be touched. An element of her superiority, as well as the essence of love if it is to be noble, is that she may choose to bestow or refuse her love. In respect to the lady, the lover feels himself an inferior being, her humble servant who obeys her commands. However, through diligence, courtesy and the performance of noble deeds he hopes in a long supplication to win her favor. In gratitude and adoration, he vows her exclusive homage and loyalty, signifying thereby that he will be, as he was, a sincere, discrete and faithful lover.

Both Christine's love lyrics and love narrative follow the traditional courtly love style in the initial stage of the romance
when the suitor courts the lady, but only in this stage. The love poems consist of short lyrics grouped in collections entitled Cent Balades, Virelais, Rondeaux..., two narrative poems—a pastoral, the Dit de La Pastoure, and a courtly romance, the Duc des Vrais Amans—and a final collection of short lyrics known as the Cent Balades d'Amant et de Dame. Although all of Christine's individual poems are placed in the abstract setting of a court, in her final collection, the Cent Balades d'Amant et de Dame, the poems are presented as dialogues between the lover and the lady, or as soliloquies in alternating sequence, so that a love story emerges. In all but the narrative poems, whether it is the man who speaks or the lady who recollects his words and manner, the same sequence is followed. The chevalier, under the lady's spell, claims that in spite of his unworthiness and his timidity in her presence, he can no longer conceal his suffering:

Plus ne vous puis celer la grant amour
Dont je vous aim, ...

                      ................................
...
mais or voy la journée
Que ma vigour est du tout affinée
Par trop amer qui m'occit et cueurt seure,
Se de vous n'ay reconfort sans demeure.15

Although he insists that his hope will be upheld "par obeîr, souffrir et bien servir,"16 he feels he will die if she does not grant him the favor of her love. After he has allayed her fears over the
preservation of her honor and has declared his intention of fidelity, he thanks her for her gift of love which inspires him now to greater valor.

In the narrative poems, the words and gestures of the suitor reveal the same attitude of humility. The chevalier in the Dit de la Pastoure, charmed by the innocence of the shepherdess Marote, behaves modestly toward her, helping her to gather her flock and reassuring her that his friendship is offered kindly:

... 'Dieux vous doint bon main,
Bergierete savoureuse,
Ne soiez pas paoureuse
De moy qui suis vostre ami

Car pastouriaux aussi sommes,
Voz chiers amis et voz homes.'...17

In the Duc des Vrais Amans, which is presented as a prince's own narration of his love affair, he recounts how as an adolescent he wished to be in love so as to win glory, but he remained too awkward to initiate courtship until he renewed acquaintance with a princess of renown with whom he fell in love. After perfecting his knightly virtues, he invited her to his castle and during her visit they shared in the pleasures of courtly life. According to the prince's reminiscences, he became ill after her departure; thus in tearful letters to the princess he implored her mercy promising to be trust-worthy and true if she would favor him with her love. When she conceded and welcomed his arrival at her castle, he pledged to her
his life-long devotion:

Car je suis vostre homme lige
Et cuer, corps et ame oblige
A vous, belle; ...

.........................
Si vous mercy, belle et bonne,
Humblement, ...

.........................
... s'osteray
De moy toute laide tache
Et a honneur prendray tasche
Que je vouldray poursuivre
Pour les vaillans ensuivre
Ainsi me ferez proudomme. 18

All through her poetry Christine's first deviation from the classic model of courtly love becomes apparent in her portrayal of the lady during courtship. Personally, Christine finds no correspondance between the actual woman and the contrived image portrayed in courtly love tradition. The woman's resistance in courtship comes not from haughtiness but from the high value she places on her honor: her established reputation and her idealized conception of love:

Se j'estoie certaine que on m'amast,
Sans requerir ne penser villenie,
Et qu'a l'amant, sans plus, que on le clamast
Trés douz amy souffisist, pas ne nie
Que ce ne fust
Vie plaisant qu'am... 19

Because of her suitor's patient courtship, however, and her own aroused sensibility, she ignores all forewarnings and yields to
temptation. Once the woman enters into love, she is transfigured.

After her promise of love is given, her supplicant is transformed into the beloved and her admiration of her lover's valor represents her illusion that her lover is unique. She becomes consequently preoccupied with her feelings and necessarily assumes that her lover will be constant.

Christine's three romances delineate these modifications of the woman's feelings during courtship—the beginnings and the expansion of her love. The young shepherdess Marote, pictured initially in the pastoral, the Dit de la Pastoure, as content with her daily tasks and cherishing her independent and carefree life, experiences new emotions after a chance meeting with a chevalier who, with flattering words for her loveliness and song, begins to woo her. Although cautioned by her friend concerning the wisdom of bowing to the knight's attentions for whom, she says, Marote can only be a diversion—

'Cuidaeroies tu amée
Estre de lui, folie, nyce!
Garde qu'il ne te honnisse,
Car s'amour n'aras tu pas;
Et ne te fie en ce pas
N'en son regard douz et simple'; ... 20

She cannot refuse his gracious prayer for her friendship when she insists that her honor will be enhanced. Suddenly losing interest in her former pastimes and companions, she becomes absorbed in her
feelings of happiness which she spontaneously expresses:

Ha! le plus doux qui jamais soit formé,  
Le plus plaisant que nulle autre accointast,  
Le plus parfait pour estre bon clamé,  
Le mieulx amé qu'onques mais femme amast! ... 21

The princess in the Duc des Vrais Amans was strongly admonished as well against entrance into a courtly love affair, but despite her temporary refusal she could not resist the invitation to love. Claiming that she wished to lift the prince's dejected spirit and to be the occasion for his advancement in valor, she arranged for their meetings and welcomed her new happiness.

The woman's awakening to love is best illustrated in the Cen Balades d'Amant et de Dame where in her first poems the lady detaches herself from any possibility of a love relationship, because she assumes that notoriety will inevitably develop for the woman in love and because of her high regard for her own honor:

... mais ne suis apprêée  
La Dieu mercy! es las ne en la serre  
Du dieu d'Amours.  
Je ne lui fais requestes ne clamours,  
Je vif sans lui en plaisance et en joye,  
Par amour n'aim ne amer ne voulroie.  
.................................
Et beau mocquier m'ay de femme apprêée  
En tel donger ou mieulx lui vaulsist querre  
Pour soy tuer ...  
Car perdu a du tot honneur sur terre.22

After a period of conflict between reason and love--
the tenderness she experiences allays all scruples and she feels it
to be only reasonable to love and know happiness. When she abandons
her struggle to resist, she praises her lover and love:

Si me suis toute ordonnée
A l'amour, ne deffinée
   Ne finée
N'iert ja l'amour qui souffire
Me doit bien, car je me mire
   Et remire
En sa beauté sans orgueil,
Et il fait en tout accueil
   Ce que je veuill.\textsuperscript{24}

The continuation of the love affair is contingent upon
separations so that the lovers might not become imperfect in each
others' eyes or be observed in their furtive encounters. During these
absences the woman's emotions simulate those of the aggrieved widow.
After the departure of her lover, all of Christine's heroines share
virtually the same experience—loneliness and melancholy:

Seullecte a part, de tristesse garnie,
En durs regrais lasse, pensiue et morne,
Seray tousjours de leesse banie,
Tant que m'amour du voyage retourne,
   Ne n'aray bien, ...\textsuperscript{25}
They share longing for the beloved, intensified by memories of past happiness:

Son venir et son aler
Et son gracieux parler
Adès m'est vis que je voye

..........................
Tout le cuer en plours me noye
Et me defaillement li membre
Quant tous ses fais je remembre
Et il est de moy si loings; ...26

To be free of their sadness, they wish for death:

Et ma vie dolente en tel dueil passe
Que briefve mort mille fois mieulx amasse

..........................27
Car près d'un an suis ja en ce martire.

Finally, a fantasy life is created in which imaginary fears become real and feelings of disharmony with the environment arise:

Ce moys de May tout se resjoye,
Ce me semble, fors moy, lassette! ...28

Because the woman in love must necessarily conceal her feelings, her somber moods affect her surroundings, and she feels as though she wears the widow's garb.

When the "temporary" separation lasts beyond all possibility that the lover might return, the identification between the widow and the broken-hearted woman is completed; the woman in love feels as abandoned as does the widow. It seems as if Marote's knight, for
example, is not to return from his present journey. She has lost her joyfulness and her health; estranged from her companions who reproach her, her tranquil life is no longer fulfilling. Although little by little the chevalier vanishes from the scene and Marote is disappointed by love, she ends her song by bidding all true lovers to pray that her chevalier return safely, for her illusion does not completely fade. The glow of romance has so transformed her everyday world that to relinquish the imaginative longing would be to descend to a hostile reality, barren of joy:

\begin{verbatim}
..............................
Dont souvent je me demente
A vray Amour et guermente
Qui me fist enamourer
D'un tel que son demourer
Me fait livrer a martire
Et destruire tire a tire
Cuer et corps et esperit.
..............................
... se Dieux tost ne l'ameine,
Il en est pic de ma vie!
Car sanz lui je n'ay envie
De vivre; il est la pasture
Sans qui de vivre n'ay cure. ...
\end{verbatim}

The princess in the *Duc des Vrais Aman* likewise feels bereft. Her love affair with the Duke continued for ten years, characterized by brief interludes of happiness and lengthy absences to ensure the reputations of the lovers; the affair was then discovered and the princess, brought into public disgrace. Although the Duke had begun his narration of the romance on a tone of youthful hope which
declined with maturity into melancholy, it is ended with the lady's expression of hopeless grief, for Christine added as an epilogue to the tale an interchange of poems that the lovers composed for solace during separations. The last of these is a plainte by the princess to Love. Ill in bed and dissociated from the love relationship except in memory, the joyful past appears to her as fraudulent, so cruelly did it disappoint her expectations:

Plus que nulle aultre dolente,
Amours, a toy me guermente
Du mal qu'il fault que je sente
   Et du martire
Dont tu m'as mis a a la sente,

............................
Car de toy fus decele,

............................
Puis que cellui, qui requise
Tant m'avoit ...

............................
Ne plus ne m'aime ne prise,
Et de s'amour suis esprise

............................
Si est bien drois que je doye
   En dure guise
Dueil mener sans jamais joye
Avoir, ... 30

Because the prince no longer seeks a way for them to meet, the princess presumes that he has found a new lover, and as love has disappointed her, she concludes that she was deceived by her credulity. Thus the romance ends inconclusively—whether the Duke's supposed infidelity is a product of her fears, or a premonition that time will extinguish his sadness and eventually his love, or that it was love
he wished for, not she.

In the *Cent Balades d'Amant et de Dame* which is Christine's concluding romance, the woman's feelings of betrayal have a basis in reality. After an ephemeral union of affections between the lover and the lady, the course of their love affair abruptly shifts. The lover claims to be continuously called away on pressing matters:

Et ne vous vuelvez deslerre
Que j'ay un petit affaire. 31

And he also explains to the lady that he must reduce his visits so as not to arouse scandal:

Ce ne fust que je redoube
Le parler de mesdisans,
Que mau feu arde ...
..........................
Hardiemment passeroie
Et plus souvent vous verroie, ... 32

His beloved should not doubt him, he insists, because, as she can see, he bears loyalty on his devise and is clothed in the blue of fidelity. However, is it not she, he accuses, who loves another, and if she is negligent, why not he? As the lover's ballads grow brusque with impatience, the lady's imploring or reproachful tone lengthens her poems. Her wounded love appeals to his sense of compassion and to his conscience; she taunts him by observing the emptiness of his gestures:
S'il n'est loyal, s'amour tiens a legiere,
La gist l'amour, non pas au bleu porter.33

and protests that "les chemins sont communs et soubzmis/ A toute gente."34 Eventually, her fears of his infidelity are confirmed.

In the final ballad, the lady, feverishly ill in bed, bids her adieu to Love, her destroyer, and in a concluding lai mortel she denounces Love for its devastating treachery. The nature of Love is so perverse, she mourns, that whoever falls into its power must meet bitter grief. Engulfed in her memory, the lady recapitulates the successive stages which brought her to this state of grief—how she trusted in the courteous manner of her lover until the time that he, finding her heart firmly anchored in his love, withdrew his heart from hers. Her last words, dictated by despair, beg Love to carry her sorrowful complainte to him who can be her only cure, even though she knows that this one way of salvation is closed to her forever:

.............. mais ma grief complainte
Au moins il te plaise apporter
   Et tost courir
A celui qui me fait perir
   Sans arrester,
Combien qu'il n'a nul vueil d'oster
   Ne secourir
Mon mal, dont j'ay la couleur tainte.
   Ainsi fineray mon age,
Assez juene, en ce malage
Qui m'est rente et heritage,
Dont ma lasse vie est mendre.

....................
Ouquel lieu ne truis suffrage
In all Christine's romances, the woman's feelings of deprivation, despair and isolation from reality are symbolized by the violent illness into which she falls. This woman, consumed by love, cannot conceive of a "nevermore." Whispering to an imaginary figure, she tries to recapture the love of her beloved even while she realizes that, since he is no longer in the reality of the secret love they had shared, her own faithfulness and grief cannot possibly affect him. His promises, she sees, were binding while his affection lasted, but once their respective feelings ceased to correspond, he attached little importance to vows. Humiliated by the loss of her honor, the woman realizes with further shame that were she again to receive his love, it would be feigned:

Mais rien n'y veut ma complainte
N'estre de plours palle et tainte,
Car jamais, fors d'amours fainte,
Ne m'amera, ... 36

Just as perfidious Fortune deceived the widow, Love has destroyed the woman: Fortune and Love must be denounced for their irrationality and treachery. However, the perfidy of Love is that even if from the beginning the woman fears its sorrowful ending, it is a passion which, although it annihilates the soul, cannot be resisted. The
woman on her deathbed, longing for the intense happiness she once
felt, knows that she would once again, no matter what the cost, risk
the adventure.

As Christine construed the woman's experience in courtly love,
she discovered a reality which not only deviates from but radically
opposes the traditional view. The qualities attributed to the lover
and his beloved are seen as reversed. It is the suitor who becomes
remote and unyielding. The presumption of which he was presumed
guilty during courtship is realized when, in cowardly arrogance and
indifference to his obligation, he conceals his truancy with false
words. No longer the exemplar of courtly virtues, his aggressive-
ness obliterates courtesy, bravery and generosity. In her dis-
appointment the woman loses her alleged perfection. Thus the lovers
exchange positions because their qualities have been reversed. The
suitor's bondage is, as he has said, do-ulz,37 for he remains inde-
pendent, whereas the woman's servitude began as soon as she surrender-
ed her love. Even when the lover remains firm in his loyalty, it is
the lady's reputation—not his—which has been injured, and his res-
pect for her will be unconsciously affected by her disgrace, with the
result that he will love her less. The once idolized lady enters the
realm of literary tradition where to love is to be inherently vul-
nerable.

Thus, according to Christine's distinctive interpretation,
the experience of courtly love remains a beautiful creation for the man but devastates the woman by the disillusionment she must inevitably encounter. Courtly love is any love between man and woman not rooted in and sanctioned by the reality of contemporary society. Although Christine did not exclude the possibility of love in marriage, "amours" signifies for her romance beyond marriage. Love, without the safeguards that marriage provides—duty, mutual interests to protect, and companionship—is an illusion for the woman. Man was carried to power and received the blessing of her love on the strength of promises he was unable to fulfill. Unable or unwilling? In Christine's love stories the woman's dreams evaporate.

In the poetry itself, Christine makes no attempt to analyze the reasons for the ending which always remain obscure. The reasons are merely suggested: Is it man's nomadic instinct which must assert itself in spite of the will to constancy? Or is that will to constancy less sincere in Christine's society than in days of old?

Christine's conclusion concerning courtly love, however, even if it is only implicit in her lyric poetry, is unambiguous. Under the guise of an ideal, she reveals it as a pretext designed to serve the intentions and pleasures of the man. The joy induced in the lover's heart by the experience of love inspires him to brave acts and behavior, easing and precipitating his entrance into maturity. Fashioned by man, courtly love confers upon him—and in Christine's
view, only upon him--its benefits. Christine is indicting love not because of disbelief in the possibility of genuine feeling, nor out of prudery, but because of its devastating effect upon the woman whose nature is to suffer from the loss of a passion which cannot last and who must bear the burden of its consequences. The quest for pure love is one of the most sublime ideals mankind has created and is an irrepressible desire of the human soul; courtly love is therefore irresistible, and Christine sees the woman in peril. This attempt to awaken man's sensitivity to woman's nature and social situation represents Christine's first challenge to masculine supremacy.

...
The *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* constitutes Christine's first explicit statement on the injustices done to women. On May Day, 1399, Cupid is presiding over a special session of his court where, before the gods and goddesses, he reads a petition presented by women in which they have registered their grievances. Their cause is just, he concludes, and, indignant at the deterioration of nobility, especially in France, he pleads on behalf of the women. In the person of Cupid, Christine diagnoses what is implicitly stated in her lyric poems: women of all ages and stations are being disgraced and outraged daily by disloyal men. Wooing them in brightly trimmed carriages, joining parties uninvited and flirting in church, they deceive trusting ladies to whom they swear eternal love. Cupid states sorrowfully that it is all a masquerade and that the mischief does not end with men's duplicity. The God of Love relates how the betrayal of the once-beloved lady is fully accomplished: men boast! wherever they congregate—in taverns or the king's chamber—they tell of their amorous triumphs, as each swears to the truth of the conquest which he is describing in detail. Rejected suitors also contrive stories which contribute to the calumny. Motivated by vainglory or envy, nearly every man defames women. Then the deceivers and slanderers accuse all women of frailty, inconstancy, deceitfulness and all of the greater
vices. This so-called informed opinion eventually comes to constitute dogma which seems unassailable when accepted and perpetuated by such writers as Ovid and Jean de Meun. Since the authors of these derogatory opinions are clerics who teach the schoolboys, and since the boys become the authors of the future, the propaganda is passed on from generation to generation. 38

Looking beyond this Epistre for Christine's own account of other practices of abuse to which women were currently subjected, we find her lamenting about the women of her time who are being wounded in their feelings, violated in their person and deprived of their rights to hold property. When nobles, through brutality or intimidation, seduce women in times of peace and like chiens affamés 39 dishonor them during war, there is no limit to which the common people will go as soon as the moment allows, especially during civil war. Married women fare little better, Christine observes, if Lady Fortune brings them a bad husband who, by pretense of jealousy, holds them in subjection and fear. All misfortunes, however, fall on the widow, for greed as well as pride, lust and anger may conspire against her. She becomes an immediate prey to relatives seeking a share in her fortune and debtors who do not have verifiable proof, and whom she pays in order to escape court proceedings. The greed of those she considered friends and admirers is even more heartless when insinuations are made that her husband formerly maintained his
standard of living by resorting to loans. As her money is depleted and her husband's memory blemished, so is her own good reputation lost, and whoever honored her while her husband was alive "... a present le doz lui tourne." After suffering humiliation and the loss of inheritance and property, she is left destitute at poverty's door:

De femmes vesves, d'orphelins,
Qui n'ont argent, fours, ne molins,
Ne granches, ne terres, n'ostelz. ...

Women are themselves treated as property. For Christine the most subversive influence in social life comes from the tutors of the nobles whose appetite for profit knows no moral restriction. In the critical period of adolescence, a prince, if he is not well trained in discipline, is permitted to feel that he can act as he pleases. Because no social pressures or fear of punishment control the behavior of a powerful and spoiled young lord, unconscionable advisors seek to indulge his sensual inclinations:

Et pour ce, encore à parler des faulx meynistes et desloyaulx conseillers, quant de telz en a environ grant seigneur ou puissant homme, ou monde n'est plus grant peril, ...

soit luxurieux, adont ne fauldroit mie à eulx bien travailler pour lui complains, de faire diligence partout que filles, femmes mariées et de tous estaz soient cerchées et quises afin que leur seigneur en
soit par eulx servis, en les decevant par maintes fraudes, qui mieulx mieulx, et qui-plus-en-scet servir est le meilleur varlet. 42

Whenever women are procured for the noble’s pleasure, he becomes conditioned to dissolute ways, while his flatterers, satisfying his erotic ruthlessness, are advanced in his favor.

It seems to Christine that charity is dead because the protective shields of noblemen, formerly extended to women who were in need, lie buried. Although all women are rendered vulnerable, those who are in particular need suffer the most. Because of an abortive justice, no reliance can be placed on legal assistance: women’s rights are protected only when they offer money to influence decisions, and judicial counsel, because of its dishonest motivation, merely humiliates them:

Et justice, qui favorable
Leur doit estre, n’est pas durable
Adès pour elles, se de quoy
Bien payer n’ont mais en requoy
On leur dira belles leçons!

