

MORAL POSTURING: BODY LANGUAGE, RHETORIC, AND
THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL
FRENCH AND ENGLISH CONDUCT MANUALS

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation argues that late medieval conduct manuals were a direct reaction to the social upheavals of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and that their programs of self-improvement were an effort to contain and re-channel ambition and discontent. Specifically, I demonstrate that their writers sought to maintain social stability by either minimizing or exaggerating the possibility of social mobility, and packaging both programs within the attractive prospect of creating one's own identity. In so doing, the writers of conduct manuals created their own identities, constructing personae of moral authority.

In my first chapter, "Roaring Girls?" I show how the writers of three fourteenth-century French conduct manuals tried to reconcile young female readers to their arranged marriages and limited career options by painting a frightening portrait of the alternative and offering covert authority through outward submissiveness. The first, the Livre du chevalier de la tour landry, narrates harsh penalties for women who break the physical codes of virtue. The writer warns his young daughters that women who speak loudly, toss their heads, or let their gazes wander frighten away eligible bachelors or wind up in loveless or even abusive marriages. Discreet women make better marriages and win over unaffectionate husbands through their docility. The Ménagier de Paris's tone is kinder, as he is writing for a young wife, but although he attempts to inspire pride in her position as the supervisor of a large and busy household, he still expects her to maintain a public physical decorum of restrained gaze and movement. Christine de Pisan's Livre de Trois Virtus prescribes behavior for every rank from princesses to peasants (who could hardly

have been expected to read it), maintaining that there is dignity in every estate if the woman fulfills her role properly. I demonstrate that in all three books, the writers depict limited opportunity for social advancement, but warn readers that women who behave badly can suffer precipitous social descents. However, women who obey the rules can gain authority over servants and households, the respect of their communities, and even the ability to influence their husbands in subtle and tactful ways.

In my second chapter, “Good Knight, Sweet Prince,” I demonstrate how fourteenth-century French books aimed at male readers offer similar advice to keep one’s place and rise slowly if it all, despite the seemingly greater opportunities for men. Geoffroi de Charny’s Book of Chivalry proposes a hierarchy of chivalrous merit based on motive rather than hereditary rank: the man who practices arms for the sake of glory is superior to the man who does so to win a lady, but the second man is superior to mercenaries. Geoffroi must paint an attractive portrait of chivalry to readers who know that it is no longer an express path to knighthood (Geoffroi himself won his spurs only posthumously), and he must also remind leaders to speak with their men and inspire them with courage and trust, rather than dismissing them as cannon fodder. Christine de Pisan’s Livre du corps de policie, like her Livre de Trois Virtu, urges its putative audience (extending from rulers to rural laborers) to fill their assigned spheres in life honorably, rather than seeking to change them. She, too, wishes employers from prince to petit bourgeois to praise and value their underlings in order to foster loyalty and trust rather than resentment. I demonstrate how all the writers in my first two chapters are trying to reinforce an already shaky feudal hierarchy by positing that if individuals of all ranks play their roles, the system can still work.

In my third chapter, “In English and in wryting of our tonge,” I show how English conduct manuals writers, far from denying the fluidity of social roles, nearly overstate it. The eponymous heroine of Capgrave’s Life of St. Katherine abandons her role as earthly leader to become a saint in heaven, but in the process displays the verbal tricks of a lawyer and the sharp tongue of a common scold. Peter Idley’s Instructions to His Son dispenses with the code of chivalry altogether, advising the reader to avoid all conflict, physical or legal, and pursue advancement and financial security through social connections and industry. Even two English translations of earlier French texts show a new English concept of nobility as something that can be *acquired* through noble words and thoughts, rather than a purely inherited rank that is *demonstrated* through physical conduct. The Body of Policye, a translation of Corps de policie attributed to Anthony Woodville, sticks to Christine de Pisan’s phrasing almost word-for-word, except on the topic of foul language, which Woodville expands and emphasizes. The Book of the Knight of the Tower, William Caxton’s translation of the Livre du chevalier de la tour landry, tones down the crudeness and sarcastic tone of the original to provide readers with a more dignified role model. I argue that both Woodville and Caxton emphasize rhetoric as a learnable noble quality over physical nobility because both have benefited from very recent advancement in the world: Woodville, from his sister’s royal marriage, and Caxton, in his spectacular rise from mercer’s apprentice to the protégé of King Edward IV and the Duchess of Burgundy.

In conclusion, I argue that while both French and English conduct manuals were attempts to control social disorder, French writers did so by discouraging all but the most limited advancement, and English writers did so by implying that great advancement was possible if readers would only follow their rules. In both cases, if readers joined the system rather than fighting it, they were promised self-respect and the respect of others.

Dedicated to my parents, my brother, and to all the friends
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INTRODUCTION

When I began this project on medieval conduct literature, I expected to find authors using different strategies to reach their male and female readers. Anna Dronzek had described how conduct manuals aimed at female readers usually emphasized physical punishment or physical signs of virtue, “something tangible, something that appeals to the physical senses that govern them” (144). Elizabeth Ann Robertson noted a similar strain in devotional works: “A woman’s essentially sensual nature requires that she come to understand God through the physical world, a requirement emphasized in this work through the use of concrete details that underscore the association of a woman’s spirituality with her essential sensuality” (116). Presumably, conduct manuals aimed at male readers would feature a more logical approach, appropriate to a mind amenable to reason. In short, books for women would appeal mostly to pathos, and books for men would appeal to logos.

My first investigations seemed to support this view. Anne Clark described a process whereby even written instructions in devotional materials were physicalized, so that female readers could create a sort of sense-memory of what virtuous conduct feels like. The audience would act out scripts of piety, assimilating the text by “attempting to reinscribe its words on their bodies, imitating the virtuous behavior it models” (18). Mirrors for Princes such as the Secretum Secretorum, on the other hand, used many

examples from classical history, seemingly an appeal to logos. When conduct manuals addressed to males did appeal to pathos, the appeal was also to ethos: one was to feel good because one had created a good character by performing good actions. The aim was what Mark Addison Amos has called “a fundamental inner transformation” (45). Women must be terrorized into behaving properly, while men could be made to see it as logically relevant to their own benefit.

Thus, I anticipated that reading matter written for a male audience with logical minds would elicit cooperation from its audience, while that intended for a female audience would very likely feature a kind of medieval method acting—not the American version in which actors try to get in touch with their feelings, but the original version that Constantin Stanislavsky and Michael Chekov describe, in which action precedes and produces emotion: an actor plays out the action of rage (stamping his feet, gritting his teeth) and discovers that these actions by themselves are sufficient to make his blood pressure go up and his face flush, while moving his arm in a hesitant way produces a tentative emotion (Stanislavsky 201) (Chekov 59). Books aimed at women would feature actions of piety and docility, such as kneeling and speaking softly and submissively, in order to inspire pious and docile feelings. Books aimed at men would appeal to their reason, explaining to them how virtuous conduct was in their interest, and inspiring them with a desire to cooperate with authorities who clearly had their best interests at heart.

What I found in my further reading, however, was more complex. Books aimed at women did indeed feature programs of physical piety and meekness, and Christine de Pisan even advised her readers to create a visible performance of virtue in case the reality was insufficient to make an impression on observers. But books aimed at men also

featured programs of physical virtue. Geoffroi de Charny wanted men-at-arms to attend and eventually participate in jousts and tournaments to inspire or accentuate chivalric ambitions. He praised men who followed such programs and harbored such ambitions without urging from others, but acknowledged that there were men who needed external inspiration: admiration for another man's prowess, a desire for a lady's favor, or just the practice of arms itself, to inspire enthusiasm for the activity. He granted that if these outside forces produced good results, they were commendable, if not ideal.

As for appeals to reason, they were not only present in advice to men, but also present in advice to women. Christine de Pisan quite logically notes that women with unpleasant in-laws or even unpleasant husbands cannot change either one, and gives coping strategies to help the reader avoid conflict. The *Ménagier de Paris* casually mentions that his young wife will often have to use her own judgment in making moral decisions, and just as casually notes that if she behaves in a way that prompts the disapproval of her older female relatives, she may suffer more unpleasant consequences from them than from himself. Even though the Chevalier de la Tour's stories frequently feature women who are physically punished for bad conduct, suffering broken noses and blinded eyes, he also tells of women who suffer ridicule and social ostracism, gaining reputations as loose women, ill-tempered harridans, or both. These women have failed to create the necessary ethos of virtue, and rejection, not bodily injury, is their punishment. Moreover, the Chevalier hopes to appeal to his daughters' reason by giving them these examples in a book, rather than relying on physical chastisement to keep them in line.

A look at books across the Channel did not clarify the issue. Yes, the English books also featured some advice on performing virtuous actions before experiencing virtuous feelings, or even in order to experience them, but the same books reasoned with the imagined reader, urging him, or her, to consider how virtuous actions could have beneficial results both eventually in heaven and presently, if not quite immediately, during life on earth. Again, there seemed little difference in the advice addressed to male and female readers, beyond the obvious acknowledgment that they would usually face different careers, since a highborn woman was not expected to go into battle and a woman who married into trade would need to adapt to her husband's family business.

Were the visible differences in conduct manuals, then, due to social rank rather than gender? Was the well-off peasant or successful merchant's daughter given a different message from the knight's son or the young court lady? To be sure, they were expected to fulfill different duties, but the terms in which those messages were couched did not seem to vary by rank: conduct manual writers were just as likely to scold noble readers for behaving in a common manner as they were to coax lowborn readers into abiding by rules which frequently seemed inequitable and oppressive for the greater stability of society, as well as for their own spiritual good. Or were they addressing these messages to lowborn readers at all? Christine de Pisan was the only French writer to address any messages specifically to those at the bottom, and she frequently peppered such passages with qualifiers indicating that she did not expect such messages to reach them. Clearly, she did not expect such people to be literate, and her implied hope that kindly employers would pass on her improving advice to their inferiors is often a fairly

transparent ploy to get the employers to treat their servants fairly and give outcast women a second chance in life. In no passage does she advise social superiors to read commoners the sections supposedly meant for their benefit.

The English writers and translators, however, had some expectation that even lay commoners might be literate. The Prologue of Caxton's translation of the Livre du Chevalier, The Book of the Knight of the Tower, specifically refers to the book's appropriateness as an example for people of all classes, not merely the members of the lower nobility for whom it had been written. Was this merely a marketing ploy to make ambitious commoners want to buy the book? Caxton himself had risen from mercer's assistant to diplomat and his translations made him the protégé of a number of Woodvilles and Plantagenets; he had reason to believe that refined literature could improve a commoner's life, for it had certainly improved his. Anthony Woodville's (attributed) translation of Christine de Pisan's Livre du Corps de Policie contained extended passages on cleaning up the language of ordinary Englishmen, remarkable in a translation that is otherwise almost doggedly faithful to its original. Clearly, he thought what ordinary Englishmen were saying was not beneath his notice, although he might have assumed that his reforms would be carried out by the young prince for whom the book was translated, and not by commoners reading it for themselves. As for Peter Idley's Advice to His Son, the canny bailiff who wrote it includes the usual proscriptions against dressing above one's station and affronting one's betters, but he also advises cleanliness as a means of advertising not godliness but one's material prosperity, and specifically discusses making advantageous social connections. Lastly, John Capgrave's Life of Saint Katherine functions as both a bizarre Mirror for Princes (his protagonist's

actions guarantee that her kingdom will be overrun by invaders and she will be killed), and as a bizarre saint's legend, in that Katherine's lawyerly tactics of counter-argument and rebuttal are unusual in a genre where long, declamatory speeches, rather than sharp retorts, are typical. Katherine's cheeky replies have a distinctly homespun, somehow plebeian ring, compared to the stately, dignified orations associated with both saints and royalty. As we shall see when comparing Capgrave's poem to other late medieval saint's lives such as Bradshaw's Saint Werburge of Chester or Lydgate's Albon and Amphibalus, Katherine seems less defined by royal status or holiness than by a frankly professional level of oratory, which gives her an almost clerkly status—and clerks were considered so ignoble in France that following their profession could lose a nobleman his title (Bush 119), although such derogation laws were enforced inconsistently.

Thus, while Idley, Caxton, and Woodville were suggesting that a life of virtue was an ennobling thing even for those of no particular rank, Capgrave depicted a queen and saint as possessing, even enjoying, the ability to give a snappy comeback as readily as a trial lawyer or even a shrewd tradesman's wife. The dignity of the nobility and the haggling skills of the mercantile and legal trades overlapped in English literature, without anyone's apparently feeling threatened.

Were social lines so easily blurred in reality? Richard Kaeuper does note that in England, "The lines of demarcation in the upper ranks tended to blur, producing more community of feeling among all ranks of the privileged, from great lords through country knights and squires (sometimes even a notch below) and not excluding the more prosperous mercantile layers (Violence 111). However, the feuding between the Woodvilles and the Plantagenets suggest that old aristocrats did not always welcome

newcomers in England any more than they did in France. Were the English books with their hint of friendly interclass relations, if not quite egalitarian ones, merely a ploy to keep upstarts from uprising? On the other hand, the Woodvilles themselves did not take the “I’m in the tree-house; pull the ladder up” approach of many recently promoted families who cannot wait to distance themselves from their old neighbors. They became patrons of Caxton and commissioned him to translate numerous French works so that any literate man or woman in England could enjoy them and be improved by them. If their eventual aim was similar to that found in the French books, to keep society stable, their method was certainly different: the English books imply that rising is possible (and perhaps more feasible than it actually was), if the reader is patient and works within channels rather than trying to overthrow the whole system. The French books minimize the likelihood that anyone can rise, even though Duby writes that some members of the peasantry were thriving and even acquiring property in both countries (332).

What was going on here? Why would one country make social mobility seem less likely than it actually was (except for the negative mobility of becoming outcast from society), while another country represented success as being within anyone’s grasp if the proper methods were followed? Did any of these authors deliberately distort the picture, or was the difference a matter of perception, that is, was the burgeoning middle class and the decay of the feudal system regarded with horror in France and with resignation or even guarded enthusiasm in England? It seemed that England was already becoming a nation of shopkeepers, and was not perturbed by the prospect. Perhaps that was the difference: France too had its shopkeeper class, but seemed very perturbed by it indeed.

This is not to say that all Englishmen happily welcomed the blurring of the classes: in my third chapter, I discuss an incident during which an English gentlemen fumed over the prominence of clerks and scholars, and insisted his son follow the traditional aristocratic pursuits of hunting and hawking rather than be mistaken for an educated commoner (Furnivall xii-xiii). But the English attitude seems in general less defensive than the French one; certainly, it looks remarkably modern compared to the rhetoric of the French manuals, in which commoners are mostly ignored or relegated to the servant class, where one must monitor them but never socialize with them.

What seems particular to the English was the notion that the art of rhetoric, that of presenting a deliberately crafted self, *could* be taught to those of lower rank. Bartlett believes that commoners might welcome such instruction rather than resenting it because of the window it gave them on noble life: “An important appeal of the discourse of courtesy—perhaps especially for readers drawn from England’s developing merchant class—might well have been the opportunity that it provided for identification with noble characters and a vicarious entrance into luxurious surroundings” (78). She warns that this “identification with certain courtly scenes and characterizations may have had an empowering effect on women readers,” but it could also have its price: “the internalization of other aspects of feminine courtesy may have disabled readers, rendering them passive and subservient toward men as well as toward God” (85). One might make a similar argument about the English conduct manuals’ apparent friendliness to newly literate commoners: if it were merely a ruse to prevent rebellion against landowners and masters, any readers who followed such advice perpetuated their own subjugation.

To assume so is to ignore the medieval concept of rhetoric: that it was an art, a source of power, and to be excluded from it was to be excluded from the cultural conversation. Lee Patterson notes that in the aristocratic world, self-presentation was inseparable from identity: “Attitudes, habits, and deportment—all those qualities that constitute ‘character’ or ‘personality’—are assumed to be self-consciously adapted, a style of being that each person fashions in order to be himself or herself” (3). Far from being a matter of hypocrisy, the acting out of one’s character was the necessary component to creating it, and having it accepted by society and reflected back at the individual to reinforce that identity. Susan Crane observes that “in several medieval contexts, public appearance and behavior are thought not to falsify personal identity but, on the contrary, to establish and maintain it” (4). Patterson notes that in legal situations, resolutions were not valid or accepted by the participants unless they were “legitimized—made real—by being ritualized as a theatrical performance. The efficacy of the event depended on its ceremonial enactment: theatricality, far from impeaching the validity of an event, was a warrant of its authenticity” (185). The acceptance by spectators of the rhetorical moves that made up one’s own character was a vital part of reinforcing the individual’s own sense that he or she had become that character in very truth: the man-at-arms earned the respect of veteran fighters, reinforcing his confidence in his own prowess; the young woman saw others’ approval of her soft speech and restrained gestures, and knew that she was regarded as the virtuous lady she wished to be.

Readers were even to imagine this audience so they could perform their roles more persuasively. As Clare Sponsler phrases it, “To perform her role properly, the bourgeois female must...watch herself as she is always watched by others” (65). Lest we suppose that

readers were to feel circumscribed by an Orwellian world of perpetual surveillance, let us remember that being watched can feed narcissism as well as paranoia. Conduct manuals offered a segment of society who might usually feel that they were ignored a feeling that they were very important indeed, and that their actions, even their deportment and gaze, had meaning. Although Sponsler allows for “the possibility of a resisting reader,” she posits that “many readers would have readily fallen in with these proffered subject positions and so have become more open to the...advice” (69). Moreover, in England, conduct manuals offered readers who may have felt that they had little control over many aspects of their lives a sense that they could at least control themselves:

Self-governance is presented as the mechanism by which an individual can, through personal initiative alone, attain success and happiness. The optimism and confidence of this position are breathtaking. Potential barriers—such as lack of wealth, absence of employment opportunities or marriage prospects, low social standing, or poor health—are never mentioned. Instead, the assumption is that learning to control one’s own behavior is the definitive factor in determining happiness, with the individual’s enthusiastic participation as the only requirement. (Sponsler 71)

Why would such encouragement be needed at this particular point in history? Both England and France had suffered class uprisings in the Peasants’ Revolt and the Jacquerie; the path to knighthood had narrowed if not closed, making recruitment to the military problematic; tradesmen and merchants were questioning and flouting ancient aristocratic privileges; civic and ecclesiastical authorities had tightened the definitions of a valid marriage in response to elopements and abductions. The writers of conduct

manuals responded to these disturbances by representing conformity to the system as a form of empowerment rather than a form of subjugation. French conduct manuals depict a world in which most mobility is downwards: if the readers do not fill the responsibilities of their proper sphere, maidens will frighten away noble suitors with their vulgar conduct, and lazy, vainglorious knights will disgrace their chivalrous order and ancestral name. Perhaps a few ladies in the lower nobility may “marry up” and some men-at-arms may be awarded the spurs of knighthood for their valor, but the possibilities of rising seem very limited indeed. However, people who play their roles properly will earn respect and self-confidence. In contrast, English conduct manuals depict the prospect of social mobility with perhaps unrealistic optimism, implying that children of tradesmen and lawyers can win powerful connections and the acceptance of their betters by displaying the outer marks of inner virtue. Rather than addressing the reader as a helpless victim of authority, conduct manuals from both countries elicit the reader’s cooperation by offering self-transformation as well as self-presentation. Readers who learn to create and perform a character of virtue, enacted through outward signs, benefit not merely from its effect on the observer, but also for its power to transform the inner self.

Thus, the conduct manuals offered readers palatable alternatives to bucking the system in the form of an opportunity to create their own ethos. Recent research has traced this idea of self-fashioning (usually attributed to the Renaissance) back to medieval conduct manuals. Bartlett, for instance, writes that “medievalists have yet to mount a significant challenge to the abduction of this line of inquiry by Renaissance scholars, who ignore the fact that imitation—the fashioning and reconstruction of the self

in accordance with the multiple models provided by the holy family, male and female saints, aristocratic ideals, and an assortment of textualized personages—was the chief aim of virtually all forms of medieval (and particularly devotional) discourse” (32).

If the conduct manuals were a direct reaction to the social upheavals of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, with programs of self-improvement designed to contain and re-channel ambition and discontent, were the writers hypocrites to try to persuade people to obey rules that supported a system that oppressed them, or, even with readers of the highest rank, confined them to limited roles? Were they teaching their readers hypocrisy by having them “perform” virtue when their feelings were not always virtuous? The attention to appearances rather than realities was typical of Cicero, whose work was taught throughout the medieval period. Cicero, writes Nan Johnson “ascribes a strategic role to ethos, which he defines as the winning of the good will of an audience through the presentation of a favorable character, principles, and conduct. However, unlike Aristotle, Cicero does not treat ethos in relation to the philosophical issue of the Good but discusses it as a strategy of style” (104). In fact, the tensions that the conduct manuals imply between visible virtue and the inner self, in terms of both writer and reader, had been an issue in rhetoric from its classical beginnings:

The philosophers of classical times laboriously honed their definitions of the moral good, and in discussing the impact of the orator they debated at length the importance of both real goodness and apparent goodness. In Gorgias and Phaedrus the nature of ideal truth and absolute goodness are central issues in Plato’s argument for reformed oratorical practice; the reality of the speaker’s virtue is presented as a prerequisite to effective speaking. In contrast, Aristotle’s

Rhetoric presents rhetoric as a strategic art which facilitates decisions in civil matters and accepts the appearance of goodness as sufficient to inspire conviction in hearers. (Johnson 99)

Inspiring such conviction is crucial. Quintilian, whose work was as central to medieval rhetorical instruction as Cicero's, says bluntly that lawyers who are "capable of discovering with some skill what it is that their Proofs require" are plentiful enough, but that merely informing the judge of facts is insufficient: "the man who can carry the judge with him, and put him in whatever frame of mind he wishes, whose words move men to tears or anger, has always been a rare creature. Yet this is what dominates the courts, this is the eloquence that reigns supreme" (III. 47). In other words, it isn't enough to be right; one must convince others that one is right. Conduct manuals transfer this principle from the courtroom to the larger court of public opinion. The Chevalier's stories of women who allow their reputations to be destroyed, possibly unjustly, because they failed to give a performance of virtue that would persuade others involve a failure of eloquence: they neglected to use the restrained movements and modest speech that move an audience to conclude, "This is a virtuous woman."

Successful delivery, on the other hand, could actually create a character of virtue, an ethos. Quintilian's discussions of Delivery cover voice (V. 93, and elsewhere), posture, gestures, and movements of shoulders and feet (V. 133-155), and even dress (V. 157-153). Failure to attend to any of these details can indicate a lazy, ignorant, or frivolous character. When conduct manuals discuss clothing, gesture, voice and dress, they are teaching rhetoric, even when they do not use the term. When women use dignified movements and a steady gaze, these women are "speaking" a virtuous

character. When men prefer Spartan meals and sleeping arrangements and avoid foppish clothes, these men are also “speaking” a virtuous character. The “speech” is meant to move observers to the conclusion that “This is a virtuous man or woman.” Successfully persuading others that one is virtuous reinforces the individual’s knowledge that he or she has become virtuous, which is a further incentive to *stay* virtuous: now the reader has created a reputation and an identity, and will want to preserve both, particularly since they are seen to be inextricably linked, if not synonymous.

Maintaining such a character will involve conscious manipulation of the audience, just as it did in classical rhetoric. As Johnson notes:

Aristotle goes to great length in the Rhetoric to provide a student of oratory with information about the protocols of different speech situations, human emotions, and audience types as an aid in learning how to identify the Good and Utility implicit in different subjects and to create credible ethos in a variety of ways.

Ethos is a strategy in Aristotle’s rhetoric but a beneficent rather than a manipulative one; “making one’s character look right” results from deliberation about the nature of the audience and the “mean” course appropriate to the subject and the situation. In other words, ethos is the result of a considered choice about how the Good is best defined and conveyed within the boundaries of received opinion. (102-03).

While readers were learning to make the characters “look right,” they were also learning how to make someone else’s character look wrong. Both Christine de Pisan and the *Ménagier de Paris* give examples of women who cope with social conflicts, such as scandal-mongering or unfaithful husbands, by maintaining a serene exterior that not only

allows them to present a superior contrast to their adversaries in public opinion, but even to win over their adversaries: allaying the court gossip's spite or mollifying the "other woman." Their tactics show considerable similarity to those Quintilian recommends using in cross-examination:

In this, the first thing is to know your witness. A timid witness can be terrorized, a fool deceived, the irascibles provoked, the malicious flattered, the long-winded encouraged in his prolixity...It has proved useful to show restraint in attacking honest and modest witnesses, because people who would have fought back against an onslaught are often mollified by courtesy" (II. 347-49).

Clearly, Christine and the *Ménagier* expand this recommendation to appease benevolent people to appeasing malevolent ones as well. Idley and Caxton give similar strategies for avoiding conflict through proper use of rhetoric. Even Capgrave's Life of Saint Katherine involves teaching the tools of rhetoric, although in this case Katherine seeks and wins conflict. Capgrave specifically names the principles of arrangement, diction, and delivery she had studied in childhood and later uses to win her debate. Although he may never have intended anyone to follow Katherine's example, he gives her curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic in such detail that anyone who did wish to follow it could use the poem to map out a syllabus. Readers of the poem have access not only to her achievements, but to her training program, and in that sense, the poem is didactic.

Were the writers teaching manipulation or being manipulative themselves? When writers conveyed these principles, they were creating and reinforcing their own virtuous identities as well as influencing readers, just as Quintilian had believed rhetors must do:

For Quintilian, the most important quality of the orator is intrinsic moral virtue....Moral character can be learned, Quintilian insists, and the education of the good man should be the “first and greatest” aim of education.... It is clear...that Quintilian perceives the orator as a spiritual missionary who must embody philosophical truths.... Quintilian shares Plato’s view that the orator must develop “loftiness of soul” in order to speak out truly” and that edification in the “way to virtue” is the aim of oratory. (Johnson 104)

Thus, the writers of conduct manuals were inscribing themselves into this culture of virtue. The rhetoric of virtue was something they practiced by teaching its principles to others. Should they benefit by being thought wise and learned people, this was entirely appropriate; Quintilian thought a little enlightened self-interest was all to the good: “The fact is, everyone looks for some reward; even eloquence, though it takes the greatest pleasure in itself, is enormously influenced by the immediate reward of praise and renown” (IV. 381). And if eloquence is the virtuous man speaking well, that same virtuous impulse must also be influenced, reinforced, and inspired by “the immediate reward of praise and renown.” Despite their different circumstances and audiences, both French and English conduct manuals writers sought this praise, for themselves and for their readers.

Here, then, is how I have arranged the results of my investigations. In my first chapter, I show how the writers of three fourteenth-century French conduct manuals tried to reconcile young female readers to their arranged marriages and limited career options by painting a frightening portrait of the alternative and offering covert authority through outward submissiveness. The first, the Livre du chevalier de la tour landry, narrates

harsh penalties for women who break the physical codes of virtue. Women who speak loudly, toss their heads, or let their gazes wander frighten away eligible bachelors or wind up in loveless or even abusive marriages. Discreet women make better marriages and win over unaffectionate husbands through their docility. The Ménagier de Paris's tone is kinder, as he is writing for a young wife, but although he attempts to inspire pride in her position as the supervisor of a large and busy household, he still expects her to maintain a public physical decorum of restrained gaze and movement. Christine de Pisan's Livre de Trois Virtus prescribes behavior for every rank from princesses to peasants (who could hardly have been expected to read it), maintaining that there is dignity in every estate if the woman fulfills her role properly. I demonstrate that in all three books, the writers depict limited opportunity for social advancement, but warn readers that women who behave badly can suffer precipitous social descents. However, women who obey the rules can gain authority over servants and households, the respect of their communities, and even the ability to influence their husbands in subtle and tactful ways.

In my second chapter, I demonstrate how fourteenth-century French books aimed at male readers offer similar advice to keep one's place and rise slowly if at all, despite the seemingly greater opportunities for men. Geoffroi de Charny's Book of Chivalry proposes a hierarchy of chivalrous merit based on motive rather than hereditary rank: the man who practices arms for the sake of glory is superior to the man who does so to win a lady, but the second man is superior to mercenaries. Geoffroi must paint an attractive portrait of chivalry to readers who know that it is no longer an express path to knighthood (Geoffroi himself won his spurs only posthumously), and he must also remind leaders to speak with their men and inspire them with courage and trust, rather than dismissing

them as cannon fodder. Christine de Pisan's Livre du corps de policie, like her Livre de Trois Virtus, urges its putative audience (extending from rulers to rural laborers) to fill their assigned spheres in life honorably, rather than seeking to change them. She, too, wishes employers from prince to petit bourgeois to praise and value their underlings in order to foster loyalty and trust rather than resentment. I demonstrate how all the writers in my first two chapters are trying to reinforce an already shaky feudal hierarchy by positing that if individuals of all ranks play their roles, the system can still work.

In my third chapter, I show how English conduct manuals writers, far from denying the fluidity of social roles, nearly overstate it. The eponymous heroine of Capgrave's Life of St. Katherine abandons her role as earthly leader to become a saint in heaven, but in the process displays the verbal tricks of a lawyer and the sharp tongue of a common scold. Peter Idley's Instructions to His Son dispenses with the code of chivalry altogether, advising the reader to avoid all conflict, physical or legal, and pursue advancement and financial security through social connections and industry. Even two English translations of earlier French texts show a new English concept of nobility as something that can be *acquired* through noble words and thoughts, rather than a purely inherited rank that is *demonstrated* through physical conduct. The Body of Policie, a translation of Corps de policie attributed to Anthony Woodville, sticks to Christine de Pisan's phrasing almost word-for-word, except on the topic of foul language, which Woodville expands and emphasizes. The Book of the Knight of the Tower, William Caxton's translation of the Livre du chevalier de la tour landry, tones down the crudeness and sarcastic tone of the original to provide readers with a more dignified role model. I argue that both Woodville and Caxton emphasize rhetoric as a learnable noble quality

over physical nobility because both have benefited from very recent advancement in the world: Woodville, from his sister's royal marriage, and Caxton, in his spectacular rise from draper's apprentice to the protégé of King Edward IV and the Duchess of Burgundy.

In short, I argue that while both French and English conduct manuals were attempts to control social disorder, French writers did so by discouraging all but the most limited advancement, and English writers did so by implying that great advancement was possible if readers would only follow their rules. In both cases, if readers joined the system rather than fighting it, they were promised self-respect and the respect of others. But only in England was this program offered to all classes. I conclude that far from attempting to deceive or trick their readers, the writers were offering them the same rhetorical skills that had served them as writers.

CHAPTER 1

ROARING GIRLS?

Can a program of feminine submissiveness lead, covertly, to feminine empowerment? The late-twentieth-century writers of The Rules and The Surrendered Wife thought so, and their late-fourteenth-century French predecessors appear to have thought so no less. Three books written for young women, the Livre du Chevalier de la Tour, written around 1371, the Ménagier de Paris, a household manual written around 1393, and Christine de Pisan's Livre de Trois Vertus, written in 1405, promised their readers that learning the visible signs of meekness and docility would give them power over court and kingdom if they were of high rank, authority with family members and servants if they were of lesser rank, and even for the women of the lowest classes, influence with erring husbands and short-tempered employers. The books raise a number of questions about their intent and effect: whether they wished readers to act out the signs of submission consciously and deliberately, or to feel submission in their hearts; whether they were ploys to keep rebellious girls from bucking the system by inspiring hope that obedience would give them greater eventual control over their lives; or

whether they were sincere attempts to give readers tools that would allow them to make the best of limited options. (To forestall suspense, the answer to *all* these questions is a qualified “yes.”)

The books treat similar themes of female virtue and vice, and grapple with similar questions about whether virtue must proceed from within or can be established from without by a constant regimen of good habits. Their approaches to these questions vary considerably, even when the answers appear similar. What is consistent in all three texts is the implicit notion that the reader is unlikely to rise in the world, regardless how virtuous she is, although she may suffer a serious fall if she is not virtuous. Bad behavior may scare away a suitor or alienate a husband, but good behavior is not likely to attract someone whose station in life differs greatly from her own. Her aim in life, then, is not to hope for advancement, but to fit herself for her assigned role and seek to shine within it.

All three books acknowledge that a woman can be punished for an appearance of sin even without basis in fact, and they also attempt to fix the point where going through the motions of virtue, whether in an effort to revive flagging motivation or to inspire others with a good example, diverges into plain hypocrisy. They discuss body language as if it were another form of speech which must be as restrained and dignified as the speech of the mouth, yet they struggle with the tension between body language as an expression of character, and body language as that which shapes character. They laud female silence as a virtue, but they give examples of good women using their speech effectively to turn others from vice, and of evil women who do not speak up when speech is required. Girls may roar as gently as any sucking dove, but they must roar

nevertheless—or rather, the attraction presented by all three books is a promise that, in the cause of virtue, girls will have an opportunity to roar, or at the very least, exercise considerable influence.

Despite their similarities in subject matter, the three books claim to address their advice to three very different audiences. The Chevalier's book purports to contain advice to his daughters on piety and court life; the *Ménagier's* manual advises his young bride on both housekeeping and moral conduct; Christine de Pisan addresses her advice to women of every class. How readily should we accept these framing devices? The Chevalier's book, as he states himself, was not exactly written by himself but researched and compiled by priests and clerks at his request (13). Although Nicole Crossley-Holland has found considerable evidence suggesting that the *Ménagier* might be Guy de Montigny, a knight who had been in the service of the Duke de Berry (7), Georgine E. Brereton and Janet Ferrier find a middle-class flavor in his doubts about “trop grans seigneurs” and overly-complex recipes (xxii),¹ the *Ménagier* and his wife may be literary constructs that have no more historical basis than Kim Phillips ascribes to the mother and daughter featured in The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter and The Good Wife Wold a Pylgremage (*Medieval Maidens* 62). Of all the “writers,” Christine de Pisan has the most verifiable authorship, but much of her “advice” is actually intended to operate as rhetorical ploys on audiences addressed openly in other sections: advice to prostitutes on

reforming, for instance, is highly unlikely to have been read by them and is more likely a hint to high-born readers to offer such women alternate employment as laundresses (Bornstein 112).

Although I would like to accept these constructed personae at face-value, and discuss only what these literary masks tell us about what the authors, or publishers, thought their audiences wanted to read, or (since the Chevalier's book and Christine's Livre were the sort of books parents might present to their daughters), what authority figures *thought* young women ought to read, it is inescapable that authors sometimes reveal more than they know. As Ruth Mazo Karras has pointed out, cop shows may tell us very little about the actual practices of policemen, but they tell us a great deal about what producers believe television audiences expect and will accept in representations of how cops are or should be (22). Each of these three authors, then, speaks from a position of authority on how young women should behave, but the position of authority is not entirely secure in terms of social position for any of the three. The Chevalier must secure, with his daughters' good marriages, a family status that is by no means solidly-established; the Ménagier needs to elicit the cooperation of a much-younger wife who may not find him particularly attractive; Christine de Pisan is a widow, a female intellectual, and a person of Italian origins in a French court: she must adhere to a high moral tone lest any of these facts be used to impugn her reputation (Forhan vi).

Moreover, their putative readers may have different incentives to follow the advice given in these books: the Chevalier's daughters presumably need only to be told that they must retain their position in society, the Ménagier's wife must be convinced there are benefits in adjusting to her new position, which is of somewhat lower rank than

that into which she was born, and Christine's audience ranges from princesses who ought to know how much they have to lose to bourgeois women and serving maids who must be subtly guided away from rebellious impulses. All three writers wish to maintain social stability, but will doing so require them to win over people on the lower rungs of the hierarchy who might see upheaval as desirable, and if so, how are they to achieve this? The result is perhaps a surprising one: their tone towards high-born ladies is brusque and even dismissive: they must be told what to do and which visible signs of virtue are required. Towards less exalted women, however, the tone becomes more genial, and they are more likely to make appeals to a reader's motivation and inner sincerity. On the other hand, some of the humblest women Christine de Pisan mentions would never have heard of her book, let alone been able to read it for themselves, so for whom is the message really intended?

When we consider whether good actions proceed from good thoughts, or whether carrying out programs of virtue is meant to help readers to think more virtuously, we must also consider how the notion of virtue would change depending on the status of the speaker and that of the anticipated audience. A French noblewoman might read the Chevalier's book in terms of maintaining her class: making a good marriage, preserving her reputation, avoiding rifts between herself and her husband. Her reading would concern the performance of the visible signs of the identity to which she is born. An haute bourgeoisie woman, someone just on the fringes of minor nobility, might rather seek not merely the visible signs of nobility, manners that she could someday parlay into marriage (her own or a daughter's) into a titled family, but possibly some reassurance that she could acquire a noble identity even without (or prior to the acquisition of) a title.

As Mark Addison Amos has noted, the “tactical warning—behaving churlishly makes one a churl” is countered by “its hopeful converse—behaving nobly can make one noble: one’s manners (or any program of behavior) can lead to a fundamental inner transformation” (45). However, there is no indication that the French writers deliberately included this audience in their imagined readership. Aspiring gentry and newly-literate tradesmen’s wives might wish merely to ape the manners of their betters and improve status; they might also wish to “feel noble” inside, to feel that nobility of conduct and nobility of rank are somehow related, and that virtue would allow them to transcend a bourgeois birth in spirit, even if it never enabled them to do so in literal rank. But unlike English conduct manuals, the French manuals do not specifically appeal to the bourgeois desire for gentility. Christine de Pisan is perhaps an exception, but as we shall see, her messages to women of lesser rank are often coded messages to their superiors.

Let us begin then, by examining what the Chevalier Geoffroi de la Tour Landry’s readers, not merely his own daughters, were told was noble and virtuous behavior for a young woman. The Chevalier would like his daughters to go to heaven someday, but he is more concerned with their getting to the altar first. In his exempla, bad women may lose their souls, but this is always anti-climactic to losing their looks, their husbands’ love, or the chance to marry at all. Virtue, then, means preserving one’s eligibility as much as one’s soul.

As represented by the Chevalier, female virtue is not a monolithic program. There is a constant tension between what young women may do and not do, and what they may say and not say. Like most conduct manuals the Chevalier’s book advises women to keep silent, but he gives several stories in which righteous speech is the key to

the woman's salvation, and in at least one story, scolds the woman who does not speak up when it is necessary. Virtue might seem to be a question of inner intention, but in a number of stories, a woman who plans to behave immorally is protected by her pious habits—and the habits always involve specific physical action (i.e., speaking prayers aloud, going to church, fasting).

The tension between intent and the physical act recurs frequently in the Chevalier's book. The Chevalier tells the story of two sisters, the daughters of an Emperor, who despite their rank share a bed. The younger sister rises early to pray for the dead, while the older rather understandably complains that her sister's prayers (which are evidently vocalized), disturb her sleep. Both sisters agree to meet their suitors secretly at night; the praying sister's suitor is prevented from passing beyond the bed-curtains by the souls of the dead for whom she has prayed, but the late-rising sister is seduced, eventually discovered to be pregnant, and disgraced and executed along with her lover (7-9).

Now, one might reasonably wonder if the sisters' intentions count for nothing. The younger sister clearly has no less intention to fornicate than her sister: "...they revealed their affairs to each other, and sent their knights certain times to come to them privately at night"² ("qu'elles se descouvrirent l'une à l'autre de leurs amourettes, et tant

qu'elles mistrent aux deux chevalliers certaines heures pour venir à elles par nuit privéement") (7) As Aquinas puts it, sin and virtue "are not done outside but within the agent":

Since what defines acts as moral is their voluntariness, our will is the proper agency to which they are attributed. But because voluntary acts include not only exercises of the will itself but all acts done under will's control, sin can be attributed not only to the will, but also to every agent power the will can arouse or repress, though not to the parts of the body as such. For parts of the body don't start actions but are merely the tools and slaves of the soul's desire, whereas our inner ability to desire is not a slave but a free man.... (255).

It would seem that the physical facts of the older sister's defloration and impregnation argue no greater *inner* impurity on her part than the younger's, while the younger's physical virginity--since she would have done the same as her sister had her suitor not been prevented from meeting her--is spared, without her motives in the matter having been at all superior to her sister's. Her habitual prayers may protect her from the *results* of the sexual temptation, but they do not prevent her from *succumbing* to it insofar as she has invited the suitor to visit her. Moreover, as the Chevalier has carefully specified, the sisters "slept in one bed, her and her sister likewise" ("Si couchoient en un lict elle et sa sœur ainsée") (7). This fact occasions the older sister's annoyance with the prayers of the younger, but it also (unless the assignations were somehow arranged for separate locations, and the Chevalier has *not* carefully specified any such thing) presumably permits the younger to witness the fact that her sister's lover has taken the trouble to show up while hers has not. There is no hint that she feels any contrition until the

absentee lover subsequently tells her that he experienced such dread at the sight of her ghostly bodyguards (presumably called up by her prayers), that he has fallen ill and repented.

How significant is her repentance, when there is no hint that she repented or even had moral reservations while carrying out her sinful intention was still possible?

Certainly, Abelard had his doubts on this point. Although he concluded in his Ethics that “the wish or desire itself of doing what is not seemly is never to be called sin,” giving in to that desire was another matter: “the consent is sin.” Moreover, such sin has still been committed when its physical completion has been prevented:

We consent to what is not seemly when we do not draw ourselves back from such a deed, and are prepared, should opportunity offer, to perform it completely.

Whoever is discovered in this intention, though his guilt has yet to be completed in deed, is already guilty before God in so far as he strives with all his might to sin, and accomplishes within himself, as the blessed Augustine reminds us, as much as if he were actually taken in the act. (trans. Schoedinger 125)

The idea of Abelard writing on the failure to resist sin has its own ironies, but nevertheless, by these standards the Chevalier’s flawed heroine has sinned as much as her sister. She made no attempt to resist anything. Her contrition is mentioned only when the no-show lover summons her to his sickbed and confesses all. The younger sister appears to be saved from disaster through no moral virtue of her own.

It is tempting to view the younger sister’s prayers for the dead simply as a form of spiritual investment. An old saw says, “Pray for the Dead, and the Dead will pray for you.” The younger sister *has* prayed for them, to relieve the pains of their punishment for

sin in Purgatory, and they are returning the favor by preventing her from committing the sort of sins for which they themselves may be suffering this punishment. She may well have already committed sins of intent, but the Dead Souls can at least stop her from carrying out physical sins. She is still guilty before God, but not guilty before men, as her sister is. It is the earthly punishments of men that bring about her sister's death, and deny her a chance to repent and reform. In this manner, the barrier the dead souls present to the amorous knight not only protects the younger sister's present physical performance of virtue, but affects her future performance: when she learns what happened from the now-repentant knight, she thanks God for protecting her, prays more devoutly than ever, and resolves to live "chastement et nettement" (8) (chastely and purely). Indirectly, then, the dead souls have given her counsel on how she ought to conduct herself in future. As Aquinas notes, "Doing something good on another's advice rather than one's own judgment is not yet perfect activity of one's own reasoning and desiring" (236). But this imperfect conduct is still a sign of improvement. The influence of the dead souls, repaying her for her prayers with their protection, will certainly be a better guide to her than her own flawed desires, or her sister's example. Her own judgment now has the opportunity to improve.

On the other hand, if sins of the spirit are more serious than sins of the flesh, the older sister is still more culpable. The sin tempting both sisters, that of physical desire, can be less serious than the temptation to which the older sister has repeatedly *succumbed* even before the liaisons with the knights are arranged: lack of piety. As Aquinas notes, "Other things being equal, sins of the spirit are graver than sins of the flesh. The spirit turns us to (and away from) God, whereas fleshly appetites mainly turn us towards bodily

goods” (253). Both sisters, then, are tempted towards bodily goods, but only the older turns away from God by refusing to engage in regular prayer. She also sins against charity by refusing to pray for the souls in Purgatory, something all good Christians are expected to do if for no other reason than that they would wish their own pains to be shortened and ameliorated by the prayers of those who survive them. As Aquinas affirms, “all sins that turn us away from God by destroying the love of charity are intrinsically liable to an eternal penalty” (272). The earthly penalty of the older sister’s lack of charity is that her seduction is successful and she dies in disgrace. The eternal penalty is that she may end in hell, but if she is fortunate enough to merit Purgatory, she had better hope, if her pains are to be shortened, that her early-rising sister will include her name in her prayers for the dead.

The charity and piety of the younger sister, who is rewarded with a good marriage and a respectable reputation, are physical matters, not merely matters of good intent. Her piety has been demonstrated in the physical act of praying aloud and on her knees. That moral posture protects her from the immoral posture of falling backward with a man not her husband, however much she had once intended to do just that.

Geoffroi has another tale of two sisters, the daughters of a knight. Again, one is virtuous, and one is a foil to this virtue. The virtuous one regularly fasts before praying her Hours and hearing “all the masses she was able to hear” (“tout les messes qu’elle pouvoit oïr”). Apparently, attending one morning Mass on a daily basis is insufficient: the foil bolts to the storeroom to “eat soup in the morning or some such nonsense” (“mengoit la soupe au matin ou aucune lescherie”), after hearing a short mass and saying two or three Our Fathers, complaining that all this fasting “made her head ache”

(“la teste lui faisoit mal”). Predictably, the foil comes to a bad end: she continues her habit of midnight snacks despite all her husband’s many tactful warnings (the Chevalier says he spoke “very sweetly” [“moult doucement”]) , and eventually he catches her in the storeroom with some noisy servants, two of whom are displaying their affection rather openly. The staff with which the indignant husband beats the manservant shoots off a sliver that puts out the wife’s eye (12-13).

Raiding the larder at midnight would seem a paltry sin for so stiff a punishment. And what on earth has this to do with the wife’s over-familiarity with servants, with whom she might be expected to interact frequently enough during the daytime? Is gluttony or sloth part of a slippery slope to lewd revelry with servants? Is the wife’s offense that she was not there at night when her husband “touched near him and didn’t find her, which made him furious” (“si tasta delez lui et ne la trouva pas; si en fut yrrés”)? Are we to suppose merely that depriving herself of food on a regular basis (we are also told that she used to ransack the kitchen when her parents were asleep) would have made her capable of restraining her hunger until morning? Or does the fact that she is not present to satisfy her husband’s possibly sexual needs³ imply that her fraternizing with the servants is part of a general lack of self-control that extends to all her hungers, i.e., that she ought to be capable of channeling her urges properly within marriage? The Chevalier does not say that she herself behaves lasciviously or that she approves the servants’ lasciviousness, unless to be present is to take part and to approve (and judging by her punishment, it is: the eye with which she has witnessed, uncritically, the servants’ coarse behavior, is destroyed). The thing that finally brings about her punishment is neither a sin of gluttony nor lust, but a fact of physical position: she is not where she

should be, in bed beside her husband, and this discovery send him into a rage. However, let us note that the marriage appears troubled even before this incident. The Chevalier describes the husband as “wise and cruel” (“sage et malicieux”). Marriages are arranged by parents or guardians, but the implication is that a worthier young lady, one who fasted and prayed more ardently, would have attracted a suitor with a kinder disposition in the first place, and not been subjected to the explosions of a man so easily enraged.

Physical position is also the crucial element in the good sister’s triumph. We are not told whether her head also ached from fasting; presumably, it would be very little sacrifice to forego sleep and breakfast if one has no sufferings to offer, but constitutions do differ. The Chevalier is not concerned with whether her hunger pangs are more or less severe than her sister’s; if she does have them, they do not dissuade her from her piety, which is exercised not merely at home, but in the physical act of going to church. She is rewarded with a rich and powerful husband, and the opportunity to host her father in style. The other sister, of course, has lost not only her eye but also her husband’s love, and the father finds “her household arrangement and administration careless and wretched” (“l’arroy et le gournement nice et malostru”) (14). Although the husband may have withdrawn funds from her at the same time he lost interest in her, the implication is that the wife has also lost heart and ceased trying to keep up appearances. The father promptly goes home and reproaches his wife for spoiling the bad sister. It is worth

noting that both the virtue of the one and the vice of the other require a witness, in this case the father, to authenticate their existence and their consequences.⁴ Appearance, in this case, is the confirmation of substance.

Fasting, in general, seems to be a protection against seduction but not necessarily against experiencing desire. The Chevalier recommends fasting for girls three or four days a week until marriage (19), but although the Chevalier affirms that fasting “grieves and restrains the flesh from ill desires” (“adoulist et reffranist la char des mauvaises volentéz”) (21), its immediate result seems not to be to afflict the body so it will be incapable of lust. Nor does it seem directly to improve the judgment of its practitioners. Rather, it seems to be a kind of investment in piety: women who fast are rewarded with some sort of supernatural intervention when they are tempted to sin. Their flawed will is overruled by the virtuous will of a saint or a soul in Purgatory because of their fasting and prayers. At least one Roman woman, who fasts regularly both on Fridays for the Passion and on Saturdays for the Virgin, is miraculously saved when she falls into a pit in the dark. She has fallen into the pit on the way to meet her lover, so again, the fasting doesn’t seem a deterrent to lust or to unseemly behavior. When she is rescued, she (like the good sister in the first story) resolves to live chastely. Her interaction with the Virgin sounds much like what Richard Firth Green has called “Bargains with God”:

“Underlying such stories is a clear assumption that, just as in human affairs, dealings with the supernatural will be regulated by trothplight” (342): the sinner pays homage to a saint, and the saint fulfills his or her end of the bargain by obtaining God’s grace for the sinner. Green relates a story in which a sinful woman has one pious custom of burning a candle before the Virgin’s image every day, and the Virgin reciprocates by tricking the

devils who come to fetch the woman's soul after death. He notes that the story's author "pays lip service to the creed that *qui vero malo, in ignem eternam*, but deep down he cannot really bring himself to believe that all those candles bind the Virgin to nothing" (344).

Indeed, the Virgin may decide to intercede before death, often with wondrous dreams and messages, as well as miracles. The Roman woman who was saved both from the pit and from the sinful rendezvous with her lover later has a recurring dream-vision of a tarnished silver platter, and decides to go to confession (evidently for the first time in a long while). Her confessor describes a relationship between soul and body that is nothing like the one given by Aquinas, in which the body is merely a tool of the sinning soul:

...the vessel of silver, puffed with smoke, signifies the soul which is in the body, for the soul is white and pure, and if the body wouldn't consent to do sin, it would always be white, as the silver vessel which just came from the goldsmith white and clean.... And when the miserable body sins by false delights, for each of its sins, it has a black stain on the soul, and it remains just as long as the body, which experienced the delight and the sin, confesses and is shriven humbly, and in that manner, made satisfaction.

...le vaissel d'argent trait de fumier, signifie l'ame qui est ou corps; car l'ame est blanche et nette, et se le corps ne se consentist à faire pechié, elle feust touzjours blanche, comme le vaissel d'argent qui vient de l'orfèvre blanc et net.... Et quant

le chetif corps a pechié par ses faulx delits, pour chacun pechié il avient une tache noire à l'ame, et se tient jusque à tant ce que le corps, qui a fait le delit et le pechié, l'ait confessé et regehi aussi laidement et en la manière comme, il a fait, et faitte satisfacion. (17-18)

The body that performed the sin must perform the confessing: rather than using the body as its tool, the soul of the woman in the Chevalier's story is almost at the mercy of her body, depending on it not only to refrain from sinful acts but also to engage in virtuous ones. As with all Christians, male or female, confession is key, for the next story (which the holy man tells the repenting woman) tells of a woman virtuous in all respects save that she never confessed her affair with a monk, a sin for which she is damned. The Chevalier relates that her tormented spirit warns the people, "it seemed to me that the great deeds and fasting that I did extinguished the sin that I didn't dare to confess to the priest or be shriven of, and for this I was deceived and lost" ("me sembloit que les grans biens et abstinances que je faisoye estaindroient bien le peschié que je n'osoie regehir ne confesser au prestre, et pour ce j'en suis deceue et perdue") (20). Her private penances or public deeds of charity are fruitless, if she does not speak the words detailing her sins into the ear of a priest authorized to absolve them.⁵

This emphasis is in stark contrast to Cynthia Ho's analysis of the Chevalier's views on female speech. As she comments, "Landry makes his contribution to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century female conduct literature by devoting attention to admonishing and disciplining through the use of language. In his ambition to place his daughters outside the economy of unlawful desire, he banishes them altogether from the world of the free exchange of words. The Book of the Knight is thus a conduct book for

a woman's tongue, because the honor of both herself and her family hangs on her beneficial or harmful language" (100-01). But the restrictions Ho rightly perceives in the Chevalier's condemnation of flirtatious or belligerent speech do not apply to confession: there a woman may and must speak freely.

Although all the fasts and charitable deeds of the damned woman cannot save her without confession, the Chevalier still advocates fasting. Fasting initiates the spiritual recovery of the woman in the pit, although it cannot complete it; as Geoffroi maintains, "the beginning of her salvation was not until the fasts on Friday for the Holy Passion and Saturday for the Virginity of Our Lady, for which she was saved from peril" ("son commencement de sauvement ne fut que par les jeuns comme le vendredy pour la sainte passion, et le Samedi pour la virginité de Nostre-Dame, dont ellse fut sauvée du péril") (20). He does not specify whether the peril she is saved from is an untimely death in the pit or the peril of damnation had she been successful in meeting her lover. Moreover, in this section he answers the question about the physical cost of fasting suggested by the story of the knight's two daughters, in which one daughter complained of her aching head and the reader was left to guess at the other's experience. Suffering should not be a deterrent: "the more fasting gives pain to the head or body, the more the fast has great merit and great moral worth, for, if fasting didn't make one sick, there wouldn't be much merit to it" ("de tant est la jeuner fait plus de mal à la teste et au corps, de tant est la jeune

de plus grant merite et de plus grant valeur; car, se la jeune ne faisoit mal à jeuner, l'on n'y auroit point de merites") (20).

Despite the importance the Chevalier gives or allows his compilers to give to monastic self-tortures such as fasting and lack of sleep, his real concerns are less ascetic than aesthetic: he is convinced that awkward body language will be interpreted as the visible sign of a girl's lack of virtue. He cautions against craning one's head to look around lest one be thought frivolous: "if you want to look alongside, turn your face and your body together, that you may hold your stature more steadfast and sure, for one makes jokes about those who, in a frivolous and brandishing manner, turn the face here and there" ("Si vous voulez regarder de costé, virez visaige et corps ensemble; si entendre l'en vostre estat plus seur et plus ferme, car l'on se bourde de celles qui se ligierement brandellent virent le visaige çà et là") (24). He follows this advice with a story of three sisters: one who turns her head and looks around too much ("avoit le resgart bien vertilleux"), one who talks too much and, significantly, too inconsequentially (she "often replied and frequently before she could completely understand whatever one said to her" ["respondoit souvent et menu avant qu'elle peust tout entendre ce dont on luy parloit"]), and a third, whose speech and body language are more restrained. Although the Chevalier specifies that the third is not the most physically beautiful, her decorous manner makes her the choice of the King of England, who is repelled by the reports his messengers give of the conduct displayed by the other two sisters (25-27). Her dignified

carriage and subdued but appropriate speech are construed as visible signs of inner virtue, just as her sisters' apparent awkwardness and frivolity are construed as signs of—if not vice itself—then a lack of steadiness that leaves them susceptible to vice.

The question is one of rank as well as one of vice. Although we shall see that Christine recommends a downcast gaze before one's husband, the Chevalier's text, and a number of courtesy books Kim M. Phillips examined, recommend quite the opposite: "These courtesy books...make clear that downcast head and gaze are socially undesirable, and are traits associated with persons of lower status." It was considered "ill-bred or servile...to cast one's head and gaze down." Phillips notes "this level head and gaze, perhaps surprising as a desirable feminine trait, seems linked firmly to concerns about status," and that "a calm, steady and direct manner constituted good deportment, incorporating notions both of proper femininity and superior social status" ("Bodily Walls" 190). The shifty-eyed sister is thus not only acting like a loose woman, she is acting like a common one.

In different manners, the two unseemly sisters send the same message: that they are unfit to be married. As Bronwen Wilson has noted, a woman's "still and chaste deportment" was "an analog for her 'bridled tongue.' Her public appearance was interpreted as speech" (104). Thus, the shifting glance and posture of the one sister is the equivalent of the wandering speech of the other. The Chevalier is even more disapproving of hostile feminine speech than he is of frivolous speech. A woman who accuses a notoriously ill-tempered man of loading the dice is publicly insulted and his unsupported slanders stick, while her possibly justified accusations do not (32). In other examples, both a shrew who openly scolds her husband and a jealous wife whose

accusations escalate into a catfight with her supposed rival end up with broken noses (32, 35). Their lack of virtue is not only displayed in the uncontrolled conduct of their bodies, but is finally inscribed on their bodies, with disfiguring marks that destroy what little love their husbands might still have for them.

But this is not to say that Geoffroi condemns all female speech. Several stories clarify his belief that it is sometimes a good woman's duty to speak the right word—but at the right time, and in the right manner. Haman's wife, for instance, "inflamed him and gave him foolish advice" ("l'atise et li donna fol conseil") (138) to pursue his malicious plans, but the Chevalier does not imply that she ought to have held her tongue altogether. On the contrary, "any wise woman must gently and courteously dispel the anger of her lord with sweet words, especially when she sees him stirred up to do anything evil or vile that would dishonor him" ("toute saige femme doit bel et courtoisement oster l'ire de son seigneur par doulces paroles, et espécialement quant elle le voit esmeu de faire aucun mal ou aucun villain fait dont deshonneur"). Haman's wife is contrasted with "Queen Esther, who was a good righteous lady" ("la royne Ester, qui fut bonne dame et juste"), whose diplomatic action of kneeling before the king and praying for justice allows her to save her foster-parent's life and bring retribution upon his false accuser (136-38). Esther's

kneeling posture is deferential, but her speech, however obsequiously phrased, is intended to direct the king's actions—and she succeeds in doing just that.

Depictions of interceding queens became popular in the late middle ages, as Paul Strohm points out. Not only the Biblical Esther but historical queens Philippa and Isabelle of Hainault were depicted in kneeling intercession scenes that may have been apocryphal or at least carefully staged. However, Strohm has serious doubts about just how much actual female rhetorical power was involved here:

I must admit to considerable personal skepticism about whether intercessory queenship, exercised from the margins and conditioned upon exclusion from worldly office, represented a genuinely alternative feminine power. As a formation, it would seem more likely to dupe women than to empower them, more likely to accommodate itself to late medieval ideas of theocratic and patriarchal kingship than to seek their overthrow. The very warmth of its acceptance and breadth of its promulgation by clerics, chroniclers, and other ideological agents of late medieval kingship is itself cause for added suspicion. In the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth centuries, a flood of commentaries, songs, meditations, chronicles, ceremonials, and poems modeled and celebrated female subordination and self-marginalization as a source of characteristically feminine power. (Social 96)

The possibility that feminine intercession is a pretty myth allows us to read the following anecdote on several levels. The Chevalier's own lady is apparently permitted to contradict him; indeed, he seems deliberately to set up a situation where she might do so. The Chevalier, almost certainly playing Devil's Advocate, affects to believe that it is

sometimes permissible for married women to love “par amours,” as long as there is “honor, of which no one can think evil” (“honneur qui mal n’y pense) (247). The situation he appears to advocate is that of having a courtly lover or a sort of *cicisbeo*, in which everyone knows there is no physical consummation. His wife promptly responds that this is the sort of thing men say to get women to do what they want, and that women who listen to such talk will be dishonored, either in fact or by repute; she further points out that the Chevalier rejected a prospective fiancée because of her over-familiar, flirtatious manner, and that woman later was named in a scandal, possibly without cause (247-48). As Anna Dronzek points out, although “in many of the [Chevalier’s] tales a woman’s sexual misbehavior is often only a symptom of her true, nonsexual sin,” the loss of status is repeatedly linked with a loss of chastity: the “damage to a woman’s honor or reputation” is expressed in terms of blemished purity, “although a woman’s original transgression may not have been sexual” (148-49). This is a point the Chevalier has been making all along, but here he allows his wife to make it, in apparent opposition to his own dictum.

This would appear to be one rhetorical battle the Chevalier wants to lose, but as M.Y. Offord posits in his Introduction to Caxton’s English translation, the conversation may never have happened. The Chevalier pretends to advocate the sort of flirtation he indulged in during his youth, but his present opinions are put in the mouth of his wife (xlili). It’s a suspicion others have held: Anne-Marie De Gendt wonders, “Faut-il alors conclure, comme le fait [Sidney] Painter, que ‘the ideas put in the lady’s mouth were those of La Tour Landry?’” After acknowledging that the point of view and mode of expression are certainly similar to the Chevalier’s previous idea, De Gendt has to ask

whether “la parole de la dame ne serait-elle *rien de plus* qu'un substitut à celle de l'auteur?” (“Plusieurs” 124) Cynthia Ho goes so far as to refer to the “pseudo-wife” (116). If the wife is, as many speculate, merely a literary construct to voice the arguments against “fin’ amor,” then it is fascinating that the Chevalier deliberately chooses to present the proper view of courtly flirtations--that they are never acceptable--by having his “wife” correct him when he is wrong! The implication is that sexual chastity is the one arena in which a woman is permitted to speak in a critical, rather than deferential tone, towards a man.

Granted, the teaching of sexual chastity is considered the mother’s territory (De Gendt “Plusieurs” 125), but as Ho points out, the entire conversation occurred in the past, when Madame de la Tour was still alive. The Chevalier is reminding his daughters of a conversation that supposedly took place when they were physically present, but perhaps too young to understand or remember (113-14). We have, in short, only his version of events to go on. Whether Geoffroi is reporting his wife’s words accurately or not, it is only his voice the daughters can hear now. In any case, Strohm’s suspicions about the spurious nature of “interceding woman” scenes are not unfounded, although this particular episode is given a certain amount of realism in that Madame de la Tour is represented not as kneeling and pleading, but as answering her husband in a fairly spirited manner.

