ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


2. Thus, not all men (and especially the wisest) share the opinion that it is bad for women to be educated...Your father, who was a great scientist and philosopher, did not believe that women were worth less by knowing science; rather, as you know, he took great pleasure from seeing your inclination to learning. The feminine opinion of your mother, however, who wished to keep you busy with spinning and silly girlishness, following the common custom of women, was the major obstacle to your being more involved in the sciences.

The Book of the City of Ladies, pp. 154-155.


4. The exclusively male access to the genre of history is discussed in reference to Christine de Pisan by Nadia Margolis, "Christine de Pisan: The Poetess as Historian," The Journal of


6. Dietmar Rieger, "Die Französische Dichterin im Mittelalter: Marie de France - die 'trobairitz' - Christine de Pisan," Die französische Dichterin vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart (Wiesbaden: Renate Baader und Dietmar Fricke, 1979), pp. 44-45. This was read in German. An English summary of his analysis of the state of 'Christine criticism' is found in the introduction by Earl Jeffrey Richards to the latest translation of The Book of the City of Ladies, p. xxix.


11. See Chapter One footnote 49, p. 32, for details.

12. Charity Cannon Willard is the notable exception. Her work on the textual aspects of Christine's works, from translation, textual transmission and manuscript illustrations has been invaluable to Christine studies. It is to her that we owe the new translation of Les Trois Vertus in English. A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies by Christine de Pizan, ed. C. C. Willard (Tenafly, N. J.: Bard Hale Press: New York: Persea Books, 1989).


champion of her sex'; Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the
Querelle des Femmes, 1400-1789," Signs, 8 (1982), 9: '...a
defender of her sex'. For a brief critical summary of the
contribution of Power and Kelly to the feminist
historiographical project see Sheila Fisher, "The Lady Vanishes:
The Problem of Women's Absence in Late Medieval and
Renaissance Texts," Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and
Renaissance Writings eds. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley
(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), pp. 6-10.


19. Sheila Delany, "Mothers to Think Back Through: Who are
They? The Ambiguous Example of Christine de Pisan," Medieval
Texts and Contemporary Readers, eds. Laurie A. Finke and Martin
188. Also Sheila Delany, "Review of Enid McLeod's book The
Order of the Rose, the Life and Ideas of Christine de Pisan.

Livre Des Trois Vertus," Journal of the History of Ideas, 27
(1966), 440.

21. Humanism had its genesis in Italy with the work of authors
like Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. For an full discussion of the
eyearly developments of humanism see Walter Ullmann, The
Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism (London: Paul
Elek, 1977).

22. Susan Groag Bell, "Christine de Pizan (1364-1430):
Humanism and the Problem of the Studious Woman," Feminist
Studies, 3 (1976), 173.

23. The concept of the great humanist thinker as a model citizen
and upholder of the new civic order is derived from the Aristotelian model of the perfect man and is to be found in the works of most humanist authors. For a summary of these writers see William Harrison Woodward, Vittorino da Feltre and other Humanist Educators (1897: rpt. New York: Teachers College Press, 1970).


27. Marie de Romieu, "Brief Discours, que l'excellence de la femme surpass elle d'homme" (Paris, 1591); Rachel Speght, "A Muzzle for Melastomus" (London, 1617), and "Certain Queries to the Baiter of Women" (London, 1617). De Romieu is discussed in Lula McDowell Richardson's book, The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance Pt. 1 From Christine de Pisan to Marie de Gournay. For a full discussion of these later contributors to the Querelle des Femmes see Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory".

28. Leonardo Bruni's most famous work on women's education is his treatise, De Studiis et Literis, dedicated to Baptista di Montefeltro on the occasion of her marriage in 1405. As noted above, the translation of this work is available in Vittorino Feltre and Other Humanist Educators.


31. A clear presentation of this argument is to be found in Sheila Fisher's, Introduction, *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings*. Also, see Kelly's essay "Did Women have a Renaissance?" which provides the founding claims of this argument.


36. There are many defences of women that appeared in print throughout the early sixteenth century which utilise this method of argument. Many of them adapted Boccaccio's histories to their own, usually less ambiguous ends. Capella's *Della eccellenza et dignita delle donne* (1526), Champier's *Nef des
dames vertueuses (1515) and Elyot's *Defence of Good Women* (1540) are just a few examples.


38. In Part 1 of *Le Livre de la mutacion de fortune*, (1400-1403), Christine allegorically describes part of her life. The poet has an ill-fated encounter with the Roman goddess of fortune who takes away her husband and transforms her out of necessity into a man. Christine then credits her sexual transformation with making a writer of her.


41. *De Studii et Literis*, p. 133.