..............................

... mais tel conseil
A nulle croire ne conseil,
Car conseil de honteux effet
Ne fait acroire en nesun fait.
Ainsi charité morte trouvent;,
Ce acent celles qui l’espreuvent! 43

Aristocrats, once the refuge of needy women, have either abdicated their duty or set an example of abuse.
It is to be noted that Christine does not, however, make a blanket condemnation of any group. In order to be fair and to encourage responsible conduct, she excludes from her criticism men whom she considers to be honest and upright:

Plusieurs gentilz hommes cognoistre 
Cuide bons (Dieu les vueille accroistre!) 
Et qui en armes sont vaillans, 
Et en meurs petit deffaillans, 
Et de qui Renommee compte 
Mainte bonté et maint l'on compte. 
Et tel gent deust on evancier, 
Honorar, amer et prisier, 
Pour a tous donner exemplaire 44 
Que bons doivent a chacun plaire.

Nevertheless, men of good will, in her opinion, represent too small a minority to serve as effective models for conduct. Thus women are deprived of redress and are consequently rendered defenseless and remain undefended. 45

It is from this point of departure that Christine herself first rises to a conscious and organized defense of women in the Cité des Dames. 46 She describes herself as sitting alone in her study, one day in 1404, reading a book which was then enjoying a wide popularity, the Livre des Lamentations by Matheolus. Although she finds it distasteful and gives it only a cursory reading, it leads her to wonder why so many different men, including distinguished philosophers, write such absurdities about women and, as if with one voice, judge feminine nature and behavior "enclins et plains de tous
les vices." As impartially as she can, she begins to examine herself and think about the women she knows so as to determine the truth of the statements made by Matheolus. Unable to find any substantiation, Christine can only conclude ironically: since it is impossible for men of such intellect to err, she must attribute to her own simplicity of mind the inability to understand the allegation that she and other women are defective creatures. In feigned sorrow over this disparagement, she asks how God in His infinite wisdom could have fashioned so curiously the feminine sex, and then she prays to Him:

Helas! Dieux, pourquoi ne me faiz tu naistre au monde en masculin sexe, a celle fin que mes inclinacions fussent toutes a te mieulx servir et que je ne errasse en riens et fusse de si grant parfeccion comme homme masle ce dit estre? Mais puisque ainsi est que ta debonnaireté ne se est de tant estanude vers moy, esparagnes donques ma negligence en ton service, biaux sire Dieux, et ne te desplaise--car le servant qui moins reçoit de guerions de son seigneur, moins est obligié a son service.48

As she sits in the darkness feeling downcast, suddenly there appear three crowned ladies who illuminate the room. They tell her that they have come to banish the ignorance which is so blinding her that she is trusting outside opinion more than her own mind. They then remind her that philosophers are not infallible and that the best things are the most debated. "Or te reviens a toy meismes, reprens ton scens et plus ne te troubles pour telz fanffelues."49
Women, they say, have for so long a time been living as in an open field "sans haye," neglected by noblemen who have grown careless in their duties. Because no champion has come to defend them, Christine is to be entrusted with a special mission: she is to build a glorious City which will shelter securely all fine women forever. This City Christine is to figuratively construct in the Cité des Dames, and since the names of the three ladies who will guide her are "Raison," "Droitture" and "Justice," no error will be possible in constructing it.

After stating the prevailing popular opinion of men concerning women, Christine uses her reasoning power, as embodied in her allegorical characters, to present arguments which invalidate these erroneous statements written about women. The invalidation is the specified purpose of the book. However, at the completion of the City, this invalidation is seen as an important factor in the achievement of her ultimate thesis: the maligning of women, which demeans them, serves as a justification for further abuse since one does not consider himself unjust in mistreating an imperfect creature. Thus, in silencing the verbal attack, Christine actually accomplishes her larger aim of providing protection for women against all potential injustices. Therefore, the City prevails as a concept beyond the scope of this one work.

At the same time the Cité des Dames is Christine's most comprehensive statement in her defense of women. However, since this
defense, which is Christine's principal preoccupation, is mirrored in all her writings, an accurate reconstruction of its nature requires an examination of more than this one book. Thus, one distinguishes three phases of her defense, all interrelated and presented simultaneously. The first exposes injustices to women; this is the indispensable foundation on which her defense rests, and a number of these injustices have already been observed. The second, a consequence of the first and likewise pleaded negatively, attempts to prove the accusations against women to be morally unsound and unjust. Once doubt is cast on the validity of these accusations, she proceeds to the third and most important phase of her argument, in which the charges are shown to be incompatible with both spiritual truth and human truth according to her interpretation. Here, Christine argues in a positive fashion by offering observable facts in favor of women. Each alleged vice is refuted by revealing the presence of its corresponding virtue. At the conclusion of Christine's conceptual defense as embodied in her City, she hopes that the reader will view woman from an enlarged and new perspective with the result that he will judge the charges to be misrepresentations and, in light of the truth as she has presented it, unacceptable. Christine's defense is therefore designed to accomplish the total vindication of women of the past, present, and future.

Before examining Christine's presentation of the positive qualities of women, we must analyze her refutation of the charges
against women. This refutation is accomplished through logical argumentation. In the Epistre, Cupid recalls that the great city of Troy met its defeat by the invaders' subtlety, rhetoric and treason. He then asks if it is surprising that a mere woman succumbs when her suitor uses all his guile and fortune to abet him in his triumph. Falling before superior forces does not necessarily imply the weakness of the vanquished, he insists. If a woman is betrayed and then reneges on her promise, can she be called deceitful? The God of Love wonders, moreover, whether men truly believe women to be weak and deceitful. If woman were truly so weak, would it be necessary to devise so many tricks and complicated tactics to ensure her conquest? "Car pour chastel pris ne fault guerre emprendre." 52 Nor should woman be accused of artfully pursuing man, since the social custom of the day allows man and not woman to take the initiative:

Je ne sçay pas penser ne concevoir
Comment femme peust homme decoy
Ne le va pas ne chercher ne querir,
Ne sus son lieu prier ne requérir,
Ne pense a lui, ne ne lui en souvient,
Quant decepvoir l'omme et tempter la vient. 53

Thus, even in the Epistre Christine begins to raise doubts over the legitimacy of the attacks against women. If one side makes the rules, assumes the favored position and wins, is it then right to impute weakness to the defeated opponent, she asks. It should not be called deceitfulness when the loser accepts a partner who, she hopes,
will play more fairly, or when, with newly found wisdom, she with-
draws from further games.\textsuperscript{54}

When dishonest statements about women are given tangible form in writing and are perpetuated in books such as the second part of the Roman de la Rose, Christine believes that a grave wrong is committed. Even when evidence disproves the content of such books, the weight of tradition of this anti-feminist literature is such that the reader tends to accept unquestioningly its false accusations with its one-dimensional portrait of women. The vituperation against women in the Roman de la Rose serves to diminish confidence in them, Christine suggests, and consequently justifies betraying and mistreating them. The so-called realism of Jean de Meun's poem is constituted largely by his eulogy of nature in the act of pro-
creation; Christine sees his apology of deception in which he argues that amorous passion would make one forgetful of the true purpose of sexual relationships, as a mere sophism. His argument undermines the Christian virtues of shame, chastity and loyalty, and serves as a pretext for what Christine considers illicit behavior.

Meun's partisans saw him as a moralist, who presented human foibles in order that they might be corrected through his use of irony. For example, he introduces blasphemous symbols for the parts of woman's body in order to show the extravagance of the lover's passion; he portrays a husband who reviled all women to point out
the inanity of jealousy. Christine believed that whatever was the moral impulse behind the book, it could not redeem its possible harmful effect. Due to her belief in the mind’s receptivity to evil, she feared the uncritical reader would not consider the author’s possible broader purpose, with the resulting danger that the safeguards to virtuous conduct being weakened by such apologies of vice, his energy would overflow in the direction of aggression. She therefore considered the Roman de la Rose to be a social menace because of its immoral atmosphere, which provoked lust and vice:

...Mais ... je dis que c'est exhortacion de vice, confortant vie dissolue, doctrine pleine de deceuance, voye de dampnacion, diffameur publique, cause de souspecon et mescreandise, honte de plusieurs personnes, et peut estre d'erreur. Mais ie sçay bien que sur ce en l'excusant vous me répondrez que le bien y est enorté pour le faire et le mal pour l'eschiuer. Si vous puis soûldre par meilleur raison que nature humaine, qui de soy est encline a mal, n'a nul besoing que on lui remontoije le pié dont elle cloche pour plus droit aler.55

Because such an art of love was directed to a male audience, the moral decay of society to which it contributed would be to the prejudice of women. Man, having defeated woman by guile, would feel justified in his disparagement of her. This would create a self-sustaining cycle, and such a book, Christine believed, must therefore be the instrument of wrong.

As a means of concluding the negative section of her defense,
Christine describes how man has devised the rules of the game to which woman unknowingly consents. He then accuses and judges according to the rules of his own design. Advocate in his own cause, he makes woman act as she does, then tells her what she is so as to exculpate himself and allow him to go on with the game. As power desires to perpetuate itself, the written word becomes his accomplice, the means by which he may maintain and buttress his own position.

It is in this way that innocent woman is made to appear guilty. Soon all women in general are spoken of and written of as guilty.

Christine suggests this process in her love poetry. After the lover's idealization of his lady into a goddess, flattering to them both, she is made to descend upon earth. There, divested of divinity, she remains the same unsubstantial self, only now figuring simply as frail. Eventually, as occasion arises, her supposed basic weakness fans out into the more distinct traits of fickleness, deceitfulness and dullness, and finally extends to the more dissonant key of quarrelsomeness, lust and greed. Thus the woman seems to be characterized by absence of integrity, guilty in the eyes of God and man. The shadow of the evil of Eve obscures the individual woman who exists unknown to literature.

It is because of this system with its invisible rules where man's self-seeking motives prejudice the verdict, that Christine suggests that the accusations made against women should be dismissed.
Thus she brings to a close the second part of her defense, and the end of the negative section, attempting to show that the accusations against women are morally, and according to justice, indefensible. But if one still wonders why the irreversible cycle is never broken, she repeats: "Je leur respons que les livres ne firent/ Pas les femmes."56 All would be different if books were written by women, as they well know that the shares have been unequally divided amongst the participants, and the strongest ones have taken the biggest and the best.57

The third and positive part of Christine's defense is concerned with illuminating the nature and characteristics of women as well as emphasizing their contributions to society. Realizing that in defending women she would be accused of feminine bias, she stated explicitly that she wrote for the single purpose of revealing the truth as she saw it:

Et ne croiez ... que je die ne mette en ordre ces dictes defenses par excusacion fauvourable pour ce que femme suis. Car veritablement mon motif n'est simplement fors soustenir pure verite, .... Et de tant comme voirement suis femme, plus puis tesmoingnien en ceste partie que cellui qui n'en a l'experience, ains parle par deuinalles et d'auenture.58

She believed that if she could discover as much of the truth about women as was within her means, with the greatest measure of objectivity possible, she would then be in a better position to disprove the
degrading statements made about women and to convince men that women actually possess qualities superior to those men willingly admit. After searching for this truth from religious writing, mythology and human history, she could then appraise it in light of her own observations of daily life. At this point, she felt, her own womanhood would give her an understanding of woman which no man could possibly possess. Christine assumed that such a study, undertaken with serious intent by a thinking woman, would necessarily shed new light on a subject which till then had been treated in most literature in jest or with prejudiced motivation—in either case with little evidence that the writer assumed responsibility for pursuing an objective truth.

To support her claim of women's essential goodness, Christine first considered knowledge obtained by divine revelation. She turned therefore to the Bible, which constituted for a person of her culture the authoritative source of religious history; its narration enunciated God's will for humanity and was the starting point for salvation. To begin her study, she examined the two most crucial events in the history of mankind—the Creation and the Lord's Mission and Resurrection. Christine found no Biblical justification for man's allegation of woman's inferior nature, in regard either to her origin or to her spiritual destiny. She accepted the story of the Creation, that God had created man from the dust of the earth, and that from man's own body He then created woman. Christine believed
that man was God's noblest creature, and that woman, also created in God's image, was endowed with reason and beauty. When Adam awoke and found woman by his side, he loved her and said that in all phases of his existence she would be his companion. Because of the prevalence of the belief that Eve bore the onus of guilt in mankind's punishment, Christine also examined the causal relationship between the first sin and human mortality. The blame for mankind's banishment, she explains, should not rest upon Eve but rather upon the serpent, in whose false words the guileless Eve believed:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{... mais du decevement,} \\
\text{Dont on blasme dame Eve nostre mere,} \\
\text{.................................} \\
\text{Je di pour vray qu'oncq Adam ne dequt} \\
\text{Et simplement de l'anemi congut} \\
\text{La parole qu'il lui donna a croire,} \\
\text{Si la cuida estre loial et voire,} \\
\text{.................................} \\
\text{Si ne fu donc fraude ne decepance,} \\
\text{Car simplece, sanz malice celée,} \\
\text{Ne doit estre decepance appellée.} \\
\text{Nul de degoit sanz cuidier decepvoir,} \\
\text{Ou aultrement decepance n'est voir.61}
\end{align*}
\]

She also points out that women were loved and honored by God who assigned to them a significant role in mankind's Redemption. Christine discovered that the women in the Gospel were not of weak or deceitful character, nor were they ever maligned. Women shed tears not from weakness but from compassion, and because of their compassion the Lord blessed women. Christ was never abandoned by women, either
during His life on earth or during His Passion and death; because of their firm faith, women remained devoted servants of the Lord:

Perfaitte amour, en foy grant arrestance,  
Grant charité, fervente volenté,  
Ferme et entier corage entalenté  
De Dieu servir, et grant semblant en firent,  
Car mort ne vif oncques ne le guerpirent.  
Fors des femmes fu de tous delaissié  
Le doulez Jhesus, navré, mort et blecíé.  

God's sanctioning of women is most clearly manifested in Mary, whom He invested with the dignity of bearing the Savior. In the Cité des Dames, Christine addresses Mary thus:

Or viens doncques a nous Royns celestes(s),  
habitacle de la Trinite, Joy des anges, estoille  
et radrice des desvoyez, esperance des vrays creans. O' dame, qui est celluy tant outrageux qui jamais osé pensser ne gitter hors de sa bouche que le sexe femenin soit vil, consideree ta dignité?  
Car se tout le demourant des femmes estoit mauvais, se passe et surmonte la lueur de ta bonté a plus grant comble que autre mauvaisté ne pourroit estre.  
Et quant Dieux voulst en cestuy sexe esleire son espouse--Dame tres excellente--pour l'onneur de toy, tous hommes se doivent garder non pas seulement de lblasmerl femmes, mais aussi de les avoir en grant reverence.  

The women who played a role in Christ's life suggested to Christine that their qualities of compassion and humility were essentially characteristic of woman's nature. Religious history then provided a model for Christine in formulating a concept of femininity. As she viewed women in history, legend, and modern life, it seemed to
her that meekness, modesty and kindness, as embodied in the Biblical women, were indeed descriptive of woman's basic disposition:

Car nature de femme est débonnaire,
Moult piteuse, paourouse et doubtable,
Humble, doule, coye et moult charitable,
Amiable, devote, en payx honteuse,
Et guerre craint, simple et religieuse,
Et en courroux tost apaise son yre,
Ne puert veoir cruaulté ne martire,
Et telles sont par nature sans doute
Condiçons de femme, somme toute.64

These qualities of gentleness, Christine observed, rather than being scorned as weakness should be regarded as a blessing: women generally are not guilty of crimes as great as those of men; they therefore do less harm in the world than do men. In anticipation of the objection that virtue is predicated on a moral struggle, she asserted that, if women naturally abstain from great vices, they should also be credited with virtue. She recalls that there were saints who, without moral conflict, attained the highest degree of glory.65

Believing that for Goodness to become virtue it must be conducive to good actions, Christine next extended the scope of her inquiry beyond a consideration of woman's nature to her character—specifically, her moral and mental characteristics. Religious history, in the stories of Sara, Rebecca, Esther and Judith, again provided Christine with a basis on which to form judgments and then led her to a general appraisal of woman's performance in the past and present.
If prejudices could be shaken, she concluded, and woman perceived more accurately, then the obvious would be recognized: from earliest times through the present, there have been fine, generous women, capable and learned. Moreover, she adds, since nature has not lost its power, women of virtue and distinction shall always exist:

Car moul en fu, est et sera de celles
Qui a louer sont com bonnes et belles
Et ou vertus et graces sont trouvées,
Sens et valeur en bonté esprouvées.65

Christine fully and readily admitted that there are wicked women in history and in everyday life, just as there are wicked men; however, one should not call all women wicked, she protested, because of the few who are, just as one does not call all of the apostles wicked because there was one Judas:

Et nottes qui plus est que de la compagnie de Jhesu
Cris ou ilz n'estoyent que douze hommes sy en y ot il un tres mauvais et les hommes oseroyent dire que toutes femmes deussent estre bonnes ou celles qui ne le sont que on les doyen[int] tant lapider.66

Because Christine was aware that a statement on women in general would not by itself cause men to revise their opinions and could be accused of being arbitrary, she built the greatest part of the defense with a documentary of real women, inviting her reader to be an observer of feminine virtues in action. If it could be shown that women have maintained exemplary private lives and have played
important roles in society's development at all periods of history, then the obvious would have to be recognized and would have to be acknowledged. Christine therefore undertook to examine women's moral, intellectual and spiritual characteristics so that their full and proper worth might be measured.

Because of women's spiritual origin, she is a moral being; Christine gives evidence that women have shown distinct traits of moral character in the conduct of their personal lives. She singles out for particular attention chastity, loyalty in love, loyalty in marriage, filial loyalty, and steadfastness in every aspect of everyday living.

Since Christine singles out chastity as woman's most important virtue, she relates the stories of two Biblical women, Susanna and Sara, who respected the holiness of wedlock by preferring punishment and death to violating the marriage bond. She adds the account of Rebecca, whom God rewarded by blessing her with a child in her old age. She notes in the story of Ruth that women have even preserved marriage's sanctity in widowhood. To clarify the misconception that it is only in the absence of physical charms that a woman's goodness exists, Christine presents the examples of the beautiful and faithful Penelope and of the pretty widow of Tiberius who continued to live virtuously in the midst of Nero's debauched court. Nor does woman's desire for purity exist simply for personal glory. When the
Cimbrian women saw their men defeated in an attempted invasion of Rome, they surrounded themselves by chariots and prepared to die. Recalling women who are loved in their later years, Christine cites the recent example of Queen Blanche de Castille who pleaded so reasonably with her son's antagonist, the Comte de Champagne, that he withdrew his forces and subsequently became her loyal friend.\(^{68}\)

Next to be considered is loyalty in romantic love. Claiming that women are no more promiscuous in affections than they are in use of their bodies, Christine recounts the love stories of Dido and Medea, presenting both heroines in a sympathetic light. Each of these princesses rescued a young hero from a sure death, and believing his words, sacrificed love, treasures, and a secure future to ensure his success. When later deserted by the opportunistic youth, neither princess could recover from grief. Dido perished of her own will. Medea also, according to some accounts, followed her own vengeful rage by destroying herself.\(^{69}\)

Christine continues to discuss loyalty—particularly, loyalty of wives to their husbands—in a conversation with "Droitture." Writing from the standpoint of the prevalent male opinion, she states that men accuse women not only of having easy morals but also of being disagreeable companions. Claiming that in old age and illness a servant is preferable to a wife, these authors discourage men's marrying. "Droitture" then reminds Christine that there have not been
women writers to portray wives truthfully. Christine knows that in reality there are marriages in which the companionship is happy; she has also seen marriages in which the fault lies with the husbands who mistreat their wives:

Ha! chiere amie [Christinel] quantes femmes est il, et tu meimes le sces qui usent leur lasse de vie ou liain de mariage par durté de leurs maris, en plus grant penitence que se elles fussent esclaves entre les Sarasins. Dieux! quantes dures bateures sans cause et sans raison, quantes ledanges, ...70

Christine was personally acquainted with wives who suffer patiently as they die from hunger and neglect.