The contradiction here is endemic of the book as a whole: upbraiding one’s husband is insolent and the cause of broken noses—except when it is the admirable proof of chastity. Fasting is the key to salvation—except that a woman who fasted and never confessed was damned. Chastity is all-important—except that loose women who repent

are saved, and women who never actually committed fornication or adultery die under unpleasant circumstances that hint at an unpleasant afterlife. What, after all, does the Chevalier consider virtue? What does he consider noble behavior, which is here linked to virtue? The Livre is a book that constantly shifts its argument. Appearance is everything: women who are “blamed” (i.e., imputed with unchastity) need only be guilty of quarreling or levity, and the imputations will stick (something Dronzek has also observed [147]). Appearance is nothing: the woman whose neighbors all thought her a saint is damned for secretly avoiding confession of her sin. Chastity is everything: lascivious women are drowned or stabbed to death. Chastity is not everything: women who arrange meetings with their lovers can be saved by their pious practices. Feminine silence is everything: women who argue with their husbands or even with friends who cheat at cards end up with broken noses and ruined reputations. Feminine silence is not everything: Haman’s wife is reproached as much for not discouraging his vendetta as she is for encouraging it, and the Chevalier’s lady is apparently free to contradict his (probably facetious) advice to his daughters that paramours or flirting with suitors may be acceptable. It is no wonder the Chevalier is concerned that his daughters may be unable to distinguish good from evil, for his slippery text regularly evades his own control despite his greater maturity and experience. One might blame his clerical compilers for inconsistencies: Offord notes that the Chevalier’s anecdotes are “fluent and lively,” while the “more didactic portions of the book,” the ones showing the clearest priestly influence, “tend to be clumsier in expression and verbose” (xxxix). Nevertheless, the

Chevalier had the final say on what went into his Livre, and if he was a careless editor who allowed his clerics' moral viewpoint to contradict his own, the responsibility for allowing these opinions to be expressed in his name is still his.

For the Chevalier, appearances do count. He does not go so far as to say that they replace substance, but he makes it clear that appearances can override substance: the girl he was encouraged to marry suffered the loss of her reputation, possibly without having committed any actual offense against chastity, and Haman's Wife, who should have been more gentle and forgiving than her husband, was destroyed for failing to speak the soothing words that might have calmed his anger and deterred him. The first girl is easily believed to be unchaste because she is known to speak too freely; Haman's wife is blamed for not speaking when she should. Just as an inappropriate presence or absence of speech implies culpability in other areas, an inappropriate presence or absence of physical movement implies a general lack of virtue: one woman is blackballed as a possible wife for twitching and looking about too much; other women are seduced, disgraced, disfigured, or even killed after habitually omitting to walk to church and get on their knees. Some of the women who have not been perfectly chaste are eventually saved because their devotions included the physical: praying aloud, fasting, hearing masses said. All virtue is performed: by the presence of modest speech or respectable silence, by the physical act of kneeling and praying, or by an absence of fidgeting and gawking in all directions.

Moreover, retribution for female sins is also physicalized. As Dronzek notes, the "death or permanent physical disfigurement" inscribes "the recognition of the errors of her ways...directly upon the fictional woman's body, where the book's audience can read

it” (146). Increase in virtue is physicalized as well: the tarnished plate in the repentant woman’s vision, representing the stains on her soul, “serves as something tangible that women, with their physical natures, can comprehend, leading them to understand the concept of sin’s impact upon the soul more easily than abstract discussion.” Dronzek argues that it is a deliberate part of the Chevalier’s pedagogy to give his daughters and readers “something tangible, something that appeals to the physical senses that govern them” (144).

Is the Chevalier concerned only with what “seems,” rather than with what “is”? The Chevalier might know well enough what the meaning of “is” is, but he appears to posit that God, like the suitors and husbands in the Chevalier’s exempla, can only judge by what He sees. Cynthia Ho calls prayer “the act of linguistic submission to God’s will. A maiden’s obediently suitable use of communication with God will set the pattern for the relationship with her husband since prayerful dedication restrains unbound female language and guides it to appropriate avenues of expression. In Landry’s tales, subjugation of female language practically prevents uncontrolled action” (107). However, private prayer is also a moment during which a woman is alone before God, and males, whether father, husband, or priest, are excluded. She may internalize devotional and conduct manuals in ways that the male authors never foresaw. As Anne Clark Bartlett comments, “Even in the most misogynistic of texts, the intrusion of an alternative set of conventions challenges the totality of a narrative’s antifeminism” (146).

But perhaps the real issue is Geoffroi’s hard practical knowledge of how the marriage mart works. He has heard gossip about women losing their reputations on the flimsiest of rumors; his own engagement fell through at a hint that his fiancée was over-

demonstrative, if not actually promiscuous. Possibly, the Chevalier is really not terribly concerned with the sort of moralizing his clerical compilers have thrown in: he has the more immediate concern of getting his daughters married off. Despite his many arguments against courtly love, as De Gendt points out, he refrains from direct criticism of more powerful nobles of his acquaintance who were notorious for engaging in such dalliance: "...aux yeux d'un membre de la petite noblesse tel que le Chevalier de la Tour Landry, la classe des grands seigneurs est dotée d'une quasi-inviolabilité. La critique violente des abus de l'amour courtois, l'un des motifs-clef du Livre, ne touche pas vraiment les grands de ce monde" ("Gens" 8-10). His own family is not so well-established that it can swallow a scandal and still seem an attractive connection:

Geoffroi IV de la Tour Landry appartient à une famille aux origines modestes. Le fondateur de la dynastie fut un certain Landricus Dunensis, qui donna son nom au château qu'il fit construire dans l'ancienne province d'Anjou. Ses descendants ne se distinguaient en rien des autres seigneurs angevins. Cela changea lorsque Geoffroi III de la Tour Landry épousa la fille d'un grand seigneur voisin, Olive de Belleville. Notre auteur [est le] petit-fils de ce couple. (6)

In other words, one fortuitous marriage had put this family on the map, and a bad marriage, or a scandal preventing marriage, could take it off again. In the end, the quest to behave nobly, to marry into the nobility, means not behaving as the nobility do. The Chevalier doesn't want a parcel of unmarried, scandal-ridden daughters left on his hands. To do him justice, as Ho concedes, "His love for her daughters and his desire to protect them from harm are unmistakable" (101). He also doesn't want to visit any married daughters only to find that they are battered wives, or at least neglected by

husbands whom they alienated with scolding or cheap behavior. The Chevalier is not in the business of trying to reform the inequities of marriage; he merely wants to secure his daughters the best chance of security and comfort within it. Hell may be the ultimate consequence of bad behavior, but a miserable life will be the initial one. Geoffroi concentrates on simple physical conduct and physical results, because these will have the most immediate consequences for his daughters. Insincerity or hypocrisy flit briefly across his radar, but these have physical solutions also: the woman concealing her sin must confess with her lips and fast with her body. Women with salacious intentions are eventually saved by physical devotions, fasting and daily prayers that bring miraculous interventions so their immoral plans are not carried out.

Since God presumably “knoweth the hearts” of his creatures (Acts 15:8), and will be the one to witness whether the readers of the Chevalier’s book carry out his precepts, which the Chevalier cannot, one is left to speculate about several possibilities: 1) that the Chevalier believes having a good intention is worthless if one has made a bad impression (like the Chevalier’s near-fiancée, who was disgraced, whether justly or no); 2) that having a bad intention is no barrier to creating a good impression (on Divine viewers as well as human) like the unchaste women who are finally saved by their prayerful practices; or, 3) that the performance of virtue creates more virtue, and the women who fast, pray, speak demurely, and keep their gaze steady and modest are not merely displaying signs of inner virtue, but augmenting it, something that will eventually affect their intentions in a positive way. It is my belief that the Chevalier holds with the last: the purpose of his book is to teach women *how* they should perform and create that virtue. His exempla are scripts telling his readers the stage directions they must follow,

the lines they must utter, if they wish to be cast as good women, and which they must eschew lest they be cast--and permanently typecast--as sinners. Geoffroi cannot guarantee that following the script of virtue will bring his daughters husbands who are either noble or nice, but he is fairly certain that following the script of vice will bring them neglect, abuse, indigence, and social isolation, for he has seen these negative results.

In the apparent inconsistencies centering on speech and movement, the part good women must play is revealed to be no stock character, but a complex and demanding role. But if she can play it well enough, the Chevalier indicates that she can exert substantial control over her household, her children, and even, subtly, her husband. How else can the Chevalier make marriage seem attractive after all this talk of broken noses and unfaithful husbands? He implies that if his daughters are virtuous—if they carry out his programs of prayers and fasting, if they can refrain from fidgeting or nagging—one day, they will be able to contradict their husbands in front of their children...in the name of virtue. The eventual goal of all this deference is power.

At least, the Chevalier would like his readers to think so.

* * *

Whatever the Chevalier's intentions, the tone of his book seems remarkably punitive compared to the c. 1393 Ménagier de Paris (translated into English as The Goodman of Paris). From the first, the Ménagier takes a more cooperative attitude towards his putative reader, ostensibly his much-younger wife, appealing to her desire to please rather than her fear of bodily harm. "...[a]ll that I know you have done since we were wed until now and all that you shall do hereafter with good intent, was and is to my

liking, pleaseth me, and has well pleased me, and will please me” he assures her, “[f]or your youth excuses your unwisdom and will still excuse you in all things *as long as all you do is done with good intent*” (“...tout quanques je sçay que vous aiez fait puis que nous fusmes mariés jusques cy et tout quanques vous ferez en bonne intention m’a esté et est bon et me plaist et me’a bien pleu et plaira.... Car vostre jeunesse vous excuse d’estre bien saige et vous excusera encoures de toutes chose que vous ferez en intention de faire bien et sans mon desplaisir” (Power 42, emphasis added) (Ménagier I. 2). The contrast between his amiable manner and the Chevalier’s castigatory one was noted by Janet Ferrier (88 fn 13), but let us hesitate before assuming that this is solely the result of what Nicole Crossley-Holland termed the Ménagier’s “gentleness and erudition” (1). Gentle and erudite he may have been, but there is also considerable proof that he knew something about persuasive rhetoric, and guessed that the high-handed approach used by Geoffroi de la Tour might not be the best way to get the results he wanted.

His instructions to his wife contain physical directions, but he is far more concerned that she maintain the proper state of mind while carrying out these physical directions than the Chevalier (who appears to suppose that going through the motions of early-morning piety or marital obedience can eventually tame those of a naturally slothful or rebellious inclination). The Ménagier’s wife, like the Chevalier’s daughters, is to wake early and pray. But the Ménagier does not “mean that you, dear sister, nor married women, should rise at this hour,” in the sense of dressing and beginning a normal day; she is to “pray and praise Our Lord with some intercession, prayer or orison before going to sleep again” (“...non mie pour ce que je vueille dire que vous, belle seur, ne les femmes qui sont mariées, vous doiez lever à celle heure.saluez Nostre Seigneur

d'aucun salut, prière ou oraison avant ce que vous vous redormez”) (Powers 47)

(Ménagier I. 10). At this point, no mention is made of bodily posture, and one might suppose that the woman might say her prayers in her bed and simply roll over when she is done. The four prayers the Ménagier gives, however, are a little more complicated than a memorized Pater Noster or Ave, and would probably necessitate lighting a candle and sitting up to read. But the emphasis is on her thoughts: the woman is to pray that not only that she avoid danger and sin, but that her thoughts “be set to keep Thy holy laws and to do Thy holy will” (“...adrecée à ta sainte justice et voulté faire” (Powers 49) (Ménagier I. 11). Her body is not a rebellious subject over which she must keep constant watch, but a servant cooperating in her duty to God, whom she prays to give “my body strength and my soul health, enduing me with the will to do what is right, and to live justly in this world, and not to fail” (“...me donne santé d’âme et de corps, donne moy voulté de bien faire, en ce siècle vivre justmement et bien per sévérer” (Powers 48) (Ménagier I. 11). Rather than beating down her body with fasting to make it comply, she is to draw upon its vigor to allow her to follow God’s will. Indeed, her bodily senses are to be a conduit to experience and praise the glory of God and his saints, for she begs the Virgin Mary to compensate for her own physical failure in death:

...when in the hour when my eyes shall be so heavy with the darkness of death
that I cannot see the brightness of this world, nor move my tongue to pray or call
to thee, when my frail heart that is so faint shall tremble from fear of the enemies
of hell and shall be so stricken that all my limbs shall melt away in sweat from the

agony of death, then, sweet and piteous Lady, deign to look upon me with compassion and aid me that I may see with thee the company of angels.... (Powers 49)

[en icelle heure que mes yeulx seront si aggravés de l'obscurité de la mort que je ne pourray veoir la clarté de ce siècle, ne ne pourray mouvoir la langue pour toy prier ne pour toy appeller et que mon chiétif cuer qui est si foible tremblera pour la paour des ennemis d'enfer et sera si angoisseusement esbahis que tous les membres de mon corps de fondrant en sueur pour la peine de l'angoisse de la mort, lors, dame treès douce et très piteuse, me daignes regarder en pitié et moy aidier à voir avec toy la compagnie des anges.... (Ménagier I. 12)]

Only at the last third of this prayer does the Ménagier have her say, "I clasp my hands and lift up mine eyes and bend my knee before thee" ("Je joing mes mains et eslieve mes yeulx et fléchis mes genoulz devant toy") (Powers 49) (Ménagier I. 12), which may have proven an awkward business the first time she read this prayer if she happened not to be doing anything of the kind. But the mention of posture here is either an afterthought or just an assumption that she would at least get out of bed long enough to say her prayers kneeling, even if she intended to go back to sleep. To the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, posture could be neither an afterthought nor an assumption: it would be mentioned before anything else.

Likewise, when the Ménagier mentions fasting, he does not refer to aching heads or sneaking soup before Mass. The wife is to "give up eating and drinking even a little, at night or vespers" ("vous vous désister de boire ou mangier à nuit ou vespre, se très

petit non”) but even this is merely a tool to aid her mental concentration: “take your mind from all earthly and worldly thoughts,” the *Ménagier* counsels, and “think of nothing but hearing mass at an early hour on the morrow, and after this of accounting to your confessor for your sins, in a good, thoughtful and modest confession” (“...vous ostez de toutes pensées terriennes et mondaines...et ne pensez à riens fors à demain bien matin oïr vostre messe, et après ce rendre compte à vostre confesseur de tous vos péchiés par bonne, meure et attempée confession”) (Powers 54) (*Ménagier* I. 17). Both men and women should learn to control their thoughts when the mass begins:

at ...[this] point should every man and every woman, restrain their thoughts and think of no worldly thing they may have erewhile seen or heard, for when men and women be at church to hear divine service, their hearts should not be at home or in their fields, nor in any other things of this world, and they should not think of temporal things, but of God, in purity, singleness and sincerity, and should pray devoutly to Him. (Powers 54-55)

[...ouquel endroit doit lors chascun homs et chascune femme refraindre ses pensées endroit lui et qu’il ne pense à chose mondaine qu’il ait oncques mais veue ne oye, car quant li homs ou la femme est au moustier pour oïr le service divin, son cuer ne doit mie estre en sa maison ne ès champs, ne ès autres choses mondaines et si ne doit mie penser ès choses temporelles, mais à Dieu proprement, seulement et nuement, et à lui prier dévotement. (*Ménagier* I. 17)]

Physical direction, when it does come, is merely to reinforce and display inner respect, for during the gospel “everyone should be silent and stand upright, and set his

heart to hear and mark what the Gospel saith, for these are the very words that our Lord spake with His lips” (“se doit chascun taire et soy tenir droit, mettre s’entente à oïr et retenir ce que l’Euvangille dit, car ce sont les propres paroles que Nostre Seigneur dist de sa bouche”) (Powers 56) (Ménagier I. 18-19). The important body here is the Lord’s, not the parishioner’s. When the Ménagier returns his attention to human bodies, the wife is not directed to see her body as an enemy of virtue, but to pray for “peace between body and soul, that the body may be obedient to the soul” (“....paix entre le corps et l’âme, que le corps soit obéissant à l’âme”) (Powers 57) (Ménagier I. 20). His tone is far more optimistic than Geoffroi de la Tour’s; the Chevalier seems to regard the body as refractory enough, even with the infinite mercy of God.

The contrast between this implicit tolerance of humanity’s physical nature, and the Chevalier’s rather resentful attitude—as if the body were a recalcitrant beast to be whipped or starved into submission, like a horse or a hawk—is telling. The Chevalier frequently writes as if women scarcely had souls to which he might appeal, and only the threat of physical damage can move them. The Ménagier writes as if physical⁶ compliance without the cooperation of the soul is meaningless. Indeed, he writes that “contrition demands sorrow of heart in deep agony and repentance” (“....contrition requiert douleur de cuer engrans gémissens et repentances”) (Powers 58) (Ménagier I. 21). Let us recall that Geoffroi has told of a lady whose secret, *unconfessed* sin, though she clearly repents and strives to make amends, eventually damns her. The Ménagier, however, stipulates that confessing sin and saying the prayers of the recommended penance will not save a sinner who secretly feels no remorse: “The sinner must know that without contrition his prayer is unavailing, since he has his mind and heart

elsewhere” (“Et sache le pécheur que sans contrition sa prière ne vault riens, puis qu’il ait sa pensée et son cuer ailleurs”) (Powers 58) (Ménagier I. 21). Someone who confesses merely out of habit or to avoid gossip cannot be absolved. In short, appearances are not everything with the Ménagier.

Despite his emphasis on inner life, the Ménagier does not entirely neglect the importance of body language in piety. The wife is to pray before an image or altar “without moving hither and thither, nor going to and fro, and hold your head upright and keep your lips ever moving saying orisons and prayers” (“....sans changer divers lieux, ne aler çà ne là, et aiez la teste droite et les bolièvres tousjours mouvans en disant oraisons ou prières”) (Powers 52) (Ménagier I. 15-16). But control over her gestures and glance are only the beginning of controlling her mental focus: “keep your glance continually on your book or on the face of the image, without looking at man or woman, picture or else, and without hypocrisy or feint, keep your thoughts always on heaven and pray with your whole heart” (“Aiez aussie continuellement vostre regart sur vostre livre ou au visaige de l’image sans regarder homme ne femme, peinture ne autre chose, et sans papelardie ou fiction, ayez le cuer au ciel et aourez de tout vostre cuer”) (Powers 52) (Ménagier I. 16). The Ménagier can see if she shifts her gaze or fidgets in church, but he cannot see if she is privately thinking about hot soup or going back to bed, as the slothful women in the Chevalier’s stories have done. He seems to rely on her own restraint of such impulses, for he also does not add the Chevalier’s warnings of external harm should she fail: that she will lose an eye or have a broken nose or be drowned. Rather, he tells her of the benefits that will accrue to her if she complies: “honour will befall you and all

good will come unto you” (“....honneur vous sourdra et tout bien vous vendra” (Powers 52) (Ménagier I. 16).

As she makes her way to church, the wife is counseled to use appropriate controls of posture and gaze: “...bear your head straight, keep your eyelids lowered and still and look straight before you about four rods ahead and upon the ground, without looking nor turning your gaze upon any man or woman to right or to left, nor looking up, nor glancing from place to place, nor laughing, nor stopping to speak to anyone in the road” (“....en alant ayant la teste droite, les paupières basses et arrestées et la veue droit devant vous quatre toises et bas à terre, sans regarder ou espandre vostres regard à homme ne à femme qui soit à destre ou à senestre, ne regarder ahult, ne vostre regard changer en divers lieux muablement, ne rire, ne arrester à parler à aucun sur les rues”) (Powers 52) (Ménagier I.15). These are essentially the same physical elements the Chevalier found defective in the two uncouth sisters in his story and in his own prospective bride. As Kim Phillips notes, “Looseness of posture in the head, neck and shoulders and flighty gaze are read as looseness of character in a woman” (“Bodily Walls” 190). In the cases the Chevalier mentions, however, improper gestures serve to alienate and distance desirable social connections, for all three women lose their suitors. The scenario the Ménagier describes implies that inappropriate gesture bears the risk of inviting *undesirable* social connections. In the passage immediately preceding the one on gesture and glance, he counsels his wife to “flee suspicious company and never go near any suspected woman, or suffer one to be in your company” (“....fuyez compaignie souspeçonneuse et jamais femme souspeçonneuse ne approachiez, ne ne souffrez en vostre compaignie”) (Powers 52) (Ménagier 15). The Chevalier, according to Phillips, is concerned with a “level and

firm gaze” as a sort of “bodily wall, where a flighty and curious gaze opened a bodily window in interaction with men, inviting improper intimacy” (“Bodily Walls” 191). The improper intimacy to which the Ménagier alerts his wife is one with unsavory women, rather than with amorous men. Unlike the Chevalier’s daughters, she is in no *immediate* danger of losing a suitor, but she can still lose her reputation—and, as the Ménagier mentions elsewhere, if he dies before his much-younger wife, she may want to marry again (42). A lost reputation could diminish her chances of a second marriage.

While women who lose their reputations in the Chevalier’s book generally lose their husband’s love and possibly an eye as well, the Ménagier tells some surprising tales of husbands’ efforts to protect their wives from the worst consequences of their sins. One husband refuses to hear which of three children was fathered by another man, lest he love the child less than the other two (184); another sends his runaway wife the stage props of pilgrimage, sackcloth and cockle-shells, so they can maintain the fiction that she has returned from Compostella and not from an adulterous liaison; he even announces that the pilgrimage was the fulfillment of his father’s deathbed request, lest anyone suspect his wife has sufficient cause to go on pilgrimage as a form of penance (185-86). The Ménagier’s endorsement of such husbandly benevolence should not make the reader assume that the Ménagier would be equally benevolent under such trying circumstances, but his recounting of the story allows him to paint a kindly and forgiving persona for himself.

The Ménagier is not making a case for exploiting the patience of hen-pecked husbands, here: what he seems to advocate is reciprocity, for a wronged wife in another story demonstrates at least as much self-restraint. Discovering that her husband’s

mistress lives in a poor and comfortless hovel, Jehanne de la Quintine offers the girl firewood and warm bed-linens, “that you and I together should care for him in health, rather than that I alone should care for him in sickness” (“j’ai plus chier que vous et moy le gardions en santé que je seule le gardasse malade” (Powers 190) (Ménagier I. 238]), and requests only that the girl promise to hide the arrangement from everyone including the husband. After accusing his mistress of acquiring these luxuries through some unsavory means, Thomas Quentin does learn the truth. He does not confront his wife, nor does she confront him, but after hearing mass and confessing his sins, he returns to his wife, vowing to be faithful. “And thus did his wife reclaim him by subtlety” comments the Ménagier (“Et ainsi le trahi sa femme par subtilleté”) (Powers 191) (Ménagier I. 239); he admiringly notes that Jehanne’s actions saved both her husband’s reputation and her own.

Here is where the disconnect between appearance and reality exposes the troubling inconsistencies in the tale. On the surface, the wife in the story is another medieval doormat like patient Griselda, in this case tolerating her husband’s infidelity and worrying only for his ill health and lack of creature comfort (although she does let slip her suspicion that should he fall ill, she will be left to nurse him alone). When the Ménagier refers to her “subtlety,” he might as well say “manipulation” or even “hypocrisy,” for when the wife enjoins the mistress to secrecy, she may well have the expectation that the husband will learn the truth sooner or later. The wife has in no way uttered a lie, but she has put the mistress in a position where *she* must utter one: either lying about where the new furnishings originated (and letting the husband suspect she has another man keeping her), or revealing the truth, breaking her agreement to keep the

wife's secret, and thus rendering that agreement a lie. In either case, the wife is giving a false impression (pretending to be unaware), forcing her husband to realize that she is giving a false impression (since the wife clearly is aware), forcing the mistress to choose between telling one lie and telling another, and forcing Thomas to realize that he is also giving a false impression both in his ménage with his mistress and in his reluctance to confront his wife. To make all well, the wife must maintain the fiction that all is well, while compelling the husband to recognize that all is not, in fact, well. Her conciliatory words to the mistress and unruffled demeanor to the husband simultaneously mask and draw attention to her feelings, which, however, the *Ménagier* never discloses. We know only that she “bore with [the affair] and suffered it very patiently” (“...le tolléra icelle dame Jehanne et le souffri moult patiemment”) (Powers 189) (*Ménagier* I. 237). Is her patience a subtle way of terminating the affair without directly confronting anyone? Only a knowledge of human nature allows the reader to assume that she may have had very strong objections indeed; for the *Ménagier*'s purpose, performance for once supersedes inner thoughts. What is clear, however, is that she, like the husband who pretends his wife has been on pilgrimage, proceeds as she does to avoid an open disruption. Preserving an appearance of the status quo can be the best means of restoring the status quo.

However important it may be to keep social stability, the *Ménagier* includes that most famous (and discouraging) medieval example of marrying up, the story of patient Griselda. The *Ménagier*'s version of the story would seem, at first, only to emphasize his concern with the intersection, even synonymy of inward thought and outward actions: Walter asks his prospective wife if she can respond to any of his actions “without

argument or contradiction...either in word or deed, in sign or thought” (“sans résonance ne contredit par toy...en signe ne en pensée”) (Powers 118) (Ménagier I. 105). The story has a far more interesting theme, and that is how to deal with a superior who is not merely cruel and unreasonable, but also clearly incompetent, and the solution involves a kind of Orwellian double-think. Griselda’s triumph involves a performance of obliviousness that far excels Jehanne de la Quentine’s; Griselda must never show or even entertain the awareness that she can do her husband’s job much better than he. The performance is particularly tricky since all spectators recognize that particular fact well enough. Griselda cannot go to them behind her husband’s back to form a pact, as Jehanne did, that would allow her to keep things running smoothly offstage while flattering Walter’s ego in public, unless she reveals her consciousness of his deficiency to these spectators and thus to herself.

The Ménagier’s retelling of Griselda’s story is remarkable not only for the disclaimer that follows it, “I am not so foolish, so overweening nor of so small sense that I know not well that ’tis not for me to assault nor to assay you thus” (“je ne suis si fol, si outrecuidié, ne si jeune de sens, que je ne doie bien savoir que ce n’appartient pas à moy de vous faire tels assaulx, ne essais”) (Powers 137) (Ménagier I. 125-26), but for the details establishing Griselda’s ability to govern subjects as compared to her husband’s. At the beginning of the story, we are told that Walter “much loved solitude, and considered not the time to come, and by no means would he marry. All his joy and delight was in rivers and woods, in hounds and birds, and he took no thought for the government of his signory” (“il amoit fort solitude et n’acentoit riens au temps à venir, ne en nulle manière ne vouloit pour lui mairage. Toute sa joye et plaisance estoit en rivières,

en bois, en chiens et en oyseaulx, et peu s'entremettoit du gouvernement de sa seigneurie”) (Powers 113) (Ménagier I. 100). A ruler cannot afford to love solitude, except from a distance: as Geoffroi de Charny has pointed out, he must be available to answer the concerns of his inferiors and reassure them when necessary (Kaeuper and Kennedy 143). He cannot ignore the “time to come,” when his people will need his heir to govern them, because he happens to be too busy hunting and fishing to marry. When Walter’s mistreatment of Griselda is at its most extreme, the people “held him in hatred” (Powers 127) (“ils le prenoient en haine”) (Ménagier I. 115), and only a few sycophants show Walter any approval (Powers 133).

Griselda, on the other hand, is described as appeasing nobles “when there arose debate and discord among [them]” (“quat le cas li offroit des débas et discors”), using her “fair words, ripe judgment and good equity” (“ses doulces paroles, par si bon jugement et si bonne équité”) with such skill that “all with one voice said that this lady had been sent them by heaven for the salvation of the people” (“tous à une voix disoient que pour le salut de la chose publique ceste dame leur avoit esté envoyée par provision célestielle”). Far from maintaining humble silence or sequestering herself to spin, she “wisely and diligently busied herself...with public affairs” (“de la chose publique sagement et diligemment s’entremettoit”). (Note that the same phrase, “la chose publique,” is used to refer both to the earthly “public affairs” and the celestial “salvation.”) The fact that she does this “at the behest of her lord and in his presence” (“aux commandemens et en la présence de son seigneur”) (Powers 120) (Ménagier I. 107), merely glosses over the pertinent quality here, and it is *not* obedience. The Ménagier’s Griselda is not merely patient beyond description, but extraordinarily tactful for never pointing out what every

character in the story clearly knows: that she is the better ruler of the two. She does not appear even to realize it. The *Ménagier* refers to the “sorrowful thoughts ...this lady [must] have hid in her heart, remembering the foul death of her daughter and that the like was ordained for her only son of two years old” (“quelles douloureuses admiracions peut avoit ceste dame en son cuer, en recordant la vilaine mort de sa fille, et que de son seul fils de l’age de deux ans la mort estoit déterminé” (Powers 124) (*Ménagier* I. 112), but there is never any mention of her hiding rancor or rage in her heart—unless the word “vilaine” is indicative of her real opinion of the man responsible for her daughter’s supposed death.

She is also remarkably lacking in ambition, for the conditions Walter has created in his signory are ideal for staging a coup. Griselda never appears to consider doing what a number of medieval rulers’ wives might do under less onerous circumstances: have Walter assassinated and put their son as a puppet ruler in his stead, while wielding all true power herself. The *Ménagier*, commenting on her serene demeanor (Powers refers to her “cheer,” but the original uses the word “courage,” a word that encompasses inner feelings and visible demeanor [cf. Hindley-Langley “corage”]), observes that “all could see that in these two persons there was but one mind, the which mind and will was chiefly the husband’s” (“nul ne poivoit appercevoir que en icelles deux personnes eust que un courage, lequel courage et voulté principalement estoit du mary”) (Powers 126) (*Ménagier* 114). The marquis has already shown that any common sense in his ménage originates in his wife, and even if “courage” is translated as “heart,” its cognate, the marquis has also amply demonstrated that he does not have one. Thus, any heart or mind

that he and Griselda share came into his possession as would a dowry, and is only “his” through marital property rights. Without her, he cannot rule effectively; without him, she could probably rule very effectively indeed.

The nobles who sorrowfully escort her back to her father’s house (130-31), could very easily be turned into a vengeful mob with a few choice words—and the Ménagier has already established Griselda’s rhetorical skill. But Griselda uses her few choice words to assuage the crowd’s wrath rather than fanning it—turning it to her advantage. She begs them not to criticize Walter’s actions. Were she to say nothing at all, their resentment might still bubble over into rebellion: recollect that when Walter’s new marriage is announced, “all the people of the country murmured against the nuptials of the marquis” (“toutes les gens du païs murmuroient des nopces du marquis”) (Powers 131) (Ménagier I. 119), for this is during the period when Griselda is exiled to her father’s house, and is *not* in a position to address the people and calm their wrath.

Griselda’s virtue, then, is not to suffer in silence, but to suffer with the right words, words that divert hostility away from the asinine Walter, a man who would rather torture his wife and exile his own children than run his local government. Griselda’s peace-weaving is the sort described by Kim Phillips in Medieval Maidens as a wife’s “virtuoso performance of active docility” (13). Griselda not only saves Walter’s reputation (as she has earlier done when she settles the Barons’ disputes while allowing Walter to save face and take all the credit), but possibly saves his life. Griselda’s speech

protects Walter from the effects of his own incompetence, but only because his incompetence is the one thing she does *not* mention. Rather, her speech emphasizes submission, inward and outward:

...she turned her to the lords, ladies and maidens that had accompanied her...and said and showed to them by fair, soft words how that for the love of God they should not say, or think, or believe that her lord the marquis had done her any wrong, and that it was not so, but that he had good cause to do all that he pleased with her, that was bound to suffer and bear it. (Powers 130-31)

[...se retourna devers les chevaliers, dames et damoiselles qui l'avoient acompaignée...et leur dist et monstra par belles et doulces paroles que pour Dieu elles ne vouldissent ne dire, ne penser, ne croire que son seigneur le marquis eust aucunement tort vers elle, qu'il n'estoit mie ainsi. mais avoit bonne cause de faire tout ce qu'il luy plaisoit d'elle qui bien estoit tenue de le souffrir et endurer. (Ménagier I. 118-19)]

Griselda's obedience may not be nearly as remarkable as her ability to keep order. A grumbling crowd unhappy with a ruler is usually a recipe for social disruption, but Griselda's submissive persona allows her to do what her husband cannot: maintain control of the populace.

Although he lauds Griselda's legendary virtues, the Ménagier yet acknowledges that they are indeed but a legend. As his own credulity is sometimes stretched when it comes to household remedies (cf. the advice on removing stains, Power 215), he has no wish to strain his wife's credulity; regarding Griselda's story, he bluntly advises her,

“And wot you that it never befel so....” (“Et croy ce ne fust oncques vray”). The story is nevertheless a part of the culture his wife will be expected to know: “And I would that since others have seen it, you should also see and *know how to talk about all things*, like to the others” “Et désire bien que puisque autres l’ont veue, que aussi vous la véez et sachiez de tout parler comme les autres”) (Powers 137-38, emphasis added) (Ménagier I.126). The story of Griselda is apparently meant to contribute to his wife’s conversational powers.

Like the Chevalier’s daughters, the Ménagier’s wife is given the lesson that docility performed well leads to the actual, if covert, exercise of power. Griselda’s physical performance of submissive virtue, even her apparently heartfelt *belief* in that role, barely mask the fact that she, not Walter, is running the country. If not a signory, at least it is a fairly complex household that the Ménagier’s young wife will be running: indeed, it is Griselda’s managerial power rather than her surreal patience that the wife will most need in her new position. Unlike the lady in the Chevalier’s story who fraternized excessively with servants instead of properly sequestering herself with her husband, the Ménagier’s wife must deal with servants frequently, even affectionately, but without consorting with them as an equal. She must avoid an overly-ingratiating servant as much as an insolent one, and seek rather a docile one:

...if you engage a maid or man of high and proud answers, you shall know that when she leaveth she will miscall you if she can; and if, on the contrary, she be flattering and full of blandishments, trust her not, for she seketh in some other way to trick you; but if she blushes and is silent and shamefast when you correct her, love her as your daughter. (Powers 209)

[...se vous prenez chamberière ou varlet de haultes responses et fières, sachiez que au départir, s'elle peut, elle vous fera injure; et se elle n'est mie telle, mais flateresse et use de blandices, ne vous y fiez point, car elle bée en aucune autre partie à vous trichier; mais se elle rougist et taisant et vergongneuse quant vous la corrigerez, amez la comme vostre fille. (Ménagier II. 58-59)]

Her proximity to domestic and temporary workers must not deceive her into thinking she may place herself on a level with them without negative consequences. The Ménagier specifically warns her that if she forfeits their respect, the servants will respond to all her commands with excuses instead of action: “‘There is plenty of time,’ ‘It shall be done soon,’ or ‘It shall be done early tomorrow morn’” (Powers 211) (“*il est assez à temps, il sera jà bien fait, ou il sera fait demain bien matin*”) (Ménagier II. 61).

In recruiting and monitoring both seasonal and permanent employees, the Ménagier's wife must look for the same visual and verbal clues that others presumably use to judge her own character. Her responsibilities here cover the Human Resources, Contracts, and Accounts Payable departments of any modern business. Closeting herself with the sort of elaborate devotions the Chevalier described is not an option. Once the employees are hired, her duties shift to those of Middle Management, and she must look for the physical clues in the servants' deportment in order to know how she must act towards them. She is to make sure that servants carry out their responsibilities promptly, that they do not behave in an unseemly manner, cursing or quarreling (Powers 209-211).

Should a servant fall ill, she must visit him personally and devise cures “full lovingly and kindly” (“très amoureusement et charitablement”) (Powers 218-20) (*Ménagier* II. 70-71), at once a mother-substitute and a Corporate Nurse.

The *Ménagier* is less concerned that his wife might fraternize excessively with the servants, as the over-familiar wife in the Chevalier’s story did, than he is that she be able to supervise them properly if she is to hire, fire, and manage them in due season. His wife must know how to assert her authority to make sure that servants are doing their jobs and not behaving inappropriately. The distance she maintains is a social one, not a spatial one, but she can maintain it only if she does not sequester herself. But her speech must be limited and very much to the point.

However, the wife is not to judge her neighbors by external signs nor use these signs to impugn them.⁷ In his guide to confession, the *Ménagier* talks about how the wife should accuse herself if she has sinned against charity. She has never given “aught to the poor, but have held them in shame and despite, and since they appeared to me disfigured and foul, I would not suffer them to approach me, but turned from them so that I might not see them” (“ne pur luy aux povres riens donner, ains les ay eu en desdaing et en despit et pour ce qu’ils me sembloient tous deffigurés et tous puans je ne les laissoie aprouchier de moy, ains me tournoie de l’autre part, afin que je ne les véisse”). The Chevalier is pragmatic about the fact that women are often unjustly faulted for vices of which they may not be guilty, but the *Ménagier* wishes his wife not only to avoid being criticized but to avoid criticizing others for their poverty or ill health and assuming, contrary to Christianity, that their misfortunes are punishment for their sins. The warnings against a lack of inner charity elide into the prohibitions against bearing false

witness against one's neighbor and honoring parents (or, in this case, parental substitutes), for the wife is to guard against gossiping about family members or friends who criticize her: "I have not honoured and revered my friends.... but turned in anger and despite towards those who helped me...blaming them and speaking scandal in their absence; and I have often spoken evilly of them" ("Je n'ay pas porté honneur ne révérence à mes amis.... ains ay eu en indignacion et en despit ceulx qu m'ont ce monstré...et leur en ay mis sus blasme et vilenie grande en derrière d'eulx") (Powers 69) (Ménagier I. 32-33). The Chevalier's sinning women are blamed; the Ménagier discourages his wife from blaming others. The Chevalier's sinning women are objects of scandal; the Ménagier cautions his wife against being the bearer of it. The Chevalier's daughters are warned that their sins will be observed by others; the Ménagier's wife is warned that she can sin in what she observes about others.

Although Claire Sponsler notes that practicing self-government was something the upwardly-mobile reader could use to distinguish herself from her social inferiors (51-52) (inferiors who presumably need to be whipped into shape, literally or verbally, by others), the self-discipline the Ménagier attempts to inculcate actually distinguishes his reader from her putative betters: the Chevalier de la Tour Landry's daughters. The middlebrow Ménagier sounds nowhere near as punitive as the determinedly-aristocratic Chevalier writing for his aristocratic daughters. Many possible reasons for this disparity present themselves, reasons ranging from family roles, to rank, to geography and social milieu. Is the difference one of authority within the family? After all, however submissive a wife must be to her husband, she is not entirely without authority, and the Chevalier recognizes this when he allows his wife's views on courtly love to override his

own. His daughters, on the other hand, are entirely under his rule until their marriages. Their bodies are not only his legal property (as his wife's would be): they owe their existence to him. The body of the *Ménagier's* wife, however, is something he has acquired after she has had time to develop into a fully-formed human being, complete with soul, however desirous of instruction she may now be. His prologue reminds the wife how she asked him "not to correct you harshly before strangers nor before our own folk, but rather each night, or from day to day, in our chamber...and then you would strive to amend yourself according to my teaching.... And your words were pleasing to me" (Powers 41) ("...je ne vous voulsisse mie laidement corriger devant la gent estrange ne devant nostre geut aussy, mais vous corrigasse chascune nuit ou de jour en jour en nostre chambre...et lors vous ne fauldriez point à vous amender selon ma doctrine.... Si ay tenu à grant bien" (*Ménagier* 2). The wife wants to be treated like an adult, not a child; she recognizes that as a grown woman, she is still subordinate to her husband, but does not question the hierarchy. Rather, she wants to advance to the higher position within the hierarchy that her married status would warrant. The *Ménagier* is not threatened by such ambition, because it provides her with a strong motivation to be obedient to him: she would rather be a respected wife than a child who is scolded in public.

Is the difference also one of rank? The Chevalier may feel free to be as harsh as he pleases, since his daughters are clearly beneath him in rank, while the *Ménagier*, unlike his highborn wife, appears to be merely a well-off bourgeois. The *Ménagier* does indeed bring up his lesser rank, first in his prologue (Power 42), and again when giving his famous disclaimer after recounting the story of Patient Griselda (137). In marriage, however, a wife ascends or descends to her husband's rank, and some husbands would

make a point of asserting their prerogatives. The *Ménagier* does not appear to be at all defensive on this point, and continually acknowledges and even assumes his young wife's good intentions.

Is the difference also perhaps a country vs. city mindset? The Chevalier--with his stories of fathers visiting their new-wed daughters and discovering that their marriages are going well or ill--seems to envision a world of far-flung estates where relatives live in such isolation that their circumstances are not known until guests arrive. The *Ménagier*, on the other hand, describes a mercantile world in which his wife will be constantly interacting with tradesmen, beguines, servants, and her own relatives, and he takes for granted the fact that, while she may receive guidance from her family, she will need, on her own, to know how to delegate tasks to servants and how to make sure merchants do not overcharge. The Chevalier, sequestered on his estates like a fourteenth-century Squire Western, can afford to be behind the times and impose his old-fashioned views on his family, using physical discipline just as he would with a horse or a hound (or at least using literary accounts of physical discipline). Perhaps the *Ménagier* and his household are simply adapting to the pace of urban life. When wives must be something closer to business partners than chattel, Geoffroi's feudal viewpoint is both impractical and inappropriate.

One might wonder if the difference is simply one of temperament—if indeed temperament can ever be separated from rank and setting. The *Ménagier* is constantly assuring his wife that he knows she wishes to do her best; Geoffroi, whether he was ever actually physically abusive to either his wife or daughters, recounts his stories of maiming and disfigurement with what seems to be positive relish. One is forced to

wonder if the *Ménagier* is simply a nicer fellow at heart than Geoffroi, whose literary persona can appear rather mean-spirited. In any case, the bodies of Geoffroi's daughters, his stories warn, could be objects of punishment, just as the erring women in his stories are punished through the injuries and scars inscribed on their bodies. Their bodies house souls, but the souls are approached through the body's vulnerability to chastisement or suffering, even self-induced suffering such as fasting or early rising. The *Ménagier*'s most punitive tales involve wives who have pretty well "asked for it" even by modern standards, in one case abandoning the husband to drowning (Power 138-39), in another destroying, in sequence, the husband's favorite fruit tree, his loyal greyhound, and his dinner, all the while intending to commit adultery if he shows no temper at these lesser provocations (162-8). The *Ménagier* certainly anticipates no such misconduct on the part of his wife: her body houses a soul to which her husband continually appeals. He gives her hints on how she can make this body more useful as a tool of piety or chastity, so that it will further protect and strengthen her soul; it is not her enemy, but the "castle which ...[God]... gave us to defend, and [if] we have delivered it unto His enemy, to wit the Devil of hell, what excuse shall we have?" ("le chastel dont il nous avoit baillié la garde et nous l'avons livré à son ennemy, c'est le Déable d'enfer, quelle excusacion arons-nous?") (Powers 60) (*Ménagier* I. 23). Moreover, her cooperation has the double effect of asserting her soul's prerogative over her body and creating greater spiritual intimacy in

her marriage. The Ménagier trusts that his wife's body will carry out the will of her soul; indirectly, that is the will of his own soul, to which her soul is linked both by wedlock and by her own voluntary obedience.

Of course, the young wife is still subject to the influence of her environment: the Ménagier notes that "the women of your lineage be good enough to correct you harshly themselves, if I did not, an [sic] they learnt of your error from me or from another source" ("les femmes de vostre lignaige sont si bonnes que sans moy et par elles mesme seriez-vous asprement corrigée se elles le savoient par moi ou autrement"). But the correction of female relatives is not actually something imposed on her from without; she is encouraged to "[t]ake counsel privily of them, and then follow it either more or less as you please" ("Si vous en conseillez privéement à elles et après leur conseil si en faictes ou plus ou moins selon vostre vouloir") (Powers 42) (Ménagier I. 3). Moreover, although for the violent husbands and punitive kings the Chevalier warns of, the Ménagier (with a few exceptions) generally substitutes the more distant threat of a God who may damn the wife should her virtue be only an outward show, this threat is applied equally to all humans, be they male or female, married or single. The wife is not more subject to this threat than a male sinner, and the Ménagier does not appear to hold that women learn better when presented with examples involving physical threats, which their earthly natures require for comprehension, in the manner Dronzek describes (44-46).

On the contrary, the Ménagier's wife is understood to have an inner life that can rebel against external controls, and must be *persuaded* not to do so, lest she incur God's punishment, which lasts longer than any broken nose. Although her inner life is presumably expressed in her gestures and behavior,⁸ the wife's gestures and behavior

cannot entirely *shape* her inner life, as the Chevalier appears to believe gestures and behavior ought to do. Without inward assent, the Ménagier appears to believe that outward complicity is meaningless. Using his deliberately genial tone, he perhaps increases his chances of gaining both.

The “gentle courtesy and freshness” Crossley-Holland praises in the Ménagier’s book (10) are not just evidence that he was a likable man: I believe he was a highly intelligent one. Although fabliaux had fallen out of fashion towards the end of the fourteenth century (Strohm Hochon’s 135), the elderly husband married to a young and straying wife has always been (and perhaps always will be) the set up for risqué stories: certainly, the Roman de la Rose was still current, and the Jealous Husband character there is so obnoxious that many readers might think he deserves a straying wife. Not wanting to be the punch line to a joke, the Ménagier may have concluded that encouraging his wife to perceive herself as the respected and virtuous mistress of an extensive household, capably directing the arrangement of its linens, its wine cellar, and its servants, beloved by a sweet-tempered husband, was a better setting for fidelity than making her feel like a young victim forced into marriage with a carping old domestic tyrant. This is not to say that the Ménagier was not in actuality a sweet-tempered and loving husband; his

skepticism about the Griselda story points to a man capable of seeing the humorous aspects of this exaggerated legend. But in addition to being a very kind man, he was unquestionably a very smart one.

* * *

As amiable as the Ménagier's tone is towards his high-born wife, compared with the Chevalier's towards his potentially upwardly-mobile daughters, one might expect Christine de Pisan to take an approach towards women in the highest circles, the first class of women she addresses in the 1405 Livre de Trois Vertus, that is still more amiable. One would be wrong. She opens the third of its very short chapters with a merciless tirade directed at, of all people, princesses:

O foolish and ill-advised simpleton, what can you be thinking of? Have you forgotten what you really are? Don't you realize that you are a poor and miserable creature, frail, weak, and subject to all infirmities, passions and diseases and other pains that a mortal body can suffer? What advantage do you have over anyone else? What advantage would a pile of earth covered by finery have over one that was under a poor rag? O pitiful creature given to sin and every vice....
(Lawson 37)

[Ha! fole musarde mal! avisee, que as tu pensee? En petit d'eure avoyes oublié la cognoissance de toy meismes? Ne sces tu que tu es une miserable creature, fresle et subgiecte a toutes enfermtéz, et a toutes passions, maladies et aultres douleurs

que corps mortel puet souffrir? Quel avantage as tu, ne que un aultre? Neant plus
que aroit un tas de terre couvert d'un parement de celui qui seroit soubz une
povre flossoye. Ha! dolente creature encline a pechié et a tout vice! (de Pizan
14)]

These words, which Christine puts into the mouth of Gentle Jesus, are meant to reclaim the high-born lady from the danger of mistaking her surroundings—the soft sheets, the curtsying ladies-in-waiting, the luxurious food and wines, the expensive gowns and jewels—for her essence. If there is anything Christine does *not* appear to want for her reader, it is that exterior and interior be synonymous: one must not only maintain a distance between the privileges of her rank and her innate worth, but between her gestures or even her facial expressions and her actual feelings. Although Christine advocates that interior and exterior correspond where one's Creator is concerned ("above all else you must love and fear Our Lord" ["sur toutes choses vous aduit amer et craindre Nostre Seigneur"]), she advises, promptly adding, "all hearts that love well should show it by good works" ("tout cuer qui bien aime Dieu le demonstre par oeuvre") (Lawson 35-36) (de Pizan 11), where one's fellow creature is concerned, one had better learn to dissimulate, and dissimulate well. This does not entail speaking actual untruths, but exerting a command of face and bearing that will be interpreted by others in a particular way. It is a physical performance of virtue that may equally express inner charity or

conceal suspicion and allow for surveillance. In short, it may reflect and even influence the lady's inner state—but it need not do either, as long as it has the proper effect on her human audience.

Where the lady's divine audience is concerned, Christine is occasionally quite brusque. The lady is to give all her love to God, but that does not mean he gets all of her time (at least, in a direct sense). Unless she is a contemplative, she must show her love of God through acts of charity and mercy, and Christine bluntly states that “this active life has more use in the world than the other one” (“Yceste vie active sert...plus au monde que la devant dicte”) (Lawson 44) (de Pizan 24). She advises against luxurious food and idleness (42), but without the obsessive attention the Chevalier lavishes on these topics. The lady must rise early and pray, but like Queen Jeanne, she must not disturb her ladies-in-waiting in the process (which surely demonstrates more consideration than the pious girl in the Chevalier's tale showed to her groggy sister). As for the elaborate regimens of prayer and fasting mentioned by both the Chevalier and the *Ménagier*, they are impractical for princesses: “Such ladies are more to be excused in the eyes of God if they do not spend so much time in long prayers as those who have more leisure, nor so they have less merit in attending conscientiously to public affairs than those who occupy themselves more with prayers (unless they intend to devote themselves to the contemplative life and leave the active life)” (“telles dames font a excuser plus meismes vers Dieu se tant n'employent de temps en longues oraisons que celles qui plus ont loisir, ne elles n'ont pas moins de merite de bien et justement entendre a la chose publique et au bien de tous a leur pouoir que elles aroyent de plus longuement vaquer en oraisons,

s'ainsi n'estoit que elles vouldissent du tout entendre a la vie contemplative et laisser la vie active") (Lawson 59-60) (de Pizan 48). The lady is rather to show her love of God in her service to the poorest of his creatures.

Interestingly, Christine looks for the most "sincere" performance of virtue when one deals with just such social inferiors. The virtuous woman performs charitable acts: "[s]he goes around to the hospitals, visits the sick and the poor, according to her ability, helps them at her own expense and physical effort for the love of God" ("si cherche les hospitalux, visite les malades et les pauvres, les secourt du sien et de la peine de son corps pour l'amour de Dieu selon son pouvoir"), Christine writes. But sympathy elides into empathy: "She has such great pity for people she sees in sin or misery that she weeps for them as though their distress were her own" (a si grant pitié des creatures que elle voit en pechié ou en misere ou tribulacion, que elle en pleure come de son meisme fait"(Lawson 44) (de Pizan 24). When people show her deference, she must "behave respectably and speak softly; her conduct will be kindly and her expression gentle and pleasant, greeting everyone with lowered eyes" ("Son maintien, son port et son parler sera doulz et benigne, la chiere plaisant a yeulx baissiéz"), and with "words so humane and so sweet that they may be agreeable both to God and to the world" ("en parole tant humaine et tant doulce que agreable soit a Dieu et au monde"). This is not merely a matter of outward form, for she is not to "take any personal delight" ("n'y prendra point de delit") in the honors of her rank, but always to remember its temporary nature and her own mortal frailty (Lawson 47) (de Pizan 29). Although charity was as much a practice necessary to one's own salvation than a matter of compassion in the Middle Ages

(Aquinas, for instance, distinguishes between “almsgiving...done materially without charity” and that done “formally for God’s sake, readily and pleasurably” [362]),

Christine sees little distinction between the two:

Her charity will not only make her feel sorrow when she sees people in affliction, but oblige her to roll up her sleeves and help them as much as she can. And as a wise doctor of the Church says, charity exists in many modes and is not to be understood as helping another person only with money from your purse, but also with help and comfort by your speech and advice.... (Lawson 48)

[...ne lui souffrira mie seulement en avoir la desplaissance de veoir gens en desolacion se elle meismes ne met les mains a la paste de tout son pouoir pour les aidier. Et si que dit un docteur sage: Charité s’estent en plusieurs manieres—et ne s’estent pas seulement que on doye aultrui aidier de l’argent de sa bourse, mais aussi de l’aide et reconfort de sa parole ou de son conseil.... (de Pizan 31)]

Part of the physical performance of charity, interestingly enough, is dressing up, not down, for visits to the sick and poor. Although the princess is to do secret acts of charity through an almoner, she is also to do public ones, partly that she may set an example for others to follow, and partly so the poor and downtrodden may feel their own status enhanced by coming in contact with hers. Christine’s grasp of psychology is very shrewd on this point:

The good princess will never be ashamed to visit hospitals and the poor in all her grandeur, accompanied magnificently, as is fitting. She will speak to the poor and to the sick: she will visit their bedsides and will comfort them sweetly, making

her excellent and welcome gift of alms. For poor people are much more comforted and accept with more pleasure the kind word, the visit, and the comfort of a great and powerful person than of someone else. The reason for this is that they think that all this world scorns them, and when a powerful person deigns to visit them or comfort them they feel that they have recovered some honour, which is naturally a thing that everyone desires. (Lawson 53)

[Et meismement n'aura mie honte la bonne dame de visiter elle meismes aucunes fois les hospitaux et les provres a tout son estat, accompaigned grandement comme il appertient; parlera aux povres et aux malades, les touchera et confortera doucement en faisant son aumosne, et en ce elle fera souveraine et florie aumosne. Car le povre est trop plus reconforté et plus prent en gré la douce parole, la visitacion, et le reconfort d'une grant et poissant personne que d'un autre: la cause si est que il lui est avis, et il est vray, que tout le monde le pesprise, et il lui semble que quant personne poissant le daigne visiter ou l'araisonner, que il a recouvré aucun honneur, qui est chose que naturelement chascun desire. (de Pizan 38)]

But the lady must never exceed the grandeur of clothing or ornament appropriate to her rank, even in some cases when her husband desires her to do so: "do not do it, for it is not seemly to do this kind of thing; indeed, even if a lady's husband...wishes it, she still ought not to undertake anything without serious thought, counsel, and a good reason" ("Si ne le feras mie, car il n'aperitent a nulle d'ainsi de faire, voire se ce n'est par si que son seigneur...le vouldist"). Although Christine acknowledges that a lady's husband is

the one “whom she ought to obey and comply with and by whom she ought to be ruled” (“*“a qui elle doit obeir et compaire et pare qui elle doit estre riglee”*”), (Lawson 57) (de Pizan 44), a wife must hesitate at surpassing the display fit for her status, even to please him. Despite Christine’s lip-service to wifely obeisance, it is suggestive that the husband’s wishes are less to be consulted than those of the poor recipients of her charity: she may quietly defy him to dress more plainly if she thinks it appropriate, but she must dress grandly for charitable errands so that the poor people she visits can bask in her reflected status. The lady’s performance is geared to the rhetorical effects it will have on her indigent audience, rather than the preferences of her putative lord and master, as if the reader were to consider the greater need, rather than the greater power.

Christine does not actually recommend having a bell rung before one as one goes to give charity, but she sees no impediment to having the donor’s name inscribed on tablets or announced by heralds: “Others will follow her example and give similarly, and by their actions they will gain a good reputation” (*...si y prendrent les autres exemple de pareillement donner. Et se ceste maniere de donner et d’avoir accointance a yeulx pour avoir renomee*) (Lawson 71-72) (de Pizan 66-67). At least three distinct groups benefit: the lady and her household, by setting a virtuous example, the audience, by following it, and the recipients who receive largesse from the first two.

Here Christine brings up the question of hypocrisy (something that can also be a problem when dealing with hostile courtiers or in-laws). Is the public display of virtue blameworthy in itself? Christine insists it is almost compulsory:

It may seem that she has a small streak of hypocrisy or that she is getting a name for it, yet it may be called a “just hypocrisy,” so to speak, for it strives towards

good and the avoidance of evil. We do not mean that under cover of almsgiving they ought to commit evil deeds and sin, nor that great vanity ought to arise in their hearts. Certainly being “hypocritical” in the cause of good will not offend any person who desires honour. We repeat that this kind of “just hypocrisy” is almost necessary, especially to princes and princesses who must rule over others.... (Lawson 72)

[...par eulx semble qu'elle touche aucun raim d'ypocrisie ou qu'elle en prengne le nom, toutevoies se puet elle appeller par maniere de parler juste ypocrisie, car elle tent affin de bien et schivement de mal; car nous n'entendons mie que soubz umbre de ceste chose maulx et pechiéz se doient commettre, ne que une grant vaine gloire en doie sourdre en courage.

Si disons de rechief que ceste maniere de just ypocrisie est comme neccessaire a princes et princeps qui ont a dominer aultruy.... (de Pizan 67-68)]

Any consideration for the wounded pride of others abruptly disappears when dealing with political factions among the barons and the nobility. Although the princess is encouraged to heal political breaches and avert warfare whenever possible, she is advised to “reproach...[malefactors]...sharply, saying that the misdeed is very serious and that the prince is quite justifiably offended by it and that he has decided to avenge himself for it, as is only right, but nevertheless she, who would always wish the blessing of peace, in the event that they would wish to atone for it or to make suitable amends, would gladly go to some trouble to try if she could by some means to make peace between them and her husband” (“les en reprenda en poignant et en oignant, disant que les mesfait est moult

grant et que bonne cause en est le prince indignéz, et que s'entente est de s'en vengier si comme il est raison, mais nonpourtant elle, qui vouldroit tousjours le bien de paix, ou cas que ilz se vouldroient amender ou en faire amende convenable, mettroit volentiers peine d'essaier, se pacifier les pourroit vers son seigneur") (Lawson 51) (de Pizan 34-35).

Christine emphasizes the supposed feminine ability to speak in a more conciliating manner as a useful means of avoiding bloodshed, but it is obvious that the tactic in the above speech involves intimidating the offenders first, and only then proffering an olive branch. The sweetness Christine lauds is effective only after a good round scolding. Christine does not say whether the lady has to restrain her wrath during the conciliatory speech, but she also does not say whether the lady must manufacture wrath for the threatening rhetoric to be effective. Indeed, anyone who has ever had to settle a dispute might speculate that the lady's real grievance may occasionally be with a hot-headed husband who engenders such disputes, but she must redirect her irritation where it is officially warranted. However, Christine never acknowledges such a possibility, and she makes it clear that her reader is not to acknowledge it either. The princess is to say that the prince's desire for revenge is "only right," and her offer to plead for his mercy should be taken as an act of kindness, not an admission that he might be even partly to blame.

This conscious program of tact and manipulation refutes accusations that Christine was little more than a courtly brown-noser. Although Sheila Delany derides Christine as "intensely loyal to [her] employers...the Rosemary Woods of her day," and a woman who acclaimed "her corrupt and fratricidal patrons as the most benign and humane nobility in the world" (187), there is considerable evidence that Christine had few illusions about her patrons, but she was willing if necessary to feed their *own*

illusions that they were nice people. Indeed, perhaps she thought that building up such a self-image in the minds of her readers might help them to transform themselves into nice people. Susan Crane has noted that elaborate rituals of amity are not always merely disguises. Rather, they are mimetic rituals: “the transformation already inherent in the metaphor [of ritualized conduct] will implant itself in the understanding and behavior of the participants, better enabling them to produce the desired future” (23). The princess who represents her husband as a stern yet kindly lord, willing to relent, might have some chance of getting his barons to sue for peace; she can then notify her husband that they have done so, thus bringing him to make concessions on his own side. She certainly will have a better chance than someone who openly shows a lack of faith in her husband.

The guard she must keep on her emotions during political converse is no stricter than the guard she must keep when dealing with her own courtiers and ladies. Her reputation will depend on her display of appropriate speech and physical carriage: “She will speak rather softly and with a pleasant expression without making grimaces or movements of the body or the hands. Sobriety will keep her from laughing too much and without cause. It will prevent her, above all else, from ever speaking badly of any other person or saying any word of criticism” (“parler...assez basse, a beaulz traiz, sans faire mouvemens des mains, du corps, ne grimaces du visage; la gardera de trop rire, et non sans cause; lui deffendra sur toutes riens que nullement ne mesdie d’aultrui, ne parle en

blasmant”) (Lawson 57-58) (de Pizan 45). Critical speeches are not merely unkind: they can be cited against her, just as immoderate laughter or vulgar gesturing on her part might become objects of censure for others.

Christine’s concern with physical bearing echoes that of the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, but on one important point she departs from him rather sharply. Her discussion of “sobriety,” moderation and restraint in all physical conduct, covers a good four pages; to chastity, the Chevalier’s obsession, she devotes one short paragraph. Chastity, she writes, is a quality that the lady “will have so abundantly and with such purity that in neither word nor deed, appearance, ornaments, nor bearing, conduct, social pomp nor expression will there be anything for which she could be reproached or criticized” (“de laquelle elle sera par ceste maniere de vivre tant reamplie et ramenee a tel purté qu’en fait n’en dit, semblant, attout, contenance, maintien, estat, regart, n’aura riens ou il ait a redire ne prochier”) (Lawson 59) (de Pizan 47). Christine seems to imply that it goes without saying that *her* readers would never engage in real unchastity, but nevertheless they must guard against giving anyone a pretext for imputing immorality, even unjustly.

Although Delany also refers to Christine as the “Phyllis Schlafly of the Middle Ages” (191), perpetuating the repression of other women while trying to advance herself, the sweet persona that Christine advocates for the reader is less a question of meekness than of manipulation. The shark pool that is court life inspires further advice on dealing with unjust gossip. The princess must never reveal that she considers backbiters enemies; rather, “she will make them think that she regards them highly as her friends.... But she will be so wise and circumspect that no one can believe that she does it calculatingly. It would be shameful if at one time she was very cordial and another time gave them

furious looks that seemed genuine and were so plain that it was clear her smile was insincere” (“elle leur monstrera donra a croire que elle les tient a tres grandement ses amis.... Mais il convendra que celle dicte bonne chiere soit ordonnee et menee par tel sens et si rassissement que nul ne puist apercevoir que faintement le face, car se une foiz estoit trop grande et autre foiz a yeulx felons—si comme le cuer que on voit bien que le ris en yst a force--, tout seroit honny”) (Lawson 69) (de Pizan 63). Although Christine says the lady should “hate with all her heart the vice of lying” (“fera hair du tout son cuer le vice de mençonge”), and gain a reputation for candor “that people will believe what she says and have confidence in her as one has in a lady whom one has never heard lie” (“que on croira ce que elle dira, et y adjousterà l’en foy comme a celle que on n’ourra jamais mentir”) (Lawson 57) (de Pizan 44), telling nothing *but* the truth by no means signifies telling the *whole* truth. This reserve extends to her husband’s family members: she must “speak well of them and praise them” (“dira bien d’eulx et les exsaucera”) even if they are “stand-offish and uncivil” (“dongereux et mal traictable”), and to his friends, towards whom “she will still be friendly” (“si leur fera elle bonne chiere”) even when they “have bad characters” (“qu’il y en eust de mauvais”) (Lawson 65-66) (de Pizan 57-58). She is to invite her detractors to apparently secret conferences, where being physically sequestered in a private space implies emotional intimacy. There she is to tell them “ordinary things with a great show of secrecy and confidence and keep her real

thoughts to herself” (“de choses comme par grant secret et fiance que seront toutes contre sa pensee”) (Lawson 69-71) (de Pizan 63-65), clearly with the intention of tracking which rumors originated where.