52. Bell, "Humanism," 178.

53. In the latter stages of Christine's participation in the *Querelle de la Rose*, Gontier Col does make deprecating comments about Christine's gender see Baird, p. 60. Phillippy claims, however, that overall her position in the intellectual circles in Paris seems to have been accepted without contest, p. 191.

55. Phillippy, 192.

56. The full argument can be found in Delany, "Mothers to Think Back Through".

57. As I am far from an expert on all of Christine's writing I have taken the following summaries of Christine's political works from Edith Yenal's extensive bibliography on Christine, which I take to be reliable. I am using the 1982 edition.

The most obvious statements of Christine's political conservatism are to be found in Le Livre du corps de policié, written about a year after La Cité des Dames. Yenal describes it as, 'a political work with strong moral overtones.' She summarises Christine's position in the following passage:

Christine had little faith in the common people and opposed popular rule. She believed in hereditary monarchy, as Chapters xxiv and xxv clearly indicate, and remained a divine-right monarchist to the end. (p. 51)

Other of her works like L'Avisioin - Christine, (1405) and Une Epistre a Isabeau de Baviere, (1405) also bewail the growing moral weaknesses of the French monarchy and call for a resolution of the differences within the royal family so that France can once again become the great nation it was under Charles V and be able to ward off the foreign invasions which Christine predicts in both works.

58. Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday - Anchor Press, 1979), especially pp. 78-79. It is not simply Chicago's brief summary of Christine which misconstrues her. Rather, it is the notion that these women at the 'Dinner Party' are chosen because they provide good role models for women. Chicago elevates Christine to the
level of popular acclaim with little explanation for why Christine was selected, as opposed to say Margery Kempe. It is this lack of critical awareness of the problematics of her task that I most object to. The fact that her fame has reinforced her opinions is even more disturbing. In the Richards' translation of the La Cité des Dames Chicago is quoted on both the front and back covers of the book, as if her appraisal of the work is as important as the name of the author and translator.

A number of critics have raised serious questions about this 'feminist' project. The most interesting and relevant are Beatrice Gottlieb's comments in her essay, "The Problem of Feminism in then Fifteenth Century," in Women of the Medieval World, ed. J. Kirshner and S. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985). In her discussion of Christine's participation in the Querelle de la Rose she explains that the method of argument is that 'of examples and authorities, organised by topics... [whose]...pervasive tone is hyperbole.' 'To the modern taste the genre is repellent,' she declares, because of its uncritical inclusion of mythical characters and its aim to convince 'by force of authority or overwhelm by force of numbers.' (quotes from page 356.) She is forced to admit, however, that 'the inhabitants of Christine's City Of Ladies have much in common with the guests at Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party", so a potpourri of legend, fiction and history may not be as out of date as I think.' She concludes, nevertheless, that '[o]ut of date, or not, it is none the less hyperbolic and naive.'


63. Bell, "Comment," 593.

64. Diamond, "Comment," 594.


68. Delany, "Response," 596.


72. Reno, 276.

73. Schibanoff, "Taking the Gold out of Egypt," p. 91. Schibanoff is here suggesting that Christine adopts the very conservative
and homo-centric literary methodology of employing established Church figures to authorise her text.


75. The complete letters and documents of the Querelle in the old French can be found in C. Ward, The Epistles on the Romance of the Rose and Other Documents in the Debate (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1911). A more up-to-date compilation, with a detailed introduction can be found in La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents.

76. Jean Gerson was the chancellor of the university of Paris. Gabriel in her essay, "Educational Ideas of Christine de Pisan". It is interesting to note that Gerson also uses the epithet of 'manly woman' ('femina ista virilis') in relation to Christine. No doubt it was meant as a compliment. Christine is not recorded as having challenged this construction of her identity which again suggests she perhaps she did not disapprove of such gendered terms.


78. It is Jean de Montreuil's comparison of Christine to Leontium in her tenacity and arrogance which sparks Christine's action. It is only after these very personal attacks on her gender that Christine begins to regard de Meun's slander of women to be one of the principal objections (as opposed to its initial secondary status in Christine's objections) to the Romance. It is at this point that she appeals to the queen for her support in defending the 'honour and fair name' of women. Baird, p. 66.

79. Christine's criticism of the Romance is not restricted to the Querelle. Earlier, in 1399, she condemned de Meun for his vicious slander of women in L'Épistre au Dieu d'Amours in which


82. Gottlieb, p. 347.

83. Gottlieb, p. 347.

84. Baird, p. 60.


86. Richards believes that the book written by Mathéolus was probably the Old French translation of the Latin, *Liber Lamentationum Matheoluli*, composed around 1300. It was translated by Jean le Fevre de Ressons toward the end of the fourteenth century. The verse work of 5,614 lines, couched in Ovidian diction presented the standard misogynistic arguments. Richards observes that, ironically, Mathéolus has Christine to thank for his fame because his book was not well known beforehand.