Loyalty is also illustrated by accounts of wives' devotion to their husbands and their husbands' interests. A striking example is that of Queen Hypsiclea who, as companion-in-arms to her husband, relinquished comforts and luxury for a soldier's life of hardship. She remained his companion even when he was deserted by everyone else and tempered the harshness of his existence with her sympathy and understanding. Christine further dramatizes such devotion by recounting how widows, from their feelings of deep personal loss and from respect for the family bond, showed reverence for their husbands' memories. Queen Archemyre commanded the construction of a magnificent sarcophagus of marble as a perpetual symbol of prayer for King Mausole. Also evoked is the final moment
in the March of the Seven against Thebes. When princess Argia heard that her husband had been killed, she found his corpse on the battlefield. Neither the grimness of death nor the fear of defying Creon's order deterred her from her self-appointed task of paying honor to his body, which she burned and whose ashes she put in an urn. She then turned her attention to avenging his death.

Christine wishes to give further examples of wives' loyalty in marriage in order to refute critical statements. She recalls that such eminent rulers and sages as Pompey, Scipio and Seneca, in their extreme old age, were appreciated and loved by their wives. Wives have also endured the hardships of poverty and illness for their spouses. After citing the example of a Roman noblewoman who shared her husband's existence in exile and poverty, Christine is reminded of women of her own acquaintance whose husbands were afflicted with leprosy, the ultimate of miseries in medieval times. Faithful to their marriage vows, they disregarded their own welfare to follow their husbands to leperhouses where they ministered to their needs:

Car de telles ay congneues de qui leurs maris devenoient mesaulx et que il convenoit que ilz fussent separez du siecle et ains en maladerie. Mais onques leurs bonnes femmes laisser ne les vouldrent et mieulx amoyent aler avecques eulx pour les servir en leurs maladies et leur tenir la loyal foy promise en mariage, que demourer sans leurs maris bien aises en leurs maisons.
Loyalty of wives in marriage includes for Christine not only constancy in affection but sound judgment in offering advice. Despite men's recriminations against women for not respecting their husbands' private affairs, she believes that no one is more dependable than a good wife, not only in guarding her husband's secrets, but also in offering him judicious counsel. Had Brutus paid attention to Portia's pleas, he would have escaped death, and if Hector had not spurned the fears of Andromache, his life too would have been saved. Still another instance of loyalty in marriage is found in cases where wives used their ingenuity to ensure the safety of their husbands when their lives were in jeopardy. Turia, pretending that her husband had already fled into exile, ran through the streets, weeping and disheveled, while he remained concealed in her room. Christine thus concludes that evidence from history and her own society indicate that wives remain firm in their marriage commitments.72

Christine next reflects upon filial loyalty—a subject needing particular emphasis, she feels, because the attachment of daughters to parents is generally overlooked. For example, when a daughter is born, the husband becomes angry and the wife depressed because of his disappointment—an unjustified reaction. In reality, if a mother sets an example of good behavior, there should be no danger of a daughter's becoming wayward:

Car quant est a la doubté qu'elles facent folle,
il n'y a que de les saigement introduire quant elles sont petites et que la mère leur donne bon exemple par soy meisme en honnestété et doctrine. 
... et qu'elle soit garde de mauvaise compagnie et court tenue et en crainte. Car discipline tenue a enfans et aux jeunes leur est preparatoire de bonnes meurs a toute leur vie. 

Furthermore, the financial burden of a daughter, in spite of the payment of her dowry, is actually less than that of a son. And although parents exult in their sons as much as they do in their possessions, they seldom receive any gratitude from sons. Pride distorts the young men's natural affection, while their reckless ways, ambition and greed eventually become sources of parental distress. If a son becomes powerful, he treats them with insolence; he seeks his inheritance; and he does not give solace to his widowed mother. Even when sons are good to their parents, worldly demands and opportunities afforded to young men take them away from home. On the other hand daughters remain to offer their parents the comfort needed, especially in their later years. Christine describes the uniqueness of the daughter-parent relationship in different levels of society: the maid Griselde who worked at spinning to earn a living for her father and herself; the daughter of Mithradates who abandoned an easy life of pleasure to share her father's life of combat. 

Christine includes in her assessment of women's moral virtues a reflection on the virtue of steadfastness. As she contrasts her own portrait of the woman dedicating herself to her duties with that
of the supposedly frail woman described by male authors, she becomes
aware of a contradiction: while men refuse to admit that a woman
is strong, they do not consider that they themselves are often lack-
ing in strength:

Sont doncques ses hommes si constans que varier
leur soit comme chose hors de tout usaîge ou pou
commun qui tant accusent femmes de muableté et
d’inconstance? Et certes se ilz ne sont bien
fermes, trop leur est lait d’acuser autruy de
leur meismes vice ou s’il y demander la vertu que
ilz ne sevent avoir.\textsuperscript{75}

She passes in review the traitor Judas, the apostate Julian, the
tyrant Denis and the lineage of Roman emperors whose abysmal lives
were characterized by instability of purpose and who, when dominated
by destructive passions, degenerated to the limits of perversion.
Christine then wonders whether men do not feel ashamed when they
see that they are governed by men of such little character whose deeds
rarely accord with their words. Barbarous women like Athala, Jezebel
and Queen Brunehaut of France are unusual, she asserts, compared to
the women of either noble birth or modest condition who are not only
constant in their affection but who surmount trying circumstances
through their own resourcefulness.\textsuperscript{76} Judging from the evidence based
on examples which history and her personal experiences offer her,
Christine succeeds in establishing the fact that women are as capable
as their male counterparts in upholding a moral way of life.
Attention is next turned to the question of the depth and extent of women's intellectual capacity, and Christine seeks to substantiate her belief that woman's intelligence is equal to man's through discussion and by citing examples of women's activities in the areas of politics, scholarship, technology, the arts, and finally in practical living.

Before proceeding to an actual demonstration of their mental and practical abilities, however, Christine wonders whether it could still be justifiably said that women are not fully responsible beings since they do not serve as lawyers and judges. She reasons that for a harmonious and ordered community God wisely ordained a distribution of tasks among its members. Because He created man and woman to help each other, He divided their tasks according to genetic factors and gave to each the nature and tendencies to accomplish the special work of each as perfectly as possible. Men are stronger physically, therefore more aggressive and can, through superior strength, best enforce justice. There is no inherent correlation between external appearance and inner worth, Christine notes; thus woman's comparative physical weakness does not imply an inferior mental endowment.

Continuing her theoretical discussion concerning women's mental abilities, she observes that if women do appear to be duller, two reasons may satisfactorily explain this: first of all, it is not
possible for women to prove their capabilities when deprived of educational opportunities. Were girls enrolled in school, their innate capacity would enable them to learn as rapidly and with as much understanding as boys. Secondly, their mental powers are necessarily less developed because their occupations generally confine them to the home:

Scez tu [Christine] pourquoi ce est que moins scevent? Dame ["Raison"] non, se ne le me dites. Sans faille ce est pource qu'elles ne frequentent pas tant de diverses choses--ains se tiennent en leurs hostelz, et leur souffit de faire leur mainaige--et il n'est riens qui tant apparegne creature raisonnable que fait l'exercite et experience de plusieurs choses et diverses.\textsuperscript{77}

Christine compares women to inhabitants of rural areas who seem to possess such intellectual simplicity that they might be considered as subhuman; yet their mental faculties at birth are no less perfect than those of city dwellers. Dullness of mind should not therefore be attributed to an inherent inadequacy of the sex but rather to women's insufficient opportunity to cultivate and exercise their minds. Christine assumes moreover that human beings are possessed with all human qualities and abilities.\textsuperscript{78}

Thus she begins to explore the full spectrum of woman's intellectual potential as well as her practical skills.

To introduce her illustrations of specific abilities that
women may possess, Christine shows that in positions of leadership women have displayed general intelligence. There have been women of important political stature, for example, who have proved that they had a comprehension of justice and the state mechanism. First cited is the Empress Nicole who brought her nation out of anarchy by inaugurating the reign of law; this example is followed by that of a long line of French queens and noblewomen who, when widowed, governed their domains with diplomatic skill, upheld justice, and earned the love of their subjects. Exceptionally noteworthy is the example of Blanche de Castille whose son, Saint Louis, so respected her excellent judgment and enlightened policies as regent that upon his ascension to the throne he would hold no conclave without her presence.79

Christine adds that some women have even proved themselves skilled warriors. No man ever exceeded the diplomatic skill and military prowess of Semiramis, the famous Assyrian queen who in her widowhood continued the conquests begun by her husband and who enlarged her realm. After victory she always exhibited gentleness and foresight by founding and beautifying colonies and cities, rewarding loyal service. She thus averted rebellion in her dependencies and won the cooperation of her subjects. In all her dealings with her people, her manner proved to be noble and proud.

The history of the Amazons, a people who captured Christine's imagination, is a brilliant example of women who, with dimensions
other than maternity, demonstrated amazing ability to inure themselves to pain and to become an invincible enemy, as well as to establish a viable state and gain the confidence of the people. Christine tells of their grief at the loss of their men in military excursions, subsequent refusal by them to be subjected to any man because of their bitter sorrow over their loss, the institution of self-government and policy of conquest and pacification. Their renown spread to distant lands and they became a manifest threat to the great powers of the day, and Queen Thamyris thwarted a Persian invasion by taking Cyrus prisoner in an ambush. Only because of the crafty maneuvering of the Greek army and its superior numbers did it win victory in battle against the Amazons. To no more valiant a figure does history attest than the Amazon Queen Penthesilia. Christine recaptures the moment when the queen set out for Troy to bear homage to the nobility of Hector. Arriving too late, she was taken to his shrouded figure as it lay in the temple; there, in deep grief, she mourned the death of chivalry:

Ha! fleur et excellente de la chevalerie du monde, le sommet, le comble et la consomacion de toute vaillance, qui se pourra d'ores en avant aprés vous jamais vanter de prouesse ne caindre d'espée puisque orés est estaine la lumiere et exemple de si grant haultesce?

Penthesilea was slain in her attempt to avenge this tragedy; the mourning for this queen by her own people was equalled only by that
of the Trojans for Hector. No empire lasted as long as did Amazonia, nor did any empire either at war or during periods of peace display such fine achievements. Even after its death is spiritual image endured. 81

From a general consideration of women's intelligence, Christine turns to an evaluation of their specific abilities, beginning with verbal ability. History decidedly shows, she reflects, that women, given access to learning, have acquired high scholarly standing. She remembers Cornificia and Proba of Rome who by application excelled as students, mastered philosophy and literature and, as they each gradually found an individual manner of expression, became known for their creative talent. Particularly vivid in Christine's mind is Sappho, whose unique style of composing love songs was admired by readers of her day and also endured as a literary tradition. The contemporary example of Novella--daughter of the canonist and professor at the University of Bologna, Jean André--whose legal training enabled her to lecture at the University in his absence confirms Christine's belief that women can attain breadth, depth and subtlety of knowledge as well as originality of thought. 82

Christine next raises the question of women's inventive ability in the field of science and technology. Because she esteemed the ability to assimilate and apply knowledge to be a lesser gift
than creative talent, she wished to determine whether through ob-
ervation and reason alone women have discovered what are now con-
sidered fundamental requisites of civilization. A procession of
women once worshipped by pagan peoples as goddesses now files
through her imagination. Ceres taught her people how to till the
soil and prepare crops, and gradually introduced them to community
living by demonstrating how to build houses and towns. Isis (also
called Yo) transplanted to Egypt the achievements of Greek culture,
taught the people how to tend orchards and educated them in social
organization. Carmenta, who founded Rome, invented an alphabet and
grammar for the indigenous population as well as devising and
enacting laws by which it might be governed. Minerva discovered
various arts and industrial techniques, such as sheep-raisign and
wool production, the extraction of oil and essences, the crafts of
spinning and weaving, military science and armor, chariot-making,
arithmetic, script-writing and music, while Pamphile invented
sericulture and Arachne cloth-making and the dying of fabrics.

Christine also approaches the question of whether women have
been artistically gifted. Musical and dramatic ability abounded in
women like Sempronia, she recalls, who played instruments and
narrated stories so well that she moved her listeners to emotion and
inspired them to fine deeds. Proficient in the visual arts were the
Grecian women Thamar, whose painting of Diana was unveiled at
ceremonies held in the Goddess's honor, and Irene, whose self-portrait
at her easel was exhibited in public. Closest to Christine in time and in her affection is Anastasia, who is praised for the delicacy of the glistening miniatures which ornament her manuscripts.\textsuperscript{83}

To complete a totally qualified judgment concerning women's intelligence, Christine considers the virtue of prudence. In her opinion this is of irreplacable value because it permits a person to perceive and then pursue the most appropriate course leading to the greatest good. Prudence is not dependent upon any external factor but is based solely upon reasoning power and goodness. She finds that women display this virtue in the management of the home:

\textit{... te [Christine] trouveras que de leur maignage gouverner et pourveoir a toutes choses ... sont communement toutes, ou la plus grant partie, tres/curieuses, songneuses, et diligentes ...} \textsuperscript{84}

After narrating Solomon's praise of a good wife from the Book of Proverbs, she gives illustrations from public life, such as the founding of Carthage by Dido. Christine tells how upon arrival on the coast, Dido purchased from the natives just that area of land which an ox's skin could cover. By stretching it, she built a city and governed it well. Since she had given her own people the option to return to their homeland or to remain, she could rely upon a firm measure of support because she had gained their trust and good will. The inquiry into a woman's intelligence is thus concluded with the
illustration that a woman may possess practical sense as well as intellectual and creative abilities.\textsuperscript{85}

In order to gain a complete appreciation of the characteristics of women Christine considers their spiritual capacity. She states that innumerable women have had religious intuitions, are devout in worship, and practice the charity taught by love of God. She also shows that they have been elected to be saviors of their faith and their nation, prophetesses and saints.

Women have been divine instruments, inspired by a sense of high purpose to preserve the law of their land and save their people from extinction. From the Old Testament, Christine narrates both the story of Judith who, informed by God's interest in His chosen people, armed herself with courage to deliver the Hebrew nation from their tyrant, and of Esther, faithful to her people even though married to an alien, whose intervention on their behalf with her husband prevented the massacre of the Jews. That heathen women were saviors is illustrated by the Sabines who, unwilling to compromise their loyalty to either their Roman husbands or Sabine kinsmen, by a concerted action of bravery reconciled them so that peace was regained. In the unfolding of Christian history, Christine notes that Mary's intercession is of a special character yet still one of many. The soul of the pagan king Clovis was nurtured by his wife Clothilde for the moment when he would become the recipient of grace, an event
of the highest significance for the diffusion of Christian culture in the Western world.

In other striking ways does history attest to women's spiritual qualities. Numerous were the women of all cultures endowed with the spirit of prophecy. Christine tells of the Jewess Deborah, of the pagan Cassandra in sorrow for the predestined ruin of her city, and of the Sibyls, who communicated their messianic messages to the Roman world. In her hagiography (found in the Cité des Dames) Christine presents the holy lives of the young girls and women who, under appalling pressures of intimidation and torture, remained serenely confident of their purpose in life and final destination. The most spectacular were those mothers who watched their children freely giving up their lives and then gave up their own:

'O! quel est au monde plus tendre chose que mere a son enfant, ne plus grant douleur que son cuer sueffre quant mal luy voit endurer? Mais parce que je voy encore est foy plus grant chose comme il y paru a maintes vaillans femmes qui pour l'amour de Nostre Seigneur offroyent leurs propres enfans au tourment si comme la benoite Felix qui vid ses sept fils, qui estoyent tres biauix jouvenciaux, martirer devant elle. Et la tres bonne mere les confortoit et aemonnestoit de pacience. ... Et puis apres ... youlst estre sacrifiee et vint au martire ...'

With this presentation of spiritually gifted women, Christine has thus completed her survey of women's capabilities.

Christine's defense of women would not be complete, however,
without mention in a concluding section of a recurrent theme in her
writing—her unique characterization of women in terms of their
physical and spiritual beauty. Whether Christine is portraying the
young women in her love poetry, legendary or historical figures, or
allegorical characters, the terms she chooses are similar because her
view of the woman, in whatever situation she depicts her, embodies
the same essential qualities. All are described as "belle" which
refers equally to their moral qualities and to their physical
appearances. In the *Dit de la Rose*, for example, Christine states
that all women who are good are beautiful. They are of gracious
bearing, and her noble ladies in particular are dignified but
never haughty in manner. They have an even, gentle disposition,
and are of a modest and sincere nature. Characterized as "sage,"
which signifies for Christine the exercise of good judgment and
discretion, "vaillant" and "preux," they are of irreproachable virtue,
holding themselves in esteem and, because of their goodness they
are loved and respected. A Biblical woman who illustrates these
virtues is Queen Esther whom Christine describes in the *Mutacion de
Fortune*:

Adont fu au roy amenee
La belle Hester, la preux, la sage,
Qui ebrisue fu de lignage,
Et de la loy de Dieu eslite,
De qui tant de louange est dicte
En la vraye sainte Escripture,
Qui tant fu belle creature,
Vaillant, prudent, bien regommee, 
Qui de toute gent fu amee.89

Christine's contemporary model for an exemplary woman in a position of authority was Jeanne de Bourbon, the wife of Charles V, whose sense of dignity and composure she praises in her biography of the King, the Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V:

... la contenance de celle dame rassise louée et amoderée en parole, maintien et regard, assurée entre toutes gens, aournée de toute beauté, passant les autres princessess, estoit chose à voir tres agréable et de souveraine plaisance.90

Although Christine has genuine affection and admiration for the women she describes, she counsels her son and all young men:

Puis compagnie riouteuse  
Et femme petit cremeteuse ... 91

For frivolous and brazen women represent for her, like la Vieille in the Roman de la Rose, a travesty of the woman who brings dishonor to her sex:

Car rien n'est plus desconvenable  
Que femme folle et mal traictable,  
Et si n'est chose plus plaisant  
Que femme doucée et appaisant, ... 92

The characterization of Christine's female allegorical figures which guide an important part of her work may serve as a
summation of her concept of a woman and of woman's role in society. Although the use of allegory was commonplace in the Middle Ages, Christine's approach was unique. Beautiful in appearance, regal yet kindly in attitude, they portray an idealized concept of her real woman. Dedicated to the principles of truth, justice, peace and mutual understanding, her dominant allegorical persons are characterized by feelings of compassion for mankind, and by spreading their enlightenment, they are presented as a means of helping mankind. They thus embody the qualities that Christine has shown woman to have—charitable love and good judgment—and illustrate the two essential aspects of woman's role as seen by Christine—the maternal and didactic principles. Although all the deities are invested with a moral authority demanding righteousness in the lives of men, two specifically represent motherhood, while others represent the teacher. "Terre" in the Chemin de long Estude and "La Dame Couronnée" in the Avision, incarnate the mother who provides nourishment for her children and, recognizing the need for the continuance of life, pleads for purification of the land. Even while lamenting the horror and grief of being dismembered by creatures begotten of their flesh, maternal tenderness dissolves into pity for them and never betrays through vindictiveness the goodness of that love:

... se ie blasmoye ceulx que ie fais mon meismes ouvrage ie diffameroye. si te dis quaccuracion de mauvaisitie fournue en malice a nul ie ne donne ne que pour despit ne hayne que contre moy eussent
ne sont a ceste chose meuz ... 