The performance must be both convincing and consistent: “It is best to do this with the appearance of sincerity so that it does not put them on their guard” (“convendra que soit fait par si bonne maniere qu’ilz ne s’en donnent de garde”), and the lady must not herself complain about her enemies to anyone else, even to servants, “for if she said anything about them behind their backs contrary to the impression she wished to give and word of it got back to them, it would be a dangerous situation” (“car se aucun mot d’isoit d’eulx en derriere contraire a ses semblans qui fust raporté [ce soit peril]”). The danger is not in being thought a hypocrite but a coward: “They would think that she had done it out of fear, and it would make them prouder and bolder to harm her” (“ilz penseroient que elle la feist par craintte; si en seroient plus orgueilleux et plus hardiz de lui nuire”). Should anyone report enemy gossip to her, she must assume that her reaction will also be reported to her enemies, and pretend not to believe it or affect to think that her enemies meant well: “She can gloss over it by saying that they must have said or done it for some other reason than malice towards her” (“se la chose se puet couvrir nullement, que pour aucune autre cause que pour mal d’elle laient dit ou fait”). The program has a two-fold purpose: either the lady’s critics will be shamed into tractability, for fear of appearing ungrateful, or they will show their malice openly, at which point “their wickedness will be very much greater, and more apparent to everyone. They will be all the more condemned for it and also much more dishonoured, as you are supposed to be their friend” (“leur trayson et leur mauvaistié seroit de tant plus grande et de plus apperroit au

monde: si en seroient de tant plus repris et plus deshonnouréz et moins venroient a leur entente, car chascun leur donroit le tort”) (Lawson 69-71) (de Pizan 63-65). The lady’s performance of friendship is utilized only in part for its effect on her personal enemies; it is also employed for its effect on general public opinion, just as her charity was.

Even her husband is not exempt from a program of physically displayed respect that may reflect little or nothing of her actual state of mind: “...she will humble herself towards him, in deed and by word and by curtsying: she will obey without complaint; and she will hold her peace to the best of her ability....” (“se rendra humble vers lui en fait, en reverence et en parole, l’obeira sans murmuration et gardera sa paix a son pouvoir soigneusement”). Christine acknowledges that some husbands are hostile, indifferent, or unfaithful, but states that the woman should pretend “that she does not notice it and that she truly does not know anything about it” (“que elle s’en aperçoive et que elle n’en scet riens”), even when people try to bring her reports of her husband’s misdeeds, just as she is to ignore gossip about herself. Should she suffer genuine fear for her husband’s soul, she should let her confessor intercede with him rather than speak to her husband herself and risk offending him, and when she is with her husband, “she will try hard to say everything that ought to please him, and she will keep a happy expression on her face” (“dira a son pouvoir toutes choses qie plaire lui pourront, et a joyeux visage se contendra”) (Lawson 62-64) (de Pizan 53-55).

Christine does not account such deceptions as hypocrisy but as “discreet pretence and prudent caution, which is not to be thought a vice, but is a great virtue when done in the cause of goodness and peace without injuring anyone in order to avoid a greater misfortune” (“discrete dissimulation et prudent cautele, laquelle chose ne croye nul que

ce soit vice, mais grant vertu quant faicte est a cause de bien et de apix et sans a nul nuire, pour eschiver greigner inconvenient”) (Lawson 70) (de Pizan 64). And yet she, herself, cannot entirely parse out where display ends and substance begins: a lady “cannot give any proof of her loyalty except by the love she shows ...[her husband]... and the external signs by which thoughts and emotions are commonly judged. One cannot judge the intention of good people except by their deeds, which if they are good testify to a good person, and vice versa” (“si ne puet faire autre certification de sa loyaulté fors par l’amour que elle lui monstre et les signes de par dehors par lesquelz on juge communement du courage, car autrement ne puet on jugier de l’entencion des gens fors par les oeuvres, lesquelles, se elles sont bonnes, tesmoignent la personne bonne, et aussi au contraire”) (Lawson 65) (de Pizan 56-57). When choosing ladies to educate her daughters, she must look for the type of woman who “knows how to demonstrate the good manners and good deportment fitting for the daughter of a prince” (“elle...saiche bien monstrar le bien, la contenance et maintien qu’il apertient a fille de prince a avoir et savoir”) (Lawson 67) (de Pizan 60). Her councilors must include men whose speech shows them to be “prudent and intelligent” (“les plus sages et de la plus vive opinion” and she must ask around (discreetly) in order to be sure that they lead “virtuous lives” (“que ilz soient de bonne vie”) (Lawson 60-61) (de Pizan 49-50). The problem with this

method of evaluating others is obvious: what is to stop ladies-in-waiting or court officials from undertaking the same sort of physical display of integrity and good intentions that the lady is to exercise?

As willing as Christine is to admit that visible signs are all one has to go on, she is only too painfully aware that the lady's courtiers, servants, even her husband, are also performers. Perhaps Christine hopes that deceivers will not be able to sustain their performance of virtue for very long; once they show their true colors, the princess can adjust her first impressions. But what does this say about the princess's ability to maintain her own performance of affection towards a callous husband or a spiteful court? "[M]any women cannot pretend to ignore certain things, or do not know how to do it well," Christine admits ("ausquelz maintes ne scevent pas bien ou ne peuent dissimuler") (Lawson 71) (de Pizan 65). The program of dissimulation is necessary, but Christine cannot offer any advice on making it easy or natural. As Phillips notes in her paraphrase of Simone de Beauvoir, the medieval girl "was not born but rather became a woman" (Medieval Maidens 61). Christine claims that "women are by nature more timid and also of a sweeter disposition" ("nature de femme est plus paoureuse et aussi de plus douce condicion") (Lawson 51) (de Pizan 35), which enables them to make peace among quarrelsome men. But the behaviors she describes, the appropriate words for each situation, the look in the eyes, whether stern or modestly downcast, the tone of voice, sweet or strict, the carriage of the body, dignified before mixed company, relaxed and good-humored among women—these are not things of nature at all. They are learned behaviors. And while Christine suggests that performed benevolence may eventually win

the respect of a neglectful husband or the gratitude of spiteful gossips, she never actually states that the lady will truly grow to love her husband or feel genuine liking for her false friends. The obvious conclusion would seem to be that she need not.

That the irrelevance of personal feeling to conduct is a feature confined to princesses is revealed very clearly in Christine's advice in the sections of the book addressed to the minor nobility and *hautes bourgeoises* who serve as chaperons and ladies-in-waiting to high-ranking women at court:

[T]he lady or the maiden of the court (or any servant-woman) is expected to love her lady and mistress with all her heart (whether the mistress is good or bad or kind), or otherwise she damns herself and behaves very badly.... If you ask, "But truly, if my master or mistress is a bad person or doesn't treat me very well, am I still obliged to love her?"

We answer you, "Yes, certainly." For if you think your employers are bad and that it is not to your advantage to work for them, you must leave them. You should leave if it seems better not to stay there any longer doing your duty badly and not bearing such love to them nor such faith as you owe them. (Lawson 111)

[....]la dame ou damoyselle de court, voire toute servante, est tenue d'amer tres fort et de tout son cuer sa maistresse, soit bonne ou mauvaise, ou male ou doulce; ou aultrement elle se dampne, et fiat que tres mauvaise creature.... Et se tu veulz dire: voire, mais se mon maistre ou maistresse est mauvaise personne, ou ne me fait gaires de bien, suis je doncques tenue de l'amer,--nous te respondons que ouil, sans faille: car se il te semble que ilz soient mauvais ou mauvaises ou que n'y

faces ton proffit, tu t'en dois partir, se bon te semble, non mie y demourer pour mal faire ton devoir et ne lui porter telle amour et tel foy que tu dois. (de Pizan 124)]

Princesses must act with love regardless what they feel; for ladies-in-waiting, love is a feeling that must be borne in the heart as well as performed. The disparity between thoughts and acts is either the privilege of ladies of highest rank or, perhaps, their burden. But let us examine the interaction of chaperon and princess more closely, to see if this distinction holds.

Christine has allowed for the possibility that a princess, particularly a very young one, will not know what is necessary to play her part. In this case, the court lady who serves as her chaperon must model for her the conduct, and even the emotions, she must cultivate. Although her devotion to her mistress should be sincere, in other respects that chaperon's behavior may be quite as manipulative as that recommended for princesses. The mimetic rituals Crane describes (quoted above) are to be used here to coax the princess into feeling wifely affection, as verbalized by the chaperon. If, for instance, the chaperon notices the princess behaving too flirtatiously at a party, she must indirectly guide her thoughts to more proper channels, even if this means praising an unappealing husband:

....when everyone has departed and the party is over and her mistress has withdrawn, it may happen (if her mistress is a close friend of hers) that she herself will start the conversation with her chaperon, saying "Didn't we dance tonight!" This man and that one are charming, or they are not, or something else. And then the wise lady can reply in words like these: "I don't know, but I didn't see

anyone who seemed to me so kind nor so handsome and charming as my lord, and I had a good look around. I think that compared to the others he is the best favoured in all respects.”

But if the lord is old or ugly she will say: “To tell the truth, I hardly noticed anyone else in the company except my lord, for compared to the others he seemed so clearly the lord and prince. And how good it is to hear him speak, for he speaks so wisely!” But let us suppose this has not been the case: she will still recall something about him that she can praise, but she will say nothing about what she may really think. (Lawson 90)

[Et quant venra qu’ilz seront departiz et la feste faillie, et sa maistresse sera retraicte, pourra avenir se la dicte maistresse est privee d’elle, lui en entrera elle maismes en paroles, disant: Nous avons bien dancé, telz et telz sont gracieux, ou ne le sont mie, ou quelque chose. Et adonc la sage dame pourra respondre telz manieres de paroles: Je ne sçay que c’est, mais je n’en voy nul qui me semble tant plaisant ne tant bel ne gracieux que fait Monseigneur, et m’en suis bien prise garde, mais il m’est avis qu’entre les autres c’est cil a qui plus avient toutes choses a faire et dire. Ou se le seigneur est vieil ou lait, elle porra dire: Certes, je ne prenoye garde a nul de la compagnie fors a Monseigneur, car il m’estoit avis qu’entre les autres il sembloit si bien seigneur et prince, t comment le fait il bon

oïr parler, que parle il sagement! Et posons qu'il n'y ait esté, si le pourra elle
ramentevoir en quelque guise, disant bien de luy, mais de ce qu'elle aura pensé ne
dira riens. (de Pizan 98)]

Christine does not specify whether the thought the chaperon is to “say nothing about” is only her suspicion that her mistress may be encouraging gossip, or her consciousness that her lord is sufficiently unattractive to make temptation to stray understandable. The princess, if she has read Part I, may think that she is cleverly manipulating the court by miming the gestures and procedures of virtue. She is encouraged to believe that her emotions can be hidden, and maintained as they are, as long as she follows the visible stage directions of the virtuous character Christine has written for her. Her lady-in-waiting, however, is simultaneously being instructed on how to gauge and, if necessary, redirect the princess’s emotions. The positive things she says about the prince, however unappealing he may actually be, are not merely intended as a template after which the princess should model her own comments; they are also intended to influence the princess’s thoughts. If the princess thinks that those about her admire her husband as a courtly paragon or a wise ruler, she is less likely to be embarrassed by him. Even if the marriage is an arranged one, as it usually would be, she can at least feel proud to be seen by his side, instead of resenting being saddled with him.

The chaperon’s aim may be a noble one, as it involves preserving her mistress’s marriage, her reputation, and possibly the stability of the kingdom. But it is inescapable that while Christine tells the princess she may think what she likes, as long as she performs the discernible acts of virtue, she is also telling chaperons and ladies-in-waiting that they must point the thoughts of the princess in the right direction whenever those

thoughts seem in danger of straying into forbidden territory. The emotional independence Christine offers princesses appears to be, after all, only an illusion, even a deliberate deception.

Yet this holds only if we suppose that Christine never expects princesses to read this section. She may indeed have known that a time-pressed princess would hardly be likely to read her entire book, but she was neither so foolish nor so foolhardy as to write things that she actively hoped the princess would *not* read. Indeed, we have seen that she often addresses messages to one group that are actually intended for the benefit of another group. She prefaces her advice to peasants and paupers with qualifiers: “If it happens to reach your ears” (“...se il ainsi que aler puist jusque a voz oreilles”) (Lawson 176) (de Pizan 218); “If it can come to your notice” (“....se jusques a vostre cognoissance peut aler”) (Lawson 178) (de Pizan 221). A long passage, urging poor women to regard their rags with pride as the royal livery of Christ Himself, marking them as special members of his household (Lawson 178) (de Pizan 221), is typical. Perhaps some benevolent lady making her charitable rounds would read these passages to the ostensible audience, but as usual, Christine has a multi-layered message, and probably most of it is for the benevolent lady, to teach her a pious compassion for the objects of her charity.

What, then, are we to make of her advice to chaperons? Christine is well aware that guiding a rebellious charge can be a tedious task. As Roberta Krueger comments, the chaperon must use great diplomacy to prevent the princess from transgressing moral or social boundaries and yet stay in her “good graces.” The chaperon wishes to avoid offending her charge so deeply that she loses her position, but if the princess “begins to

mock or worse, to plot against, her teacher,” the chaperon will be held responsible for any scandal the prince causes (Krueger “Anxious” 22). Krueger notes that Christine’s own experience “as a teacher within royal and ducal households” (17) had made her only too familiar with “the troubled relationship between students and teachers” and with the frequent “failure of moral teaching to effect any change in its recipient” (19). How should Christine convince chaperons and their charges that they are on the same side?

Christine banks on the likelihood that readers *will* look at sections addressed to other readers. The princess who has read the advice to chaperons, urging them to steer their charges away not only from actual flirtations but from any discontented thoughts about the prince, might be less likely to roll her eyes in exasperation when her chaperon follows such advice. She will realize that the chaperon is only reading the scripted lines of virtue for *her* part, just as the princess has been learning scripted lines and stage directions of virtue for her own part. She may be less likely to try to evade the chaperon’s surveillance, and might even feel some compassion for a woman who is just trying to do a difficult job. She will certainly be less likely to provoke her. As for the chaperon, if she has read the section addressed to princesses, she may be less likely to gossip about a rebellious charge. She will remember how vulnerable princesses are to harsh and often unjustified criticism, and may regard her mistress as young and impulsive, rather than truly vicious. And she will probably find her charge more receptive to this attitude.

Forestalling the resentment of a micro-managed princess might be very difficult, given the nature of some of the machinations Christine teaches her chaperon. Moreover, if the princess does not discourage admirers the chaperon must do it for her, representing

it as the will of her mistress. After gaining a suitor's trust with hospitable gestures so that he will reveal his true intentions, she is to tell him that his plan is hopeless, because her mistress's "virtue is easy to protect, for I know quite well that all her love is reserved for her husband, just as it ought to be" ("qu'elle en est legiere a garder. Car je sçay bien que toute s'amour est en son signeur, si que elle doit estre" (Lawson 91-92) (de Pizan 99-100). Just as the Chevalier quotes his wife as holding the sort of opinions on courtly love he himself would endorse, Christine has the chaperon recite the sort of moral platitudes her mistress ought to have sustained. In this case, merely warning away the young man is insufficient: the chaperon must recite the lines of moral rectitude and spousal devotion because her mistress has failed to play the character herself.

On the other hand, should it be necessary for the chaperon to remonstrate with a former charge for her bad behavior, the majority of her criticisms are to be directed at appearances, rather than substance. Without mincing words, the chaperon acknowledges that real guilt or innocence is immaterial: the princess is to consider ladies who "merely for being suspected of such love without the truth of it ever being proved, lost their honour and their lives from it.... I swear on my soul that there was no sin, nor guilt, nor wickedness, but yet you have seen their children reproached and held in less esteem because of it" ("pour seulement estre souspeçonnees de telle amour, sans que la verité en fust oncques atteincte, en perdoient honneur et la vie.... si tiens sus mon ame que pechié ne coulpe villaine n'y avoient, et leurs enfans en avez veu reprouchiéz et moins priziéz")

(Lawson 100) (de Pisan 112-13). The chaperon's concerns sound remarkably similar to the Chevalier de la Tour's, for he, too, tells of women who are blamed for sins of which they may have been innocent.

The advice Christine wishes the chaperone to give has good, pragmatic value, and shows a shrewd understanding of court politics, but it may lose the chaperon the affection of the princess, at least temporarily. Christine's assertion that anyone who "may hate her [the chaperon] for it or feel resentful" ("l'en doye haïr ou savoir mauvais gré") will eventually come to appreciate the chaperon's good sense and "will love her for it in the end" ("l'en aimera au desrain") (Lawson 94) (de Pisan 103), may only be wishful thinking. But court ladies are not to concentrate on being favored by the princess, but on protecting her, even if she resents them for it. Christine realizes that the chaperon may feel very frustrated when her good intentions cause the princess to flout or ignore her and turn all her affection to another court lady who tells the princess what she wants to hear, but she does not want the chaperon to forget her real mission, protecting the princess, even at the cost of her own popularity.

Indeed, court ladies must not flatter their mistress in order to curry favor (Lawson 111) (de Pisan 125), nor must they nourish resentment or envy if they see another court lady receive preferential treatment, i.e., if the princess "often confides in another person and prefers her to know her secrets and be around her more" ("plus souvent l'appelle en ses conseilz et vueille que plus sache de son secret et soit plus entour elle") (Lawson 118) (de Pisan 136). (If, of course, the lady-in-waiting has read part I, she will realize that this is the procedure recommended for people the princess doesn't trust, and the princess may be *appearing* to cultivate Lady X's company mostly to keep an eye on her.) But ladies-

in-waiting are advised not merely to appear humble, but to feel it: “Your mistress may see another woman who is more prudent, more skilful, and of better breeding and more perfect than you are, so your lady is more cordial to her, although it may seem to you that you would be the better choice. If you pay close attention to the truth of your conscience and review your actions, you will perhaps find that you may well have deserved it for something that you said or did that was reported to her and angered her” (“qui voit une aultre plus sage, plus habile et mieulx condicionee et plus parfaite que toy, quoy qu’il te semble que tu vailles mieulx: si l’a plus chiere environ soy. Et aussi, se tu veulz bien regarder au vray de ta conscience et lire en tes fais, tu trouveras peut estre que tu le pueux bien avoir desservi pour tel chose et telle que tu feis, et telz paroles que tu deis qui lui furent raportees, dont elle se courrouça”) (Lawson 120) (de Pisan 138).

As frequently happens with Christine, we must ask at whom this advice is really aimed. Is this section truly intended for court ladies, or is it meant to mollify any princesses who read this far and are irked at the imputation that they might ever be unfair to their ladies-in-waiting? Certainly, Christine does not want the court ladies to reproach their mistresses, or denounce their rivals, but again, we should hesitate before we accept Delany’s assumption that Christine was a courtier who recommended suspending “all critical faculties” (186). Again, meekness equals manipulation: Christine advises suffering the arrogance of a rival patiently, because “everyone who sees you thus graciously put up with the pride and presumption of someone else without talking about it or showing your irritation will esteem you for it and love you more” (“ceulx et celles qui te verront ainsi gracieusement supporter l’orgueil et outrecuidance d’auctrui sans en faire

parole ou semblant t'en priseront et aimeront mieulx") (Lawson 121) (de Pizan 139). In other words, she is to bear favoritism patiently for the same reason her mistress is to bear gossip patiently: because it makes her look good and the other person look bad.

Patience is never solely a Christian virtue with Christine: its display is constantly proposed as a way to save face and indirectly put others in a bad light. Her development of this point is quite blunt:

God wishes you and expressly commands you to love your enemy and render him good for evil. Whoever acts against God's commandment damns himself and therefore gains nothing, and so it would be more to his advantage to hold his tongue. Furthermore, another trouble comes to him because of it, and that is our second reason: that he or she acts against his or her own honour. A person of great intelligence would never slander her enemy because she would know that it could seem to other people that she wanted to avenge herself with words. This is the vengeance of people with little power and faint hearts that few wise people use. (Lawson 123)

[Dieux veult et commande expressement que on aime son anemi, et que on lui rende bien pour mal: et qui fait contre le commandement de Dieu se dampne, et si n'y gaigne riens: pour ce seroit mieulx son prouffit s'en taire.

Item avec ce un autre inconvenient lui en vient, et est nostre seconde raison: c'est que il fait ou elle fait contre son honneur. Et voy cy la raison: une personne de grant courage jamais ne mesdiroit de son anemy, pour ce que elle scet bien que il

lui pourroit sembler aux gens que vengier s'en voudroit de parolles, laquelle chose est la vengeance de gens de pou de poissance et de foible cuer, et de quoy pou de sages gens usent. (de Pizan 142)]

Christine follows this with reminders that a gossip may be branded a liar, and that the object of her gossip will only hate her the more and plot against her more viciously. It must be noted that only one quarter of this passage concerns abstract virtue or the will of God: the rest is frankly focused on appearances and practical results. The second reason reveals a great deal about Christine's understanding of the intersection of virtue and status: to be thought powerless is just as dangerous as being thought malicious or dishonest—perhaps more.

The emphasis on the intersection of apparent virtue and apparent status, does not, however, mean the two are to be thought synonymous by the reader, even though her observers may think so. A good mistress and her court ladies will not be deceived by flatterers who display merely physical marks of deference: "Although these people may well curtsy respectfully to her, with one knee touching the ground, and make deep bows and flatter a great deal, yet they will not keep quiet about gossip, but they will tell each other their impressions, and they will whisper scandal to each other" ("que ilz facent ou que elles facent bien les obeissans, les genoulz a terre et a grant reverence, et assez de flateries, si ne s'en tairont ilz mie; ains diront leur avis l'une a l'autre et chucheteront a conseil") (Lawson 124) (de Pisan 144).

Christine's advice to the wives of barons follows the same formula, in that it is mainly concerned with what people might say, and focuses on not giving others pretexts to criticize. Her assertion that a baroness "should conduct herself with such skill that she

may be feared as well as loved” (“elle se gouverne par tel savoir que craintte soit et aussi amee”) anticipates Machiavelli’s similar advice a century later. The rest of her program for baronesses is more suited to middle management than to court ladies, but it is equally focused on manipulating the perceptions of others:

Her men should be able to rely on her for all kinds of protection in the absence of their lord, in a situation where anyone would offer to do them any harm.

Therefore, it is right that she should know about all sorts of things so that in each case she will know what to do. She should be well informed about and apprised of the legal aspects and the local customs, and which things should be phrased carefully if there is need for great tact towards those who would wish to do her wrong or who are somewhat rebellious or uncooperative. She should be kind, humble and charitable towards the good and obedient ones. She ought to work with her husband’s counsellors in all her undertakings and listen to the judgement of the wise old men, so that she may not be reproached for anything she does, and no one may say that she wants to do everything her own way. (Lawson 129)

[...ses hommes puissent recourir a elle pour tous reffuges après le seigneur, et en cas que on leur feroit aucun tort: et pour ce est droit que elle sache de toutes choses, afin que en chascun cas puist donner response convenable. Soit toute enseignee et aprise des usags, drois et coustumes du lieu, et quelz choses y apertienent; bien enlangagee, haultaine, se besoing est, par bonne discrecion contre ceulx qui la vouldroient mespriser ou qui aucunement seroient rebarbatis et rebelles, et douce, humble, et charitable vers le gens obeissans; si doit ouvrer par

les gens du conseil de son seigneur en tous ses fais, et oïr les opinions des anciens sages afin que elle ne soit reprise de chose que elle face ne que on ne die que elle vueille ouvrer de sa teste. (de Pizan 150-51)]

Unlike the Chevalier's daughters, this woman must do much more than pray, speak humbly to her husband, and avoid tossing her head around. But neither can she devote herself exclusively to affairs of the household, as the *Ménagier's* wife is expected to do, even though the *Ménagier's* wife has a position with many managerial aspects. The baroness Christine describes must be educated about local ordinances, not just about devotional practices or pudding recipes. In the next passage, Christine says pointedly that the baron's wife "ought to have *the heart of a man*...she ought to know how to use weapons and be familiar with everything that pertains to them, so that she may be ready to command her men if the need arises. She should know how to launch an attack or to defend against one, if the situation calls for it. She should take care that her fortresses are well garrisoned...." ("elle doit avoir cuer d'homme...elle doit savoir de drois d'armes et toutes choses que y affierent afin que elle soit preste d'ordonner ses hommes se besoins est, et le sache faire pour assaillir et pour deffendre se le cas s'y adonne; prendre garde que ses forteresses soient bien garnies....") (Lawson 129, emphasis added) (de Pizan 151). Christine concludes with advice on giving military pep talks similar to those Geoffroi de Charny requires of knights and leaders on the battlefield (Kaeuper and Kennedy 143). Although Christine wishes these women to be tactful enough that they do not alienate their fighters and put themselves and their households in danger, the elaborate meekness (and excessive fasting) the Chevalier defines as feminine virtue are simply impractical here. The baroness may be expected to deal with the sort of local conflicts Vale

describes, the “raids...skirmishes, ambushes, ransomings, arson, cattle-theft and casual brigandage which were the stuff of private wars” (132). Christine knows from reading Vegetius (who heavily influenced her Deeds and Arms of Chivalry) that the hard-boiled practicalities once used to organize the Roman legions are more applicable here than some vague notion that doughty men will protect frail women.

The Baroness’s first duty is to protect her people from such depredations. Later, we will see that the tradesman’s wife uses her well-appointed house, rather than showing clothing, as an extension of her own body’s virtue; for the Baroness, the well-being of the people functions as an extension of her own self. She is particularly responsible when “her husband is away and has left her in charge with full authority” (“son mary estant dehors, se il lui en a donné la charge et la commission”) (Lawson 129) (de Pizan 151). One wonders how many woman who developed the bellicose “heart of a man” that Christine considers essential to dealing with private wars also found a use for the meekness and deference all three of our authors advocate when dealing with a difficult husband. Despite the toughness required of a Baron’s wife, Christine does recommend just such deference, particularly when dealing with a husband of inferior birth: some women, she notes,

...regard their husbands as peasants compared to them. This is great foolishness...no one is a “peasant” if he does not commit base acts, nor noble if he is not virtuous.... As for those well-bred women, the more they humble themselves before their husbands in obedience and in reverence and the faith that

marriage requires, the more their honour will increase. For although all women should do this, those women will be esteemed for it still more than the others.

(Lawson 138)

[...reputent leurs mariz villains envers elles, qui est grant folie...car nul n'est villain s'il ne fait villeinnie, ne gentil s'il n'est vertueux.... A propos ycelles gentilz femmes, de tant que plus se humilient devers leurs mariz en honneur, obeissance et reverence, et la foy que mariage requiert, de tant croistra plus leur honneur; car quoy que il apertiengne a toutes femmes le faire, encore ycelles plus que les autres en seront prisees.... (de Pizan 164)]

In other words, even a woman of noble birth is to present a humble persona, because in the long run...it makes her look more noble.

What, then, is her advice for women who are not even members of the lower nobility? When Christine shifts her attention to the wives of clerks, merchants, and administrators, she takes care to note that her advice to each class could be read with benefit by women of every other class (Lawson 145) (de Pizan 171). Whether this is a ploy to make middle-class women feel that their section is just as important as that aimed towards the nobility, or whether it is Christine's way of sneaking in hints to noblewomen under the guise of addressing their inferiors, is a debatable point: given Christine's penchant for double-edged rhetoric, there is evidence for both of these aims.

Granted, her advice to this class is less about dealing with court gossip or rebellious barons than basic housekeeping: keeping the children quiet when there are visitors, readying the master's dinner and laundry, even going into the kitchen herself to

supervise the cooking (Lawson 147) (de Pisan 174-75) (but not, presumably, bandying words with the servants as did the unseemly wife in the Chevalier's tale). There is still heavy emphasis on appearances and on playing one's part, in a rather theatrical sense, but this emphasis has less to do with the woman's physical performance and much more to do with her costume and set decorations. Christine discusses the embroidery and laundering of table linen with almost as much precision as the *Ménagier*, but she very pointedly acknowledges that this is less to please the husband than to impress the neighbors: "She will use it to serve the important people that her husband brings home, by whom she will be greatly esteemed, honoured, and praised" ("Si en seront serviz les gens d'onneur que son mary amenra, dont elle sera prisee et louee"). There are few strictures on body language in this section, beyond the advice not to dress beyond one's station and to avoid shouting at servants: hardly any of the warnings about moving one's head or eyes immoderately or laughing too loudly that peppered the advice to noblewomen. In a few lines, Christine covers the subject of middle-class body language, a subject to which she had devoted pages in her first section: "Even if she is young, she ought to be moderate and not disorderly in her games and laughter. She ought to know how to enjoy them in moderation so that they are seemly, and her speech should be without flirtatiousness, but proper and mild, orderly and comely, with a simple and decorous look, and not glancing about; she should be merry, but in moderation" ("Et quoy que elle soit joenne doit estre en ses jeux et ris attrempee et sans desordennance et

le savoir prendre par apoint, si que ilz soient bien seans; et le parler sans mignotise, mais propre et doulz, ordonné et attrait; en regart simple, tardif, et non vague, et joyeuse par apoint”) (Lawson 150) (de Pisan 179).

Why does the bourgeois housewife not need the page after page of amplification on this subject Christine directs at court ladies? It is true that she will be the object of fewer gazes, and her conduct probably does not influence people beyond those in her community, but there may be another reason why her virtue is not determined by her body language alone. It is as if the house itself has become an extension of the bourgeoisie wife’s body: the clean linen, decorous servants, and well-prepared food bespeak her respectability to others, just as a steady gaze and restrained gestures demonstrated the court lady’s virtues.

Indeed, tidy household trappings are the middle-class woman’s *only* outlet for displaying rank, for Christine is particularly stern towards women who outdress their proper rank: “It is not fitting” (“n’apertient point”), she writes, “that the wife of a country labourer enjoy the same rank as the wife of an honest artisan in Paris, nor the wife of a common artisan as a merchant’s wife, nor a merchant’s wife as an unmarried lady, nor the unmarried lady as a married lady, nor the lady as a countess or duchess, nor the countess as the queen. Rather each woman ought to keep to her own station in life....” (“que la femme d’un laboureur de plat païs porte tel estat que la femme d’un homme de commun mestier, ne la femme d’un homme de mestier comme une bourgoise, ne une bourgoise comme une contesse ou duchece, ne la contesse ou duchece comme une royne; ains se doit chascune tenir en son propre estat....” (Lawson 153) (de Pisan 184). Aside from her evident concern with maintaining social stability, Christine is also familiar with

the ridicule the newly rich provoke in their efforts to impress (think of the twentieth-century stereotype of the over-trimmed arriviste vs. the aristocrat in shabby tweed and sensible shoes). People who dress above their station merely call attention to their actual lack of status: “Even if those men and women who indulge in such excesses, whether in clothing or grand style, left their business and took up fine horses and the status of princes and lords, their real social station would still dog them” (“se ceulz et celles qui tiulx oultrages font, soit en abiz ou estat, laissoient leur marchandise et prenissent du tout les grans chevaulx et les estaz des seigneurs, leur estre s’ensuivroit”) (Lawson 155) (de Pizan 186). Christine herself was depicted in the illuminations of her books (over which she exercised great control during her lifetime [Gibbons 130]) as dressed with severe elegance rather than sumptuous ostentation.

This does not mean that women of lesser rank are not promised power in some form. Indeed, in the section on artisans’ wives, Christine states, “the wife herself should be involved in the work to the extent that she knows all about it, so that she may know how to oversee his workers if her husband is absent, and to reprove them if they do not do well” (“elle meismes aperient mettre les mains a la paste: si doit tant faire que elle se cognoisce en l’ovrage affin qu’elle sache deviser a ses a ses ouvriéz se le mary n’y est, et les reprendre se ilz ne font bien”) (Lawson 167) (de Pizan 205). She is encouraged to intercede with her husband if his customers try to talk him into a bad bargain.

For those even lower down the social scale, Christine departs rather dramatically from the sort of advice we have previously encountered. For serving-women, Christine is hardly enthusiastic about the kind of extensive fasting advocated by the Chevalier and the *Ménagier*. Given that these women must eat on the run rather than sitting down when the

family has its meals, “if such a woman does not fast on all the days ordained by the Church, God will excuse her. Indeed, she may feel that she cannot do it without harming her health, which might perhaps be damaged so that she could not earn her living” (“se telle femme ne jeune meismement tous les jours commandéz de l’Eglise, elle en fait assez a excuser, voire se elle sent que sans moult grever son corps, lequel par aventure deffaudroit si que elle ne pourroit gaignier sa vie”) (Lawson 169) (de Pizan 208). Christine, however, cautions against confusing gluttony and laziness with actual health concerns. (There is no indication how she would classify the head-aches complained of by the impious sister in the Chevalier’s tale.)

Although Christine has focused on body language for the upper classes, and on physical setting and clothing for the middle and trade classes, for lower-ranking women, body language becomes less important than good intentions (presumably, this may be to some extent because the rhetoric of clothing and domestic display is generally unavailable to such women). The virtuous serving-woman who seeks salvation “ought to understand that God, who knows and sees everything, asks only that she have good heart towards Him, for then she cannot go wrong” (“doit savoir que Dieu, qui tout cognoit et voit, ne demande que le cuer: car qui l’a bon vers lui ne faudra mie a bien ouvrer”). If her duties prevent her from getting to church physically, “she can be there in spirit” (“le cuer sera par bonne volenté”), but Christine adds, “it is scarcely to be believed that anyone is so busy that if she wanted to take the trouble to get up early she could not easily find the time on most days to hear a Mass and recommend herself to God, and then come back to do her chores” (“toutevoies n’est nie a croire que nulle ou pou soit si

occupee que se elle veult prendre la peine de lever matin, que elle ne puist avoir bien espace d'oïr une messe le plus des jours, se recommander a Dieu, puis s'en torner faire sa besoigne") (Lawson 169) (de Pizan 208).

How much of this advice is really aimed at the serving-women themselves? Towards the end of this section, after describing the scams some cooks and housemaids use to cheat their mistresses and *before* cautioning servants to avoid these frauds, Christine says, "So you ladies who have servants, watch out for these tricks so that you are not deceived" ("Si vous prenez garde, entre vous qui estes serviz, que deceus n'y soiez") (Lawson 171) (de Pizan 211). If the serving-woman is not literate, the mistress would have to read this book to her for her to benefit from its instruction. Thus, while Christine's advice appears to be primarily directed at the servant, its actual function is two-fold: to warn the mistress that these frauds exist, and to warn the servant that the mistress has been alerted to such frauds. In a similar manner, the advice to get up early for church, while appearing to scold lazy servants who are reluctant to do this, is also an indirect way of putting pressure on their employers (the ones probably reading the book), to give servants time off to go to church before starting their workday.

The carping tone Christine has taken to princesses, ("O foolish and ill-advised simpleton.... poor and miserable creature...." [Lawson 37]) which had largely disappeared in favor of matter-of-fact advice to women of lesser rank, reappears when she addresses prostitutes: "you miserable women so indecently given to sin, open your eyes" ("Ouvrez les yeux de cognoissance...miserables femmes donees a pechié tant

deshonnestement”) (Lawson 171) (de Pizan 211). The prostitute is to repent, and not protest that it is useless to do so when she will remain a pariah in any case, because Christine assures her that respectable people will be ready to help her:

....all who see her reformed and ashamed of her sin and dissolute life will feel very great pity for her. They will welcome her with open arms, say kind things to her, and give her occasion to persevere and do well. She will be seen to have such a good and respectable life, such a devout and humble manner, that while she used to be rebuffed by everyone she will now be befriended and cherished by all good people....

....and if she were so disposed, everyone would gladly take her to help do the laundry in their big houses. They would take pity on her and gladly give her a means of making a living.... (Lawson 173)

[...toutes les bonnes creatures qui la verroient ainsi convertie et honteuse de son pechié et fole vie en auroient tres grant pitié, l'appelleroient vers eulx et lui diroient bonnes paroles, et lui donneroient occasion de perseverer et bien faire; et pourroit estre veu de si bonne et honneste vie, tant devote, douce et humble, que la ou elle souloit estre deboutee de chascun seroit appelée de toutes bonnes gens et chier tenue....

...que ainsi fust disposee come nous disons. Car chascun la prendroit volentiers a aidier a faire lessives en ces grans hostelz; si en auroient pitié et volentiers lui donneroient a gagner.... (de Pizan 214)]

As this advice is unlikely to be read by the prostitutes themselves, Christine is clearly giving respectable women a hint that they should provide paid labor and words of kindness to such women precisely so that neither fear of material want nor of social isolation will drive reformed prostitutes back to their former trade. If there are words on mental attitudes, they are aimed at those who consider themselves too respectable to have anything to do with fallen women: “Jesus Christ Himself felt no repugnance in showing such women the error of their ways and turning them from sin” (“le digne personne de Jhesu Crist n’ot pas orreur de leur tenir resne en les convertissant”) (Lawson 171) (de Pizan 211). The apparent reproach is for loose women; the real reproach is for people who will not help them reform, and who inwardly consider themselves superior. Both conduct and motive are censured here: for the “respectable” women, not the prostitutes. However, Christine is also trying to give respectable women courage: they will be less reluctant to give déclassée women help if they need not fear social disapproval themselves, particularly, the risk of being tarred with the same brush.

Despite her “affectionate greetings” (“Salut par dilection”) to chaste women, Christine warns that “no one ought to presume that he is stronger than St Peter was or than David or Solomon were, and others of greater knowledge who have fallen into sin” (“nul de doit presumer de soy que il soit plus fort que fut saint Pierre, ne que David, Salemon et autres de grant savoir qui trebucherent en pechié” (Lawson 174) (de Pizan 215). Virtuous women must not allow themselves to feel smug or self-righteous—but

note also that the examples of weak people who stray are all male. Christine could choose to mention Bathsheba or any of a number of biblical examples of women in respected positions who fell into sin, but she does not. Just as scolding prostitutes serves as a coded critique of “respectable” women, scolding women serves as a coded critique of “respectable” men.

It is at this point, however, that this very respectability becomes a matter of internal state, rather than a set of gestures and speech codes meant to convey an appropriate ethos. The lower one travels on the social scale, the more sincerity becomes an issue. Christine concedes that “you women of good repute” (“preudesfemmes”) have every right to “continue to take pleasure in your chastity” (“vueilliez doncques delicter de plus en plus entre vous,”) but they must take care that they do not “suggest deceitfully by gestures and words that you are chaste when secretly the opposite may be in you, for God, from whom nothing is hidden, would know it very well, and would punish you for it” (“faintise montrer par signes et paroles que le soiez et que couvertement ait en vous le contraire, car Dieu, a qui riens n’est mucié, le saroit bien, qui vous en puniroit”). Here, Christine is suspicious of the very same “gestures and words” that she recommended to high-ranking court ladies as signs of a virtue that may be genuine enough, but must be made visible to others or it is irrelevant.

She is even more suspicious of women who gossip about others to hide their own lapses: “Do not do as some foolish women do who try to hide their follies by talking about other people, or claiming that they themselves are highly respectable women, and that they abominate such a deed. Such an attitude invites scorn.... There is no proof that she herself is chaste when she finds things to say about the others....” (“ne faicte pas

comme aucunes foles qui cuident par parler des aultres mucier leurs folies ou faire a croire que moult sont preudesfemmes et que tel fait ont en abhominacion, mais telle maniere fait a desprisier.... n'est point signe qu'elle le soit quant tant treuve sur les autres a dire outre a dire"). Christine is in agreement with the Chevalier and the Ménagier on the importance of chastity for women, but she eschews their divide-and-conquer tactics, by which good women are urged to flee the company of loose women: "You ought to have pity on fallen women, pray for them, give them a chance to redeem themselves...." ("Si devez avoir pitié des defaillans et prier pour elles, leur donner occasion d'elles retraire....") (Lawson 174-75) (de Pizan 215-17). Alone among these three writers, Christine urges the virtuous reader to consider whether immoral women *wish* to reform and need help doing so, rather than merely guarding her own reputation from any hint of scandal by association.

Motive is also important for women in rural areas. Village women, like serving-women who cannot get to church easily, are encouraged to serve God "in heart and will" ("en cuer et volenté") (Lawson 176) (de Pizan 219). Delany comments that Christine "ignores the independent woman of her day," limiting her role to an "angel in the house" who makes sure the husband is not stealing from the elite (189-90). It is true that physical virtue for countrywomen mostly consists of not stealing other people's produce or livestock, and paying tithes honestly. Christine has little concern with what peasant women are doing with their posture or gaze. But when it comes to the poorest women, she appears *very* concerned with what they are thinking. Her tone towards them is far more conciliatory, even flattering, than her tone towards princesses. Delany might dismiss this as a ploy to sweet-talk poor women away from rebellions and Jacqueries, but

her “hypocrisy” towards the lower orders, if it is that, is certainly less repellant than that displayed by Richard II after the Rising was put down and he no longer troubled to feign a conciliatory manner: coolly tearing up his own royal letters promising to free the serfs “before the eyes of the crowd,” and later punishing the peasants who had followed his orders to go home peacefully when he had allowed them to think that their obedience might bring pardons (Jolliffe 251-52). Christine’s conciliatory manner does not appear to cloak a secret hostility or contempt. As much as she counsels humility for princesses and guarding against false pride for chaste women, so much does she counsel the most poverty-stricken women that they can take pride in identifying with God himself. “You who complain of poverty, is there any man in the world who would not hold himself well recompensed to be dressed in the king’s livery?” (“Est il homme ou monde qui ne se tenist pour bien paré d’estre vestu des robes du Roy et da sa livree?”) Christine asks, urging the woman to address her prayers as follows:

O my Creator...I Your poor created being who am dressed in Your garments in soul and in body, have no real value in my soul except as You have made it in Your image. In body I have human flesh, as You wanted to have, dressed in poverty, the garment You wanted to wear all your life. You show very clearly how You dignified the condition of poverty more than any other when You chose it for yourself.... Who could have been poorer than You, who elected to spend all Your life in such poverty that You never had anything of Your own except what

You were given as alms?Alas, miserable creature that I am, ought I to complain of being like You? Lord God, I thank You for having deigned to honour me so much.... (Lawson 178)

[He! mon Createur!moy ta povre creature, qui suis revestue de tes robes en ame et en corps: n'y pas souffisance en ame, en tant que tu l'as faicte a ton ymage? En corps que j'ay char humaine, si que tu volz avoir, et vestue de povreté, laquelle robe tu volz avoir toute ta vie; et bien monstras que tu auctorisoies plus l'estat de ceste perphecion de povreté que nul autre, quant pour toy meismes l'esleus.... qui fut oncques en ce monde plus povre que toy...toute vie user en tel povreté que oncques n'os riens propre, ne mais ce que on te donnoit par ausmosne.... Helas! et moy, miserable creature! me doy je plaindre d'estre de ton convent? Beau Sire Dieux! mais te rens graces et mercis, quant tant me dagnes honnourer que j'en soye.... (de Pizan 223)]

It is probable that actual poor women would have welcomed a little less honor of this kind, but it is equally probable that actual poor women never read Christine's book.

Although Christine would appear to be appealing to the self-esteem of poor women, or at least counseling them to bear their sufferings patiently for the sake of heaven, rather than rebel against socio-economic conditions, again, we must not assume she herself expected that any of them ever read this passage, or even have it read to them. Although she has mentioned the possibility that advice might happen to reach them somehow, note that she does *not* write, "Should your employer read this to you to teach you good conduct," or "Should some kind lady read this to you when giving you alms." Nor, it is important to

remember, did she include instructions to pack the Improving Works of Christine in the food basket in her otherwise very specific directions on how ladies should give charity. Christine never “forgets” to mention anything, so the one meant to benefit from the lesson is almost certainly the literate woman, should this passage happen to come to *her* notice. The overt message is one that those superior in the hierarchy might approve, as it does not advocate rebellion, but the coded message directed towards wealthy women is a quieter version of “O foolish and ill-advised simpleton....” In reading that poor women are to identify, quite consciously, with Christ in his poverty, wealthier women are to remember the Biblical promise that Christ will count kind deeds to the needy as having been done for himself.

Was Christine the conservative Delany thinks her? It is true that Christine resisted the late medieval “tide of social change, of protest and nascent democracy” (Delany 188), but it is also true that she had seen havoc wreaked by social upheaval, and had little reason to suppose that rebellion, even cultural rebellion, could cause anything but misery:

....through the later fourteenth century it became increasingly difficult for skilled workers to earn enough to support a family. Public order was jeopardized by these stresses; the heightened economic and social insecurity caused by inflation, currency devaluation and wage restrictions, compounded by the effects of war,

led to increases in crime and to civil disturbances that were often crushed with brutality, such as the uprising by the Jacquerie in 1358. (Forhan 5)

Was she empowering women or trying to suppress them? The “prudery” that Delany condemns (182, 191-92) may have less in common with Victorian censorship than with late-twentieth-century concerns about harassment and hostile environments in the workplace; like many involved in the “political correctness” controversy, Christine perceived bawdy speech as a sign of contempt. It is true that she advocated maintaining traditional roles, at least on the surface, but it is also true that male debates on the position of women were more intellectual exercises than serious defenses, and they were perceived as the thin edge of a wedge of general social disruption:

At most the defense of women may have offered some of the men a chance to play with dangerous ideas such as radical egalitarianism and skepticism.... if women need be neither subject to men nor confined to their households, then perhaps nothing need be as it is.... If all we believe with respect to women has no support beyond custom, is our opinion on other matters, our belief in the religion of our ancestors, for example, any more solidly based? If all laws and pronouncements with respect to women are the result either of blind prejudice or of the cynical conspiracy of men seeking to keep power in their own hands, what of the laws of church or state that keep prelates and princes in power? Is the inferiority of peasant to king, or of savage to civilized European any more “natural” than that of woman to man? (Case 81)

These are exactly the kinds of questions Christine does not wish to be accused of raising. Rather than fall victim to criticisms that her writing encourages peasants’ revolts,

shrewish wives, or heresy, Christine, whom Forhan describes as “the quintessential outsider” (vi), appears to uphold the status quo. In her stern warnings to women of all classes to show deference to their husbands with curtsying and sweet conversation, not to dress above their station, to perform all conventional formulae of piety, from church-going to almsgiving, Christine seems to be paying lip-service, at least, to hierarchies of gender, of class, of established religion. But more than any other author in this chapter, Christine is frank about the aim of all this deference: the woman is to gain heaven eventually, but in the mean time, she can wield power on earth. Only the poorest women, who have no choice but to appear humble, must set their sights more directly on heaven. Where humility is an option, rather than an inescapable fate, it must be acted out, with lowered eyes and soft voice, in order for the woman to get her way.

In the end, however, Christine’s emphasis on the visible performance of virtue does not completely exclude a concern with the interior self. Princesses may be told to perform an affection they do not feel, but their chaperons are told to help them to feel it, if necessary by expressing admiration for the prince and giving the princess a model to copy. Chaperons who cannot feel loyal to their princess, regard court favorites without jealousy, or observe the princess’s conduct without averting scandal are urged to resign. Christine tells peasants and servants to be loyal and honest, but in doing so she is telling their employers, who are more likely to read the book, to reward and encourage loyalty and honesty through fair dealing. Like the *Ménagier* and Geoffroi de la Tour, Christine at heart does expect outer virtue to correspond to inner virtue, but rather than depicting

the virtuous exterior as merely the expression of an already virtuous interior, she hopes that rehearsing the *procedures* of charity and patience will produce their emotional realities.

In pretending that she does not seek the hearts and minds of her readers, when they are her ultimate goal, Christine is being something of a hypocrite. But since her ultimate goal is to promote the welfare of princess, lady-in-waiting, and kingdom, she herself would call her hypocrisy a virtuous one. Ultimately, her message is a straightforward one, for she believes no more than Geoffroi de la Tour or the Menagier that a woman can radically improve her station in life. Rather than offer false hope that her readers can change the world, she gives them as many useful strategies as she knows for making their small corner in it a bearable one.

* * *

How should we account for the differences in these three texts? Certainly, Christine de Pisan's noble readers have the greatest apparent freedom of thought: it is assumed that, unlike the Chevalier's daughters or the Ménagier's wife, they will be responsible for making many decisions, and making them correctly, and it is insufficient to follow blindly the counsel of authority figures: they must be able to distinguish good counsel from bad. Yet of all three groups, they have the least physical freedom: as public figures, they must assume that their words, their physical deportment, even the smallest motion of lips or eyes will be observed and interpreted by others, and must be controlled and even manipulated accordingly. In contrast, the Chevalier's original female readers, the minor nobility, are presumably to maintain the same meek manner inside and out; if a wife must assuage her husband's anger or persuade him not to pursue some plan

of revenge, her outer tact is not acknowledged, at least by the Chevalier, to be a necessary disguise for dealing effectively with someone she knows to be an idiot. Her show of respect means feeling respect; indeed, if she does not use her tact to protect her lord's best interests, she cannot have his best interests at heart, and clearly does not bear him proper love. In the *Ménagier's* account of Griselda, the mistreated wife maintains this same oblivious demeanor, but the court perceives Waler's ineptitude, and so, plainly, does the *Ménagier* who tells the story. As for the *Ménagier's* wife, well-born but clearly now expected to maintain a prosperous bourgeois household, she is warned that her relatives will point out her faults if her husband does not, but she is also told, surprisingly, that when she consults these same relatives for advice, she may "follow it either more or less as you please" ("si en faictes ou plus ou moins selon vostre vouloir") (Powers 42) (*Ménagier* I. 3). Like the princesses and Chevalier's daughters named in the other two books, her speech and gestures will make or break her reputation, but in her case the stakes are more local: she risks the disapproval of a small neighborhood in a large town, not of an entire signory, and while she must not jeopardize her personal happiness or her soul's salvation with bad behavior, neither the fate of a country nor of a diplomatic alliance rests on her. The poorest women, if we believe the advice aimed at them is any more than a rhetorical ploy actually designed for their betters, have the greatest physical freedom, but the least spiritual freedom. They are constantly reminded to guard their thoughts, because God is watching.

How then, does each writer believe that inner virtue and outer virtue interact, if at all? The *Ménagier* would like a virtuous inside to correspond to a virtuous outside not least for the sake of his wife's immortal soul, since God sees through all hypocrisy, and

such virtue cannot be coerced. The Chevalier acknowledges that hypocrisy can exist, but supposes (or hopes) that physical fear might be sufficient to keep it in check, at least until the woman reaches an age where she has sufficient reason to understand and approve the virtue she has been previously taught to mime. Granted, many of his exempla were compiled by clerics (unless his account of commissioning the book is an authorial fiction, like Chaucer's "Lollius"), and his input on those sections might have been minimal, in which case the emphasis on religious actions would seem to be explained, but the lack of emphasis on the inner soul would not. Surely, the divines he commissioned could be expected to emphasize the state of the soul during confession and Mass as the *Ménagier* does, but the Chevalier's scribes seem more concerned that confession involve enumerating all one's sins aloud and that kneeling and fasting accompany all churchgoing and private devotions. The Chevalier's reader seems more subject to physical threat than the *Ménagier's*, but less psychologically monitored: The Chevalier seems to take it for granted that a physical regimen of early rising, frequent prayer, and submission to male authority will produce the desirable traits of piety and meekness. Christine de Pisan, harsh realist that she is, would have the high-born woman bear inward virtue indistinguishable from outer virtue only in the eyes of God; in the eyes of man, her virtue must be physically performed in almost complete detachment from her inner life. When it comes to her social existence, Christine's princess is deeply embedded in a web of facial expressions and bodily postures, varying appropriately for private afternoons with ladies-in-waiting or court occasions with heads of state; when it comes to her

consciousness, she is scarcely embedded at all, for Christine recognizes that she cannot successfully perform her role if she loses herself in it. The poor woman, on the other hand, must be sincere, for her most important audience is God himself.

If a generalization may be safely made, the higher the woman's status, the less pertinent her interior life becomes, but given her position as the cynosure of all eyes, her inner life is far more likely to be construed, or misconstrued by others in terms of her outward signs: speech and physical gestures. The more public her sphere, the more she must guard her psychological privacy by consciously adopting the physical signs of virtue. The lower her status, the more she must be won over and assured that God, not to mention the author, values her opinion and her cooperation. And yet, the generalization could equally be made that, at least for Christine, the higher status of the lady's *audience* necessitates the divide between her thoughts and her physical performance, for although the lady's sympathy and compassion for recipients of her charity is required to be genuine and founded in the heart, towards backstabbing courtiers and even her own husband she must bear a pleasant demeanor that may have little to do with her true state of mind. Christine never addresses the fact that a working woman, scarcely having time to go to church, may equally have to show a pleasant demeanor to employers she knows to be penny-pinching little tyrants. The Chevalier and the Ménagier draw less of a distinction between human audience members, as far as requisite sincerity is concerned; hypocrisy becomes an issue only before God.

Where all three authors agree, however, is on the necessity for teaching the proper words and gestures to young women. Inner grace is insufficient, of itself, to produce the outward signs of its existence: these must be acquired through the woman's own

conscious study and through the influence of trustworthy authorities: family members, the clergy, and guide-books such as the ones these authors have written. Whether the woman is motivated by fear of punishment, a desire to please her family and community, or a hope of eternal salvation, whether her body carries out the urgings of a mind filled with virtuous maxims, or the mind responds to a body habituated to acts of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, someone has to tell the lady the rules, and someone has to explain to her why she might want to obey them. As necessary as her obedience or even cooperation may be, the information she needs must come from external forces.

Should she heed these forces, she can be the mouse that roared. All three authors present scenes of women restraining the behavior of hot-headed or ill-advised men. When the Chevalier contrasts the behavior of Esther with Haman's wife, when the *Ménagier* praises Griselda for obviously managing the signory better than her husband, when Christine de Pisan shows a princess healing the breach between her husband and his barons or an artisan's wife steering her husband away from a bad bargain, the promise is that—covertly—women will have what Chaucer's Wife called “the maistrie” in marriage (Robinson III. 1040).

However, the reality is that all three books assume that marriages and rank are arranged matters. The princess cannot hope for a more handsome or affectionate husband, although she can do her best to sweeten the temper of the one she has; the woman of minor nobility might hope to marry a powerful landowning nobleman, but she will not have kings courting her as a king's daughter would. As for the *Ménagier*, he

cheerfully admits to his wife that she comes of a higher birth than he and in marrying him she has somewhat married down (Powers 137-38) (*Ménagier* I.126). The advice given in these conduct manuals concerns making one's situation in life as pleasant as possible, not changing it.

Notes

¹ The subtitle of the Slatkine Reprint rather positively identifies the author as “un bourgeois parisien,” and his concern with managing servants, preparing a good hypocras, and ridding the house of fleas does seem somehow middle-class.

² All modern English translations of the Chevalier de la Tour are mine.

³ Bear in mind that feeling a husband’s “arm over my syde” is interpreted by the Wife of Bath as a definite sexual overture (Robinson III.410), and one may speculate that this particular custom did not vary much from one country to another.

⁴ As Anne Marie De Gendt points out, instilling sexual mores into female children would indeed have been seen as the mother’s responsibility (“Plusieurs” 125); the Chevalier’s book, according to him, is the result of wondering how to instill such morals in his daughter when he is a widower without a wife to handle such matters.

⁵ It will be important to remember, amidst all the warnings against feminine speech, one of several forms of speech that are protected is confession. Christine de Pisan will even recommend that wives bring complaints to their confessors and let them mediate with the erring husbands. There are other protected forms of feminine speech that the Chevalier lauds, and they will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁶ Hunting fowls had their eyes sewn shut and were minimally fed until they learned dependent and submissive behavior towards humans.

⁷ The exception here is in hiring servants, where the wife is indeed advised to watch for external signs of virtue and vice, and in particular, discourage female servants from foul language, lest they be unjustly accused by public opinion of sexual laxity as well, the two sins being thought to go together (210).

⁸ This is something Kim M. Phillips brings up in her discussion of the Chevalier’s book, describing the link between interior and exterior in terms of Jean-Claude Schmitt’s theories on gesture (“Bodily Walls” 191).

CHAPTER 2

GOOD KNIGHT, SWEET PRINCE

If young Frenchwomen have little hope of upward mobility, can their brothers fare any better? Despite the supposedly greater career options for men, the messages Geoffroi de Charny and Christine de Pisan give male readers in his Book of Chivalry and her Livre de Corps de Policie are not markedly more encouraging, in terms of social betterment, than those offered female readers in the last chapter. Geoffroi urges men-at-arms to build a reputation for valor over time, but he knows that noble status and material prosperity may continue to elude most of them, and they may spend years taking orders from leaders with high rank and low competence. Christine's Corps de Policie, like her Trois Vertus, assures readers they can shine within their proper spheres, but offers no hope that they can escape those spheres.

But was the hierarchy in France really so rigidly fixed? Geoffroi de Charny and Christine de Pisan are writing at a time when social mobility has become both limited and newly feasible. It is limited in that proving one's worth through chivalry no longer provides ready passage into the aristocracy, if it ever did outside of romances, where it is a staple—and even there nobility is *revealed* by virtue, not the reward for it, as the hero usually turns out to be a long-lost heir to begin with (i.e., Percival [Duby Chivalrous 107]), while in romances such as Jean Renart's, the villain is a “*vilain* upstart,” an

intruder and “base-born man, badly educated” who should never have been permitted to rise (182). It is newly feasible in that acquiring money through trade rather than tenanted estates allows new-money families to intermarry with other families possessing lots of gentility and no cash. The nobility resent the interlopers, even if (or especially if) they must interbreed with them; commoners resent them for assuming the rights of ancient privilege without being ancient; and as the late medieval king begins to monopolize the issuing of patents of nobility, taking them out of the realm of chivalry altogether (Bush 66), all classes begin to resent *him*.

It is in this atmosphere that Geoffroi and Christine attempt to direct their readers towards the path of virtue. Geoffroi ostensibly addresses his Book of Chivalry to members of the Company of the Star, an aristocratic and exclusive audience (Kaeuper and Kennedy 20-21), but he will praise the valor of good fighting men of all classes, and criticize highborn leaders who do not live up to their responsibilities. Christine, as she did in Trois Vertus, will address her Book of the Body Politic (Livre de Corps de Policie) to all classes, even those unlikely to read it, and her message is one of mutual respect and interdependence. Geoffroi deals with the question of rank by establishing a hierarchy of motive that supersedes the hierarchy of birth: the man who takes up chivalry for love of glory is superior to the man who takes it up to win a lady’s favor, and he in his turn is superior to the mercenary, and so on. Christine deals with rank by not only telling her various classes how they should behave towards each other, as all conduct writers do, but also telling them how they should regard each other. Subjects must love their prince as well as obeying him; princes must feel goodwill towards their subjects as well as taking material steps to promote their safety and prosperity; knights must have loyalty upwards

and compassion downwards. Geoffroi has no qualms about using allusions to chivalrous romances to inspire his readers' ambition and enthusiasm; Christine distrusts how romances make readers lose control of their passions, and prefers a classical Roman model in which the emotions are guided and restrained at all times.

In other words, despite Geoffroi's subject of physical combat and Christine's metaphor of the state as a living human body, both writers have written conduct manuals focused far more on feelings than on conduct. Although this is partly explained by Dronzek's theory that conduct manuals geared to women will focus on the physical and those geared to males will focus on the intellectual because of medieval beliefs about gendered learning styles (144), I believe that other issues also come into play. Geoffroi and Christine attempt to elicit cooperation from readers whose cooperation may be very difficult to get. Unlike the readers of female conduct manuals, who could see clear rewards of good marriages and punishments of public disgrace and ostracism depending on whether they follow the rules, male readers of books praising chivalry and keeping one's place knew that social advancement was becoming a matter of clever marital alliances and royal or noble patronage, not getting filleted by an opponent. As Richard Kaeuper remarks, "chivalry meant the worship of prowess, and prowess (whatever gentler qualities idealists wanted to associate with it) meant beating an opponent with really good hacking and thrusting" ("Societal" 99). But how important was prowess to social advancement in the late middle ages?¹ Families who could prove that they had maintained a noble lifestyle for a number of generations (usually three) knew that they could claim noble status and escape paying taxes (Bush 63, 76). They also knew that pursuing certain occupations considered ignoble could subject them and their descendants

to derogation laws which would deprive them of their noble status and oblige them to pay taxes again (86-87). How could readers be persuaded to subject themselves to “hacking and thrusting” or to live simply and industriously when the rewards for doing otherwise were so unmistakable? Their answer to the question, “What’s in it for me?” might be, “Not much”—unless they regarded leading lives of virtue and valor as something more than merely a practical plan to obtain material rewards.

Neither Geoffroi nor Christine proffers radical social advancement as a likely possibility. Geoffroi acknowledges that men-at-arms may risk life and limb for many years without ever gaining a title, or even gaining the respect of less experienced leaders drawn from the aristocracy who refuse to listen to their advice. Christine knows that commoners may have little or no opportunity to advance themselves, and that those who achieve material success and flaunt it too openly will be ridiculed by the aristocracy rather than welcomed. Rather than discourage their readers with endless lectures on staying in their miserable, lowly place and counting themselves lucky they have even so much, both try to provide an alternative path of living with dignity and virtue regardless of class. The system only works if their leaders and employers treat them with professional courtesy, instead of contempt or indifference. For Geoffroi and Christine to elicit cooperation from their readers, they could not afford to be perceived as deceptive or dishonest, extolling systems of chivalry or class interdependence in which they did not

truly believe in order to keep people docile. It is my contention that they *did* believe these medieval structures could work, if people would work to uphold them, and their very sincerity is what made them effective and popular authors.