88. See my discussion of Gilbert and Gubar's re-working of Bloom's theory of the anxiety of authorship on pp. 217-220.
89. Much work has been done by early feminist criticism from the nineteen sixties onwards on women's need to break out of a male paradigm of both reading and writing. Patrocino Schweikart's essay, "Reading Ourselves" and other essays in Gender and Reading discuss the problems of women's reading.


92. In her article on the "Early Feminist Theory," Kelly states that Christine was unable to draw upon the classical sources which were available to her male counterparts: 'Unlike the male humanist, however, Christine could not draw on classical learning to guide her toward her new intellectual position' (p. 13). Nadia Margolis disagrees with this assessment, saying it 'oversimplifies' the issue. She goes on to state: 'It is not that Christine could not use any classical examples but that she was obliged to find different ones.' (Footnote p. 368) She refers to Chapter Five and Six of Charity Cannon Willard's book, Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works (New York: Persea Books, 1984) for a detailed analysis of Christine's various uses of classical sources.

93. Guarino, front cover.


95. R. W. Chambers in his introduction to the first edition of Margery's Book declares that those readers who are expecting a work akin to Walter Hilton's The Scale of Perfection will be disappointed with the newly discovered manuscript of Margery's

96. Alfred Jeanroy, "Boccace et Christine de Pisan, Le De Claris Mulieribus, principale source du Livre de la Cite des Dames," Romania, 48 (1922), 92-105. This was read in French.


98. Richards, p. xxxvi.


101. See Kelso for a discussion of women's access to literature during the late Medieval and early Renaissance periods.

102. It is not known for certain whether Christine could read or write Latin. Such critics as, Willard, Schibanoff, Curnow and Gabriel attribute her with some degree of competency because of her participation in the Querelle de la Rose, where some of her opponents wrote in Latin. However, Willard has suggested that it is unlikely she was confident with Latin and believed she used vernacular translations wherever possible. Maureen Cheney Curnow affirms Willard's ideas in her unpublished annotations of the manuscript of the La Cité des Dames. She argues that Christine was using the 1401 translation of De Claris Mulieribus made by Laurent de Premierfait, rather than the

103. Christine uses the Italian debate on the vernacular, headed by Dante which focused on the responsibility of the writer to her/his mother tongue to explain her use of French in the La Cité des Dames. Her use of the vernacular capitalises on the 'unnaturalness', as Phillippay calls it, of Boccaccio's decision to write in Latin and points to the natural language available to men and women, not just the literary élite.

104. Walter Ong, Orality and the Technologising of the Word (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 113. Ong explains that Latin became a learned language for a combination of linguistic and political reasons. Between 500 and 700 A.D. Latin which had been spoken as a vernacular began to evolve into various early forms of Italian, Spanish, French and other Romance languages. By 700 A.D., these offshoots no longer spoke or understood Latin and it therefore became solely a written language. The number of mutually incomprehensible dialects necessitated the retention of Latin for official discourse and it therefore continued to be the dominant language of the Church and state administration. Unlike the mother tongue which was learned at home from infancy, Latin was taught at school. As a result of its base in academia Latin became an exclusively male language.

105. Phillippay, 169.


107. Bruni addresses this question specifically in a letter to Baptista Malatesta:
There are certain disciplines which while it is not altogether seemly to be entirely ignorant of, nevertheless to ascend to the utmost heights of them is not at all admirable. Such are geometry and arithmetic, on which if too much time and energy is expended, and every subtlety and obscurity pursued to the utmost, I shall restrain you by force. And I shall do the same in the case of Astronomy, and perhaps in the case of Rhetoric. I have said this more reluctantly in the case of the last, since if there was ever anyone who has bestowed labour on that study I profess myself to be of their number. But I am obliged to consider many aspects of the matter, and above all I have to bear in mind who it is I am addressing here. For why exhaust a woman with the concerns of status and epichiremata, and with what they call crinomena and a thousand difficulties of rhetorical art, when she will never see the forum? And indeed that artificial performance which the Greeks call hypocrisis, and we call pronuntiatio (which Demosthenes maintained to rank first, second and third, such was its importance), as it is essential to performers, so it ought not to be pursued by women at all. For if a woman throws her arms around while speaking, or if she increases the volume of her speech with greater forcefulness, she will appear threateningly insane and requiring restraint. These matters belong to men; as war, or battles, and also contests and public controversies. A woman will not, therefore, study any further how to speak either for or against witnesses, either for or against torture, either for or against hearsay.
evidence, nor will she busy herself with *loci communes*, or devote her attention to dilemmatic questions or to cunning answers; she will leave, finally, all public severity to men.