The symbolic figures who fulfill an expressly educative role seek, through reasoning, to bring about more equitable and harmonious relationships between groups and between persons and to restore peace of mind to the individual. In the Chemin de long Estude "Sagece" defines for "Chevalerie," "Noblesse," "Richece" and herself their respective spheres and tasks for the maintenance of a society bound in unity and strength, teaching that by the pursuit of righteousness its harmony is ensured. In the fantasy the Dit de la Rose, the goddess "Loyauté," bearing vases filled with roses, descends at a banquet for nobles of France who have distinguished themselves in valor and goodness. As she confers a flower upon each knight, symbol of the Ordre de la Rose, each of the knights pledges to uphold the chivalric laws--maintain justice, protect the honor of women, and be loyal and true to his love. "Philosophie," who was Boethius's inspiration at the time of his exile, appears in the Avision as the allegorical interpretation of his Consolation of Philosophy. When adversity becomes too painful to bear, it is "Philosophie" who teaches that human life has been designed according to a divine purpose whose justice is beyond question; wisdom consists in weaving the years with patience and in recognizing and using well the benefits one has received.
In the *Epistre d'Othée*, which lies entirely within the supernatural realm of existence and is composed exclusively of allegorical figures, many of which are women, it may be seen that the essential characteristics of women are those which Christine is teaching to mankind. The instruction of the noble Hector provides the dramatic impetus of the work which finds its relevance in the message that eternal peace is open to all who follow virtues. The goddess Othée—representing prudence—sees in the young Hector all human graces in their potential state and invites him to contemplate one hundred legendary figures, each of whom will illustrate a moral path to follow or shun for the attainment of worldly perfection. This moral lesson is then enriched with a spiritual lesson so that Hector may ultimately climb to his heavenly abode.97

Minerva, who offers Hector armor, teaches him to combat evil on earth; by becoming therefore his adoptive mother and thus opening his soul to love of God, she exemplifies the virtue of Faith.98 Pallas, Minerva's dual image and wise inventor of new crafts, counsels Hector to join wisdom to knighthood or thought to deed. Since Pallas and Minerva are one and the same goddess, Pallas personifies Hope.99 Pentesilla, mourner and avenger of Hector's death and of the death of valor, teaches the knight to love a virtuous person; spiritually, she teaches the virtue of Charity because she brings succor to the world.100 The lingering voice of Echo, whose gift of love Narcissus
pitilessly refused, reminds the knight of people in distress and teaches him to help those who, without the aid of another, cannot help themselves; she thus symbolizes one aspect of charity, Mercy. 101 In memory of the death penalty paid by Cyrus for his contempt of a woman, the amazon Queen Tamyris informs the knight of the danger of overweening pride and teaches him respect of all persons possessed of virtue; Tamyris represents, thus teaches, the quality of Meekness. 102

Cassandra, who prophesied in the temple teaches that one must always speak the Truth; at the same time she teaches devotion to God and the Church. 103 The lesson that Truth is to be at all times believed regardless of who speaks it is taught through the images of Andromache, 104 and of the Sibyl who prophesied Christ's coming to the emperor Augustus 105; they carry the message that Christ's teachings are to be believed, and to be heeded. Daphne, bestower of the laurel wreath upon the victor, shows Hector that perseverance in effort and in goodness will bring its own reward. 106

Christine's City which represents her defense of women was to be consecrated by Joan of Arc. History was therefore to vindicate the confidence which Christine had always placed in women. In her poem in honor of the Maid which Christine wrote in 1429, Joan represents woman's character exactly, as Christine has always described it. She is praised for her single-minded determination to
serve God and her nation, her courage, prowess, and intelligence.

Because Joan alone could liberate French soil and bring peace to its people, Christine reveals her as an instrument of God and a sign of His love of women:

Tu, Johanne, de bonne heure née,
Benoist soit cil qui te créa!
Pucelle de Dieu ordonnée,
.................................
Hée! quel honneur au feminin
Sexe! Que [Dieu] l'ayme, il appert,
Quant tout ce grant peuple chenin
Par qui tout le règne ert désert,
Par femme est sous et recouvert,
Ce que pas hommes fait n'enussent,
Et les traittres mis à désert;
A peine devant ne le crussent. 107

Joan thus provided the conclusive piece of evidence for Christine's defense of women.

In all her works, Christine has been continuously constructing—consciously and subconsciously—her imaginary City designed to be the defense and refuge of women. The City is completed in the Cité des Dames which represents her most inclusive defense of women. Its architecture is imprinted with the national character of the Gothic style and is built with an upward movement, dominated by high towers and enclosed with solid walls; it thus possesses both a residential and military function. Its architect Christine hopes that the City will surpass all others in splendor because it represents one of the first attempts at clarification of attitudes and rectification of
conceptions of who women are, of what they have been and may become.
It is Christine's belief that although the City may at first disturb local sensibilities, its creation can ultimately only enlighten and hence beautify the surrounding land and its people.

Through raising her City, Christine hoped to establish a body of what she assumed to be truth about women which would refute any imputation of woman's bearing an inherited flaw of weakness, wickedness or inferiority. Christine sought, in the defense, to substantiate two basic assumptions. The first is that because God's image is mirrored in woman, man and woman are equal in the sight of God. Christine's proof of woman's humanity is her sense of the dignity of the body and soul. She has represented woman with the ability to will and do good, aspiring to the ideal of fulfilling the obligation of love and justice. Capable of a range of emotion and manifesting aesthetic and spiritual impulses, she is analytic, imaginative, and intuitive, and so may live the full life of the mind. Skillful and physically adaptable as well, she can endure the extremes of climate and natural environment. Possessed therefore of full personality, woman is seen to have the attributes necessary for experience in the three domains of human expression--feeling, reflection and action. Christine believed that woman's versatility enabled her to exercise all activities, her potential limited only to the finitude of human resources.

The second premise, based on woman's creation from man's rib,
is that God's two human creatures belong essentially to each other. The portrayal of woman's love for man through the sharing of his fate as companion and sustainer of health and spirits testify to her willingness to fulfill her destiny. Nor does this relational role end with personal allegiances, for throughout history, woman has evidenced concern for the well-being and progress of mankind. Benefactor of civilization, woman has been responsible for great technical and cultural transformations that have altered the face of the habitable earth. Due to her innovations in agriculture and husbandry, man advanced from his life as hunter and food-gatherer to a more settled existence. Once essential foodstuffs were at his disposal, clothing became the next compelling need; woman thus invented the crafts, converting raw materials to finished products so that clothed by wool, cotton, linen, and later silk, man could be protected. As the struggle for existence somewhat lessened, she contributed toward the variation and embellishment of daily life. She next provided for transportation and shelter. As the now fertile earth increased its yield and metallurgy was discovered, woman introduced urbanization, from which a diversified commerce opened up new trade routes, and culture could be further diffused.

Increased social development soon gave impetus for the creation of writing whereby civilization could attain greater permanence and mankind's mental powers flourish. Along with the material comforts and amenities of living woman evolved, she performed the
essential tasks of the fast-growing communities: regulating society and devotion to God, maintaining order and justice. By such harmonious movement men could learn that in living by law, they could perhaps know peace and, given peace, prosperity and plenty would follow. In this on-going surge of creative energy, man was brought out of barbarism into the complexity of the modern world. Motivated by instincts of love and vigor, woman helped to create, unify and widen the community of man. Thus, Christine suggests in her conclusion to her defense that if justification be needed, woman has earned her right to full membership.

It therefore emerges that the defense of women stands as a challenge to the integrity, sense of justice and claim to superiority of men. In her final plea on behalf of women, Christine brings her defense from the context of history into the realm of men's personal experience to awaken not only their minds but their consciences. She asks:

Qui sont femmes? Qui sont elles? Son ce serpens, loups, lions, dragons, guieures, ou bestes rauissables denourans et anemies a nature humaine qu'il conuiengne faire art a les decepuoiret prendre?...Apprenez donc a faire engins...deceuez lez, vituperez les...106

And the question carries its own response:

Et, par dieu! si sont elles voz meres, vos
sieurs, voz filles; voz femmes et voz amîes,
elles sont vous mesmes et vous-mesmes...

Is not the woman whom man wounds and whose intrinsic worth he im-
pugns, bearer of man and his spirit throughout eternity and his
source of security and happiness?

Car tout homme doit avoir le cuer tendre
Envers femme qui a tout homme est mere
Et ne lui est ne diverse n'amere,
Aingois souverve, doulce et amiable,
A son besoing piteuse et secourable,
Qui tant lui a fait et fait de services,
Et de qui tant les oeuvres sont propices
A corps d'homme souefvement nourrir;
A son naistre, au vivre et au morir,
Lui sont femmes aidsans et secourables,
Et piteuses, douces et servibles.

Has not woman, apparently fit only for child-bearing and domestic
life, actually been responsible for man's civilized life and, if he
enjoys a privileged status, for the arts and tools of his trade? To
speak ill of this woman, Christine states in her challenge, is an
instance of ingratitude which is unnatural since man and woman are
bound by a natural tie of love, and is unreasonable because woman is
a human being like man, who cares for his needs and brings him the
benefits he enjoys:

Et a brief dire l'opinion et dit des hommes communément
est que elles n'ont servy au monde ne servent fors de
porter effsans et de filler.
Et je dis adonc a elle ["Raison"] : Ha! dame or apperçoy par ce que vous dites plus qu'on'yconques mais la tres grant ingratitude ET DESCONNOISSANCE D'ICEULX hommes qui tant medisent des femmes. Car nonobstant que il me semblast que assez cause souffisant y avoir de non les blasmer parce que femme est a tout homme mere et les/autres biens que on voit magnifistement que generalement femmes font a hommes, vrayement voyey comble de benefices et a souveraine largesce que ilz ont receu et recoivent d'elles./ Or se taie ... les cler resisans de femmes ... et baisent les yeux de honte de ce que tant en on[il ou]se dire a leurs diz considerant la verité qui contredit a leur diz voyant ceste noble dame Carmentis,Laquelle par la haultesce de son entenement les a apris comme leur maistresce a l'escole ... la leçon de laquelle savoir se treuvent tant haultains et honnoyrez, c'est assavoir les nobles lettre du latin.

Mais que dirent les nobles et les chevaliers dont tant y a et c'est chose contre droit qui medisent si generaulment de toutes femmes refraignent leur bouche ... advisant que la usaige des armes porter ..., duquel mestier tant s'aloisen et tiennent grans, leur est venu et donne d'une femme./ Et generaulment tous hommes qui vivent de pain et qui civillement vivent [esl] cités par ordre de droit et aussi ceux qui cultivement les graignages ont ilz cause de blasmer et debouter tant femmes comme plusieurs de eulx font pensant ces grans benefices. ...

Strongly suggested in Christine's challenge is that man's condemnation of women is unjust to woman, to man himself, and a disloyalty to God.

Christine seemed to feel that men's hostile attitude and behavior toward women caused them humiliation and distress. She saw that both attitude and behavior had to be revised for the redress of justice. However, since she had no direct control over men's behavior
and, furthermore, understood that hostile behavior was to a large extent dependent upon a prejudiced attitude against women, she used the tools at her disposal, her intelligence and writing, in an attempt to influence men's minds in the direction of reason and humanity. Since the accusations against women formed a false image of them and sustained the prejudiced attitude, Christine devoted most of her writing to revealing what she considered to be the untruthfulness of these accusations, and suggested that woman's unseemly behavior is in truth evoked by man.

To prove the untruthfulness of the accusations, Christine showed that no justification could be found for them either in the Bible, in ascertainable evidence, or in logic. First, there was no Biblical basis, according to her interpretation of the first moments in mankind's history, for assuming woman's inferiority. She saw that God had selected a woman--the Virgin Mary--to play an instrumental role in the development of Christianity; in this sense she anticipated the humanists of the Renaissance. Secondly, Christine demonstrated that man's accusations were unsupported by evidence from history and the contemporary environment since the image of woman she proposed revealed woman as modest, honest, merciful, strong and wise. Finally, Christine showed the accusations to be illogical and spurious because men themselves behaved as if women possessed the qualities men insisted they lacked. Because Christine understood the basic need to be recognized at one's true value, she saw the unfairness of ascribing
unfavorable characteristics to a woman merely because of her sex.

The vehemence of Christine's censure of the accusations, however, was aroused not simply by the unfairness in depriving women of their due recognition, but because they contributed to the graver injustice of providing a rationalization for the disrespectful attitude and behavior toward women. The resulting humiliation affected their character in such a manner that the inferiority for which they were reproached might then become an established fact. Because men tended to view women in terms of the unfavorable characteristics attributed to them and to treat them with less fairness than they would treat men, women reacted according to the expectations and conformed to the false image. Christine protested against the injustice of the accusations because it justified abuse of women.

Christine realized that the source of the hostile statements was frequently disappointment in personal experiences or motives irrelevant to women, such as the wish to amuse readers. She knew too that they did not impede the course of nature and human affections and that in reality many men behaved courteously and kindly toward women. She felt it unjust that gratification in speaking idle words should win over moral considerations. As habits of blaming women were perpetuated and the prejudice against women continually justified, man and woman were further separated by invisible barriers of distrust. There is an image projected throughout Christine's work in varying forms—the widow defenseless in a competitive world, the
abandoned woman despairing the loss of the beloved, Cassandra mourning the refusal of her people to see the truth and stop war preparations, the allegories of Mother Earth and France grieving over their destruction by rival factions. In all these cases woman is portrayed as powerless due to man's misperception of her capabilities.

Christine suggests, however, that the condemnation of women is also unjust to men. If man depreciates woman, he must consider himself of little worth; as man and woman are created of the same substance, if man considers woman a defective creature, he must necessarily bear an imperfection as well. The benefits—social, practical and psychological—that man derives from this kind of attitude are illusory. No feats of prowess or pretense of courtesy could compensate for an honorable reputation earned by personal merit. Tyrannical and deceitful methods only provoke revenge and hate. Any self-satisfaction gained is slight compared to the loss in human sensibility for coercion destroys the worth of a relationship:

Maintes gens sont qui veulent par maistrise
Les biens d'amours avoir et acquérir;
...........................................il4
Pour ce souvent font la doulçour perir ...

and love without authentic feeling behind it is not the experience of love—
Mais se bien vient a ces faulz d'aventure
N'est pas droit bien, ...
Car en tous cas le bien est moult petit
Quant il est pris sans désir n'appetit. 115

The condemnation of women, Christine also suggests, is a dis-
loyalty to God. When God created women to strew the soil with her
seed and flowers, He made manifest His faith in women:

Or puez tu (Christine) ...veoir clerement comment
Dieux qui riens ne fait sans cause, a voulu monstrer
aux homme que il ne desprise le sexe femenin ne que
le leur quant il luy a pleu conceder qu'en cervelle
de femme ait si grant entendement que non mie
seullement soyent habilles a apprendre et retenir
les sciences, mais trouver d'elles mesmes toutes
nouvelles, voire sciences de si grant utilitite et
prouffit au monde que riens n'est plus necessaire... 116

To have belief in His wisdom is therefore not to violate, but to
respect His creation and the ingenuity with which it is conceived.
Christine believes that blaming women has no foundation in man's
instinctual, moral or rational nature.

Christine realized that shaming men would never move them to
question seriously the justness of their opinions and conduct but
only cause them to resist her ideas. Her challenge, therefore, in-
cluded three other manners of approach which might better influence
them: persuasion through inspiration and exhortation, example, and
reassurance. In her poetry and prose Christine continually exhorts
and inspires men to better behavior toward women. She finds an
opportunity to remind princes of their royal duty to assist needy women,\textsuperscript{117} nobles of their knightly duty to protect women's good name,\textsuperscript{118} and to recommend to young men reliance on their own good instincts and judgment in regard to women:

\begin{quote}
Ne croy pas toutes les diffames
Qu'aucuns livres dient des femmes,
Car il est mainte femme bonne,
L'experience le te donne.\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Since Christine realized that inspiration and exhortation are not always effective, her writings reinforce them by persuasion through example. By introducing prestigious figures whose conduct toward women she praises, she attempts to convince her readers that the elite of their nation and chivalry did not sanction or conform to the cultural pattern of disrespect toward women.\textsuperscript{120} Believing that her readers would wish to identify with models of success, she glorifies nobles as well as literary heroes and refers frequently to Charles V whom she describes as having been loyal to the queen whose office he enhanced in dignity, merciful in his attitude toward women disgraced, and sympathetic to requests of women in need of assistance:

\begin{quote}
O! quel douce chose estoit ce à le veoir communement à l'issir de sa messe. ... La veist on gentilz femmes et tous estas, grandes, moyennes et petites. Ne se glissoit pas d'entre elles comme coq sur brise, par ennuy de les ouir, ... les oyait à loisir ... responce tres benigne leur donnoit. ... et ainsi de toutes choses en brief expedioit.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}
To further encourage men to adopt more just attitudes and behavior toward women, Christine wished above all to give them reassurance that fear of women is unfounded while respect of women could only be beneficial. Her writings consistently point out that in a unified humanity, the excellence of one member, far from effacing another's, radiates its virtue by helping and healing and when possible, by creating new and better life. Since goodness begets goodness and appreciation and praise favor better behavior, men who assumed a fairer attitude toward women would benefit in love and in marriage. The man who is faithful to his promise will rarely be deceived:

Mais je connais de voir et aperçois
Que se amans tenissent vérité,
Foy, loyauté, sans contrariété
Vers leurs dames, ...

..............................
Je croy que pou ou nulle fausseroit,
Et que toute femme loial seroit.122

The husband who appreciates his wife will be able to trust and consult with her about serious matters and receive solace from her affection. The rewards of sincere feeling, known only through the experience, are as satisfying:

Mais a cellui qui désirant seroit
De pain faitte ou d'une miche blanche,
S'ataindre y puert, Dieu acet com il la tranche
Joyeusement et de grant cuer s'en paist!
Ainsi de toute riens désirée est.123
The difference between man and woman, Christine wished to prove, need not engender scorn or antagonism; the sensibility of a woman joins man and woman more closely; woman's intelligence aids man in the attainment of success. Since man and woman bear a common humanity and destiny and share most common qualities, needs and interests, Christine's final words of challenge to men are those she voiced from the beginning of her defense of women in the Epistre au dieu d'Amours:

Par ces preuves justes et veritables
Je conclus que tous hommes raisonnables
Doivent femmes priser, cherir, amer,
Et ne doivent avoir cuer de blasmer
Elles de qui tout homme est descendu;
Ne leur soit pas mal pour le bien rendu,
Car c'est la riens ou monde par doiture
Que homme aime mieulx et de droitte nature...

Christine's message carries the simple truth that women and men are human beings whose destinies are inextricably linked. Her appeal extends no further than that the brotherhood of man become a reality and that loyalty be recognized as a significant value in human relationships. Whether based on human law, divine law or common sense, it is an appeal to reason and compassion which finds its full justification in its consequences for men. Christine's City is therefore of an unusual character, for it is not a warring city. Although she tries to restore a balance between the respective virtues of men and women, it is not her intention to draw up a balance sheet
favorable to women which might serve as a further pretext for
estrangement or hate. Her stories are destined to illustrate simply
that when culture demanded and permitted women to manifest their
qualities and exercise their talents, thus providing the intangible
necessities of social stimulation and of inducement by praise and
incentive, their capabilities reflected the same prism as men's. Also
men and women together in cooperative ventures produced change and
progress in the world. Her hope is simply that the new feminine
image created in her writings would lessen the pride that becomes
cruel when it causes others distress and win woman greater respect
and consideration, so that man and woman may stand closer together and
increase their trust in one another.

Christine, a fifteenth century woman, does not propose that
women usurp men's functions or that the principle of subordination
of the wife to the husband be reconsidered. She does not advance the
idea that the rules governing social life be changed; she simply
suggests that one act responsibly and with a measure of self-restraint
in word and deed. Christine thus confines herself to a seemingly
modest proposal but one whose consequences would be immeasurable. She
knows that at heart men and women prefer peaceable and friendly re-
lations and that when life is more loyally lived, all are blessed.

Imperceptibly, as she progresses in her work, Christine shifts
accent. To ensure that her City remain in the splendor of its first
glory, while directing her defense and challenge to men, she has been at the same time addressing women. Once the architect bids them farewell, they must remain strong and defend themselves. The City has been designed therefore to give contemporary women an identity they have not felt, to rebuild their confidence by raising their self-image. Even were her challenge to cause men qualms of conscience and to perhaps heighten the ability to discern, nevertheless Christine knew that women had to learn to protect themselves. When one's guilt is believed, meekness can become self-effacement; in revenge for abuse, prudence may become cunning.

In constructing her imaginary City, Christine has developed the concept of womanhood. She has tried to inspire a feeling of sisterly love by creating a City of such spaciousness that it is open to women of all ranks, ages and varying talents so that they may reside without rivalry within the City and in harmony with the outer environment.

While the City is not hostile or isolated from the surroundings it remains a medieval fortified city; woman's honor must be preserved. That Christine conceived of the concept of feminine unity as protection for women is seen in her prayers to the Virgin Mary where she asks Mary to keep them from harm and temptation:

Pour le devot sexe des femmes
Te pri que leur corps et leur ames
Tu ayes en ta saintte garde,
 Christine sees womanhood, however, not merely as a protective, but also as a positive concept. Women will emerge as entities only when they seek to enhance their reputations by pursuing goodness. In the next work to be discussed, the **Livre des troix Vertus** Christine will develop her idea of womanhood and her plea to women as expressed in her conclusion to the **Cité des Dames**:

Et briefment/toutes femmes soyent grandes, moyennes, ou petites vueillés estre sur toute riens avisees et cautes en deffense contre les annemis de vos honneurs et de vostre chasteté. Voyez mes dames comment ses hommes vous accusent de tant de vices de toutes pars, Faittes les tous menteurs par monstrer vostre vertu et prouvé mensongeurs ceulx qui vous blasment par bien faire/. ... 

Fuyez, fuyez mes dames et eschevez telz acointances soubz lesquelz ris sont envelopez / venins tres angoisseux et qui livrent a mort./ et ainsi vous plaise ... acroistre et mouteplier nostre cite, vous resjouyr et bien faire.
NOTES -- CHAPTER III


5C chemin, pp. 98-232.