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Geoffroi de Charny may be seen, perhaps, to be writing to the brothers of the Chevalier de la Tour's audience: a knightly class that may or may not be financially solvent. He recognizes that chivalry may be pursued for gain, without openly acknowledging that without this option, advantageous marriages may be the only way of rising in the world, and marriage is generally less hazardous to life and limb. What he does not state is that by the time he is writing, chivalry had become one of the least practical and statistically, least practiced ways of advancing one's self. The eleventh century was "an age of constant frontier warfare during which military function was as important as birth, if not more so" (MacKay 158), explaining the meteoric rise of heroes such as the Cid. As Paul Strohm writes:

As recently as the thirteenth century, with their ranks winnowed and their prestige both reflected and enhanced by increased costs, the knights had been firmly associated with the baronial aristocracy, not only in theory but in practice. In the course of the fourteenth century, however, a decisive separation occurred—a separation that, although continuing to affirm the gentility of the knights, denied their aristocratic status.... The lower ranks of the old elite, whose position was

based on land tenure, found themselves jostled by persons who had gained gentility through household or military service, or by nongentle persons whose condition was based on the exchange of goods and chattels. (4-5)

As Rachel Dressler points out, by the later Middle Ages, “It was income and goods, not lineage, that determined one’s knightly position. And there are indications that marriage was an equal, if not greater, factor in acquiring, retaining and enhancing the patrimony than the male line of descent” (148). Going to work as a commercial farmer or a shopkeeper could lead to legal forfeiture of noble status (Bush 86), but failing to take up arms could not, no matter how much it made the neighbors gossip. Although Dominique Barthélemy says “There was only one class, at once noble and knightly” (60), Theodore Evergates maintains that “Nobility and knighthood denoted entirely separate characteristics, neither signifying the other” (17). As for families in which nobility and knighthood had been synonymous when they were first establishing themselves, “the descendants of these self-made men soon ceased to arm their sons” (Duby Chivalrous 96).

To induce spoiled heirs of the nobility to take up chivalry when their privileges are something they may well take for granted, or to appeal to upwardly mobile commoners who know that an arranged marriage or a court appointment is a more direct (and less painful) way to rank than getting bashed over the head with a mace, Geoffroi must promote the abstract idea of chivalry, the concept that it is “ennobling” in itself, even without the official acquisition of a title. Geoffroi, to judge by his biography in Richard Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy’s translation, truly accepted the abstract idea of chivalry: “Vigorous and valiant as he may have been, he was captured twice, went on a

useless crusade, failed to secure Calais for his king, and was hacked to death in the great set-piece battle for which he had presumably longed all his life. Yet he was vastly admired by his contemporaries, and when we turn to the ideals he presents in his writing we find that he lived the sort of life he most valued, dying in the manner most fitting his strong sense of vocation.”

Why was he so admired, if his practical results were so negligible? As Kaeuper and Kennedy see it, “...through the window of his words, we modern readers can get a new glimpse into the lay aristocratic mind of his age” (18). It is probable that through the window of Geoffroi’s words, medieval readers hoped to get a glimpse into the aristocratic mind of their own age: non-aristocrats, so they could understand the class they hoped to enter or at least emulate, and aristocrats, so they could become a part of a tradition they had been taught was theirs to uphold. Although, as Susan Crane points out, reading history (or literature) backwards to find “the irrelevance of birth and the sole supremacy of conduct on determining merit” is a modern distortion of the medieval idea that “status can be bequeathed, but virtuous conduct must complement it before true gentility can be claimed” (107), still there was a medieval notion that a “family’s reputation” was “the accretion of generations rather than merely the work of an individual” (Bush 109). As M.L. Bush notes, “For the nobility justification was not by birth alone; deeds of valour were a part of its code of values” (108).

Geoffroi’s frame, however, assumes a wholly aristocratic audience, since all three of his works are thought to have been written for the king’s chivalric order, the Company of the Star (Kaeuper and Kennedy 20-21), but his discussions of other classes of fighting men show that he at least wishes his aristocratic readers to respect and value fighters

from other ranks. One of Geoffroi's sources, Ramon Lull's Libre que es de l'ordre de cavalleria (c. 1279-1283), was translated into French as Livre de l'ordre de chevalerie shortly after the Catalan original appeared (Kaeuper and Kennedy 24-25). Geoffroi departs from his source in many areas, particularly those concerning religion and women, which shall be discussed in more detail later. The first difference is his attitude towards poor knights. Bush notes that higher nobles wanted to set themselves apart from lower ones, and chivalry was one method of doing it: "To distinguish themselves from the noble ruck [sic], French nobles sought the knighthoods imparted by membership of the chivalric orders of St. Michel, Estoire and St. Esprit" (33). However, Jean le Bon's aim was to *expand* the membership of the Company of the Star, and Geoffroi's actual audience was meant to be an inclusive one. Kaeuper and Kennedy refer to his

attempt to write a book that could reach all layers of power, status, and wealth within the body of knights. He constantly speaks with respect and encouragement even to poor knights. Here he changes the emphasis found in Ramon Lull. The Libre que s de l'ordre de cavalleria insists that knights be not only nobly born but wealthy enough to sustain themselves in the proper state; Lull had worried that poor knights would turn to robbery. Charny, however, stands rather with such works as the Lancelot du Lac in which the valiant poor knight was recognized. His thoughts could potentially go to all those who lived honorably by the progression of arms, whatever their particular social substratum. He thereby assured the possibility of the wider audience for his treatise. (34)

Geoffroi begins his hierarchy with men who devote themselves to jousting and stop with that. They "neglect and abandon the other pursuits of arms" ("en delaissent et

entreoublient les autres mestiers d'armes"), but "that is not to deny that it is a good pursuit, attractive for the participants and fair to see. I therefore say that it is good to do" ("mais toutevoies est li mestier bon et bien avenant a faire et bel a regarder. Et pour ce di je qu'il est bien de le faire"). However, "he who does more is of greater worth" (qui plus fait, mieux vault") (86-87). Jousting was one of the rituals used to establish and display social status, as Susan Crane has noted: "a knight or a lady, by taking part in a tournament or a courtly Maying, is simultaneously demonstrating virtues said to be class-specific and attempting to enhance personal honor (for prowess in the one case, chaste sexuality in the other)" (176).

Tournaments merit higher praise than jousting from Geoffroi, not least because of their greater risks: "physical hardship, crushing and wounding, and sometimes danger of death" ("travail de corps, froisseures et bleceures, et peril de mort aucun foiz"). Participants are usually encouraged by the fame they acquire (which appears more widespread than gained by men who confine themselves to jousting). Geoffroi does not condemn the desire for fame (a theme we shall also encounter in Christine's Corps de policie), and even acknowledges it as a mark of divine favor: "they want to continue this kind of pursuit of arms because of the success God has granted them in it" ("violent continuer de poursuivre en celi fait d'armes [pour les graces que Dieu leur en a faictes"]). But fame in tournaments is not something that should content knights: "They content themselves with this particular practice of arms because of the acclaim they have already won and still expect to win from it. Indeed they are worthy of praise; nevertheless he

who does more is of greater worth” (“de cesti mestier d’armes se tiennent pour coens pour les grans los qu’il en ont et entendent a avoir. Et vraiment il font bien a loer, combien que: qui plus fait, mieux vault”) (86-87).

As an encouragement to greater endeavors, Geoffroi believes in earning what might be termed bragging rights, and this involves traveling to find wars to fight. Fighters who go on pilgrimage or journey to battle in foreign countries have the right to tell of the “strange marvels and extraordinary things” they have seen (“merveilles estranges et diverses choses”) even if others who have never traveled assume they must be exaggerating or lying outright: “...it should seem to all men of worth that those who have seen such things can and should give a better and truer account of them than those who will not or dare not go there.... We should therefore be glad to listen to, behold, and honor those who have been on distant journeys to foreign parts, for indeed no one can travel so far without being many times in physical danger” (“il doit sembler a toutes gens de bien que cilz qui ont veu teles choses en peuent et doivent mieux parler et dire la verité que ceulx qui n’y veulent ou osent aler.... Et pour ce devons nous telz gens qui ainsi ont esté en lointains et estranges voiajes volentiers oïr, veoir et honorer; car vraiment nulz ne eput aler en telx loitains voiajes que le corps ne soit en peril maintes foiz”) (90-91).

What Geoffroi is offering is rhetorical power : the well-traveled fighter may speak with authority in company, instead of remaining silent and humbly listening to the experiences of others. On a purely practical side, travel could indeed be a good career move :

M.G.A. Vale notes that “Lesser nobles served the great magnates in their private quarrels,” and consequently made valuable alliances while they acquired material profit—but the French crown generally tried to suppress conflicts among the provincial

nobilities, although it was not always successful (139). Geoffroi omits all mention of the defiance, or at least evasion, of royal prohibitions involved in going to distant places to find battles to fight. In Geoffroi's world, traveling gives a fighting man rhetorical authority, as well as military authority: others must listen to his opinions with respect.

Moreover, the fighter deserves this respect even if his original motives are mercenary. Such men might "have preferred to remain in their own region if they could well do so" ("plus volontiers demorassent en leurs paÿs se il peussent bonnement"), Geoffroi admits, "nevertheless they leave and go to Lombardy or Tuscany or Pulia or other lands where pay or other rewards can be earned, and there they stay and are provided with horses, and armor is included in the pay and rewards they receive" ("toutesfoiz s'en partent et vont en Lomardie ou en Touscane, en Puille ou es autres paÿs, la ou l'en donne soulz et gaiges, et la se demeurent et se mettent en estat de chevaux et d'armeures parmi les solz et les gaiges qu'ilz reçoivent") (92-93). The mercenary motives are not so deplorable when the gain is applied to acquiring more accoutrements of war, rather than some item of luxury or amusement. Indeed, those qualified by both birth and training for a life of chivalry were not infrequently barred from it by the expense (Bush 120), so the concern is a practical one, not just a question of preferring more noble motives. Geoffroi adds that the man-at-arms who goes to war with this motive will also "learn and gain knowledge of much that is good through participating in war, for they may be in such lands or territories where they can witness and themselves achieve great deeds of arms. And many times Our Lord has favored a number of those who have departed in the way I described above both with renown for their great achievements through their physical strength and skill" ("apprendre et savoir moult de

biens pour le fait de la guerre, car ilz peuvent estre en telx païs ou marches la ou peuvent veoir et faire en fait d'armes moult de biens. Et plusieurs foiz a Nostre Sires donné grace a plusieurs qui sont alez en la maniere qu j'ay dessus dite, tant de le renomme des grans biens qu'ilz y ont faiz se leurs corps et de leur main"). The man who begins with mercenary goals is thus acceptable, although it is to be hoped that his experiences will inspire him with more noble motives. Naturally, he is still inferior to the man who *began* with noble motives, but men must not criticize what God has approved: "when God has by His grace granted them honor for their great exploits in this military activity, such men deserve to be praised and honored everywhere, provided that they do not, because of the profits they have made, give up the exercise of arms too soon, for he who too quickly gives it up may easily diminish his reputation" ("quant Dieu leur a donné tel grace d'onnour pour les bons faiz en ce mestier, icelles gens font a loer et honnorer partout, mais que il ne delaissent mie pour leur proffit trop tost du continuer; car qui trop tost le delaisse, de legier s'abaisse de renommee") (92-93). As much as Geoffroi values motives in general, in this he veers slightly more towards Christine de Pisan's emphasis on appearances: the fighter might value money more than fame or the glory of battle, but he ought at least to make this preference less obvious by waiting a decent interval before he quits.

Men who spend all their profits on extravagant fighting gear, however, are not entirely superior to misers who do not wish to spend their own funds at all. Although the men with lavish equipages "deserve praise for their great determination to put their own resources into the pursuit of opportunities for performing deeds of arms" ("bien font a loer pour la grant et bonne volenté qu'ilz ont de mettre le leur en poursuivre les faiz

d'armes"), they may be denied such opportunities through their own fault: "it often happens that they have to depart, because of the great state and outward show with which they burden them and the great expenditure to which they commit themselves" ("dont avient il moult de foiz que il convient qu'il s'en partent pour le grant estat dont ilz se chargent et les grans missions qu'il veulent faire"). This is a great pity, since, given the proper opportunity, "they fight as well as good men-at-arms are wont to do" ("il les font si tres bien come bonnes gens d'armes ont accoustumé du faire") (96-97). Novice warriors who based their conduct in battle on their experience of jousting would be particularly prone to this kind of excess. Philippe Contamine describes how knights tried to outdo each other in the ostentation of their jousting pavilions. Each knight generally displayed "the four shields of his grandparents," but "there are cases where eight or even sixteen shields or quarters of nobility were displayed for the admiration of all" (207). Clearly, competition often began with lineage and decor rather than combat. Geoffroi does not entirely disapprove: sumptuous display and fancy gear are positive qualities in that they express enthusiasm, but they are also negative ones in that they limit the actual *practice* of arms. The greedy warrior who fights for the wrong reasons is almost preferable to the sincere one who uses up his funds so quickly that he has to go home without having fought at all. This undercuts Geoffroi's general position that motive is more important than deeds alone.

The tension between motive and practice as the core of virtue is very strong in this particular area. Geoffroi's harshest condemnation of greed is initially aimed squarely at its practical effects in battle: "there are a number of men," he writes, "who pay more attention to taking prisoners and other profit, and when they have seized them and other

winnings, they are more anxious to safeguard their captives and their booty than to help bring the battle to a good conclusion. And it may well be that a battle can be lost this way” (“plusuers sont qui regardent a prendre volenté et desire de sauver leurs prisons ou leur gaaing que de secourir et aidier de mettre la journee a bonne fin. Et bien puet avenir que par tel maniere peut l’en perdre la journee”).² His emphasis at this point is on good battle tactics, but the conclusions he draws on the topic of greed return the focus to the combatant’s motives of virtue or vice: “In this vocation one should therefore set one’s heart and mind on winning honor, which endures for ever, rather than on winning profit and booty, which one can lose within one single hour” (“Et pour ce doit l’en mettre en ce mestier plus son cuer et s’entente a l’onnour, qui tous temps dure, que a proffit et gaing que l’en peut perdre en une seule heure”) (98-99). The bravery and valor of men who fight for profit is certainly preferable to cowardice and idleness, but those with less mercenary motives are to be prized still more highly.

In general, Geoffroi prizes those whose military aspirations proceed from within over those who require external stimuli, and yet this leads into a practice of deliberately seeking out such external stimuli: going to tournaments, reading histories of brave knights, talking with men who have been in combat, so as to increase one’s own enthusiasm. His highest admiration is reserved for men who

...from their own nature and instinct, as soon as they begin to reach the age of understanding and with their understanding they like to hear and listen to men of prowess talk of military deeds, and to see men-at-arms with their weapons and armor and enjoy looking at fine mounts and chargers; and as they increase in years, so they increase in prowess and in skill in the arts of arms in peace and war;

and as they reach adulthood, the desire in their hearts grows ever greater to ride horse and bear arms. And when they are old enough and have reached the stage where they can do so, they do not seek advice nor do they believe anyone who wants to counsel them against bearing arms at the first opportunity, and from that time forward, on more and more occasions; as they increase in years, so they increase in prowess, and in skill in the art of arms for peace and for war. And they themselves, through their great zeal and determination, learn the true way to practice the military arts until they, on every occasion, know how to strive toward the most honorable course of action, whether in relation to deeds of arms or in relation to other forms of behavior appropriate to their rank. Then they reflect on, inform themselves, and inquire how to conduct themselves most honorably in all circumstances. They do this quickly and gladly, without waiting for admonitions or exhortations.

[...cil qui, de leur propre nature et de leur propre mouvement, dès lors que connoissance se comence a mettre en eux en leur jeunesse, et de leur connoissance ilz oient et escoutent volontiers parler les bons et raconter des faiz d'armes, voient volontiers gens d'armes armez et leurs harnois, et si voient volontiers beaux chevaux et beaux coursiers; et ainsi come ilz viennent en aage, si leur croist leur cuer ou ventre et la tres grant volenté qu'ilz le peuvent faire, ilz n'en demandent conseil, ne n'en croient nullui qui les en vueille conseiller qu'il qu'il ne arment ou premier fait d'armes de paiz et en fait d'armes de guerre. Et d'eulx mesmes pour la grant et bonne volenté qu'il y ont, aprennent il l'usage et la

maniere du faire, et tant qu'il ont la cognoissance de tousjours faire et tirer au plus honorable, tant de tous faiz d'armes comes en autres manieres, de tous bons gouvernemens qui a leurs estaz appartiennent. Et lors s'apprensent et avisent et demandement de tout ce qui est bon a faire pour le plus honorable. Si le font briefment et liement et n'attendant pas que l'en las amonnestes, ne que l'en les en avise. (100-101)]

Despite the inner motivation Geoffroi praises, note the many external reinforcements his men-at-arms must seek. They must find veteran fighters so they can learn from their experience; they must look for jousts and tournaments so they can copy the proper manners for these events. Not least of all these external stimuli is Geoffroi's own book: surely, no novice warrior is so intrinsically dedicated that he will not welcome encouragement and a few tips from Geoffroi. Perhaps the test of the man's mettle is in his reaction to these things: presumably, some fledgling fighters are discouraged by their aching muscles and bruises, or some listeners greet tales of tournaments with a determination to stay home and mind the crops or go into the family spice business rather than risk being tossed off a horse and permanently crippled if not killed. Perhaps some decide that they will engage in jousts to impress the local girls, but not chance being carved into small chunks in far-away battles where none of the neighbors can admire

them in any case. Perhaps tales of legendary warriors do inspire some neophytes, as Geoffroi hopes, to seek the glory that comes with increased danger. But the litmus test is still based on an internal reaction to an external influence.

Moreover, the rewards are external too. Dedicated students of warfare rewarded by God with greater skill in the arts of war they have so faithfully practiced and praise from onlookers. Their success encourages them to seek further glory:

And when God by his grace grants them frequent success in jousting, they enjoy it, and their desire to bear arms increases. Then after jousting, they learn about the practice of arms in tournaments, and it becomes apparent to them and they recognize that tournaments bring greater honor than jousting for those who perform well there. Then they set out to bear arms in tournaments as often as they can. And when by God's grace, they perform well there, joyfully, gladly, and openly, then it seems to them that tournaments contribute more to their renown and their status than jousting had done; so they no longer take part in jousts as often as they were wont to do, and go to tournaments instead. Their knowledge increases until they see and recognize that the men at arms who are good in war are more highly prized and honored than any other men-at-arms. It therefore seems to them from their own observation that they should immediately take up the practice of arms in war in order to achieve the highest honor in prowess, for they cannot attain this by any other form of armed combat. And as soon as they realize this, they give up participating so frequently in exercising their skill at arms in local events and take up armed combat in war. They look around, inquire, and find out where the greatest honor is to be found at that particular time. Then

they go to that place and, in keeping with their natural good qualities, are keen to discover all the conditions of armed combat in war, and cannot be satisfied with themselves if they do not realize to the full their wish to find themselves there and to learn.

[Et quant Dieu leur donne grace de le bien faire baudement et liement et ouvertement, dont leur semble il bien que le tournoier leur accroist leur renommee et leur bien plus que les joustes ne faisoient. Si delaissent plus les joustes qu'ilz n'avoient acoustumé pour aler aux tournois; et de plus en plus leur accroist leur cognoissance tant qu'il voient et cognoissent que les bonnes gens d'armes pour les guerres sont plus prisiez et honorez que nul des autres gens d'armes qui soient. Dont leur semble de leur propre cognoissance que en ce mestier d'armes de guerre se doivent mettre souverainement pour avoir la haute honnour de proesce; car par autre mestier d'armes ne le pueent il avoir. Et si tost come ilz en ont la cognoissent, si delaissent a faire si souvent les faiz d'armes de pays et se mettent es faiz d'armes de guerre. Si regardent et enquierent et demandent ou il fait le plus honorable selon le temps en quoy ilz sont. Dont vont il celle part et puis veulent savor de leur bonne nature tous les estas de fait de guerre et ne se pueent tenir a paiez d'eulx mesme se ilz ne voient tout le desir qu'ilz ont du savoir et de y estre. (100-03)]

Despite Geoffroi's emphasis on "their own observation" and "their natural good qualities," the vital inducements to take up arms are "renown," "status," and a wish to be "highly prized and honored." There is also a sort of abstract concept of the perfect knight

at work here: he does not practice arms and increase his skill only so he will be capable of going to war. Rather, he goes to war as part of increasing his skill and his resemblance to the chivalric ideal on which he is encouraged to model himself. Defense of the realm and social advancement are part of a larger program of self-improvement, in which the practice of chivalry is an end in itself. As Kaeuper and Kennedy put it, “Being a hardy fighter is not enough, though it is praiseworthy in itself. The great goal is not simply to win each contest, but to become a *preudomme*, a man of worth,” whose virtue progresses from “genuine love and service of God,” through wisdom instead of mere wit, to valor beyond what mercenary rashness can achieve. Following virtuous leaders will eventually make him a good leader also, not only in the military sense but also in the sense of being a moral role-model (58).

Nevertheless, one of the best-known motives for engaging in arms does indeed begin with an outside influence. What has Geoffroi to say about “Deeds Undertaken for Love of a Lady,” that staple of medieval romance? Men who are “unaware of the great honor they could win through deeds of arms” (“ne cognoissent mie la grant honneur qu’il pourroient acquerir pour les faiz d’armes”) but fight successfully “because they put their hearts into winning the love of lady” (“quar ilz mettent leur cuer en amer par amours”) are to be esteemed—as long as the ladies inspire them to more and greater feats rather than holding them back: “[t]heir ladies themselves, for the great honor and superb qualities that reside in them, do not want to let them tarry nor delay in any way the winning of that honor to be achieved by deeds of arms, and advise them on this and then command them to set out and put all their efforts into winning renown and great honor...these ladies urge them on to reach beyond any of their earlier aspirations: (“leurs

dames mesmes, de leur tres grant honneur et des tres grans biens qui en elles sont, ne les veulent mie laisser sejourner ne perdre leurs temps d'avoir tel honneur come d'onneur d'armes; si les en avisent et puis leur commandent que eulz aillent travailler et acquerir les biens et grans honnours...les y font aler oultre ce que par avant n'en avoient eu nulle volenté"). This pattern of ladies inspiring their suitors to great feats of valor appears repeatedly in the works of Chrétien de Troyes, for one. But while the ladies are being warned by both Geoffroi de la Tour Landry and Christine de Pisan that encouraging suitors will bring them only dishonor and loss of reputation, even if nothing indecent has occurred, Geoffroi de Charny forseees increased credit to both knight and lady: "they should be praised and honored, and so also should the noble ladies who have inspired them" ("les doit l'en loer et honorer et les tres bonne dames aussi qui ainsi les ont faiz") (94-95). Any reservations Geoffroi de Charny has about chivalry for the sake of love have less to do with either rumors or actual instances of unchaste conduct than with the hierarchy of chivalric motivators: obviously, the men who choose chivalry for its own sake are preferable to the ones who are "unaware of the great honor they could win through deeds of arms" and just want to impress a girl.

Why is Geoffroi at such pains to emphasize the inner motives of men-at-arms when so many of the rewards (or punishments) he discusses have to do with external matters: honor, material gain, and status for those who participate, envy, neglect and having to give precedence to war heroes for those who do not? To understand what he does emphasize, we must look at what he does not emphasize: the exclusive nature of chivalry at the time his source, Ramon Lull's book, was written. Lull was addressing a group born into and for the practice of knighthood; outsiders could not easily enter this

group, and insiders were wary of losing the privileges associated with it. In contrast, Geoffroi's audience is made up of nobles who may perceive safer ways of maintaining their rank and aspiring bourgeois who may find easier methods of increasing it, such as patronage, life as a courtier, or advantageous marriage. Lull assumes that everyone would like to join the order of chivalry, not only for its honor but for the privileges of rank pertaining to knights, but that of course some people are disqualified by birth. (The irony here is that Lull's own family "was only a few decades away from bourgeois origins in Barcelona" [Kaeuper Violence 194]). At a time when social mobility is less a question of battle-won honors than of property arrangements and professional connections, Geoffroi argues that chivalry is still worth pursuing for its own sake, not merely for the material benefits it can bring.

We can perceive what Geoffroi thought not only by which passages from Lull he chose to include in his own book, but by what he chose to expand on, and what he chose to omit. Both are distressed by knights who think only of appearances: Lull writes that horse and armor do not automatically make a knight "worthy" (Price 29), and Geoffroi admits that skill and knowledge of proper equestrian equipment are more important than possessing flashy gear (Kaeuper and Kennedy 100-01). Lull states that a knight who behaves dishonorably is beneath a serf or a bondsman, and doesn't deserve the name of knight (Price 20), but there is no corresponding clause such as Geoffroi introduces, that a low-born man who behaves honorably is ennobled by his conduct: "And for those who perform deeds of arms more to gain God's grace and for the salvation of the soul than for glory in this world, their noble souls will be set in paradise to all eternity and their persons will be for ever honored and well remembered. Thus it is for all who go in

search of deeds of arms in support of the right, whether or not they be knights, for many fine men-at-arms are as good as knights....” (Et qui fait les faiz d’armes plus pour avoir la grace de Dieu et pour les ames sauver que pour la gloire de ce monde, les ames dignes sont mises en paradis et sanz fin, et les corps touzjours mais honorez et ramenteuz en touz biens. Et ainsi est il de touz ceulx qui tielx justes faiz d’armes vont querant, ja ne soient il chevalier; que maintes bonnes genz d’armes sont ainsi bon comme li chevalier....”) (Kaeuper and Kennedy 176-77).

Lull is also writing at the time when fighting orders are still prevalent, and he sees chivalry in no way incompatible with holy orders. In fact, Lull believes that knights act according to the spirit, rather than the body, and therefore a carnal knight is contrary to the order of chivalry (Price 30). Geoffroi, however, thinks there is nothing wrong with young men dressing with elegance befitting their rank (Kaeuper and Kennedy 190-91) or going to dances and even flirting a bit (112-13). In his hierarchy of acceptable intent, those who enter chivalry to make court contacts or impress a lady may not be as admirable as those who enter chivalry to support the honor of their lord, but they are still to be praised, and chivalry has a use for them. So invested is Lull in the idea that knighthood is a question of spiritual force that he maintains that a knight who is too easily beaten is suffering from weak courage, rather than a weak body (Price 33). As Kaeuper notes:

Clearly the personal capacity to beat another man through the accepted method of knightly battle—in fact the actual physical process of knocking another man off his horse and, if required, hacking him down to the point of submission or death—appears time and again as something like the ultimate human quality; it

operates in men as a gift of God, it gives meaning to life, reveals the presence of the other desired qualities, wins the love of the most desirable women, determines status and worth, and binds the best males together in a fellowship of the elect.

(Violence 141)

Geoffroi, however, knows with the pain of experience that maintaining such gifts of God requires physical exertion, and those who do not practice quickly get out of shape (Kaeuper and Kennedy 122-25). Lull says that clerics and knights are both doing the will of God, but he privileges the clerics, because their devotion is greater (Price 27).

Geoffroi departs from this completely: despite his many references to the grace of God, Geoffroi's piety does not involve an extensive tolerance for clerics. Knights are nobler, he says, because they have to resist more temptations (Kaeuper and Kennedy 180-83), and he thinks the priests ought to stay in their place and pray (he restrains himself from adding, rather than annoy the fighters by getting in their way): "It is not fit for them [priests] to undertake other duties, and if they behave in this way, they act in keeping with their position and as befits their office. They should not have anything to do except say their masses with diligence and devotion, and this office should suffice without learning any other" ("Il ne leur appartient de chargier d'autres affaires que de celli, et se ainsi le veulent faire, il font selon leurs bons estaz et ce qui a eulz doit appartenir. Si ne doivent avoir a faire fors tant seulement dire leur service et les messs tres diligenment et tres devotement, et cest office doit bien souffire sanz aprendre nul autre") (Kaeuper and Kennedy 174-75). As Rachel Dressler puts it, "...de Charny goes further than distinguishing the role of knight from priest. He suggests that of the two orders, knighthood is superior. He insists that because their vocation is the most dangerous for

soul and body, knights must maintain a clearer conscience than that of any other order. Furthermore, he calls knighthood the most rigorous order of all and says that there is no religious order whose members have to endure as much suffering as that endured by knights” (158). Kaeuper notes that romances dismiss the prayers of clerics as worthless compared to the prowess of a good knight (“Societal” 53), and goes so far as to state that “knights conceived of chivalry [itself] as a practised form of religion, not merely as knighthood with a little pious and retraining overlay. Through the practice of chivalry...warriors fused their violent way of life and their dominance in society with the will of God” (50). Kaeuper also notes that knights apparently thought “the very toughness of their lives functions as a form of penance” (Violence 50), and in one story the courtly world co-opts one of the seven sacraments of the Church: Gawain is punished for killing a lady by having “his penance adjudged by the ladies of the court” (224). No one seems to require a priest for absolution.

The issue here is not solely a knightly disinclination to have meddling priests interfering with the business of war. The back-story here is the scandal of the Knights Templar. In 1307 Phillippe le Bel attempted to merge the Templars with a band of crusaders headed by himself, in what might best be described as a hostile takeover. The Order resisted, and after accusing the Templars of heresy and sodomy, Phillippe eventually intimidated Pope Clement V into issuing a Bull suppressing the Order (Hillgarth 87-88). Although the Templars’ confessions of dishonesty and perversion were obtained by torture, J.N. Hillgarth believes that the Order’s reputation was sufficiently tarnished to make Lull less inclined than he once was to attempt to reconcile holy orders

with the warrior life (100-01). By the time Geoffroi was writing, chivalry had disassociated itself completely from holy orders, and only retained an aura of sacred mystery without actually submitting itself to the Church:

Knights did not simply and obediently bow before clerical authority and, bereft of any ideas of their own, absorb the lessons and patterns for their lives urged on them by their brothers, sisters, and cousins wearing tonsures and veils. They absorbed such ideas as were broadly compatible with the virtual worship of prowess and with the high sense of their own divinely approved status and mission; they likewise downplayed or simply ignored most strictures that were not compatible with their sense of honor and entitlement (Kaeuper “Societal” 105)

Their lip-service to the Church included ignoring its repeated condemnation of tournaments, as well as criticisms leveled by both religious and secular writers (i.e., Bernard of Clairvaux and Alain de Lille [Kaeuper Violence 76-77]). The Christian veneer of what Kaeuper calls “the sacred mythology chivalry constructed for itself” (“Societal” 106) was not sufficiently powerful to put an end to the popular tournaments, despite the occasional death. As Kaeuper and Kennedy point out, “Charny’s praise for

jousting and fighting in the *mélée* as the first two honorable levels of prowess does not ruffle the smooth surface of his piety in the slightest” (46). (He does, however, privilege actual battle above both of these things.)

Despite this, Geoffroi draws his many of his words and concepts “almost intact from the sphere of religion into that of the everyday life of the men-at-arms.” Religion thus colors his idea of physical virtue as well as his definition of prowess:

....Charny borrows something of the coloration of traditional medieval Christian denigration of the body in contrast to the immortal soul. He speaks of “this puny body that lives only the space of an hour.” This phrase might sound strange in the mouth of a knight much given to the praise of prowess, the ultimate display of bodily strength. But Charny uses descriptions of this sort to castigate the bodies of the slothful and the timid, those who do not make the most of their bodies, hearing to risk them in the all-important quest for honor. In his mind denigration of the body in words does not connect at all with deed of *prouesce*, for it is by such feats that a knight gains honor which (like the soul), is immortal. (36)

The honor and virtue Geoffroi advocates, however, do not exclude fin’ amour. Lull disapproves of anything that might lead to lechery, from fancy clothes to drinking (Price 90), and further condemns men who pursue chivalry to feed their vanity; such men are like women who are always looking at their reflections in the mirror. Lull has a low opinion of women generally: they are naturally less noble than men, and he argues that women can never be knights because of their vanity, a quality Lull considers more pertinent to chivalry than women’s generally inferior physical strength (38-39). Lull condemns all sexual relationships outside marriage (42), and even *within* marriage if one

has married out of one's class (100). His real rationale might have less to do with racial purity³ than simple economics: in medieval Spain, as in France, noble status meant tax exemption. As Angus MacKay remarks, "it is worth noting that marriage opportunities for the *hidalgos* could also be restricted because lay and ecclesiastical lords tried to prevent them marrying non-noble women for the simple reason that any resulting offspring would all be tax-exempt *hidalgos*" (164). By Geoffroi's time, no one pretended to be shocked when the less-ranked married up in order to rise in the world or the impoverished nobles married down in order to replenish their assets (Duby Chivalrous 109; Carpenter 52), and Lull's proscriptions against *mésalliances* were no longer heeded, if they ever had been.

In fact, Geoffroi has no objection to chivalry for the sake of impressing a lady *outside* of marriage, as long as one is discreet (Kaeuper and Kennedy 118-19). As for the ladies, he says that having a lover who is a respected knight is a source of pride and status for a woman:

Which one of two ladies should have the greater joy in her lover when they are both at a feast in a great company and they are aware of each other's situation? Is it the one who loves the good knight, and she sees her lover come into the hall where all are at table and she sees him honored, saluted, and celebrated by all manner of people and brought to favorable attention before ladies and damsels, knights and squires, and she observes the great renown and the glory attributed to him by everyone? All of this makes the noble lady rejoice greatly within herself at the fact that she has set her mind and heart on loving and helping to make such a good knight or good man-at-arms.... And if one of the other ladies loves the

miserable wretch who, for no good reason, is unwilling to bear arms, she will see him come into that very hall and perceive and understand that no one pays him any attention or shows him honor or notices him, and few know who he is, and those who do think nothing of him.... Indeed, if there is such a lady, she must feel very uneasy and disconsolate when she sees that she has devoted time and thought to loving and admiring a man whom no one admires or honors, and they never hear a word said of any great deed that he ever achieved.

[Laquelle des deux dames doit avoir plus grant joye de son amy quant elles sont a une feste en grant assemblee de gens et elles scevent la couvine l'une de l'autre, ou celle qui ayme le bon chevalier et elle voit son amy entrer en la sale ou l'en menjue et elle le voit honorer, saluer et festier de toutes manieres de gens et tirer avant entre dames et damoiselles, chevaliers et scuiers, avecques le bien et la bonne renommee que un chascun lui donne et porte, dont icelle tres bonne dame s'esjoist et son cuer si tres grandement de ce qu'elle a mis son cuer et s'entente en amer et faire un tel bon chevalier ou bon homme d'armes.... Et des autres dames, s'aucune en y avoit qui aymast le chaitif maleureux qui ne se veult armer et sanz nulle assoine, et elle le voit entrer en celle sale mesme, et elle voit et cognoist que nulz n'en tient compte de lui, ne on le festie, ne fait semblant, et pou de gens le cognoissent, et ceulx qui le cognoissent n'en tiennent nul compte.... Et certes, se il en y avoit aucunes de telles, bien devroient avoir le cuer a malaise quant elles

verroient qu'elles ont mis leur temps et leur entente en amer prisier ceulx que nulz
ne prise, ne honoure, ne riens n'en oyent recorder ne raconter de nul bien qu'il
feissent oncques. (120-121)]

However, if the relationship is to be kept secret, the lady's triumph must logically also be secret. Of what use, then, is her knight's reflected glory? Geoffrey compensates for this by affirming that the lady's status may also be demonstrated in the display of her fine clothing, which Geoffroi thinks should be allowed, since women cannot gain honor by fighting as men can (192-93).

At first glance, Geoffroi de Charny seems to be far more lenient about women than either Geoffroi de la Tour or Christine de Pisan, both of whom had a hearty distrust both of sartorial display and fin' amor. But we must remember that Geoffroi de Charny is officially addressing male readers (although there is no reason to assume that women did not read his book, just as they were known to read Arthurian romances [Kaeuper Violence 31]). When Geoffroi considers the consequences of love for women, it is mostly in terms of the further consequences for men: a well-dressed woman will reflect credit on the man who accompanies her; her affection will inspire her knight to achieve more; the prospect of lowering his lady's status might shame another knight into overcoming cowardice. Geoffroi worries very little about the fragility of the lady's reputation, although he despises indiscreet boasting (as with his comment that some vain men would prefer to be *thought* a woman's lover than actually *be* her lover in secret) (118-19). Still less does he worry about the psychological cost for the woman who is

being encouraged to see herself through male eyes. This is how Roberta Krueger describes the process that occurs when women encounter such representations of themselves in fiction:

An analysis of the narrative strategies of individual works reveals that the apparent privileging of noblewomen in the frame of the romance masks the displacement of the female reader's subjectivity. The female reader who projects herself into romance is often entrapped by her literary encounter. If she identifies with the feminine identity created by the text, she becomes an object of male desire or of exchange between men. The reader so enticed becomes complicitous with a scheme that works against her. (Women Readers xii)

To some extent, chivalrous literature justified male dominance over women while advocating protection of women: it offered "a great measure of idealized responsibility for the protection of women and for the elimination of the most coarse and brutal forms of subjection; it also endowed knights with an even greater valorization of their powerful place in society, and especially with regard to women" (Kaeuper Violence 230).

On the other hand, Geoffroi de Charny's book is also intended to entice its readers, in this case, men, into projecting *themselves* into the text. They are meant to see themselves as the worthy knight, whose elegantly dressed lady is proud when he enters the hall and she sees him greeted with respect and admiration. They are meant to dread being the underachiever who is so unpopular even his own lady comes to regret having wasted a moment's affection on him. Chrétien's Erec et Enide might be taken as a cautionary tale along these lines: Erec becomes so uxorious that even his wife is embarrassed at the damage to his reputation, and he must go on a quest to retrieve it.

If we remember that many of the fighters reading this book might not be noble at all, although they would like to be, we can see how social ambition and the fear of social disgrace could lead them to sacrifice themselves for the sake of an abstraction. In the service of lords, they will fight wars whose justifications are often confusing (if not arbitrary) even to their own participants. In doing so, they might attach themselves to causes contrary to interests of their own class. They will risk death or maiming, or at least exorbitant financial outlay, possibly without actually managing to escape the class they were born into even should they survive combat. They, too, are complicitous in a narrative that may not be to their advantage at all.

Even those who are already of noble status may be lured by the chivalric ideal into being killed in horrific ways while fighting for the flimsiest of causes. As Kaeuper and Kennedy point out, the knights of Compagnie de l'Etoile had to swear an oath whose words are remarkably similar to an oath in the early-thirteenth century prose Lancelot (67), and Crane notes that both the orders of the Garter and the Star "overtly imitated Arthur's Round Table, implying their founders' imitation of Arthur and their members' imitation of the knights" (134). Ramon Lull himself "drew heavily on thirteenth-century prose romances" (Kaeuper Violence 31). Georges Duby writes of the "youths" who "provided the main audience for this so-called literature of chivalry which was obviously composed mainly for their amusement." Many of these knights were younger brothers "kept in a state of celibacy" that threatened the family with extinction if the older brother failed to reproduce (Chivalrous 120). Duby tells of sizeable families, sometimes ten or twelve brothers, almost completely wiped out by violent incidents (Chivalrous 109, 116), as young men pursued a life of self-destruction inspired in part by the tales of prowess

they were fed: “Dedicated to violence, ‘youth’ was the instrument of aggression and tumult in knightly society, but in consequence it was always in danger: it was aggressive and brutal in habit and it was to have its ranks decimated” (115). Lest we suppose that the literary allusions of chivalric rites were intended for noble practitioners only, let us remember that literate people of lesser rank could identify with literary ideals even when they were perfectly conscious that the reality often fell far short of its representation. Men-at-arms who were neither knights nor younger sons with likely prospects of knighthood may have appreciated the Arthurian cast of these rituals, just as their literate sisters enjoyed reading about the exploits of high-ranking heroines Guinevere and Émaré. But the same romances that lauded the glories of prowess also emphasized the transitory nature of chivalric glory, as F. Regina Psaki notes: “Being a knight is...not a stable identity to acquire and keep; it is the object of a vexed pursuit, of constant reevaluation and comparison; it is vulnerable to loss or devaluation; it must re-won in every encounter” (210). As Kaeuper notes, “[in] any sane person the prospect of being wounded, maimed, or killed with edged weapons in fierce combat would surely produce to some degree the phenomenon of fear” (Violence 165). We ought perhaps to have more sympathy for men who reacted to all this violence with reluctance rather than the

gusto that Geoffroi displays;⁴ Geoffroi has nothing but contempt for men who balk at the prospect of being crushed under a horse or gazing at other men's innards (Kaeuper and Kennedy 126-27).

On the other hand, Kaeuper cautions us not to assume that chivalric ideals were never more than a socially-acceptable cloak for brutality, although they could also be that:

Of course, we need no more believe that most knights were constantly out of control, moved by sheer glandular urges to cut and thrust, than to believe that most of them had happily experienced a complete taming of such impulses simply by learning courtesy. The problem that distinguishes the medieval chapter of the story of public order, however, is that...the right and personal practice of warlike violence has fused with honour, status, religious piety, and claims about love, so that those knights who are inclined, or who see opportunity, will be likely to act with whatever force they can muster, confident in their course of action. This ethos, moreover, will inevitably and understandably extend beyond the caste of knights to play a role in society generally. (Violence 9)

These abuses of chivalry draw Geoffroi's strongest ire, for the very reason that they dishearten and corrupt the troops, and destroy the populace's faith in the military. As great as Geoffroi's contempt is for cowards who will not fight at all, his greatest scorn is provoked by men unfit for the positions of authority they occupy: their incompetence leads to the demoralization, defeat, and death of the men who rely on them for guidance. A noble title does not protect bad leaders from his criticism; indeed, it makes them all the more guilty, for God has not appointed them to their high positions so they can

behave irresponsibly. His source, Lull, maintains that knights must be nobly born.

Peerage and knighthood are not merely inextricably linked, they are synonymous (Price 51). While Geoffroi commends the nobly born warrior, because he risks more and has less to gain than an ambitious commoner (Kaeuper and Kennedy 106-07), he nevertheless praises all men who pursue the practice of arms, to varying degrees (176-77). And his harshest criticism is reserved for the man who has the rank of leader, but will not lead. For what purpose were such men created? Geoffroi asks a long series of rhetorical questions about whether their ancestors were chosen to abuse their positions, answering each in the negative⁵:

Were they chosen to harm the common people and to obtain profit for themselves? Indeed no! Were they created to impoverish their people and enrich themselves without good cause? Indeed no!Were they chosen in order to refrain from taking up arms and exposing themselves to the perils of battle in the defense of their lands and people? Indeed no! Were they chosen in order to be cowards? Indeed no!Were they chosen to be generous to the unworthy and to bestow gifts on wastrels? Indeed no!.... Were they chosen to send away from their company men of worth? Indeed no! Were they chosen to shut themselves up in their houses where no one can speak to them? Indeed no!.... Were they chosen

so that they could despise and disdain poor men? Indeed no!Were they chosen so that they could not and would not speak to those who approach them? Indeed no!

[Furent il fait pour faire le damage du commun peuple et et faire leur profit singulier? Certes nennil. Furent il fait pour apovrir leur peuple et pour eulz enrichir sanz autre bonne cause? Certes nennil.... Furent il fait qu'il ne se deussent point armer, ne mettre leurs corps en peril de batailles a la deffension de leurs terres et de leur peuple? Certes nennil. Furent il fait pour estre couhart ? Certes nennil.... Furent il fait pour estre larges et donner le leur aus chaitiz et en mal employé ? Certes nennil.... Furent fait pour alongier les bons d'entour eulz ? Certes nennil. Furent il faiz pour estre enfermez en leurs maisons, dont nulz ne puisse parler a eulz ? Certes nennil.... Furent il fait pour avoir en despit n'en desdaing povres genz ? Certes nennil.... Furent il faiz pour ce qu'il ne sceussent ou vouisissent parler a eulz qui viennent vers eulz ? Certes nennil. (Kaeuper and Kennedy 138-41)]

Geoffroi's assertions are far more radical than we may at first think them, if we compare them not only to Lull but also to Robert de Blois, whose thirteenth-century Enseignement des princes said that knights should "revere all other 'men of honour' (*prud'hommes*) even if they should be poor, but on the other hand, they were enjoined to despise all those men, known collectively and pejoratively as 'serfs,' who did not belong to the knighthood. This was a class rule intended to segregate its members and to exclude non-members" (Duby Chivalrous 181-82). Geoffroi does consider the the fate of

commoners: the knights are there to protect them, not scorn them. As for Lull, he decries nobles who behave ignobly and degrade their rank. But perhaps only a man who has himself gone to war can write as passionately as Geoffroi does on the effect of bad leadership on the underlings. Lull wants leaders to distinguish themselves from commoners; Geoffrey wants them to inspire and set an example for them: “They were...chosen to show themselves often and to move among the people, to listen often and to give replies concerning matters which may affect themselves and others” (“Dont furent il fais pour eulz monstrier souvent et estre entre la gent pour souvent oïr et respondre des choses qui peuent toucher a eulz et a autrui”) (142-43). Moving among the people allows the leaders not only to reassure and encourage the fighters, but also to benefit from the experience of seasoned fighters who may have useful information. Even when those in authority were properly enthusiastic, they were not always competent: Geoffrey Koziol describes Louis VI as fighting “with no real tactics, just a gleeful, impetuous rush into battle, whatever the cost,” ignoring advice from veteran fighters (134-35). He may have had reason to think his *modus operandi* a sound one, if he read chroniclers’ supposedly factual accounts of battles: “historical sources show us single great men turning the tide of battle by their prowess, cutting paths through their enemies, who fall back in stunned fear. Perhaps this is not merely flattery and topos; given relatively small numbers, close fighting with edged weapons, and the sudden surges of panic so often described, one unusual man might well tilt the balance” (Kaeuper Violence 139). On the other hand, Geoffroi’s recommended program of graduating from jousting to tourneys to battle seems designed to develop leaders who are well-grounded in proper battle conduct and less likely to act on impulse. If, during the course of his experiences

on the battlefield, he had encountered leaders who were neither, he would see the utility of a system of training that backed up confidence with skill and experience. (A training program such as Vegetius' would have been ideal, but ironically, Geoffroi's literary allusions are all to Arthurian romances and noble epics, and it is Christine de Pisan who draws on ancient Roman military manuals, with their matter-of-fact emphasis on training recruits to handle various weapons or repel specific kinds of assault. This makes more sense when we observe that John of Salisbury proposed a "soldiery selected by careful examination, disciplined in constant drill, and enlisted for true, public service," and mourned the loss of "Roman discipline" [Kaeuper Violence 78]; John of Salisbury's Policraticus is, of course, one of the strongest influences on Christine's Corps de Policie, and she was undoubtedly impressed by the supposed superior military discipline of the classical period.)

Geoffroi does not object to the privileges of rank, but he wishes no one to forget its responsibilities. Bad leaders may well degrade their own rank, but Geoffroi considers in addition the consequences their actions have for their subordinates: the loss of morale, of battles, and of lives. As physical as fighting is, Geoffroi defines chivalry by what the knight does, rather than corporeal lineage or a set of physical characteristics, such as naturally brawny arms or a steady seat on a horse. The fact that a man naturally scrawny and anemic will not be as good at the "hacking and thrusting" Kaeuper describes as another man who is already blessed with burly biceps and natural horsemanship may not escape Geoffroi's awareness; he is certainly aware that poor or obscure men-at-arms face obstacles to obtaining gear or training that rich or well-connected men do not. But his

hierarchy of motive makes it clear that he considers it the fighter's duty to develop what he has to the best of his ability.

* * *

Geoffroi finds fault with knights, rather than with knighthood, but Christine de Pisan's Book of the Body Politic (Livre de Corps de policie) is ambivalent at best about the place of chivalry in the social order. She may have been less wary of knighthood's social implications when she wrote her Epitre d'Othéa à Hector, or else she masked it better: Kaeuper and Kennedy comment that Christine's Othéa is one of a number of books embracing a "new humanist view" of knighthood, whereas Geoffroi's book "looks back to an earlier tradition" in which knighthood is a kind of Christian order, not just a career (64). But while Othéa at least pays lip-service to the value of chivalry, Corps de policie bristles with misgivings about a system that rewards old titles with tax-free status but stifles active fighters, practically guaranteeing looting since spoils are their only remuneration. She can justify the need of peasants to a lord, and justify the existence of the lord to peasants, but she has great trouble deciding what to say to, and about, knights. Her passages relating to knights involve reconciling matters that may not be compatible, or redefining some aspects to make them acceptable. She may speak of returning to a previous age when warriors were both valiant and compassionate, but her knowledge of classical history indicates an awareness that abuse and deception have always been a part of warfare. Despite her traditionalist rhetoric, she is actually trying to steer chivalry away from its frequently dishonorable history. Her passages relating to princes and commoners, however, seem more concerned with reinforcing already existing constructs, a return to a golden age of monarchy with mutual trust and loyalty, so to speak. She is

aware that monarchs, of course, have been tyrannical or weak and vacillating in the past as well as the present, and that commoners have been rebellious or easily swayed by rival factions. But the rules that they must follow to avoid these problems seem clearer and easier to articulate than those of chivalry.

Although Christine distinguishes between the specific responsibilities of each class, she insists that all must strive towards virtue, and that this virtue is one that benefits all members of the state regardless of class. As she says in the opening of her section on knights, “What I have said before concerning the virtues serves each estate in the polity, and each individual person.... For it is sufficient to speak of the manner in which everyone ought to do his own part in the order that God has established, that is, nobles do as nobles should, the populace does as it is appropriate for them, and everyone should come together as one body of the same polity, to live justly and in peace as they ought” (“Si serve au propos de chascun estat de la dicte policie et a chascune personne singuliere.... Il me souffira sans plus de parler de la maniere que chascun doit tenir en ce que a faire lui compete en l’ordre ou Dieu l’a establi: c’est a sçavoir les nobles comme les nobles, les populaires ainsi comme leur appartient, et que tou se refere a ung seul corps d’une mesme policie ensemble vivre en paix et justement, ainsi comme il doit estre”) (59) (104)⁶.

Although Christine uses the metaphor of a body for the classes of men, readers of the Corps will notice that Christine shows far less concern for the physical signs of virtue for men than she shows for women in Trois Vertus, although she does discuss those signs. Rather, she is constantly emphasizing the compassion the prince ought to feel for subjects in poverty, the courage that is more important to the warrior than physical

prowess, the self-respect that ought to be more important to tradesmen and laborers than profit. Christine's greater deference to male readers should not be misconstrued as proof that she has greater respect for them; rather, she frequently attempts to flatter them into behaving, implying that bad behavior is unworthy of them. For her female readers, on the contrary, her respect can be measured by the fact that she speaks frankly to them about what works and what doesn't in the public display of virtue. (Of course, Christine's varying tones of respect or reproach may be cultural poses she does not expect readers to take at face value: she is well aware that men and women may read each other's books, just as she embeds messages to female readers in sections of Trois Vertus supposedly addressed to women of another class, anticipating and even hoping that her real audiences will read each other's sections.) Nevertheless, her appeals to male readers are appeals to emotion rather than male logic, because emotions are what Christine attempts to manipulate.

She begins her lessons in psychological manipulation with royal children. "If the child of the prince does wrong he [the tutor] should correct him, saying that it is not appropriate to his rank for the prince to do this, and that if he does not change he will encounter shame and blame" ("se l'enfant du prince mesprend il le doit courrigier en lui disant que ce n'est mie estat du prince d'ainsi faire, et que s'il ne se chastie il encourra honte et blasme") (9) (11). The choice of the tutor is also a matter of psychological manipulation, as the tutor must not only set an example as to conduct but also monitor the child's moods:

....when the son of the prince has grown older, then he ought to be separated from the women who have cared for him and his care ought to be entrusted principally

to one older knight of great authority, and one ought to carefully look to see that he is wise, loyal, prudent, and of good manner of life, and that he have similar persons around him. This knight must take as much or more diligent care of the habits of the child as he does of his body. So he ought to take care that he rises early; that he hears Mass, says his hours, has a pleasant and confident expression, speaks well to people, greets them kindly, gives to everyone the honor due to his position. This knight ought often to show him what the honor and valor of knighthood is, and tell him the deeds of many worthy knights. He ought to make him recognize who is good and who is better in his father's household and who he ought to honor the most. And he ought to show him and teach him the emblems of arms and order of battles and chivalry, how to fight, to attack, to defend, and for what quarrels one must take arms and fight, what armor is the best, strongest, and most sure, and most comfortable.... (8)

[Quant le filz du prince est deja parcreu adone doit estre separé des femmes qui l'ont nourri et en doit on bailler la garde princepalement a ung assés ancien chevalier de grande auctorité, et doit on bien regarder que icellui soit saige loyal preudomme et de bonne vie et avec lui des aultres sembables. Cellui chevalier doit diligaument prendre garde de son corps. Si doit estre soigneux de le faire lever a heure competente, qu'il oie sa messe, qu'il die ses heures, ait belle et assurée contenance, parle bel aux gens, salue benignement, rende a chascun qui parle a lui l'onneur qu'il lui appartient selon son estat. Lui doit cellui chevalier souvent monstrier que c'est honneur et vaillance de chevalerie, lui retraire les

beaulx fais plusieurs vaillans. Lui doit faire congnoistre lesquelz sont bons et les meilleurs de l'ostel de son pere, et d'aulture part et que on doit plus honnorer, lui monstren et divider que c'est que pris d'armes et droit de bataille et de chevalerie, comment on se combat, comment on assault, comment on se deffent, et pour queles querelles on doit faire armes et se combattre; quel harnois est le meilleur, le plus fort ou le plus seur et plus aisié.... (10)]

A number of conflicting themes are already visible here. Christine recognizes that knowledge of battle-lore is not merely a matter of inspiring legends but of practical matters like choosing armor and defending or storming a fortress. But in her insistence that the child know what constitutes an appropriate *casus belli*, she introduces the idea that some causes are not appropriate justifications for war. This note will be heard again, as she discusses appropriate and inappropriate ways of *waging* war, always making it clear that unnecessarily involving civilians is despicable. The second note of ambivalence is struck with the tension between external signs of virtue and internal motivation. Just as with female children, the male child's facial expression and spoken interactions are things to be supervised and shaped. External conduct is not all that must be monitored, however; the knight must also guide the child's perceptions of who is important and why. Given the emphasis on the strategies and accoutrements of war, Christine hints that great warriors are to be honored and emulated by the young prince in preference to people who may be of higher rank. This is interesting, as knights by this time had less standing in reality than they did in romances, unless they began their chivalrous exploits already possessed of a title: "Essentially membership of a military or chivalric order served to stratify the lesser nobility. In this respect, it was very much like

the dubbed knighthood, another non-inheritable rank” (Bush 33). Given that many knights could not pass on their titles (and their tax-exempt status) to any heirs they might have, other forms of nobility such as royal or municipal patents might seem more practical—if not as prestigious.

Christine, however, proceeds as if chivalry had her full and unreserved support. She means the young prince to be surrounded by worthy examples of knighthood, as if cultural total immersion will produce not only the conduct but the mindset of chivalry:

At meals, he has songs sung about the deeds of the noble dead and the good deeds of their ancestors so that the will of the young person is made courageous.

Valerius says that the ancients taught bravery, chivalry and good manners this way in their schools.... And there is no doubt that good example and wise advice often heard and seen in childhood can cause a man to grow up excellent in all virtue, and similarly, by evil teaching one can be brought to the way of perdition. As Averroës says in the second book of Physics, one can acquire a second nature by long habit of good or evil.... (9)

[...au mengier faisoient chanter les gestes de vaillans trespasés et des bonnes euvres de leurs plus courageuse; et ainsi, ce dit Valere, estoient par ses anciens la tenues les escoles de vaillance de chevalerie et des bonnes meurs, des queles escoles.... Si n'est mie doubte que par bons exemples et saignes ammonestemens souvent veoir et oyr en enfance peuent estre cause de faire devenir l'omme excellent en toute vertu, et sembablement par mauvaise doctrine peut estre conduit a voie de perdition. Car dit Averroys ou seconde livre de Phisiques que

homme peut acquerir une seconde nature, c'est assavoir par longue acoustumence de bien ou de mal.... (12)]

This virtue, despite the regular Mass-going and praying of the Hours arranged by the tutor, is not the virtue of clerics, who can afford to sequester themselves from the world in their devotions. Christine makes clear, as she did in her advice to princesses, that rulers may not live the contemplative life without neglecting their responsibilities. The young prince must “love, fear, and serve God without dishonesty, but with good deeds rather than spending time withdrawn in long prayers” (“aimer comme dit est Dieu, le craindre et servir sans faindre, et plus le servir par bonnes euvres faire que moult vaquer en longue oroison”). The sincerity Christine advocates towards God is also called for towards the realm: “he ought solely to love the good and benefit of his country and his people. All his ability, power, and the study of his free time ought to be for this, rather than his own benefit” (“il doit singulierement aimer le bien et l'acroissement de son pays et de son peuple et en ce doit de toute sa puissance et estude vaquer plus mesmes que a son singulier profit”). Given that her next bit of advice involves loving abstract justice and doing “equity to all people” (“equité a toutes gens”) (11) (15). While she wishes commoners to pay proper respect to persons of rank, she does not by any means want rulers to favor them and gain a reputation for unfairness.

Some writers, most notably Sheila Delany, have criticized Christine's supposed slavish devotion to her powerful benefactors and prim disregard for humble people, except for a few proto-Victorian reminders to their betters to treat them kindly and to the little people themselves to stay in their place (187-88). Any argument that Delany makes about Christine's conservatism or supposed toadying to the upper classes must be

countered with an acknowledgment that Christine addresses the problem of unfair taxation, and while she appears to come down on the side of royalty, her protests are not against the commoners but against the over-privileged nobility. She asks whether it is appropriate for the prince to “raise any new taxes or subsidies above his usual revenue over his demesne for any reason,” (“mettre oultre son demaine aucune nouvelle charge ou subside sur son peuple pour la survenue d’aucun accident”), and concludes that under some circumstances, it is:

It seems to be me that the laws give enough freedom and permit him to do so for some cause. For example, to defend the land from his enemies if he is attacked by war, for which he ought to have paid soldiers for the defense of the country. Also for marrying his children, or paying ransom for them if they should be captured.... But this should be done compassionately and discretely [sic] so to hinder the poor less, and without taking more than what is necessary for the particular cause, such as war or for whatever it was set. And the rich, in this case, ought to support the poor, and not exempt the rich, as is done nowadays, leaving the poor the more heavily burdened. (19-20)

[Si me semble que les loys donnent assés licence et permettent qu’il le peut faire en aucun cas, combien que au plus tart qu’il peut et envis le doit faire, c’est assavoir pour deffendre sa terre des ennemis s’il assailli de guerre par quoy il lui couviengne tenir pour marier ses enfans ou pour les tirer hors du prison....

Mais ce doit estre fait compassionablement et par discrecion et au moins chargier les povres qu’on peut ne prendre plus que nécessité pour employer es aultres

superfluz usaiges plus que en la guere ou en ce pour quoy on l'assiet. Et doivent les riches en tel cas supporter les povres, et non mie que iceulx riches en soient exemps, si comme on le fait aujourduy, et que les povres en soient tant plus chargés. (31)]

Apparently, diversions of funds is not the only problem; disproportionate taxation really is a serious issue, not only because it provokes discontent among the commoners, but because it increases the presumption of the nobles. Christine resorts to heavy sarcasm on this point:

I dare say, no matter who is displeased, saving their reverence, it is a marvelous right that the rich and high officials of the king and princes who have their rank and power as a gift of the king and princes and are able to carry the burden, are exempt from taxes, and the poor who have nothing from the king have to pay. Is it not reasonable if I have given a great gift to my servant, and give him a rich livelihood and his estate, and it happened that I had some need, that he comes to my aid more than the one who has nothing from me? It is a strange custom that is used nowadays in this kingdom in the setting of taxes. But if it were changed, it must be uniform, not that some of the rich pay and others not, for this would bring envy, because some would despise those who paid as a form of servitude. If everyone paid, no one would be reproached. (20)

[Car c'est ung merueilleux droit je l'ose dire, a qui qu'il en desplaise, sauve leur reverence, que les riches et les gros officiers du roy et des princes qui bien peuent porter la charge en soient exceptés, et les povres qui n'ont du roy nul emolument

soient tenus de paier. Et comment seroit ce raison se j'avoye fait ung grant bien a ung mien serviteur et donne sa vie et son estat grandement et bien et bien, et il avenist que j'eusse aucun affaire que icellui ne me deust plus tost aider a mon besoing que cellui qui oncques n'auroit de moy. C'est une estraige coustume de quoy on use aujourdui en ce royaume ou fait des tailles qu'on assiet. Mais qui la voudroit rompre il couviendroit les faire tous unis, non mie que aucuns des gros en paissent et les aultres non, car de soudroient les envies pour ce que sembleroit une despis a ceulx qui paierent et une maniere de sertitute, mais quant tout seroit ung adonc n'y auroit nul reproche. (31-32)]

Indeed, being exempt from taxes was, as Philippe Contamine points out, “one of the ends sought after by all aspirants to nobility; perhaps in the short term it was the essential aim.” In France, each community was told how much it had to pay, and trying to limit the number of tax-exempt families at least allowed the burden to be shared generally. “Nevertheless, doubtful cases regularly arose; a community wished to tax an individual, whilst he claimed to be of ancient noble stock, leading a noble life, related to nobles of the region, possessing noble goods, serving in the king’s army and not practicing any craft or trade incompatible with nobility (the famous notion of derogation, *dérogeance*)” (203). Such disputes could turn bitter; like crabs in a barrel, when one seemed likely to escape, the others dragged him down. For obvious reasons, tax collectors and financial managers in countries where nobles were tax-exempt were also exasperated. A royal controller in Castile, outraged that one self-styled *hidalgo* was trying to get out of paying his share, alleged that the man’s father was “the shitiest [sic] peasant.... He used to go to the pinewoods with a couple of donkeys to get branches for

the ovens, and he was a tax-paying villein.” The son became a procurator for the tax-payers, skimmed off enough to make himself and his cronies rich, and “with this wealth he wants to go one better than his fellows and become an *hidalgo* and thus also exempt his five sons and some fourteen or fifteen grandchildren. If this should happen in this way, he will open the door for other tax-payers....” (MacKay 165).