Leonardo Bruni, *Arentino Humanistisch—Philosophische Schriften mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe*, ed. H. Baron (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 11-12. This was read in German. Also translated and reprinted in *From Humanism to the Humanitites: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Europe*, Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine (London: Gerald Duckworth and co., 1986). Despite running the risk of being considered 'threateningly insane' we know that Baptista Malatesta defied Boccaccio on at least one occasion and performed a public oratory in Latin. However Boccaccio's letter makes it evident that when a woman becomes socially visible within the social power structure renaissance literary convention makes her either insane or a sexual predator. This latter technique is demonstrated by Boccaccio's treatment of Semiramis in *De Claris Mulieribus*. He initially praises her for successfully ruling in her son's place but when she becomes too powerful a public figure he transforms her 'manly valour' into predatory sexuality, which does not even leave her son safe.

108. Phillippy, 170.

109. The examples of women who governed nations and led their people wisely has great significance at the time of writing. As Kelly notes in "Early Feminist Theory": 'To Christine, the Salic Law of 1328, which removed women from inheritance of the French crown, was still new and offensive' (p. 21). Georges Duby in his study of the makings of modern marriage in medieval France discusses the politics which brought about this decision, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (Harmondsworth: Peregrine - Penguin, 1983).

111. Those pagan women who behave in a Christian manner also receive special attention from Christine. The prophetess, Erythraea, who is attributed with predicting the coming of Christ and his crucifixion, is praised by both writers, but it is Christine who stresses the Christian elements of all the sibyls and describes in detail Erythraea's prophecies, claiming them to be from God. Christine thus re-writes Christianity back into pagan times; a technique familiar to much early humanist writing. Many pagan poets were salvaged for Christian readers through allegorical moralisation. Boccaccio, and numerous other humanists (for example Bruni, Vives and Vergerius and later, Chaucer) go to great lengths to defend this christianised re-reading process and legitimise the imitation of pagan poets. For example, see Boccaccio, Genealogia deorum gentilium, translated in, Boccaccio on Poetry, ed. Charles G. Osgood (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), especially 14.18 (p. 84) and 15.9 (pp. 128-129).


113. She is portrayed in a similar manner by Chaucer in 'The House of Fame'.


115. In the example of Proba, Christine once again oversteps Boccaccio and then attributes her own claims to him. Whereas Boccaccio commends Proba because 'she knew the sacred Scripture entirely, or at least sufficiently...' (220), Christine re-writes: 'For these reasons, Boccaccio himself says that this merits great recognition and praise, for it is obvious that she possessed a sound and exhaustive knowledge of the sacred books' (66).
116. Astrik Gabriel also sees Christine first and foremost as a moralist. She names Christine, 'the first woman-moralist of France' (p. 21).

117. The tale of Lucretia is another tale used to refute one of the primary claims of anti-feminism; that women invite and desire to be raped. In his account Boccaccio stresses Lucretia's rape and her decision to die rather than live 'dishonourably' (p. 102). For this she is praised as 'an outstanding model of Roman chastity' (p. 101). For Christine, the story's importance lies in its message about women's hatred and fear of rape and in the validation of this message in the law created because of Lucretia's rape.

118. Phillippy, 180.


122. Natalie Zemon Davis explains how, in the medieval period women found it difficult to participate in such genres as ecclesiastical and classical history and theological debate. They were excluded from the intellectual bastions of the universities and in their enforced domesticity found little opportunity to travel to gather documents and were incapable of reading such material as was available because of their lack of
a Latin education. Christine's access to the royal library through her close association with the French court make her a notable exception. She utilised her opportunities to compose in nearly every traditionally male genre of writing with the exclusion of theology which was an area of the patriarchal canon still completely closed to women. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Gender and Genre". See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1975).

123. For a discussion of the growth of women's literature in the eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century see Gilbert and Gubar’s, Introduction, *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

124. Gilbert and Gubar, Chapter Two, especially, pp. 48-49.

125. For a discussion of the effects of the exclusively male transmission of literature in the medieval period see Susan Schibanoff, "Early Women Writers".

126. Gilbert and Gubar, p.188. They find evidence of anxiety created by this image of woman in the works of many modern women writers, like Virginia Woolf, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Mary Shelley and Christina Rossetti.

127. This passage is also quoted in Gilbert and Gubar, p. 196. A fuller discussion of Eve's depiction in Milton can also be found in this essay.


131. A modern French edition is now forthcoming thanks to the work of Charity Cannon Willard.
Author/s: Watkinson, Nicola Jayne

Title: Medieval textual production and the politics of women's writing: case studies of two medieval women writers and their critical reception

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