6Avision, Pt. I, p. 106.


8"L'Epistre au dieu d'amours," éd. Roy, II, 24, l. 735; Epistles on The Romance of The Rose, p. 102, ll. 770-771.

9éd. Roy, l, 148, vs. 1. No. III.

10éd. Roy, l, 7, vs. l.
11st. Roy, I, 12, vs. 3.

12st. Roy, I, 182; vs. 1, No. LXII.


15st. Roy, III, 210, vs. 1.

16st. Roy, III, 214, l. 7.


18st. Roy, III, 150, ll. 2830-2854.


22st. Roy, III, 217, ll. 3-20.

23st. Roy, III, 225, ll. 24-29.

24st. Roy, III, 239-240, vs. 3.


27st. Roy, III, 265, ll. 4-8.


29st. Roy, II, 293, ll. 2241-2262.


34 éd. Roy, III, 292, l. 9.


40 Mutacion, II, Pt. III, p. 93, l. 7011.

41 Ibid., I, Pt. II, p. 99, ll. 2677-2679.


43 Mutacion, II, Pt. III, pp. 94-95, ll. 7039-7052.


This work was read in its English translation as it was the only text available: Christine de Pisan, *The Booke of the Cyte of Ladyes* by Christine Du Castel, trans. by Bryan Anslay (London: Henry Popham, 1521). Hereafter cited as *Cyte of Ladyes*. Quotations from this work have been kindly offered by the editor of the forthcoming critical edition: Christine de Pisan, *Le Livre de la Cite des Dames*, edited with *Introduction and Notes* by Maureen C. Curnow (Typescript: Vanderbilt University, 1972). Hereafter cited as *Cité*.


54 *Letter IV, Christine to Jean de Montreuil, The Epistles on the Romance of the Rose*, p. 27, ll. 317-327.


62. Ibid., p. 19, 11. 568-574.


65. Ibid., pp. 21-23.


68. Cyté of Ladys, Pt. II, chaps. .xxxviij.-.xlvij., .lxiiij.-.lxiv. Penelope is also portrayed in the Mutacion, III, Pt. VI, p. 163, and in the "Epistre au dieu d'amours," éd. Roy, II, 15. The spelling of names of Biblical, historical and legendary figures varies from edition to edition. For the ease of the reader, names cited in this section are given in their modern English form.


71. Ibid., Pt. II, chap. .xxij., par. 166a.
Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. II, chaps. .xiiij.--.xxix. Andromache is also cited in the Mutacion, III, Pt. VI, pp. 97-98.

Cité, Pt. II, chap. .viij., par. 143a.

Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. II, chaps. .viij.--.xj.

Cité, Pt. II, chap. .xlviij., par. 200.

Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. II, chaps. .xlviij.--.lij.

Cité, Pt. I, chap. .xxviij., par. 82a.


Ibid., Pt. I, chaps. .xij.--.xiv.

Cité, Pt. I, chap. .xix., par. 68.

Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. I, chaps. .xv.--.xix. A description of Semiramis may also be found in the Mutacion, II, Pt. V, pp. 182-190. The exploits of the Amazons are also recounted in the Mutacion, II, Pt. V, pp. 201-210; III, Pt. VI, pp. 5-19, 141-152.

Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. I, chaps. .xxviij.--.xxx.


Cyte of Ladyes, Pt. I, chaps. .xliij.--.xlvi.


92 Mutacion, II, Pt. III, p. 82, ll. 6659-62.

93 Avison, Pt. I, p. 87, ll. 11-14. See also Chemin, pp. 114-117.

94 Chemin, pp. 175-232.


98 Ibid., No. XIII, pp. 24-25.


100 Ibid., No. XV, pp. 26-27.


101 Ibid., No. LXXXVI, pp. 98-99.

102 Ibid., No. LVII, pp. 63-64.

103 Ibid., No. XXXII, p. 46.

104 Ibid., No. LXXXVIII, pp. 100-101.

105 Ibid., No. C, pp. 113-114.

106 Ibid., No. LXXXVII, pp. 99-100.


109 Ibid., p. 102, ll. 769-771.


111 Cité, Pt. I, chap. xxxvij., Par. 102.

112 Ibid., Pt. I, chap. xxxvij., Par. 106.


123 Ibid., p. 4, ll. 94-98.

124 Ibid., pp. 23-24, ll. 721-728.


CHAPTER IV

THE MISSION FOR WOMEN

A: Introduction: Christine's mutacion (2)

Christine's mutacion consisted not only in surmounting her own disabilities in order to defend women but also in utilizing the self-knowledge she had gained from her experiences for the guidance of women. She recognized in herself previously unforeseen reserves of strength and intellectual capabilities and appreciation. She also realized her vulnerability to feelings of wounded vanity, envy, despair, and her achievement, if imperfect, in resisting them. Her sympathy, not her indulgence, was extended to women. Whereas Christine's defense of women was intended to restore their faith in themselves, the latter phase of her work was an attempt to educate them to live more satisfying and fruitful lives. Henceforth, no longer simply an observer and commentator, Christine instructed directly by defining areas of responsibility for all women in society, and for royalty in particular.

As Christine observed the women in her society, she saw that in the new social climate of luxury, ease, and loosened moral standards, where increasing social prestige was placed on noble or wealthy women, subtle dangers could arise to the well-being of the women as the emotions of pride, resentment and jealousy were awakened. She
saw at the same time that there were women who bore a heavy burden in life—those who suffered grief or who in some manner received unfair treatment because of their ignorance of dangers and of the ways of confronting them. Christine was then to speak to two distinct audiences of women and there developed a two-fold purpose to her work: critical and consolatory. These two intentions are clearly demonstrated in letters that Christine dedicated to individual women, the Queen—Isabeau de Bavière—and to Marie de Berry.

Known in history for her cupidity, extravagance, frivolity, and eventual treachery to her nation, the queen was living in debauchery amidst an undisciplined court, indifferent to the oppression borne by her people.¹ Christine's first reference to Isabeau's irresponsibility is found in the Avision (1405) where it is disguised in allegory. In this imaginary dream, Christine visualizes herself as the confidante of "la dame couronnée," who represents not Isabeau, but the French nation. Now being trampled and bruised by her children, the French people, who were engaged in civil strife, the Princess bears her grief to Christine:

Adonc la tres venerable princesse haule le pan de sa vesteure et a moy descuevre le nu de ses costez disant regarde/lors ma veue tournee celle part comme iavisasse les costez blans et tendres par force de presse et de desfoulement noircis et betez et par lieux encavez aucques iusques aux entrailles non mie trenchez de cops despee. mais froisiez par force de grans foules...²
The Princess then discloses the cause of the nation's distress by unveiling before Christine's eyes the current picture of her court. Formerly her defense and glory were her three ladies of honor who now lie imprisoned within the palace, replaced by three infamous women from the infernal regions: "Fraude," veiled with malice, solidifies the walls to obstruct the shining light of "Raison," while the clawed monster "Avarice" confines sickly "Justice" to her bed, and "Volupte" is lulling "Chevalerie" to sleep with song. Within the palace and throughout the kingdom, a fierce wind blows the disease of pride. With the corruption that permeated the court, it appeared to Christine that the destruction of the French nation was imminent.3

When, in the same year, 1405, troops of the opposing factions assembled outside of Paris and a war crisis threatened, Christine wrote a letter to the queen imploring her to take the initiative for peace. Hoping to influence the queen to assume the responsibility Christine herself felt for the future of the nation and to resume her rightful role as mother of her people, Christine attempted not merely to arouse the queen's compassion but to caution her that her future was now at stake. In an attempt to gain the queen's confidence, Christine assured her that as the instrument of reconciliation, Isabeau would be blessed with salvation, the gratitude of her people, and the perpetual glory surrounding Queen Esther, her predecessor Queen Blanche, and other valiant women in history. In the letter,
Christine pretended that the queen was ill informed of the nation's plight because of the isolation of royalty and proceeded to portray a divided and ruined kingdom—indiscriminate murder, the loss of the nation's finest men, the land overrun by enemy troops, enduring hatred within the royal family, shame in the international community, and the famished children and widowed mothers who cry out for God's vengeance upon those responsible for their distress:

Helas, qu'il couvenist que le pouvre peuple comparast le peché dont il est innocent, et que les pouverses petiz alleictans et enfans criassent après les lasses meres veves et adoulees, mourans de faim, et elles, desnus de leurs biens, n'eussent de quoy les appaisier, lesquelles voix quant a Dee avient, comme racontent les escriptures en plusieurs lieux, percient les cielx par pitié / davant Dieu juste et attiraient vengeance sur celx qui en sont cause.

Christine ended her letter by prophesying that public reproach and eternal malediction awaited the queen if she continued to betray her privilege of royalty and her sex. In criticizing the queen, Christine was concerned with both the fate of her nation and of women for she felt that a royal princess should exemplify the qualities she believed were the most essentially feminine—the qualities of mercy.

At the battle of Azincourt (1415), Marie de Berry's husband and son had been taken prisoners and near relatives and friends were
killed. One year later she lost her father, Jean de Berry. Some-
time after Azincourt and before Christine's departure for exile, she
addressed the _Epistre de la prison de vie humaine ..._ to this
princess, but it was destined, she said, for all women in need of
consolation for the losses and misfortunes they have suffered:

[II.] Pour aucunement trouver remede et
medicine a la grievve maladie et enfermete
d'amertume de cuer et tristete de pensee par
quoy plus de lermes, lequel a l'ame a tel cause
ne peut prouffiter ne au corps valoir, peust
estre restraist et remis, qui tant a couru et
encores, dont c'est pitié, ne cesse entre
meismement les roynes, princesses, baronnesses,
dames, demoiselles du noble sang (v') royal de
France et generalment le plus des femmes d'onneur
frappées de ceste pestillence en cestui françois
royaume.

While wishing to soften the princess's grief by sympathy, Christine
sought above all to renew her spirit through guidance. Although loss
of loved ones was irreparable and grief was bitter, she conceded,
they had found refuge from the insecurity of life. Nor were the
living to continue in hopeless grief for God has granted earthly
blessings to all, and the princess had been generously endowed with
intelligence and perception, good health and grace, and good fortune
in her fine husband and children and in her ability to practice
charity. Christine added that a confident surrender to Providence
did not deny the right of the innocent to defend and justify them-
selves; furthermore this surrender brought about a confidence that
the wicked would inevitably be punished. Christine concluded that useful occupation, rather than retreat into sorrow, was more pro-
fitable to the dead and to oneself, and was more pleasing to God.9

Although Christine was addressing two audiences, her constant desire was to guide all women into maturity by educating them to an acceptance of their situation in life—both the limitations and, more importantly, the possibilities it offered to live purposefully. Christine was so deeply concerned with the problems of women that she feared that if women yielded to the atmosphere of moral permissiveness, they would continue to be unfairly treated, the ethics of society would be further debased, and women would not know the value of fulfilling some of their potentialities but would know only sorrow. Christine therefore composed a sequel to the Cité des Dames, entitled the Livre des trois Vertus (known also as the Trésor de la Cité des Dames), designed as a book of etiquette and moral instruction in which the critical and consolatory intentions are interwoven and given alternating emphasis. This work will be dis-
cussed in the present chapter.

In view of Christine's continued dependency upon royal patronage, and her own personal security, her work of this latter period in which she instructs and censures royalty represents a deepened commitment not simply to womanhood but to the future of her country.
B: *Le Livre des trois Vertus*

In the *Livre des trois Vertus*, written for the "bien et acroissement de l'onneur et prosperité à l'université des femmes,"
Christine wishes to show women how to attain perfection, which she conceives as being "responsibility" or loyalty to duty. It is a concept of excellence which depends upon the woman's acquisition and practice of virtues, that is, upon the strengthening of her character. The word Christine frequently uses in her writing—*vertu*—encompasses the active force of moral courage. Her criteria for the ideal womanly character are not merely humility, gentleness, kindness, generosity and modesty but also fortitude, balance, flexibility and resourcefulness. She demonstrates that, by striving for perfection and increasing their honor, women would fulfill their duty to themselves—save their souls and enhance their personalities and happiness, fulfill their responsibilities to society, and raise the social status of their sex. Her approach is a positive one where every situation, if viewed correctly, offers an opportunity for success. Moreover, moral and social perfection provides the best protective measure against influences which threaten a woman's well-being: the difficulties of existence, societal forces such as male chauvinism and the malice of public opinion, and the woman's own egotistic impulses. Christine's unique point of view, exemplified
in her teaching of perfection, is the identity which she establishes between the means and the goal, for what is best for achieving something else is best in itself. Her essential message is that every woman possesses not only a human value, but a social value as well, and that she should therefore recognize, esteem and assert it.

The guidelines which Christine suggests for attaining feminine perfection are derived from certain premises and form a coherent system of ethics; this system is not explicitly stated but is understood by inference. Its religious foundation rests upon her belief that the individual's first duty is to God and that love of Him is shown through good works. Her system presumes also that human beings, created to live in society, depend upon and influence one another but that they know one another only according to their observable behavior. Christine postulates then that in every person exists the desire for self-perfection and for admiration as proof of that perfection. All individuals share the need for both stability and activity, creativity and human solidarity, while society's goals are social and political stability and the advancement of civilization.

On the basis of these assumptions, Christine formulated her ethical system. Her one absolute law governing the behavior of the individual is obedience to God's command to love one's neighbor as oneself. The individual has the duty to respect and aid his fellow men and the corresponding duty to fulfill his legitimate worldly
needs and interests. According to Christine's interpretation of the "Command," equal emphasis is placed upon the neighbor and the self. Decisions must be motivated by anticipation of both the potential positive and negative consequences of these decisions in order to attain the greatest good. Behavior therefore depends on the concrete situation. Virtues—humility, charity, patience, temperance, chastity, and diligence—and the Christian teachings are principles of desirable behavior but are relative to each situation. Ethical concepts such as sincerity and candor, like material ones—social position and wealth, for example—are valuable only when they help in reaching the good, but undesirable when they produce a bad result. Obligation in a situation is not limited to what is done; it extends to what should be done. The instrument of thought which helps find the right concept is called prudence or discreción.

An example may illustrate Christine's conception of the relativity of behavior. Although philanthropy is to be practiced anonymously, a princess or any influential figure, provided she resists vanity, should publicly perform a benevolent act, such as endowing churches; it will inspire others with a desire to emulate her behavior, and the respect she earns will strengthen her authority. If such advice, Christine observes, seems to border on hypocrisy—

... toutvoies se peut elle appeller par maniere de parler juste ypocrisy car elle tent afin de bien et eschivement de mal ... Si disons
Because human needs are incorporated into society's goals, there appears to be no contradiction between the interests of society and of the individual: good actions benefit others and bring recognition for oneself; work is a blessing to society and a privilege to the individual since it prevents restlessness and loneliness. Peaceful relations between individuals and groups permit the development of civilization and answer the human desire for amitié.

Through this system Christine develops the major premise which underlies her teaching to women: moral behavior is invariably the most successful, for by acting virtuously the woman will enhance her reputation. The honor she earns affords her an irreproachability which serves her needs and permits her in turn to serve society. However, with dishonor she risks losing her salvation and future effectiveness. Christine thus suggests that striving for perfection is a dynamic process whereby self-centered love is transformed into concern for others. This transformation initially makes personal survival possible and provides a means for self-realization. Its ultimate effect is that of contributing to the welfare of the neighbor
and of society. Seeking perfection is seen as a process of growth whereby energy is rechanneled into constructive activity. The word "perfection" must of course be qualified; in behavior it is never absolute and must be considered in terms of the will and of thoughtful effort. It must also be modified for practical considerations and according to Christine's own criterion of maximum usefulness as a measure of behavior.

The Livre des trois Vertus contains the proposition of the good and the better; dedicated to all women, it is divided according to their social strata. The first section is addressed to princesses and hautes dames (i.e., duchesses and countesses); the second, to dames and demoiselles (noblewomen of lesser birth); and the third, to women in ranks beneath the nobility—femmes d'estat, bourgoises and femmes de commun peuple. Each section is subdivided according to the type of life contemporary women led. Included, for example, are chapters for nuns, prostitutes, young girls awaiting marriage, widows, the elderly, youth, and the poor. Virtues, Christine states, admit no distinction of class. Nevertheless, she also states that the standard must be higher "où est plus d'onneur," that is, for the princesses and court. Obedience to a more stringent moral code is therefore required for influential personalities and groups. Moreover, spacial behavior, dependent upon the context and result to be achieved is demanded of all groups. Although this implied double
standard is a concomitant of Christine's ethics, it serves her immediate aim to attempt to reorient the behavior of the queen and her court. Encouraging adaptation when appropriate and resistance when change might threaten the social fabric, she also seeks to guide the noblewomen and rising middle classes through a period of rapid social change which characterize the early fifteenth century in France.

Christine's teaching technique and attitudes on learning reflect her system of ethics. Her method of teaching is three-fold. First, in order to recall her reader's sense of duty, she guides her in a reevaluation of herself and her situation. Second, to clarify her reader's duty, she proposes a redefinition of her role. Third, to convince her of the value of fulfilling her duty, she enumerates the maximum benefits that will accrue and which prove that the righteous way will emerge as the most expedient. Christine regarded learning as an active problem-solving process. She assumed that her reader would learn best in an experience in which she had a vital interest and was an active participant.

In the beginning of the Livre des trois Vertus, Christine aims to inspire in her readers a desire for Virtues through a comparison of virtues to jewels. The princesses deserve the best in life, Christine tells her first readers; they will therefore be the first to be presented with priceless and everlasting treasures, whose
essence ("l'amour et crainte de nostre Seigneur") removes fear from the heart and temptations from life's path. Christine's initial approach is to place her reader pictorially in a familiar aspect of the reader's own experience. Christine then projects herself into her reader's imagination. Through self-confrontation which is intended to bring the reader to a conscious recognition of reality, Christine elicits a desire for improvement. She thus teaches "perspective" so that habitual emotional reactions may be modified. Then assisting the reader to change her behavior by an assessment of her needs and capabilities, Christine stresses that selflessness should be countered by self-respect; in this way "perfection" appears feasible and desirable.

Christine's attempt to involve her reader in a reevaluation of judgment may be illustrated by her remarks to the princess at the beginning of the Livre des trois Vertus. To win first the princess's confidence, she places her in a familiar setting:

Quant la princesse ou haulte dame sera en son lit au matin resveillée de somme, et elle se verra couchiè en son lit mol entre souez draps aornée de riches paremens et de toutes choses pour aise de corps, dames et damoiselles entour elle qui l'ueil n'ont à autre chose si mon à aiser que riens ne lui faille de tous delices ...
To awaken the princess from complacency, Christine then simulates the voice of "pride," parodying its inordinate self-love and resultant aura of fantasy:

Beau sire Dieux, est il en ce monde plus grant maistresse de toy ..., n'yroies tu devant les autres, ceste cy ne celle la quoy qu'elle soit mariée à hault prince, n'est point à comparer à toy, tu es plus riche ou plus haultement enlignagée ou plus prisée pour tes enfans, plus crainte ... pour la puissance de ton seigneur, qui seroit ce donoques qui t'oseroit faire quelconque désplaisir, ne t'en vengeroies tu pas bien ...

She then delineates how pride progressively bends the moral fiber and engenders greediness ("Si te convient mettre païne à amasser tresor ... C'est le meilleur amy ...")\textsuperscript{17}, callousness ("qu'as-tu à faire se on en parle, tieulx pleurs ne te peuent nuire ne grever")\textsuperscript{18}, and finally inertia and self-indulgence ("Tu n'as que ta vie en ce monde, vif à repos ..., vins et viandes ne te peuent failir ..., nul n'a bon temps s'il ne le se donne, aucune gracieuse pensée te fault avoir qui te resjouira, pour qui sera jolie, tieux robes ..., ainsy et ainsy ...")\textsuperscript{19}. As the voice of "conscience," Christine then restructures the dimensions of the princess's universe, revealing her as God knows her: a mortal creature subject to all the bitter miseries of earthly existence and less fortunate than the wretched poor who are divinely blessed.

The princess, presumably humbled, is now attentive to any
admonition. Incalculable are the losses of acquiring renown through selfish ambition: divine punishment, adversity, unpopularity, and ceaseless frustration. Christine then sharply contrasts the dread of the Last Judgment with the joy of the soul carried into Christ's presence and the peace which He has promised to His faithful workers.