Avoiding taxation, then, is not just a matter of avarice: a history of having to pay taxes is one of the proofs that one’s ancestry is *not* truly noble. But if pride is the problem, then pride must be manipulated to solve the problem. Christine, then, sees the self-importance of the rich as one more emotion that the prince must manipulate to his own ends; they must be made to think that supporting the prince financially is a matter of status rather than an onerous chore from which the lucky escape. However, she privileges actual men of arms: “Nevertheless I do not mean that those who fought for the defense of the country should not be exempt” (“Toutesfoys je n’entens mie que ceulx qui suivent les gueres pour les deffense du pays ne soient exemps”), clearly distinguishing them from those with titles unconnected to chivalry (20) (32). Note that Christine also believes it is important to pay one’s soldiers, and that crime and plunder can be minimized by doing so: “if soldiers were well paid, one could restrict them on pain of punishment to take nothing without paying for it, and by this means they could find provisions and everything that they needed economically and plentifully” (“se les gens d’armes fussent bien apiees on leur pourroit et devroit faire tel edit que sur peine de punicion riens ne prenissent sans paier, et par celle voie fineroient des vivres et de tout que leur couvient mesmement a bon marché assés foison”). Having professional men of arms with proper wages will discourage looting by eliminating the need for it, and the

soldiers will have more influence with the people if they are not already resented by them for extortion. Like sheepdogs, the soldiers must bring their charges into line without killing them: they “need to bring back the common people or others who from fear or dread or evil want to rebel and take the wrong side” (doivent ilz se ils voient gens que soient de communes ou d’aultres qui par crainte ou par paour ou par aucune mauvaise volenté se vueillent rebeller et rendre a l’adverse partie”). The king ought to deal with abuses by the military as a shepherd deals with “a dog that ran after his sheep...he would hit him with his staff” (ung chien qui courust sus a ses oeilles tost lui donroit de son baton”).

Christine is emphatic on this point, that the soldiers must never abuse their power over the populace. “This does not mean that the soldiers themselves should pillage and despoil the country like they do in France nowadays when in other countries they dare not do so. It is a great mischief and perversion of law when those who are intended for the defense of the people, pillage, rob, and so cruelly, that short of killing them or setting their houses on fire, their enemies could do no worse” (“Ce n’est mie a entendre que les gens d’armes eulx mesmes foulent et gastent et pillent le pays si comme ilz font a present en France, ce qu’ilz ne font ne oseroient faire aultre part, qui est ung grant meschief et perverse ordonnance que ceulx qui sont establis pour la defense du peuple eulx mesmes le pilent, gastent et robent, voires se cruelement pluseurs y a que sans occire et bouter feu les ennemis ne pourroient pir faire”) (16-17) (25-27). That her description of military abuses is by no means exaggerated can be borne out by Sidney Painter’s description of the behavior of English warriors who regularly changed allegiance during the twelfth-century struggle between Empress and Maude and King Stephen for the purpose of

plundering lands owned by lords on both sides (3-6, 8). If anything, Christine minimizes the problem, which was clearly *not* limited to France nor to her own time. The issue here is that abuses of chivalry are a destabilizing force, as a number of medieval reformers recognized:

What troubles these writers...is not usually violence in the abstract, nor war simply conceived as one sovereign or even one seigneur marshalling his forces against another. Rather, the issue is how to carry on daily living with enough security and peacefulness to make civilized life possible; the world seems almost Hobbesian, with violence carried out on any scale possible to achieve any end desired. (Kaeuper Violence 22)

It is also striking that Christine mentions fear and dread before evil as possible motives for rebellion. This is yet another ploy to elicit the ruler's compassion: he is to view the people as scared herd animals who know no better, unwittingly misled by rabble-rousers, rather than as "inarticulate and brutish," which is how Lynn Staley believes the peasants in the Rising of 1381 were viewed: "the peasant is not simply bestial but irredeemable" (151). Certainly, Froissart ridiculed John Ball for his "mad" and "absurd" notion that serfs ought to be paid for plowing, harvesting, mowing, and threshing the master's grain, and dismissed all who listened to Ball as "ill-disposed people" of "the meaner sort" (Jolliffe 237-38). As patronizing as Christine's depiction may sound, it is an attempt to make the ruler envision the masses as helpless creatures to be cared for, rather than sinister beasts who must be taught fear lest they be feared. It is also a ploy to mollify non-aristocratic readers: should they read the section addressed to kings, as Christine likely expects they will, they are presented with the ruler as kindly

shepherd, religious allusions probably intended, rather than the ruler as punitive tyrant.

In fact, the resonance of pastoral imagery in the Bible, from the twenty-first psalm to the agrarian parables in the New Testament, would probably have made Christine's references to sheep seem a good deal less patronizing to her contemporaries than they might to a modern readership.

When she is not depicting the people as sheep, Christine pictures them as part of the ruler's own body. The head of state is like "the mind of a person" ("l'entendement de l'omme" controlling "the external deeds that the limbs achieve" ("les foraines euvres que les membres achievent"), and people of the lower orders are like "the belly, the feet, and the legs. Just as the belly receives all; that the head and the limbs prepare for it, so too, the activity of the prince and nobles ought to return to the public good.... Just as the legs and feet sustain the human body, so, too, the laborers sustain all the other estates" ("le ventre, les pieds, et les jambes. Car si comme le ventre reçoit tout en soy ce que prepare le chief et les membres, ainsi le fait de l'exercite du prince et des nobles doit revertir ou bien et en'amour publique...et ainsi comme les jambes et piés soustiennent le fais du corps humain semblablement les laboureurs soustiennent tous les aultres estats") (4) (2-3). Virtue, for the prince, involves not only performing virtue with his own body, as the princess must do, but also learning to regard the entire realm *as* his body.

But Christine wisely aims her reproaches away from the king. Like the Englishmen in the Rising of 1381, she appears to think that the King would halt the abuses of his nobility if he only knew of them⁷ (whether she actually thinks anything of the kind, or even supposes the king actually to be uninformed, is another matter: by now, we should be highly cautious of assuming we know what Christine believes). "I say

these things for the poor” (“ce que je dis des povres”), Christine maintains. “Compassion moves me because their tears and moans come bitterly forth” (“compassion a ce m’esmeut pour les pleurs et gemissemensqu’on leur voit getter amerement”). She points out that poor people are forced to sell their beds or starve after paying these taxes, and “it would please God if someone informed the king and noble princes. There is no doubt that their noble blood holds so much kindness that they could not allow such cruelty. But often those that collect these payments are fat and rich, and so whether all this comes to the profit of the project for which the tax was established, God knows, and so do others!” (“que pleust a Dieu que de ce feussent bien les roys et nobles princes informés. Il n’est mie doubte que tant de benignité a en leur noble sang que souffire tel durté ne pourroient. Mais souvent avient que de telz y a qui receveurs sont de ces cueilloittes en sont gros et grans et enrichis, et se tout vient au proffit de la chose pour quoy la dite charge est estable. Ce scet Dieu, et ausi font aultres”) (19-20) (32-33).

Although Christine wants her royal readers to take action against the chiselers, her words focuses less on physical performance than on emotion. She expresses the compassion the prince ought to feel for the poor and oppressed, hoping her reader will be inspired to emulate her...but if that doesn’t work, she slips in the implication that his untrustworthy nobles might be skimming some of the tax money and pocketing it, rather than applying it to his wartime fundraising or ransom money. If the prince will not be moved by Christian pity for the people, then perhaps hurt pride at being conned by his nobleman will make him take action. The noblemen’s pride is also manipulated: they

don't want to pay taxes that other nobles need not, but will not want to be excluded from taxes if this makes them seem less noble. Christine is using male pride to control those whose pride ordinarily leads them into conflict.

That being the case, Christine attempts to frame forgiveness of enemies and generosity towards the poor as the means by which the prince can prove his magnanimity to himself; that is, he is to worry more about *feeling* virtuous than he is to worry about appearing weak to others:

Valerius said...that the empire of Rome, that is, its superfluity, did not increase so much from the strength of their bodies as from the vigor of their courage... generosity shows itself to those who are poor and suffering, who need one to be generous and liberal to them. Humanity is shown to those who are ill or in prison or insecure in their bodies or their goods. He who has power and right to punish and to pardon, pardons and alleviates their miseries by the power of the prince. He is responsible for healing them his poor subjects compassionately, by the above virtues, maintaining the order of justice and not too rigorously, and especially in those things that are not contrary to nature. And even though, said Valerius, you do not know which of the virtues to praise most, nonetheless, it seems that the one that is highest is that which takes its name from God, and this means liberality which is so like divine virtue, extending itself to all and by which one acquires the most friends. And as it is more in the power of princes than in

other persons to be liberal and also they are most in need of friends and well wishers, I say that it is most necessary and appropriate and even enhances their glory. (26-27)

[Valere que dit que l'empire de Romme, c'est a dire la seigneurie, n'eut pas tant d'acroissement par la force des corps que par la vigueur des coraiges.... liberalité se demonstre a ceulx qui sont povres et souffreteux, et qui ont mestier que on leur soit large et liberal. Après humanité se demonstre a ceulx qui sont en maladie ou enprisonnés ou mesnaisés de leurs corps ou de leurs biens, et sur qui on a puissance et seigneurie de punir et de pardonner, lesquelles miseres pardonner et alegier sont toutes soubz puissance de prince, dont il est tenu de les mediciner compassionablement a ses povres subgetz par les dessusdites vertus, gardant toutesfoys l'ordre de justice et non trop rigoureusement, et par especial es choses qui ne sont contraires a nature; et je soit ce dit Valere que tu ne saches laquelle de ces vertus fait plus a louer. Toutesfois semble il que la souveraine soit celle qui a prins son nom de deité, et ce veult dire de liberalité, qui est si comme vertu divine qui se extent vers tous et par laquelle vertu on acquiert plus d'amis. Et pour ce comme il soit plus en la puissance des princes que d'autres gens d'estre liberaulx, et aussi que avoir amis et bien vueillans, leur soit une chose necessaire, dy je que leur est couvenable et de nécessité et mesmes en l'acroissement de leur gloire.... (44-45)]

The liberality Valerius supposedly praised concerns an incident in which the Romans freed some rich, aristocratic prisoners without demanding ransom. This is hardly likely

to become a common practice in an age when (as we have already seen Geoffroi de Charny complain) some people rely so heavily on their profits from ransom that they don't care if their side wins the war. But Christine's appeal is primarily to self-esteem, and only secondarily to concern for one's public image. Although the prince ought to focus on inner virtue rather than public opinion, his virtue will have the added benefit of making public opinion favorable to him. If Christine addresses public opinion at all, it is only because she must combat the possibility that the prince will think clemency will make him appear weak: on the contrary, she affirms, he will be admired for it. Let us remember that when addressing female readers Christine's emphasis is quite the opposite: inner motives are addressed only briefly, and the effect of one's actions upon the public is to be calculated before every move.

In fact, the question of appearance versus substance seems to trouble Christine far more in Corps de Policie than it does in Livre de Trois Vertus. Malicious lords and soldiers, she writes, attack innocent civilians, yet their forms do not reflect their damnable nature:

When they conquer lands, fortresses, cities, or other places, they act like famished dogs when they enter the city, without pity for the horrible massacres they inflict on Christians—dishonoring women and leaving everything in ruin. Alas, what hearts these men have, when such cruelty can be done to others in their likeness, which is against nature and against divine law! Are they not afraid that the fierce devils of Hell will snatch them for the city of Hell? For there is no doubt that they will come to that in the end. And certainly such people ought rather to have the

face and flesh of a horrible serpent, rather than human ones, for under the human form, they wear the cruelty of the treasonable detestable beast! (29)

[....quant sont venus au dessus de prendre terres, fortresses, cités ou aultres places, quant ilz entrent dedans semblent estre chiens afamés sans nulle pitié des horribles occisions qu'ilz font sur crestiens en deshonnourant kes femmes et tout mettre a ruine. Ha, quelz ceurs des hommes en eulx tele cruauté de ainsi defaire leur semblable qui est contre nature et contre la loy divine! Ne sçay qu'ilz n'ont paour que la fierté des dyables d'enferles ravisse en la cité d'enfer, mais n'est pas doute qui a ce ne faulront ilz mie a la parfin, et certes mieulx deussent teles gens porter chiere et figure de serpent horrible que humaine, car soubz espece d'omme ilz portent cruauté de tresfellone beste detestable. (49)]

The question of whether the inside should match the outside is a vexed one. For princesses, the official answer is usually no. Princes, however, are not to rely on the “virtuous hypocrisies” that are the mainstay of princesses. Christine does recommend some conscious manipulation on the part of the prince, but she does not stress it nearly so frequently as she does with female readers. Clemency is a virtue which the prince must have towards his subjects “in order to tie their hearts to him and confirm them in greatest affection. For without doubt there is nothing more sweet nor more favorable to a subject than to see his lord and prince gentle and kind to him” (“pour leurs ceurs relier et confermer en plus grande amour. Car sans faulte il n'est rien plus doux ne plus savoureux a subget que veoir son seigneur et prince doux et benigne ver soy”). This does not translate to over-familiarity, she cautions: “Not that he abases himself among

them so that they respect him less, but while keeping the honor which a sovereign deserves to receive from his subjects, he is gentle and kind with their requests and petitions, and of gentle speech. He should not show great annoyance or disdain towards any of them for some small thing or misdeed” (“non mie que il se rende entre eulx se abaissié qu’ilz le prisent moins, mais engardant l’onneur qui appertient a souverain recevoir des ses subgés, leur doulx et benigne en leurs requestes et peticions, et en douce paroles, et pour pou de chose ou de meffait ne prendre pas grant arrogance ou grant desdaing contre aulcun dieulx”) (30) (51).

Moreover, Christine’s advice to rulers on remaining accessible to underlings has echoes of Geoffroi de Charny’s. Hannibal, she warns, “became so proud of his victory over the Romans in the battle of Cannae...that he no longer deigned to hear those who wanted to speak to him but would only speak through others who reported to him. He trusted so much in his good sense, good fortune and happiness that it seemed to him that no one could teach him anything. Because of this, he distrusted the words of a wise knight named Maharbel...” (“se leva en tel orgueil pour cause de la victoire qu’il eut contre les Rommains en la bataille de Cannes...qu’il ne daigna plus oyr nul qui eust a parler a lui, mais parloit et faisoit parler par aultres qui raportoient. Si se fia tant en son sens et en sa bonne fortune et felicité qu’il lui sembloit que nul ne lui pouoit rien monster. Et par ce il desprisa les paroles d’ung saige chevalier qu’on nommoit Maharbel”). Hannibal’s failure to listen to Maharbel costs him the capture of Rome’s chief fortress: “But he disdained to hear him because he believed that he was his own best advisor and that he had so much sense that he could not fail. But his thoughts deceived him and he did fail. Because of this, no prince should despise hearing many different opinions

especially from wise persons” (“si n’y daigna entendre et n’en tint compte. Car il lui estoit bien avis qu’il avoit assés sens de n’y faillir mie. Mais son cuider le deceupt car il y faillit. Et pour ce ne doit nul prince despriser a oyr en elurs affaires maintes opinions, et par especialdes gens saiges”) (34) (58-59).

This is standard medieval advice, from the Secretum Secretorum to Lydgate’s Fall of Princes, but as Judith Ferster has pointed out, the tricky part is being able distinguish the good advice and the good advisers from the rest (50, 53). Christine’s solution is to choose older, veteran advisors, whose knowledge is worth far more than physical prowess: “although they do not have great bodily strength, like the young...they are greater in virtue and discreet in advice, which is more useful and profitable than bodily strength, and is so much more to be praised. And the most noble virtues are understanding, discretion, and knowledge rather than strength of body” (“qu’ilz n’aient si grande force corporelle comme les jeunes, toutes foys ilz ont plus grande vertu et discrecion ou conseil comme dit est, laquele chose est plus utile et plus proffitable que n’est vertu corporele, de tant comme plus fait louer. Et est plus noble la vertu de l’entendement et de discrecion et de cognoissance que n’est force de corps”) (37) (65). That this assertion conflicts with chivalry is obvious: wise heads must direct battle, but strength of body is hardly irrelevant in combat. The strong, however, are useful *only* for their physical labor, not their decisions. The implied parallel with medieval hierarchy is

hardly complementary to warriors: the prince's friends may be strong young knights, but their opinions are no more relevant than the opinions of sturdy peasants are to the aristocrats who rely on their labor.

There is yet another advantage to selecting older counselors. Not only have they the experience on which to base their decisions, but they are less likely to be led by the fiery passions of youth: "Some disparage age because they are deprived of the bodily pleasures and delights. But, age is not to be blamed but greatly praised therefore, for it uproots the root of all evils. According to Archica of Tarento...no more greater pestilence was given to humans by nature than bodily desire, which gives birth to treachery, subversion of cities and of peoples, rapes, and all evils. There is no evil that sensuality will not attract the human spirit to do" ("aucuns desprinsent vieillesse pour ce qu'elle est privée de voluptés et de delectacions charnelles, c n'est mie blasme a vieillesse, ains est grande louenge, car elle nous oste la vieillesse, ains est grande louenge, car elle nous oste la racine des tous maux. Car selon ce que dit Archica de Tarente...nulle plus capitale pestilence n'est donnée a l'omme par nature que volupté corporele, de laquelle naissent traisons, submersions des cités et des peuples, violences et tout maux. Ne il n'est nulle mauvaistié a quoy volupté ne attray aucunfoyes le courages des hommes") (37) (65-66). Christine's discussion would appear to privilege the body's influence over the mind: the philosophers are capable of wisdom only because the physical heat of youth has inevitably cooled. This was hardly the Christian ideal: Augustine was famous for his

“conversion from compulsive sexual activity to continence” (Miles 9) when he was still in the prime of life. But the man who consciously rejects sensuality while still physically capable of it is a rare paragon.

Her argument that the sensuality of a young body is more powerful than the mind is merely a ploy to introduce her real theme: that physical sensuality is at the root of both forcible rape, which everyone condemns, and courtly love, for which the culture makes many excuses (in fiction—in reality the woman, even if innocent, is often blamed, just as Geoffroi de la Tour Landry repeatedly says). As Charity Cannon Willard points out, “What troubled her particularly, on practical as well as on moral grounds, was the veneer of nobility that served to disguise illicit love, all too frequently providing a snare for unsuspecting or inexperienced women” (87). Moreover, even if the woman does not succumb to the man’s advances, she becomes a figure in his narrative, as Roberta Krueger observes:

The paradox of amorous discourse for the implied female reader is that if the lady acquiesces to the lover’s demands, she becomes an accessory to the poet’s gratification, an “object” who fulfills his desires. But if she says “no,” she also plays into his desire, which depends on her very inaccessibility. There is no space, it would appear, for a resistance that is not perforce recuperated by the poet’s desire. Whether she says yea or nay, she is complicitous with a system that casts

her as “other.” It would seem that the poet gains mastery and linguistic control of “her” being, even as he casts himself as her submissive servant. (Women Readers 187)

Christine does not consider lust, despite its courtly guise, as a mark of nobility. For this reason, she condemns those who are forced by age to forego vice but regret the sinful joys of their youth. The weakness of their bodies has in no way added to the vigor of their minds; their will is still evil. This, rather than the primacy of the body, is Christine’s real focus. She makes it very clear that she believes in free will. Discussing the death of Archimedes, whose knowledge of astrology did not save him from the death he foresaw, Christine allows the notion that man is *influenced* by the heavens and the elements, but rejects the idea that his actions are determined by them:

...when someone asked him why he did not leave the place where he said he must die, he said that the movement of the heavens held him so firmly that he could not leave, from which it appears that he was of the opinion that the influence of the heavens drives one into what must become of him, which shows that he was not so great a clerk that he could not be deceived. Because this is not true with respect to the operations of the soul, which acts in freedom.... As for the body, it is true that a human is somewhat subject by birth to the actions of the heavenly bodies, by the alternations in the courses of the heavens and also in the four primary qualities; heat, cold, dryness, and moisture.... But in what is subject to the soul, that is, the deliberations of the will, the influences of the heavens have no domination, despite the fact that it could be true that the action of the heavens

gives many inclinations to humans, such as, for example, joviality, lechery, or other natural predispositions. But despite this, through reason, humans can put on a brake and resist following their inclinations. (42-43)

[...quant on lui disoit pour quoy il ne se departoit du lieu ou quel il disoit qu'il devoit morir, il disoit que le mouvement du ciel le tenoit si fermement qu'il ne se pouoit partir, sur quoy il appert qu'il estoit d'opinion que l'influence du ciel chasse l'omme en ce qu'il lui doit avenir, pour laquelle chose peut veoir qu'il n'est si grant clerc qui en aucune ne erre et ne puist estre deceu. Car ceste chose n'est mie vraye, quant aux operations de ;'ame qui euvre en la volenté.... Mais quant au corps, bien est vray que en aucunes choses l'omme est subget par naissance es actions du corps du ciel, si comme alteracions du cours du ciel et aussi des quatre premieres qualitez, c'est assçavoir de chaleur, froideur, seicheresse et moisteur.... Mais en ce qui est subget a l'ame, c'est deliberacion de volenté, les influences du ciel n'ont point de seigneurie, non obstant qu'il peut estre vray que l'action du ciel donne a l'omme plusieurs inclinacions, si comme aux aucuns joliveté, luxure, ou autres mouvemens naturelz. Mais non obstant ce, l'omme y peut mettre frain par raison et resister quant au fait a toutes teles inclinacions. (76-77)]

This might seem rather odd advice, coming from the author of the Epistre d'Othea, which linked the planets, the elements, and temperaments to human virtue. It seems even odder when one recalls that Christine was, as Delany reminds us, “the daughter of a prominent physician-astrologer” (182). It seems oddest of all when one notes that the advice follows the story of Archimedes, who predicted his own death with

astrology, yet took no action to evade it. What kind of advice can the prince follow if his advisors are as superstitious as the examples Christine gives? Trusting that his advisors are more dependable because they are Christians rather than pagans will not help: they can still be given to unorthodoxy or other flaws. Earlier, Christine has observed, “there are enough of our bishops and priests who can be publicly seen in horrible faults. There is no prince nor other persons who will reprove them, by saying that they are human beings, not angels, and that it is human nature to sin. Alas! they are not human...but they are truly devils” (“assés de nos pontificaulx et prestres en qui sont veus publiquement foison de treshoribles deffaulx. Il n’y a prince ne aultre qui les en represigne, mais eulx mesmes telz y a sont hommes et non mie angelz et que c’est chose humaine de pechier. Helas! ilz ne sont mie hommes...mais sont droiz dyables”). Far from being able to rely on the advice of such clerics, the prince must give advice to *them*: “despite the fact that correction of people in the church is not his to undertake, nonetheless what prelate, priest, or cleric is so great that he will dare withstand or complain about the prince who reproves him for his manifest vice or sin?” (“car non obstant que la corrcpion des gens de l’eglise du tout ne lui appartienne, toutesfoys qui sera le prelat si grant ne aultre prestre ou clerc qui osera recalciter ne murmurer contre le prince s’il le reprent de son manifeste vice et pechié”). Moreover, as conventionally pious as Christine appears, she is not afraid to caution rulers against granting financial benefits to a cleric based on personal liking rather than fitness for the post (Body Politic 12-14) (Corps 19-20). But in giving such counsel, Christine threatens the very hierarchy she supposedly wishes to preserve. All rulers before the Reformation were considered subject to the Church, even if in name only. Christine seems ready to concede more influence to the solar system than she will

to the representatives of God's Church on earth. Perhaps the solar system is merely an allegory for the supremacy of God's providence; nevertheless, Christine is a devout Catholic who appears not to require the priesthood to mediate her piety.

Christine returns to more familiar ground in terms of the prince's public speaking; surely, discussing matters with his counsel or explaining his decisions to the people is more accepted than preaching to the priests. A "wise and well-ordered speech out of the mouth of the prince is more weighty and willingly heard than when it comes from another" ("la saie parole et bieje ordonnee yssant de la bouche du prince est beaucoup plus pesee et volentiers escoutee que celle qui vient par aultruy"), so the prince must be skilled in delivering such speeches. Citing Valerius, she writes:

When eloquence is combined with gentle movement of the body, it affects the listeners in three ways: it affects the spirit of some and the ease of others, and it seduces and sweetens the eyes of others. Gestures affect the spirit...when by suitable motion of the body, the speaker represents things and brings them to memory, like dangers, fortune and misfortune, virtues, vices, examples of the great, and the effects of counsels, by which things, spirits are involved and give their consent to the speaker. Second, by suitable and well-moderated pronunciation, the ears of the auditors are invaded and conquered by great pleasure and delight. Thirdly, the eyes of those that see it are conquered in that they see and consider the handsome and honest countenance of the persuader or

speaker, and thus his eloquence is enriched by these things. And by its opposite...the speaker is displeasing and of little virtue, and thus has less effect.

(46)

[...quant eloquence est conduite par sage ordre avec le deu mouvement du corps elle envaist les oyans par .iii. manieres, car elle prent les couraiges des ungs et les oreilles des aultres aux aultres; elle adoulast et atendrist les yeulx. Elle envaist les courages...quant per couvenable mocion du corps celui qui parle represente les choses et ramaine a memoire comme les perilz, les fortunes ou infortunes, les vertus, les vices, les exemples des fors hommes, et les effectz des conseaulx, par lesqueles choses les courages sont ramenés au consentement du parlant.

Seocndement, ar prononciacion couvenable et bien moderee, les oreilles des auditeurs ou des ceulx qui oient sont envaies en tant qu'ilz regardent et considerent le bel maintien et honnesté du persuadent ou de parler, et tout ainsi que par ces choses eloquence est aornee. Ainsi per l'opposite d'elles...parleure est mal savoureuse et pou vertueuse, et donne mains d'efficace. (82-83)]

Like the princess, then, the prince must use pleasing words, gestures, and tones to create a rhetorical ethos, but the emphasis is strikingly different. The princess's performance is designed to avert criticism: her tones must not sound harsh, her movements must not seem vulgar, etc. The prince's conduct is framed not in terms of avoiding disparagement but in terms of a kind of sexual conquest: his eloquence seduces, his speech invades and conquers, the audience eventually gives its consent. Yet the seduction motif is one Christine resists in other places. As Jennifer Summit notes, a number of women writers

from Marie de France through Christine herself sought to co-opt the language of romance from the control of men: “Love’s status as an unchanging pursuit posits the immutability of the differentiated roles of men and women in heterosexual courtship, an activity that...regulates who has the power to use language—namely ‘men’” (50). Why, then, does Christine choose to use the images of seduction in this passage?

Possibly Christine portrays the matter in this way because she anticipates a male reader’s assumption that a man in power should not have to plead his cause or that he makes himself less masculine if he does so: she names both “ancient foreigners” (“les estrange anciens”) utilizing “pleasant and ornate speech” (“parlant par plaisant et aorné langage”) and Charles V as historical examples of noble eloquence. The latter, she notes, “would explain his reasons so well that he never failed to put his premises in good order and to deduce to the conclusion by varied points” (“ouvroit une raison et le narroit au long, la ne failloit mie bien et bel a mettre ses premisses en bel ordre et les deduire a leur droit par divers points”), a program he followed when urging the council to resume the war with England. As a contemporary example, she gives the Duke of Orleans, who not only makes all the appropriate points in his own arguments, but “if he answers another, no matter how strange and varied the subject before him, he does not fail to give all the principle points and aspects of the subject and answers each point so carefully that those who hear cross themselves because they marvel at his great memory, beautiful rhetoric, and his eloquence and bodily movements which correspond to the noble language used so that he can well be compared to the ancients mentioned above” (“s’il donne response a aultruy tant soit la chose devant lui aura esté proposee estrange et des diverses matieres il ne fauldra ja a recueillir tous les principaulx points et clauses de la maniere et respondre

sur chascun article si proprement que ceulx qui l'oyent se seignent de la merveille de sa grande memoire et belle rhetorique. Et avec ce est la faconde et mouvement du corps si correspondant au bel langaige qu'il peut bien estre comparé aux notables anciens dessusditz") (47-48) (84-85).

Rhetoric, of course, can also be used to whip the audience into a violent frenzy. Norris J. Lacy describes how a character in Les Voeux du heron "uses his considerable skill and, where necessary, his subtlety to transform a jovial social occasion into a provocation to war and carnage" until the other characters' "jests turn into bloodthirsty boasts" (18-19). Christine, however, is trying to discourage this sort of appeal to pathos. Sandwiched among all the advice on beautifully delivered speeches, she has also outlined the classical structure of discussing counter-arguments and rebutting them when debating any important point—including whether to go to war. It cannot have escaped her mind that, while preparing counter-arguments in a deliberation over the *casus belli*, the prince might well decide that the rebuttals are not nearly as strong as he could wish; he might even decide that the war would not be a just one after all. As Forhan notes, Christine decries pointless wars, particularly civil wars (Political 141). Christine has seen the toll that wars take on the populace: not only do soldiers from both sides plunder food and property and assault the citizens, but they also alienate their own people. It is harder to avoid rebellions when people see their own country's military as predators rather than

protectors. Wars between one neighboring lord and another are the worst, as Duby writes: “There was little to choose between foragers from friendly or enemy armies: one took as much as the other” (Rural 333).

Tenants or even local small property-owners caught in the middle of feuding lords might well come to wish a plague on both their houses. Encouraging the prince to use a logical appeal reduces the chances that he and his audience will work themselves into a battle-rage that has little or no basis in the actual political situation, and harms his own subjects.

This by no means indicates that Christine disapproves of all wars, however. A writer whose works include Deeds of Arms and Chivalry obviously believes that there is a need for the military, and her admiration for Joan of Arc is well-established (Krueger “Anxious” 36, among others). His people must be prepared to fight when necessary. Regarding the people as extensions of his own body does not mean that the prince should pamper them or “keep them at bodily ease,” as Christine puts it, and let them go soft—unless he is using this as a ploy to keep them in subjection: “when Cyrus, the king of Persia had finally conquered the people of the kingdom of Lydia, who were always rebelling, he believed that he had no better method of keeping them subjugated than by introducing pleasures. He wanted to give them leisure and keep them at bodily ease, and so he forbade them to use weapons and commanded that they play and amuse themselves with all kinds of gambling, and accustom themselves to merchandise, and all such things, and that they have all kinds of leisure. And so these people, who had been so powerful and brave in arms, became as soft and dainty as women. So they were conquered by pleasures when they could not be by arms” (“quant Cirrus le roy de Perse eut a la parfin

vaincus ceulx du royaume de Lyde qui tousjours se rebelloient, il considera que mieulx ne les pouoit mettre au bas que par les induire a delices, et pour ce, les vould mettre en oiseveté et aux aises du corps, si leur deffendit les armes, et leur commanda qu'ilz se jouassent et estbatassent a toutes manieres des jeux gainabls et marchandises feissent, et toutes teles choses et suiveissent toutes manieres d'aises. Et ainsi celle gent qui devant avoit esté puissante et vaillante en armes devinrent molz et delicatifz commes femmes. Si furent vaincus par delices ceulx qui par armes devant ne le pouoient estre"). Christine emphasizes that this defeat by bread-and-circus can be avoided with proper training: "...rest makes knights and soldiers weak and slothful and yet the exercise and work of arms makes them tough and able" ("le repos rent les chevaliers ou les gens d'armes frois et endormis, et l'exercitacion et traveil d'armes les rent habiles et endurcis") (49) (87-88).

But the prince must apply the same rigor to himself: "it seems to ignorant folks that his majesty the prince has nothing to do except live at rest and at ease, in luxury and honors, because he has enough ministers to do everything! But without doubt, this is not true... If he is wise, the office of rule where God has established him is burdensome. He has to know the deeds of his ministers, for if they do wrong the punishment and blame come to the prince for his negligence, to the soul as well as his body. Thus, since varied affairs of the kingdom and the country are numerous, there will be no leisure for him if he wants to do his work properly" ("qu'il sembleroit aux folz non saichans que a majesté de prince n'affiert fors vivre a repos et aises, en delices et honneurs, puisqu'il a assez ministres qui disposent des toutes choses. Mais sans faille ainsi n'est mie, car il n'est aultre homme a qui tant affiere occupacion si justement veult vivre comme fait au princ.

Car l'office de seigneurie ou Dieu l'a estably le charge des toutes besoingnes s'il est saige. C'est assçavoir qu'il ait cognoissance des fais des ses autres ministres, car s'il y a mesfait ou coulpe de par eulx, la peine et le blasme en vient au prince et a sa negligence, tant a l'ame comme au corps et mesme en dommaige. Doncques comme les choses diverses du royaume et du pays soient et grande pluralité et foison, ne sera mie oiseux se bien y veult vaquer") (48) (86). Despite Forhan's decision to translate "folz" as "ignorant folk," the word could just as easily be rendered "fools" or "madmen," so it would seem that Christine is confident that only a blithering idiot would think that princes are lazy, coddled folk who do little or nothing to earn their privileges. Unfortunately, as Bush observes, however industriously some families had pursued their titles, once they possessed them, many were eager to live the "noble" lifestyle: living off the proceeds from a tenanted estate rather than following a trade (16, 63). Christine's apparent defense of the prince is really a coded critique of the noble lifestyle: this is what princes *ought* to be doing.

The prince's need for the respect of his people should never be confused with simply wanting to be popular. Again, she anticipates Machiavelli in stating firmly that princes (like the baronesses she describes in Trois Vertus) must be feared as well as loved. "For in whatever land or place where a prince is not feared there is no true justice.... There is no doubt that the good prince ought to be feared despite being gentle and benign. His kindness ought to be considered a thing of grace which one ought to particularly heed rather than scorn" ("Car ou lieu et en la terre ou le prince n'est doubté ne peut avoir bonne justice.... Si n'est mie doubte que bon prince doit estre craint, non obstant que soit il doulz et benigne. Mais icelle benignité doit estre reputeée chose de

grace qu'on doit singulierement garder, et non mie qu'elle tourne a mespris") (38) (67-68). Soldiers will fight bravely for such a prince—if for no other reason, then at least because they fear the punishment of their lord more than the attacks of the enemy. The prince must consider himself, in the end, in the light of a military leader, or he cannot protect his country. The safety of his people is more important than his popularity with them.

Christine is fairly definite about what she wants princes to do, even if she cannot guarantee their ever doing it. When it comes to knights, however, her message seems mixed: deception is bad, deception is necessary; nobility merits respect, nobility is made the excuse for the lowest behavior; women should be protected, women can be collaborators in warfare. Rather than acknowledge these conflicts directly, Christine's opening to the section on knights focusses rather on the distinctions and overlaps between her advice to knights and the preceding advice to princes.

If princes are the heads of state, a familiar usage in modern parlance, nobles and knights are the state's "arms and hands" ("bras et mains") (Body Politic 58) (Corps 103). Here Christine draws a distinction between the classes, all of which must strive for virtue, but each of which has its own virtue appropriate to its life: "While the same virtue is just as appropriate and necessary for the ordinary person, the simple knight, or the noble, as of princes, nevertheless, the estates, differ in their way of life, in their conversation, and kinds of activity; thus it is suitable of my treatment of the subject to differ as well" ("combien que une mesme vertu soit propice et necessaire tant aux simples et nobles chevaliers et toutes gens comme aux pirnces, toutesfoys pour ce que l'estat se differe en maniere de vivre et de conversacion et diverses euvres, couvient aucunement differer la

matiere”). Differences in lifestyle do not diminish the duty to pursue virtue, only in how the virtue is performed: “But there is no doubt that one can speak the same to nobles as to princes when it concerns the aforementioned virtues. This means that it is also their part to love God and fear Him above all else, to care for the public good for which they were established, to preserve and love justice according to their competences” (“Mais n’est mie doute que en tant eput on dire paraillement aux nobles comme aux princes que touche avoir les dessus dites vertus. C’est a sçavoir que aussi bien leur affiert aimer Dieu et criandre sur toute riens, avoire cure du bien publique, pour laquele garde sont establis a tenir et aimer justice en ce qu’il leur appertient”) (Body Politic 58-59) (Corps 103-04).

Duby says that the nobility’s urge to set themselves apart from the newly rich who had to be careful with money meant that by the thirteenth century, “to be noble meant to be extravagant with money” and that “a noble was condemned to a life of luxury and expense under pain of losing face” (Chivalrous 184), even if many nobles could not afford to live in this manner. In contrast, Christine describes a classical nobility that involved teaching one’s children to bear lack of luxury stoically:

....as soon as they were grown enough that they could endure hardship, they were taken from their mother’s entourage and made to exercise according to their abilities and physical development, and very quickly at this age they accustomed them to bear armor according to their strength, and to wear armor in some exercises that were not too hard or difficult. They were not fed with dainty foods

nor fancy clothing as many are today, but given plain food. As to their dress, there was a proper sort of clothing that nobles wore but no one else, but I do not believe that this was trimmed in martin fur nor embroidered. (59)

[...tantost qu'ilz estoient tant pancreus qu'i; puisseent souffrir aucune peine ilz les ostoient d'entour les meres et leur faisoient exercer peine et travaux selon leurs sages et corpulences, et tresfort en icelli aage les acoustumoient a soustenir le fais des harnois de guerre selon leurs forces et a travailler des bras et aucun exercite qui ne leur feust trop grevable. Si ne les nourrissoient pas de friandises ne mignotement vestus a la guise de pluseurs, mais ne grosses viandes. Et quant aux robes y avoit une propre façon d'abit que les nobles portoient et non aultres gens, mais je croy bien qu'ilz n'estoient mie fourrez de martres ne brodés. (105)]

As we have seen above, Geoffroi de Charny also believes that coddled people make poor soldiers; they will be unable to tolerate sleeping on the ground and eating on the fly. A little display in clothing, however, does not perturb him, although he objects to clothing that makes men look like women or gaudy armor that actually inhibits fighting ability (188-93). Christine's advice is actually the more ascetic of the two; she wishes to avoid an entire mindset, one that poisons the lives of the nobility with a sense that material luxury, not obligation, is their birthright. Christine knows that in addition to rendering the elite useless and ineffectual, this mindset only fuels the resentment of their underlings.

Moreover, her notion of nobility is very different from the legal one, which relies on bloodlines, land, and generations of tax-exempt status. Although Geoffroi thought

that knights must not do anything unworthy of chivalry, he at least valued the idea of nobility as a genetic thing sufficiently to feel that commoners should be excluded from chivalry altogether. Christine may not encourage social-climbing, but she is openly harsh with those who think they are still noble because of their birth regardless of how they behave. Noblemen must meet six conditions “otherwise their nobility is nothing but a mockery. The first is that they ought to love arms and the art of them perfectly, and they ought to practice that work. The second condition is that they ought to be very bold, and have such firmness and constancy in their courage that they never flee nor run from battles out of fear of death, nor spare their blood nor life, for the good of their prince and the safe keeping of their country and the republic” (“aultrement leur noblesse est nulle si comme moquerie de icelles condicions. La premiere est qu’ilz doivent tresparfaitement aimer les armes et garder le droit d’icelles, et en ce labeur doit estre leur exercite, la .ii. condicion qu’ilz doivent estre treshardis, et doit estre celle hardesse en tele termeté et constance que ilz ne doivent fuir ne partir de bataille pour paour de mort, ne espargnier leur sang ne vie pour le bien de leur prince et la garde de leur pays et de la chose publique”). In addition, they must encourage each other, they must be truthful and keep their vows, and the fifth (and most elevated-sounding) condition is that they must “love and desire honor above all worldly things” (“aimer et desirer honneur sur toutes chose mondaines”). This sounds most heroic, but Christine chooses not to end on this lofty note. The reader is brought back to reality with the hard pragmatism of the sixth and last

condition: “they ought to be wise and crafty against their enemies and in all deeds of arms” (“ilz doivent estre siges et cauteleux contre leurs ennemis et en tous faitz d’armes”) (Body Politic 63-64) (Corps 112-13).

Indeed, many of the military exempla given in this book and in Othéa involve triumphs of trickery and deceit, rather than physical prowess. When Christine does focus on physical combat, simple strength is never her main concern. Indeed, in one instance, the warrior’s ferocity and ruthlessness seem to be more crucial than muscle: a Roman knight is “so badly wounded that he could no longer use his hands and believed his life would be brief. So he did as much as he could with his feet to attack one of his enemies, and then, standing on top of him, he seized his nose with his teeth and tore up his whole face!” (“si detrainché qu’il ne se puoit plus aider des mains, et bien sentoit que sa vie estoit briefve. Si fist tant que a ses pliés fit cheoir ung de ses ennemis, et puis monta sur lui, et avec les dens lui saicha le nes et tout lui decira le visaige”) (68) (122). In this bizarre episode, evoking images of Mike Tyson or a Monty Python sketch more than any lofty notion of chivalry, it appears that Christine’s notions of battle do not exclude fighting dirty when necessary.

Nor, finally, do they exclude outright treachery. With seeming approval, Christine tells the story of Senola, who tells the Roman citizens that he repents making war against them, saying “that they ought to have pity on him since they were of the same blood, and he pleaded with them to be brought to Pompey that Great, to cry for mercy since he preferred to die there. One of them believed him and captured him in good faith. Then Senola struck a great blow which killed him, and so Senola died, one of the best knights who has ever been in the world” (“qui de lui aussi devoient avoir pitié qui estoit

de leur mesmes sang, et pria qu'on le portast vers Pompee la grande. Si lui crierait mercy mercy et que la voiloit il morir. Si y eut ung en la place qui le creut et cuida prendre en bonne foy. Adonc Scena le ferit si grant cop qu'il le tua; et ainsi fina Scena, ung des meilleurs chevaliers qui fust du monde”) (74-75) (135). That Christine should advocate so earnestly that knights be true to their word, and then praise one who breaks it (note that the enemy knight takes Senola's word “in good faith”), that she should demand that princes show mercy to captives yet not oblige captives to avoid betraying the trust of their captors, that she should praise military feats at all, when, as Forhan remarks, five of her works feature passionate pleas against war (Political 148) (a penchant we have also seen in Trois Vertus, where princesses are usually the ones to exercise diplomacy in settling feuds), seems strangely inconsistent. Are the wars Christine supports merely foreign ones, for instance, against the hated English? Does she see local wars as a body attacking itself, a violation of the body politic a harmonious society should be? How, then, could she support Joan of Arc, when the monarch Joan defended was cutting rather cynical deals with both the Burgundians and the Duke of Bedford, deals Joan herself seems to have questioned (Lutkeus and Walker 178, 180-81)? Surely Christine was also aware that even among Frenchmen, international wars were a splendid excuse to get revenge on local enemies: “Old scores could be, and frequently were, paid off by men sheltering beneath the Anglo-French conflict to justify their warlike behavior towards their neighbors and ancient enemies” (Vale 141). Or, from the beginning, is Christine merely paying lip-service to the glory of war, while taking care to give grim details of its reality? As Kaeuper points out, many romances give brutally frank accounts of the

political maneuvering behind war and of the “effects of sword strokes on armor and the human body beneath” (“Societal” 98). Was Christine giving a nod to both traditions?

Of course, to many medieval moral and theological authorities, war itself was not “inherently sinful. In fact, truly just warfare was not simply acceptable, it could be pleasing in the eyes of the Almighty.... If the warriors had the right motives, if the war was called by proper authority in order to right a wrong or injury, then all was well” (Kaeuper Violence 66-67). However just the grounds, medieval tactics could be as shady as those of any other era, and deceit was no anomaly. Vale writes that private wars in the French provinces often featured the “abuse of hospitality by trickery.... Raymond-Bernard de Montpezat...set out in 1318 from his castle of Monpezat with eleven accomplices on the pretext of inviting certain officers of the seneschal of the Agenais to eat and drink with him.” He found fault with the serjeants and “accordingly attacked them, bought them back wounded to Montpezat and threw them into prison”—all of this, apparently to avenge a personal grudge against the seneschal (140). Geoffroi de Charny himself was taken prisoner by Edward III after a convoluted series of events involving chicanery on both sides: a bribed Lombard who turned double-agent, a disguised Edward III fighting in plain armor, and a false wall hiding the English ambush (Kaeuper and Kennedy 10-11). We might suppose Christine thinks that trickery is unacceptable against one’s own countrymen, but that it is permissible in order to repel a foreign invader, such as the English. Yet Christine gives examples of people deceiving their own men, in order to make them fight more bravely. Minos, for instance, pretends to be the son of Jupiter, claiming “that his father Jupiter gave him the laws and rules which he established. He used this pretense so that they hesitated to break his laws. But these stories are not told

so that the good captain or good soldier teaches his people to use evil arts or to pretend to use them, for that would be evil and a bad example. But the wise captain or leader of soldiers could wisely pretend to be greater than he is, or that he had done more than he really did, or to have a good and rational cause for whatever he does, and if he finds any good and just deception, I believe it is well and wisely done....” (“son pere Jupiter lui bailloit les lys et ordonnances qu’il leur establissoit, et de ceste faintise il usoit a fin qu’ilz doublassent plus a trespasser ses commandemens. Et ne sont mie ces choses a entendre que le bon capitaine ou le bon homme d’armes doie pour ce introduire ses gens a user de mauvais art ou qu’il faigne qu’il en use car tele faintise seroit mal fait en donroit cause de mauvais exemple. Mais se le saige capitaine ou conducteur des gens d’armes scet saignement faindre qu’il ait encore plus grant qu’il n’a ou qu’il face plus qu’il ne fait, et que a bonne et raisonnable cause fait ce qu’il fait, et sur ce treuve aucunes bonnes et justes cautelles, je tiens que ce n’est que bien et saignement fait”) (71) (128-29). One cannot help noticing that this manipulative advice, similar to that given to women of high rank in Trois Vertus, is contained in the section addressed to military leaders, *not* in the advice to princes. Performing virtue, conscious of the effect the performance is to have on one’s audience, is permissible to knights, even advisable, but not to male royalty. Why? Is it because knights, like princesses, are not at the top of the power structure, and must balance their obligations to those above and below? Moreover, Christine is surely aware that princes may read this section, although it is not specifically addressed to them.

Is she subtly warning them that their military leaders may exaggerate their own exploits to gain power, just as she warns ladies of the con games played by tradespeople in the guise of scolding the tradespeople about engaging in dishonest business practices?

Despite her apparent endorsement of trickery and manipulation, Christine does try to elicit some aspirations after virtue out of her noble readers. “Since the rank of nobility, that is noblemen, have among the highest and most exalted of honors in this world” (“Comme l’estat de noblesse, c’est asçavoir des nobles hommes, soit entre les haultesses et honneurs du monde la plus exaucee”), she writes, “it is reasonable that they be adorned with the virtues which are properly called noble as well. Without them, nothing is noble” (“c’est bien raison qu’il soit aorné des vertus, lesquelles a proprement dire sont droite noblesse, et sans elles n’est rien noble”). She even goes so far as to cite Juvenal as saying, “Nothing ennobles a person except virtue” (“rien anoblist l’omme excepté vertu”) and Boethius as claiming that “the word ‘noble’ is useless and vain if not illuminated by virtue” (“inutile et vain est le nom de noblesse se vertu n l’enlumine”), a statement that would have outraged Lull, who apparently thought that virtue was vain when not illuminated by nobility. At this point, Christine repeats that the fourth of the sixth virtues she has named is crucial: “to be true in speech, fealty, and oath” (“qu’il soit veritable en parole, feaulté et serment”). Dishonesty, she writes, is bad enough in ordinary people, but worse for noblemen: “some are so defiled that no truth comes out of their mouths, one cannot trust their promises, no more than the promises of the most vile people that exist! And I am speaking of people that call themselves ‘noble!’” (“tant en sont entechés, si comme il en sont aucuns qu’il n’est verté qui de leur bouche saille, mais a leurs promesses et seramens n’y a quelque feaulté ne attente ne on ne se peut fier, ne que aux

plus viles gens qui soient. Je dis aucuns qui se dient nobles”) (75) (135-36). That such advice should come barely a paragraph after the story of Senola’s triumph of double-crossing is astonishing, and—knowing Christine—hardly a coincidence. “God is truth,” (“Dieu est verité”), she adds, noting that even the ancient pagan philosophers revered truth: “Alas, that these noble ancients who had no knowledge yet of the divine law, loved death more dearly than to break their law and lie. What shame there is on those who are Christians who for an unimportant thing will lie and perjure themselves as if they did not care!” (“Helas et se les anciens nobles qui n’avoient encore nulle cognoissance de la loy divine aimoient plus chier morir que faulser leur loy et mentir, quele honte doit ce estre a ceulx qui sont Crestiens quant pour legieres choses ainsi comme se ilz n’en feissent compte mentent et se parjurent”). She follows this with the story of a man who returns to prison rather than break his promise to his captors (75-77) (135-37).

Christine might be giving a double message here, or perhaps acknowledging that the world is a complex place that does not go according to hard-and-fast rules. But it is equally likely that she is merely indulging in the fine medieval art of irony, that custom of appearing to condone what one is actually critiquing. Christine utilizes this ploy herself in Cité des Dames, in which her affected veneration of Boccaccio’s moral rectitude accompanies her radical deconstruction of his stories. Christine knows well that some members of her audience are familiar with both the Decameron and with Boccaccio’s generally racy reputation.

Reputation itself is the focal point of a large part of this section. What kind of reputation are knights to seek? In contrast to women, whose greatest virtue is to be inconspicuous—not to laugh too loudly, not to speak too much, not to move too

unreservedly—Christine encourages the male desire for renown. There is nothing wrong, she declares, with a man wishing to have his achievements publicized. But at that, she slips in some kudos for women:

Valerius says that when someone's military deed surpassed the others in excellence of courage, boldness and strength the Romans made a noble image and seated it in an honorable and prominent place dedicated to this use and wrote his name and details of what he had done below it. And thus they had a memorial to them so that they would be an example to others, so that one made great effort to be honored this way. And they treated clerks likewise: if there was a philosopher or a notable man, or woman, like the wise Sibyl, who surpassed others in wisdom or in learning; or an artisan made images with such skill that they seemed alive, or an artisan of any craft did excellent work, they were honored likewise. And so, as you see, they desired glory and honor, these noble ancients, with which desire Valerius agrees, saying that the virtuous should desire honor, glory, and reverence. (82)

[...dit Valere que quant aucun avoit fait en armes tant qu'il passoit les aultres en excellence de vaillance et de hardiesse et force et force, les Rommains faisoient fair son ymage tres noblement et l'asseoient en certaine place digne et belle qui estoit a ce depute, et dessoubz faisoient escrire leurs noms et les beaux fais et principaulx qu'ilz avoient fais. Et ce faisoient ilz afin qu'il eust memoire d'eulx et que les aultres hommes y prenissent exemple, afin que plus grande peine meissent a devenir vaillans pour estre semblablement honnourés. Et

semblablement faisoient s'il y avoit a solonnel philosophe, ou aucun homme notable, ou femme qui passassent les aultres en sagesse ou en aucune science, si comme fut la sage Sibille, et aussi ung ouvrier qui tailloit ymages par tele science qu'ilz sembloient estre en vie ne oncques pareil ouvrier en tele science n'avoit esté veu. Et ainsi comme vous oez, estoient couvoitise appreveu Valere, et dit que l'omme vertueux la doit desirer.... (150-151)]

It would perhaps be uncharitable to point out that Christine herself must be very virtuous, because she includes wise women among those worthy of honor, as well as clerks, of which she considered herself one:

....Christine calls on cultural conventions that made clerks the traditional enemies of women and thus positioned women at the exterior of the literate, tradition-bound authority inhabited by the medieval clerisy. Christine both cites and reverses such cultural antinomies when she imagines a new form of literary culture embodied in the figure she calls a "*clergesce*," a female cleric who represents a level of learning and literary activity that is removed from the ecclesiastical, institutional settings of medieval antifeminism. (Summit 67)

Moreover, her self-positioning brings her autonomy as well as admiration, as Mary Ann

Case notes:

....Christine marks herself as one of what I shall call "knowing and singular" feminists, a tradition of independent female intellectuals in Renaissance and early modern Europe who became feminists out of the necessity of defending their own activities. I use this term...to refer to a number of women who were singular in their achievement, but also on occasion in their eccentricity and their isolation;

whose knowledge was not only the sort of learning unusual for their sex, but also the cognitive autonomy necessary to persist in unusual views and lifestyles, and the awareness both that they needed to defend their whole sex in defending themselves and that such a defense was possible. (80)

Thus, just as much as her advice in Trois Vertus dealt with how women were to interact with men, much of her advice here deals with how men are to interact with and even to view women. To be fair, Christine wants to see other female authors treated with respect by her male readers, and she gives them a classical role model to emulate. When Plato died, she comments, “found near him were the books of a woman poet, named Sappho, who wrote about love in joyous and graceful verses, so Orosius says. And so, perhaps he looked at them to take pleasure in her pleasant poems” (“on trouva emprés lui les livres d’une femme poete qui avoit nom Sapho qui escrivoit d’amours en vers joyeux e gracieux; ce dit Orose. Si les avoit veuz pour cause par aventure de plaisir prendre en ses plaisans dictiez”) (97) (178-79). Christine does not add that both Sappho and her poems were considered easily as racy as anything in de Meun’s Roman de la Rose, which Christine had fiercely condemned for its sexual license (Krueger Women Readers 225). If Christine was aware of Sappho’s dodgy reputation, it would hardly help her argument to bring up the fact here: her purpose is to get male readers to respect the works of female writers, both ancient and of her own time. But one cannot help wondering if this is just one more private joke at the expense of her less erudite male readers.

In any case, Christine has no objection if the male search for chivalric glory reflects a little glory on herself as a writer who inspires chivalrous acts. In fact, Christine wants something more, since the object of *fin’amor* is generally a woman whose beauty,

quite independent of any action on her part, inspires chivalrous acts: Christine wants to be the one who *educates* readers on how to achieve chivalrous acts. If the quest for personal glory is not an entirely negative thing, then this very likely includes her own personal quest. Again attributing what are almost certainly her own opinions to Valerius, she writes that those who argue “that glory and honor should not be desired in this world, but despised” (“que gloire et honneur ne doie estre desiree en ce monde cy mais despitee”), contradict themselves:

...those who in their books claim to despise glory, desire and want it just as much as others do. And...glory is certainly not despised by those who teach this idea, for they carefully put their names on the volumes and books which they write. They praise people who do not care about glory, but they still want to acquire glory; perpetuating their names by writing them on their books. And so we conclude this chapter, saying that the good and noble ought to and can desire glory.... [F]or those who live morally in the active life, to desire glory in a just cause is not a vice. (82-83)

[...celux qui en leurs livres enseignent a despiter gloire la desirent et veulent comme les aultres. Et...gloire n'est mie despitee de ceulx qui s'eforcent de introduire le despitement d'icelle, car ilz mettent diligamment leurs noms en leurs volumes et es livres qu'ilz ont traitiés et escripz. Ilz esleuent le despitement de gloire en louant ceulx qui n'en ont eue cure. Et toutesfoys ilz veulent gloire acquerir par ce qu'ilz veulent perpetuer la memoire de leur nom en scrivant es titres de leurs livres. Et ainsi concluant ce chapitre disons disons que les bons et

vaillans doivent et peuvent desirer gloire.... a vivre moralement selon licite
activité n'est pas vice a celui qui le fait a juste cause. (151-52)]

Coming from the woman who inserted the words, “I, Christine,” in numerous passages of Cité de Dames, just in case any scribes left off the *explicit*, we can suppose this advice is fairly heartfelt. In her case, we may even judge that it was quite successful: although her family had been lower nobility in Italy, they were closer to being haute bourgeoisie in France (Forhan Political 12), and the family fortunes waned further after the deaths of her father and husband (14). Thanks to her work, Christine included Isabeau of Bavaria and the Duke of Burgundy among her high-ranking patrons (McGrady 195, 198); she became so well-known that Henry IV unsuccessfully tried to lure her to his English court (Forhan Political 73-74).⁸

But is her advice merely an attempt at self-aggrandizement? Conduct manuals, after all, are meant to get people to behave better, not merely to admire the writer (both results are generally welcome). If a desire for admiration inspires people to behave better, then there is no reason, Christine reasons, why moralists and philosophers should not use this goal to motivate their readers. To some extent, the emphasis on the inner self for male readers and the emphasis on physical virtue for female readers can be explained not merely by the idea that women were thought to learn through material lessons, as Dronzek has discussed (144); unlike female readers, male readers, who may frequently be young and quite reckless, cannot generally be guided by fear of consequences. Young women are more likely to consider what a loss of reputation might do to their lives; young men are known to disregard possible loss of life and limb, let alone reputation. Flattering male readers, leading them to believe that they will be the objects of awe and

even envy, may be the best means of channeling their energies into feats of chivalry—as opposed to having them “vegetate in thir father’s or elder brother’s houses” as younger sons frequently did (Vale 137), or wander about in packs, looking for trouble (Duby Chivalrous 116-17).

As for chivalry, Christine represents women as men’s collaborators in warfare, not as merely their passive victims, or nearly passive supporters holding the fort back home until the men return. Although Christine has been at pains to establish women’s kinder, gentler nature in Trois Vertus, she is not above quoting exempla indicating how women can be used in warfare. But her stories on this point are both ambiguous and ambivalent, for exposing the women to risk gives a vague impression of the men hiding behind their skirts in a cowardly manner. She refers to a Duke of Athens who, after being warned of an impending attack by the Megarians, encourages the Athenian women to go on their usual yearly island pilgrimage so that the Megarians will not know that the Athenians are prepared for them. The women are ordered to “dress in their finest” possibly twice (so Forhan renders “feroient plus grande chier,” although the phrase could simply mean to put on a show of being happy), and at least once (certainly the second phrase, “dans le mieulx paree,” refers to clothing). The women are to act out these charades first when boarding the ships, and then (after the Megarian soldiers have been ambushed and killed on the island), when the captured Megarian ships are heading to Megara, so that the Megarians will recognize their ships, see the sumptuously dressed women in the distance, and assume that “their ships returned with the women and their booty” (“leurs gens qui s’en retourassent atout les dames et avec grantz proies”). Rushing to the port to welcome their conquering heroes, the remaining Megarians are

killed (83) (153). The story is remarkable on several levels: that women are not being scolded for their frippery (something Christine has occasionally scolded them for herself), that the victory has as much to do with deliberately creating false impressions as it has to do with military prowess, and that women are central to military success, not useless creatures, let alone impediments. Most of all, it is remarkable in that this book is ostensibly intended for male readers. Christine does not openly tell them they they should regard women as possible comrades in arms, not as enemies to be vanquished—but she provides classical evidence that such things can be and have been done. This story is nevertheless disquieting, for in enlisting the women in his deception, the Duke of Athens is exposing them to additional risk. Is using women as bait the stuff of chivalry?

One might also ask if imposture is the stuff of chivalry. Clothing is again the theme of another military ruse. The king of Pyrrha dresses his soldiers in Elerien armor, and when the real Eleriens approach the Pyrrhic people begin setting fire to their own houses. The Eleriens assume these are more of their own men, and when they enter a narrow pass to join them, the Pyrrhic soldiers kill them. In another story, the people's leaders capture and kill a spy, dress one of their own men in his clothes and have him go up on a hill and signal the enemy to approach. They mistake him for their own spy, and they, like the Eleriens, are ambushed and killed. (87). Change of clothing in this sequence of exempla is always associated with trickery. This is disturbing enough in a society in which false semblance is the hallmark of evil; things should appear what they are. But it is particularly subversive in a society in which heraldry has become such a point of contention: bearing arms, now something that established the nobility of a family, and the frequent subject of lawsuits (Coss 85, among others), originally emerged

as a means of distinguishing fighters on the field. Is Christine really encouraging all these ruses, or is she revealing that this, and not the image of the valiant knight on horseback, is the nasty underside of warfare that has existed all along? Let us not forget that, as Lacy observes, “scholars have, to my knowledge, discovered nothing” about one of the historical personages in Veux du heron “that would let us read this passage”—one in which the character vows to “burn churches, kill pregnant women and even his own friends”—as deliberate irony (22). The chivalric ideal of truth and protecting helpless damsels seems never to be reflected in a history of war replete with examples of deception and violence towards women.

What is notably missing in Christine’s collection of stories is the standard chivalric trope of a knight doing brave deeds to impress a lady, something Geoffroi de Charny brought up, although he considered it a lesser motive than love of glory. Although Geoffroi presented us with the images of a lady basking in her knight’s reflected glory and another lady cringing in her admirer’s reflected disgrace, Christine will have none of this. She replaces the image of the woman waiting in the tower for her knight to return with an active collaborator in warfare who does not earn her status either by submitting to seduction or by encouraging her admirers to attempt it—thus encouraging onlookers to believe she has already succumbed. For Christine, Judith L. Kellog writes, “virtue is associated with agency, and so Christine replaces the gullible, and sometimes complicitous, woman with an enlightened woman who refuses to be taken in by ‘foolish love,’ the seduction game whose rules were largely articulated by Ovid. In

addition, she also takes women's virtue well beyond chaste sexual behavior"—(which was the primary focus of Geoffroi de la Tour's advice)—"for she describes women as fundamental to the building of a strong, just, and enlightened society" (191).

Christine was not above deception herself, as when she evaded pressure to become Henry IV's court poet (see fn 6). Are such deceptions permissible when dealing with enemies, particularly with the hated English, and only reprehensible when used on one's countrymen? Yet she has lauded Atilius for keeping his oath to his captors (76-77). Moreover, while paying lip-service to the glory of chivalry, every story Christine relates involves a broken oath, a deception, using women as pawns of war instead of protecting them. We know that Trois Vertus encourages "virtuous hypocrisies": ostentatious charities to encourage others to give alms, sweet-talking onerous relatives and court gossips, flattering an ugly husband. Perhaps what is going on here is a grim recognition that survival, whether of the individual or entire nations, sometimes requires both ruthlessness and mendacity; what Christine finds wearying is the sugar-coating of such harsh realities as the "glories of war." The young knight may have to defend his people at the risk of his life and limb, but Christine does not, in fact, want his head filled with romances and epics. However, given that titles won through chivalry are often non-inheritable and therefore less effective in putting one's family on the map than a good arranged marriage or state service (Bush 33 and 51), romances and epics might be the only way to get young men out on the battlefield. As Kaeuper notes, "Belief in the right kind of violence carried out by the right people is a cornerstone of this literature. Yet aggression and the disruptive potentiality for violence is a serious issue for these writers

no less than for the historians” (Violence 22). As little as Christine likes war, she likes invasions and rebellions still less, and they are inevitable when there is no military class to repel the first and put down the second.

