

of a dissertation that was directed by first-rate traditional scholars, and feminism is not something to force into such a situation. Buettner has done great service to have put this manuscript in view, with a usable level of erudition and a sophisticated reading of the imagery.

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1 Teresa de Lauretis, "The Essence of the Triangle or Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the U.S., and Britain," *Differences* 1 (summer 1989), 3–37. Reprinted in *The Essential Difference*, ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1–39; de Lauretis, "The violence of rhetoric: Considerations on representation and gender," in *The Violence of Representation*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (London: Routledge, 1989), 239–258; Michèle Barrett, "Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender," in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York: Methuen, 1985), 65–85.



Christine de Pizan. *Le Livre des Faits et Bonnes Moeurs du roi Charles V le Sage*.
Trans. Eric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau (Paris: Stock/Moyen Age 1997). 373 pp.

Twelve years ago, when Eric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau brought out their modern French translation of *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, they did a great service to the reading and teaching of Christine de Pizan. One of Christine's major prose texts was finally available in an appealing, accessible modern French format. Numerous scholarly essays and full-length studies produced during the last decade are buttressed by the existence of this translation, and many classes of French literature students have acquainted themselves with late medieval *exempla* through the same work. Hicks and Moreau have now again made an essential contribution to Christine studies by publishing a modern translation entitled *Le Livre des Faits et Bonnes Moeurs du roi Charles V le Sage*.¹

Over the last century, the text had previously been printed only in Suzanne Solente's two-volume edition, completed in 1941; while excellently edited and meticulously presented, the work in fifteenth-century French remained largely impracticable for college students and non-specialist readers. The new version comes complete with an engaging and serious introduction, a chronology of Christine's works and their modern editions, and a helpful, substantive index to proper names. The translation is elegant, by turns straightforward, playful, or ceremonious, in keeping with Christine's own changes of style. In addition to focussing on the historical genesis of the work, the introduction takes up the

question of Christine's multiple voices and their origins in the chronicles, treatises and florilegia the author consulted in preparation for this project.

Christine wrote the *Fais et Bonnes Moeurs* in 1404, at the request of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and brother of King Charles V (d. 1380). The aging Philip sought both to praise his brother individually as a wise monarch, and to offer a generalized portrait of the ideal ruler as a model for the then-dauphin, Louis de Guyenne (who died before he could take the throne, in 1415). Moreau and Hicks note that the duke's invitation to Christine was not only an honor, but a natural choice. First, from a literary standpoint: Christine enjoyed international fame for her work, and had already refused offers from the Duke of Milan and the King of England to travel to their courts. Philip had been impressed with the allegorical poem *La Mutacion de Fortune*, which Christine gave him as a New Year's gift in 1404; two years earlier, she had already made him a present of her *Chemin de Long Estude*, an allegory containing a flattering description of Charles as a well-loved king. Christine's obvious affection for the monarch who had originally brought her family from Italy to Paris, who admired her father and cherished intellectual pursuits, was a second reason for Philip to turn to her as a sympathetic biographer. Finally, the Duke of Burgundy's choice of Christine was an inspired political gesture. Orléanais and Burgundian factions jockeyed for power as King Charles VI suffered bouts of dementia. Hicks and Moreau point out that though Christine avoided partisan affiliations, it was easy to associate her with the Orléanais; she set her *Dit de la Rose* in the Orléans court, and called herself lady-in-waiting to Queen Isabeau of France, who became the Duke of Orléans's lover. Thus, when Philip of Burgundy approached Christine to write in praise of Charles V, he protected himself against the charge that he was hiring a Burgundian propagandist. Instead, in the translators' words, he was winning over "the muse of the rival court" (15).

Christine's *Fais et Bonnes Moeurs* participates in the mirror of princes tradition anchored by John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159), Vincent de Beauvais's *De eruditione filiorum regalium* (1246/7—1249), and Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* (1285)—a lineage dedicated to presenting an image of the ideal ruler for the edification of the monarch-in-training. In his 1981 *Idéal du prince et pouvoir royal en France à la fin du Moyen Age*, Jacques Krynen remarks that since "one of the main characteristics of the medieval mentality [was] the codification of individual and social behavior," it stood to reason that the mirrors' purpose would be to "moralize and codify the art of governance" (52). The desire to moralize was not gratuitous; Krynen recalls that medieval rulers were "more constrained by principles than controlled by institutions" (55). Because a king could allow himself damaging excesses and capriciousness in government, he must be taught to remain steadfast in virtue.

Consistent efforts to pattern the prince's behavior on ideals of justice, generosity, piety and sobriety resulted in repetitive advice from authors. The mark of individuality that modern readers look for may seem absent from these works. But while Christine advocates the same qualities that regularly recur in *miroirs*, *Les Fais et Bonnes Moeurs* offers insight into both Charles's particularities and the historical context of his reign. For example, in emphasizing Charles's prudence and strategic talent, Christine lauds a new type of ruler: she marries the enduring model of the warrior king to the more modern notion of the acute administrator whose power lies more in words than arms. She cites the Duke of Lancaster's disparaging remark that Charles was "nothing but a lawyer" (244) to insist that the king's reflective skills constituted the best kind of chivalric valor. After all, she asks, had not his talents regained territory lost to the English? Other chapters showcase related qualities: Charles's diplomacy and munificence shape the substantial section of the book that treats the Emperor Charles IV's historic visit to Paris in 1378. His desire for concord and willingness to listen to wise counsel structure the account of the papal schism in the same year.

Those already familiar with Christine de Pizan's work will recognize many themes in *Les Fais et Bonnes Moeurs*: the value of books and study, the need to reject self-aggrandizement, the importance of nobility of spirit over lineage. Yet there are also moments of surprise. In most of her writing, Christine is severely critical of her own era and nostalgic for better, more virtuous times. Indeed, the *Fais et Bonnes Moeurs* provides a perfect outlet for this nostalgia, a pretext for vaunting the superiority of the past. But startlingly, in the midst of fond memories of Charles V, the author turns to the present to extol the marvels of the moment. Never, she says, has France been so prosperous, never have its power and grandeur been so imposing, never has peace ruled so persuasively, never have people of all ranks and social classes lived better. "I am happy to write," says Christine, "that everything has progressively improved since the beginning of [Charles VI's] reign" (143). This is a striking counterpoint to her usual judgments. Was Christine showing her own strategic skills in offering this bouquet of compliments to the weakened king? Her patron the Duke of Burgundy had died when the *Fais et Bonnes Moeurs* was only partially complete; was it now time to strengthen ties with the Orléanais faction that included the king's wife, brother, and therefore, inevitably, the young dauphin himself? With the help of the Hicks/Moreau translation, a wider audience can now examine both the political ideals and political contingencies of fifteenth-century France.

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1 All quotations from French texts have been rendered here in English to save space.