Because concern for her soul is now the princess's preoccupation, the voice of discretion resolves her anticipated dilemma. Christine informs her that there is a Golden Mean between the two ways to salvation—the Contemplative Life and the Active Life wherein one relinquishes all worldly attachments and serves God directly or indirectly through one's neighbor. The princess need not suffer pain on earth, provided that she is humble and willing to use her position—a trust from God—for the benefit of others and to use her wealth for the sustenance of the poor: "Si n'est point de doute que Dieu veult estre servi de gens de tous estas. ... Car l'estat ne fait mie le dampnement mais n'en savoir user saigement c'est ce qui dampne la creature ..."20 By distinguishing herself through her virtues and living righteously, the princess will command affection and respect as a person, and she will leave behind a lasting renown and set a pattern of behavior for all:

O le tres grant tresor à princesse et à toute haute dame que bonne renommée. ... Car le tresor commun ne la peut servir qu'environ elle, mais celluy de bon renom luy sert et pres et loing qui eslieve son honneur par toute la terre.21
Thus for the noblewomen the dedication to humanity is preferable to a blind desire for power. However, in the preceding quotation, Christine appears to be speaking to all women as well.

As a preliminary step toward fulfilling her function in society, the princess—the model for all women—must be a responsible person; she acquires her virtues and becomes self-disciplined in her personal conduct and in her pattern of living through learning, which is a habit-forming process as well as a problem-solving process. Modes of behavior may be learned by replacing undesirable habits by desirable ones; the princess then "voudra faire tout ainsy que fait le bon medecin qui cure la maladie par son contraire." 22

To destroy the root of pride she will place in its stead, humility, that is, the realization of her dependency upon God and her gratitude to Him; she will replace avarice by charity, envy by respect for humanity, anger by patience (i.e., forbearance and forgiveness), and wantonness by chastity. Above all, the two key virtues are temperance, without which all other virtues are powerless, and diligence, which enables the virtues to become manifest. Temperance governs all manner of expression in one's personality. For example, the demeanor of the princess should reflect perfect composure. She is to have a dignified bearing, a calm manner, a modest and kindly expression, and quiet and gentle speech. Sobriété will regulate her daily living, her tastes, and her choice of activities and of company.
Diligence is the criterion, along with moderation, for the woman's life pattern. Although her daily schedule will vary in content according to her role, it is based on a maximum disposal of time in rational and purposeful occupation, which always includes religious observance and a balance between activity and rest.\(^{23}\)

Christine's emphasis on self-restraint is an expression of her idea that it is an essential condition for a happy and efficient life. Its broader impact is that only by responsible behavior can the woman have the moral credit which will give her the necessary authority to be influential. Since excess and extravagance shock and since visible behavior reflects inward disposition, only reasonable and dignified behavior will earn her confidence and respect. Christine's emphasis on energetic performance of tasks recognizes apathy as the insidious enemy to fulfillment of duty. However, as delight in righteous living grows in the measure that it is renewed, she promises her reader, after the initial trials, an effortless success:

... lesquelles choses ne sont mie moult fortes à faire, ains embellissent et son plaisana mais que bon cuer sy veuille disposer et qu'ung petit l'ait acoustumé. pourra la sage dame acquerir loz gloire renomée et grant honneur au monde et à la parfin paradis qui est promis aux bien vivans.\(^{24}\)

Christine then redefines the woman's role and outlines to her reader her responsibilities as a wife and mother, as mistress of a
household or domain, as a servant, and finally as an equal member of a social group. She shows that even though the woman is economically dependent upon her husband and others and subject to a number of social pressures, she nevertheless has a high degree of autonomy in expressing herself in order to enhance her reputation and honor. In her life there are several goals the woman is to pursue: the maintenance of harmonious and just relations within her community; the conservation or enhancement of her economic resources; and the preservation of the integrity and, if possible, the advancement of the honor of herself and those to or for whom she is responsible. In instructing her reader, Christine discusses the immediate objective of performance of the role, the means by which to attain it, the rewards to be achieved by patience and perseverance; she also replies to anticipated objections.

Loyalty to her husband is the woman's primary duty as a wife, and domestic harmony must be her ultimate consideration: "... se rendra humble vers lui en fait en reverence et parole. L'obeira sans murmuracion et gardera sa paix à son pouvoir ..."\(^{25}\) Christine advances an affirmative view of marriage, presenting it as a cooperative venture which promotes the mutual interests of husband and wife as well as the interests of society. She sees the role of the wife in a broadened light because the wife must be a moral force in the relationship. Through consideration for her husband, expressed
in her even-tempered disposition, solicitude for his welfare, sympathy for his aspirations and concerns and respect for his allegiances, the wife strengthens his affection for her and thus increases her influence over him. For example, when in the prince's company, the princess expresses pleasure; in his absence she lives quietly, and upon his return awards public recognition to those of his retinue who distinguished themselves on his mission. She honors his parents more than she does her own, complies with their wishes and reconciles any differences they might have with him. She hides feelings of disapproval for the uncongenial behavior of her husband's friends, because display of such feelings will change neither the behavior nor her husband's bias and will merely provoke his anger. If his position should become endangered by the friendship, however, she will tactfully counsel him. In the same manner, the urban housewife whose husband serves as a governmental functionary creates in the home an atmosphere of happiness and calm:

... luy doit à toutes heures faire bonne chiere... , s'il avient qu'il soit aucunement troublé en courage ay comme diverses choses que les hommes ont à faire livrent aucunefois mains déplaisira, qu'elle luy puisse par son gracieulx accueil faire aucunement entroublier ...

Her duties include careful attention to his wardrobe, thoughtfulness at meal-time, and honoring of his guests:
... doit estre soinguse que son mari soit nettement tenu en robes et toutes choses ... /
ne lui enquire point de ses besoingnes ne autres choses aucunement secretes à table ne devant maisgne ... / s'il semont gens d'onneur en son hostel, sy doit elle mesmes se besoing est aler en la cuisine et ordener coment ilz seront servis ...27

The wife's obedience to her husband does not allow her to be impatient. If he is "pervers et rude mal amoureux vers sa femme,"28 what she is unable to change she must gracefully accept; righteous indignation will only compromise her relationship with him and discredit her reputation. She should, however, attempt gentle persuasion:

... elle luy en touchera à part doucement ..., une fois l'amonestera par devotion, autrefois par pitié qu'il doit avoir d'elle, autre fois en riant comme se elle se jouast. Avec ce luy fera dire par bonnes gens et par son confesseur ...29

If her attempts bear no significant result, she should avoid further discussion that leads to no solution and place her faith in God.

The woman's marital duty excludes all vindictiveness, such as an escape in romantic love: "... trop fait grant folie cil qui met le feu en sa maison pour ardoir celle de son voisin."30 Courtly love, when it is not the cause of the woman's ruin, remains nevertheless a source of grief and anxiety. The uneven happiness of love, the faithlessness of most lovers, and the languishing of the ardor of
those few who remain loyal submerge the woman in a sorrow which is
depended by the haunting fear of discovery, a fear which persists
beyond the end of the romance, because vanity loosens the suitor’s
reserve and the tongues of servants:

... et en la fin de telle amour souventefois le
blasme et parler des gens aux dames en demeure,
ou a tout le moins la crainte et paour en leurs
cuers que eulx mesmes en qui se sont fiez le
dient et s’en vantent .... Oultre plus les
servans qui scevent vos secrez ...

There is no limitation, Christine concludes, to the risks involved
for the woman in romantic love.

The highest tribute that can be paid to a woman is that she
is a loyal wife; thus, all manifestations of affection for her hus-
band create for her an aura of honor. It is assumed that the loving
wife will be faithful to her husband and that her love will be
judged by appearance: "Si ne peut faire autre cercifficcation de sa
loyauté fors par l’amour qu’elle luy monstre et les signes de par
dehors par lequelz on juge comunement du courage." Fulfillment
of her marital duty and the honor which she thereby earns ensures the
woman’s security in regard to her husband, his family and society:
"Et de tenir ces manierez son dit seigneur lui saura tres grant gré,
aura la grace et benivolence de ses parens qui moult luy pourra
valloir, et garder de mains autres perils et encombrers ..." The
wife's patient acceptance and endurance will not only increase her
merit and honor but will also change the conduct of her husband, who will eventually appreciate the goodness of his wife. Christine says to her non-noble reader that devotion to a husband will result in rewards at his deathbed: "... que quant vient à la mort, que conscience les reprent et ilz avissent le bien de leurs femmes ..., qu'ilz les laissent dames et maistresses de tout quant qu'ilz ont baillant." But more important than eventual material rewards is the fact that the woman has strengthened her position to lead her husband into more humane attitudes toward life and into prudent and conscientious behavior; she is also better able to fulfill her other roles in society.

Christine illuminates child-care as an experience of self-fulfillment for the mother. At the same time the role of the mother is of fundamental importance because Christine had the idea, advanced for her time, that a child is to be "raised." One might infer that she conceived of the child as a young tree whose intrinsic nature would develop in health only if given proper nourishment and care. Because the character of a child is developed rather than innate, motherhood should occupy a significant part in the woman's life, even that of the noblewoman. The princess should not only be responsible for the selection of her children's staff but should also be with them as much as possible, playing an integral role in their training and exercising a severity tempered by her "nature de mere" so that
her children will both esteem her and revere her authority. The
mother throughout society shapes habits of self-restraint appropriate
to the family's social status: the villager's wife, for example,
must teach her children respect of a neighbor's property, while the
townswoman must train her children in orderliness. The permanent
and active concern of every mother is the upbringing of her
daughters, and her greatest asset is her own moral character which
sets a pattern for them and for the girls in her household. Control
of their environment is critical; therefore a governess must be
"de bon renom et devonte envers Dieu et de sens et honneur mondain,
sage, et prudente ..."36

At the same time, in view of economic realities and of the
individual's religious and social responsibilities, Christine con-
sidered that the mother should be a decisive influence on the child's
character and his vocational orientation and instruction. Hoping to
raise the educational qualification of her nation's rulers, Christine
placed the responsibility on the princess to convince the prince of
the usefulness to their sons of learning, which would include know-
ledge of government, Latin—necessary for a background in law—and
the sciences.37 The education of a prince is to stress both
Classical and Christian principles as compatible ideals. The pre-
paration of the child for life is a universal maternal duty: "Se
elle a enfans, les face aprendre premierement à l'escole afin qu'ilz
puissent et saîchent mieulx servir Dieu, après soient mis en aucun mestier par quoy leur vie puissent avoir ..."38

As mistress of a household or an estate, the woman exercises a moderating and civilizing influence and performs a mediatory and even vanguard role in ensuring its future vitality. Whether she helps her husband as housewife or in his business, acts as his surrogate during his absences or on her own behalf as a widow, she is highly competent in applying practical and social skills. She demonstrates practical skill by expert knowledge and efficient use of her material and human resources and by wise distribution of her income. She neither undervalues her personal needs (whether for survival, comfort or display, depending upon her position) nor deprives others of what is rightfully theirs. She abides by the principle of fair practices and generosity to the poor, but she takes care not to deplete her wealth by unwise risks or squandering. The competent mistress displays social skills through the effective manipulation of people. She commands obedience by demonstrating qualities of leadership and by the threat of her disapproval. She assumes greater humility when a person is much humbler than she, thus winning his love, and with the powerful she shows her authority and proficiency so as to command reverence and respect.

The atmosphere which the well-to-do urban housewife proudly creates in the home is one of comfort and well-being, for which she
will be admired and praised. Harmonizing the human tendencies
toward severity and luxury, she introduces order into the home,
balanced economy ("... doit ordener [les provisions] et dispenser
par bonne discretion ... sans trop grant escharceté et aussy bien se
garder de folle largesse ..."),
industriousness ("quant elle aura
cy la messe ..., puis se prendra à faire bonne oeuvre ou à filler
ou à coudre ..., ne filles ne femmes ne elle mesmes ne vouldra veoir
ne souffrir nulle heure oiseuses ...").
Although she assigns the specific household tasks to her staff, she
herself must skillfully supervise, thus encouraging pride and the
will to work. Whenever she must scold, she balances firmness with
consideration:

... ne à ses meigsies ne sera malle maudisant, ne
disant villenie, ne toute jour riote pour un beau
neant, ains les reprendra volerement quant
mesprendront ..., mais ce sera sans tonner ne
mener grant harou sy qu' on l'oise de ioings.

However, thoughtfulness extends beyond her home:

... se prendra garde que riens ne pourrisse avau son
hostel ne voise a mal de quoy creatures pouvres se
peussent aucument aidier ... , ne robes n'y
soient mangiées de versa, sy les fera donner aux
pouvres ..., ne fera pas seulement de ce ses
amoynes mais du vin de sa propre boisson et de
la viande de sa table aux pouvres aouchées, à
malades ...

Christine's portrait is therefore essentially that of the honorable
and honored woman in her domestic role.

The artisan's wife is also aware that an economic and social unit may be damaged by idleness and imprudence; she is thus the driving force in her husband's workshop. She urges her husband and assistants to a long day of conscientious labor, and she herself gains professional competence so that she is able, in her husband's absence, to oversee the shop and criticize imperfect workmanship. She cautions her husband to live within their earnings, not readily to accept an order for an unusual piece of work nor to extend credit to a customer whose reliability is not yet established. The artisan's wife thus engenders a spirit of enterprise which looks forward to the future

... il n'est nul sy bon mestier que qui n'y met diligence à paine puut on aller de pain à autre.\textsuperscript{43}

while she exercises a restraining influence in the present.

The responsibility of a chevalier's wife is to assume in his absence the management of the manor and make it prosper. She must therefore have an understanding of the rural economy that pertains to the local region. Well-informed in regard to feudal laws and fees, sources of revenue, and jurisdictional procedures, she must also know the type of cultivation best adapted to the soil and the possibilities the natural resources offer for further exploitation, such as the possible introduction of cattle-breeding in an area of
pasture land. At the same time, her awareness extends to the human conditions of work. Through persuasion a wife has to encourage her husband to adopt a reasonable standard of living for the family; they will thus avoid the shame of debt and spare their people financial hardship. She should establish effective control over her personnel, neither tolerating harshness of treatment by her officers toward the people nor allowing her people to be indifferent to their work. In addition to her supervisory role, she participates in the activities of the season, for example in the process of preparing fine woolens for her family or for sale. The abundant yield of the land and wise use of resources promise the estate prosperity greater than that furnished by its revenue alone, and its mistress, Christine concludes, has performed a real achievement and is to be commended.

The wife of a powerful baron also bears the responsibility for administering the great holdings of her husband when he is away at court or at war. She must therefore possess knowledge of the legal and financial affairs of the estate and must acquire perfect self-control, "courage domíné." A central figure in the life of the barony, she is required to give informed opinions on all questions addressed to her, checking rebellious or scornful behavior by her eloquence and encouraging loyalty by her kindness. In the event of an impending clash of arms, she must take precautionary measures which include inventory of the reserve stock of ammunition; assessment
In her supervisory capacity, she must be selective in her choice of personnel and demanding in her standards. The primary consideration for her administrative officers is their integrity. Her court she must direct "toujours comme la prudent et bonne abbesse fait son convent," permitting no infringement on good taste and respectability in her attendants' manners, attire or diversions. Because she herself resists impulses of frivolity, conceit and baseness, her ladies will react to her dignity and kindness with affection and will respect her wishes. When she presides over the royal council, her judgments should be based not on impulse but on careful evaluation of evidence and on her own experience and reason. She must rely, however, on expert advice. Such qualities of leadership and good judgment will show her to be equal to the tasks delegated to her by her absent husband, and she will bear herself with increasing self-assurance. The personal behavior of the princess and of her disciplined court will fashion etiquette and a sense of responsibility and dignity in the realm and in neighboring lands.

As symbol of the state the princess performs a political role which permits no indiscretion and which is primarily humanitarian. Hers is the delicate task of cementing bonds between the Crown and foreign powers, as well as between the Crown and its subjects. In order to capture the loyalties of the influential and learned segments of society, the princess must show an appreciation of their
of reliable sources of manpower and financial support (without overtaxing her people); reporting to her men the policies and decisions of the estate's managers; and engaging the active support of her fighting men. Thus, by control over her lands and people, she sustains the honor of the baron and prepares herself as well for possible widowhood: "... qu'elle ne feust pas trouvée ignorant de savoir son estre sy que chacun la voulisit fouller et emporter sa piece."45

Mistress of her royal household and sovereign in her realm, the princess, as a public personality, is in a strong position to influence society and effect political and social action. Because her conduct reflects upon the reputation of her kingdom and modifies its mores through the example she sets, she must be the epitome of behavior and taste. In her daily environment she establishes habits of regularity and responsibility, introduces a feminine grace, and creates an atmosphere of imperial dignity. The usual daily schedule for the princess whose children are grown consists of morning prayers, attendance at Mass followed by alms-giving, meeting with the royal advisory council when her husband is absent, dinner with her attendants, reception of visitors, time devoted to handwork in the company of her daughters and attendants, Vespers, recreation taken in the garden, supper, and final prayers. Into her household management she must also introduce organization and responsibility.
particular interests and their desire for prestige. She should extend invitations, for example, to eminent members of the ecclesiastic community, seek and act upon their advice, and stimulate their activities through her philanthropic acts. She is equally cordial to royal advisors, members of the legal profession, merchant and artisan classes, and to foreign dignitaries, and she is particularly warm in her welcome to her people, inviting the women to her court. Thus, the princess promotes the interests of all sectors of society and also regulates relations with the Crown. In this manner unrest and war may be averted.

However, when war threatens, she must perform a private political role. Reflecting on the casualties of armed combat and persuaded that conflict is best settled by pacific means, she assumes the responsibility of arbitrator. Should spokesmen from the people present her with a grievance, she must first attempt appeasement; if this is not fruitful, she must then intervene with the prince on behalf of the people and argue that without the consent of the governed he cannot retain his rule. If the prince, in indignation over an act of aggression committed by the barons, himself plans war, the princess seeks through patient diplomacy for a common ground of agreement: "la douce parole fleschist et brise sa [le prince] durté." By these gestures of good faith, she comes to represent for her subjects their ultimate political refuge. Thus, when the
disintegration of the state threatens, it is the princess who can best reestablish conditions for peace and stability.

The princess must show consummate skill in times of difficulty, herself exercising self-restraint. Christine observes that there is no person who is loved by all, and the person who is most liable to be disliked is the person who is most nearly perfect. If there are ill-intentioned persons in the princess's entourage who might endanger her good relationship with her husband and bring her into disrepute among the nobles and people, the princess must protect herself from public disgrace by refraining from attempts at a vengeance which might prove unsuccessful. She should instead mask her feelings toward these persons, make a pretense of friendship with them, and pretend that they enjoy her total confidence by informing them in secrecy of inconsequential matters. If an unfavorable comment about her is reported but she deems her reactions will be disclosed, she should display indignation at the reporters or else attribute the motivation of the comment to a cause unrelated to her. Eventually her opponents will capitulate, or if they should act against her interests, their disloyalty will be manifest. Because its purpose is the preservation of harmony and avoidance of regrettable consequences, Christine recommends this policy of guile to the princess and even to all women:

Ainsy la sage dame usera de ceste discrètre
The fulfillment of her responsibilities will procure for the princess high rewards. She will generate a wave of affection throughout the land and will enjoy a reputation beyond it. The favorable impression she creates on influential groups in performing her political role will shield her against intrigues and hostile comment. The royal council, for example, will not vote any measure inimical to her interests. The clergy will pray for her, and their sermons in her praise will strengthen her husband's and the people's confidence in her. The princess's interests will be promoted among the merchants and artisans in the event that she needs money or credit. Because of her humane behavior, her subjects will take her into their hearts and will revere her. The merit she earns from her charitable activity will be even greater because of its effect on public behavior and on the poor and humble persons who, flattered by her attention, recover a vestige of self-respect. Imperceptively, her selfless behavior will affect her personal attitudes so that another person's success will give her as much happiness as does her own.

Because rewards and punishment act as controls over behavior,
The princess' are proportionately greater than those of a lesser person because her behavior is of greater consequence to the fate of society. She must handle her public role responsibly; she must use her power for good purposes; her duty is to redistribute the wealth concentrated in her hands. Christine's implication is that in terms of social justice the princess must fulfill her role to the best of her ability. In the same way, any mistress of a community, whether the highborn woman or the villager's wife, must use her influence for the benefit of its members, protecting them against themselves—whether its members include a staff of subordinates or only her husband and children.

Anticipating objections from her reader, Christine observes that her advice does not apply to those wives who are restricted in their freedom of decision. In the interest of harmony, she counsels patience and obedience but notes that just as a strong light cannot be totally eclipsed, the behavior of a wise and good woman will inevitably earn her affection and respect in her community.