If the prince is to protect and guide the people, and if the knightly class is to defend them, and discipline them when necessary, what then do the people owe the superior classes in return? The section focusing on the “Common People” opens with a promise to discuss how the people ought to respect and obey their prince: “It is suitable to speak of the love, reverence, and obedience that his people should have for the prince. So let us say to all universally: all the estates owe the prince the same love, reverence, and obedience. But after I have said something about the increase of virtue in their life and manner of living, perhaps I will discuss the three ways the different classes ought to express the generalized principle” (“Dire nous convient de l’amour, reverence et obeissance que son peuple doit avoir envers prince. Si direment universellement a tous en tant que touche ceste matiere comment tous estas doivent au prince une mesmes amour, reverence et obeissance. Mias après en disant aucunes choses touchant; augmentation de vertu en leur vivre et maniere de converser, pourra estre que je toucheray trois manieres d’estas differentes qui sont par especial contenus en la dicte université”). Christine then offers a fable in which the belly of a human body resents the limbs for their laziness and lack of respect, and the limbs complain of the belly’s greed and ingratitude. The limbs go on strike, the belly starves, and the whole body dies. In short, after proposing to tell the duty of the people to the prince, Christine actually gives a moral telling the prince *his* duty to the people: “Likewise, when a prince requires more than a people can bear, then the people complain against their prince and rebel by

disobedience” (“Semblement avient quant le prince demande plus au peuple qu’il ne peut fournir et que peuple mumure contre prince et se rebelle par desobeissance”) (91) (167-68). Remember, however, that the prince was the head of the body politic: the nobles were the arms, and the belly and feet the various levels of commoners. Christine’s criticism is really directed primarily against the nobility, especially those who give the prince lots of bad advice but no tax money, leaving the burden to fall still more heavily on the lower classes. She wants the prince to avoid overtaxing the people, but even more, she wants him to intercede lest his nobles do so, adding insult to injury by displaying their contempt to the people openly.

As flawed as the monarchy can be, Christine admits frankly to preferring the rule of one hereditary king, even an imperfect one, to the constant jockeying for power inherent in other forms of government: “....there are cities and countries which are self-governed and are ruled by princes which they choose among themselves. Often these make their choice more by will than by reason. And sometimes, having chosen them by caprice, they seem to depose them the same way. Such government is not beneficial where it is the custom, as in Italy in many places” (“Aussi y a des cités et paÿs qui possident seigneuries et se gouvernent par princes qu’ilz eslisent entre eux. Et souvent teles y a qui font leur election a volenté plus que par grande raison, par quoy avient a la foy que ainsi comme a volenté les eslisent, sembablementles deposent. Et tele gouvernance n’est mie a preu du bien ou elle s’acoustume, si comme en Ytalle en maintz lieux”). (She might as well replace Italy with England, where the usurpations and counter-usurpations of the Wars of the Roses were rapidly coming to fit her description as well as any republic might.) “Other cities are governed by certain families in the city

that they call nobles” (“Les aultres se gouvernent par certains lignages de la cité qui s’appellent nobles [note the somewhat skeptical tone here: Christine has actually said, “who call themselves nobles,” rather than “qui on appelle nobles,” i.e., “whom everyone calls nobles”]), “and they will allow no one not of their lineage to enter their counsels nor their discussions” (“ne aultres que d’iceulx nobles lignages ne souffreroient entrer en leurs consaulx ne à leurs ordonnances”). The contrast with a monarchy, where at least even the lowliest people can (in theory) bring their petitions to the king and beg for his intercession (Justice 60), is implied.

This is not to say that Christine advocates a republic: “...[I]n some places, the common people govern and every year a number of persons are installed from each trade. I believe that such governance is not profitable at all for the republic and also it does not last very long once begun, nor is there peace in and around it, and for good reason. But I will not say more for reasons of brevity. Such was the government of Bologna” (“en aultre lieux gouverne le menu peuple, et font establir ung nombre de gens par annees de chascun mestier. Et croy bien que tele gouvernance ne soit mie proffitable a la chose publique, et aussi ne la voit on gaires durer ou qu’ele soit commencee, ne la paix tant qu’elle y est acroistre ne vivre en apix, et la raison est bonne. Mais je laisse de plus en dire pour cause de briefveté. Et ainsi fut gouvernee Boulongne la grasse”) (92) (169-70). The word “was” (“fut”) is significant, indicating that Bologna’s government evidently did

not last. Descended from Italian émigrés, Christine finds the comparatively stable government of France a happy improvement. She is possibly justified in doing so; Psaki tells us that political regimes in Italy were notorious for their instability:

The Italian peninsula featured a variety of political systems quite unusual for medieval Europe. The south, including Sicily, was dominated by a monarchical model; after the death of Frederick II in 1250, though, the southern kingdom split into two hostile kingdoms, Angevin in Naples and Aragonese in Sicily. In the center and north, on the other hand, there was a myriad of smaller political organizations: semi-independent city-states called communes; the republic of Venice; the Papal State, including the territory around and north of Rome; the towns and lands governed by one noble family; and other intermediate forms of government. This political hegemony was not peaceful. Indeed, alliances and allegiances were unstable and violent, organized around the two poles of papacy and empire, which competed for hegemony even more violently in Italy than elsewhere. (203)

But Christine's urge to praise France and criticize everybody else leads her to some rather far-fetched claims. Her description of France's history co-opts healthy dollops from Wace, in terms of tracing the country's roots back to Troy, and her description of the relations between monarch and subject were probably taken with a grain of salt even in her own day:

From its foundation by the descendants of the Trojans, it has been governed, not by foreign princes, but by its own from heir to heir, as the ancient chronicles and histories tell. This rule by noble French princes has become natural to the people.

And for this reason and the grace of God, of all the countries and kingdoms of the world, the people of France has the most natural and the best love and obedience for their prince, which is a singular and very special virtue and praiseworthy of them and they deserve great merit. (92-93)

[....dès son commencement qui de l'issue des Troyens a esté gouverné, non mie des princes extrainges, mais des ceulx mesmes qui sont yssus de hoir en hoir des ceulx qui tousjours les ont seignouris, comme il appert par les anciennes ystoires et les croniques qui de ce font menscion, laquele seigneurie des nobles princes François est convertie au peuple comme naturele. Et pour celle cause est ce avecques la grace de Dieu que sur tous les pays et royaumes du monde le peuple de France est le plus naturel et de meilleur amour et beissance a leur prince, laquele chose est singuliere et tresepecialle vertu et grande loenge a eulx et en desservent grant merite. (171)]

This mutual admiration society is very likely a matter of wishful thinking on Christine's part, but perhaps any prince who reads this far will be reassured that the people do love him—and be more likely to pay heed to Christine's advice on not overtaxing them or letting his nobles abuse them.

However, should the prince *not* be as benign as the exemplary ruler in Christine's rosy picture, are the people then excused from obedience? Boccaccio would and did say no:

How senseless and stupid the confidence of rulers. They think that while they sport, the people will be faithful and obedient to them. ...should I call him king of

liberty, dignity, duty, and everything I hold dear? Whose command do I obey?

For whom do I labor, to whom do I give part of my property, for whose safety do I spill my blood? He watches over me with destruction, desolation, and insult, and when he is thirsty, he sucks my blood. I see him rely on the worst of counsels and admire the worst deeds, but regarding the public welfare he is sluggish, torpid, and dull.

Shall I call him king? Shall I venerate him as a prince? Shall I keep faith as if he were the Lord? Hardly. He is an enemy. To conspire against this kind of ruler, to take up arms, to deceive, to oppose this man is an act of greatness and, even more, of necessity. Scarcely any offering is more acceptable to God than the blood of a tyrant. (49-50)

Christine, however, believes in rendering unto Caesar, even (and especially) when Caesar is a disaster. Giving the kind of deferential advice that would make Sheila Delany froth at the mouth (Delany specifically cavilled at Christine's refusal to encourage or back rebellions [185-86]), Christine states firmly that St. Paul "counsels the common people to hold themselves subject to princes and high powers" ("admonnestes ceulx du commun peuple que ilz se tiengnent subgés aux princes et aux haultes"), as does St. Peter, who in addition stipulates that this is not the case only for good princes: "Suppose that the princes were bad... then subject yourself for the love of God, and especially to the king as the most excellent and to the leaders ... sent by God for the punishment of evildoers and for the glory of the good and of their good deeds" ("supposé encor que les princes fussent mauvais... rendez vous subgés pour l'amour de Dieu par special au roy comme au plus excellent, et aux ducz...envoyés et commis de par Dieu a la vengeance des

malfaicteurs et des maulx et a la loenge des bons et des leurs bienfaitz”) (93) (172-73).

Christine does not, one must note, go to the trouble of asserting that it is impossible for the French princes to be bad. She has merely given ample illustrations of bad princes—always in Italy or some ancient society—and encouraged her princely readers not to identify with them, but rather with the noble French tradition she depicts. Lest they miss this point, Christine tells two stories of loyal subjects who risk (and in one case, sacrifice) their lives to save unpopular kings from murderous plots (94-95) (174-75). Although the point of both stories is ostensibly the faithfulness and bravery of the heroes, the underlying moral is that kings who behave sufficiently badly will inspire murderous plots. Just as she does in Trois Vertus, Christine uses a message apparently shaped for society’s lowly as a means of telling their supposed betters a thing or two.

This, of course, does not mean that she has no words of wisdom for the affluent but untitled. Christine’s discussion of burghers and merchants, which she defines as primarily city people with property, again commends the lack of ostentation so highly praised for their female counterparts. “Such people ought to be honorable, wise, and of good appearance, dressed in honest clothing without disguise or affectation” (Et doivent teles gens estre honnorables, saiges et de belle apparence, vestus d’abitx honnestes, sans desguiseure ne mignotise”). This does not mean that they must grovel and truckle to their social betters, but rather exhibit quiet dignity: “They must have true integrity and be people of worth and discretion, and it is the estate of good and beneficial citizens” (“Et leur appartient estre prudommes veritables, et gens de foy et de discret langage; et est l’estat des citoiens bel et prouffitable”). Christine even acknowledges that some people sneak into the gentry class through the back door: “In some places, they call the more

ancient families noble, when they have been people of worthy estate and reputation for a long time” (“Et en aucuns lieux s’appellent els [sic] anciens d’aucun deulx nobles quant ilz ont esté de long temps gens de bel estat et de renomee”) (99) (183). This is the sort of “tacit” ennoblement Bush describes, in which the family’s claim rested on “the belief that the long-term enjoyment of noble status was self-validating. As a result, a claimant’s ability to prove that noble status had been enjoyed by his family over several generations could be regarded as a sufficient entitlement” (14). In addition, in many places “the tenure of municipal office was a means of automatic ennoblement. From the late middle ages there developed the *noblesse de cloche* in a dozen French cities.... Serving the municipality could be as socially elevating as state service” (168). Naturally, those of noble birth considered themselves superior to nobles of “commoner birth” (108). The newer nobility were almost certainly resented as well by members of the class they had just left.

Does Christine object to this kind of social advancement? Not apparently, for she declares that “one ought to praise good burghers and citizens of cities. It is a very good and honorable thing when there is a notable bourgeoisie in a city. It is a great honor to the country and a great treasure to the prince” (“....si doit en tous lieux prisier les bons bourgeois ou citoiens des villes. Et est moult belle chose et honnorable quant il y a notable bourgeoisie en une cité, et est grande honneur au pais et grande richesse au prince”) (99) (183-84). With privilege, however, comes responsibility: “These people ought to be concerned with the situation and needs of the cities of which they are a part. They are to ensure that everything concerning commerce and the situation of the population is well governed” (“Ces gens cy se doivent entremette des faitz et besoingnes

des cités dont ilz sont que toutes choses qui apartiennent a la marchandise et au fait du commun soient bien gouvernees”). Bluntly, Christine says that they will have to think for the commoners, because the commoners are incapable of thinking for themselves and can easily be turned into a mob by unscrupulous rabble-rousers:

...humble people do not commonly have great prudence in words or even in deeds that concern politics and so they should not meddle in the ordinances established by princes. Burghers and the wealthy must take care that the common people are not hurt, so that they have no reason to conspire against the prince or his council. The reason is that these conspiracies and plots by the common people always come back to hurt those that have something to lose. It always was and always will be that the end result is not at all beneficial to them, but evil and detrimental.

(99)

[....le menu peuple n’a mie communement grande prudence en parole, mesmes en fait qui touche policie, dont ne se doivent mesler des ordonnances d’icelle establies par les princes, doivent prendre garde les bourgoys et les gros que pour chose en soit faicte le commun ne s’en empeche ne n’en face aucune conspiracion mauvaise contre le prince ou le conseil. La cause si est pour ce que teles conspiracions ou machinacions de commun revertissent tous jours en prejudice a ceulx qui ont que perdre. Ne jamais n’en est ne oncques ne fut a leur preu, ains est tous jours la fin mauvaise et prejudiciable.... (184)]

In short, Christine is suspicious of such “popular” movements as the 1413 Cabochian revolution (actually backed by Jean sans Peur, the Duke of Burgundy, who was happy to

exploit the workers of Paris in his own conflict against the Armagnacs [Forhan Political 22]), precisely because the outside agitators never suffer as much as the locals, including locals who try not to take sides or get involved.⁹ Ambitious men routinely attached themselves to political movements just as a pretext to plunder (Painter 8-9). Kaeuper notes that the laws of chivalry were intended to improve matters, but did not always succeed:

In contrast to an earlier era, the taking of prisoners (and ransoms) usually replaced mass slaughters; a clearer sort of conventions regulated the fate of those besieged. Yet war as conducted by the chivalrous still meant raiding and ravaging more than-piece battle. Given the looting and widespread destruction (especially by fire), the general population may not have especially noticed much improvement as towns and villages were torched, bridges were broken, populations were forced to migrate, vines were cut, shipping was sunk or burned. (“Societal” 99)

There was no such thing as collateral damage: the spoils of war were the *point*. Christine’s solution is to warn the middle-classes who may be tempted to take sides that they are not only betraying the ignorant people who depend on them for guidance, but also risking their own interests. The common people may lose their lives, she implies to her comfortable middle-class audience, but you could lose your *property*.

Christine, then, wants the middle classes to show compassion to the lower classes, but it is the compassion of stewardship, not a bid for egalitarianism. The wise, she maintains, “should teach the simple and ignorant to keep quiet about those things that are not their domain and from which great danger can come and no benefit” (“doivent

ammonester les simples et les ignorons de eulx taire de ce de quoy ne leur apertient a parler, et dont grant peril peut venir et nul preu”). The Bible “forbids such complaints and says also, “you will not complain about great rulers nor curse the princes of the people”” (“defente le murmuration, et dit ainsi tu ne murmureras point les grans seigneurs et si ne maudirás pas les princes du peuple”) (100) (185-86). Criticizing the ruler is unsafe as well as unbefitting, as Cantilenes the philosopher learns when he defies Alexander the Great:

{ Alexander]...wanted to be greeted according to the custom of the place, which was a kind of adoration, as we would call kneeling or speaking on one’s knees, which was not the customary thing in Macedonia or other regions. But because there were complaints, Cantilenes the philosopher (who had been sent to him by Aristotle, because he could no longer abide the burden of traveling with him himself) harshly reproved Alexander, for which Alexander had him executed.Aristotle counselled his disciple not to speak of the vices of the prince behind his back for two reasons. First, it does not become a subject to shame his lord. Secondly, that as soon as these words have gone out of his mouth, they are reported to the king by flatterers. He advised him to speak little to Alexander, but when he did, that he ought to speak cheerfully, so that his words could not put him in danger. Nor should he flatter him, but if cheerfully phrased, what he said would be acceptable. But this disciple did not follow his master’s teaching, and he repented too late. (101)

[...{Alixandre}...voulut estre salué a la maniere du lieu qui estoit comme une maniere d'aourer, si comme nous dirions agenouillier ou parler a genoulx, qui n'estoit chose a coustumee en Macedone ne es aultres regions. Mais pour c qu'il en fut murmuré et que Cantilenes le philosophe, lequel aristote lui avoit baillié pour ce qu'il ne pouoit plus souffrir le traveil de le suyvir, l'en reprint trop aigrement et en parla moult, pour laquele chose Alixandre le fist mourir.

....Aristote a cellui sien disciple qu'il ne parlast point des vices du prince en darriere, car il disoit qu'il ne se doit faire pour deux raisons. L'une si est que il ne appertient au subget mesdire du seigneur; l'autre que quant teles paroles sont saillies de bouche tost sont prestz les flaeturs qui les raportent. Encore lui amonesta qu'il parlast pou a Alixandre, et quant il luy parleroit que ce fust tres joieusement, afin que par soy taire il ne deist chose qu'il peust tourner a peril ne aussi flaterie, ou par son joyeux parler ce qu'il lui diroit lui fust acceptable. Mais cestui disciple ne tint pas bien la doctrine de son maistre, si s'en repentit tart.

(186-87)]

Christine, of course, does follow this master's teaching: her strictures on proper conduct for royalty are framed as expectations that of course the royalty of France will behave appropriately, if only to set an example for princes of other, and of course, inferior places. But her rendering of this story is a massive departure from the version Boccaccio gives in Fates of Illustrious Men, her source (along with Famous Women) for so many of the revised legends featured in her Cité. The philosopher (whom Boccaccio calls Callisthenes), is praised for his "great genius" and his "veneration at the altar of learning," qualities Boccaccio explicitly privileges above "distinguished ancestry" and

“royal forebears” (117). After establishing Callisthenes’ virtues, Boccaccio pulls no punches to establish Alexander’s vices, from his presumption in wanting divine worship to his sadistic vengeance on the philosopher:

After he had conquered Darius and the Persian army, he acquired such great booty that he forgot he was a mortal being. He had the presumption to wish to be worshipped as a god by his followers according to the custom of the Persians....

[Callisthenes] condemned the madness of the king as being both foolish and detestable. Indeed, this most honorable man remembered that recently

Alexander had fallen into the frigid Cydnos River. When he contracted a near-mortal illness, he was cured not by his own divinity, but by the grace of God and the efforts of physicians. Callisthenes knew that Alexander was again and again overcome by wine and anger, and he also knew that, like ordinary men, Alexander was burdened down with unhappiness and disturbed by very serious cares....

The steadfast philosopher could not be deterred from reminding Alexander of these facts. At last Alexander succumbed to the anger that was habitual with him, and resolved to punish the innocent man severely. He charged this man...of conspiring against him with many others. By Alexander’s orders his eyes were dug out, his ears, nose, lips, hands, and feet cut off. Then this teacher of the king, robed according to his office, was led as an object of ridicule into the presence of

the army which was aroused in anger against him. But these horrors did not yet satisfy the madness of the emperor. Callisthenes was enclosed in a cave, along with a wild dog whose constant attacks allowed him no rest. (118-20)

Boccaccio's version emphasizes the arrogance of the ruler; Christine's emphasizes the arrogance of the philosopher. Boccaccio plays up the savagery of the philosopher's punishment, clearly out of proportion to far worse offenses than any crimes against tact he had actually committed; Christine leaves out the details that might create sympathy for the philosopher, and puts in a sentence signifying that he regrets his actions, not just their inordinate penalty. Most importantly, she leaves out the displaying of the mutilated man, still wearing his official robes, in front of an angry mob, a detail that could not fail to remind even the least literary of readers of the mockery of the robed and thorn-crowned Christ (Matt 27:29). What Boccaccio meant as a warning against blasphemy and tyranny is transformed into a warning against questioning authority.

Christine's tweaking of the story is the more striking given that, like many medieval books of *exempla*, her *Cité* includes the story of Queen Esther's intercession (145-47). Although Christine's version does not give the reason for Haman's vengeful plan, she undoubtedly knew that it was precipitated by Mordecai's refusal to kneel and worship him as a god (Esth. 3:1-5). Is her careful rendering of the story another example of the toadying Delany criticized, or is it her private joke on rulers who took her reverent persona at face-value?

While Christine wants proper respect given to rulers, she does not begrudge respect to merchants and tradespeople. She praises several Italian states for having "the most rich and powerful merchants who seek out goods of all kinds, which they distribute

all over the world. And thus is the world served all kinds of things, and without doubt, they act honestly. I hold that they have a meritorious office, accepted by God and permitted and approved by the laws” (“moult a riches et puissans marchans qui par toutes terres vont querir denrees des toutes sorte, lesquelles ilz dispendent puis par le monde. Et ainsi est le siecle servi des toutes diverses choses, et sans faille ceul qui en ce faisant pratiquent loyalement”). It is permissible for them to apply the cost of seeking and transporting goods in an appropriate vendor’s mark-up, but not to cross the line into confidence tricks: “They ought to be honest in their work...they ought not, under threat of damnation and awful punishment of the body, treat their goods with any tricks to make them seem better than they are in order to deceive people so that they might be more expensive or more quickly sold, because every trade is punished when there is fraud in one” (“Loyaulx doivent estre en leur labeur...ilz ne ne doivent sur peine de dampnacion et villaine punicion au corps sophistiquier leur denrees par aucun barat pour les fair apparoir meilleurs qu’elle ne sont pour decevoir gens, afin que plus chier ou plus tost ilz vendent, car moulti est toute art reprouvee ou il y a fraude”). Being “in trade” is not in itself shameful, but swindling is: “And those that practice deception ought not to be called merchants but rather deceivers and evil doers. Above all, merchants should be truthful in words and in promises, accustomed to speaking and keeping the truth so that a simple promise by a merchant will be believed as by a contract..... Although there may be some that do wrong, I hold that by the mercy of God, there are those who are good, honest, and true. May God keep them rich, honorable, and worthy of trust!” (“Et ceulx que y font fassetés ne doivent mie estre appelés marchans, maid drois purs trompeurs et mauvaise gent. Veritables en bouche et en promesses doivent aussi souverainement estre les

marchans, dont pour ce qu'ilz acustument a dire et tenir verité est que la simple promesse d'ung marchand sera creue par aussi grande foy comme on feroit aultre part par lectres obligatoires.... Combien que sans faille quoy que il soit des mauvais, je tiens que la mercy Dieu en y ait moult des bons loyaulx et veritables. Riches et honnorables et dignes de foy Dieu les en maintiengne”) (104) (194-94).

What Christine does not mention is that “trade” is often the way-station up or down from the noble life. In some places, impoverished noble families stood to lose their noble privilege: the *Vieux coustumier de Poictou* stated that a noble who “practices commerce or manual labour or in other ways lives by a mechanical craft publicly and notoriously like a commoner, not conducting himself as a noble, using or exercising arms and living nobly, shall not enjoy the privilege of a noble” (Contamine 204, translating Filhol). Similar laws existed in many parts of Europe, but they were not enforced consistently: a fifteenth-century list of *hidalgos* in Murcia includes “fourteen notaries, a surgeon, a tailor, a skinner, a publican, a maker of carding combs and a cutler”—and, as Angus MacKay adds, “such people were quite capable of asserting their legal rights” (163). Nevertheless, there might be other motives behind a reluctance to engage in commerce. Haute bourgeoisie families teetering on the edge of aristocracy often wanted nothing more than to amass property so they could live off their rents like the old families, and cease to engage in trade, however rarely this ideal was actually achieved (Morgan 27). Those who were just about to gain or lose noble status would be most inclined to distance themselves from the merchant class. The upwardly mobile rarely liked to remember their lowly beginnings, particularly when longstanding tradition was one of the ways of establishing nobility: i.e., one’s family was noble because it had

always been noble for as long as anyone could remember. As R. Howard Bloch comments, by this time “nobility represented a quality of birth, and a man was powerful because his ancestors, sometime around the year 1000, were already in command” (68). Indeed, the upper-class avidity to demonstrate ancient lineage led to such absurdities as commissioning poets to invent exploits for invented ancestors, since family trees traced to before the ninth and tenth centuries “came up against the awkward fact that before then there were no ancestors” (Duby Chivalrous 121)¹⁰. But what if the family were no longer powerful? For old families whose fortunes were fading, both the new money people and the new, non-agrarian economy that allowed merchants to flourish were threats to their own status.

Although the merchant class and burghers would have been deeply resented, people who needed them to import luxuries or lend money to finance a private war could not always afford to offend them. Artisans and peasants might have borne the brunt of aristocratic spleen—they could still be slighted with impunity. According to the *dérogeance* laws, nobles could forfeit their noble status for engaging in commercial farming or other manual trades, although not always for clerical work (Bush 86). The benevolence with which Christine wants tradespeople to be viewed is elicited even more strongly for craftsmen and farm-workers. Indeed, Christine is at some pains to reprove those who would view this class with contempt:

Next comes the third class of people who are artisans and agricultural workers, which we call the last part of the body politic and who are like legs and feet, according to Plutarch, and who should be exceptionally well watched over and cared for so that they suffer no hurt, for that which hurts them can dangerously

knock the whole body down. It is therefore more necessary to take good care and provide for them, since for the health of the body, they do not cease to go “on foot.” The varied jobs that artisans do are necessary for the human body and it cannot do without them, just as a human body cannot go without its feet. It would shamefully and uselessly drag itself in great pain on its hands and body without them, just as, he says, if the republic excluded laborers and artisans, it could not sustain itself. (105)

[Après vient le .iii. estat du peuple qui sont les gens de mestier et les laboueurs des terres, lesquelz nous prenons pour la darraine partie du corps de la policie qui sont comme les jambes et les piés dit encore Plutarque que par souveraine cure on les doit garder qu’ilz ne hurtent de aucun empechement, pour ce que de leur hurt pourroit venir au corps trop pereilleuse cheoite. Si leur est de tant plus necessaire bonne garde et providence, comme pour le salut du corps ilz ne cessent d’aler par terre; c’est a entendre, pour les divers labeurs que font les gens de mestier qui sont necessaires a corps humain, et dont il ne se pourroit garder ne passer, tout ainsi que ung corps humain ne se pourroit passer des piés, et que il nalast laidement et inutilement soy trainant, et a tres grande peine sur ses mains et sur son sorps, tout ainsi, ce dit il, est de la chose publique ostés laboueurs et les gens de mestier, elle ne se pourroit soustenir. (194-95)]

Delany may complain of Christine’s conservatism and truckling to royalty, but Christine’s concern for the commoners, and her recognition of their place in a healthy

economy, are startling when compared to the brutish imagery of peasants in much medieval literature: “‘Beast’ is...a characteristic epithet for the rural laborer in virtually every genre of clerical and aristocratic literature” (Justice 124).

Christine even goes so far as to tell a story in which military prowess is compatible with farming. Actilus is recruited by Roman knights “[a]s he worked at his plough in the field” (“et lui menant la charue aux champs”). The knights put him at the head of the Roman army, but once Actilius has restored the republic, he returns to his rustic life without regret: “And he whose hands had been hardened by the by labor at the plow, after he had left the leadership of the army, reestablished the republic by his noble courage and with his hands. Said Valerius, ‘the hand which had governed a team of oxen behind the plow took up governing battle chariots.’ And after many great and noble victories, he was not ashamed to leave the dignity of emperor and return to the work he had left behind” (“Et lui qui avoit lors les mains endurcies du labeur de la charue depuis qu’il estoit alé et qu’il avoit laissié le gouvernement des ostz de romme, restablit a la force de son noble couraige et des ses mains la chos publique qui sans lui aloit a decours; dont dit Valere les mains qui avoient gouvernés les buefs couplés a la charue prinrent a gouverner charues des batailles. Et après tres nobles et tresgrandes victoires, neut pas de honte de alissier la dignité d’empereur et retourner au labeur dont il en estoit party”)(108) (201). Note that Christine says the republic would have fallen apart without him (a phrase that does not appear in the English). Actilius knows how essential his leadership has been to the Romans; he is either astonishingly unambitious, or secure enough in his

own worth that he does not need the “noble lifestyle” to give him an identity. Christine clearly has no patience for the false elegance of nobility who think that a little work will make them less noble.

How effective could her rhetoric be? Christine and her audience lived at a time when the advantages of achieving and retaining noble status seemed to outweigh the disadvantages, judging by the number of people who went to considerable lengths to acquire such status and preserve it once acquired. Some commoners gained the nobility either through patents or through establishing claim to a title through long tradition (Bush 4); there were cases of ancient nobles losing their noble status for failing to maintain the standards expected of them, although, as previously stated, such policies were not consistently enforced (16); there were families unable to support the noble lifestyle, and reduced to living like peasants for survival purposes despite retaining a meaningless title (5). Certainly, none of these individuals seems to have been eager to return to the happy life of a rustic commoner Actilius relished. The life of a commoner was something one tried to escape, through professional advancement, patronage, or arranged marriages, not something one willingly returned to after the sort of military achievements that gave some people their ticket out of it. But an economy with too many Chiefs and not enough Indians is doomed to instability. Someone had to do the hewing of wood and drawing of

water, and most people preferred it to be somebody else. The medieval ideal was less “Not in my backyard” than “My backyard, as long as someone else is doing the plowing.”

On the other hand, the ideal of pastoral virtue is an old one, and Christine’s readers may well have recognized the trope for the literary construct it is. She may have anticipated this, and was merely opposing that convention to the one used in many romances, where the unknown knight wins status (or reclaims his ancestors’ long-lost status) by proving his valor. Rather than following (or openly criticising) the usual storyline of prowess leading to upward mobility, she offers an alternative ending, in which the protagonist finds happiness by satisfying the responsibilities of rank but avoiding its privileges.

* * *

Christine’s focus, then, is socio-economic stability. Geoffroi is also aware of social instability, but his concern is more specific: in a world in which personal and professional advancement can be achieved more easily through marriage, being a courtier, and economic display than through chivalry, how can fighters be recruited? If a title is not to be the bait, what is? Those already possessing titles must be made to think that chivalry is part of living up to the standards and traditions of their class. Those without titles must be made to think that in living up to the standards of the class to which they would like to belong, they will somehow feel more noble even without (or prior to)

acquiring a title. They can take pride in part of this tradition. Pride must be Geoffroi's strongest argument, for by the late 1300s, a good marriage or land tenure affords better prospects than risking the possibility of having a body part lopped off in battle.

Christine, however, does not want more soldiers or more wars—just professional soldiers to fight in the wars that cannot be avoided. She recognizes, reluctantly, that the country must occasionally defend itself against invaders like the English, but fears the abuses of a military out of control, knowing that women and children generally suffer the most. But although Geoffroi and Christine differ in their views on war, they share the fear of social instability. The newly rich provoke discontent among the lower classes, who rightly perceive their “privilege” as not always an ancient thing at all, merely a monetary thing. This might lead them to question the privilege of the really old families, and there is no doubt that the old families feared exactly this: that they would be confused with the parvenues, and the peasants would cease to defer to them. Keeping to defined roles is the solution for both: Geoffroi does not want military men acting like women or like pampered civilians; Christine does not want ordinary people dressing or putting on airs like nobility. All structures, political or military, must be supported by a solid base. Geoffroi is concerned that an army headed by people incapable of providing real leadership and poorly-trained soldiers looking for spoils rather than victory will be destroyed; Christine recognizes the dangers of a top-heavy economy: a figure with too much nobility in the head and arms tottering on dwindling peasant feet is doomed to topple. Starving the peasantry reduces their ability to produce crops or pay taxes; persecuting them destroys their motivation to do either, and provokes rebellions, which must then be put down by soldiers, who abuse their position and attack women or make

off with the crops—prompting further rebellions. Risings mean the immediate destruction of the commoners caught up in them and the eventual destruction of the monarchy. Mass movements have no positive side for her, and individuals putting on airs are figures of ridicule. Geoffroi is a little more relaxed about individual social movement upward, but insists that all have to pay their dues first.

As Bush notes, when it appears too easy to rise into the nobility, the nobles try to keep the newcomers out with restrictions and exclusionary tactics:

Although the purpose of many noble ideals was to make a clear distinction between the two orders, it was continually thwarted by the imitateness of wealthy commoners. Prior to the twentieth century European societies tended to produce middle classes whose members craved noble status and copied noble ways. rich commoners were inclined to purchase estates, acquire offices, withdraw from trade and indulge in lavish living. Many were absorbed into the noble order but, over the centuries, many acquired the trappings of the true noble instead of, or prior to, ennoblement. Thus, continually upstaging the aristocratic noble was the aristocratic commoner. In the circumstances, the nobility had no choice but to accentuate its ideals, to absorb rich commoners into the noble order and to place legal prohibitions upon the commoners' acquisition of noble estates and political or military functions. (110)

Ironically, the very same process had occurred earlier with the knights themselves. As Bloch observes, over a period of time, the knight became “less a retainer than the heir to a domain, function, and title. Chivalry itself, transformed from a relatively open class into a closed and patrilinious caste, was no longer merely an

indication of economic status but a hereditary sign of superiority” (68). Existing landed nobles fought the knight’s ascendancy as fiercely as the knights’ descendents were later to fight the rise of the merchant class: “As lesser knights became more aristocratic they began to adopt many of the great lords’ devices, titles, great seals, prestigious manor houses. The magnates reacted with resentment and with attempts to distance themselves from those they considered social upstarts” (Dressler 142).

But the more the club members pull up the ladder to the tree house, the more those on the ground persist. If their frustration is extreme, they tend to forget about climbing up and start thinking about chopping down. Christine and Geoffroi have differing reactions to the practice of exclusion. Geoffroi believes that merit should be rewarded, although he gives extra credit to nobles who don’t need chivalry for material gain or social advancement and devote themselves to it anyway. Possibly he is being polite, since he is an outsider to the noble class he was addressing; to write manuals for nobility is, after all, a way of inscribing oneself within that class. And yet Geoffroi clearly values chivalry in itself, not merely as a means of advancement. To him, perfect chivalry is very much a goal that exists in reality, not an artificial construct good for luring stupid people into being trebuchet fodder while other people sit safe at home. Perhaps he suspects the emerging leisure class does not entirely buy the old epics and romances when they can better themselves through arranged marriages or charging higher interest rates; perhaps he sees sheltered young noblemen who feel no ambition to emulate the heroic exploits of their ancestors. In either case, he resents the idea that the cause to which he has devoted (and eventually gives) his life is an irrelevant one. If the knights will go back to doing what they are supposed to be doing, and did do in some lost

golden age of chivalry, people will go back to valuing what is valuable. The parable of a woman basking in her valiant lover's fame while another cringes at her cowardly lover's lack of prestige may have some basis in truth (think of football players), but it might also be Geoffroi's wishful thinking. Perhaps he had seen actual impoverished fighters shunted aside while wealthy fops were fêted and fawned over, particularly by families with daughters to marry off. His solution to social instability is to look for an aristocracy grounded in something besides birth: valor on the battlefield.

Christine's solution is to discourage both the false elegance of people who have only just left the lower ranks and are the first to disrespect those they left, and the complacency of ancient nobles who assume that their inheritance is all privilege and no stewardship. Rather than emphasizing the exclusive nature of the elite, and fanning the resentment of those excluded, she depicts the lower levels of society in a more positive light, to encourage their "betters" to treat them with more dignity and possibly (should they ever read her works or hear of them) the commoners themselves to respect their station and themselves. The solution is not a physical one, despite her metaphor of a political body, but an emotional one involving changing everyone's frame of mind.

Despite the morphing of physical chivalry into a hierarchy of motive in Geoffroi's work, and the image of corporeal "body politic" that relies on a spirit of cooperation in Christine's work, the most significant source of the societal problems they encounter is the fact that people with noble titles don't have to pay taxes, and people without them do. People who do useful but low-status work may lose their tax-free position, and people who contribute nothing to society, can retain it. People who regularly risk life and limb for the safety of the country have to take orders from people who lack both experience

and prowess and whose only claim to authority is their descent from a brave fighter who lived centuries ago, or even a very recent noble patent given to a rich merchant who funded an impecunious king. A brave man-at-arms, lacking a title, has to pay taxes; a titled coward does not. People who dress, act and live like nobles for a few generations can claim noble status, and get out of paying taxes, if no one blows the whistle on them before the requisite number of generations have put up the aristocratic front long enough to fool the neighbors; people who live quietly and practice a useful trade cannot. In the end, Geoffroi and Christine are dealing with a society in which abstract notions of honor and dignity must be used as incentives for fighters or for people tempted to escape their class, because the incentive tempting them the other way is the most material of all incentives: money.

This does not, however, mean that Geoffroi and Christine are offering abstract notions of honor in which they themselves do not believe in order to stem the tide of ambitious commoners. As Kaeuper notes, “[a]ny deep gulf between the acquisition of wealth and the practice of chivalry is a modern myth; gold and glory made a fine amalgam in the medieval knightly view” (Violence 132). Rather, Geoffroi and Christine are attempting to reverse the decay of chivalrous and social structures in which they *do* believe, structures weakened by both mercenary considerations and their own intrinsic violence. As Kaeuper observes, many medieval writers were troubled by the dilemma that chivalry was both the cause of and the means of controlling violence:

Among its contemporaries, chivalry won high praise as one of the very pillars of medieval civilization, indeed of all civilization. At the same time the practitioners of its great virtue, prowess, inspired fear in the hearts of those committed to

certain ideals of order. As they worried about the problem of order in their developing civilization, thoughtful medieval people argued that chivalry (reformed to their standards) was the great hope, even as they sensed that unreformed chivalry was somehow the great cause for fear. (Violence 29)

The yearning for stability comes through in both Geoffroi's and Christine's work, despite his apparent relish for violence and her apparent pragmatism towards it. The criticisms they level at chivalry or social hierarchies are only in part a warning that one may rise only thus far and no farther; they are also a plea to leaders to provide the people with appropriate role models worthy of being obeyed. Where leaders are admired and emulated for their virtues rather than resented for their privileges, rank has a meaning beyond mere economic advantage, and it is this meaning both writers wish to see restored.

Moreover, the readers of these books have access to the tools that will allow them to persuade others and themselves that they have become what they wished to be. The man-at-arms who follows Geoffroi's program will do and say all that a valiant fighter should do and say. Others will perceive that he acts like a valiant fighter; therefore, he must *be* a valiant fighter, and they will treat him as one. Christine de Pisan's benevolent prince and responsible burgher receive similar advice on how to gain the respect of others and confidence in their own powers by performing the characters assigned to them believably. Christine provides scripts detailing how the prince is to give a speech or how

the burgher is to deter a riot, situations in which the ability to persuade is crucial. In rhetorical terms, these books empower their readers by teaching them to play their roles effectively.

But we must not forget that they do not teach readers to change their roles, only to embody them persuasively for themselves and others. Moreover, those who cannot read the manuals are excluded from the rhetorical conversation: they can be told why they will be going to war or why they will be taxed to support a war, but are given no tools to answer. Christine's messages to the lowly are mostly hints to their betters; she never specifically suggests that anyone read her advice to local peasants, any more than she did in Trois Vertus. Geoffroi does not address foot-soldiers at all, even though he gives leaders advice on how to interact with them. The lower orders are not only barred from learning to wield the tools of persuasion, they are scarcely regarded by our authors as an audience worthy of persuading.

Notes

¹ Even earlier, chivalric prowess was of greater putative than practical merit. William Marshal, as Sidney Painter tells us, “for the first forty years of his life was a landless knight who devoted most of his time and energy to tournaments.” Only his marriage to “the daughter and heiress of Earl Richard of Pembroke” made William a “great feudal lord with fiefs in Normandy, England, Wales, and Ireland” (vii). Kaeuper writes that Marshal “long troubled by the slight reward in terms of land that his great prowess had earned him” (Violence 132).

² We might wonder how warriors achieved the high casualties in medieval battles that were reported, if this were the case, but a combat demonstrator from the Royal Armouries explains this succinctly: “You kill lots of poor people” (Rimer, Royal Armouries).

³ However, Roger Highfield speculates that “because the Spaniards must be one of the most mixed races in Europe they developed a theory of purity of descent” (128).

⁴ See for instance Andrew Taylor on the pressure to hide or even repress all fear.

⁵ “Certes nennil” (138), which Kaeuper and Kennedy have rendered as “Indeed no” with an exclamation point, is more emphatic than either “ne” or “pas.” It is closer to “certainly not in the least” or “by no means.”

⁶ All French quotes are from Robert H. Lucas’s critical edition. All English quotes are from Kate Langdon Forhan’s translation.

⁷ Steven Justice notes that in the rising of 1381: “... all the major chroniclers notice that the rebels called themselves the allies, almost the delegates, of the king. ‘With whom haldes yow?’ was their challenge; the correct reply was ‘Wyth Kyng Richarde and wyth the trew comunes’” (59). The Good Parliament of 1376 has taken a similar tack, proceeding as if “any misbehavior by the counsellors was done without the king’s knowledge,” even though Edward III was understood to be senile and unfit to rule (Ferster 79-80).

⁸ Christine’s son had been brought into Henry IV’s household after his patron, the pro-Ricardian earl of Salisbury, had been killed. Her handling of Henry IV’s offer of a position as court poet involved deceptive tactics worthy of a place among her exempla: she pretended to accept, and insisted she needed her son to return home to help her pack. Once he was safely in France, any pretense of going to England was abandoned (Forhan Political 73-74).

⁹ Jean sans Peur did not actually fare much better than the underlings he used as tools: in 1419, while he knelt in submission before the dauphin, he was “hacked to death” (Forhan Political 24).

¹⁰ As an aristocrat in Visconti’s film The Leopard says of a frantic social-climber, “He’s of an old lineage—or soon will be.”

CHAPTER 3

IN ENGLISH AND IN WRYTING OF OUR TONGE

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the role of a knight was thought so incompatible with some professions that practicing them could cause a loss of rank according to fourteenth-century derogation laws. In France, performing clerical work could be penalized with derogation until the end of the eighteenth century (Bush 119). In late-fifteenth-century England, however, knights were sending their children to be educated at the Inns of Court (Ferguson 196-97), and the “shift from clerks to gentlemen” in legal and administrative work was sufficiently widespread to raise the ire of those who thought that gentlemen ought to devote themselves to arms, not bureaucracy (Morgan 24-25). Although concepts of what is virtuous are often thought to be eternal, concepts of what is respectable can shift dramatically. What, then, was happening to the moral advice readers received during this time, and how would England’s more fluid socio-economic dynamics affect its reception of ideas inherited from the French? Although the French books encourage social stability by telling readers that they can shine within their own proper spheres as obedient wives, honest workers, and dutiful men-at-arms, England gives a hint of its future as a nation of shopkeepers by encouraging merchants to study the manners of the nobility; at the same time, English books depict the aristocracy as possessing the verbal tricks of sharp lawyers. In short, in the English books, noble

manners are not beyond the reach of those of ordinary birth, and learning the tricks of a useful trade is not beneath the notice of the high-born.

Towards the end of the years during which England made the transition from a chivalric and feudal society to a mercantile and legalistic one, four books were written focusing on the question of virtuous conduct. Two were translations of French works which we have examined in earlier chapters, and two were indigenous English texts. Despite their earlier dates, the English originals display a clearly legalistic thrust, not being dependent on French originals produced in a more feudal society. John Capgrave's Life of St. Katherine (c.1440) draws on the Golden Legend and other saint's lives without being sufficiently dependent on any of them to be termed a translation, even by looser medieval standards. The author clearly feels as free to tinker with his material as Chaucer did, and while technically St. Katherine is not overtly a conduct manual at all (indeed, it is almost an anti-conduct manual and an anti-Mirror for Princes, in that his heroine violates both the rules of obedience usually set out for maidens, particularly in marriage arrangements, and the rules of diplomacy with counsellors set out for rulers), this text rewards being interpreted in the light of a conduct manual rather than merely a hagiography. Capgrave's saint's early training and education are clearly presented as the tools which will enable her to triumph over the pagan philosophers in debate; her rhetorical skill allows her to win her case in court as if she were a lawyer, rather than a passive conduit for divine inspiration.¹ The reader must admire her, but he or she is almost warned not to attempt to copy her, in fact, to take her virtue as a lesson in disastrous government just as one would take lessons in what not to do from the vices of

the men in Lydgate's Fall of Princes. Peter Idley's Instructions to His Son (c. 1445-50) was written by a bailiff, active in the law, for a son he expected to follow in his footsteps, and is a prototype of the Protestant work ethic: the son is to work for worldly success and comfort as well as eternal salvation; he is also openly encouraged to make powerful connections, rather than stay modestly in his place, associating with companions who cannot help him. Even Idley's pious exempla savor more of the assizes than the supernatural pyrotechnics attending the Chevalier's disobedient wives and repentant sinners. Idley's stories of divine retribution parallel court sentences and contracts fulfilled or violated: sins recompensed have reduced penalties; sins for which the perpetrator makes no amends by compensating the victim or appealing to God for mercy are punished both in this life and the next. If salvation cannot be bought, damnation can certainly be avoided by making proper restitution to the victims. One cannot imagine any of our French writers discussing virtue in similar terms of equitable restitution and estimation of legal damages.

While Caxton's and Woodville's translations necessarily reflect much of the earlier French societies that had produced them, both display the English optimism on matters of social mobility. The Body of Policye, a circa-1470 translation of Christine de Pisan's Corps de policie attributed to Anthony Woodville, is fairly faithful to its original, but expands a few passages such as the one on discouraging swearing and foul language even among commoners. As the French (besides Christine) rarely seem to care what the commoners are doing as long as they are not rebelling, the English version would seem to expect more of the masses, for they too are to share in the formation of a national virtue with its own moral language and a moral literature to supply its vocabulary. William

Caxton's translation of the Livre du chevalier de la tour landry (c. 1483-84) is far less faithful to its source than Woodville's translation, yet his goal is the same: he too is working to develop a kind of national virtue. He severely reworks the original, toning down the bluntness and sarcasm of the French to effect a more lofty, decorous tone that an expanded audience of upwardly-mobile readers might find appropriately genteel. Caxton had reason to know about upward mobility, since reading and translating improving literature allowed him to rise from a mercer's apprentice to an editor patronised by Woodville and the Duchess of Burgundy, among others. His translation's very existence (and its prologue) implies social improvement, for although the Chevalier's descriptions of arranged marriages for obedient daughters stand intact, the translation is aimed at virtuous readers of *any* class, and even a merchant's daughter could dream that reading the same books as a knight's daughter might lead to a prominent marriage. (She would also have the example of Elizabeth Woodville, whose own marriage to Edward IV raised her family from minor nobility to enormous power and influence).

Let us begin with the two English originals. The first involves a saint who argues like a lawyer, and the second is advice from a lawyer who wants his son to live a saintly (but still prosperous) life.

I. Homegrown

Although their works precede Woodville's and Caxton's chronologically, the ideas expressed by John Capgrave and Peter Idley anticipate humanist concepts of education and civic duty. Not limited by French sources (not least because they mix and

match various sources and analogs, rather than confining themselves to a single *auctore*), Capgrave and Idley have the freedom to synthesize messages distinctly English in their focus as well as their diction. We have encountered the idea that physical acts could create as well as display inner virtue, and we have encountered the idea that there is nobility of conduct, which is accessible to all, as opposed to nobility of descent, which is not. John Capgrave's virgin martyr incorporates both physical virtue and noble ancestry, but with a new element added: the trained skill in rhetoric that will allow her to defeat not only the pagan philosophers, but also, in an earlier scene, the noble counselors who wished her to marry rather than remain a virgin queen.

Her skill and outright zest in debate make her remarkable when compared to protagonists in other late medieval saint's lives. Bradshaw's Saint Werburge is not confrontational at all, leaving it to her family to reject unworthy suitors (ll. 932-80) and announcing her decision to live celibately with weeping and affirmations of her devotion to God, rather than arguments (ll. 1422-77). Barclay's St. George excels in the traditional feats of chivalrous romance, battles and dragon-slaying (ll. 246-52, 862-910) rather than intellectual sparring; his final profession of faith is a declamation rather than a point-by-point refutation of counter-arguments (ll. 1709-92). Lydgate's Amphiball is converted by a special grace from God and the prayers of the Pope (ll. 316-36); Albon is converted by a special dream from God and the prayers and explanations of Amphiball (ll. 443-757). Neither seems to require (or even be capable of) the extensive debate Katherine sustains with the hermit who converts her, and their martyrdoms, like George's, feature pious declamations (ll. 1430-99, 1046-1134), not skilled argument. Moreover, both are arrested when word of their conversions leaks out; Katherine actively *seeks* her confrontation

with Maxentius. Even the hero of Chaucer's "Second Nun's Tale" is not as confrontational as Capgrave's mouthy saint; Cecilia famously insults the pagan lords for their stupidity (SNT 437-41, 493-511), but Capgrave's Katherine goes her one better by insulting her own counsellors.

Although she attributes her readiness to face the pagan philosophers to Christ's promise to supply his followers with the words they will need (IV. 1163-69), it must be noted that when she faces down her own courtiers she is still a pagan, and has only the techniques of other pagans, Aristotle and Ovid, to support her counter-arguments. The techniques are successful in both cases,² and—despite the fact that her arguments concern Christian matters in the second case—her techniques remain those of classical rhetoric, and are the same ones used in the earlier argument. Moreover, her arguments with the emperor and his philosophers have many rhetorical fallacies. In the end, she is an inspiring figure not because her arguments are convincing, but because they are confounding: Katherine is able to leave her opponents sputtering, fuming, and speechless. And despite Capgrave's numerous foreign sources, from the Golden Legend to the probably apocryphal monkish manuscript he mentions in his Prologue, she does so in fluent, even colloquial, English.

Capgrave hints that Katherine is predestined for Christian virtue even before instruction because of her inclination towards virginity. (I. 190-91). Her chastity, however, is articulated in her speeches, rather than confined to the restrained physical movement and minimal speech advocated by the Chevalier de la Tour as the insignia of feminine virtue. Although Capgrave bluntly announces that faith is the reward for good works, not the cause of them (I. 811-12), he does not concentrate solely on physical

virtue or the body language of virtue expressed in a firm gaze and deportment free of fidgeting or head-tossing. Although Capgrave refers to her “sad” (i.e., serious) manner (II. 1170 and elsewhere), he is more concerned with her command of the tools of debate. Indeed, the English language itself is made the focus of his narrator’s efforts, for he notes that his (possibly apocryphal) priestly source “mad thi lyff in Englysch tunge ful well,/ But yet he deyed or he had fully doo,” (Prol. 57-58), and laments the “straungenesse of his derk langage” (Prol. 62). The priest whose manuscript is Capgrave’s supposed source had, in his turn, studied the language and culture of his martyred subject for years to make his account as accurate as possible:

Twelve yere in that londe he dwelt and more,

To know her langage, what it myght mene,

Tyl he of her usages had fully the lore

With ful mech stody, tary, and tene.

Ful longe it was or he myght it sene,

The lyff that Athanas made of this mayde.... (Prol. 183-88)

Virtue, then, might seem to be defined just as Christ defined vice: it is signalled by the speech that “cometh out of the mouth” (Matt. 15:11).

From language, Capgrave turns to a more traditional definition of noble nature: ancestry. But his discussion of Katherine’s antecedents brings up several troubling questions about chivalry (the supposed cause and effect of hereditary titles, as the nobility supposedly earned their privileges through brave deeds, which of course they will continue to perform to uphold the family name—although as we have seen from the previous chapter, the reality was somewhat different). It also brings up troubling

questions about ancestry in general: Katherine is descended, like Christ himself, from more than a few generations of sinners. Almost by process of elimination, Capgrave makes it clear that if nobility cannot be claimed solely through ancestry or the physicalized nobility of sedate body language, it must be demonstrated through the use of the right words.

To begin with, Katherine's father Costus seems to fit medieval notions of chivalry:

Was no lorde besyde that him wold do wrake
For what man that dede he shuld it sone wayle
Whan that he gan venjauce to take—
Preyer as than wold not avayle.
To many a kyngdom made he asayle
And many a castell beet he ryth down
Whan thei to his lawes wold not be bown. (I 39-35)

Capgrave's apparent approval of Costus's ruthlessness is debatable. England had already experienced the problems caused by Henry VI's ineffectual rule, and a strong king might seem preferable. However, the culture had popularized two stories of kings who relented after their queens pleaded for mercy towards the people: Froissart's story of Queen Philippa's interceding with Edward III on behalf of the burghers of besieged Calais (McAlpine 233-34), and a similar story involving Queen Anne pleading with Richard II on behalf of the Londoners (both intercessions, as I have noted in my first chapter, may at least have been deliberately staged as public relations moves, if they are not completely apocryphal [cf. Strohm 96]). Thus Costus's merciless course of action with conquered

peoples may not be entirely endorsed by Capgrave. However, Costus is a pagan, and Capgrave does not need to hold him to the occasionally contradictory standards of a Christian king who must simultaneously turn the other cheek and be a fierce protector of his people. Nevertheless, Capgrave acknowledges that even pagan kingship involves reconciling contradictions. “A goode man was he,” he affirms, “this is the ground:/ Meke as a mayde, manful at nede.... Strong man of hand.../ Helper of hem that to him hade nede” (I 36-40).

Costus’s pagan status appears to give Capgrave more misgivings than his vexed role as a maintainer of peace through war. In any case, he addresses any misgivings his readership might have on that score:

Ful grete pyté onto oure thowt it is
That swech a trew man schuld hethen be,
But rith thus wrote thei that were ful wys:
Oute of the harde thorn brymbyl-tree
Growyth the fresch rose, as men may see;
So sprong oure Lady oute of the Jewys
And Kateryne of hethen... (I. 50-56)

That virtuous fruit may come of blemished stock is an assertion Capgrave repeats after an extensive detailing of Katherine’s royal genealogy (I. 533-686). Lest his readers object,

“thow thei were men of grete lorschepe,/ The kynrod of schrewys to God is no worchepe” (I. 699-700), Capgrave reminds us that St. Jerome not only acknowledged but emphasized Christ’s flawed human lineage:

I answer hereto as do Seynt Jerome:

“Crist cam of schrewys” he seyth, “for thys skylle

The principall cause why to this world He come

To corect synneris; that was His wylle.”

For many men that synfull were and ille

Are in His genelogie, ye may hem there fynde,

My lady Kateryne stante in this same kynde. (I 701-07)

In other words, ancestry is important...because it isn’t. Katherine’s nobility, like that of Christ, is a matter of her own words and acts rather than something proceeding entirely from her lineage. Genealogy was a vexed subject during the Wars of the Roses, and Theresa Coletti has noted that contemporary concerns about proper hierarchy and political continuity were often expressed in a coded way, for instance, in the character of Herod, who is depicted as destroying records of Jewish genealogy and trying to pass himself off as hereditary royalty (47-49). Christ, like Katherine, could count kings among his human ancestors, but his forbears also included Rahab the Harlot.³

Lineage, then, would seem to be important to Capgrave not so much in terms of establishing a reputation of ancestral privilege (as the families I described in my second chapter attempted to do), but in terms of recognizing that even blemished stock and can produce admirable progeny: Katherine, the descendent of pagans and invaders, will be a Christian martyr. Heredity is not, in other words, destiny. Not every one of Capgrave’s

contemporaries would have been satisfied with this. If heredity should not determine lordship, what should? Henry VI's ancestors had seized the throne from Richard II on the premise that he was unfit to rule, but now there were serious doubts about Henry VI's fitness to rule. If fitness to rule could be such a vexed question, surely ancestry was easier to substantiate.⁴

But just in case it is not, Capgrave establishes the importance of rhetorical skill and training in the practice of virtue. He determines the location of Katherine's region by noting that St. Mark preached there, and "prechyd so there that hem alle twyst/ Fro all her maumentrye and fals beleve" (I 103-04). Rhetorical skill can lead men to faith. Katherine's early training involves a devotion to "lettyres and wordys" beyond her age (I. 252), proceeds to "rethoryk and gramere," from there to "cases...nombres.../The modes, the verbes" and "the figures and the consequence" (glossed by Winstead as forms and logic) (I. 254-58). These basic tools of grammar and literacy, when polished with more advanced rhetorical skills, will allow her to "ovyrcome heresy and blaspheme/ Thorowte all Grek" (I. 28-87). We have come a long way from the Chevalier's daughters, trained to speak simply, if at all, lest they frighten away suitors with excessive glibness. "Sche schall be myty with strength of Goost," Capgrave says (I 301), but her might seems to be based more on the strength of Clerks. Katherine is eventually taught how to decorate "maters with colourys and with terms dysplayeth" (I 371), and to use dialectic to distinguish "trewth fro the falshed" (I. 375). Although she is docile in the root word's sense of being teachable, she is not docile in the way the Chevalier expected maidens to be. Eventually, her tutors run out of instruction: "We wondyr how sche may oure argumentis dryve/ For hir conclousyoun now; in yerys five/ Cune we not lerne that

sche doth in one” (I 417-19). Indeed, Katherine’s erudition might very well bring accusations of Lollardy to a real woman of Capgrave’s time, particularly one of lesser birth. “Hir bokes for to loke on can sche noght blyne;/ Whosoevyr lett hir, he dothe full gret synne” (I 781-82) Capgrave asserts, and the lines have a defensive ring; in fact, the supposedly illiterate Margery Kempe drew criticism just for having scripture read to her (Staley 141, 162)

Katherine’s reading leads to her first crisis: she would rather read than marry as her court wishes her to do. Her reluctance in the face of courtiers’ pressure is similar to that of the Marquis in the Griselda stories, except that unlike the Marquis, Katherine is not frittering away her time in hunting and hawking. Moreover, as her debating skills make clear, she does not need a spouse to handle the diplomatic and negotiating aspects of her position for her, as the incompetent Marquis does in every version of the Griselda tale. Emissaries speaking for all three estates come to her: nobility, clerks, even a Duke to speak remind her of her required loyalty to the common people, since they presumably are not trained to speak for themselves. In advice typical of *Mirrors for Princes*, Katherine is told she must “be governyd and werk be counsayle” (I. 946). She is told she must marry immediately, and is cautioned (in what seems remarkably modern slang) “Ye wyl not lete this matere slyde” (I. 935). A “grete lorde” (106) tells her “Ye must now leve youre stody and youre bokys/ And tak youre solace be feldys and be brokys” (II. 125-26), as if the activity for which Griselda’s Marquis is usually most criticized, his evading his responsibilities by wandering in the forest, were preferable to scholarly pursuits. Katherine may share the Marquis’s horror of marriage, but not his enthusiasm for hunting: “Schuld I now chaunge my lyffe and myn aray/ And trace the wodes

abowte undyr the bow?/ I loved it nevyr; how schuld I love it now?" (II. 192-94). We must remember, however, that hunting was an important part of how the king socialized with his nobles (Carpenter 37-38), and Katherine's habit of sequestering herself is already problematic (as well as being contrary to Geoffroi de Charny's principles of sound leadership, detailed in the previous chapter). "Hunting, too, meant horsemanship, another species of prowess, another active display of lordship" (Kaeuper Violence 175). Lastly, Mirrors for Princes recommended that a king's private life include opportunities to socialize and participate in harmless forms of recreation (Watts 89). Katherine is vulnerable to criticism because she has failed in moderation: just as Griselda's Marquis spends too much time in the social activities and leisure privileges of his class, Katherine (according to her advisors) spends too little.

However, the time that she has spent with books rather than in hunting is what allows her to counter the courtiers' rhetoric with rhetoric of her own. The first speaker uses *argumentum ad populum*, the use of charged buzzwords and bandwagon appeal to "stir up a favorable emotional climate" (Corbett 92), (i.e., "mom," patriotism," and "apple pie.") The people who agree on the desirability of Katherine's marrying include "all youre reume, of lordys and othyr" (II. 118) "certainly youre modyr" who is "in this case ryght on of hem" (II. 119-20), and "my lord the Duke of Tyre, youre hem" (II. 122). He appeals to tradition: "Thynk on youre kyn, think on youre hye lyne" (II. 127). He also appeals to her sense of pity, pointing out that a husband can defend and benefit her people (II. 134-38). We might expect him to tell her that prospective husbands might find her erudition unmaidenly, but instead, he finishes by appealing to her ego: a suitor will want her "Mech more.../ If he knew youre cunnynge, as now do we" (II. 142-43).

Katherine neatly deflects both the guilt-trip and the flattery. She points out that a hasty decision, considering her youth, would show anything but wisdom, and notes that were she eager to marry, her advisors would be advising her to wait: “I am but yung; I may full weel abyde:/ Thus schuld ye sey to me if I had hast.” Deliberately echoing their own wording, she adds that until she has had time to grow up a little more and consult more advisors, they should “Let all this matere as for a whyle now slyde” (II. 211-13).

A second lord comes with a prepared oration, using the second-hand rhetoric of a professional speechwriter (in this case, a clerk) to persuade her, since “His wytte was not sufficient as in this cas/ To speke in this matere” (II. 236-37). Katherine, his speech asserts, will be too soft-hearted to lead men into war or punish criminals as they deserve; she will faint if she witnesses violent death (II. 260-73). His major premise is that rulers must be tough enough to punish and make war, his minor premise is that women cannot be tough: therefore, no woman can be a proper ruler without a mate to fulfill these responsibilities. Rather than arguing with the soundness of his second premise (that women cannot be sufficiently tough), Katherine questions the enthymeme behind his first premise, that wars and executions cannot proceed without the physical presence of the ruler, whether male or female. The lords of the realm were perfectly capable of going to war on occasions when her father was not present to lead them (II. 288-94), and her father was rarely present at state executions, although he authorized them when necessary (II. 304-08). She adds something of a personal challenge: “What word seyde I evyr,

eythere schort or long,/ Schuld let your corage?" (II. 313-14). If they fail to defend themselves, they must blame their own cowardice and not any hindrance on her part.

The Duke of Damascus points out that if a ruler wishes loyalty from his subjects, he must be loyal to them: "The pupyll must nedys onto the kyng obeye...So is a kyng swore eke ful depe/ To love his pupyll, be thei heye or lowe" (II. 670-74). Katherine, he implies, is in danger of breaking her coronation oath to govern the realm: "Thus are ye swore, madame; ye it knowe/ Bettyr than I what is to breke an othe" (II. 677-78). He thus questions what Richard Firth Green would call Katherine's "trouthe," her "reliability," or "reputation for fair dealing" (14); his own rhetorical approach is a challenge to her character rather than her argument: an *ad hominem* (or in this case, *ad feminam*) attack (Corbett 91). Katherine replies that she is not abandoning her authority, but he is close to defying it; he may accuse her of "ber[ing] us down with youre philosophye (II. 692), but he is the one to "carpe and in youre langage wade,/ New wordes rehearse and new resones speke/ Whech were rehersed and have her answers eke" (II. 703-05). She finishes with her own *ad hominem* attack: where loyalty is concerned, her father left the country "in rest and pes/ And in noo debate" (II. 708-09)... unless the Duke himself initiates or at least tolerates it, which would be treason:

....ye may youreself it ses

And but ye do ye be ontrewed to me,

Not to me oonly but to the magesté

Of my crown and gylty for to deye. (II. 710-13).