The primary prerequisite for a servant in a household or a lady-in-waiting at court is loyalty to her mistress. Equity demands that in exchange for the material support and sense of security which her mistress provides, the servant reciprocates with the same responsible behavior. At the same time the lady-in-waiting maintains a personal relationship with her mistress; her loyalty is expressed in practice by her actively seeking to promote her mistress' welfare.
Above all, she must care for the honor of her mistress. As a member of her court, she will mold her personal conduct to exemplify civility and respectability. In her personal relationship with her mistress, she must inhibit all free expression that might disturb her mistress's tranquillity, such as reporting to her rumors or tales. If she observes in her mistress any tendency to yield to human weakness, she should not reinforce it, nor does she let jealousy caused by her mistress' preference for another lady of the court manifest itself in spiteful gossip about her mistress. The devoted servant will earnestly seek her mistress' good. She will love her as herself and sympathize with her in her varying moods. She will use her ingenuity to please her in all honest ways and to win her favor. Silencing critical remarks about her mistress, she must always attempt to build confidence in the latter's goodness, thereby establishing for her mistress a good reputation.

Continuing her advice to the ladies of the court, Christine further clarifies their duty by indicating the responsible behavior to be followed in case of certain contingencies. The mistress' personality and her willingness or unwillingness to fulfill her duty bear no relationship to their fulfillment of their own. If impediments to loyal service exist, the one moral option open to them is ending the relationship with the mistress—that is, departure from her service. If necessity demands that the lady remain, and if the situation appears to be unchangeable, the practical alternative is
for her to keep to herself any disapproval, to the best of her ability to silence the disapproval by others, and to pray for her mistress’s improvement. Before her mistress commits herself to rash behavior, duty requires the lady to attempt to dissuade her from it; however, if such forthrightness is of little value she must seek out the mistress’s confessor. If her mistress requests her complicity, she must take a firm stand in refusing. Christine foresees at this point her reader’s possible argument that the better course might be compliance because of the reader’s dependability to keep a secret. Christine replies that self-scrutiny would reveal such a motive to be of doubtful honesty. Nevertheless, in the event of a mishap, the logical development is that the servant must do her best, once the situation is irremediable, to preserve her mistress’s honor and rescue her from her plight, permitting her to be restored to God. Her behavior will eventually earn her the esteem of others, once they understand that she acts from a sense of duty and devotion.

When Christine addresses the servant in an urban household, she stresses the self-restraint which the role of loyal servant demands. A domestic servant must try to perform her tasks with scrupulous honesty. Wishing to admonish any reader in the service of a family against the temptations implicit in her role, Christine describes practices of those servants she terms "fauces gloutes chamberiers"\(^9\): they return home from market, reporting more purchases than they actually made; they socialize at the city baths
when presumably they are at the river doing the laundry. If such a
false servant serves in the household of newlyweds and has not only
a talent for housekeeping but also the ability to make pious gestures,
she is regarded with awe and runs the house as she pleases, imputing
financial difficulties to the master's hospitality.

Christine indicates that the servant's material need is a
justifiable reason as well for her seeking to be in her mistress's
good graces. It is not permissible, however, that she abuse her
position. She also states that the servant is not pledged to ir-
revocable obedience, for ultimately she must be answerable to God.

Christine also guides the woman to her duty in social groups
where she is an equal member: the ladies of the court, the nuns in
a convent, and in the more loosely linked group of the urban or
rural neighborhood. Christine observes that the nature of court life,
where honors are distributed by the princess to her attendants and
where women live in communal intimacy, creates feelings of jealousy
that disturb the woman's happiness and the social climate. To help
her reader counteract these feelings which cause her only sadness,
Christine asks her potentially troubled reader to consider that, if
her mistress seems to favor some other lady of the court, no wrong
has been done her, for the love and favors of a mistress were never
hers, nor is her mistress' affection hers to command. Christine asks
if it is sensible or fair to pursue this person with malice, for why
is this favored person not entitled to advantages and happiness just as well as the reader herself. An examination of the reader's recent actions might reveal that she deserved the loss of her mistress's confidence, and a sympathetic thought to her "rival" might suggest that by this favored treatment to the other lady, God is rewarding her for a virtuous act she performed. If injustice has actually been done, God considers a forgiving nature a virtue and such forbearance will eventually bring the wronged lady esteem. Christine's message is that there can be no spiritual peace within the individual and in the group unless kindness dispels the illusion that one deserves more success and happiness than others and unless friendship is given to one's peers. To her readers in monastic life, Christine brings the basic message that charitable love buries the sword of malice and will create among them unity and joy.

Christine wishes to teach the same respect for fellow human beings when she discusses the woman in the role of neighbor. Since neighbors depend upon one another for acts of kindness, Christine suggests that the essential characteristic of this role is friendliness. The urban housewife, for example, being neither indifferent to the wants of others nor haughty or discourteous, should willingly oblige her neighbors with little favors and give them companionship when need arises; through her kind and sympathetic interest in them she will earn affection. To the village workman's wife, the neighborly concept also applies and guides her away from traditions of
suspicion and greediness; she must not disturb the peace of the community by such peccadilloes as putting her animals to pasture in an adjacent meadow or bringing lawsuits concerning trivial matters against her neighbors. Rather, she should be peaceably disposed toward them. Vanity and presumption impair cordial relations for the rural noblewomen as well, for though isolated on their estates, they often meet one another in church or at social affairs. She describes how unwilling some are to suffer any offense to their egos. Even at Mass they exchange insults about one another's appearance. These same women will hesitate to join the company of another who maintains a higher estate than they, because they would have to ride behind her on the road. Vanity, Christine suggests, not only nourishes ill will between people but hinders the formation of friendships, and individuals emerge as lonely and isolated figures. The yearning for companionship is strong in the heart and must not be smothered by various facets of pride.

When Christine's point of interest is the woman's role as member of a social class, her most important concern is appropriate behavior particularly in terms of external display. In an age of competitive ostentation, where an anarchy of fashion reigned, she wished to persuade both her noble and middle class reading public to show moderation because excess and extravagance were disruptive influences on society and on the individual. The status-seeking caused
by the bourgeois' desire to display his wealth, the desire of the
noble to emulate his peers of higher birth, and the human desire
to distinguish oneself from others brought confusion into the social
structure and enhanced as well feelings of envy and indignation.
When the means of an individual and his needs were no longer in
harmony, many persons ended in debt and destitution. Describing an
outfit that a Parisian couturier made for a lady from the Gatinais—

Et n'est ce pas grand oultragé voirement et chose
superflue ... une cote hardie où il a mis V aulnes
à la mesure de Paris de drap de Bruxelles de la
grant moisson, et traisnent bien parterre .iii.
quartiers de queue et aux manches à bombardes qui
vont jusques aux piéz, mais Dieu scet se selon cest
abat convient large atour et hautes cornes, qui
rest en verité un tres lait abillement et qui
messiet.50

Christine concludes that not only is immodesty offensive to God but
a more subdued and becoming appearance would enhance her reader's
personality and reputation: "N'est pas doubt qu'à qui cler y voit
le moien est le plus doux et le plus plaisant."51

However, social cleavage was no longer a fact; Christine
thus addresses the noblewoman who is married to a bourgeois, urging
her to withstand the inclination to snobbery and reconcile herself
to a situation which, if viewed correctly, is not only dishonorable
but indeed advantageous. While reminding her that "baseness" and
nobility depend upon behavior not birth, Christine recommends to this
noblewoman respectful obedience to her husband and gentleness
toward her servants and neighbors. She will thereby set an example
for all women, and in humbling herself she shall manifest her good-
ness; she shall thereby be even more elevated in the eyes of others.

Because circumstances and successive stages in life vary,
Christine defines in the Livre des trois Vertus a code of behavior
for younger and older people, for girls of marriageable age and for
widows, as well as for her readers who were the outcasts of society--
prostitutes, and the poor. To end the warfare between the young and
the old, she tries to guide both groups toward a mutual tolerance and
sympathetic behavior. Understanding that the interest of society was
in compensating for the loss of youth's carefree freedom by status
in old age, she counsels her younger readers to honor and respect
their elders and to heed their advice considering the fact that
civilization is due to their innovations and that present society is
maintained by their leadership. Because she knew that the problem
of the aged was more than a lack of respect and that many old people
face a nightmare of poverty and loneliness ("car plus grant enfermeté
n'est que de viellesse."). she also asks that they give them care
and comfort and aid them with their charity, both for their own
sake—for they themselves will be old one day—and for the sake of
humanity.

In a corresponding message to her older readers, whose wisdom

and experience were considered pertinent to the development of the young, she counsels them to bear themselves as befitting the dignity of age while maintaining a pleasant sociability and reminding themselves at moments of ill humor that they will not change the world. If vexed by the pleasures of the young, a moment of reflection will make her realize that she, too, was once young, that she should be grateful that she no longer experiences the turmoil of youth, and that, since she herself cannot resist the temptations that come with age, it is unfair to be more severe in her judgment of the young ("... on doit jennes gens reprendre et tencier voirement de leurs folies non mie pour tant les hair ne diffamer ..."). Mutual consideration will result in advantages to both groups. The young reader must understand that honor is to the one who gives it, that following advice will avoid criticism, and that praise from an elder member of society is weighted with respect. The older reader if she acts with dignity, will preserve her health and sense of self-respect, and will be a figure of reverence everywhere. By suggesting reciprocal efforts at understanding, Christine hoped to bridge the gap between the generations, knowing that at heart children want the support and wisdom of the elderly and elders do not want to hate.

Remarks are addressed as well to the women entering adulthood—girls of marriageable age and young women—to help them ensure their future success and to widows who feel their life is over. Scrupulous
adherence to propriety is the suggested behavior for young girls whose major concern must be to find a husband. Constantly under scrutiny, their appearance and conduct must display good breeding and reserve: hair and dress neat, eyes lowered on missal in church, close to their mothers at dances, reserved in the presence of men, occupied in tasks all day, docile with parents, and gentle with servants whose talk can often disrupt plans. Christine explains to these readers that by such a show of modesty their marriage prospects will be bright. Likewise, the conduct of all young women must be governed by discretion because a reputation acquired at great cost can readily be lost. For example, Christine advises the urban housewife, tempted by the attractions of city life, such as the baths or social gatherings, to reflect before she follows her whims; nor should she participate in pilgrimages for she can find God everywhere. In reply to possible protests by the ladies of the court that all pleasures seem to be denied, Christine states that seemly behavior will not only avoid misfortune but will bring satisfaction and pleasure: the rarer a jewel is, the higher value it commands, and the greater is its desirability.

The anguish of widowhood is often the most difficult period in a woman's life. Christine herself knew the experience and felt that preparation for life as a widow was as important as preparation for marriage. No comforting words could alleviate the shock and
pain of loss; Christine wished, however, to help save the widow from financial ruin and to spare her feelings of shame. Confronted with her new responsibilities, she must not prolong her mourning period. She must cultivate a meek manner in order to ingratiate herself with those in authority who will then attend to her requests. She should adopt a secluded and simple life-style so as to avoid the hostile criticism to which widows were subjected, and in her relations with others appear humble and benign. Balancing this attitude of self-effacement with determined behavior, she must also be able to fight for what is hers, considering beforehand whether the battle is absolutely necessary, and by an estimation of her means judging as well her chances of success. If it is necessary that she enter litigation, she must then engage reliable and experienced counsel and must herself act with resolution, for a helpless attitude will not meet with sympathetic consideration.

... qu'elle prenne cuer dominé, c'est assavoir constant fort et sage, pour aviser et pour poursuivre ce qui luy est bon à faire, non mie comme simple femme s'acroupir en plours et en larmes sans autre defence comme ung pouvre chien qui s'aculle en ung guignet et tous les autres luy courent sus, car par ainsi faire entre vos femmes trouveríés asses de gens sans pitiés qui le pain vous osteroient de la main et vous reputeroit on ignorans et simples ... 54

The widow remains among the living. She must assert her human rights and find whatever happiness she can in resuming a normal life.
Because Christine sees the possibility of dignity in all individuals, she includes among her readers the fringe members of the social order, first the prostitutes and then the poor. For the prostitutes, her teaching is principally an exhortation to reform; she decries the shameful life such a woman leads and urges her to remember the love and forgiveness which God offers to those who will accept it. The prostitute's excuses for not changing her way of living cannot be seriously considered. If she dresses decently and lives humbly and chastely—"en une petite chambre en bonne rue"—she can find a useful and appreciated role in her community. The strength she once had for wrong-doing will strengthen her in more honest work, and a merciful society will respect her sincere efforts and will enable her to begin to earn a respectable living. She will thus exchange shame for honor.

In her introduction to the princesses, Christine felt the need to humble their pride, but at the conclusion of her work she addresses words to the poor and despised:

Amis tres chiers de Dieu amés, plaise vous à retenir nostre amonicion ... par quoy elle vous ramentovie ce qui vous peut aider contre les aguillons d'impascience quant ilz vous poignent de divers et tres grans mesaises que vous portés ..., faim, soif, froit, mauvais logis, impotent vieillesse sans amis, malades sans reconfort, en sur que tout le despris, villenies et dehoutement du monde, sy comme à pou se vous esties une autre espece de gens et non mie chrestiens.
Poverty was a bitter and constant companion to many, but conditions were too primitive and harsh to imagine life without it. Christine could try, however, by reminding them of the spiritual life, to ease their moments of resentment and discouragement and restore to them some sense of self-respect. To compensate for lack of worldly comforts and honor, she consoles the poor with the hope that in ever-lasting life they will be clothed in glory by the Lord who had suffered their torments. The comforts of this world are inconsequential—its transient honors are in fact hazards, for the rich tread an uncertain path. Christine tells her readers to accept patiently God's Will, to comfort their husbands, and bring solace to poor widows; in so doing, the true treasure will soon be theirs. In bringing hope and self-respect to the poor, Christine includes them in the human community.

In the introduction to the Livre des trois Vertus, "Raison," "Droiture" and "Justice" appear before Christine and urge her to continue the valuable work she had begun in the Cité des Dames so that as many women as possible may find refuge in the City. Writing from the three-fold point of view of the individual woman, of women as a class and woman in society, Christine develops the philosophy of "responsibility" or loyalty to duty as exemplified by the illustrious women whom she included in the Cité des Dames. As human beings, women are capable of wickedness and wrong-doing, and they are also easily
victimized in a society which is not particularly tolerant toward them. Because of this situation powerful yearnings for security and satisfaction can turn a woman toward revenge or toward escape into fantasy, lethargy, or self-preoccupation. Believing that no human being can emancipate himself from society and wishing to help her reader make an optimum adjustment to life, Christine seeks a solution for women: if they could channel their energies into socially useful goals, their talents might better be used, their desires for admiration and happiness satisfied, and their need for security—and salvation—ensured. Christine wished to convince her reader that her ultimate and immediate destiny was for her to determine but would try to assist her by setting forth certain principles and duties to guide her.

Because Christine believed that the success in performing a role depends upon the measure of self-fulfillment it brings, she hoped to inspire women with a desire for recognition. If only the high-born can achieve fame, all women, by their good example, can leave an indelible mark upon society. Christine's intention was to show her reader that every role or specific situation offered her the possibility of recognition as well as certain utilitarian benefits and gave her the chance to make a valuable contribution to society. Since woman was considered inferior, Christine wished to give her reader a feeling of pride in her feminine nature and to
heighten her self-expectations. Because woman's traditional duties were not highly valued, Christine attempted to create favorable attitudes toward her role in society as well. If a woman appreciated her capabilities and understood her responsibilities, she would maintain her self-respect. Once she truly understood her place in society, she was obliged to carry out her responsibilities as fully as possible. Her feminine qualities had predisposed her to essential tasks—creating harmony in the home and promoting peace in the community. Although hers was a supportive role in the family, it offered her many opportunities for decisions and initiative. A woman could make her married life a constructive partnership and as a mother she could be a decisive influence on her child’s future. By performing the domestic tasks traditionally assigned to women, she could contribute to the dignity and embellishment of human living. If a woman could negotiate for peace, she could also help, when necessary, to win the war; she could master technical knowledge and skills and perform whatever tasks were required by her way of life. In every grade of society a woman could perform a vital function in her community by making intelligible the moral commitments of human beings.

The concept of responsibility which Christine develops for her reader is one of rational action which involves a clear perception of reality. This perception may be defined as a sense of perspective
in which one sees oneself as a member of both the human community and the community of God, an acceptance of one's situation when it cannot be changed, and a willingness to change it whenever necessary and possible. In order to act responsibly, a woman must be able to determine her own needs as well as understand the importance of acting justly. She is concerned with actions that will bring the greatest good both for herself and to others. She must take advantage of the means at her disposal so that she can pursue her goals to the best of her ability. Just as her goals must include moral considerations, so must her actions in achieving these goals be based on these same considerations. The individual acts therefore through both a personal freedom and a self-reliance which accepts responsibility for the well-being of the world around him. Basic to the concept of responsibility is the need to avoid a situation where one's means are insufficient to effect the goal and which, promising no significant results, might risk a loss of honor, future effectiveness and possible loss of material rewards. Responsibility depends therefore on the woman's developing her power of discrimination and exercising independent judgment. It rests also upon the strengthening of her will so that her ability to be influential or merely to survive will not be impaired by fear, anger or feelings of helplessness. Responsibility is based as well on her acquiring competency in performing her role; if she can disprove tradition
which sees a woman as a fragile and simple creature, she will gain
the respect of others and the self-confidence necessary to carry out
her tasks more effectively. The essence of self-responsibility,
therefore, is the development of character by which the woman's
original sense of impotence is replaced by a justified feeling of
strength.

Christine's teaching is a valid response to the social con-
ditions of the time. In this society behavior was determined by
status relationships in which the underlying principle was the
maintenance of traditional rights and duties. In this sense the
superior offered security to the subordinate who was bound to
reciprocate by devoted service, the husband provided for the wife
who owed him in return loyalty and cooperation. Since Christine
assumed that those who benefit from such loyalty would appreciate
and reward it, she believed that ideally women's performance of
their duties would influence others to carry out their own.

But more important was the admiration to be gained if con-
temporary women lived responsibly. For once women presented a picture
of competence, men could no longer justify their unfair treatment of
them. With a new perception of women, men might also change their
attitudes and behavior toward them. Thus, woman's best defenses are
virtuous character and competent performance of her duties. More-
over, a woman could also help to raise the quality of social life by
being a "model-image" with which other women might identify. Christine's aim for women—the "acroissement de l'ononneur"—was therefore the woman's obligation to enhance her own dignity and give a new social significance to her life.

The same code of morals applies equally to both sexes. In placing a high value on woman's chastity and exalting the character of her sex, Christine had no intention of justifying the dual standard of morality. Her expectations of women are high; however, when she explains to the women in monastic life the virtues of moral living, Christine invites men as well to listen to her words. Although in the Livre des trois Vertus she is counseling women on the behavior most useful to them, she would establish the same criteria for men, believing that self-criticism and self-denial, acts of empathy and civilized conduct, the pursuit of honor and the common good are demanded of all human beings.
NOTES -- CHAPTER IV

1 Catherine Bearne, Pictures of the Old French Court: Jeanne de Bourbon; Isabeau de Bavière; Anne de Bretagne (New York: Dutton and Co., 1900); Joseph Calmette, Chute et relevement de la France sous Charles VI et Charles VII (Paris: Hachette, 1945); Edouard Ferroy, The Hundred Years War, trans. by W. B. Wells, ed. by David C. Douglas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

2 Avision, Pt. I, p. 86, ll. 27-33.

3 Ibid., Pt. I, pp. 85-92. In the Avision, Christine does not name her allegorical figures except for "dame fraude." Her description, however, makes them clear to the reader.


5 Ibid., pp. 148-149.

6 Ibid., p. 146, ll. 78-83. On the eve of the war, Christine addressed a letter to the leaders of her country in which she apostrophizes to the queen: "Hé! Royne couronnée de France, dors-tu ades? Ne vois-tu en balance l'héritage de tes nobles enfans? Tu, mere des nobles hoirs de France, redoubtee princesse, qui y puets que toy ne qui sera-ce, qui à ta seigneurie et auctorité désobéira, se à droit te veulx de la paix entremetre? ... "Lamentation sur les maux de la guerre civile (23 aout 1410)," ed. by Raimond Thomassy, in Essai sur les Ecrits politiques de Christine de Pisan, suivi d'une notice littéraire et de pièces inédites (Paris: Debécourt, 1838), p. 144.