This pattern of argument and counter-argument continues. A prince states “I schall sey treuthe, thow ye think I rave” (II. 334); Katherine appeasingly answers, “Ye love my worchep, my londys wold ye save./ I thank you, syre, I sey not that ye rave” (II. 382-83). Despite her conciliatory words, she refutes his argument too. The scholarly Duke of Athens questions her lineage, wondering how so noble a father produced so uncooperative a daughter (II. 11. 1205-26); rather than rising to the bait of his implied insult, Katherine praises the “stody and wytt” of his native Athens (II. 1230), but suggests he regard her as a graft which may produce diverse fruit and eventually survive without the stock onto which it was grafted (II. 1240-60). A clerk as bookish as Katherine herself (“For very stody his vysage was full pale” [II. 1270]) flatters her for both learning and native wit, and begs her to find a husband worthy of them (II. 11. 1346-51); she replies that if his “commendacyoun” be so, then she must “plese that Lord with all hert and mynde,/ That in His gyftis hath be to me so kynde/ And sent me graces whech othir women want” (II. 1375-80). But she follows this meek offer by using his own words against him:

Ye have sett oure loos above so hye

We pase all women that now formed are.

And on youre grounde ageyn I thus reply;

I wold know to me who that worthy ware.

This is your argument, this is your owne lare,

That I am worthyest lyvyng of all women,

Than must I hafe the worthyest of all men. (II. 11. 1387-93)

She will use this pattern of the *conciliatio* again with the pagan philosophers: praising their wisdom and learning, but following the placatory words with rebuttals. Her advisors may be unable to best her, but they are not too dim-witted to see they are being “got at” nor to resent it. When the marriage parliament begins, the councilors are praising Katherine’s cleverness in terms that might shock the Knight of the Tower and his wife, familiar as they are with engagements that are destroyed because the prospective bride was too clever for her own good, and ought to have held herself “more symply” (Caxton 168). Towards the end of the debate, however, one disgruntled advisor is acknowledging that her wit soars like an eagle’s (II. 940), but drily adds, “Grow ye no hiere—yours wyte is hye inow” (II. 947). If, as Karen Winstead observes, the appeal of virgin-martyr narratives was frequently the chance to identify with a strong heroine who faced down authority figures (98), then Katherine’s ability to discomfit her advisors must have been very appealing indeed.

In the end, however, the plot is its own refutation: although the people have begged her to marry for their security (I. 889-903), Katherine has reminded her lords that the country has lived in peace aside from a few border wars, claiming they therefore do not require a king to lead them into battle (II. 393-405). Subsequently, her lands are surrounded by Maxentius’s troops and her people subjugated—events a warrior-king might indeed have been able to prevent. Her own accusing words to Maxentius are a tacit acknowledgment of his political conquest:

Sith ye are kyng and yrthwisnes shuld kepe,

Whi make ye swech mastries in otheris mennes londe,

Compell my tenauntism thow their sore wepe,

To go with her offeryngis rith in her hondis,

With trumpes and taburs befor you to stonde,

Withoute my leve, withoute my licence?

This is wronge to me and to God offence! (IV. 918-24)

This would be a more powerful argument if legislation, like history, were not customarily written by the victors. As Green has pointed out, commoners who tried to invoke rights granted them under Anglo-Saxon law got nowhere with a legal system relying on post-conquest records (201-02). It would also be more powerful if there were not warrior-queens in both ancient and medieval history (or at least legend). Katherine's apparent failure to defend her territories with military force when necessary is a horribly irresponsible thing for a ruler; it would have fatal consequences for Henry VI. Moreover, Katherine defends the use of her books by telling her councilors they contribute to good government: "This worldly governaunce were not worth a leke/ Ne were these bokes..." she maintains, for books preserve knowledge that might otherwise be lost "...for our myndys are swech now/ It slydyth forby, all that evyr thei know,/ And be oure bokes ageyn full fast thei grow" (II. 535-39). Yet she will burn all her books of pagan lore...and then use their debating techniques to defeat the pagan philosophers. Books are important because they aid memory, yet her memory, filled with strategies from books that no longer exist, is sufficient. "...Goddys lawe, ne mannys, schuld not be know/ Ne were oure bokes" (II. 554-55). But man's law can change with regimes, and legal documents are only useful when they can be produced in court, as the people Green describes learned when they could not find contracts (documents that later historians

discovered did in fact exist) to prove their cases (39). Katherine also tells her advisors that if not for a book, men would not know their ancestors were Adam and Eve: “Yet is that book not of oure beleve/ Receyved as yet: me thinkyth it must nede” (II. 544-45). If the book were of her belief, however, Katherine might not be permitted to read it in Capgrave’s time (Deacon 144). Knowledge open to pagans is, ironically, forbidden to believers.

Katherine’s conversion must be indeed the work of God, for the man who ostensibly brings it about produces one logical, ethical, and pathetic fallacy after another in his efforts to persuade her. She herself wished to marry Christ, he notes, for she told her parliament she “wolde no lorde ne kyng” but one who was incomparably strong, gentle, and rich:

Thys was at that tyme, lady, your desyre:

That this lorde whch that ye wold have

Schulde lyve evermore....

This was your wyll and fullfyllyd schall it be. (III. 585-94)

Since we have already been told that God marked her for his own before she was born, how is it granting her wish to give her what she has asked for, when he has been guiding her wishes all along? But the same question about Free Will could be asked of the Virgin Mary: how can she freely give her Fiat when God has already chosen her to bear the Messiah? Is there the slightest possibility she might answer, “No”? When Katherine, no Victorian maiden, has reservations concerning the Virgin Birth, she does not mince words: “What, wene ye sere, that I were so blynde/ That I cowde not undyrstand of generayoun/ The prevy weyes?” (III. 637-39). The hermit’s answer is a

non sequitur, an argument that does not follow from the premise (Corbett 86): he notes that “God made Eve from man, and “Sith that He made a virgyne of a man,/ He was of powere eke for to make/ A man of a virgyne” (III. 652-54). Specifically, this is a faulty analogy, an argument that “concentrate[s] on irrelevant, inconsequential similarities between two situations and overlook[s] pertinent, significant dissimilarities” (Corbett 90). How could an all-powerful and eternal God be put to death, Katherine wonders (III. 694-707). “Nature fayleth whan we feyth lere,” the hermit answers, for if such things could be proven by logic, “There were no mede than in oure beleve” (III. 710-14). Switching gears, he points out that she has only the words of others that Costus was her father, and that she was a baby in the cradle as other children are:

Of all these thingys can we make no preve,

Wherfore full mekely we must hem beleve.

So schall we beleve all manere thing

Whech that oure Lord comaundeth onto us.... (III. 727-30)

This is another false analogy: Katherine’s genealogy, and the infancy she cannot remember, can be reconstructed from the customs regarding heredity and child-rearing embedded in her culture, but there is no parallel for the contradictions the hermit wishes her to accept, or the fact that he at once wishes her to put logic secondary to faith, and yet be dazzled by his brilliant logic, used in the service of faith. However, the hermit’s

arguments are firmly in the tradition of Aquinas, who provided logical proof to God's existence not because God required it, but because the weakness of human understanding required it:

...[F]eyth is not provable, as clerkys seyn.

Therefore oure wyttes must be ful beyn

To leve swech thingys that we can not prove:

Lete argumentys walk, thei are not to oure behove. (III. 669-72).

Should we take this literally, there would be little point to Capgrave's book, for it is all about argument: Katherine being trained in the techniques of argument by the best clerks and tutors, Katherine arguing with the advisors who wants her to marry, the hermit arguing with Katherine about the true faith, Katherine arguing with the pagan emperor and his philosophers about the merits of Christianity. If argument meant nothing, then arguments would not be won by the most virtuous, only by the most skillful. If we take it that Katherine's skill comes only from God, then it is disconcerting that the strategies she uses to discuss Christianity with Maxentius and his philosophers are not, except for their subject matter, particularly distinguishable from those she used previously in the Marriage Parliament, when she was still a pagan (albeit a virtuous one).

The emperor begins by using an appeal to pathos, in this case, attempting to invoke sheer terror in Katherine at the prospect of the disapproval of the gods (IV. 615), punishment in the netherworld (IV. 623-24) and, more immediately, a shameful criminal's death by hanging (IV. 625-30). Katherine responds by telling the emperor, "Rede in your boke, loke in her lynage" (IV. 633); according to this book (obviously a pagan one, which Katherine must have read in order to be able to use it in her argument

now), Jupiter and Saturn led human existences as kings of Crete and Italy (IV. 635-40).

There, she claims, “men thei were and are noght eterne./ How schuld thei be goddys whan thei were made?/ It longyth to a godde to be sempiterne!” (IV. 645-46). Katherine does not, however, bring up the human existence of Jesus Christ, which could be used to make a similar argument against Christianity. This is *ignoratio elenchi*, “ignorance of the refutation,” popularly known as the “red herring” (Corbett 92). It is a technique routinely used by lawyers, who often suppress damaging information about their clients (unless they think opposing counsel likely to bring it up, in which case they will minimize its impact by releasing it themselves).

The emperor, however, knows enough about Christianity to know that Christ did experience a human birth. He has the same objections to the Virgin Birth Katherine has earlier expressed during her conversion: “How shulde a mayde in hir wombe bere/ A child and she mayde as she was ere?” (IV. 665) Katherine does not really answer his objections, but merely resorts to *ad hominem* assertions of his stupidity: “Ye take the barke, whch is open to the yye,/ Then ye fede you ryght in youre dotage./ The swete frute whch withinne doth lye,/ Ye desyre it nought” (IV. 687-90). She says that of course he cannot see God, because God is in heaven: “The hye very God, this may ye wel knowe,/ Is not nowe visible among us here;/ He is fer above....Dwellyng in blysse....” (IV. 696-99). Katherine does not mention transubstantiation, God’s physical presence during the Mass, which, as Green has pointed out, Capgrave’s own Prologue references in the vignette of the monk eating the manuscript of Katherine’s story: the vision’s “eucharistic overtones are unmistakable” (259). Stating that God is not here, and

leaving out her religion's central tenet that under certain circumstances, he *is* here, is another example of Special Pleading. Indeed, her next argument sounds more like Gnosticism than orthodoxy:

The rotyn barke of thingis visible here,
Whech ye se outwarde, this byte ye and knawe;
The swete frute, the solace eke so dere,
Whech schuld be the parfytnes of youre lawe,
Fro that swetnes ye youreselve withdrawe
With ful grete hert of cursyd obstinacy
Whech hath you brought in ful grete heresy. (IV. 708-14)

Technically, Maxentius may be called a pagan, a heathen, or an idol-worshipper, but although the opinions he expresses would be heresies in the mouth of a fallen-away Christian, he himself has never been a Christian and can therefore neither be a heretic nor utter heresy. Katherine's accusation has no validity.

Maxentius next tries a combination of intimidation, flattery, and guilt: Apollo ought to punish her for her blasphemy; he has given her the gift of beauty, but instead of being grateful she is the worst of his "rebells" (IV. 762-63). Katherine responds with her own flattery:

Ye be a lord of ful grete pusauns;
Ther is no swech betwix this and Fraunce,
For as I have lernyd of all the oryente,
Youre meny calle you kyng omnypotent. (IV. 774-777)

After these soothing words, Katherine points out that if his men were to rise against him in treason, he would rightly execute them. God, she says, would be equally justified in executing Maxentius for treasonously giving honor to idols instead of to his creator (IV. 778-91). To flattery, Katherine, like Maxentius, has appended intimidation and guilt: she has not only warned him of the fearful vengeance of his creator, whom Maxentius ungratefully rejects although “in erde bysyly oure helth He soughte” (IV. 788), but she has also just mentioned the possibility of a rebellion in front of a court full of people who might decide to take this as a hint. Katherine has also used a false analogy in comparing Maxentius’s obligation to punish treason with God’s, because the Christian God could be expected to be more forgiving than the vengeful Maxentius, and indeed, she does make just such assertions elsewhere.

Maxentius next tries the ethical appeal of royal authority figures, some of whom are related to Katherine. The King of Armenia tells her that she ought to follow advice, since “to maydens it longeth to be led with glose” (IV. 1040). Katherine counters by redefining herself as “trewe spowse and wyfe” (IV. 1050) to her heavenly husband, and therefore not obliged to follow advice as maidens do. The King of Macedonia brings up Katherine’s own argument, that Jesus’s enemies are guilty of treason, and asks “why sufferd He to be arayed/ Of His owyn servaunts so as He was?” The bishops of Maxentius’s court concur; Jesus would be as imprudent as Maxentius or any other ruler who allowed this sort of thing: “And a wyse lord had stond in that case,/ He wold have hanged hem of very justyce!” (IV. 1083-86). Katherine says she will not repeat her explanations of Jesus’ sacrifice, and instead resorts to diction guaranteed to annoy, not appease:

...ley down that orible blast

Of your cursyd tungis, ye lordis, I yow praye.

Berke now namore ageyn that holy name,

For ye shall sumtyme se that day

Ye shall for thys berkyng be put onto blame. (IV. 1114-17)

The emperor rightly fears that martyring Katherine will not be as effective in eliminating Christianity as outsmarting her (II. 806-09), and concludes, “with resones wil we hir oppresse” (II. 811). When the emperor first proposes the debate, she responds with what even Capgrave concedes is a “full straunge challenge”:

Onto these clerkys whych are here this hour

Gadered togedyr befor yow as justice

Ye haf graunted a guerdon of grete apryse

If that thei convicte me; to me graunte ye noon.

Wherfor, me thinkyth all wrong hafe ye goon.

But wold ye graunt now to my guerdon

That if I spede and convicte hem all o rowe,

That ye schall leve your maumentrye ful sone

And my Lord Jhesu as for your Godd to know.... (IV. 1275-85)

In one of his few wise decisions, Maxentius rejects the plan. He assembles a team of “grete clerkis/ Lernerd in gramer, rethoricke, and philosophie” (IV. 821) to defeat her. Unfortunately for Maxentius’s team, grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy are precisely what Katherine has been trained to use, and Katherine easily bests them.

Katherine's ploys do not always meet debate team standards, but they are very good at rattling her adversaries. When Katherine objects to idolatry, one clerk tries the *conciliatio*, one of Katherine's favorite tactics, and says, "I undyrstand full wele your grete eloquens./.... Ye sey her ymages which we worchep here/ May not fele, ne hafe no powers." Nevertheless, he continues, "thei be but figures/ Representyng othir manere thing./....So are these ymages toknes of goddis" (IV. 1495-1504). This justification has been used in defense of statues in Catholic churches, as Winstead points out in her introduction (8), but Katherine evades that point, and concentrates on the deplorable character of the pagan deities: Saturn was "a fals traytoure--/ Homycyde cruell, debaterre and robboure" (IV. 1519-20); his wife was "Veniable, dispytous, chydere every tyde" and the murderer of her own children (IV. 1521-24); Pluto was a rapist and Venus was a slut (IV. 1532033). Again, Katherine is utilizing Special Pleading, for the pagan philosophers are evidently not sufficiently versed in Christianity to point out that many of the saints whose statues are placed in churches were quite as bad, at least before they reformed: St. Peter was a coward, St. Thomas, a skeptic, St. Mary Magdalen (by tradition, at least) a woman of ill repute, and St. Paul, a killer and an inciter of others to violence.

Another clerk tries to argue that their gods and the planets bearing their names are merely allegories for eternal qualities (IV. 1583-85), but Katherine is familiar with his source: "The Kyng of Thebes a book had hir sent/ In whech sche fond swech exposicyoun,/ But sche halt it now but for abusyoun" (IV. 1592-94). The repudiation

scene is explicitly staged as a performance of Gospel Truth: she has crossed herself at head, mouth, and heart (IV. 1.1318) as parishioners still do when the Gospel is read at Mass, and issues the following categorical disclaimer:

I hafe left all my auctoures olde,
I fonde noo frute in hem but eloquens.
My bokes be go, goven or elles solde.
Farwell Arystotyll.... (IV. 1324-27)

As we have seen, however, Aristotle and his Rhetoric have not really gone very far away from Katherine at all. Knowing her opponents' counter-arguments makes it that much easier to frame her rebuttals. The planets, she responds, are either men, or they are made objects. Obviously, they are not men, therefore "he that made hem, he is Godd alone" (IV. 1611-26). This is an Either/Or Fallacy, a statement that "infer[s] one alternative from the proof or disproof of the other alternative" without "pos[ing] alternatives which take all possible actions in the case into account" (Corbett 88). Katherine's assertion leaves out the possibility of a random universe, something that, even in pre-Darwinian days, had occurred in the speculations of philosophers.

In the end, Katherine seems to overwhelm her adversaries less by the force of her arguments than by the fact that she can argue at all: "I wold a supposyd...that the hevyn schuld falle/ Rather than woman swech sciens schuld atame" (IV. 1638-39). Like Johnson's notorious parable of a dog standing on its hind legs, Katherine's preaching amazes them by its existence if not its skill. But lest we dismiss her as an inept rhetor, remember that medieval scholars learned rhetoric from Quintilian, who relied as much on arrangement and verbal ornament as on logic, and from Cicero, whose reliance on *ad*

hominem and emotional manipulation are evident in much of his work, particularly the Catiline speeches. Katherine's use of fallacies demonstrates, rather than invalidating, her rhetorical prowess. The fallacies could become a chink in her armor only if the emperor's philosophers were capable of identifying and refuting them, something they clearly have not been trained to do. By the time the emperor gives up and has her executed, she has brought about the conversions (and consequent executions) not only of every one of the philosophers, but of Maxentius's own queen.

What was the appeal of Katherine's story? Winstead writes that Capgrave was "attuned to the interests of women, who were avid readers and patrons in 1440s East Anglia," and his poem's development of family relations and the difficulties faced by females running households reflects this knowledge (7). But another interest of women may well have made this story appealing, and that is the idea of a fictional space where women could talk back. Familiar as we are with the steady diet of silence varied with the occasional meek speech prescribed for women in conduct manuals, we can see how a saint's opportunity to mouth off, and remain virtuous while doing so, must have seemed very attractive. Winstead writes that Chaucer, for instance, depicted St. Cecilia with aggressive qualities that were supposedly justified by her pious mission: "...Cecilia is in command of every situation and always in action: teaching, organizing baptisms, rallying converts, and reducing her persecutor to a babbling fool." William Paris's St. Christine likewise "mocks the pretensions of her powerful captors," and Paris somehow turns the narrative of her torture into a "gleeful recitation of the mishaps and indignities that she heaps on her persecutors" (83-85). Of course, Winstead notes, the male authors of such tales may have thought they were depicting "*clerical*, rather than *feminine* authority"

(101). But as Winstead has observed, readers often glean different meanings and messages from those the authors intended (100, 103), something Anne Clark Bartlett has also noted (21-27).

In the end, Katherine must be martyred because no one can out-talk her. Her arguments are less persuasive than they are provoking. She gloats when she tells the clerk in the Marriage Parliament, “This is your argument, this is your owne lare” (II. 1391). Presumably, most readers were already believers, so Katherine and her debate may not have converted anyone other than the pagan philosophers charged with the task of converting her. But if no one was particularly stirred by her arguments in favor of the faith, they must have been impressed by her courage, her stubbornness, and her ability to reduce authority figures to a frustrated, tooth-gnashing frenzy. Had she been paired with one of the nose-breaking, eye-blinding husbands in the Chevalier de la Tour’s stories about contentious wives, it is not at all clear who would have won.

But if her contentiousness makes her a vexed figure for a saint and for a woman, her skill makes her a vexed figure for a royal personage. M.L. Bush writes that beginning with the fifteenth century, “the bureaucratic development of the state...pitted aristocratic nobles, whose political function essentially stemmed from the rights and obligations imparted by landownership, against professional nobles whose political function stemmed from the exercise of public office.” Those descended from ancestors who won nobility through military functions believed that “soldiering was a more appropriate activity for nobles than civil administration and therefore the nobles of the sword were inherently superior to those of the robe” (i.e., royal administrators). Bush notes that in France, the military nobles regarded administrative nobles as members of the

third, rather than the second estate (51). The prejudice against professional status was so strong that noble bureaucrats sometimes deliberately cultivated a nonchalant air about the duties of their posts, developing a “cult of amateurism” (109).

In such a climate, Katherine’s rhetorical efficiency alone makes her a startlingly bourgeois figure. Tales of saints humbling themselves to live as hermits and mendicants are hardly unusual in the Middle Ages, but Katherine takes a more middle-class route towards sainthood. Rather than giving one long, dignified, “sermon-like speech” as Bokenham’s St. Margaret does (Lewis 77), Katherine bickers and quibbles like a late-Empire version of Margery Kempe (though considerably less tearful), citing chapter, verse and local ordinance when anyone challenges her. She is exemplary not as a queen, not as a paragon of meek or dignified conduct, not even as a model of piety, but as a clerk.

* * *

If Katherine’s tactics are better suited to the courtroom than the royal court, Peter Idley’s advice, written for his son Thomas, dispenses with traditional courtliness altogether. His focus is uncompromisingly middle-class and unsurprisingly a legalistic one, for he was a prosperous bailiff dealing with legal matters through most of his career: “Besides the business of rents, Idley, as bailiff, was concerned with the honour and hundred courts of his district. The sums of money received from these sources furnish some indication of the amount of legal business transacted and of the responsibility resting on the bailiff” (D’Evelyn 7). His function was extensive both in location and frequency: “According to the headings of the roll, the honour court of Wallingford met once a month; the hundred courts for Binfeld, Pirton, Lewknor and Ewelme, and the

court for Bensington, every three weeks” (8). Cases involved matters ranging from fines for suit and service, to actions for debt, to trespass, as well as ordinary criminal matters. Idley’s area of expertise would strike the modern reader as being most comparable to that of a civil or tort lawyer, and indeed, as Green tells us, most medieval litigants were eventually encouraged to settle their cases without ordeal, combat or, later, the decision of a jury (84).

Unlike writers of earlier conduct manuals, Idley is ill-at-ease with the tension between achieving happiness in this world and achieving it in the next. This does not mean that the two are never compatible, only that his justification for recommending certain courses of action is evidently to avoid trouble *now*; the fact that they make the attainment of heaven likelier is almost an afterthought. For instance, one must avoid quarrels and giving offense needlessly, not merely because it is more Christian to live in peace, but because old enemies can cause trouble later, even if all feuds are supposedly forgotten, and a man without friends had no one to testify on his behalf should he ever require friendly witnesses. Servants must be paid in a timely manner, not merely because defrauding them is a sin, but because they may become greedy and even vengeful if one

does not. In this practical manner, Idley considers class divisions, the question of whether intent should be considered when judging an action, and how much one is to trust friends, former enemies, or even one's own wife.

“One can easily understand why in his Instructions to his Son, Peter Idley shows such ready acquaintance with legal terms and procedure and why he destines his son Thomas, for his own advancement, to the study of law” writes D'Evelyn (8). Idley does not consider God's law necessarily incompatible with man's law, but he knows which has the more immediate power to motivate:

I conceyve thy witte both goode and able,

To the lawe, therfore, now haue I ment

To set the, if þou will be stable

And spende thy witt þat God hath sent

In vertu with goode entent;

Than shall I helpe þe as y can

With my goode till þou be a man. (I. 127-33)

Should the son not heed the carrot, there is always the stick—and again, he will not have to wait for the resurrection of the dead to experience it: “And if þou do the contrarie, trust me well/ I woll put fro the without nay/ Londe and goodis eueri deell” (I. 134-36).

He advises his son “God and man hoolly to please” (I. 139), at this point addressing no more than most conduct manual writers do the painful fact that the two are not always synonymous.

Powerful friends are part of this program, but Idley does not mean his son to copy their fashions to the point that he dresses obviously above his station. Idley’s family is clearly moving up in the world, but like Christine de Pisan and Geoffroi de la Tour, Idley does not believe people should outdress their rank. He advises his son, that he “goo not euer to nyce and gay (I. 105), aiming his scorn at “cuttyng and Iaggyng of clothis” (I. 106). The advice not to dress above one’s class we are used to hearing, and it reflects the sumptuary laws of the time; Deacon writes that during the mid-fourteenth century,

...nobles could wear whatever they pleased, [but] no person under the rank of a lord could wear any purple silk; knights and their wives could wear no cloth of gold, or fur or sables; no esquires or their wives could wear any silk at all; no persons not having possessions of the annual value of £40 could wear any fur; no widow who had less than £40 in possessions could wear any fur, or any gold or silver girdle.... (37).

As Clare Sponsler notes, “For legislators and fashion critics alike, the chief function of clothing was to assign an individual to a fixed social position and to make that position knowable at a glance” (20). We are entering a bourgeois world, however, when we encounter Idley’s advice to “Keepe hem [clothing] as clenly as pou can” (I. 100). The middle-class preoccupation with hygiene is something we have met with only in the *Ménagier’s* householding manual; the advice to princes, knights, and high-born ladies

dealt with it not at all. As Sponsler observes, the new interest in “bodily refinement” was one way the rising middle class sought to distinguish themselves from the lower classes (51-52).

In addition to presenting middle-class respectability, Idly’s reader must not forget his roots and become puffed up with pride:

And if to worshippe þou happe to rise
By fortune of connyng for tattayne,
fforgete not þysilf in noo maner wyse;
ffro proudnesse of herte þou the refreyne. (I. 148-51)

This does not, however, mean that one should not make friends in one’s new sphere. Social connections are important, and Idley’s notions of the “right sort” of people is not entirely a matter of moral influence. One cannot help suspecting that Idley’s advice to seek good companions and avoid bad ones is as much a question of reputation and reflected status as moral corruption or improvement:

Looke also for ony disporte or othir thyng
With good felawshippe þou be accompanied;
That shall to honoure specially the bryng
If þou with hem woll be allied;

And he þat with evell companye is asspied,

Ofte is take in likenesse of a theiff

And fynally broght vnto myscheiff. (I. 155-61).

This advice would resonate more convincingly if crime were not as much the provenance of the legal authorities as the local cutthroat during the fifteenth century. One supposes that the Lancastrian England Idley knew in the mid-1400s was not noticeably better than the Yorkist England of the late 1400s Hicks describes below:

Everyone in Yorkist England was engaged at some time in lawsuits of some kind in some type of tribunal, whether criminal or civil, by martial, common, canon, mercantile, forest or customary laws, as plaintiffs, victims, defendants, witnesses, jurors, attornies [sic] or officials....Every kind of law, court and even arbitration had its jurisdiction defined, its own rules and procedures, yet all were subject to perversion. What pressure caused even those with good cases to settle?

Wherever suits were heard, there was scope for patronage, maintenance, labouring and the whole range of other abuses associated with bastard feudalism. (180-81).

Given the power of patronage, Idley's reader must not have such *contemptus mundi* that he neglects to win friends and influence people: "like a body þat is without soule;/ So is a man without a frende" (I. 218-19). These friends are not merely companions for leisure activity; they are social insurance against persecution. The friendless man has been isolated from the rest of the herd, and this is as disastrous in Idley's world as it is in any schoolyard: "Eche man on hym woll clappe and gavle; He is in hate as is the fende" (I. 220-21). Making enemies could have legal consequences also: as Green notes, late

medieval courts stopped being “a last resort for those who cannot be bought to settle their disputes locally” and turned into “merely another, and quite routine, front on which to carry on the fight.[T]he fires of endemic local feuding were stoked rather than damped by the intervention of the king’s law.... [I]t was obviously in the best interests of those who sought a hearing before such commissions (or better yet get themselves appointed as commissioners) to represent their old enemies as ruthless gangsters, hardened criminals, and violent extortioners” (182). The individual who did not have friends to declare otherwise fared poorly.

Being scapegoated is to be avoided, but scapegoating others is not recommended. The reader must not strive to raise his status by pounding on someone else, as schoolboys (or knights, for that matter) do, for Idley does not believe in resolving conflicts by vengeance as one finds in “honor” codes. “Stryve not with hym þat is to the egall: Who shall be victoure it is harde to knowe” (I.183-84). Should the reader then stand up to his superiors? No, “Ne with thy better, þou getest a falle” (I. 185). Bullying inferiors is also out: “And of a foole þou might be ouerthrowe” (I. 186). Unlike the wolfpacks Georges Duby describes, rampaging over the locality looking for trouble (Chivalrous 116-17), Idley’s reader is to avoid conflict “fro the hye vnto the lowe/ Peas aboute all thyng is beste” (I. 187-88).

What did Idley know about conflict? Possibly, he was not thinking at all of the armed combat that was still occasionally used to resolve both personal and public disputes (Green 80), although it was increasingly frowned upon. Litigation could be painful enough, especially at a time when written documents were supplanting sworn oaths (comparable to depositions or character affidavits) as the central factors in most

lawsuits: “The extreme formalism of medieval common law always worked to the advantage of those who could afford lawyers capable of prolonging cases to the point where their opponents became exhausted, so that the increasing use of written covenants to govern social relationships could hardly fail to concentrate yet more power in the hands of the rich” (161). Idley acknowledges this:

Iff a man of hye degree and grete astate,
Mighty of possession and riche of goode,
If he perseuer in weer striff, and debate,
It woll make hym weere a threedbare hoode:
A low ebbe cometh after an hyee floode.
Be debate is loste right, title, goodis, lyffe:
This thende of werre, debate, and stryffe.” (I. 736-42)

One should therefore attempt to soothe another’s wrath whenever possible, just as Christianity commands: “A Softe worde swageth Ire/ And causeth grete rest, it is no nay” (I. 190-91)

The trouble a riled opponent can cause, however, is not limited to official harassment. “A grete worde might cause affray/ And causeth men ofte to be slayn;” (I. 194-95). If the trial by combat was on its way out post-Norman Conquest, brawling, ambushing, and waylaying people likely to influence the outcome of a case were not, judging by the experiences of Sir William Shareshull, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench:

In 1329, while still a serjeant at law, he was violently assaulted near St. Pauls’ wharf (Putnam 1950, 4), and four years later, when he had become a justice of Common Pleas, two knights, Sir William and Sir Richard Harcourt, assaulted his

servants and goods at York (4); three years after that his assizes in Wiltshire were threatened “by armed gangs of murderers and robbers” (63); the next year, his houses at Bromsgrove were attacked by a “large group of malefactors including a vicar and two chaplains” (5); and in 1345, the monks of St. Swithun’s disrupted his courtroom (147). (Green 179)

Given Idley’s concern with the laws of man, one might wonder what he has to say about crimes of the heart. He gives the following disclaimer at the opening of his second volume: “Of preve synnes I woll speke nought;/ Preve synnes I woll in no wyse touche-- / Unto mannes consciences I theym vouche” (II. 24-26). He will confine his attention to “dedly synne/ Suche as mankynde daily falleth ynne,/ Which that is open and in ded wrought” (II. 21-23). One would think, then, that he has little interest in the question of hypocrisy, of virtuous actions concealing or even motivated by vicious thoughts. Shortly after this passage, however, he contradicts himself: the first commandment, to love only one God, must be obeyed “with herte and thought” (II. 45), and the reader is advised, “...serche thy conscience all aboute,/ If euer þou were to thy Lorde vnkynde,/ Within thy soule and thy body withoute” (II. 51)

Idley follows this with a very strange story: a monk resolves to abandon his vow of chastity and marry the beautiful daughter of a Saracen. When the father consults his “Mamet,” he is first told the marriage may be permitted if the Christian monk renounces his God and his faith (II. 132-42), but when he prays for guidance, the idol appears to have had second thoughts:

The mamet answerd with contenauns sadd,
“I commaund the nay in no manere,

ffor though he be now wanton and madd,
It may happe sodenly to chaunge his chiere.
It woll not be lost þat was bought so deere.
ffor thoughe he forsake his God and fro hym dissever,
His verri God woll forsake hym neuer.

“He is called God and Lord of all cristiante;
He is euer besy and redy man to saue;
He is a God of grete mercy and petie,
ffor that he will of hym mercy crave
Redie mercy forth with he shall haue.
ffor though man this day hym forsake,
To-morow he is redy ageyn hym to take.” (II. 189-201)

This encomium from a pagan deity about the Christian one would be surprising enough, in that Idley does not represent the idol as an inanimate block of wood or metal, the representation familiar to us from the stories of St. Katherine and St. Cecilia. Since Idley chooses to make the idol sentient, or since the story came to him in that form, from a medieval point of view the idol is quite rightly recognizing the Christian God’s superior place in the hierarchy of the universe. The monk is impressed that even “a mamet, a feende of helle,/ Wiche neuer loved the [the Christian Lord] nyght ne day,/ He declareth thy petie and mercy ay” (II. 232-34). What is more surprising is that the monk has as yet shown not the slightest shred of repentance or even moral reservations about either the actions he has already carried out (asking for the daughter’s hand in marriage, consulting

the pagan priest about converting), nor about the ones he still intends to carry out: the marriage and the renunciation of his Christian faith. Nevertheless, God is not only willing to offer him forgiveness for which he has not asked, but willing to move him to ask it. God's mercy precedes virtue of either act or intent on the part of the monk. Although some medieval cases were dismissed on such grounds as that one plaintiff "had no act which can prove his will," and that the actions of a defendant in another case could not be proven malicious since "the will of another person cannot be divined," the official maxim was that "the will is to be taken for the deed." However, Green notes, "this maxim seems in practice to have been applied to failed attempts to commit a felony...rather than to alleged intentions to commit one in future" (301). By this standard, the monk seems irredeemably guilty, since he has done whatever he can to set the actual events of his desired sin in motion.

But just as the law can condemn him, the law can save him: the monk has a contract with heaven. All the monk's prayers and previous obedience to his vows serve as an investment in virtue that will cover occasional lapses, in a sort of moral insurance policy. A similar trope figures in the story Green gives of the sinful woman whose custom of lighting candles to the Virgin saves her soul, discussed in more detail in my first chapter (344). Thus, the lecherous monk is not damned by his intent to renounce Christianity in order to satisfy his lust, but saved by his previous acts of piety, which bind heaven with the force of a legal covenant.

Indeed, although the point of Chaucer's "Friar's Tale," according to Green, is that intent counts for a great deal, specifically that the intent behind a curse is of more import than the words of the curse themselves (313), Idley does not appear to distinguish

between casual swearing and swearing with conscious malice. A rich man who “vsed many othes orible and grete” (II. 676) is not only struck by illness but personally guilt-tripped by the Virgin Mary, who visits him, bleeding Babe in arms, with accusations that his corrupt language has wounded her child:

“Thysilff,” she said, “hast thus hym yshent
And al to-drawe my deere, blessed childe,
And with grete othes hys lyemes al to-rent
And all his noble bodye thus hast þou defoiled.” (II. 699-702)

She adds that he is worse than the men who crucified her son, “ffor when they hadde payned hym they went away;/ But þou hym crucefiest new from day to day” (II. 709-10). The rich man is miraculously cured when he repents, but Idley goes on to say that his reader will be held responsible not only for his own swearing but for that of his servants:

I counseill you, be ware, þat kepe ony houshalde,
ffor you shall for your seruauntes hoolly answeere
And all her dedis on your bakk ye shall heuely beere,
And specially if ye suffree hem swere a grete othe.... (II. 757-60)

Again, this advice is less typical of the usual household manuals, in which supervising servants, and dismissing them should their behavior be irredeemably wicked, are simply standard aspects of maintaining a virtuous home. The emphasis here is a legal one: the master will be held responsible for his servant’s swearing in the heavenly court, just as he might be held responsible for his servant’s theft or public drunkenness in a civil court. For that matter, gluttony and drunkenness are proscribed for the reader, but less because of their status as mortal sins than because they can lead to legal troubles: the drunken

man “woll...promise and make behestis” (I. 1125), Idley warns. The consequences of promises made while intoxicated, in jest, or in a different context from that inferred by witnesses could sometimes be evaded, but not always (Green 328).

Given Idley’s emphasis on keeping one’s nose clean, it is interesting that while he wants readers to resolve conflicts amicably and make peace with enemies, they are never to regard former enemies as being on a par with true friends. Certainly, one should never trust them enough to take their advice, even though all enmity be apparently a thing of the past:

Also the counceill of thy enemye reconsiled,
Thoughe he speke feire and goo full lowe,
ffor euer fro the þat he be exiled.
Thow shalt neuer kenne the bent of his bowe.
Though he seie with the þat white is þe crowe,
And be redy alsoo when þou hem calle,
Yet resteth the olde malice in his bitter galle. (I. 435-41)

Real friends will occasionally tell one the unpleasant truth, but flatterers are probably setting one up for a scam: “Of hym that is sharpe in counseill be not ferde./ But of a swete counceilloure euer be ware” (I. 407-08). As difficult as it may be to weed out false friend from true, one cannot dispense with friends altogether, for they may be one’s sole recourse in case of financial disaster. Starvation is the worst of all deaths, since the poor man suffers so extensively before death, and may even be led into sin: “...better were to be slayn with a knyffe/ Then to be nede and fynalli to leese thy lyffe;/ ffor bothe body and soule that ladde sleith” (I. 718-20). The poor man may be humiliated if he asks for

help, and die of starvation if he does not; desperation “putteth hem fro fre wyll, which is swettest” (I. 724). The threat of being forced to beg or worse yet, steal, was no empty one, particularly in a time when tenants whose ancestors had lived on estates for generations were evicted by newly rich owners who had no local ties or loyalties: “...the old landlords were often replaced by new landlords...who felt no hereditary attachment to men or soil” (Duby Rural 312).

Given Idley’s urgings to make friends and avoid conflict, one might wonder how he viewed the chivalrous love of combat. A just war was an acceptable reason to fight, for instance, a crusade: “In certen cases it is leefull to fight:/ Oon is for the believe of oure cristen feith” (I. 786-87). It was up to those in power to decide what constituted a just war under other circumstances:

Also for thy kyng and for the Reawmes right
To put thy body with due diligence,
With alle thy power and thy holl myght,
Looke in the be founde noo necligence
To stand with thy kynge in the Reawmes defence,
And neuer to flee in no man kynde
But uttirly abide to the last ende. (I. 855-61)

As for whether the king or the religious authorities were guiding subjects and laity correctly, the reader was not to trouble his head about that. Idley, like a Hollywood film agent, preferred his proteges not to meddle unnecessarily with religion or politics. Moreover, as much as he counsels avoiding private conflicts, this by no means involves

being a conscientious objector in time of national war. The reader must allow the king to decide which wars were just. Unlike Thoreau, Idley has no apparent objection to soldiers who serve with the body only:

Trust not to moche to thyn owne reason,
Dispute not thy feith ne the power of thy kyng.
Thow myght happe to stumble and falle into treason;
Therefore medle not with suche maner thyng. (I. 806-09)

Some of Idley's advice is eminently practical, however. One could no longer avoid conflict simply by building fortifications to hold off a siege, as had been the custom for centuries:

If þou trust in bildyng of toure or castell,
Or make the neuer so hye a wall,
All vaileth not worth a wastell,
But þou haue loue of þi neighbours with all,
Thow shalt be shett vp as ony oxe in stall;
And to obeye thyn enemye shalt þou be constreyned
And vtterly of thy freedom to be refreyned. (I. 883-89)

Having the thickest wall does not eliminate the possibility of danger, but unfortunately, neither does trying to get on with one's neighbors—not *these* neighbors. Friendship with a man whose ill deeds seem to be rewarded is particularly perilous: if a man's "Mater is feyned, fals, and wrong," his success will be temporary: "Yet thynke verrily it wol not

last long;/ Who applieth hym to be fals and fekel,/ His clymbyng is full slepre and
ticle” (I. 900-03). Presumably, any friends will have a share in his fall. In fact, complete
strangers are no more to be trusted than friends:

And if it happe the to take ony Iorney,
And with straunge men þou fortune to fare,
If they desire the besily to know thy way,
Loke þou be of hem right well ware
Lest they betrappe the into her snare;
ffor it is the condicion ofte of a theiff.... (I. 932-37)

Making new friends should not be done randomly; probably, one should confine one’s
self to people to whom one has been introduced. For that matter, mending fences with
enemies should not be taken to extremes. Idley warns against too much brotherly love in
language that might be expected from a Vermonter:

One cause is þou shalt thy counceill leeve,
Yf thyn enemy of thy counceill knowe,
And wold by meanes the same remeve,
And al thy werkis turne ouerthrow,
And make therof a Iape, a knacke, and mowe;
Therefore when suche a caas happeth to falle,
To chaunge thy purpose thy purpose it is best of alle. (I. 463-69)

Idley does not exactly say that one need not forgive slights seventy times seven times,
just as the Bible orders (Matt. 18:22), but forgiveness apparently does not involve
discussing one’s goals with one’s supposed former enemy, as one might with a friend,

even once, let alone on seventy-times-seven occasions. One is still to assume that he is looking for any opportunity to sabotage, and the less he knows of one's intentions, the better. In fact, if one happens upon misfortune, even if the misfortune be not of one's enemy's making, he will be the first to capitalize on it, or at least, rejoice in it:

With thyn enemye neuer put the in presse

To be accompanied in ony maner wyse,

ffor if þou happe evell, he woll it encrese

In the worst maner that he can deuyse;

And if þou do well in thy best guyse.

In all þat he can he woll it hide;

It is the condicion of envious pride. (I. 1156-62)

Idley's caginess seems somehow typical of a lawyer's *modus operandi*, never giving information that the opposition can use against him, rather than the old chivalrous assumption that a man's oath must be accepted, unless he has proven false to his own oath. Is Idley unnecessarily suspicious here, or is personal honor during this time period (as Green has argued) giving way to legalism and finding official loopholes, a shift from "a truth that resides in people to one locate in documents" (xiv)?

Indeed, the notion that one must be true to one's word made people vulnerable to others who were not restrained by any such notion of personal honor. Later in this chapter I shall discuss Anthony Woodville's translation of Christine de Pisan's Corps de Policie; Woodville's admiration for chivalric values (far greater than his deeply ambivalent source's) exposed him to the machinations of those who might not share them. Woodville's own loyalty went unquestioned once he had made his peace with his

Yorkist in-laws; very likely he would have thought it churlish to bring up old grudges when his Lancastrian past was not held against him, and he had even proven himself on the Yorkist side at various battles. It might, however, have extended Woodville's life had he questioned the Duke of Gloucester's supposedly honorable intentions after Edward IV's death, instead of apparently accepting them at face-value. Idley would almost certainly have considered Gloucester the sort of old enemy whom one ought to trust very little, despite apparent cordiality.

Malice, however, is not the only quality that renders advice suspect. Among counselors whose advice must be taken with a grain of salt, Idley includes women. His praise of them here is as double-edged as any the Nun's Priest ever generated: "The counceill of a woman ye woll not dispise," (I. 491) he says, but notes, "God hath sent hem suche a grace,/ To be *redy of answere* and tendre of mynde,/ They beith so pure and of noble kynde"(I. 502-05) (emphasis added). To be ready of answer is not necessarily a laudable quality to Idley, even if Capgrave found it so (at least when the woman is a saint). He goes on, with palpable sarcasm:

I sey womans counceill is good and resonable—

As by scripture is proved in many a place—

ffull sure, full sadde, and right aggreable,

With short avisement and in litell space. (I. ll.458-501)

If this is too subtle for the reader, Idley goes on a little more plainly:

Also abigall by hir counceill goode

Delyuered hir housbande fro kyng Daud,

Which wolde distroie hym and his bloode;

By hire wysdom he was suerly saued. (I. 512-15)

Abigail, as those familiar with the story know, ended up a widow who married King David (1 Sam 25: 1-42). As those familiar with David's character also know, he was not particular about waiting until a wife was a widow before he enjoyed her favors (2 Sam 11:1-27).

In general, Idley seems to have his doubts about marriage, although of course he wished to see his line continue:

I reporte me to you that be married:

Wher is ther ony so glorius a lyffe!

All thyng is wele and no thyng myscaried;

No defaute is founde in the good wyffe.

Betwene wedded folk is neuer striffe,

But "ye" and "nay" ther is non othir—

They lieve in rest as shiipe without Rother. (I. 526-32)

Of course, ships without rudders don't steer particularly well.

Nevertheless, Idley does not advocate the sternness towards women Geoffroi de la Tour and his translator Caxton seemed to approve. A soft answer, Idley notes, can turn away wifely wrath, and even prevent her from straying; should the husband be unnecessarily harsh, he may have only himself to blame should he alienate his wife's love permanently:

And if pou be croked and crabbed of speche,

Lordly of countenauns and comberous to please,

Cast at hir suche as þou may reche—

This shal cause grete vnhertis-ease,

And al hir loue hooly þou shalt leese;

What wold growe more I tell not all,

That þou were lothest peraventure myght falle. (I. 1233-39)

Accustomed as we are to seeing wives warned that ill-temper will estrange them from their husbands' affections, it is refreshing to see a husband told not to dishearten his wife. For that matter, the onus of sustaining marriages, even arranged, "peace-weaving" marriages, seems to have fallen (judging at least by the advice books) primarily on women. Given that some men entered marriage without enthusiasm for reasons that might have nothing to do with the bride's personal qualities (Buckingham, for instance, resented his Woodville wife for her comparatively ignoble bloodline [Baldwin 144]), it is to Idley's credit that he believes the husband carries some of the burden of maintaining marital harmony.

In any case, Idley does not expect the middle-class housewife to aspire to the exaggeratedly meek demeanor Geoffroi de la Tour and Caxton expected of the noble bride (even if the noble bride never paid anything more than lip-service to the ideal herself). Possibly he knew the power held by many middle-class women made such paragons of meekness as unrealistic as the *Ménagier* thought the Griselda tale. The burghers' and tradesmen's wives Idley would have known would have had little in common with the brides isolated in rural estates in Chevalier de la Tour's stories, helplessly dependent on the good humor of their husbands. As Amy M. Froide notes, "wives assisted their husbands in the running of households, and widows, by virtue of

being the deputies of their deceased husbands, headed households,” a position that gave them “authority over the house, the family, the servants and apprentices, and the family buisness.” Even women who had never married sometimes achieved what Froide calls “a ‘widow-like’ status,” although most faced “practical disadvantages” that barred them from the “residential, employment, and welfare options” available to widows (237-338).

Having such a strong woman as one’s business partner as well as helpmeet could be a great benefit, but one could be *too* egalitarian, and live to regret it. Idley praises “A benyngne wyffe and a softe of speche,” and grants that when a man is fortunate enough to have such a wife, “[s]he is vnto hym a verri hertis leche.” But he ends this stanza with advice that would raise the hackles of the Wife of Bath:

But yet oo thing the wyse man doith teche,

ffor ony loue yeve hir not the maistrie;

And if þou do, þou shall fynde her contrarie. (I. 1275-81)

Supervising the servants is scarcely less problematic than supervising the womenfolk. Idley is never sure whether to extol the joys of living virtuously on earth, or remind his reader of the ephemeral nature of all possessions. “All shall passe and out of memorie,” he cautions, “I can not Rede in no maner storie/ But that all erthly thyng of lyffe and breth/ Must departe in the oure of dethe” (I. 1369-72). But merely one page before, he is advising his reader to pay his servants promptly, not merely because it is

sinful to deprive the laborer of his hire, but because if servants are deprived, they will steal from both the master and his neighbors, and this, of course, causes more legal trouble:

Paye thy seruauntis her dueteis and her hire,
That nede compelle hem not to be thieves;
And how to begile the they woll conspire,
And after growe to gretter myssheves;
Of chekons and capons make they noo force,
And after to steele thy neighbours hors. (I. 1331-37)

Should this not properly strike his reader as cause for concern, Idley notes that servants are often up and about while their employers lie helpless in sleep: "...put not thy power in thy seruantis will;/ ffor many woll wake whan þou doist slepe,/ and ofte tymes they doo full ille" (I. 1339-41). Idley implies there is a possibility that the servants may use the opportunity not just to steal from their master but perhaps murder him in his bed. Even the Christian injunction not to deprive the laborer of his hire has its worldly aspect. Likewise, Idley's urgings to give alms, despite their basis in the Biblical injunction to cast one's bread upon the waters (Eccl. 11:1), involve his developing the investment metaphor much further than Jesus did. Indeed, he seems more concerned about retribution in this life than in the next:

...whoo of his sheeif woll geve one eere
Shall have seuensfold planted in his yerde;
And he that spiseth the pouere, I am aferde,

Woll haue penaunce and penurie or he dye,

And he that hath petie, hi goodis shall multiplie. (I. 1032-36)

Although he hastens to add that “mannes soule is saued by almes dede” (I. 1043) and that “[a]ll that we geve for God in this wrecched vale,/ It shal be restored in the blis aboue” (I. 1036-37), one is left with the lingering impression that the punishment in this life concerns him more immediately, and he clearly expects the prospect of temporal misery to leave the greater impression on his son.

The tension between worldly well-being and Christian longings for another world is palpable: the reader must guard his worldly goods, but not value them above what is consistent with Christian love of poverty, and be ready to leave them all in death; the reader should wish to go to heaven someday, but not risk being sent there prematurely by treacherous servants. The reader must seek after Christian perfection—but not yet.

We can never know if Idley’s advice would have been effective with his oldest son, Thomas, for whom he wrote the book; Thomas’s death apparently preceded Peter Idley’s own death around 1473 or 1474 (D’Evelyn 24-26). Family squabbles over the estate continued until 1481 and involved not only lawsuits and counter-suits but also vandalism, assault and battery, and home invasion; Thomas’s widow was dragged out of her room and physically ejected from the premises under dispute (31-35). The feud violated not only the general principles of decorum Idley had tried to teach but also whatever specific order Idley had tried to establish in his will (25). Certainly, surviving family members do not seem to have benefited unduly by Idley’s advice to avoid conflict. But Idley’s values anticipate a time when clerks and lawyers became the driving forces in government and diplomacy. Clerical work, including legal work, was one of the

professions for which noblemen could lose their titles under the derogation laws in some regions, and it remained so in France for many centuries after the medieval period (Bush 119). As the fifteenth century drew to a close, the English gentleman “was...forced increasingly to use the courts of law for his own protection in a day when untold land-grabbing went on under the guise of litigation. A knowledge of law was essential to many a beleaguered country family.” If only to protect family holdings, knights sent their sons to be educated at the Inns of Court, and (despite the enthusiastic pageantry of chivalry prevalent in the era) the civil service careers that resulted were blamed for “deflect[ing] the knight from his traditional military duties” (Ferguson 196-97). A brief vignette will show how great was the divide between the old chivalrous society and the world of the Tudors that was on the horizon. At one circa-1500 feast, a gentleman derided humanists (including Erasmus) as “learned...beggars” and “sons of rustics,” maintaining that gentlemen’s sons such as his own required only the traditional skills of hunting, riding, hawking, and blowing on the horn. A second man (who noticed with astonishment that the first wore his own hunting horn slung across his back even at the table, “as though [he] would hunt during dinner”), pointed out that the learned rustics he sneered at would be the ones appointed to speak with any foreign ambassadors who came to court, since the first man’s son knew how to blow his hunting horn but not,

presumably, how to negotiate (Furnivall xii-xiii). Idley stands at the juncture of the two worlds, demonstrating just how much the old ideals have already given way to the new.

II. Glossed in Translation

As far as good lawyers are concerned, one might have been very useful to Anthony Woodville, a man who risked death on a battlefield many times, and probably never dreamed he would find death in a criminal execution without formal trial. However, his devotion to the traditional ideals of chivalry did not prevent him from respecting the new learning. He was known to translate books as well as write original works, and evidence suggests Woodville translated one of Christine de Pisan's works, with which this section begins.

The Middle English translation of Corps de Policie was written around 1470 (Bornstein 31). Diane Bornstein attributes it to Anthony Woodville, and given both manuscript connections with the Woodville family and Anthony Woodville's known translations and his interests in literature and chivalry, the attribution seems plausible. His nephew, the Prince of Wales, was born in 1470, and so the translation might well have been a gift for the parents, with the understanding that the boy would come to appreciate it when he was old enough to read it. A number of Woodville's translations, including The Morale Prouerbes of Christyne (1478), were printed by Caxton, who praised both the translator and the original author, "Christine of pyse," whose work he

termed “wise & holsome.” I shall therefore refer to Woodville by name as the translator, and attempt to find connections between his interpretive choices and what we know of his life.

David Baldwin writes of the “complex personality of Anthony, the Queen’s eldest brother...man of letters, patron of learning, and with an inclination to mortify the flesh by wearing a hair shirt, he was nevertheless regarded as one of the greatest warriors of the age” (26). Although his translation of Christine’s work seems a clerkly sort of undertaking, Woodville’s chivalrous life involved both actual battlefield experience and a number of ceremonial jousts that drew heavily on Arthurian pageantry. He was that amalgam Kaeuper has so perfectly described as the sort of man who knew “how to talk and act in refined company and especially with ladies” as well as “how best to drive a sword edge through a mail coif into man’s brain” (“Societal” 1). His position as the Queen’s brother had the disadvantage that the Woodvilles were resented particularly by those who had hoped to benefit by arranging a marriage for Edward IV that would bring money, lands, and or powerful political connections (Baldwin 13), and generally by those who saw the relations of the new Queen, the impecunious widow of a Lancastrian knight, as upstarts encroaching on ancient privileges:

The attitude of some of the older noble families towards the Woodvilles was...one of apprehension or even dislike, although it is possible that this has been over-exaggerated.... The late medieval nobility were socially conservative, always fearful that they were about to be swamped by an influx of base-born newcomers

who had “made good” in the world; and although their rapid rates of extinction left them with no alternative but to admit rising families there was always the feeling that the process should be strictly limited.... (Baldwin 25)

Given that he was frequently perceived as an outsider, then, Woodville’s translation project can be thought of as an effort to inscribe himself within both chivalric and scholarly traditions, as well as a demonstration of his interest in and respect for both.

Like most medieval translations, The Body of Polycye is hardly a word-for-word rendering, but it is remarkably faithful compared to translations such as Caxton’s.

Woodville is quick to change what makes no sense, for instance when he changes Christine’s opening: “If it is possible for vice to give birth to virtue, it pleases me in this part to be as passionate as a woman” (de Pizan 3) (“Se il est possible que de vice puist naistre vertu, bien me plaist en ceste partie ester passionnee comme femme”) (1), becomes “it *wolde* please me well in this partie to be passioned as a woman” (Bornstein 39) (emphasis added). There are many cases, however, in which Christine mentions a French custom or incident, and Woodville sometimes changes the reference to England, but not always. I believe these are not incidents of forgetfulness or blind translating, but deliberate choices: a passage on avoiding bad language is emphasized by his bewailing the prevalence of the custom of swearing in England, while many passages critical of royalty or nobility are left with their French references intact. Anthony Woodville was very conscious of how certain discussions of royal conduct could be offensive to his Plantagenet relations, unless he were very careful indeed in how he worded them. Moreover, although the manuscript Woodville used for his translation may have differed in many places from the one Kate Langdon Forhan uses in her modern translation of

Corps de Policie (as is quite likely with an author whose works were as widely copied and translated as Christine's were in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries), there are other places where Forhan's translation attempts to clarify which of several possible meanings Christine intends; Woodville, on the other hand, often preserves the ambiguity of the original.

Woodville's awareness of the nicer distinctions between rank (as an inherited quality) and "honor" (as a personal quality) is not surprising, considering he had cause to be more sensitive to (or defensive about) such matters than Christine. When Woodville translates the introductory passage on knights and nobles, he says that "they ought to haue the charge to defende the right of the prynce and the comon people" (Bornstein 40). Christine's original says that "they have the burden of defending the law of the prince and the polity" (de Pizan 4) ("ilz avoir la charge de deffendre le droit du prince et la chose publique") (3). Woodville's use of the term "comon people" savors more of *noblesse oblige* than the inter-dependant classes of the sort of Roman-style republic Christine frequently references. Woodville's wording here reflects his identity as a knight with literary tastes, as opposed to Christine's status as a professional writer versed in the classics. Aristotle, Christine says, maintained that "honor must not be attributed but to a virtuous person" (de Pizan 4) ("honneur ne doit ester attribuee si non aux vertueux") (4), which Woodville renders as "wourchypp ought not to be gevyn to none but to theim that be vertuous" (Bornstein 41). The word "worship" is as complex in its medieval meaning as "glose"; it can mean the personal quality of a sense of honor, but it can also mean external honors, or status. When Christine speaks of honor, she appears to mean that one must not project honorable qualities on those who do not have them, and

of course it is laudable to wish to be considered virtuous by others: “Nothing is more desired by noble hearts than honor” (de Pizan 4), (“il n’est chose tant desirée des nobles cœurs comme honneur”) (4). Woodville, however, is observing the psychological truth that a wish for status is a strong spur to virtue: “there is no thing so moche desired in noble hearts as is worshipping” (41).

It is obvious from the first that Woodville is more invested than Christine in the idea of chivalry as a source of both status and self-worth, for while Christine wants the young prince to be taught about “the emblems of arms and order of battles and chivalry” (de Pizan 8) (“que c’est que pris d’armes et droit de bataille et de chevalerie”) (10), Woodville emphasizes “the manner of battail and the worshipping in armes” (46). Christine wants the prince to know how to recognize friend from foe in battle and to follow established protocols (we already know her dislike of letting soldiers run rampant over the countryside); Woodville also wants to reinforce the chivalric ideal.

Woodville’s own chivalric experience ranged from the real-life horrors of battle to the merely ceremonial. In his Lancastrian days, he figured prominently in the decisive battle at Towton (Haigh 60); his Yorkist battles included a confrontation with Warwick at Losecote Field (110). However, Baldwin demonstrates how Woodville’s reputation for chivalry was used in “What Professor Ross has described as a ‘calculated use of chivalric pageantry to impress the people and focus attention on the high connections of the Woodville family’”:

...[I]n April of 1465, when he was visiting Elizabeth...he knelt before her and doffed his hat, whereupon “the fair ladies of the court gathered about him, tied round his thigh a collar of gold and pearls with ‘a noble flower of souvenance

enamelled and in manner of an emprise' and dropped into his bonnett [sic] a little roll of parchment tied with a thread of gold." Anthony realised that he was being challenged to perform a noble deed in order to win the flower of souvenance, and after thanking his sister and her ladies for the honour they had done him, took the parchment to the King. Edward broke the seal and informed the assembled courtiers that the ladies had requested that Sir Anthony be given licence to compete with a nobleman "of four lineages and without reproach" at a tournament.... It was decided to invite ... the "Bastard of Burgundy" (the illegitimate son of Philip, Duke of Burgundy) to come to England for this purpose since he had already written to Anthony Woodville suggesting they "break lances" together.... (26, quoting Ross 95)

The tournament was delayed until 1467, but despite its pageantry, it was curtailed before anyone besides one of the horses was seriously injured. The King stopped the fighting on the second day and subsequently feasted the Burgundian guests and the English aristocracy with great splendor (26-27). Despite Woodville's genuine previous and subsequent experience in combat, including his exploits on the Yorkist side in 1470-71 (46, 53), the incident has the weird ritualistic feeling of re-enactors at a Renaissance Faire: it was a display of nobility, and as such, consciously performed by all involved (except, perhaps, the unfortunate horse). But before we write off the incident as a uniquely medieval attempt to reconcile seemingly mutually exclusive concepts of

chivalry, the practical and the idealized, let us recall that a group of Marines on dress parade will resemble not in the least their recent deployment crawling face-down in the sand.

Nevertheless, for a man who knew the brutal truth about soldiering, Woodville sometimes preserves Christine's allusive tone to a surprising degree. Christine believes the child should hear songs "about the noble dead" to strengthen his courage (de Pizan 9), and Woodville keeps Christine's euphemism of "the worthy men that wer passed out of the worlde" (47) ("vaillans trespasés") (11). Given that battle is usually a harsh thing, we might wonder at Woodville's retaining Christine's oblique words. Is he afraid of intimidating the child rather than encouraging him? Perhaps he wishes to imply the possibility that not all brave warriors die in battle; some go on to become administrators in middle age, and die peaceably in their beds. The last is an idea that would have horrified Geoffroi de Charny, and Woodville, himself, was not permitted to fulfill either the warrior's destiny or the retired civil servant's.⁵

When Woodville, governor and tutor to the Prince of Wales, returned the boy to his mother's care in 1475 in order to go to battle, the child was still only four-and-a-half years old (Baldwin 67). What kind of influence had he been in the meantime?

Woodville chooses a moderately lenient interpretation of Christine's expectations of a child's tutor. Christine says the child "should not see him play games, laugh, or speak foolishly" (de Pizan 7) ("ne le voye jouer des nices jeux ne rire ou parler folement), with the adverb "foolishly" appearing to modify only speech (the other activities are perhaps not to be engaged in at all). Woodville, however, says the tutor must take care that the young prince "also see him not playe no nyce plays nor lawghe at [no folly nor folysshe

wordes]” (44). Christine appears to believe the tutor should not be seen to play any games, but Woodville apparently confines this to “nyce” (i.e., foolish ones). However, Christine worries that the tutor will say foolish words himself, and Woodville more particularly objects to the tutor’s laughing at the foolish words of others, instead of indicating his disapproval with a dignified expression. Woodville’s tutor must not only set a good example, but his reaction to the examples others set must also be exemplary in its self-control.

How much of this advice did Woodville apply to himself? As Michael Hicks comments, Woodville may have had little actual input in the Prince’s education. At some points, “[t]he prince’s tutor, Earl Rivers, was frequently absent abroad and day-to-day tuition was apparently overseen by Bishop Alcock” (215-16). What influence he did have may have involved sheer practical matters far more than creating an impression of aloof dignity or teaching his charge to adopt a stoical attitude; Baldwin believes that Woodville’s guardianship of the Prince was a standard medieval mixture of benevolence and self-interest:

Earl Rivers, it is claimed, ruled the area [Wales] as a personal fiefdom, and he and his sister not only held two of the three keys to the Prince’s coffers but packed the boy’s now enlarged council with Woodville supporters.... There were certainly occasions when Rivers issued instructions under his own seal or associated his nephew in his decisions as an afterthought, but such actions only reflected the reality of the situation and do not imply an abuse of power. It is true that he appointed two of his councillors as deputy butlers and used the Prince’s patronage to strengthen his position in East Anglia; but only a fool or a saint would have

failed to reward his own followers or benefit personally when the opportunity arose. In the same way, there can be no doubt that he and the other resident keyholder, Jon Alcock, Bishop of Rochester, the Prince's tutor and president of his council, kept a tight grip on the council's finances, but again, there is no suggestion that they behaved improperly, and Rivers sometimes used his own money to pay his nephew's bills. (60)

As to paying anyone else's bills, Woodville, like Christine, believes in charity, but compassion, to both of them, is as much an aristocratic virtue as it is a Christian one. Charity is part of being well-born and well-bred. Christine writes that the prince "should pity poor gentlewomen, widows and orphans and succor their needs for the love of God and out of kindness; and also all poor women and men in his power and to hear their requests kindly" (10) ("avoir pitié des povres gentilz femmes, des vesves et des orphelins et les secourir en leurs besoingnes pour l'amour de Dieu et de gentillesse") (13-14). Woodville writes that he must "haue pyte on pour gentillmen and gentillwomen and socour them in their need for the loue of God and gentilnes [and] to all pour men and women to his power and *gentilly* her their requestis" (49) (emphasis added). Woodville's usage, like Christine's, underlines the etymological connection between "gentleness" and "gentility."