8 Ibid., p. 282.
Ibid., pp. 282-201. While in exile Christine brought to women a last consolatory message based on the Scriptures: "Cristine, ayant pitié et compassion principalement des dames et demoiselles, et generalment de toutes femmes adoulées a cause des tribulacions passées et presentes, pour les induire et provoquer a matiere de pacience fit et compila en l'ordonnance qui s'ensuit ces presentes Heures ... ." Pinet, Christine de Pisan, p. 184.

Christine de Pisan, Le Livre des trois Vertus (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des manuscrits, f. fr. 452, fol. 4r. The manuscript text has been reproduced except that a limited number of accent and punctuation marks have been added in order to facilitate the reading of these passages.

Ibid., ff. 27r.-28v.

Ibid., fol. lv.

Ibid., fol. 29r.

Ibid., fol. 4r.

Ibid., fol. 5v.

Ibid., ff. 5v.-5r.

Ibid., fol. 5r.

Ibid., fol. 5r.

Ibid., fol. 11r.

Ibid., fol. 17r.

Ibid., fol. 11r.
Ibid., ff. 11r.-21v., 50v.

Ibid., fol. 31v.

Ibid., fol. 21r.

Ibid., ff. 71v.-71r.

Ibid., ff. 71v.-71r.-71v.

Ibid., fol. 22r.

Ibid., fol. 22r.

Ibid., fol. 47v.

Ibid., fol. 48v. Christine sets forth her ideas on courtly love in a letter addressed to the young princess by her former governess, Sebille de Monthault, dame de la Tour. ff. 44v.-48r. The identical letter is found in her courtly romance, "Le Livre du Duc des Vrais Amans," ed. Roy, III, 160-171.

Ibid., fol. 23v.

Ibid., fol. 24v.

Ibid., fol. 70r.

Ibid., fol. 24v.

Ibid., fol. 24r.

Ibid., fol. 24r.

Ibid., fol. 84r.
Christine devoted two chapters to the princess who is widowed. As regent for her young children, she must use her skill to maintain the dynasty. If she continues to live on her estate, she must be just and astute in its management, removing oppression and promoting the general welfare. ff. 33v.-35r.
In her understanding of the position of the women of her time, Christine de Pisan was strikingly perceptive, and her insights contain a certain universality significant to modern times as well. Through her experience and observation, she saw many obstacles which prevented a woman of her time from attaining happiness. Chief among them were the wrongs done to women by men. Moved by humane considerations and a highly developed sense of social justice, Christine commiserated with other women and voiced indignant reproach toward men. She reproached men's unwillingness to recognize or admit that they and women shared a common humanity, with common potentialities and a common destiny. She censured their acts of outrage and their arrogant claim to a woman's affections. She challenged their refusal to consider that women were capable of goodness or of contributing to the well-being of society or even to the happiness of men. For her, society had created a double standard of morality in which women's weaknesses were more severely judged than men's; this double standard was even more unjustifiable because man was often responsible for the moral failings of women. She saw the injustice of man's judgment: denying woman access to learning and the opportunity for the interchange of ideas, he then claimed her wit was dull. Requiring that she remain in her limited sphere, he depreciated her maternal and domestic functions as
well. Showing little pity for her defenselessness and little understanding of her wants, man thus destroyed woman's self-confidence and with it her self-respect.

Christine noted that, although men expressed clear views on woman's nature and capabilities, their views were not based on logic or subjected to the test of religious or historical argument, nor did they meet the critical test of experience. Man had absorbed traditional attitudes toward woman which he refused to reexamine, and thus he was able to maintain supremacy. Christine did not attribute the abuse of woman to any inherent depravity of men, rather she understood simply that the human being had instincts which encouraged him to abuse any power he had acquired unless he exercised self-restraint. Christine believed that by man's unfair treatment of woman, he not only injured himself by his actions but his actions injured society as a whole. She hoped to convey to her male public the idea that, by treating women with a sense of justice, man would earn her loyal allegiance, the respect of his fellow men, and gain the self-respect that comes from acting according to the laws of justice and humanity.

Christine felt that woman herself would have to create her own happiness. She recognized the drives for self-protection and gratification which are basic to the human condition and realized that these could easily turn a woman into a vicious and selfish human
being. She understood, however, that if these drives were properly channeled, vices could turn into virtues. She believed that women could direct their impulses and desires into activities which would satisfy their need for security, for self-fulfillment and for recognition. These same activities could be of benefit to society. She therefore sought to imbue women with ambitions which could be realized within the social structure of the time. She first wished to make them sensitive to the dignity of their sex. Through illustrations of strong, able and exemplary women of the past and of contemporary times, she wished to inspire in women of her time a sense of feminine unity and a pride in their identity. She established a positive concept of woman's nature and role. Woman's timidity—for example, her reluctance to accept violence—could be valuable as a restraining influence, reorienting society in a more humane direction. Her gentleness would permit her to be a conciliatory and civilizing influence in the home and beyond. Thus the unique feminine virtues could help effect a transformation of society.

Christine placed an equally high value on woman's traditional duties. In her portrayal of the woman as a wife, she showed that companionship and association between husband and wife were the necessary foundations for a stable and strong society. She demonstrated that motherhood was a privilege and a duty because the mother had an important influence over the development of her child's
character and could be responsible for the ability of any son to become economically independent and fully competent. In the case of a noblewoman, the mother could be influential in the formation of a just prince. She represented woman's domestic skills as serving a functional, aesthetic and social purpose. Even beyond their domestic role women had a potential usefulness to their community. If in the advancement of society, the aristocratic women's privileges were being encroached upon by men, they could nevertheless display qualities of leadership. If only the aristocratic women could participate in the experience of political life, there were opportunities for women of even the humblest station to reemphasize moral values and to contribute to the structuring of society.

The essence of Christine's teaching was that women were responsible for their own destiny, spiritual and worldly. No woman need feel helpless, defeated or useless, nor need any woman experience shame. Despite Christine's defense of the woman as a guileless and gullible creature, it was essential that she be alert, lucid and competent in the face of reality. Most important, in view of the uncertainty of life, of the complexity of human relationships, and because of the disadvantaged social and legal position of the woman, Christine sought to teach her the need to develop her character in order to overcome those obstacles which threatened her success and happiness. From these guidelines emerged the ideal woman, embodied in the qualities
of douceur and humanité and the virtues of rationality, courage and purposefulness.

Christine's work reveals an internal consistency in which her life and times are closely interwoven. There are some direct echoes of events from her life and times in her writing. Certain facets of her life experience are reflected in her works as if through a prism; there is a transposition of themes, the treatment of any one theme varying according to her specific purpose or emphasis. It would seem that the pragmatic philosophy developed in the Livre des trois Vertus governs not only her writing technique, but also her choice of subjects. Her introduction into the Cité des Dames of the Biblical women Esther and Judith, who used their feminine charm to save their people, may be explained in such a light.

The outstanding contradictions in Christine's work may be understood by her philosophy, only the contradictions ultimately remain unresolved. Christine's passionate desire for learning, her protests against the unequal educational opportunities for women, and her belief that women could compete on intellectual grounds with men are a distinctive characteristic of her writings. But in the Livre des trois Vertus the subject of a woman's intellectual education goes unmentioned. Since Christine's specific purpose was to assist women in making a maximum adjustment to life at the time, possibilities which did not contribute to this adjustment were not pursued. However,
it is certain that she found unacceptable the social customs of her
day because they closed avenues of intellectual distinction to
women.

A contradiction also exists between Christine's sensibility
to the beauty of ideal love expressed in her poetry, and her counsel
to women to shun the experience. If a woman was to enjoy a life
that was secure and productive, the adulation of men would make such
a life more difficult to attain. As Christine described the grief
and suffering of the woman in love, she concluded that romantic love
was too fragile for a woman to base her happiness on it. Nevertheless,
echoes of her lyricism in describing the woman's happiness in love
persist beyond her warning to her to avoid a love adventure.

Christine's philosophy determined as well her high aspirations
for women. Christine did not intend to perpetuate a dual standard of
morality, nor did she believe that women were superior beings. But
she was convinced that only by their striving for exemplary standards
could women best ensure their well-being, achieve happiness and con-
tribute to the social order. Her messages to men and women are
fundamentally alike, educating both in self-responsibility. She
also recognized that for women to realize their abilities, it was
essential that they have the cooperation of men.

Christine de Piaan was at once conservative and progressive.
She was conservative in the sense of being a conservationist: appeal-
ing for respect for the elemental loyalties in life, she sought to
establish national and religious unity and harmony among people. She was progressive in believing in the importance of the material concerns of life, the interdependence of people, the advancement of civilization, the relative perfectability of the human being, and the moral and intellectual equality of the sexes. In her recognition of basic human needs, the dynamics of motivation and the social significance of the behavior of the individual, in her appreciation of woman's capabilities and duty for self-development, and in her application of reason to human relationships, Christine brought a critical spirit to human affairs. Her appeal for the elimination of obstinacy, arrogance and prejudice against women in order to free the human mind and heart, and above all else, her belief that it was for the individual to create the quality of his life reveal her to have been a lucid and creative thinker. Christine believed that the achievements of a single woman reflect credit upon all members of her sex. To the modern reader Christine de Pisan exemplifies and embodies through her life and works the role that woman should perform in society.
APPENDIX

A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHRISTINE DE PISAN'S WORKS

I. Poetic works

1. ca. 1394-1415

Lyric verse

Christine composed a great number of lyric and didactic poems over a period of approximately 20 years which she grouped according to form under the following headings: Cent Balades, Virelais, Balades d'estrangé façon, Lays, Rondeaux, Jeux a vendre, Autres Balades, Encore Aultres Balades and Complaintes amoureuses.

The first 20 ballads of "Cent Balades" are of Christine's sorrow in widowhood and of the perversity of Fortune. Although she continued to write poems of grief, the majority of her poetry, patterned on the courtly love tradition, is on the theme of love. Many of these poems portray the emotional reactions of the woman to the experience of love.

Many poems, from "Cent Balades" through "Encore Aultres Balades," are inspirational and dedicated to noblemen. They affirm the superiority of ethical values over the chance nature of external circumstances.

2. 1399

L'Epistre au dieu d'amours

An allegorical poem in which "Cupido" accuses men who, in their love relationships with women repudiate any idea of obligation and betray and malign them. The God of Love defends women and shows that a more just
attitude toward them enhances the worth and happiness of the man.

3. ca. 1400

**Le Debat de deux amans**

A debate in which two nobles present their views on love: the chevalier portrays it as a destructive passion while the écuyer considers it to be a privileged state of joy and a source of knightly perfection.

4. 1400

**Le Livre du dit de Poissy**

The recounting of an excursion to the convent of Poissy. After evoking the beauty of the countryside along the Seine, the poetess describes this once important Dominican convent and the gracious hospitality of the nuns. On the return to Paris a debate takes place between two members of the party as to who is more grief-stricken—the lady whose lover is being held in captivity in the East, or the écuyer whose beloved lady refuses him her love.

5. ca. 1402

**Le Livre des trois jugemens**

A debate in which three defendants make known their respective rights: an abandoned lady claims that she did not perjure her faith when she accepted the homage of a new suitor; a chevalier, impatient at the confinement of his lady by her husband, denies that he committed a disloyalty by courting another woman; a demoiselle dejected because the knight she loves decided to court a lady of nobler birth, declines to accept his renewed proposal of love after he finds that he preferred her modest ways to the haughty manner of the other lady.
6. **1402**  
**Le Dit de la Rose**

An idealized interpretation of a meeting of the Cour amoureuse held at the hôtel of the duc d'Orléans. The goddess "Loyauté" initiates the nobles in the Ordre de la Rose—reward for their maintaining the honor of women and embodying the chivalric virtues of truth, loyalty and courteousness.

7. **ca. 1402**  
**Les Enseignements moraux and Prouverbes moraux**

A series of precepts to serve as guidance for young men who will soon assume their place in adult society. The guiding rules are primarily concerned with character development and are based on a rational morality which stresses integrity, responsibility and practical sense.

8. **1402-**  
9. **1403**  
**L'Oroyson Nostre Dame**  
**Les XV joyes Nostre Dame**  
**Une Oroyson de Nostre Seigneur**

3 sacred works. The first is an invocation to the Virgin and includes prayers for Christendom, the ruling family of France and people of all estates. The second is a prayer to the Virgin and recites the fifteen joys that she has known. The third orison invokes the Lord and recalls His life and Passion.

11. **1403**  
**Le Dit de la pastoure**

In this pastoral a shepherdess in love with a nobleman sings of her happiness. When his visits become rarer, the mood of the poem changes to one of melancholy and regret.
12. 1404

**Une Epistre a Eustace Mourel**

A letter to the poet, Eustache Deschamps, deploring the deterioration of values in contemporary society. It contrasts ancient times when princes were virtuous and their counsellors were philosophers with the present where neither truth nor justice can be found.

13. before 1405

**Le Livre du Duc des Vrais Amans**

A courtly romance written at the request of a duke who figures as its hero. It recounts his love affair with a royal princess, evoking the brief happiness they knew and the long separation which followed.

14. 1405

**Cent Balades d'Amant et de Dame**

Ballads presented in dialogue form between the amant and the dame. The dialogues develop a love story at the conclusion of which the woman is pictured in grief because of her disappointment.

15. 1402-1403

**Le Livre du Chemin de long Estude**

In her dream Christine is led by the Sibyl of Cumines along a flowering path which symbolizes the rewards of knowledge. After journeying through the East to the end of the world, they pass through the heavens to arrive at the court of "Raison." Surrounded by the "Vertus," "Raison" is leading a discussion. They talk of the causes of conflict in the world and ways of ending the destruction resulting from it. They finally agree that a just sovereign must be found who will govern the world and maintain the people in peace, order and justice.
An allegorical and narrative work whose central theme is the uncertainty of life. The poem is divided into 7 parts. Christine first allegorizes events in her life. She then describes "Fortune's" revolving castle and its inhabitants whose desires for power or riches debase the ethics of everyday life. In the last 4 parts, the poetess narrates the history of the world with its rise and fall of kingdoms, beginning with the Creation and arriving at contemporary times. She refers to the disunity prevailing in Christendom, the Empire and her native Italy.

Ditté à la Pucelle

A song of victory in honor of the Maid of Orléans which was composed immediately after the coronation of the King and the liberation of Orléans and Château-Thierry. It is perhaps the first poem honoring Joan of Arc that was written in her life time. Pervaded by a religious and nationalistic sentiment, it contains a prophecy of unity in Christendom and a plea for obedience and peace under the leadership of Charles VII. It is Christine's final statement of belief in God's justice.
II. Works in Prose

1. ca. 1400

L'Epistre d'Othea la deesse, que elle
envoya a Hector de Troye, quant il estoit
en l'aage de .xv. ans

Composed of 100 stories taken from mythology,
antiquity and the story of Troy, it is in-
tended as moral and spiritual guidance for
young men. Each story begins with a short
verse where the hero or heroine is mentioned
and a moral lesson suggested. This text is
followed by a commentary which explains and
develops the text, then by an allegory in
which its spiritual significance is stated.

2. 1401-1402

Les Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose

A literary controversy in the form of a
 correspondence concerning the moral content
and influence of the second part of the
Roman de la Rose. The participants in the
debate are Christine and Jean Gerson, who
are critical of the poem, and Jean de
Montreuil, Gontier Col and Pierre Col, who
consider it to be of great merit. Christine
censures the author for his denigration of
women and naturalistic philosophy which she
sees as an incitement to immoral conduct.

3. 1404

Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage
roy Charles V

A biography of the French king, Charles V.
It portrays Charles V in the most favorable
light. The information it contains is based
on factual material including chronicles
and accounts of living people. Christine
discusses the qualities of character embodied
in the late king. She sees these as essen-
tial to an enlightened sovereign: humility,
a sense of justice, kindliness and
forbearance. She stresses the importance of his humanistic education and love of scholarship, his disciplined personal life and sense of determination. Military achievements during his reign are cited, and his policies are shown to have been determined by concern for the commonweal. The principle of his success was that because he tempered justice with mercy, his subjects strove to maintain themselves in his good graces.

4. 1404-1405

Le Livre de la Cité des Dames

The principle source of this work is the De Claris Mulieribus of Boccaccio. With the intent of reestablishing the good reputation of women, Christine builds a "City" to serve as a perpetual refuge for all good women to protect them from disparagement of men. She builds the City with arguments in their favor and stories of famous women from history and legend. In each of 3 parts she is guided consecutively by "Raison," "Droit" and "Justice."

5. 1405

Le Livre des trois Vertus (known also as Le Trésor de la Cité des dames).

A sequel to the Cité des dames, likewise inspired by "Raison," "Droit" and "Justice," Christine addresses a leçon de sapience to women of all walks of life so that as many as possible may enter the City. One of the first European didactic works for women by a woman, it contains information on various aspects of medieval daily life. It is divided into 3 parts: the first is for princesses and highborn ladies, the second for noblewomen of lesser station, and the third for commoners.
Christine wrote this work at the age of 40, the mid-point, she said, of her pilgrimage. It is an attempt at clarification of her life and philosophy. There are 3 parts: In the first, "La Dame Couronnée" who represents France recounts the story of her growth which she portrays as that of a garden, and laments her present devastation. The second part consists of a conversation between Christine and "Dame Opinion" who explains herself as the cause of human error and knowledge. She encourages Christine to continue her writing which, because its purpose is to seek the truth, will be more appreciated at a future time when learning will once again be honored. In the third part, Christine tells how she has found consolation in philosophy. With the help of "Philosophie" to whom she has related her personal misfortunes, she comes to the realization that God governs human destinies and that the patient acceptance of suffering increases one's merit in His eyes.

7. 1405

Une Epistre a la Royne de France

When civil war threatened, Christine wrote this plea to the queen, Isabeau de Savière, entreating her to intervene with the princes so they might settle their differences and restore unity to the nation.

8. 1405-1406

Le Livre de Prudence

Two versions of the same work which is a translation with gloss of the Livre des quatre Vertus by Martin de Braga, known as the pseudo-Seneca.
10. 1406-1407  Le Livre du Corps de police

A didactic work in 3 parts which attempts to elevate the quality of political and social life by prescribing ideal roles for the sovereign, the nobility and people. Because a just society is seen as dependent upon an able and just prince, a program for education is proposed which stresses discipline, learning and wise council. Emphasis is placed on service as the aim and justification of royal privilege.

11. 1409-1410  Les Sept psaumes allégorisés

An extended prayer based on the seven penitential psalms. Each line of a psalm is followed by a meditation expressing a sense of sinfulness, hope for purification and confidence in God's mercy. The meditation includes prayers for the Church, rulers of France and people of all conditions that they might have wisdom and strength to overcome the temptations of evil.

12. 1410  Le Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie

A manual of the law of arms and military strategy destined for the larger public. The guiding rules prescribed, rooted in Christian law and given a rational basis, contributed to the concept of international law. War is seen as legitimate if undertaken on behalf of justice, not for sake of revenge or for purposes of aggression. The book recommends civilized treatment of non-combatants and prisoners of war and loyalty between belligerents; it proscribes private feuds and practices such as pillaging, unduly high ransoms and use of poisonous weapons.
13. 1410

Lamentation sur les maux de la guerre civile, du 25 Août, 1410

Following the violation of the peace treaty at Chartres (1409) by the contending parties of the Armagnacs and Burgundians, Christine wrote an appeal for peace and unity. Addressed to the French nobility, the queen, the clergy, and the duc de Berry in particular, it is at the same time an indictment of their indifference to the fate of their nation and to the sufferings of the innocent.

14. 1412-1413

Le Livre de la Paix

Christine wrote this treatise on the education of a prince after the outbreak of the civil wars although it was begun following the signing of the peace settlement of Pontoise. Dedicated to the duc de Guyenne, the dauphin of France, it was intended to educate him to the principle that private rights must yield before the welfare of the nation and to inculcate in him a love of virtue and responsibility toward his people. In both this work and in the Livre de police Charles V is held as the model of excellence for a monarch.

15. ca. 1416-1418

L'Epistre de la prison de vie humaine

Written after the battle of Azincourt, Christine seeks to bring consolation to Marie de Berry and to all women in time of mourning and adversity. Reasons are given to bear grief with courage; the souls of the dead are freed from the miseries of life; comfort may be taken in recognizing the gifts that God has given to human beings. The letter outlines the duties of all women according to their role.
16. after 1418

Heures de contemplacion sur la Passion

A translation of the Passion containing prayers for the seven canonical hours which Christine wrote in her exile. It was intended to be a means of solace for all women afflicted by the trials of war or other sorrows.

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One of Christine's works, L'Avision du coq, is known to be lost. Reference is made to it in the Le Livre de la Paix. It must therefore have been written before the year 1413.
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