Christine writes that the prince "ought solely to love the good and benefit of his country and his people." She is emphatic on this point: "All his ability, power, and the study of his free time ought to be for this, rather than his own benefit" (dePizan 11). The French reads "il doit singulierement aimer le bien et l'acroissement de son pays et de son people et en ce doit de toute sa puissance et estude vaquer plus mesmes que a son

singulier profit" (15). Christine uses "singular" twice, first as an adverb to describe the king's manner of loving the good of his people, and then as an adjective to describe the self-profit he must not seek. Does she mean it in its sense of exclusivity, ruling out all other possibilities, or in its less emphatic sense of "to an extraordinary and remarkable degree" in the first case and "personal" in the second? Woodville is no less ambiguous: "he ought to loue singularly the incresse of his realme and of his people, and in that poynte he ought to sett his study rather than upon his singular profyte" (50). He wants dedication to the people, but does not specify exclusive dedication by any means. It is well that he did not say otherwise, for in the 1470s Edward IV was severely criticized for raising funds for a war on France he never waged, preferring at the last minute to negotiate—and retain the funds for his own use. Arthur Ferguson believes the pride of the English was hurt at this appearance of cowardice after they had "willingly or unwillingly put hand in pocket to finance a war in which they generally believed" (156-57), but knowing as we do that the essential profit of waging war was in pillaging and taking hostages to be ransomed, we can understand that what really rankled many Englishmen was being denied the opportunity to recoup their investment. As Carpenter points out, "a king who ruled entirely in his own interests and took freemen's property and its fruits without observing proper process was held to be a tyrant, the antithesis of a king (28). Englishmen may well have felt that Edward had confiscated their funds through a deliberate ruse, and Woodville's phrasing may reflect this, in an oblique way: John Watts has found at least once fifteenth-century instance in which "'singularite' appears to mean 'self-interest'" (41 fn 146). Woodville may be retaining Christine's

wording because the English equivalent is loaded with connotations, but does not require him to commit himself to an interpretation that can be construed as specifically critical of Edward's actions.

Without alluding to the self-indulgence for which Edward IV was becoming notorious, Woodville makes it clear that self-indulgence is not merely inadvisable for one's self or one's pupil, but actually a deliberate form of cruelty. The Greeks who conducted themselves with great discipline but allowed their enemies to grow soft with coddling are acclaimed for their "great learning and cleverness" in Forhan's translation (9), but Woodville refers to their "grete knowing and malice" (48) ("grant sçavoir et malice") (12). This may be the result of a variation in manuscripts, and Woodville may have been working from a French source whose wording was more cynical than the manuscript Forhan used. However, a similar irregularity in translation shows up again in Caxton's translation of the Chevalier's Livre, leading me to wonder if "malice" had changed its meaning (as "shrewd" has gone from a criticism of ill temper to a compliment on cleverness). I shall return to this point in greater detail later, but I believe that the negative wording Woodville retains suggests the possibility that Woodville, like Christine, is suspicious about the Greeks' mixture of cleverness and spite, although he admires the results. But if pampering can be used to keep one's enemies in check it should never be turned on one's self. Lest the prince be imbued with false pride and misuse the gifts God has given him, Christine recommends the *memento mori* as a cure for "lack of self-knowledge" (12). Christine's original uses the term, "descognoysance"

(17). In this case, Woodville's wording, "mysknowing his persone" (51), pungently captures some of the peculiar force of the original, for it implies the construction of a *false* self-image instead of merely the absence of self-awareness.

Woodville himself tried to find a balance between the honor he sought as a knight and the humility he was expected to possess as a Christian, with his pilgrimage to Rome, his hairshirts, and his ballads warning against the seven deadly sins. Although Ferguson notes that the "elderly knight-turned-hermit is a stock figure in medieval literature" (52), Woodville's erudition sets him apart in a time when a well-born squire's education was comparable to that of a grammar-school (183). Attaining any humility must have been quite an achievement, for his displays of chivalry in his younger days as Lord Scales made him something of a medieval celebrity, one who held his own in the glittering court at Burgundy, as witness John Paston's starstruck 1468 letter to Margaret Paston from Bruges:

And they that haue jostyd wyth hym into thys day haue ben as rychely beseyn...as clothe of gold and sylk and syluyr and goldsmyths werk myght mak hem; for of syche ger, and gold and perle and sotnys, they of the Dwkys coort, neythyr gentylmen nor gentylwomen, they want non....

Thys day my Lord Scalys justyd wyth a lord of thy contré, but nat wyth the Bastard, for they mad promyse at London that non of hem bothe shold neuer dele wyth othyr in armys. But the Bastard was on of the lordys þat browt the Lord Scalys into the feld, and of mysfortwne an horse strake my lord Bastard on the

lege, and hathe hurt hym so sore that I can thynk he shalbe of no power to
acomplyshe vp hys armys, and that is gret peté, for by my trowthe I trow God
mad meuer a more worchepfull knyht.

And asfor the Dwkys coort, as of lords, ladys, and gentylwomen, knyhtys, sqwyirs,
and gentyllmen, I herd neuer of non lyek to it saue Kyng Artourys cort. (Davis I.
330)

Should Woodville let such experiences go to his head, there were always people
who could choose to find fault in his scholarship; his friend Caxton was constantly
reproached when the text of a book he printed differed from some reader's beloved
manuscript, as it frequently did (Deacon 140). In some passages of The Body of Policye,
however, it is fairly clear that wording is a matter not of interpretation, or a different
manuscript source, but of Woodville's particular concerns. Christine's displeasure over
the custom of promoting unfit clerics is reworded almost completely. She writes, "even
those in detestable and blind error are promoted, which continues even today in the
church" (12-13) ("mesmes les tient en l'erreur detestable et avuglee qui adés continue ou
fait de l'eglise" (18). Woodville, however, renders this as, "this causeth them to falle in
gret and orryble errour and so blyndid in the clergie *that it is meruayle without Godis
mercy that euer it may be in reste and peace for the fowle symonye and other
inconueniences that fallen ther to*" (52). The emphasized phrase appears to be entirely
his invention. Christine worries that bad clerics will be put in positions of power;
Woodville believes that putting them in positions of power is what encourages their
corruption. Moreover, Christine says the clerics make excuses for themselves when those
in authority try to intervene: "There is no prince nor other person who will reprove them,

but they excuse themselves from what they are accused, by saying that they are human beings, not angels” (13) (“Il n’y a prince ne aultre qui les en repreigne, mais eulx mesmes telz y a se excusent ains qu’ilz soient accuses et dient qu’ilz sont homes et non mie angelz et que c’est chose humaine de pechier”) (19). Woodville, however, breaks up the sentence to give another meaning entirely: he thinks their patrons are refraining altogether from giving the criticism that is their duty, and even making excuses for their badly-chosen protégés: “there is no prynce ne no other man that will onys reprove them of their defawtys. But such ether be that excuse theim or they be accused and sayn they be men and non aungell” (53).

Christine tells of a Roman emperor who returns to farming after great victories and “went for the rest of his life to the village called Sallon and his occupation was working on the land” (108). In the French, the emperor “se mist *de sa bonne volonté*, et s’en ala finer sa vie en ung village nommé Sallon et son occupacion estoit en labourer terre” (200). Woodville, like his source, drives home the point that this is a free choice: “*of his owyn proper wille* he went and endid his lyfe in a village whiche was named Salon, and his occupacion was only in labourying of the erthe” (190). Woodville, however, may not be as interested in pointing out the emperor’s humility as Christine is. In a time when such a rustication could signal disgrace and/or exile—when Woodville himself fled with Edward IV to Burgundy in 1470 when the Lancastrians temporarily regained power in 1470 (Baldwin 46)—Woodville perhaps has to make it very clear that his Roman emperor is exhibiting bucolic virtues, not fleeing the wrath of a hostile rival or populace. Moreover, the emperor “had more peace of mind in his state of poverty than in carrying a burden so large and perilous as an empire” (Body 108) (“qu’il avoit plus de

paix de conscience en ce povre estat, et mieulx le prenoit en gré que d'avoir la cure si grande et si pereilleuse comme de l'empire") (*Corps* 201); he is frankly oppressed by the responsibilities of ruling and seeks serenity. Woodville's emperor, as in the French, is troubled by scruples: he "was mor appeased in his *conscience* in that pour office and bettir toke it a wurthe than to haue the charge of so grete and so perlous a thing as the gouvernaunce of the empire" (190-91) (emphasis added).

Woodville perhaps knew something about the difficulties of governance of empires: recollect that he was used as a sort of diplomatic entertainment to strengthen England's ties with Burgundy, and would also witness how Edward would negotiate peace with France after spending two years whipping the populace into a francophobe frenzy. Aware as he was that today's enemy may be tomorrow's ally (as he had once opposed the Yorkist king he now served), he does not automatically change French references to English ones. Christine's reference to "the very wise prince, the Duke of Orleans," who had his children educated in Latin and logic (de Pizan 7), is left "the noble and wyse prynce the duc [of] Orliaunce" (Woodville 45). Some of Woodville's wording is surprisingly positive. Christine writes of "the perfection of virtue" demonstrated by "the wise king of France, Charles V" (11). Woodville has an additional phrase, "whiche hylde well the weyes of vertu" (49) ("lequel bien ceste voie" [15]). It seems most likely in this case that Woodville had access to a French manuscript that contained this variation.

However, Woodville is also not afraid to tailor a critique to England if he thinks it warranted. Christine wishes the French king would "proclaim an edict throughout the land, which will forbid on pain of severe punishment anyone swearing on or denying his

Creator. Alas, there is great need in France at present for such an edict, because it is horrible that the whole of Christendom has the custom of such disrespect toward the Savior. One can scarcely hear any other language” (14-15) (“ce fera ung edit par toute sa terre par le quel edit il deffendera sur peine de grande pugnicion que nul ne jure detestablement ne maugree ne renie son creatur. Helas! Bien besoing feust en France a present que tel edit fut fait, car c’est horreur que en l’université des crestiens soit coustume de tele irreverence vers son sauveur, car a peine oyt on courir aultre langage soit a jeu”) (21-22). Woodville would also like the king to “make a crye in all his londe by the whiche he shulde defend o[n] payne of gret punycion that no maner of man shulde customably swer nor forsake his creature,” but adds, “it wer gret need now a dayes *in Englonde* that such a crye wer made. For this errour is so gret and vnyursall among the people of the inreuerence of their creature that vnneth ther reneth non other langage” (55) (emphasis added). Moreover, Christine’s wording appears to lament the fact that France has fallen into the same bad habit as the rest of the Christian world, but Woodville denounces how the habit of swearing has become ubiquitous in England. He is less concerned with what the rest of the Christian world is doing.

One might reasonably expect Woodville to tone down criticisms of royalty or the nobility by retaining their original French targets, but perhaps to feel less compunction about sparing the feelings of the English lower classes, particularly since he might have little reason to expect them ever to read his work. This, however, is not the case. Christine’s disapproval of “lechery in taverns and the luxuries they use in Paris” (106) (“la lecherie des tavernes et des friandises dont ilz usent a Paris”) (197) is rendered faithfully as, “the lecherye of taverns and the plesaunce that is vused at Parys” (188).

Does he not consider this weakness one to which English laborers are prone? Actually, he appears to take a sort of bread-and-circus approach to keeping the workers from getting unruly. Christine wants craftsmen's lives to be "more sober and less licentious as is appropriate to their estate" (106) ("plus sobre et non si delivative, comme il ne leur aperiengne") (197). Woodville wants them to be "commonly sobre and not mor delicate than longeth to them, *whiche may cause them to leve their labour*" (188, emphasis added). As the additional phrase makes clear, he is less concerned about a little drinking and wenching than he is about a disturbance in the labor force. Letting commoners blow off a little steam on pub night might even avert another Peasant's Revolt. Moreover, support from the masses was not easily commanded: Carpenter has noted that although London was "never particularly pro-Yorkist," resentment of government levies and fear of Queen Margaret's soldiers led city leaders to oppose the Lancastrians (148). Woodville had helped Edward IV to reclaim his throne once. Who knew if he would need to do it again? His own loyalties had originally been Lancastrian; he knew well the value of earning a fighter's trust. From his point of view, it would be foolish to impose Prohibition on the working classes, and so inspire their resentment. One might want them for foot soldiers one day.

One wonders if he ever considered whether all this advice might inspire some resentment in his pupil; perhaps he assumed it would do him good even so (the assumption that children must cooperate rather than obeying seems to be a twentieth-century innovation). The question I have asked in previous chapters, whether virtuous behavior produces or is the result of virtuous feelings, seems almost irrelevant here, because Woodville appears to have paid little attention to it himself. Ferguson questions

whether “sincerity may be at all accurately assessed where...such conventional gestures [of piety] are concerned,” and observes that what “seems to the modern observer to be an element of instability in the medieval character, a tendency to oscillate, often with some vehemence, between extremes of worldly and spiritual endeavor, is in reality the result of a feeling that both are part, and a necessary part, of the life of the true knight” (52).

Woodville may see fit to expand somewhat on Christine’s text where foul language or the glory of chivalry are discussed, but where sincerity or making external virtue consistent with internal virtue are touched upon, he does not appear sufficiently concerned to supply any elaboration.

Perhaps the strangest example of Woodville’s *not* changing a passage, or suppressing it altogether, occurs in a section on educating the children of knights and nobles. Christine gives the bizarre example of a noble child who had to be restrained from assassination by his tutor:

When he saw the cruelest of the princes of Rome, named Sulla, who in his cruelty had cut off the heads of many Romans, the child asked his master how such a tyrant could exist without someone murdering him. The master answered that there were plenty of those who wanted to, but he had too many guards. Then, said the child, if someone would give him a knife, it would be done because he

saw him every day, and he would not fail to kill him. With that, the master no longer allowed him to see him (considering the great courage of the child) without searching him for a knife. (61)

[Il avisa si comme il passoit la grande cruaulté d'ung des princes de Romme qu'on nommoit Silla qui avoit fait couper la teste a pluseurs de Romme par sa cruaulté. L'enfant demanda a son maistre comment on souffroit tel tirant sans l'occire. Le maistre respont que assés en y avoit qui bonne volenté y avoient, mais cellui estoit trop fort de gens d'armes. Adonc dit l'enfant que ce viendroit il bien a chief, mais qu'on lui baillast ung couteau, car il aloit tous les jours en sa presence si ne fauldroit point a l'occire. De quoy le maistre, considerant le grant couraige de l'enfant, ne le cerchast avant qu'il n'eüst couteau. (108-09)]

Woodville gives this vignette in its entirety, without toning it down, making any editorial comments, or expressing any more horror at the conduct of this little psychopath than Christine does:

And as he passed by on of the prynces of Rome, whiche was a cruel man whose name was callid Silla, whiche had made to cutte of the heedis of many men of Rome by his gret cruelte, the childe asked of the master houghe suche a tyraunt myght be suffred and not slayn. The mastir answerd saying in this wyse, that ther wer men inoughe to sle him if they myght, but he was so fortiefied with men of armes that ther coude no means be founde ther for. Than said the childe, if so wer that I had a knyfe, I wolde right sone bryng that matier to a poynte, for euey daye I am in his presence, wherfor I wolde not fayle to kylle him. Wherupon the

mastir, concideryng the grete corage of the childe, wolde not suffir him to come no mor in the presence of Silla, but he serched him well befor that he had no knyfe upon him. (121)

Why would Woodville leave this episode in, or refrain from condemning the child's presumption? His charge, the Prince of Wales, for whom the translation was ostensibly made, was in no danger from tyrants at the time; Henry VI was probably already dead, and the Prince's own father, Edward IV, sat on the throne. Did Woodville anticipate problems from some Plantagenet uncles? Clarence, who rebelled in 1470 and again in 1478, would actually make a more likely figure of suspicion at that time than Gloucester. Baldwin even writes that Richard's coup in 1483 was successful *precisely* because Woodville had maintained an "apparently cordial relationship" with him in the past, and suspected no trickery: "Rivers had asked Gloucester to arbitrate in a dispute between himself and a neighbor in Norfolk as recently as 25 March 1483, and the cordiality of their meeting in Northamptonshire just before he was arrested shows plainly that he suspected nothing" (143). What tyrant could Woodville have in mind? Was he attempting to deflect criticism from Edward IV for ordering the execution of Henry VI? But Henry VI did not easily fit into the classical picture of a tyrant; although history has long pictured him as weak, childish, overly pious, and possibly insane (Hicks 7), more recent scholarship has maintained that some of his contemporaries thought him reasonably competent, at least during some points of his reign (Watts 104, 108), and others were content to have him as an innocuous figurehead (Carpenter 94-95), much like a doddering CEO who signs off on the decisions of the executives who are really running the company. His foibles tended less to cruelty and vindictiveness than to odd decisions

(even by medieval standards) such as his refusal to fight on Palm Sunday, even for the purpose of defending his crown and his life (Hindley 66). Kaeuper has noted that “kings...were knights as well as monarchs” (Violence 39), and Watts states that “the duties of the king could be presented wholly in terms of defence (whether ‘inward’ against rebels and criminals, or ‘outward’ against foreigners”) (32); in this light, Henry’s dereliction of duty becomes clearer. Many thought him a saint, but as Watts points out, “[t]he advice-literature of the age is scattered with observations that clearly indict the sort of behavior typically associated with Henry’s adult rule,” including the impractical devotions and excessive leniency in awarding pardons (110).

The story of the knife-wielding little boy reads strangely, even if one stretches one’s imagination enough to suppose that Woodville was thinking perhaps of Hastings, with whom the Woodvilles had a long-running feud, one that continued after both Lord Hastings and Anthony Woodville himself were dead, in a sort of medieval *Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce* (Hicks 219-22). Or perhaps Woodville had no one specifically in mind at all; perhaps Woodville, familiar with both the idea of the fickle Wheel of Fortune and years of English history, knew that between Lancastrian uprisings, alliances made and broken between France and Burgundy, and the occasional Jack Cade or Wat Tyler, it was best to prepare the young prince for any eventuality, including the necessity to take initiative himself, should the need arise. (He was perhaps only too prescient in this regard.)

Of course, we might accept the passage’s presence at face-value: Woodville translated it because it was there. But his protégé, Caxton, probably would have toned down the passage, as we shall find him doing with many coarse sections in The Knight of the Tower. Caxton wanted his readers to know without ambiguity which characters were

role models and which were examples of behavior to avoid. Perhaps Woodville did not see himself as a professional editor, as Caxton clearly did, and was reluctant to tamper with his source too radically. This in itself is unusual, in an age in which translators generally felt not only privileged but obliged to adjust their sources to suit their purposes; Rita Copeland writes that to medieval translators, “the force of rhetorical invention should produce difference with the source” (30). We might expect Woodville to take some sort of moral position on the story, particularly when the translation was supposedly intended for Edward’s heir, and he fails to do so. Woodville’s translation seems less an editorial task than the effort of a semi-retired knight to pass on chivalric mores; he is less a translator than a conduit for the traditions of knighthood. And the traditions of knighthood do feature violent little boys: Kaeuper notes that when eleven-year-old Gawain vows revenge on his father’s murderer, his words “elicit much admiration” (Violence 191).

Woodville himself is something of a holdover of a chivalric age, not the vanguard of a legalistic one. Yet in the care with which he chooses his words, translating some things to steer their harshest comments away from specific countries or classes, translating others (such as the condemnations of profanity) so as to make it clear he holds Englishmen every bit as culpable as their counterparts across the channel, he exhibits something of a lawyer’s mindset, or at least a clerk’s. Unlike the knight of romance, whose main concern with words was that they be true and that one be willing to risk life and limb to defend one’s word, Woodville demonstrates a clerk’s awareness that words may be taken out of context, that others may read into his words things he has not intended. To avoid this, sometimes he clarifies or adds phrases narrowing possible

interpretations. At others, he retains the shaded meanings of Christine's original, putting the onus of interpreting intent on the reader. Historically, he had good cause to take care with words, for in an incident during his Lancastrian days when he was captured along with several others (including his father, then Lord Rivers), his captors made many accusations involving the family's supposed parvenu status and the kind of *language* they had used. The accusations almost completely disregarded the fact that he had been *physically* fighting on the opposing side and focused almost entirely on the words he and his comrades had used:

...my Lord Ryuers was brought to Caleys and by-for the lordys wyth viij^{xx}
torches, and there my lord of Salesbury reheted hym, callyng hym knaves son that
he schull be so rude to calle hym and these oper lordys traytours, for they schull
be found the Kyngys treue liege men whan he schuld be found a traytour, &c.
And my lord of Warrewyk reheted hym and seyde that his fader was but a squyer
and broute vp wyth Kyng Herry the V^{te}, and sethen hymself made by maryage and
also made lord, and that it was not his parte to have swyche langage of lordys
beyng of the Kyngys blood. And my lord of Marche reheted hym jn lyke wyse,
and SerAntony was reheted for his langage of all iij lordys jn lyke wyse. (Davis I.
88)

Woodville was aware that others regarded his family as upstarts, and that he would be judged in large part not on whether the language he used was thought appropriate in general, but on whether he was entitled to use it. It is a lesson he clearly took to heart in his translation of Christine's Corps de policie. Even his emphasis on avoiding swearing, which he expands beyond what Christine says, shows that he perceives people will be

judged, in terms of rank as well as morals, as much by their words as by their deeds. This is a world less of derring-do than of rhetoric. Flower of late medieval chivalry though he might have been, Woodville was not being influenced by the court of throne and scepter, where disputes might be settled by a joust, but by the court of plaintiff and defendant, where judgment was expected to be a function of testimony.

Ironically, Woodville might have survived somewhat longer, or at least met the knight's preferred death on a the field of battle, had he been more of a throwback, and judged his Plantagenet in-laws not by what they said but by who was making the statement, and whether that person had a reputation for "trouthe." Baldwin, however, points out that Woodville may have seen no reason for suspicion. As he prepared for his nephew's coronation, a coronation that was never to take place, he and Lord Richard Grey "rode back towards Northampton to greet the Dukes [of Buckingham and Gloucester] and perhaps offered them hospitality at Grafton, conveniently situated nine miles from Northampton on the Stony Stratford road. The four lords passed a pleasant evening; but next morning Rivers and Grey were dramatically arrested" (102).

. Because he saw his role as that of statesman and administrator rather than the warrior he had been in his youth, he was executed as a traitor, deprived of the "worchip" owing to either role. As Baldwin points out, Woodville and his nephew Grey's "places of burial are unknown; and there is no indication that memorials were provided for any of them when the tide of politics again turned in the family's favour" (160). Anthony

Woodville, who merged the roles of knight and scholar long before such amalgamations became the next century's cultural ideal, is now hardly remembered except as one of the peripheral characters bumped off in Richard III.

* * *

Our last translator, William Caxton, numbered Anthony Woodville among his highly-connected patrons, a group that also included Edward IV, the Duchess of Burgundy, and Lady Margaret Beaufort. As a man who started out as a mercer's apprentice he was thus in an ideal position to know both how to make a favorable impression on the nobility and also what ambitious commoners could do to improve and perhaps advance themselves. The Book of the Knight of the Tower, his translation of Livre du chevalier de la tour landry, attempts to suit the tastes of both audiences.

In the fourteenth century, many members of the English nobility would have been able to read the French original; the one extant English translation dates from the time of Henry VI (which places it well into the fifteenth century) (xix). Caxton's 1483 translation points possibly to a falling-off in French fluency, even in those nobles of Norman descent, and also to a new readership in the increasingly literate middle classes. His dedication is carefully worded to avoid alienating either of these readerships. Caxton acknowledges that the book is aimed "in especial for ladyes & gentilwymen douȝters to lordes & gentilmen," but also remarks that "this book is necessary to euery gentilwoman of what estate she be," particularly those desiring to rear children of "worship" (3), a word with connotations both of good moral reputation and worldly status. Caxton has

simultaneously declared that everyone ought to buy his book (an unsubtle marketing ploy), but also that it is particularly the reading matter of noble women, and (implicitly) if people of lesser rank read it, they are somehow noble too—particularly if they copy the noble examples about which they read. Their nobility consists in several performances: forking over the purchase money (not necessarily Caxton's only aim), reading the book, and carrying out its precepts. Why might women without rank be willing to do any of the above? The Knight's book (and Caxton's dedication) clearly elicits the cooperation of the reader, as well as the reader's parents. As Claire Sponsler has noted, this sort of didactic literature deliberately invokes such cooperation by insisting

...that conduct is not something imposed from outside the self in the form of a set of constraints to which the hapless individual is involuntarily subjected by larger powers, but rather something controlled and manipulated from within the individual, who is construed as at all times free to shape his or her behavior as desired.... Self-governance is...presented as the mechanism by which an individual can, through personal initiative alone, attain success and happiness. The optimism and confidence of this position are breath-taking. Potential barriers—such as lack of wealth, absence of employment opportunities or marriage prospects, low social standing, or poor health—are never mentioned. Instead, the

assumption is that learning to control one's own behavior is the definitive factor in determining happiness, with the individual's own enthusiastic participation as the only requirement. (71)

However, it is by no means certain that Caxton's translation was primarily aimed at the increasingly literate English middle classes. Although Geoffrey Hindley believes that Caxton's reference to an anonymous high-born lady with daughters who wished a translation is merely a "salesman's fiction" (247), Richard Deacon believes that Caxton may have done the translation at the request of Elizabeth Woodville (72). If so, there is powerful evidence for both his gratitude for her past patronage and also for his own enthusiasm for the work, since the widowed queen was then in sanctuary at Westminster Abbey and hardly in a position to help him financially or politically (72). In either case, we cannot assume Caxton targeted ambitious commoners exclusively. Although French-speaking aristocrats of Norman descent had originally made the book popular in England during the fourteenth century (Dronzek 139), Anne Dutton points out that fluency in French could no longer be assumed among highborn English woman after the mid-fifteenth century (51).

Although Anthony Woodville and William Caxton shared a love of learning and respect for scholarship (Deacon 58), their approaches to translation could not have been more different. M.Y. Offord says that Caxton's translation was "conscientious but mechanical," rendered "almost word for word...with little eye to the sense as a whole" (xxvi-xxvii), but a comparison of the Book of the Knight of the Tower and the Livre du

chevalier shows that Caxton was perfectly willing to tweak his text, when he thought the crudeness of the original would offend English readers or give an unflattering impression of the nobility he expected less exalted readers to want to emulate.

Let us begin with a story given in my first chapter, the parable of two sisters, one who fasts and prays regularly, and a second one who prays sporadically, eats on impulse, and eventually experiences a disastrous married life with a husband who accidentally (perhaps) blinds her after finding her hobnobbing with servants. Here is Caxton's version of events:

There was a knyght/ that hadde two doughters/ one that was by his first wyf/ And that other/ by his second/ And she that he had by his first wyf/ was meruaylously deuoute/ ne neuer wold ete till that she had said all her houres and herd all the mases that she myght here/ And that other douzter was holden so tendyrly/ and so moche louyd/ that she was suffred to haue alle her wylle/ For as soone as she had herd a lytill masse/ and hadde saide twoo or thre pater nostres/ she wente in to the garderober/ and there ete a soupe or somme lycorous thyng/ & sayd that her hede oke for fastyng/ but all this was but an euylle customme/ And also when her fader and moder were a bedde· thenne must she goo ete somme good morsell or somme good mete And this lyf ledde she/ tyl she was maryed vnto a knyzt/ whiche was wyse and subtile/ Thenne it happed that her lord knewe her manere/ whiche was euyll bothe for the body/ & the soule/ and told/ and shewed this to her moche honestly and swetely many tymes/ and said she dyd euyll to vse suche a lyf/ but neuer she wold leue it/ for faire spekyng/ ne for thyng/ that he couthe say or doo Thenne it happed/ that on a nyght/ he had slepte his first slepe/ And tasted beside

hym/ and found her not/ wherof he was moch angry/ And aroos from his bed/ And cast aboute hym a furreyde mantell/ and entred in to his garderober. where as his wyf was with his clerk/ and two of his seruantes· and ete and played so. that there was a grete noyse/ and the men and wymmen iaped to geder eche with other/ And the lord that sawe all this arraye was moche wrothe and felle/ And helde a staf in his honde for to smyte one of his seruauntes/ whiche had embracid one of the wymmen of the chambre/ and smote so sore that seruaunt/ that a splynt sprange out of the staf in to the one eye of his wyf/ which was by hym/ in suche manere/ that by mysaventure her eye was smeten oute/ and lost her eye/ And thus her husbond had her in suche hate. that he tooke his herte fro her/ and set it in another/ in suche wyse that her houshold and menage ente all to nought and to perdition.... (17-18)

To begin with, the husband Caxton describes as “wyse and subtylle” is “saige et malicieux” in the French original (12). As previously noted, a similar anomaly appears in the Woodville section, in which differing translations of the same passage describe either the “cleverness” or “malice” of the scheming Greeks. Had the meaning of “malicieux” or “saige” changed as radically as those of “shrewd” or “daungerous”? A search in Hindley and Langley’s Old French-English Dictionary, Hans Kurath’s Middle English Dictionary, Franz Stratmann’s Middle-English Dictionary, and the on-line Middle English Compendium turned up no evidence that either those words or any of their derivatives had changed meanings in either language: the French “malicios” and “maliciosement” as well as the English “malice,” “maleciouse,” and “malicioseli” had consistently negative connotations, while those of the French “sage,” “sagece,” and

“sagement,” were, like the English “sage” and “saige,” just as consistently positive. Given that the Chevalier’s book, like Christine’s works, was widely popular and copied and translated in many versions, it is entirely possible that the differences in wording and meaning are the work of the French scribe or printer. In my future investigations, I should want to look at extant French versions of both the Chevalier’s Livre and Christine’s Corps to see if there is any possibility that either Caxton or Woodville deliberately changed the wording. Although Woodville in general alters his source rarely and Caxton alters his quite readily, without knowing which manuscripts they used, or even which were available to them, I cannot positively conclude that the repeated irregularities in the translations of “malice” and “sage” were either deliberate or accidental.

However, there are sufficient changes in Caxton’s other choices in wording to indicate his intentions. Caxton’s husband is “moch angry,” but the French word “yriés” is far stronger: it implies fury, rage. (Chaucer’s Wife of Bath might describe him as a “wood leoun” [Wife’s Prol. 800]). Caxton has chosen words that convey a sense of righteous anger: the man is justly indignant at his wife’s unseemly conduct, but he is hardly beside himself or out of control. Caxton’s unfortunate heroine has been the victim of an act of God: her conduct has made her the providential target of a freak accident that blinds her in one eye. In the Chevalier’s original, her punishment actually *begins* with a marriage to a man with a cruel streak; there is some hint that the accident is not entirely an accident. Caxton’s point, that freak accidents, perhaps divinely ordained, happen to spoiled, impious girls who do not mend their ways after marriage, is

not the Chevalier's point: that spoiled, impious girls are less likely to make good marriages in the first place, because the better-tempered men will prefer their sweet, Mass-going sisters.

Moreover, Caxton's tone throughout is one of solemn disapproval: the story is sad but just what might be expected when girls are badly brought up. The Chevalier's tone, however, is derisive. Caxton says the wife and servants "ete and played so. that there was a grete noyse," but the Chevalier's wording practically sneers: they "mangoient et rigoloient tellement que l'en n'ouyst pas Dieu tonner" ("they ate and jested [or danced] so that the thunder of God wouldn't make such a racket"). Caxton merely comments that "her husband had her in suche hate that he tooke his herte fro her," but in the Chevalier's original this is preceded by an additional clause, "Si luy messéoit trop à estre borgne, et la prist le seigneur en telle hayne qu'il se avilla en mist son cuer ailleurs"(13) ("As if being one-eyed weren't bad enough for her, her lord took such a hatred to her that he gave his heart elsewhere"). When Caxton's father visits, he finds her "all oute of arraye And how she had governed her nycely and wantonly" (19); the Chevalier's father discovers "l'arroy et le gouvernement nice et malostru" (14) ("careless and coarse arrangements and conditions"). In Caxton's version "wantonly" points up the girl's vice; the Chevalier's version ("malostru," which can be rendered as coarse, vulgar), points up her socioeconomic degradation. In Caxton, we are to regard with

solemn dismay the result of a frivolous lifestyle; in the Chevalier's version, we are practically urged to snicker at the way a pampered favorite ends up as slum trash.

To take another example, when the King of England chooses a wife from the three daughters of the King of Denmark, Caxton gives the following version:

...the oldest was the fayrest/ but she had not the mooste sure manere in her
beholdyng/ but ofte loked here and there. And torned ofte her heede on her
sholders/ & had her sight ventillous lyke a vane/ The second doughter had moche
talkyng and spacke ofte tofore she vnderstood that whiche was said to her/ The
third was not the fayrest of them/ but she was moost agreable. & mayntened her
manere more sure and sadly/ & spak but litil/ & that was wel demeurly. & her
regard & sight was more ferme/ & humble than of that other two. (26)

“Ventillous,” may reflect Caxton's understanding of his French source as being a cognate of “venteler”: “to float, flutter, wave in the breeze.” The de Montaignon edition reads “vertilleux,” and this could be the result of a typographical or scribal error. If it is the Chevalier's original wording, however, then the connotations could include “vertillon,” whirlwind, or “vertir,” the definitions of which include “to turn, alter, change, swap allegiance, have a change of heart or opinion.” Caxton's fidgety daughter is tacky; her behavior seems tasteless and inappropriate for a king's daughter who wants herself to be a queen. The Chevalier's fidgety daughter, however, may have a more serious flaw: her body language implies that her heart may be as changeable as her eyes and her posture; she may be unfaithful in addition to uncouth. The talkative daughter is treated

with no more dignity: “merveilles de plait et de parolles” is best translated as “a marvelous lot of speech and words” (24). Again, the Chevalier’s tone is derisive, Caxton’s, soberly disapproving.

Caxton not only tones down the Chevalier’s mocking treatment of vulgar behavior, but actually distorts his meaning. When Caxton’s Knight declares that women may show open affection to their suitors, his wife reminds him how the over-familiar behavior of his own prospective bride repelled him and dissuaded him from marrying her:

She that wist and knewe well how it was spoken of yow & her for her maryage/
maade to yow as grete chere/ as she hadde loued and knowen your persone all
the days of her lyf/ ye prayd her of loue/ but by cause that she whiche was not
wyse ynough to anuere yow curtoysly and wel/ ye demaunded her not/ And yf she
had hold her self more secrete and couered/ and more symply/ ye had take her to
your wyf/ of whom I haue syn herd saye/ that she hath be blamed/ but I wote not
for certayne yf it was so. (168).

The Knight’s lady appears to frown on the jilted lady’s deficiency of courtesy, as he had done himself in his courting days. But when we look at the original, the problem was an *excess* of courtesy, or rather of courtly flirtation:

Si avoit bien que l’en parloit d’elle et de vous. Et lors elle vous fist si grant chière
comme se elle vouz eust vu tous les jours de sa vie, et tant que vous la touchastes
sur le fait d’amourettes, et qu’elle ne fist mie trop le sauvaige de bien vous
ecouter. Et les responses ne furent par trop sauvaiges, mais assez courtoises et
bien legierrettes, et, pour le grant semblant qu’elle vous fist, vous vous retraystes

de la demander, et se elle se fust tenue un peu plus couverte et plus simplement vous l'eussiès prise, dont j'ay ouy depuis dire qu'elle fut blasmée; si ne sçay se ce fut à tort ou à droit. (253-54)

[She knew well that everyone was talking about her and you. And then she made you this great welcome as if she had seen you every day of her life, and so much that you touched upon some love talk, and she wasn't even too shy to understand you well. Her replies were not too shy, but courteous and even witty, and because of the great welcome she made you, you backed off from asking for her, and if she had carried herself more discreetly and simply, you would have taken her [to wife]. As for her, I heard later she was blamed, but I don't know if rightly or wrongly.]

In Caxton's version, the rejected bride's behavior is over-familiar to the point of being uncouth, even vulgar. As the Chevalier's wife recounts the story in the French version, the fiancée gave the impression of being too sophisticated, understanding him a little too well for a girl who was not supposed to have any previous experience. But in the version the Chevalier has earlier told his daughters, the real problem seems to be that he tried to see how far the lady would let him go, and decided it was too far for a first date. In Caxton, the prospective bride tells young Geoffroi that if he were her prisoner, "she wold kepe hym as derworthely as her owne body," and the suitor refers to the happiness of whoever enjoyed "so swete & noble a pryson" (27). The word Geoffroi uses in the French original, "doulce" could mean sweet but also soft. As the visit nears its end and the prospective bride begs him to visit again, Caxton's version reads, "but I

held me al styll/ for I had neuer sene her to fore” (27), but Geoffroi’s original reads, “si me tins moult acointes d’elle, que en si pou de heure fu son acointe que oncques mais ne l’avoye veue” (29) (“I considered myself well acquainted with her, I who could not have known her before this hour or even set eyes on her”). The word “acointe” is a double-edged term: according to Hindley and Langley, it can refer to friendship or familiarity, but it can also indicate sexual intercourse. Whatever Geoffroi’s experiences as a soldier, he expects his bride to be inexperienced, and her self-assured answers in addition to the ambiguity of their phrases about the “soft” prison of her body indicate that the prospective bride may not only have said too much, but allowed him to do too much—or at least hinted at such a possibility on future visits. Geoffroi’s original shows a man warning his daughters that young men will try to take as much as they can, but despise the young woman who is too ready to give it—and he knows, because he was just such a young man. Caxton’s version eliminates any impression that the knight was a player with a double standard, and replaces it with a Gawain-like figure who is the soul of courtesy and expects the ladies with whom he converses to be likewise.

Lastly, let us look at the case of the scolding lady who is publicly humiliated by the man she accused of cheating:

...ther was a damoyzell douȝter of a right gentyl knyȝt And she was angry in
 playeng atte tables with a gentylman/ whiche was hoote and hasty and moost
 Ryotous/ And was not right wyse/ And the debate was of a dyes. which she
 saide was not truly made/ And soo moche it increaced that wordes were
 enhaunced/ and that she saide he was a coward and a fool. And so they lefte
 theyr playe by chydynge and strif/ Thenne said I to the damoysele/ My fayre

Cosyn/ Angre you with no thyng. that he saith/ For ye knowe wel/ he is of
 hautayn wordes & of folissh answers/ wherfor I praye yow for your honour that
 ye take no debate ageynst hym/ & I told her & counceiled feithfully/ as I wold
 haue said to my sustre but she wold not bileue me/ but yet did chide more after
 this than to fore/ And she sayd to hym that he was nought worth· and many other
 wordes/ And he answerd to her/ that he was better for a man/ than she was for a
 woman/ & she said that he had said not trouthe/ & so the wordes aroos/ that he
 said yf she had ben wyse and good/ she shold not come by nyght in to the mennes
 chambres/ and kysse them and embrace them without Candell/ And she
 supposed well to haue auenged her/ and sayd to hym that he lyed/ And he said
 that he dyde not/ and that suche one & suche one had sene it/ And there was
 moche peple/ that herd hit/ whiche knewe no thyng therof to fore/ And many of
 them sayd/ that a good styll/ and not so to haue chyden had ben better for her &
 that she was beten with her owne staf/ that is to saye by her tonge/ and by hir
 hasty spekyng/ And after these wrodes she wepte and said that he had diffamed
 her/ and that it shold not be left so And she reassayled hym to fore them alle in
 suche wyse/ that he said yet more fowle and shameful wordes to the dishonoure
 of hyr that she shall neuer recouer for socoure that she can make/ And thus was
 she shamed by the haultesse of her herte.... (30)

Caxton's ill-tempered man is "hoote and hasty and moost Ryotous," but the
 Chevalier's quarrelsome man "avoit male teste et rioteuse" (32). "Male teste" could
 indicate a hot-head or an obstinate-minded man, but it could also imply drunkenness or a
 hangover, just as "fol" could mean foolish, but also insane. The Chevalier's advice in the

opening paragraph would certainly make more sense with these interpretations: “gardez vous ne pregniez estrif à fol, ne à folle, ne à gens folz qui ayent male teste: car c’est grand peril” (32) is shrewd advice for any era, if it is interpreted as, “don’t get in a conflict with a crazy man or a crazy woman, nor with crazy people who have been drinking; it is extremely dangerous.” Caxton’s version, “see that ye begynne no strif to no foole/ ne to them that ben hasty and hoote/ For it is grete perill” (29), seems more of a general warning against arguing with ill-tempered people than specific advice to watch out for drunks and borderline cases (of which, presumably, the Middle Ages had their share—as the story of the “Bastard of Condé,” below, will demonstrate). Moreover, Caxton comments with stiff disapproval that the quarrelsome man “was not right wyse,” but the Chevalier’s tone is more scathing: “et n’estoit trop saige” (“and he wasn’t too bright”) (32).

Caxton tones down not only the Chevalier’s sneers at all the participants’ expense, but the graphic nature of the man’s accusations. Caxton’s quarrelsome man says “yf she had ben wyse and good/ she shold not come by nyght in to the mennes chambres/ and kysse them and embrace them without Candell,” which implies scandal enough, but in the Chevalier’s version, the man leaves nothing to implication: “s’elle feust saige, elle ne venist pas par nuit ès chambres aux hommes les baisier et accoler *en leurs liz* sans chandoille” (33) [emphasis added] (“if she were so smart, she wouldn’t come by night to men’s rooms and kiss and hug them *in their beds* without a candle”). In addition to cutting out the phrase about men’s beds, Caxton has thrown in an additional reproach of the woman’s lack of virtue, “wyse *and good*” (emphasis added), where the Chevalier’s original mostly reviles the woman for being a moron. Caxton’s version, in

short, is a stern cautionary tale of a woman whose reputation is lost by arguing with a man whose vile rumors will be repeated by everyone present, even if they have no basis in fact. The Chevalier's version shows two people in high society conducting themselves as coarsely as a drunken peasant and a fishwife in a tavern brawl, calling each other liar and slut. The woman in Caxton is "shamed by the haultesse of her herte," but the woman in the Chevalier's version is "ahontaga par *son fol couraige* et par sa haultesce de cuer" (emphasis added) (33). "Couraige" can mean any state of the heart, so the phrase could mean "her mad state of mind and uppity attitude," but it can also mean "courage" in the modern sense, "her insane [or reckless] bravery" in thinking she could defend her honor herself the way a man does. She is punished not merely for being ill-tempered, but for not leaving the confrontations to the men-folk and thus abandoning her proper social role.

What is the goal of Caxton's efforts to produce a refined translation of the Chevalier's book? One obvious desired result is that daughters who read this book will be obedient to parents, husbands and priests, the very goals shared by the Chevalier and Christine de Pisan. We do not know whether the behaviors recommended by these books were ever practiced by readers of either Caxton's translation or the French version, and one wonders how successful they would be if anyone did use them. With most noble marriages arranged by the families, could brides win over a husband who might be reluctant or even hostile? As a child, the Duke of Buckingham had been betrothed and later married to Katherine Woodville, the queen's sister, but seems to have resented it so much that it turned him against all the Woodvilles and may have been a large part of the reason he aided Richard III's coup. As Baldwin writes, "...he had gained little from the marriage and had always considered that he had married beneath himself" (144). Was his

unfortunate duchess ever reproached on this score, and, if so, did she attempt to smooth things over with some of the submissive speeches or meek body language advocated by the conduct manuals? It is likely that the brides of such political alliances had as thankless a task as the “peace-weaving” brides in Beowulf: burdened with the responsibility of ending feuds but with very little ability to do so.

Should Caxton’s readers be middle-class, however, motivating them might be even more problematic than motivating daughters of the lower nobility for whom negotiated marriages with powerful families were the standard custom. Although non-noble daughters might indeed fear being punished for bad conduct with broken noses, disgrace, and/or hellfire, a reward for good behavior seems more certain in heaven than an earthly reward of marriage to a king’s son. Middle-class girls might aspire to marry up, and indeed, sometimes did, but the immediate appeal of such books must go beyond providing a guide to the manners of the class one wishes to enter, given the odds that most of them would be unlikely to make such advantageous marriages. Perhaps reading such didactic works would allow one to feel that one was already noble in conduct, if not in actual rank. The fact that the words “noble” and “well-bred” have both expanded their meanings from the literal reference to genealogy to an abstract idea of etiquette shows how attractive the idea is that rank is as much a function of nurture as it is of nature. Perhaps the middle-class daughter would someday marry up, but in the meantime she (and her parents, if they gave the book to her) could feel that they were above the rabble because they read such noble books, and conducted themselves by noble standards. They

could engage in the sort of self-governance and self-fashioning that Sponsler describes above, and feel that they were to some extent in greater control of their own destinies because of it.

Caxton's altering the slangy, sarcastic tone of the Chevalier's original into a dignified, solemn review of the tragic ends of disobedient wives and the happy futures of virtuous daughters is the key to buying this feeling of gentility. How could readers feel noble if they were to discover that the Chevalier's noblewomen curse like fishwives and their husbands are not sternly punitive, but just a bunch of violent brutes and no better than drunken peasants? Who would wish (or think it possible) to join an elite whose authority is based entirely on ancestral and socioeconomic power and not on virtue? Well, actually, quite a lot of people—but in order to get people to behave well, Caxton recognized that an eventual payoff ("you'll be rewarded in heaven") or a possible payoff ("you'll marry up—maybe") were less attractive than the immediate payoff ("you'll get to feel better about yourself *right now* because you are buying/reading this book"). To admit openly that the nobility, in their own representations, were a pretty crass lot, that all that distinguished the reader from the nobility was power, would be to stir up echoes of the Peasants' Revolt and the whole question of hierarchy. Rebellious daughters do not obey their ambitious parents and make marriages that will improve their parents' status as well as their own (Margery Paston is a case in point [Davis II. 897]); rebellious parents

do not buy Caxton's books for their children because they are intent on abolishing rank, not rising in it; should Caxton himself appear too rebellious, the appearance of sedition could cost him his business or his life.

It is in everyone's interest—except possibly the young female reader's—to emphasize the idea that the combination of virtue and status being marketed in conduct books allows a social mobility of the soul, even if one is physically trapped in a lower class. These books are of course really promoting social *stability*, not mobility, as Sponsler observes (63). Should the young female reader take it into her head that she cannot rely on the book's flimsy promises (“you'll go to heaven someday, you *might* marry up, and in the meantime you'll definitely feel more noble than your uncouth neighbors”), she might—like Margery and Elizabeth Paston—resist her elders' efforts to arrange her life. Despite its more conciliatory message, it, like the French originals, is really about not rocking the boat.

But Caxton is concerned with more than the respectability of the English middle classes. He is concerned with the respectability of the English language, and this pertains to his noble readers and patrons as well as to newly literate bourgeois. Although Offord claims that Caxton was “content for the most part to take the French prose as it came, making little effort to render it into natural, idiomatic English,” and attributes any discrepancies in Caxton's translation to the possibility that “the translator's attention may have wandered” (xxvii), Richard Deacon argues that Caxton “understood French very well indeed, speaking and writing it freely” (21). Rather, Caxton complained of the limitations of English: the archaic terms he found in books (22) and the varying dialects which made it difficult for people from one region of England to understand people from

another (2). He had gone from being a London mercer's apprentice in 1438 (10) to being named "Governor of the English Nation at Bruges" in 1463 (36), and his insecurities were as much about culture, particularly language, as they were about class. Caxton's first translation efforts were encouraged by Edward IV's sister Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy; she shared Caxton's sense that there was "a need for improving the still crude English language" with "the lucidity and embellishments of French and Latin prose," and was "as eager to see that continental literature was translated into English as Caxton himself had always been" (50). Although Offord dismisses Caxton's "knowledge of French at this time" as being no more than "reasonably competent" (xxvii), Deacon believes Caxton's translations had a larger effect, which may have been to some extent intentional:

...why is it that the often crude, unmusical and mundane prose of Caxton had such an impact? He was a teacher (of the courtly style) who was unable to put into practice what he was constantly reiterating. He had neither the talent for original rhetoric and gift for style, nor the time in which to weave exquisite translations, bearing in mind the enormous amount of work he undertook. How he came to influence a future generation of Englishmen as writers was in the manner he achieved a break-through in the language. It was as though he deciphered the English language, eliminating the arcane and obsolete dialect words, substituting French and Latin adaptations as he saw fit, almost like fitting out of a jig-saw puzzle and in some esoteric process bringing the language of the

continent and the King's English close together. This merging of cultures through translation did not make the English language of the Renaissance period, but it helped to speed up the process of acquiring a national language of imagery, embellishment, and style. (56)

His translations were also his attempts to demonstrate the elevated status of his patrons in the elevated diction of the books they commissioned. Caxton's position as "Governor of the English Nation" probably involved him in the elaborate preparations for Margaret's wedding to the Duke of Burgundy, which may have been the beginning of his connection with her and with her brother-in-law, Anthony Woodville (43). This was the wedding whose pageantry so reminded John Paston of the Arthurian tales, and its festivities involved an elaborate joust featuring the Bastard of Burgundy (46), whom we may remember from his previous joust with Anthony Woodville. Deacon grants that the "Code of Chivalry and all it implied were constant pre-occupations, if not obsessions, of Caxton" (60). Caxton has drawn criticism for not seeing the brutality and tyranny hidden by the colorful devices and shining armour (61), but he was surely aware that chivalry frequently failed to live up to its glittering image, even in pageants where the participants might have been expected to be considerably less ruthless than they were in actual warfare. Contestants at jousts and tournaments were known to hide spikes under their horses' trappings and "accidentally" kill men in melees against whom they bore old grudges (Rimer, *Royal Armouries*). After being unhorsed, the Bastard of Burgundy demanded that Edward IV examine Anthony Woodville's equipment to prove he had not used any illegal gear (Deacon 60). Even his misgivings were reminiscent of romances: "Chivalric literature...supports the idea of a lively concern about the proper way knights

should treat each other when they fight.... Can one fight an unarmed or inadequately armed opponent? Is an opponent's horse a legitimate target? Should a mounted man attack one already unhorsed? Should a mounted man ride his great warhorse over an enemy knocked flat on the ground?" The romances gave inconsistent answers: "Even Lancelot can appear graciously dismounting to fight an unhorsed enemy in one passage and then shortly thereafter ride over another's body" (Kaeuper Violence 170-71).

Even the Duchess of Burgundy's glittering wedding featured disillusioning events as well as inspiring ones:

Tragedy marred the wedding. Among the chamberlains of the Duke of Burgundy was an illegitimate son of the Lord of Condé, a strikingly handsome man of an agreeable disposition. He had fought beside the Duke at Montlhéry and was one of his favourites. The Bastard of Condé, as he was popularly known, had been playing a game of tennis when there was a dispute as to whether he had broken the rules. To settle the matter it was agreed to consult a canon of the Church who had been watching the game. The canon unhesitatingly ruled against the Bastard, who suddenly and almost inexplicably lost his normally equable temper and forgot his usual good manners. He raged at the canon who beat a hasty but dignified retreat to his residence. The Bastard followed with drawn sword and was confronted by the canon's brother who barred the way and begged forgiveness for the unfortunate cleric. The Bastard's reply was to kill the man instantly with his sword. (Deacon 45)

This incident lends some perspective to Geoffroi de la Tour's anecdote of a high-born man and woman quarreling over some game dice, using the coarsest terms in their rage.

High-ranking people could and did behave badly in public, and their social inferiors undoubtedly took as much delight in their disgrace as modern readers of supermarket tabloids take in witnessing the foibles of celebrities. As Deacon points out, “Caxton would have been well aware of the abuses of the system of Chivalry and of occasions when the Code was broken, as in the case of the Bastard of Condé. His own plea for a stricter adherence to the Code of Chivalry is surely an indication of his consciousness of the repeated failures to live up to it” (61).

Should we still suppose that Caxton lived in a chivalrous fool’s paradise, let us remember that Caxton’s patron, Anthony Woodville, had been a participant in the Battle of Towton. We do not know what, if anything, he told Caxton about his experiences there, but Caxton’s description of that battle is so “tersely written” that Deacon wonders at his restraint: “One would have thought that with the advantage of verbal accounts, even third-hand, of so decisive and important a battle he could have found more to say” (24). Christine Carpenter notes that the battle was “the bloodiest and possibly the largest of the war; some contemporary estimates of the number of deaths put it at 29,000 or more, although we must allow for the medieval tendency to inflate numbers” (149). Possibly, Caxton wanted to avoid offending either Yorkists or Lancastrians in case the political wind shifted again, as it was to do several times. But the real issue may have been his distaste for the brutal realities of chivalry and a consciousness that his readers preferred a little idealism, or at least, escapism. Caxton’s editing of the Arthurian legends “revealed a curious lack of interest in battles as such,” writes Deacon. “Jousts, tournaments, feats of arms: all these things were lovingly dwelt upon, but he drastically cut out the details of battles” (70). However, Caxton’s affection for the pageantry of

chivalry is also found in some of its sternest critics; Kaeuper disputes the notion that “authors of chivalric literature were cheerless critics, taking only the odd, scowling glance out of a study window at actual knighthood—to confirm their dislike—while grinding out works presenting one critique after another”:

To the contrary, this literature is animated by the diverse energies found in any great literature; every text will celebrate the glories of chivalry and will often overflow with sheer joy and appreciation for the richness, colour, and splendour of chivalric life. In the process, texts instruct knights how to be more suave and urbane, how to play the ideal lover as well as the perfect knight. In fact, they claim that chivalry (if only reformed to their liking) constitutes the very buttress which upholds civilized life. (Violence 35)

Moreover, Caxton’s English audience welcomed such pageantry every bit as much as French readers had before them: “From the time of Chrétien de Troyes in the last quarter of the twelfth century, descriptions of magnificent tournaments fill page after page of chivalric romance.... Those who heard or read these works evidently could not get enough colourful display and valorous action” (Kaeuper Violence 164).

In any case, Caxton had no more reason to linger over the grim aspects of chivalry than did his patron. If Anthony Woodville, after fighting on the Lancastrian side and sharing the bitterness of defeat at Towton, could still revel in the elaborate pageantry of his joust with the Bastard of Burgundy in a court filled with his former Yorkist adversaries, it is hardly surprising that Caxton chose to focus on the gallantry and elegance of knighthood instead of its nasty underbelly. Even as he preferred to write about chivalry as it should be, rather than as it often was, he wished to show the knight as

he ought to be, rather than as he often was. This meant that the Chevalier de la Tour, a man who recounted tales of social disgrace and marital disaster with sarcasm, blunt language, and a kind of slangy contempt, had to be turned into the Knight of the Tower, a man who pronounced the unhappy fates of sinning women with solemn disapproval, and the happier fates of their more virtuous sisters with stately and decorous praise. Caxton, writes Deacon, “seemed to believe that all art should be didactic, that if literature did not instruct and edify, it was all worthless.” His prologues and epilogues spell out “his real mission in life—that, through printing in the English language, and in developing that language while still retaining simplicity of expression, he believed a happier, more literate, more civilized and cultured people would be created” (173-74). In Caxton’s works, nobility might be technically a matter of lineage, and publicly a matter of upright conduct and sedate body language, but it must be manifested, even created, by the proper language.

* * *

All of the books I have discussed in this chapter have far less rigid notions of what is proper to each class than their French counterparts. How do we account for a printer and former mercer’s apprentice who writes about chivalry, a knight who delights in playing the scribe, a lawyer who gives advice on socializing with royalty and a member of royalty who argues like a lawyer? Such hierarchical slippage would be unthinkable in the French texts. Even the translations of French sources have a peculiarly English spin, i.e., Woodville’s concern for the blasphemous language used by the people, a topic on which Christine only touched but one on which he expands. Who in France would care if “the people” are foul-mouthed; are they not only “the people”? What they

say in France is irrelevant as long as it does not include incitements to rebellion. The fact that both Woodville and Caxton care very much about the language the people are speaking and reading also shows a departure from the fourteenth-century notion that English was a language of “relatively low prestige and broad accessibility” (Watson 336); clearly, English is no longer relegated mostly to those who are not capable of handling French or Latin. While the clerks and merchants have been learning Latin and French to do their work, the book-buying public (including aristocratic readers) has been enthusiastically gobbling up romances and conduct manuals written in English.

In terms of the attitude towards the professional classes, by the late fourteenth century there were already hints that the chivalrous mindest and the lawyer’s mindset were not mutually exclusive. In 1386, Geoffrey Chaucer was called as a witness in the Scrope-Grosvenor dispute, which centered on which family had “the right to bear certain arms, namely, *azure a bend or*” (Pearsall 9). Knights had once been viewed as the indispensable defenders of the law (Ferguson 104); now they were turning to the law to defend the visible signs of their knighthood, as if such signs were copyrighted logos. The English writers discussed in this chapter dealt with this transition from a culture of chivalry to one of diplomacy and bureaucracy with varying degrees of enthusiasm or reluctance. Although Woodville and Caxton’s translations appeared towards the end of the fifteenth century, their mindset hearkens back to an earlier time, a time when knights were expected to set an example by their conduct (even if this custom was rarely honored in fact). Lest we suppose they were limited by the vintage of their sources, let us remember that they chose those sources, and Caxton at least recognized that the language of his source must be toned down to fit the new standards of propriety. Capgrave

straddles the world of natural nobility and nurtured diplomacy: he gives his saintly heroine a royal lineage consistent with the heroine of a chivalrous romance, but considers it no more important than her ability to argue like a lawyer. As for Idley, there is no sign he wants his son or any other reader to go seeking military glory anywhere, certainly not in the dubious triumphs of joust or tournament, as Geoffroi de Charny would have recommended, nor even in battle unless the king commands it. In fifteenth-century England the topic may be virtue, but the development of the topic looks less like morality than a gradual acknowledgment that a doughty knight is of marginal use compared to a really sharp lawyer.

Was it really so easy to advance in English society? Despite Kaeuper's assertion that English "social structure was much more fluid, much less rigidly hierarchical than that across the Channel" (Kaeuper Violence 111), it may in actuality have been no better and no worse in England than in France. After all, as Georges Duby notes, the manorial system was in decay in both countries by the end of the thirteenth century, and an "energetic peasantry" in either country could not only scrape by but actually make a profit from the surplus and become downright prosperous (Rural 332). However, the French advice-literature appears oblivious to this fact, trusting perhaps that the "*vilain* upstart" would reveal himself in life just as Duby notes he consistently does in Jean Renart's romances, betrayed by his own coarse nature (Chivalrous 182). Christine de Pisan's only nod to social-climbing is a warning that affecting a higher status than one's own will draw ridicule. The English works take a more optimistic view of crossing social barriers; they portray a world in which virtuous commoners will not be mocked for modeling their manners on their betters, and aristocrats need not be ashamed to learn

from scholarly commoners. When Geoffroi de la Tour commissions clerks to compile virtuous exempla for his daughters, they are contractors whom he hires just as he would hire people to fix his roof or mow his lawn, tasks he does not do himself (unless the clerks are merely a frame story—and if they are, he clearly does not *wish* people to believe compiling moral exempla is a task he would do without hired help). When Anthony Woodville asks Caxton to translate a book, he speaks as one who has also translated and studied books, and does not think the learning of a clerk detracts from the dignity of a knight. Bailiff Peter Idley assumes (correctly) that his family will be hobnobbing with nobility: Peter's widow became "Mistress of the Nursery in the Duke of Gloucester's household" (D'Evelyn 31) and the assault on Thomas' widow involved the Duke of Suffolk (34). Capgrave's Saint Katherine talks like a clerk, and a particularly snide one; instead of being criticized for bandying words with her adversaries when she should retreat into dignified silence (as so many combative women in Geoffroi de la Tour's stories are), she is elevated to sainthood.

If the actual situation in England was not markedly different from that in France, its representation in literature was. But the fact that such literature was welcomed by English readers indicates a culture receptive to the very blurring of social boundaries that French readers found threatening. Cultural ideals obviously neither determine nor categorically indicate historical practices, but as Kaeuper demonstrates in his discussion of chivalrous literature's influence on the knightly class, they do have an effect. In their turn, actual historical practices do have a tendency to make their way into the literature. The contrast between the French cultural ideals and the English ones argues a situation where the various classes in England have by no means dispensed with the social

hierarchy, but they are far less defensive about it than the French. As Kaeuper points out, “English literature, unlike French romances, does not stress the social and cultural separation of knights from everyone else” (Violence 112). On the contrary: as possessive as the English (like humans everywhere) could be about money and property, compared to the French writers they were remarkably willing to share their cultural wealth between the classes. All classes were offered the art of persuasion as it was explained in the conduct manuals, and all classes were thought worthy of persuading that it was an art worthy of being learned.

Notes

¹ Of course, her reward for winning her case is to suffer the death penalty, but that plot-turn necessarily accompanies virgin-martyr narratives.

² Successful as arguments. Obviously, she wins the debate but loses her life—although as a martyr she of course gains a heavenly crown.

³ There is, however the implicit paradox: although no one can rest on the virtuous achievements of his ancestors, all humanity is punished for the first sin of Adam and Eve (who are also, of course, part of Christ's human lineage).

⁴ Capgrave even has the hermit who converts Katherine point out that she “knows” only by the word of others that she is Costus's heir, since she cannot remember her own conception, birth, or infancy—a sort of medieval post-modernist argument.

⁵ Although Woodville did indeed survive his chivalrous youth to enjoy a courtier's middle age, the War of the Roses proved more lethal to him at court than it ever had on a battlefield.

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